



CLEAR MIND

The Newsletter of Madison Vipassana, Inc. ❖ July 2017

Residential Meditation Retreat with Janice Cittasubha Sheppard, October 5–8, 2017

We're delighted that Madison Vipassana's own Janice Cittasubha Sheppard will be leading a retreat for our community October 5–8 at Pine Lake Camp in Westfield, Wisconsin.

Jan has been teaching meditation since 2002. She is a student of the Theravada Thai Forest lineage and received training as a Lay Buddhist Minister from Ajahn Pasanno and Ajahn Amaro at Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery. She was also trained as a Community Dharma Leader through Spirit Rock Meditation Center.

Jan leads Madison Insight's [Tuesday night sitting group](#). She teaches introductory meditation classes and an intensive, year-long program on Theravada Buddhism, and she regularly leads meditation

retreats. She also volunteers in Wisconsin prisons to provide mindfulness training and Buddhist pastoral services.



The theme of the retreat will be *Ending the Ping-Pong Game: Finding the Peace of Balance in Body, Mind, and Heart*. Playing ping-pong is fun, but having a mind and heart that swings back and forth like a ping-pong ball is decidedly not fun. In this retreat, we will investigate the many ways we swing between extremes and consider how to find the ease inherent in the "Middle Way" of balance in body, effort, and heart. We'll focus on staying present with the body and breath as it offers us the ideal window into all of the ways we also lose balance and bounce around like a ping-pong ball. Through coming into the body, and becoming grounded and stable there, we are able to then also understand and establish stability and balance even when strong emotional and thought storms threaten to overwhelm the heart and

mind. Many of us tend to favor thoughts over experiential bodily sensations, so to establish balance in meditation, we need to learn to settle into the experience of the body and breath, to find ease and even pleasure in embodiment. In this retreat, we will ask "where is balance?" in the body, breath, and mind throughout the day, whether sitting, moving, standing, or eating.

The retreat will be suitable for those newer to meditation and those with more meditation or retreat experience. Sitting meditation periods will alternate with periods of walking meditation throughout each day. Each day will include a morning reflection and evening Dhamma talk from the teacher. Days will begin and end with a *pūja* that includes chanting, lighting candles and incense, and meditation. There will be an optional movement session each full day for those wanting to join in. The retreat will be held in Noble Silence but include times for questions and response in the Dhamma hall and small group interviews with the teacher.

The retreat will be held at Pine Lake Camp in Westfield, Wisconsin. Situated on beautiful Pine Lake, the facility is surrounded by rolling hills, farms, and oak savannas and offers a number of lovely walking trails.

The cost of the retreat is \$240 for a double room and \$380 for a single. The registration fees cover room, simple vegetarian meals (beginning Friday morning), and other retreat expenses. In keeping with Theravada

Hard to hold down,
nimble,
alighting wherever it likes:
the mind.
Its taming is good.
The mind well-tamed
brings ease.

So hard to see,
so very, very subtle,
alighting wherever it likes:
the mind.
The wise should guard it.
The mind protected
brings ease.

— Dhammapada 35–36
([Thanissaro Bhikkhu](#), transl.)

Buddhist tradition, there is no charge for the teachings; however, a donation (*dāna*) to the teacher is encouraged.

To register for the retreat, complete the [registration form at the back of this newsletter](#). Early registration is encouraged to ensure a spot. Financial assistance is

available through our retreat scholarship program. We will hold a number of spaces open until September 21 to facilitate attendance by young adults (18–26) and people of color.

For a sample of Jan’s teaching, see the article below. ❖



Pine Lake

Additional Opportunity to Practice with Janice Cittasubha Sheppard

Janice Cittasubha Sheppard will lead Madison Insight Meditation Group’s regular Sunday night meditation on Sunday, October 8, 2017, at the First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive. The evening will begin at 6:00 p.m. with a 45-minute sitting, following which Jan will offer a Dhamma talk. If you can attend the retreat, this will allow you to extend it. If you can’t attend the retreat, this will be a great opportunity to benefit from Jan’s teaching.

Janice Cittasubha Sheppard – Ending the Ping-Pong Game: Finding the Peace of Balance in Body, Mind, & Heart

Like many who grew up in the 1950s, I have happy memories of playing ping-pong in our basement “rec room” and of hearing my father’s stories about his skill as a ping-pong master when he was young. Playing ping-pong is fun, but having a mind and heart that swings back and forth like a ping-pong ball is decidedly not fun.

It can take some time, even decades, to notice that swinging between peaks and valleys of emotion, attention, energy, and effort is exhausting. Our attachment to the peaks sometimes has obscured the truth of the equal and opposite valleys. Or sometimes we have decided that there must be a way to get the peaks without the valleys, and we just have to figure out what it is. But slowly we come to realize that the peaks are paired with the valleys; we can’t have one without the other. As wisdom and clarity grow, we begin to acknowledge that fact, and it begins to weaken the attachments that keep

us picking up the paddle to play the ping-pong game of the heart.

The Buddha taught about this challenge in his very first discourse, Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion (*Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta* SN 56.11). In that seminal sutta, he established two of the foundational teachings of his entire dispensation: The Four Noble Truths and the Middle Way. Of the two, The Four Noble Truths receives more attention, but the Middle Way is also an essential teaching for following the path laid out in the Four Noble Truths, though it is sometimes given scant attention.

The more we investigate the Noble Truths and try to follow the Noble Eightfold Path (the fourth of the Noble Truths), the more relevant this teaching on the Middle Way becomes. The path factors of the Noble Eightfold Path are often translated as *right view*, *right intention*, *right action*, etc., but it may be more helpful to think of them as *balanced view*, *balanced intention*, *balanced action*,

etc. This translation highlights the way in which the teaching of the Middle Way is inseparable from the teaching on the Four Noble Truths. The sutta says that this Middle Way that leads to vision, knowledge, self-awakening, and Nibbana *is* in fact the Eightfold Path.

And what is the middle way realized by the Tathāgata that—producing vision, producing knowledge—leads to stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding? Precisely this noble eightfold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is the middle way realized by the Tathāgata that—producing vision, producing knowledge—leads to stilling, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding.

So investigating how we know and directly experience the Middle Way in our body, our mind, and our heart is how we can stay on and develop the path to peace. And the ideal place to begin our investigation

for finding greater balance in body, mind, and heart is through meditation. How can our meditation itself support the embodiment of balance? Meditation is a bodily experience, but learning how to just be with the bodily experience is often swamped by thoughts about how we can “do” bodily experience or by reactive confusion that feeds even more thought, critical judgment, and self-doubt.

In meditation, we reestablish balance by recognizing how unbalanced we may be toward favoring thoughts over experiential bodily sensations. So the first step can feel like tipping too far the other way. However, if we are far out of balance one way, we do need to overcorrect in the opposite direction to begin to learn where that Middle Way may be.

Using natural images and metaphors is always helpful because we are part of nature and what applies in nature also applies to us. For example, prairies grow up and then require fire to clear out each year’s new growth and release the seeds for the next year’s growth. We can think of that like a balancing from extreme growth, to bare ground, and back to balance in the spring with the new growth emerging. If the fires occur too frequently before the plants have produced mature seed, or if there are no fires to heat and release the mature seed, then there is no new growth, no balance.

Similarly, a heart that is totally absorbed, caught up, obsessed with thought is like a field that is burned too frequently so the seeds of calm and stillness don’t mature. Stillness and calm begins to arise, but is interrupted, “burned away,” by the frequently arising fires of thought.

Conversely, a heart that is absorbed, caught up, obsessed solely with bodily sensation is like a field that is never burned by the heat of investigation and discernment, so while it is filled with mature seeds, their fertility isn’t released.

Many of us are out of balance toward the fire/thought end of things. To reestablish balance in meditation, we have to favor the bodily side for a bit longer. We do that through learning what it means to come into the breath and bodily sensations—to rest just in the direct



experience of bodily sensations—and staying there long enough to allow the seeds of calm, clarity, and ease to mature and develop. The joy and beauty of doing so is that being in the body is pleasant and easeful. Being here, in our own bodies, is the only place we really can be, and so not wishing to be somewhere else or run away from where we are is peace.

We reestablish an embodied and balanced heart by staying with the breath and bodily feeling. Resting in the breath, we find the courage to open to bodily sensations, even if they are uncomfortable or painful. We do this because bodily experiences are the path to the heart and self-awareness. Really allowing ourselves to settle into the experience of the body and breath is how we slow the growth of proliferating thought. Once we are

fully settled and solid in the body and breath, we can apply the heat of discerning investigation to bring the light of wisdom and clear comprehension. Embodiment and investigation, operating together, in balance, are the conditions for the heart to be open for intuitive knowing and insight into the truth of the way things are.

In meditation, we relearn how to “know” what is going on for us; instead of thinking about it, we learn to feel it, through the organ of feeling, the body. This takes practice, patience, and for many of us, a good deal of relearning because our natural sense of the body has been overridden for years or decades. We have to regain our embodied sense. What it doesn’t take is striving effort. Over-efforting is the greatest enemy to embodiment as it is the fastest route to feeding the thinking mind and losing connection with the body. What we are

relearning is how to be interested in and awake to the body, without pushing or demanding that it be a certain way or do what *we* want. We are learning to trust the body and allow it to take the lead. Doing so takes bravery and confidence that we won’t lose control. It is similar to the way we learn to support and respect another person. We need to have confidence and trust in ourselves to release the reins of control, open to the other person, and let them be who they are. That is how we build relationship with others, and how we get to know our own body and emotions as well.

Balance requires that we recognize the habitual pull to take charge of the body and mind and instead cultivate a willingness to listen to and feel what is actually present, in the body, in the breath, in the heart. When that happens, the

struggle ceases, and we can find ease and even pleasure in embodiment—in whatever feelings of warmth, quiet, tingling, pressure, or energy may be present in the body—and recognize the pulls, compulsions, and habitual reactions in the heart. We know that these are simply what all bodies and minds feel and do and that peace, wisdom, and clarity reside in the knowing of them.

In this retreat, we will consider “where is balance?” in the body, breath, and mind during all of our activities and positions during the day and night. Through cultivating balance we will slow and settle ping-ponging thoughts, feelings, plans, or

memories, and cultivate the seeds of open-hearted kindness and goodwill. Through being in the body and with the breath, we will find a steady mooring to know for ourselves the balance point, the Middle Way, to ease and the end of suffering. ❖



Photo: David E. Smith (Middle Way, Oxford, UK)

MIMG Sitting Groups

Madison Insight Meditation Group offers three weekly meditation opportunities, one in central Madison, one on the west side, and one on the east side. Bring your own meditation cushion or bench if you have one. Chairs and some extra cushions are available. Details are below.

Central: Sundays 6:00–8:00 p.m.

First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive, Madison

1st & 3rd Sundays: 45-minute sitting followed by talk and discussion

2nd, 4th, & 5th Sundays: 45-minute sitting, 20-minute walking meditation, 45-minute sitting (breakout group on 2nd Sundays offers introduction to insight meditation—see [next page](#))

This sitting group is peer-led.

West: Tuesdays 6:30–8:15 p.m.

9638 Shadow Ridge Trail, Middleton (directions on website)

45-minute sitting followed by Dhamma talk/discussion

This sitting group is led by Janice Cittasubha Sheppard, who was trained at Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery as a Buddhist Lay Minister, and at Spirit Rock Meditation Center as a Community Dharma Leader.

East: Fridays 7:30–9:00 p.m.

Main Street Yoga, 1882 E. Main Street, Madison

30-minute sitting followed by 10-minute movement meditation and Dhamma discussion or talk

Dhamma discussions will be led by James Meadows, Jayson Chung, and Richard Ely. James has had a meditation practice since 1994, when he spent four months at Wat Pah Nanachat (International Forest Monastery) in Thailand. He has a master's degree in Buddhist Studies from Naropa University. Jayson was one of the earliest participants of Madison Insight Meditation Group. He has studied with Matthew Flickstein since 2005. Richard has practiced with Madison Insight for 10 years and is currently taking Janice Cittasubha Sheppard's yearlong course, *Form and Freedom in Theravada Buddhism*.

Want to Help with Retreat Audio?

Madison Vipassana, Inc., would like to put together a small team of people who are available manage the audio sound system at retreats. This is an important form of service: providing proper audio amplification allows all attendees to fully benefit from the teachings offered at the retreat. In addition, the teacher's Dhamma talks are sometimes recorded and made available to attendees and the wider sangha. Having multiple people trained for this service will help ensure that we have someone available and willing to do audio at each retreat.

Audio tasks involve setting up and operating an amplifier, mixing board, speakers, and microphones. It also involves connecting our assisted listening device system to the mixing board. At some retreats, the audio operator will also connect and operate a digital recorder. Team members will be fully trained and supported in all these tasks.

To volunteer for or learn more about the Madison Vipassana Audio Team, contact Scott Knickelbine at scottknickelbine@gmail.com.

Introduction to Insight Meditation

Madison Insight Meditation Group offers an introduction to meditation the second Sunday of each month from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive, in Madison. Those who come for the introduction have time together with a leader, in a separate room, to introduce themselves, learn some of the fundamentals of sitting and walking meditation, and hear a bit about our group and its history.

These monthly introductory sessions are open to everyone. If you haven't meditated before or would like a refresher, we invite you to attend one of them. Everyone is also welcome to attend any of our three sitting groups (see above). We hope you'll join us! ❖

Like Us on Facebook!

Check out the [Madison Insight Meditation Group \(MIMG\) Facebook page](#)! Be sure to click "Like" to have us show up in your newsfeed. We're using the page to post announcements about upcoming MIMG events such as retreats, classes, and special guest speakers. If you attend one of our [weekly meditation groups](#), this is a good way to learn what else is happening at the other groups and in the broader MIMG community. We may also occasionally post inspiring Dhamma quotations. If you have a photograph or reflections about our retreats or other events, please consider sending them by messaging the page directly—we'd love to post them!

Upcoming Retreats

Janice Cittasubha Sheppard, October 5–8, 2017
Pine Lake Camp, Westfield, WI (residential)

DaRa Williams, May 10–12, 2018
Holy Wisdom Monastery, Madison, WI
(residential/nonresidential)

Ajahn Sucitto, July 14–23, 2018
St. Anthony Spirituality Center, Marathon, WI
(residential)

Rebecca Bradshaw, October 4–7, 2018
Pine Lake Camp, Westfield, WI (residential)

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The Newsletter of Madison Vipassana, Inc.
Madison, WI

This newsletter is published periodically as a service to our meditation community and is available on our website.

Editor: Cathy Loeb

To subscribe, send an empty message to:
mimg-subscribe@yahoo.com



Residential Meditation Retreat with

Janice Cittasubha Sheppard

October 5–8, 2017

5:30 P.M. (registration opens) Thursday until 1:00 P.M. Sunday

Pine Lake Camp, Westfield, WI

Sponsored by Madison Vipassana, Inc.

Jan Cittasubha Sheppard has been teaching meditation since 2002. She is a student of the Theravada Thai Forest lineage and received training as a Lay Buddhist Minister from Ajahn Pasanno and Ajahn Amaro at Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery. She was also trained as a Community Dharma Leader through Spirit Rock Meditation Center.

The theme of this retreat will be *Ending the Ping Pong Game: Finding the Peace of Balance in Body, Mind, and Heart*. Many of us tend to favor thoughts over experiential bodily sensations, so to establish balance in meditation, we need to learn to settle into the experience of the body and breath, to find ease and even pleasure in embodiment. In this retreat, we will ask “where is balance?” in the body, breath, and mind, and in actions such as moving, standing, and eating.

The retreat will be suitable for those newer to meditation and those with more meditation or retreat experience. Sitting meditation periods will alternate with periods of walking meditation throughout each day. Each day will include a morning reflection and evening Dhamma talk. Days will begin and end with a *puja* that includes chanting, lighting candles and incense, and meditation. There will be an optional movement session each full day. The retreat will be held in Noble Silence but include times for questions and response and small group interviews with the teacher.

Cost

The cost of the retreat is \$240 for a double room and \$380 for a single. The registration fees cover room, simple vegetarian meals (beginning Friday morning), and other retreat expenses. In keeping with Theravada Buddhist tradition, there is no charge for the teachings; however, a donation (*dāna*) to the teacher is encouraged.

Financial assistance

Financial assistance is available through our retreat scholarship program. Individuals may receive scholarships multiple times. Please ask if you need assistance. Contact Ann at registrar.madvip@yahoo.com or (608) 843-7531 to discuss how we can help.

Special needs

To inquire about special situations, contact Ann at registrar.madvip@yahoo.com or (608) 843-7531. Please note that we are unable to accommodate special dietary needs.

Ride sharing

To request or offer rides to and from Pine Lake Camp, contact Ann at registrar.madvip@yahoo.com or (608) 843-7531.

Registration

Early registration is encouraged. Registration is on a space-available basis and must include the registration

form on the [next page](#) and a check to reserve your spot. Confirmation will be by email and will provide information on the facility, driving directions, and recommendations on what to bring. If the retreat is full, you will be placed on a waiting list. Those on the waiting list who do not get a spot will receive a full refund. For questions about registration, contact Ann at registrar.madvip@yahoo.com or (608) 843-7531.

Young people and people of color

We will hold a number of spaces open until September 21 to facilitate attendance by young adults (18–26) and people of color. We encourage young people and people of color to register; a spot may be available even if our website says the retreat is full.

Cancellation and refund policy

All cancellations are subject to a nonrefundable \$50 fee. Cancellations received on or before September 7 will be refunded the retreat fee less \$50. Refunds, less \$50, will be given to those canceling after September 7 only if there is another person wanting to register for the retreat.

To register

Send the registration form with a check for the full amount (payable to Madison Vipassana, Inc.) to:

Madison Vipassana, Inc. c/o Ann Varda
1724 Hoyt St.
Madison, WI 53726

Madison Vipassana, Inc.
Residential Meditation Retreat with Janice Cittasubha Sheppard
October 5–8, 2017
Pine Lake Camp, Westfield, WI
— Registration Form ❖ Please Print Clearly —

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Email _____
Gender (optional) _____

Indicate if you are applying for one of our reserved spaces for . . .

- Young adults (18–26) Persons of color

Rooms . . .

Indicate whether you wish to register for a double or a single room:

- Double room (\$240) Single room (\$380)

Room assignments are made by the retreat manager before the retreat begins. In assigning single rooms, we give priority to those whose health, mobility, or other special circumstances would make it difficult to share a room. If we are not able to accommodate your request for a single room, please indicate whether we should:

- Place you on a waiting list for a single room. Place you in a double room.

Special circumstances or requests . . .

- I would like to use to an assistive listening device. (If you have questions about our assistive listening devices, please contact Scott Knickelbine at scottknickelbine@gmail.com.)
 I snore. I use a CPAP or other medical device.

If you have any other special needs, requests, or information to share with us, please explain below or contact the registrar, Ann Varda, at registrar.madvip@yahoo.com or 608-843-7531. _____

Sitting preferences . . .

To help us set up the Dhamma hall, please indicate whether you prefer to sit primarily on the floor or in a chair. We will have extra chairs, but not enough to reserve both a chair and a place on the floor.

- Chair Floor

We will have just a few extra meditation cushions available to borrow during the retreat, so please bring your own cushion or bench if you have one.

A few last details and a request for help with setup and cleanup . . .

- This is my first vipassana retreat.
 I can help set up before the retreat. I can help clean up after the retreat.
 I need a ride from _____ . I can give a ride to ___ passengers from _____.
 I enclose an additional \$ _____ to be used for scholarships for future retreats.

Send your completed registration form with a check for the full amount to:

Madison Vipassana, Inc., c/o Ann Varda
1724 Hoyt St.
Madison, WI 53726

Checks payable to Madison Vipassana, Inc.

Financial assistance is available through our retreat scholarship program. Please contact the registrar, Ann Varda, at registrar.madvip@yahoo.com or 608-843-7531 to discuss how we can help.