

From *Peace is Every Step* by Thich Nhat Hanh
(pp 126—130)

“Love in Action”

During our journey together, I have presented a number of practices to help us maintain mindfulness of what is going on inside us and immediately around us. Now, as we make our way through the wider world, some additional guidelines can help us and protect us. Several members of our community have been practicing the following principles, and I think you may also find them useful in making choices as to how to live in our contemporary world. We call them the fourteen precepts of the Order of Interbeing.¹

1. Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, All systems of thought are guiding means; they are not absolute truth.
2. Do not think that the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. Learn and practice non-attachment from views in order to be open to receive others' viewpoints. Truth is found in life and not merely in conceptual knowledge. Be ready to learn throughout your entire life and to observe reality in yourself and in the world at all times.
3. Do not force others, including children, by any means whatsoever to adopt your views, whether by authority, threat, money, propaganda, or even education. However, through compassionate dialogue, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness.
4. Do not avoid contact with suffering or close your eyes before suffering. Do not lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of the world. Find ways to be with those who are suffering, by all means, including personal contact and visits, images, and sound. By such means, awaken yourself and others to the reality of suffering in the world.
5. Do not accumulate wealth while millions are hungry. Do not take as the aim of your life fame, profit, wealth, or sensual pleasure. Live simply and share time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need.
6. Do not maintain anger or hatred. Learn to penetrate and transform them while they are still seeds in your consciousness. As soon as anger or hatred arises, turn your attention to your breathing in order to see and understand the nature of your anger or hatred and the nature of the persons who have caused your anger or hatred.
7. Do not lose yourself in dispersion and in your surroundings. Practice mindful breathing in order to come back to what is happening in the present moment.

¹ In 1996, Thầy changed the title from precepts to Mindfulness Trainings, to remind us they are an aspiration and direction, not commandments.

Be in touch with what is wondrous, refreshing, and healing, both inside and around yourself. Plant the seeds of joy, peace, and understanding in yourself in order to facilitate the work of transformation in the depths of your consciousness.

8. Do not utter words that can create discord and cause the community to break. Make every effort to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.
9. Do not say untruthful things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people. Do not utter words that cause division and hatred. Do not spread news that you do not know to be certain. Do not criticize or condemn things that you are not sure of. Always speak truthfully and constructively. Have the courage to speak out about situations of injustice, even when doing so may threaten your own safety.
10. Do not use the religious community for personal gain or profit, or transform your community into a political party. A religious community should, however, take a clear stand against oppression and injustice, and should strive to change the situation without engaging in partisan conflicts.
11. Do not live with the vocation that is harmful to humans and nature. Do not invest in companies that deprive others of their chance to live. Selective occasion that helps realize your ideal of compassion.
12. Do not kill. Do not let others kill. Find whatever means possible to protect life and prevent war.
13. Possess nothing that should belong to others. Respect the property of others but prevent others from enriching themselves from human suffering or the suffering of other beings.
14. Do not mistreat your body. Learn to handle it with respect. Do not look on your body as only an instrument. Preserve vital energies for the realization of the way. Sexual expression should not happen without love and commitment. In sexual relationships, be aware of future suffering that may be caused period to preserve the happiness of others, respect the rights and commitments of others. Be fully aware of the responsibility of bringing new lives into the world. Meditate on the world into which you are bringing new beings.