



Metta  
foundation



# whole life program

information regarding a new metta  
foundation practice

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[www.metta.org/practices/wlp.htm](http://www.metta.org/practices/wlp.htm)

## What is the Whole Life Program?

Please read the whole program description before applying

Thank you for your interest in the Metta Foundation's Whole Life Program. This is an integrated program of practice and study that is designed to aid dedicated students in bringing the Dhamma to all aspects of their lives. We've all had the experience of coming home from a meditation retreat uncertain about how to integrate newfound insights and wisdom into our lives. The Whole Life Program seeks to break down the barriers between retreat practice and everyday life; to provide an integrated experience of personal practice and interpersonal practice; and most importantly, to bring the whole of the Dhamma to an engaged life.

The Buddha taught a dispensation that encompasses the entire spectrum of life. From the time our eyes open in the morning, until the time we slip into sleep at night. He taught awareness and contemplation of the nature of experience, in all postures and in all activities. In Western lay life, many Buddhist practitioners have come to place a premium on silent retreat practice. But in truth, the opportunities for unbinding are with us morning, noon and night. They present themselves in simple personal activities like brushing our teeth or washing dishes, and they also present themselves in the complexity of relationship. Our interactions with friends, family, coworkers, and the people we meet throughout our days, all contain within them the opportunity for us to awaken to how things are. More than simply a practice of morality, our everyday path can actually bring about the unbinding of our hearts and minds.

### Why Participate?

We hope this program will convey a path, with particular and tested skillful means, workable attitudes, and a deeply felt sense of possibility. The program and the teachers will support you on your path; no easy answers are offered. The value of the program will rest with your own diligence. The Whole Life program offers no credentials: no accreditation, no letters after your name, no certificates for your office wall. This program is not intended to feed a construct of yourself as a saint or an enlightened being. Like retreat practice, it will cultivate a steadier mind that recognizes suffering and wakefulness in more moments of your life. Stepping out of identification with our stories and into the felt sense of each moment, we will humbly and bravely allow the knowing of life as it actually is. With the Dhamma and each other as reminders, we hope to foster a sense of stepping out of constructs of ourselves, of the path, and even of this program itself.



## About the teachers:

### Gregory Kramer:

The guiding teacher of Metta's Whole Life program is Gregory Kramer. Gregory has taught Vipassana and Metta practice since 1980. He has studied with esteemed teachers, including Anagarika Dhammadina, Ven. Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Mahanayaka Thero, Achan Sobin Namto, and Ven. Punnaji Maha Thero. Gregory is the author of *Insight Dialogue: the Interpersonal Path to Freedom (Shambhala)*, *Seeding the Heart: Practicing Lovingkindness with Children*, and *Meditating Together*, *Speaking from Silence: the Practice of Insight Dialogue*. He is the co-founder and director of the non-profit Metta Foundation. Since co-creating Insight Dialogue with Terri O'Fallon in 1994, Gregory has been developing this interpersonal meditation practice, and exploring the teachings of the Buddha that encompass our interpersonal lives. He also developed the practice of Dhamma Contemplation, a text-based meditation, and is currently developing a guided meditation practice based on the Buddha's teaching on dependent origination.

Gregory travels extensively sharing Insight Dialogue and Dharma Contemplation, and teaching the Dhamma. He holds a Ph.D. in Learning and Change in Human Systems, and is a visiting teacher at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies. He co-founded the hunger project Harvest with Heart. Formerly a composer then highly regarded scientist, he also founded the New York City media technology center Harvestworks/Studio PASS, the Electronic Art Ensemble, and ICAD, the International Conference on Auditory Display.

## Program mentors:

Each individual cohort will be mentored by a teacher who has trained extensively with Gregory. For this first module, the mentors will be:

### Gary Steinberg

is the Executive Director of the Metta Foundation. He has studied and practiced meditation since 1990 under the guidance of a variety of teachers, most prominently Gregory Kramer, with whom he is in teacher training, and Bhikkhu Bodhi, with whom he studies the Pali suttas.

### Phyllis Hicks

is a psychotherapist and minister. For over twenty years she has melded eastern and western understandings of psychology and spiritual practice. She has studied with varied vipassana teachers and trained intensively with Gregory Kramer since 2004. She teaches Insight Dialogue in the Eastern United States.

### Anne Michel

has studied vipassana meditation under the guidance of many teachers, mainly Ajhan Sumedho, Jack Kornfield, and Ajahn Sucitto. She has been teaching vipassana in Switzerland since 2000. She began her study with Gregory Kramer in 2004 as an Insight Dialogue teacher trainee. She now teaches the practice in France and Switzerland.

### Mary Burns

Mary Burns has practiced meditation and psychotherapy for over twenty years. She has been guided by many teachers including Thich Naht Hahn, Christina Feldman, and John Welwood. She has been studying Insight Dialogue as a teacher trainee with Gregory Kramer since 2004.



## Who should apply?

We suggest that the primary factor in your consideration as to whether this program is right for you should be a strong urge to awaken to clarity, peace, and compassion. Since most of us could easily say that we hold this aspiration, the essence of the question can be seen as: "Am I ready to commit myself to the realization of this aspiration?" "Am I ready to commit to living the teachings of the Buddha as continuously and fully as I am able?" "Am I ready to help this program work, and to help others in their process of awakening?" So the keys words are zeal, diligence, and commitment.

There are also some more clearly defined criteria. Those requesting admission should:

- Be prepared to participate at least 3.5 to 4 hours per week (details below)
- Maintain a daily silent practice
- Have attended at least one Insight Dialogue retreat with Gregory
- Have attended at least one silent retreat of a week or longer

More retreat practice, personal and interpersonal, will be helpful. While this program will largely be comprised of people with a substantial meditation background, it is also designed to be of benefit to, and appropriate for, those with less retreat practice. Commitment, inspired by a direct experience of being touched by the Dhamma, is central to this program. Commitment to a full path that includes our relational lives is crucial to the Dhamma community being formed. Since we meditate, contemplate, and live together in the teachings, our participation is both a support for others, and a necessary aspect of our own practice. There are two basic points here: we can't do interpersonal practice alone; and the path of awakening is challenging, and the support of community is essential.

### Space is Limited:

This first module of the Whole Life program is being offered as a pilot project. Space is limited for several reasons. Most importantly, we have few mentors. Because we are committed to fostering close relationships, for which small group size is essential, the overall size of the program will be small. Also, we realize that the Metta Foundation has a lot to learn about how to offer this program, from curriculum design to administration, and we think it wise to begin with a small program.

It is likely that we will need to turn people away, perhaps even people who are well qualified for this program. We apologize for this. People with a wide variety of practice backgrounds will be considered for the program, as there are concerns for diversity in background, gender, ethnicity, and geography. We will also be looking for workable subgroups by considering time zones, meditation background, and so forth. We would not turn people away lightly, and we ask for your understanding. The Metta Foundation is small and our human resources are limited. The Whole Life Program is new and it is with the best of intentions that we hope to see it succeed in its most wholesome of intentions: to foster mutual support for those on their path to freedom. The program's success, based on the commitment and zeal of teachers and students, will naturally bring about opportunities for its expansion.

## What we will study and practice:

The first program module will focus on the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. This is foundational work. We will explore these teachings in a way that includes some grasp of the traditional understanding, but that emphasizes an in-depth and interpersonal understanding of these teachings. For those only modestly familiar with this material, this first module will provide a platform for understanding the Dhamma as a here-and-now teaching, visible at many layers and at all times. For those who know this material from prior study, we hope our work together will unfold elements never before considered or just not fully understood. This first module will last sixteen months, from November to March, with November being an introductory month and both Decembers being light months.

After this first module has ended, the Whole Life program will continue, shifting the emphasis to different aspects of the Dhamma. The second module will likely be a collection of teachings that have had particularly deep impact on Gregory's personal understanding, and about which he has garnered some helpful insights. The third module will focus on dependent origination. The modules are expected to last between ten and sixteen months. Always, the Whole Life program will rest on the understanding that all of the teachings, esoteric or mundane, can benefit us in deep retreat, guide our personal practice, and be applied to everyday life.



## How will the program operate?

The Whole Life Program is a distance-based program of immersive practice and study. It brings students from diverse locations into a committed practice community, under the tutelage of a dedicated teacher.

Students will be placed into small practice cohorts of 4-8 students with a mentor who will be their primary guide. This mentor is a teacher who has trained with Gregory and will work closely with him to help design and implement the program. The mentor will work with you to foster a sense of sangha, or Dhamma community. He or she will also assemble the gatherings, participate in the forums, be available for questions about the Dhamma and about your silent meditation practice, and engage with you, from the heart, in this contemplative path.

Our distance-based practice will employ several online and telephonic technologies. We will speak about these technologies, and then describe the activities that comprise the program.

### **Metta's Bulletin Board:**

The Metta Foundation maintains a private (i.e. password protected) bulletin board. This board will be the touchstone for community activities and announcements. A detailed announcement explaining how to use the bulletin board will go out to program members.

The bulletin board is the place we will go to receive program announcements, to receive and discuss our weekly in-life contemplations, to talk about our silent practice, and to explore the Dhamma as it is unfolding in our day-to-day lives.

### **Skype:**

Skype is a free internet based voice to voice conference call program ([www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)). Skype will be used for weekly real-time Insight Dialogue sessions. Headsets will be required as they greatly increase audio fidelity. These are available anywhere office or computer supplies are sold. It will be necessary for students to set up a Skype test with Gary Steinberg to make sure that the audio quality is acceptable and that things are functioning well.

### **Telephone Conference:**

Teleconferences will take place on the service called Free conference. This is a conference call service based in the United States. We will utilize this service for Gregory's monthly Dhamma talk, and for any other meetings where all the cohorts join together in real time. To participate, Whole Life program members will dial a number in the U.S. (changing area codes). This will be a toll call for most participants. If you don't have unlimited long distance, or live internationally, we recommend you explore the usage of inexpensive phone cards. The monthly talk will last approximately 90 minutes, including a question and answer period.

### **Telephone/email:**

While this is a distance based and online program, there are real people involved to help guide you along the path. In addition to quarterly interviews with your mentor and with Gregory, email and the occasional telephone call are also available should you have a question or need additional assistance. We're here to support your



practice.

#### **In-person meetings and retreats:**

We hope to offer retreats specifically for participants of the Whole Life program. This may or may not be workable. However, as Gregory travels to offer Insight Dialogue retreats, he will also meet with participants of the program to discuss the teachings and support local communities.

#### **Practice elements:**

It is expected that the program will take an average of approximately 3.5-4 hours a week of direct involvement. The Whole Life Program will be designed around the interpersonal Dhamma that has been the hallmark of Gregory's teaching, as well as on the ways he has evolved to engage the Buddha's teachings on a daily basis. Elements of the program will include in-life contemplations, Dhamma talks, Insight Dialogue, Dhamma study, community discussions, interviews, and community service.

This path of practice will be graduated. Different facets of the Dhamma will be explored through the various elements of the program, which will all work together to help us deepen our understanding and manifest it in diverse ways.

#### **Contemplations:**

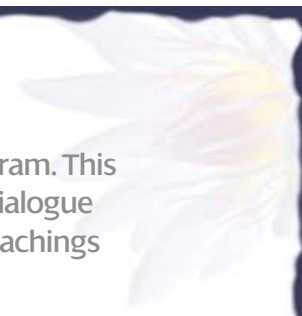
Contemplations, introduced weekly and carried directly into your life, are the heart of this program. Each week we will post one to three pages on the bulletin board for your consideration. The posting will include a short introduction to the contemplation; its relation to teachings in the historical discourses of the Buddha as preserved in the Pali canon; some sutta references for study and support; and the contemplation itself—which will be short enough to easily recall and even carry with you on a small card you can print out.

This brief but rich teaching will constitute our in-life practice, it will form the basis of our Insight Dialogue practice, and it will also provide the substance of the week's Dhamma study. These teachings will also be the focal point as we join the Whole Life community at large and explore them together on the bulletin board.

The contemplations introduced each week will fit within a theme of the month, and each month will be part of a graduated teaching for this entire sixteen month module. For example, the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path is the first module's over-arching theme, and month six will focus on Right View; then each week of this month will focus on a different, experiential doorway to understanding this path factor in a practical, fresh, and alive way. By the end of this sixteen-month period, participants will likely have arrived at an alive, nuanced, and immediate understanding of these truths and this path.

#### **Dhamma talk:**

Each month Gregory will offer a Dhamma talk that relates to the work that is being carried on in other facets of the program. These talks will weave together and present a holistic view of each full month's Dhamma theme. These talks will be held via teleconference and will last approximately ninety minutes, with a question and answer period. These talks will be the one time each month the entire Whole Life community gets together in real time. We will do our best to schedule these talks so



that our members in widely diverse time zones can participate at a reasonable hour. For those who cannot make the actual event, the teleconference, together with the Q and A session, will be recorded and made available to program participants.

In these talks, Gregory will weave together the traditional Dhamma with a perspective that includes wider interpretations of the teachings. This wider understanding will include interpersonal applications of the Dhamma, and adaptations of, and insights into, how these teachings—too often seen as esoteric—reveal themselves in our everyday lives. These talks will provide the theoretical basis for our contemplations, and provide coherence to each month's Dhamma elements and to the program as a whole.

#### **Weekly Insight Dialogue:**

Each cohort of four to eight students will join their mentor in a weekly Insight Dialogue session via Skype. The time of these sessions will be based upon each mentor's schedule and announced to the group. In scheduling, an attempt will be made to accommodate everyone within each group. However, flexibility is likely to be necessary. Insight Dialogue sessions will be based upon contemplations designed by Gregory and the mentors. Sessions will last approximately ninety minutes. While the groups are weekly, there will be breaks for holidays and personal reflection.

#### **Interviews:**

Each program participant will have a private interview via telephone. These will be conducted quarterly, alternately with the mentor and with Gregory. This will be an opportunity to explore your silent practice, the contemplations or the Dhamma in general, and anything else about the program and the practices. This is in addition to the ongoing support provided to the larger groups.

#### **Community Forum Discussions:**

The community forum, a password-protected site on the metta.org bulletin boards, is where the entire Whole Life community joins together for contemplation and communality. It is suggested that everyone stop in here several times a week for a total of at least thirty minutes. Since it should prove to be an important community touchstone, with rich and insightful discussion, it is likely that many will be drawn to spend much more time there, cultivating understanding and resting in the sense of community. Announcements that relate to the program will be housed here, but also this is the place to discuss where the Dhamma meets our lives. What's it like for you to try and live a fully integrated path of practice? What challenges or beauties do you find? A team of student-moderators will help seed the discussions with suggestions from Gregory and the mentors, but anyone who has a question, an idea for discussion, or is looking for support in an area of life-practice, is welcome to start their own topic.

#### **Community Service:**

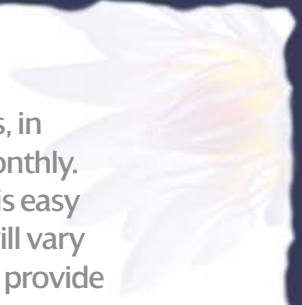
A basic building block of the Buddhist path is the cultivation of generosity, or *dana*. In many traditional Buddhist countries, cultivating *dana* is the primary way in which the lay population practices. In these countries, lay people support the monastics by providing requisites of daily living such as food and robes, and the monastics support the spiritual health of the lay population by teaching the Dhamma. In the *Dhammapada*, it is written that a gift of Dhamma conquers all gifts. In the Whole Life program, service to our community of practice, as well as to your local community,

will be the two primary avenues of dana practice. Of course, it is also encouraged that money be offered to the teachers—a modern form of offering requisites. Gregory and the WLP mentors offer their teachings and guidance out of a sense of generosity and love of the Dhamma. They receive no compensation.

Service to the community in the Whole Life Program serves two important purposes. Firstly, it is a legitimate and important practice on our path of unbinding. In supporting others, we nurture kindness and compassion; we also expand the boundaries of letting go of what we take to be 'me and mine', which includes time as well as other resources. Secondly, this kind of participation personally helps support the continuation and success of a program that is important to you and your co-students. The Metta Foundation is a small organization. We simply cannot maintain a program with this much depth by ourselves. Also, since you'll be living the program everyday, we believe it is important that you have the opportunity to help shape it.

Students will be asked to propose what community service they wish to undertake once admitted to the program. It is our hope that your enthusiasm for what you have taken on leads to a feeling of full engagement. We anticipate that community service will encompass approximately 30 minutes a week on average. Some possible areas of service include:

- Seeding discussions in the WLP community forum
- Facilitating participation in the Dhamma Contemplation forum
- Whole Life Program Administration
- Whole Life Program design
- Transcribing sutta translations for program use
- Sorting and editing audios of Dhamma talks
- Help with other Metta programs generally
- Developing and supporting Metta's Book buddies discussion groups
- Facilitating a regular Insight Dialogue group in your home community
- Facilitating a regular Dhamma Contemplation group in your home community
- Developing a program for parents wishing to practice metta with their children
- Outreach for Metta Programs
- Retreat management
- Website translation or translation of other teachings
- Services for Metta, e.g. design, web, etc.



## Program hours per week:

The following list of program elements, and the time each will take weekly, is, in most cases, an estimate. Some program elements, like Gregory's talk, are monthly. The duration of some elements, such as the weekly Insight Dialogue group, is easy to predict. Other elements, such as community service or Dhamma study, will vary from person to person and from month to month. Nevertheless, this list will provide a useful estimate of formal program time.

One Insight Dialogue meditation session per week via Skype.	1.5
Participation in contemplations on community bulletin board.	.5 (minimum)
Read weekly contemplation and teaching.	.5
One major community service commitment.	.5 (2 hrs/month)
Monthly teleconference with Gregory, quarterly interview.	.5 (1.5 hrs/mth, .5 hrs/quarter)
<b>TOTAL (Average)</b>	<b>3.5 hours per week minimum</b>

More than simple completion of a checklist, the heart of the program will be your personal commitment to living the teachings throughout your life. This is where it can be helpful to frame this program as an immersive program for non-monastics. Your silent meditation, body practices, and other study, are not on this list. Each of us has our own particular path elements. The Whole Life program will provide a solid basis in the Dhamma for a holistic vision of a life lived in the light of wisdom.

## Program costs:

The cost for the program is on a sliding scale. This first sixteen-month module is set at \$600 to \$2200, and participants should pay what they believe they can afford. Incremental payment plans can be arranged. When considering what you can afford to pay, please keep in mind that the Whole Life Program fees are set to help defer administrative and web costs only. Even the highest figure on the sliding scale, if paid by everyone in the program, would not cover the costs to create and run the Whole Life Program. The Metta Foundation is prepared to operate this program at a loss to help seed its success and growth. The program is small, which contributes to a higher cost per person. Gregory and the teachers receive no compensation for their participation. They'll be offering their teaching and guidance, as well as meeting amongst themselves, out of their love and respect for the Dhamma. Participants are invited to support the Metta Foundation and the individual teachers. Dana for specific teachers can be offered via the Metta Foundation.

Scholarships are available. If you're unable to cover the costs on the sliding scale and would like to request a scholarship, please fill out the appropriate section on the application. Request for a scholarship in no way affects an applicant's chances of admission.

If you are interested in applying to the Whole Life program, please follow the link below to the online application form. Applications are due by October 14, 2008. A grace period of two weeks is available by request. If you have questions about the program, please email [wlp \[at\] metta.org](mailto:wlp@metta.org).

Please allow plenty of time to complete the application. Most of the questions are straightforward, referring to things such as where you live and your meditation background. Along with this, there are three questions that are more in-depth (numbers 7, 12 & 17). These questions are available through the website as a PDF, please follow the link below.

We recommend that you contemplate and prepare your responses to these questions while offline, so you can give them the time needed for full consideration. When this is done, link to the full application, answer all the questions, and simply paste these in-depth replies into the online form. While this is a detailed process, we believe it an important step towards forming the committed relationships that are the basis of the WLP.

If you need to stop while in the process of filling out the application, you may return to the site at any time while on the same computer, and pick up where you left off. You may do this as many times as you'd like.

## Submitting your application:

If what you have read here inspires you, we look forward to receiving your application. You can begin here:

[www.metta.org/practices/wlp-apply.htm](http://www.metta.org/practices/wlp-apply.htm)