Meditation Sessions
@ UBC Farm Yurt

- **Wednesdays 5:30-6:30pm, beginning September, 24th.**

20 minutes: Silent sitting meditation. Bell.
10 minutes: Brief instruction or technique Q&A
15 minutes: Walking meditation.
15 minutes: Open discussion. Mutual thanks.

Beginners welcome. Tea provided.
Chairs provided, You may bring your own cushion (not required).
Open to all. Aligned with the Vipassan tradition.
Students, faculty and community encouraged.

Why Meditate?

"If you want to know your mind, sit down and observe it." - HH Dalai Lama

"There is substantial evidence showing that this type of meditation helps reduce stress and address common challenges of modern times, such as constant distractions and the ongoing demands of the environment, ultimately leading to deeper contentment and tenacity." - Dr. Varada Kolhatkar (UBC Professor, Computer Science)

Meditation works. You don't need to believe anything to benefit from it.

Arrival

Join us. Through the UBC Farm gate, turn right and you will see the yurt in about 200 meters. You can’t miss it. Late arrivals welcome, let yourself in.

The UBC Farm is a 24-hectare integrated farm and forest ecosystem on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the həńq̓əmińəḿ-speaking xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people. This working landscape grounds us in place while we explore the landscapes of our own minds.

Basic Instructions

Posture

Sit with your back straight. Imagine your spine as a stack of coins, one on top of another. Head in line with spine. Everything relaxed except the spine.

Cushion on floor, chair, or bench—doesn't matter. Hands rest naturally on lap or knees. Eyes closed or slightly open looking down. Jaw soft, tongue relaxed. Try a few stretches or wiggles to get the anxious energy out.

Once you sit, don't move until your time is up. Try not to adjust or shift.

Breathing

Focus on the feeling of breath at your nostrils. Just pay attention to the feeling of your breath entering and leaving.

Don't control your breathing. Just notice: in-breath, out-breath. When your mind wanders, come back to the breath. The exercise is returning your attention to your own breath.

When Your Mind Wanders

It will. Constantly. This is normal.

"You are not crazier than you were yesterday. It has always been this way and you just never noticed." - Bhante Gunaratana

What to do: Notice you're thinking. Return to breath. That's the practice.

Don't fight thoughts. Don't follow thoughts. Just return to breath.

Pointers

Your mind will not go blank.
You will not feel peaceful every time.
You may not enjoy it at first.
You may love meditation from the beginning.

The Five Hindrances (Common Obstacles)

1. **Wanting something else** - wishing you were somewhere else, craving pleasant experiences
2. **Aversion** - anger, irritation, rejecting what's happening
3. **Sleepiness** - dullness, drowsiness, checking out
4. **Restlessness** - anxiety, agitation, can't settle down
5. **Doubt** - "This isn't working," "I'm doing it wrong," "This is stupid"

   How to work with them: Notice which one is present. Return to breath. That's it.

Walking Meditation

We'll walk slowly around the farm. Follow the person in front of you. When the bell rings after ten minutes, stop where you are. Feel your feet on the earth. Notice your connection to this place. Walk slowly, being aware of your feet, the earth and the Farm.

Working with Pain

"Pain is inevitable, suffering is not." - Buddha

Physical pain in meditation: Notice the difference between the sensation and your story about it. Breathe with the pain rather than fighting it. Move only if necessary.

Emotional pain: Same approach—notice the feeling. Try not to be submerged into the 'story' behind the pain. Emotions are temporary weather patterns. Return to breath as your anchor when you become aware that you have been absorbed into an emotion.

Be gentle with your mind, there is no need to force change.

The Four Noble Truths

1. Life contains suffering - Birth, aging, sickness, death, and friction of constant change.

2. Grasping causes suffering - Grasping for pleasures and avoiding pains creates our suffering.

3. Suffering can end - When we stop grasping, peace naturally arises.

4. There's a path - The Eightfold Path of wisdom, ethics, and mental training leads to freedom.

"These are not commandments or philosophical abstractions. They are descriptions of what you will observe in your own meditation practice." - Bhante Gunaratana

The Four Truths describe what actually happens in the mind. You'll see craving arise, notice how it creates tension, and experience the relief when it passes away. Direct observation, rather than faith, is the teacher.

Beyond the Cushion

"Mindfulness gives you time. Time gives you choices. Choices, skillfully made, lead to freedom." - Bhante Gunaratana

The real practice is in daily life: Notice when you're on autopilot. Take three conscious breaths before checking your phone. Walk mindfully between classes. Enjoy any idle, even bored, moments as an opportunity to breathe, to practice.

Building a Practice

Start small: 10-20 minutes daily
Be consistent: Same time, same place if possible
Find community: Come to weekly group practice
Be patient: Meditation can be a lifelong journey

Community of Practice (Sangha)

"When we sit together as a sangha, we enjoy the collective energy of mindfulness, and each of us allows the mindful energy of the sangha to penetrate us. Even if you don't do anything, if you just stop thinking and allow yourself to absorb the collective energy of the sangha, it's very healing." - Thich Nhat Hanh

Regular group practice helps because others keep you motivated, shared silence is powerful, you realize your struggles are universal, questions get answered, and unhelpful loops may be cut.

Remember

Come as you are - no special clothes, beliefs, or preparation needed
Start where you are - whatever your mental state, it's workable
Use what you have - any chair, any quiet moment counts
Trust the process - meditation has worked for billions of people

"In my experience I found that the most effective way to express something in order to make others understand is to use the simplest language." - Bhante Gunaratana

The simplest instruction: Sit still, watch your breath, return to your breath after your mind wanders. Everything else is commentary.

This guide is based on the teachings of Bhante Henepola Gunaratana's "Mindfulness in Plain English". His book is a very good resource for learning meditation and you are encouraged (not required) to read a copy. This peer meditation group is designed for everyone.

Concise Summary:

Meditation Sessions @ UBC Farm Yurt offers you a weekly opportunity to develop your personal meditation practice within UBC's 60 acre organic farm and with the peer support of other practitioners. Each hourlong session begins with 20 minutes of guided sitting meditation in the yurt, followed by short Q&A about your immediate experience, then 15 minutes of walking meditation through the organic gardens and orchards. We conclude with 15 minutes of discussion exploring how mindfulness supports both personal well-being and the farm's vision of resilient, thriving food systems. The course emphasizes direct experience with discussion. Open to all levels, including students, faculty and the wider community. We create space for personal inquiry about how meditation can support your own health and is supportive of our immediate and more distant communities.

Chris Brookfield is organizing this opportunity for community meditation. He brings 25 years of Buddhist study. He has been taught by Rodney Smith (former Burmese monk) Geshe Tenzin Namdak (ordained monk in the Tibetan tradition), Geshe Tenzin Legtsok (ordained monk in the Tibetan tradition). His current teacher in Vancouver is Karen Lawrie, a highly experienced teacher of Vipassana meditation and former full-time residential Zen practitioner. Chris also brings professional experience in venture capital, designing food systems, community networks and essential services. He is a co-founder of Cairnspring Mills, a regenerative flour mill in Washington's Skagit Valley, and Elevar Equity - which pioneered commercial microcredit and impact investing.

Central to his approach is the understanding that alignment - both inner clarity through meditation and external alignment between values and action - forms the foundation for effective systems change. As he documents in his published book "Field Notes From Systems Change," when we find inner alignment, we naturally flow into deeper community connection, recognize genuine opportunities, and become agents of inner and outer transformation. Without the clarity that emerges from meditation, the patterns and openings for systems design remain invisible - whether we're working with food systems or any complex web of relationships.