

Practice Support Resource Guide



SEATTLE INSIGHT
MEDITATION SOCIETY

Welcome to the Seattle Insight Meditation Society (SIMS). Within this guide you'll find information on resources available through our community to help new meditators strengthen, deepen, and broaden their practice.

We look forward to getting to know you and continuing together on this journey. For more information about SIMS, we invite you to our website (www.seattleinsight.org), offering news about SIMS events, audio and video versions of dharma talks and classes, online practice-support materials, and more. You can contact us by email through the website, or feel free to leave us a voicemail at 206.659-5546.

In the Buddhist tradition, the “three jewels” are the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha. The *Buddha* (“awakened one”) refers to the inspiration we find from the Buddha and his awakening, as well as to the capacity within each of us for awareness, understanding, compassion, and freedom. The *dharma* (“reality” or “the way things are”) refers both to the teachings of the Buddha and to the experience and knowledge we come to through our own practice. The *sangha* is the community of people on the path toward awareness and freedom.

Deepening Practice

Classes and Meditation Opportunities

A great variety of SIMS classes are offered to those who have completed the six-week introductory meditation class* or who have had comparable training from an experienced teacher in insight meditation.

Tuesday-night classes. Rodney Smith, SIMS founding teacher or SIMS guiding teachers lead an ongoing meditation and dharma class every Tuesday evening from 7:00–9:00 p.m. at the SIMS meditation center in SODO. The evening begins with a forty-minute group meditation followed by a dharma talk. On alternating weeks, a small group discussion period takes place after a short recap of the previous week's dharma talk. People can talk about the current class topic and issues surrounding their practice.

Ongoing education. Throughout the year, senior students (SIMS local dharma leaders) lead classes on topics such as basic Buddhism, the paramis, and intermediate study. Dates and descriptions for these courses can be found on our website calendar.

Days of mindfulness. Four times a year, SIMS hosts a day of mindfulness on a Saturday from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. During these days, people can focus on meditation practice within a silent setting, with opportunities to ask questions and hear a dharma talk. These retreats are listed on the SIMS website and on the event flyers available at Tuesday-night classes.

Additional group meditations. Neighborhood groups within the larger sangha meet to meditate at various other times and locations. In addition, visiting teachers occasionally offer a sit and dharma talks. For more details on these opportunities, visit the SIMS website or pick up an event flyer at a Tuesday-night class.

*For information on the SIMS introductory meditation classes, please see the SIMS website calendar. The introductory class is also available in video format online and can be accessed on the "Talks" page.

Retreats

SIMS offers a variety of nonresidential weekend retreat experiences with SIMS teachers and visiting teachers. These retreats bridge retreat practice with daily living and are sometimes held in silence.

Nonresidential retreats include both sitting and walking meditation and often cover a particular thematic exploration of the dharma. To register for an upcoming retreat, visit the SIMS website. If you would like more information or have questions concerning nonresidential retreats, you can email registrar@seattleinsight.org.

Typically lasting from three to ten days, a residential retreat offers an opportunity to deepen practice within a silent setting. These retreats are held at practice centers where housing and food is provided and include sitting and walking meditation, teacher instruction, dharma talks, and group interviews (longer retreats include individual teacher interviews).

Please see the calendar section of the SIMS website for information on residential retreats. One local resource for residential retreats is Cloud Mountain Retreat Center (www.cloudmountain.org) in south-west Washington. Cloud Mountain offers a variety of retreats suitable for beginning students, both with Rodney and with other teachers from this tradition.

Other retreat centers in the Insight Meditation tradition include the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts (www.dharma.org) and Spirit Rock in Woodacre, California (www.spiritrock.org).

SIMS offers partial scholarships to those who aren't able to afford residential retreats led by SIMS teachers. For more information, email scholarship@seattleinsight.org.

Take delight in “beginner’s mind”—it is a time of bright discovery. If you lose your breath, if you don’t sit for a couple of days, you can always come back, always begin again.

Mentors

SIMS mentors are available to new meditators to offer guidance and answer questions about practice. Talking with a mentor has been helpful to many members of the sangha as they transition from the beginning class to the larger sangha meetings on Tuesday nights. Mentors are available to beginning students from the third week of the beginning class until the end of the series. Mentors may be contacted by beginning students via email or phone.

Mentors are available for questions or discussion on an individual basis at the conclusion of each Tuesday-night class. SIMS teachers and local dharma leaders also are available for individual interviews outside of class with those who have been attending the Tuesday-night classes for at least six months.

SIMS Resources

The SIMS website (www.seattleinsight.org) has information on events, special announcements, classes, nonresidential and residential retreats, visiting teachers, and KM and shared-interest groups. The website also features a broad selection of practice support materials, dharma talks, and online registration for SIMS-sponsored nonresidential retreats.

With several hundred books, as well as CDs and DVDs, the SIMS library is another excellent resource for dharma-related materials. You can view materials and arrange to borrow them on the SIMS website, or visit the library upstairs at the SIMS dharma center.

In practice, things often come up that we think are obstacles: *I'm too busy, other people in the household keep me from it, I have children, it's too noisy where I live, going to SODO on Tuesday night is too far for me, I'm just not into groups.* Are these objections really roadblocks, or are they opportunities to question our assumptions and investigate our resistance? Can we work with these perceived barriers in our practice?

Vipassana (Insight or Mindfulness) Meditation Resources

Recommended Books, Periodicals, and Audio Talks

The Experience of Insight, by Joseph Goldstein

Seeking the Heart of Wisdom, by Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfield

A Path with Heart, by Jack Kornfield

Breath by Breath, by Larry Rosenberg

Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness, by Sharon Salzberg

Stepping Out of Self-Deception and Lessons from the Dying,
by Rodney Smith

The Beginner's Guide to Insight Meditation, by Arinna Weisman and
Jean Smith

Buddhadharma magazine www.thebuddhadharma.com

Northwest Dharma News (published online by the Northwest Dharma
Association) www.nwdharma.org

Shambhala Sun magazine www.shambhalasun.com

Tricycle magazine www.tricycle.com

Dharma Seed (library of Vipassana audio talks)
1.800.969.7333; www.dharmaseed.org

Wisdom Publications (nonprofit publisher of Buddhist books from all
traditions) 617.776.7416; www.wisdompubs.org

Retreat Centers

Cloud Mountain Retreat Center (Castle Rock, WA)
1.888.465.9118; www.cloudmountain.org

Insight Meditation Society (Barre, MA)
978.355.4378; www.dharma.org

Spirit Rock (Woodacre, CA)
415.488.9558; www.spiritrock.org

Becoming Part of the Sangha

Volunteering

SIMS is an all-volunteer organization—this means the only way we can operate is for sangha members to give their time and energy to the many tasks needed to keep things humming. Volunteering itself is a practice of generosity (or dana) and it's also a great way to get to know other sangha members. There are many different ways to contribute. You can access opportunities online through the website on the "Volunteer Opportunities" page under the "Ways to Give" tab. Or, listen for announcements on Tuesdays when volunteers are often requested. We hope you decide to get involved—you'll be glad you did.

Kalyana Mitta Groups

Kalyana mitta is a Pali term meaning "spiritual friend." Within the SIMS sangha, a number of kalyana mitta (KM) groups have been formed to look deeply into an aspect of life where our hearts are drawn to investigate through the lens of the dharma. These small groups of six to twelve people provide a safe and accepting environment, and an opportunity to explore our own practice, benefit from that of others, and connect with people from the SIMS sangha. The groups are co-facilitated by two group members who have Vipassana experience and have received facilitator training. Topics for KM groups have ranged widely; for a list of current groups, please see the SIMS website. You can also indicate interest in an existing or potential group by emailing kmcoordinator@seattleinsight.org.

It's so hard to meet people and I'm basically a shy person. Have you found yourself thinking this in the past? Investigate the fear that arises in a new situation or large group. Bring compassion to yourself in that fear. Question the assumption that everyone knows each other and you are the only one who is feeling shy. Remember that others in the room are also uncomfortable. Try making it part of your practice to reach out and meet at least one new person each class night.

Shared Interest Groups

Shared interest groups are an opportunity to meet and connect with others in a small-sangha setting. They are organized around any activity or topic that sangha members may have in common, and can take many forms: book/discussion groups, informal sitting groups, hiking groups, and writing groups are a few examples. To express the wish to start or join a shared interest group, email kmcoordinator@seattleinsight.org.

Dharma and Children

A SIMS group has formed to help foster a deeper understanding of how our individual practices include our relationships to children, and to increase support within the sangha for those working with or raising children. To learn more about resources in this area, visit the “Dharma and Children” page under the “Sangha” tab on the website.

Dharma Etiquette

The etiquette for attending a dharma event is very simple: to remain sitting attentively from beginning to end. As part of our attendance in an event and commitment to the dharma, we can practice dealing with whatever comes up during that time. If that’s not possible, it’s better not to attend than to be insensitive to the teacher and sangha by leaving early. Whether we like what is being said or who is saying it is secondary to our willingness to work with our mind’s reaction and to be aware of our impact on the whole gathering.

Of course, there are legitimate reasons that make it necessary for people to leave dharma events early. If we find ourselves in such a situation, we should quietly, without distraction, leave the event in order to tend to our needs. If an early departure is anticipated, it’s best to sit in the back in order to slip out inconspicuously.

The dharma requires more from us than a “drop-in” mentality. We can become so casual in our relationship to truth that we no longer stretch upward to meet where it is pointing. We can miss the entire point of the dharma by responding to its entertainment value rather than looking at our need for entertainment.

Dana: In the Spirit of Generosity

Dana is a term meaning “gift” in Pali. We also use the word to refer to the practice of generosity and the donations given to a teacher or sangha. In the Insight Meditation tradition, the Buddha’s teachings are offered freely to all, and people are invited to contribute dana as they are able. At SIMS, our teachers’ livelihoods and the sustenance of our sangha are fully dependant on the dana gifts of our participants.

There are no fixed guidelines for dana donations. While the amount each of us chooses to contribute is a personal decision, a good rule to follow is to “give without regret”—generously, openly, and what we can afford.

8.2016

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