



## The Mindful Mission

By Jeff Hardin

Meditation practice is an ideal basis from which to work with others and to live in community while on volunteer aid missions. Mindfulness can help us to see clearly even in challenging or confusing situations and to act in ways that are most beneficial in any given moment. In our volunteer efforts it is crucial to work towards the goal of always being helpful and avoiding any kind of harm to oneself or others. Helping and not harming are the fundamental principles underlying mindfulness meditation practice.

Many of the healing arts have professional oaths that include the phrase *Primum non nocere* (Latin for "First, do no harm"). This important concept has, sadly, over the annals of mission work, volunteerism and humanitarian relief, occasionally been forgotten. The history of aid work, though overall inspiring, beneficial and positive, is also marred by the injury of, exploitation of, domination over and even death of the individuals and disruption of the communities that were meant to be the benefactors of compassionate assistance. A key element of this has been the misunderstanding of what is beneficial and what is harmful. This can come from the aid workers and volunteer organizations not understanding the host culture, devaluing native individual or communal beliefs and customs, and asserting their own views and agendas onto those that are being helped. Mindfulness practice helps us to understand the internal and external conditions in any given moment so that we may make wise choices.

While working with others Insight World Aid volunteers endeavor to be at all times mindful and compassionate. This can be particularly challenging in difficult situations. Most people have habitual ways of coping with stressful circumstances and these are often unhelpful or even unhealthy. In order to be prepared to navigate difficulties and to conduct oneself wisely at all times, it is important to cultivate the skills of meditation in advance and to strive to practice continuously while on mission. Meditation is an ideal tool to change unhealthy coping strategies into healthy ones and to develop and maintain mental and physical balance, calm and clarity even in the most extreme situations.

While it is obvious that meditation can inform and assist our living in the world and our interactions with others, the reverse is true as well. That is, in order to develop skillfully, meditation practice is best informed by one's actions in and engagement with the world. Rather than being a solitary practice of going inward for one's



## Cambodia Medical Mission Scheduled for February 2013

Insight World Aid is forming a small group of health professionals and individuals with other skills and talents who are interested in working to serve others while practicing mindfulness and compassion for our first overseas volunteer aid mission.

In addition to our work to support underprivileged Cambodians, we will be sightseeing in Cambodia, visiting the historic ruins at Angkor Wat, having daily meditation sessions and meditating at a Cambodian Buddhist monastery. Our volunteer work and sightseeing will be guided by Insight and metta (lovingkindness) meditation practices. There will be guided meditations, dharma teachings, group discussions and meditation practice support during the trip.

Information and volunteer applications are available on our website: [insightworldaid.org](http://insightworldaid.org).

### Cambodia Trip Information Meeting

Sunday, September 9, 2012

12pm - 2 pm

Insight Meditation Center

108 Birch Street, Redwood City, CA

own betterment, engaged meditative practice seeks to combine the benefits of cultivating quiet and focusing inwardly with wise and compassionate involvement in the world. Accordingly, life can be seen as a dance of spiritual development internally and externally. This is a key concept in the *Satipatthana* sutta, an ancient Buddhist teaching that has become the de facto meditation primer for modern insight meditation. In this text, the meditator is instructed to develop a balanced, calm and penetrative investigation of all areas of life not only as they occur within oneself but also in the lives of others and in the relationships between oneself and others. It is by this investigation of our interconnectivity that wisdom and compassion arise and mature for positive change in ourselves and in the world.

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## Insight World Aid Needs Volunteers

We are still in need of a Volunteer Coordinator, a Local Projects Team, fundraisers, grant researchers and grant writers.

Opportunities to practice compassion in action continue to be available. All teams welcome volunteers. No experience necessary! Visit our website for details.

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## Who We Are

### Board of Directors

**Gil Fronsdal, PhD** (President) is the primary teacher for the Insight Meditation Center in Redwood City, California. He has a Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies from Stanford University and has authored several books on Buddhism.

**Nancy Smee, PhD, CNM, MPH** (Secretary) is a university professor, researcher, and certified nurse-midwife. Her research areas are HIV/AIDS with a special emphasis on the prevention of mother to child transmission, and the healthcare of vulnerable populations.

**Gary Kissiah** is a lawyer and author of *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali: Illuminations through image, commentary and design*.

**Linda McGrath** is the founder and owner of *YogaSource Los Gatos*, Silicon Valley's premier yoga studio. She leads workshops, conferences and retreats in the US and internationally.

**Jeff Hardin MD, PhD** (Executive Director) is an emergency medicine physician who has been practicing Vipassana since 2000. He is a meditation instructor and mentor at Sacramento Insight Meditation.

### Board of Advisors

Adrienne Ross, MD

Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi

Jack Kornfield, Ph.D

Basil Stamos, MD

Beth Kanji Goldring

## Medicine and Compassion Symposium

Sunday, October 7, 2012

1pm - 4 pm

Insight Meditation Center

108 Birch Street, Redwood City, CA

Mark your calendars for IWA's *Medicine and Compassion Symposium*, an afternoon of presentations and discussions of how caregivers, patients and individuals work with compassion and wisdom in the setting of stressful situations. If you would like to present at the symposium, please contact us.

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## Support Insight World Aid

1. **Volunteer:** Insight World Aid is in need of volunteers. We appreciate help from both people with medical training and qualifications, and also people with non-medical skills.

IWA is seeking volunteers to help fundraise and research grants. No experience needed. Opportunities to volunteer are also available on the communications, local projects and international teams.

If you would like more information regarding donating your time and skills to IWA please visit our website and download a volunteer description list and application.

2. **Donate** - Insight World Aid is now accepting donations. As a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization, donations made to IWA are tax-deductible. If you would like to make a donation at this time please send your check to our mailing address below or visit our website to donate through PayPal.

3. **Spread the word** – If you know someone who may be interested in our work, please forward this information to them or give them the link to our website.

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## How to contact us

**Our Website:** [insightworldaid.org/](http://insightworldaid.org/)

**Our Mailing Address:**

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