

A Letter from Jean

Dear Friends of The Lighthouse,

When Ray and I were in Tahiti I decided to meditate on our balcony over the water. It seemed like a peaceful place surrounded by ocean and sky. I chose a spot, closed my eyes and began to breathe. Just as I began to observe my thoughts a noisy boat came zooming by stirring up my peace and the water. The waves crashed on the shore and soon became calm again. As my thoughts began to settle another boat came zooming by. I couldn't help but notice the analogy of this racing boat to my experience meditating.

When I ask my clients if they meditate they often say "I've tried but I am not very good at it" or "I can't get my mind to stop". People often misunderstand the process of meditation. Meditation is not about getting your thoughts to stop. In fact that is impossible. Our minds never stop thinking. Meditation is about becoming an observer of your breath, thoughts and body. Observe does not mean to change control or stop anything. Therefore the only wrong way to meditate is to not meditate.

Several years ago I attended a 10 day Vipassana retreat. For ten days I did not read or write. I did not talk to another person. I lived completely in a state of observing myself which included meditating for 8 to 10 hours a day. I woke up to meditate before breakfast which was served at 6:15am and after I meditated until 9pm lights out. By the second day I wanted to sneak out, get in my car and drive away. Now I know why they had us turn over our car keys when we first arrived. By the 4th day I wanted to jump out of my skin. My leg hurt each time I observed my body during meditation. On the 6th day the teacher asked how we were doing and I said "Fine, when I am not in pain." She told me to come see her at lunch. I asked her "How do you know if you're in too much pain?" thinking that maybe I was hurting myself. She said something very profound that I will never forget "There is no such thing as too much pain." That simple statement eliminated the war I had started in my head thinking that I should avoid this pain or tend to it in some way. The next time we sat in meditation I played that mantra over and over again in my head. There is no such thing as too much pain. There is no such thing as too much pain. And while my pain did not go away I did have an amazing experience where I rose above the pain and it no longer had its grip on me. I did not feel the need to avoid it change it or fix it. At the same time I had a vision of a sewer tunnel opening up and hundreds of rats running out of my mind.

I experienced a level of peace that day that remains with me to this day over 8 years later. Vipassana meditation is the single most powerful life altering meditation that I have personally experienced. It is not easy but each time it gets better and better and I get better and better. That is why I am committed to sharing this experience with you. If you have troubles in your mind and are constantly trying to run from the pain or anxiety I know that Vipassana can help you too. Vipassana is not a nice mental vacation like guided imagery, peaceful like progressive relaxation or passive like hypnosis. Rather it is you learning about you. Learning to face yourself and all your mistakes and wounds and drive yourself deeper and deeper into your spiritual development. Don't you think it's time you got to know yourself? Don't you think it's time to stop running from the pain buried deep inside and deal with it for once and for all. I know you deserve peace of mind and a tool that will help you live a more centered more

powerful life. If you are willing to work to gain that control join me on Tuesday April 2nd at 6:30 and start the journey. We will meet weekly for 10 weeks for instruction and meditation. Registration is open until March 31st. Please call the office for more information.