

Insight Meditation Community of Charlotte

Dhamma Study and Practice Program (DSPP)

Program Description

The Insight Meditation Community of Charlotte is offering a one-year program that seeks to integrate meditation practice with the study of the teachings of the Buddha. The program provides Dhamma students with the opportunity to (1) delve more deeply into the meaning and significance of the Buddha's teachings, (2) creatively explore the relationship of these teachings to meditation practice and daily life, and (3) cultivate sangha and support friendships.

The DSP is intended to strengthen the insight meditation community in the Charlotte area, and help ensure the quality and continuity of the teachings that are available to members.

OVERVIEW

- Monthly sessions, including eight three-hour Tuesday evening sessions (6:00 to 9:00), and four daylong Saturday sessions (9:00 to 5:00). These sessions will be a combination of classroom time, discussion, and formal meditation practice, with some small group discussions. Session dates are:
 - September 26, 2017, evening
 - October 17, 2017, evening
 - November 11, 2017, **daylong**
 - December 12, 2017, evening
 - January 16, 2018, evening
 - February 10, 2018, **daylong**
 - March 20, 2018, evening
 - April 17, 2018, evening
 - May 19, 2018, **daylong**
 - June 12, 2018, evening
 - July 10, 2018, evening
 - August 11, 2018, **daylong**
- Recommended readings and reflection.
- Study partner (Dhamma buddy) for the year.
- Monthly mentoring from an IMC Charlotte Dharma Leader.

The DSPP is limited to twelve participants and is by application only, due June 15, 2017.

CURRICULUM

The intention of the DSPP is to offer students of the Dhamma an opportunity to explore more extensively and more deeply the basic teachings of the Buddha. This is done by looking closely at a wide range of traditional teachings and exploring their meaning carefully in the context of lived experience—both meditative experience and the experiences of daily life. The program combines classroom teaching and discussion with ongoing self-regulated study following a shared, structured curriculum.

Participants will also form a Dhamma relationship with their Dhamma buddy, their individual mentor, and the teachers and other participants in the DSPP. Everyone will be working through the same curriculum at the same time, and a good deal of inter-communication will be taking place. The curriculum of the DSPP is organized around following:

1. **First Quarter** - Becoming Grounded
 - a. **September** - Program overview, intentions, generosity, and the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha)
 - b. **October** - The Four Noble Truths
 - c. **November (Daylong)** - The Noble Eightfold Path
2. **Second Quarter** – The Path in Depth
 - a. **December** - Wisdom/Insight (Pali: panna)
 - b. **January** - Ethical Behavior/Conduct (Pali: sila)
 - c. **February (Daylong)** - Mind Training/Meditation (Pali: Samadhi)
3. **Third Quarter** – Other Key Teachings
 - a. **March** - The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipatthana Sutta), Part One: The Body, Feeling Tone, and the Mind
 - b. **April** - The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipatthana Sutta), Part Two: Phenomena
 - c. **May (Daylong)** – The Seven Factors of Awakening
4. **Fourth Quarter** – Bringing it all Together
 - a. **June** – The Three Characteristics of Existence
 - b. **July** – The Brahma Viharas (Divine Abodes)
 - c. **August (Daylong)** – Closing session, the life of the Buddha, and other material

Monthly Sessions

The twelve **monthly sessions** are at the core of the DSPP. The eight **evening sessions** will be primarily classroom time and discussion, with some formal meditation practice, and will be taught by the program's core teachers. The four **daylong sessions** will allow time for additional formal practice, as well exploration of topics in small groups. Other IMC Charlotte Dharma Leaders will participate as guest teachers for the daylong sessions.

Study

The **self-study** component of the program is significant. For each of the sessions, materials will be provided suitable for systematic study. This material will serve as a basis for the monthly sessions, the self-study assignments, and the work with one's study partner (Dharma buddy) and mentor. Participants will be provided with two textbooks: The Middle-Length Discourses of the Buddha, translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (Wisdom Publications), and The Noble Eightfold Path by Bhikkhu Bodhi (BPS Pariyatti Editions).

Personal Mentoring

Each participant will be paired with an IMC Charlotte Dharma Leader as their mentor. Mentors draw upon the breadth and depth of their own practice and personal experience to discuss meditation

and expressions of practice in the world, and to share in the exploration of the DSPP readings with participants.

Participants will connect with their mentors, at a minimum, in monthly half-hour phone interviews. This component of the DSPP operates on the dana system, and is arranged directly between the participant and the mentor.

APPLICATION

Is the DSPP Right for You?

The DSPP is grounded primarily in early Buddhist and Theravadan thought and in vipassana (insight) meditation practice. Some other traditions may be referenced, but the DSPP will not satisfy those seeking to gain grounding in other traditions (e.g. Mahayana, Vajrayana and Zen).

The mission of the DSPP is to provide experienced IMC Charlotte participants with the opportunity to study, to apply practice to daily life in an examined way, and to strengthen peer support. It is not the intention of this program to cultivate community Dharma leaders, Dhamma teachers, or teaching skills. It is a program for personal and interpersonal development.

Eligibility

The DSPP is intended for those with vipassana meditation experience. Applicants should have, cumulatively, a minimum of one year of vipassana practice and at least seven days of silent, residential vipassana or metta retreat practice. It is not necessary for applicants to have done a significant amount of study, but it is important that participants have an interest in the careful examination of and reflection upon the teachings of the Buddha.

Those who do not have seven or more days of vipassana retreat time but who have spent a significant amount of time in either the study of Buddhist thought or the practice of another Buddhist lineage are still encouraged to apply.

Admissions Standards

The strongest applicants will be offered admission to the program. The "strength" of any individual application will be relative to the strength of the others, therefore there is no absolute standard by which one will be guaranteed admission. All factors being equal, there will be a preference to admit those who (1) are active members of the IMC Charlotte community, including having attended the sangha's classes, series, and retreats, (2) have had more meditation practice, particularly in vipassana, and (3) are likely to contribute constructively to group discussions and collective learning.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Program Cost

The tuition for the DSPP is \$200. This amount has been intentionally kept to a minimum so that finances will not be a barrier to participation for most people. The tuition covers space rental, texts, materials, and other administrative costs.

The teachers, both core teachers, and guest teachers, are offering their services on a dana (donation) basis. These services include planning the program, teaching at the monthly sessions, handling administrative details, and serving as mentors (for which dana arrangements are separate from dana for the program). The work of the teachers and the mentors is sustained by the generosity of each participant.

Payment of the tuition is due with the participant's confirmation of acceptance of the invitation to participate, no later than July 22, 2017. Dana for teachers will be handled at the conclusion of each of the four daylong sessions.

Limited scholarship funds are available to support program participants. All applications will be considered equally, regardless of ability to pay. Upon an offer of admission, applicants will have the opportunity to request scholarship assistance. IMC Charlotte will make reasonable efforts to award the amount requested, but may not be able to fulfill the entire request.

In addition to tuition and dana for teachers, participants may be asked to purchase a limited number of additional books.

Email and Internet Access

The DSPP will communicate administrative details with applicants and participants primarily by email. Participants will need an email address and internet access. Internet access need not be in-home; most public libraries offer access for free.

Application

The DSPP is limited to twelve participants and is by application only, due June 15, 2017. Please see the application form for more details.

Commitment

Because of the unique nature of the DSPP, the cohesive community that develops over the course of the program and the limited number of spaces available, we ask that if you are accepted into the program, that you commit yourself fully to the program for the duration, and to all of its components (other than for health or family emergencies). If you have further questions about the DSPP or the application, please contact one of the core teachers:

Clyde Alexander
CAofNC@yahoo.com
704-299-0385

Debbie George
YogaMom14@aol.com
704-763-2193

Ward Simmons
WardSimmons@bellsouth.net
704-995-4860

CORE TEACHERS

Clyde Alexander has been practicing meditation since 1998. He has attended residential retreats at Spirit Rock, Insight Meditation Society, Southern Dharma Retreat Center and Cloud Mountain. He is a graduate of the Dedicated Practitioner Program, Spirit Rock's two-year study program.

Debbie George loves sharing the dharma, the Buddha's non-religious teachings. She experiences the powerful wisdom and practice of insight meditation, the tools that untangle our thinking which is often the creator of our misery. Debbie completed a yearlong study program at Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in 2013. She's been teaching, practicing and studying Buddhist meditation since Summer 2007.

Ward Simmons has been practicing insight meditation since 1999. He regularly participates in residential meditation retreats ranging in length from a week to a month. He has completed the year-long Integrated Study and Practice Program at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in Barre, Massachusetts, and the two-year Community Dharma Leader program through Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Marin County, California. Ward has found the practice of insight meditation to be life-changing, and he considers it a privilege to share this path with others.