

For a Future to Be Possible: Buddhist Ethics for Everyday Life

Thich Nhat Hanh , Jack Kornfield (Afterword) , Joan Halifax (Introduction)

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The Five Mindfulness Trainings — to not kill, steal, commit adultery, lie, or take intoxicants — are the basic statement of ethics and morality in Buddhism. In this fully revised edition, Zen master and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh argues eloquently for their universal applicability in daily situations. Nhat Hanh discusses in depth the value and meaning of each precept, offering insights into the roles that they could play in our changing society. In a world marked by moral and spiritual emptiness, he says, The Five Mindfulness Trainings offer a path to the restoration of meaning and value. The author calls the trainings a “diet for a mindful society” that transcends sectarian boundaries, and he presents simple yet powerful ways that people can come together around them to explore and sustain a sane, compassionate, and healthy way of living.

For a Future to Be Possible: Buddhist Ethics for Everyday Life Details


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Trey Nowell says

Another Thich Nhat Hanh book that touches the soul and makes you think. This book highlights The Five Mindfulness trainings, stressing the benefits of abstaining from things that can cause us to be reckless, voicing our concerns, controlling anger, respecting life, respecting our bodies, and respecting all of creation from the complex to microorganisms. This book has trainings that no known man, even the Buddha, could follow perfectly. The parallels to Christianity and teachings of Christ are something Hanh often connects in his writings and does here as well. It has a good section after the book ends with questions often asked regarding The Five Mindfulness trainings and on how to ritualize these in practice. This book and author I would recommend to anyone with an open mind looking to improve their life and follow a code that will lead them to a life of higher enlightenment. The Five Mindfulness trainings are very difficult to follow and not easy to dismiss, which makes these for people that are very disciplined.

Adrian Gaucher says

I vaguely remember reading this book. But from what I remember I was super hyped on it because I love books on Buddhist philosophy. And I was sorely let down. There was a lot of hype and praise for it. But some of my less favorite reads, exceeded the take away from this old book. I recall it being difficult to read in its wording and technical phrases. If your looking for a down to earth perspective on Buddhism. Then this is not the place in my humble opinion.

Anna Springer says

friends - read this! activists - read this! artists - read this! parents - read this! Buddhists in other traditions - read this! It's so so so helpful about basic practices that allow one to feel a sense of ethical well-being - it's SO smart. Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings are deceptively simple. That's because he's a really good teacher, and really gets the heart of Buddha's main points.

Dana Larose says

Hoped this would be a detailed look at the Five Precepts but it was a bit too...mystical for me right now. I liked the presentation in Eight Mindful Steps much better (although I think I picked up For a Future before the former but happened to read EMS first).

At any rate, it was a small book and I always find TNH's writing very relaxing.

Lon says

Thich Nhat Hanh has updated the 5 Precepts observed by Buddhists (monastic and lay) for 2500 years to reflect modern challenges and complexities. I appreciate the impulse to broaden the scope of the precepts and to address contemporary issues, but I find the new iterations to be more than a little verbose (and this coming from ME!).

* 2500 year old Precept (#1): "I vow not to kill"

* Hanh's version: "Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, or in my way of life. Seeing that harmful actions arise from anger, fear, greed, and intolerance, which in turn come from dualistic and discriminative thinking, I will cultivate openness, non-discrimination, and non-attachment to views in order to transform violence, fanaticism, and dogmatism in myself and in the world."

The value of the book, though, are the guest commentaries on the Buddhist precepts, called now the 5 Mindfulness Trainings. A particular favorite featured an essay by poet Gary Snyder.

JB says

I've read numerous books by Thich Nhat Hanh and this is my least favorite. While some of it was interesting, most of it seemed to be very repetitive and often uninteresting. Also, it's a small book and yet quite a few of the pages are not written by him, including foreword, the afterword, and the frequently asked questions. It was not an easy book to come by, and not one I loved either. He has some much better ones out there!

Kayleigh says

This was a clear and concise explanation of the Five Mindfulness trainings. After working with TNH, it's refreshing to hear what he has to say about the trainings in print, since they correspond clearly to his dharmataalks.

MariMel says

I liked this, but not as much as some of his other books. He gave a lot of examples that seemed really negative; it gave me the sense that there is so much suffering, and Buddhism can slightly buffer all this misery. I haven't had that sense from any of his other books, so I prefer some of his others, like Living Buddha, Living Christ.

Christopher says

I hadn't realized I'd finished this, until I looked at my bookmark. As with all of Thich Nhat Hanh's writing, the focus is on changing ourselves to create a better, more just, more sustainable world. This is probably one of my favorite books of all time, and I am thankful to have it in ePub format so I can read it a few times, and almost always have it in my bag.

Agatha Glowacki says

I bought this book to study the five mindfulness trainings before taking them formally, and found the explanations and descriptions very helpful. The second half includes essays by notable Buddhists and their perspectives on the trainings, and it was fascinating to see how varied and uniquely each person perceives each training. I appreciated how Thay frames these teachings as a "diet for myself and for society" and that a proper diet is crucial for self transformation and for the transformation of society. He also suggests that the way you practice the trainings reveals the depth of your peace and depth of your insight. Your behavior also influences others, and you teach others through your actions and not just with words. In a beautiful way, he also shows how keeping these trainings is impactful beyond just yourself and the current society - he says that you impact your parents, ancestors, and future generations. Highly recommended as a consideration for these troubling times.

Wagner Nobres says

Lot of learnings regarding how to build peace in this world. Thich talks about his experiences during Vietnam War.

Rubina says

A compact guidebook focusing on the Five Mindfulness Trainings which represent the Buddhist precepts on ethics and morality. As it often is with Buddhist practices, the Five Mindfulness Trainings are not only relevant to Buddhists but for anyone who wants to be calmer and have better insights and enlightenment. It provides a wonderful introduction to Buddhist philosophy and the practice of Mindfulness.

Anna says

Found this at a thriftstore, as if it was just waiting for me. I always go to Thich Nhat Hanh's books and quotes, and this work will be read over and over for my practice. The cover alone makes me smile - just the girl holding and staring at an orange is very precious. I keep reminding myself that I don't have to 'be' anything in particular. Just pay attention.

Jim says

The literature of Buddhism both attracts and repels. On one hand, it is concerned with a practical response to the suffering of this life. This is seen in what Thich Nhat Hanh calls the Two Promises:

I vow to develop understanding, in order to live peacefully with people, animals, plants, and minerals.

I vow to develop my compassion, in order to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals.

The bulk of the book is taken up with the Five Mindfulness Trainings, which form the core of Buddhist ethics. These are useful and practical, and should form part of our own understanding as how to act in any given situation.

But then there sets in a certain patness, together with a proliferation of Sanskrit names and traits which, to learn, must be something like counting cards in Las Vegas. To wit:

The second name of the Buddha is Arhat, meaning "one who is worthy of our support and respect." The third is Samyaksambuddha, "one whose knowledge and practice are perfect." The fourth is Vidyacaranasampana, "one who is equipped with knowledge and practice." The fifth is Sugata, "one who is welcome." The sixth is Lokavida, "one who knows the world well." The seventh is Anutta-apurusadamyasarathi, meaning "unsurpassed leader of people to be trained and taught."

And it goes on from there. Now can you please repeat all those, and perhaps add a few more ... but it is not my intention to poke fun at something that basically works, but which can lead one to blubbing like an idiot. Mi vida loca, my Lokavida -- the same understanding, but when the mouth opens, all are wrong.

Marion says

Helpful little book outlining each of the Buddha's five mindfulness trainings (trainings on basic morality, for living consciously to ease pain and suffering), as translated by Thich Nhat Hanh.
