

Dharma Sharing Guidelines in the Plum Village Tradition

Dharma Sharing is an opportunity to benefit from one another's insights and experiences of the practice. By practicing deep listening while others are speaking, we create a calm and receptive environment. By learning to speak out about our happiness and our difficulties, we contribute to the collective insight and understanding of the practice.

*When we gather in a circle to share, we work together to create a space that is welcoming and safe for all present. To support this aspiration, we honor the following guidelines and share them **each time we gather*** for Dharma Sharing ...*

- **Building Sangha**

- o We indicate our wish to share by joining our palms in a lotus bud and bowing to the Sangha. With this gesture, we remind ourselves that each person present has the potential to awaken, and the Sangha bows back to acknowledge that all are ready to listen deeply.
- o Before bowing, we stop and enjoy three breaths.
- o We begin our sharing by saying our name, even if we think we know everyone. When finished sharing, we join our palms and bow again.
- o For those who may be uncomfortable with bowing, we may use other ways to indicate our wish to speak, such as placing a hand on our heart.

- **Mindful Speech**

- o We speak loudly enough so all can hear.
- o We speak from our own experience, using "I" statements to speak from our heart about what is alive for us in that moment – our joys, sorrows, challenges, questions.
- o We bring our mindful awareness to all in the circle, and speak truthfully using words that inspire confidence, joy, and hope. This is a wonderful opportunity to ask ourselves: "Is what I wish to share true, kind and necessary?"
- o With our mindful awareness, we also refrain from sharing more than once, and find an efficiency in the fullness of our sharing, creating space for all to share.

o All sharing is offered into the circle, without discussion (“cross talk”), giving advice or referring to others’ shares, allowing insights relating to our challenges and questions arise from our own inner wisdom.

- **Deep Listening**

o We come back to our breath and bring our full presence to the speaker.

o We listen with an open heart.

o We notice if the mind is reacting or wandering, and bring our awareness back to the speaker and what is being shared.

- **Confidentiality**

o We honor the trust others have placed in us and refrain from speaking with anyone about a person’s sharing at any other time or place.

o If we feel called to follow up with someone about their sharing at any time after Dharma sharing, we first ask the person’s permission. If the person declines, we honor their preference.

- **Honoring Silence**

o Sharing is always optional.

o In times when no one chooses to speak, we can savor this opportunity to be in silence together. There is no need to fill the space with unneeded words.

** The facilitator may offer a skillful reminder about Guidelines any time a situation arises that could disrupt the harmony or safety of the Sangha.*

Brother Phap Dung (Brother Dharma)