

About the Open Heart Project Sangha

2022 plans



open heart project





Happy New Year!

Dear Open Heart Project,

Happy new year! I'm glad our paths have crossed within the wondrous world of meditation and mindfulness.

As we move together into yet another year of uncertainty and possibility, I wanted to check in with you about your meditation practice and, for those who want to explore the practice more deeply, offer some insight into the Open Heart Project Sangha, the membership group within the OHP. The Sangha was created to help you deepen your personal practice and discover more wisdom, compassion, and bravery in every moment of your life—qualities we all hope for as we enter a new year, a new cycle.

Your journey is unique, unlike any other. To discover the meaning of that journey is, to me, the most important work you can do for yourself and those you care about. The one true guide for this discovery is your own wisdom. You already know everything you need to know about who you are and what your life can be. It's just that, as with most of us (myself included) that knowledge can become buried in other people's ideas, wounds from your past, and doubt that you are as brilliant as you are. While meditation is quite rightly presented as a stress-reduction technique, it is far, far more than that. It is a way to become who you really are. 2500 years of Buddhist meditation is not the story of how to get a better job, lose weight, or become a stronger athlete. (Not that there's anything wrong with those things!) Rather, it is a history of ordinary people like you and me waking up from the trance of suffering, learning to love truly, and finding the wherewithal to offer their greatest gifts to this world. It is a warrior's path!

I created the OHP Sangha to offer support to all who want to explore meditation as a spiritual practice. What your practice will reveal is unknown to me but I can offer you love and the friendship of community as you discover it for yourself. To learn more about how it all works, please read on.

With love, Susan

About the 2022 OHP Sangha



Thriving in Uncertain Times: A Year of Warriorship and Magic

In 2022, we are going to explore what it means to stay strong in the face of adversity and live an awakened life with meditation practice as the foundation. Sangha membership includes:

The Path: Our Monthly Sangha Newsletter

On the first of each month, you receive a newsletter. Each issue revolves around a theme and contains a video talk from me as well as an essay on the teachings of a great master who embodies that theme *and* an essay on a modern artwork that also embodies it. All the 2022 themes are listed below. Between this talk and essays, you get a chance to look at spiritual themes from a number of viewpoints. The idea is to make it personal rather than academic.

Weekly Live Sangha Gatherings

Each Friday for one hour beginning at 3:00p ET, I hold “office hours,” a chance to practice together, discuss the journey, review our theme, and learn more about each other.

These gatherings have become quite precious to me. They began in March 2020 as a way for us to stay connected and we have kept them going ever since. During the past 20 months, we’ve talked about great breakthroughs, difficult losses, and all manner of questions about meditation and the spiritual journey.

Monday-Friday LIVE meditations

Every Monday-Friday at 9a ET, a different teacher shows up to guide a daily meditation practice, live. Though these gatherings are meant to be 30 minutes long—20 minutes of meditation and 10 minutes for q&a—they often go a bit longer to give people a chance to share what is happening in their lives.



Monthly Meditation Immersion

Nothing will help you make a stronger connection to your practice than an occasional immersive meditation experience. The insightful meditation teacher, Maho Kawachi, offers retreat days on the second Sunday of each month, 10a ET to 12p ET.

Note: these immersions are not two solid hours of sitting. They intersperse sitting and walking meditation and you can take a break anytime you want.

Daily Audio Meditations

Sangha members receive a daily email with two different pre-recorded audio meditations. One is ten minutes long and fully guided. The other is unguided and begins with a short quote only. A bell rings every ten minutes thereafter for one hour so you can decide how long you'd like to sit. Between this and the M-F live sits, there is so much support for your daily practice.

Circles

Circles are weekly peer-led gatherings to practice together and check-in about life. These groups are meant to include the same people, week after week, so you have a chance to really get to know each other. I've heard moving stories of deepening friendship and endless support as a result of Circle relationships. Nothing makes me happier.

They are offered at various times, so no matter where you are or what your time zone is, it's likely you'll be able to join a Circle at a convenient time.

Further Enneagram Investigations

As my new book, *The Buddhist Enneagram* (from the Open Heart Project's publishing branch, Lionheart Press), takes shape, I will offer more programs to explore this exciting topic. Please stay tuned.

First chance to join In-person Austin Retreats

In 2021, I began offering small in-person retreats in Austin, TX. They are open to anyone—but Sangha members receive the notices first. Since attendance is limited

to 12 people (ten paying participants and two full scholarships), they fill up fast. The current 2022 retreat dates are:

January 19-23 The Heart Sutra (sold out)

April 20-24 Meditation and Writing Retreat

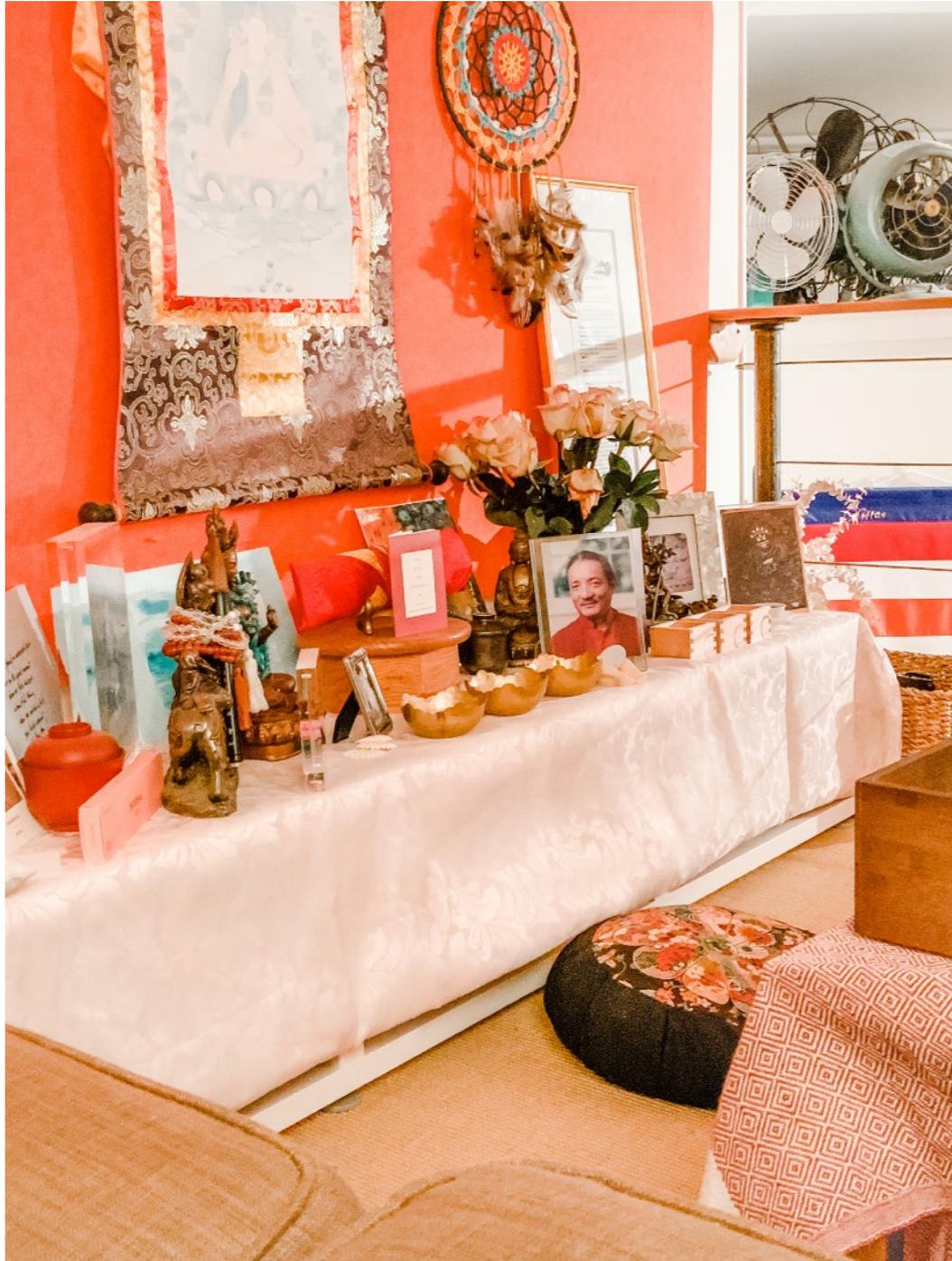
September 14-18 The Buddhist Enneagram

November 2-6 The Heart Sutra (I love teaching this!)

Special programs with guest teachers

In 2021, deeply skillful teachers have offered retreats and programs to help us explore how to bring the benefits of meditation off the cushion and into all the areas of our lives. The schedule for 2022 is still taking shape so please stay tuned.

2022 Themes



On the first day of each month, as mentioned, you will receive a newsletter based around a theme that is central to the spiritual journey. 2022 themes are:

January: Renunciation

February: Simplicity

March: Discipline

April: Loving-Kindness

May: Compassion

June: Sympathetic Joy

July: Equanimity

August: Body

September: Speech

October: Mind

November: Magic

December: Warriorship

On a Personal Note



Writing this letter to you has given me the chance to deeply reflect. Each year in the OHP is different, but I am always struck by just how much we are able to accomplish together.. I am truly honored to be on the journey together.

One interesting question that has come up this year more than any other is: Am I your teacher? Some of you refer to me as such. (No one has to do this!) My personal answer is yes. And, mostly, no. Let me explain.

Yes: I am a teacher! I teach things. I teach you things. So, yes.

No: But that does not make me your Teacher. Trust me, I have known actual capital “T” teachers and I am not one of them.

Rather, I am your friend.

In Buddhism there is a word for this kind of friend: *kalyanamitra* or “spiritual friend”. This can mean anything from a guru to your Sangha pals. I am somewhere in-between. I am your friend! Please remember this.

That said, to lead the OHP Sangha has compelled me to reckon with my own questions on this topic: Am I a teacher? What does it mean to take the teacher’s seat? Am I worthy? And, most importantly, what do I really, truly know (to ensure that what I share is trustworthy)?

These questions are of the greatest importance to me. Answering them is something I do almost every day. There is a balance I am seeking somewhere between *all hail me* (hahaha, that will never happen) and *aw shucks, what do I know?* Every teacher, I believe, contends with these questions (or should). We have all seen what happens when a teacher chooses what is behind door number one, the guru door. Massive hijinks are likely to ensue. Big, big problems come up for most people who make this decision. Behind door number two is extensive self-deprecation and an unwillingness to own one’s actual wisdom for fear of...so many things. Being wrong. Shamed. Overstepping. And so on. Different big problems come up when this decision is made, mostly because the teacher has held back what might truly benefit another.

I am not complaining about this conundrum. Actually, I truly appreciate it. It compels me over and over to return to what I know of the dharma and then mix it with my love for you to, hopefully, share teachings and insights that are living, helpful, and empowering.

I look forward to continuing the journey together in 2022.

With love, Susan

Join the Sangha...

\$27/MONTH

\$270/YEAR

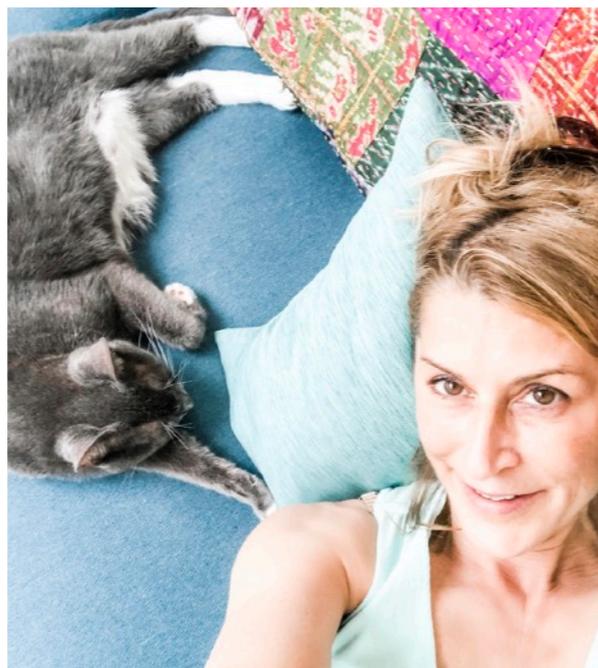
...for a month or a year. Yearly members receive two months free + an autographed copy of my book, *Start Here Now: An Open-Hearted Guide to the Path and Practice of Meditation*.

[Click here for all the details.](#)

Questions, Comments, Suggestions?

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