

Dear Sangha,

Thay tells us that when he started his training as a novice in a Zen monastery he was required to learn a book of gathas by heart for use throughout the day. Gathas, or mindfulness verses, help us dwell in the present moment and to be deeply aware of actions we perform in our daily lives so that we can perform them with understanding and love.

You will find some examples below and you are invited to choose one and practise with it in preparation for our sangha gathering on 5th November when you are invited to share the gatha you have chosen and your experience of practising with it. Gathas are generally recited silently, breathing in during the first 2 lines and breathing out during the last 2 lines. Thay has offered us many Gathas, some can be found in the Plum Village Chanting Book, many in his book "Present Moment, Wonderful Moment" and many of his books contain them, whether traditional ones or ones that Thay has composed himself to be relevant to modern life. Please choose from whatever source is available to you.

WAKING UP

Waking up this morning, I smile.
Twenty-four brand new hours are before me.
I vow to live fully in each moment
And to look at all beings with the eyes of compassion.

WASHING YOUR TEETH

Brushing my teeth and rinsing my mouth,
I vow to speak purely and lovingly.
When my mouth is fragrant with right speech,
A flower blooms in the garden of my heart.

SITTING

Feelings come and go
like clouds in a windy sky.
Conscious breathing is my anchor.

SERVING FOOD

In this food,
I see clearly
the entire universe
supporting my existence.

EATING

With the first mouthful, I practise the love that brings joy.
With second mouthful, I practise the love that relieves suffering.
With the third mouthful, I practise the joy of being alive.
With the fourth mouthful, I practise equal love for all beings.

DRINKING TEA

This cup of tea in my two hands,
mindfulness held perfectly.
My mind and body dwell
in the very here and now.

USING THE TELEPHONE

Words can travel thousands of miles.
May my words create mutual understanding and love.
May they be as beautiful as gems,
As lovely as flowers.

Please enjoy your practice.

With love and best wishes, Barbara

