

CLEAR MOUNTAIN MONASTERY

- SĀRIPUTTA STUDY GROUPS -

GUIDELINES FOR FORMING AND RUNNING CLEAR MOUNTAIN BOOK GROUPS

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JOIN A GROUP OR CREATE YOUR OWN!:

You will find a list of current groups on the [“Mitta Meetups” page](#) of the website.

Read all instructions below, but when ready ...

[Click here for the Signup Form](#)

SIGNUP FORM

PURPOSE:

Clear Mountain Monastery would like to encourage the formation of “Sāriputta Study Groups” - self-organized book groups - to support the study and practice of the Dhamma. These groups are intended to nurture a supportive environment where members can explore the teachings, deepen their practice, and develop meaningful spiritual friendships. Through collective study and discussion, members are empowered to live more mindfully and ethically, embodying the principles of the Dhamma in all aspects of their lives.

FORMATION OF BOOK GROUPS:

Who Can Participate?

- Groups are open to any who have attended three Clear Mountain sessions (ie. Saturday, Sunday, or Wednesday sessions) either online or in-person. If

someone who has not fulfilled this requirement wishes to join a group, they may do so and join three Clear Mountain sessions in the future (because we want to meet you!).

Group Size:

- We envision a group size of 6-8 members to facilitate meaningful discussions and allow for participation by all, though in some cases groups may be larger.
- Groups will be self-formed. One person agrees to be the contact and to choose the book, and others can join until the group is full.
- The organizer will be the contact person for CMM.

You may find a list of current groups on the [“Mitta Meetups” page](#) of the website.

SUGGESTED BOOKS:

- "Breathing Like a Buddha" by Ajahn Sucitto
- "Stillness Flowing" by Ajahn Jayasāro
- "Dependent Origination" by Bhante G
- "The Theravada Abhidhamma" by Karunadasa
- "Buddhist Religions" by Thanissaro and Johnson
- Jataka Stories from the beginning
- "The Island" by Ajahn Pasanno and Ajahn Amaro

Book Selection

- As you consider forming book groups, we request selecting books authored by Buddhist writers - especially Theravadan ones - whether monastic or lay practitioners. Additionally, aiming for works that are not overly sectarian can foster a more inclusive and harmonious discussion, accommodating diverse perspectives within the tradition. This approach will enrich our understanding and deepen our practice while maintaining a spirit of open-mindedness.

MEETING GUIDELINES:

1. Frequency and Duration:

- Groups should aim to meet at least once per month. We suggest a meeting length of two hours, to allow sufficient time for group practice and discussion.

2. Location and Setting:

- In-Person:
 - i. Meetings can be held at members' homes or any other location conducive to reflection and discussion.
- Online:

- i. Meetings can also be held via Zoom using the Clear Mountain Zoom account.

3. Facilitation:

- Rotate the role of facilitator among members to share responsibility and develop leadership skills. The facilitator should guide the discussion, ensuring it remains focused and respectful.

MEETING FORMAT:

- Consider following the principle of "one deep well is better than many shallow wells." Work through the texts slowly and thoroughly, ensuring a deep and meaningful engagement with the material.
- Consider the following meeting format:
 1. **Opening Meditation (20-30 minutes):**
 - Begin with a short meditation session to center the mind and establish a calm, mindful atmosphere.
 2. **Member Check-In (2 minutes each):**
 - Each member briefly shares their experiences and reflections on their practice since the last meeting.
 3. **Break (5-10 minutes):**
 - A short break for tea and snacks, allowing for informal connection among members.
 4. **Discussion of Readings (60-70 minutes):**
 - Discuss the selected readings, with each member sharing their reflections, insights, and questions. Encourage deep listening and mindful speech, relating the teachings to personal practice and daily life. Ensure broad participation and aspire to an equal sharing of discussion time.
 - Alternatively, consider experimenting with [Gregory Kramer's Dharma Contemplation](#) format:
 - i. "In Dharma Contemplation, we immerse ourselves in a short excerpt of text and allow it to transform us. First, we hear the text, then read it repeatedly so that it comes to saturate our minds. Layer after layer, we deepen our experience of the teachings. Throughout this process, we remain intimate with the text rather than engaged in conversation about the text."
 - ii. There are several phases as follows:
 1. Words
 2. Felt Responses
 3. Meaning
 4. Essence
 5. Dialogue
 5. **Closing:**
 - Conclude with either a round of metta (loving-kindness) meditation, extending good wishes to each participant and those not present, or a

dedication of merit, wishing that the benefits of the meeting extend to all beings.

6. Potluck Dinner (In-Person):

- After the meeting, consider having a potluck dinner. This provides an opportunity for participants to get to know one another better and develop good spiritual friendships (kalyana mitta).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Right Speech:

- Practice speaking truthfully, kindly, and constructively. Avoid gossip, harsh speech, and idle chatter.

2. Respect and Inclusivity:

- Respect diverse perspectives and experiences. Ensure that all members feel heard and valued.

3. Confidentiality:

- Personal stories and experiences shared within the group should remain confidential, fostering a safe and trusting environment.

ADDITIONAL TIPS:

1. Flexibility:

- Be flexible with the structure to accommodate the needs and preferences of group members.

2. Engagement:

- Encourage active participation but also respect each member's level of comfort with sharing.

RESOURCES:

1. Online Resources:

- Clear Mountain Monastery website for additional teachings and updates.
- Podcasts and talks by senior monks in the Ajahn Chah tradition.

CONCLUSION:

By forming and participating in these book groups, you contribute to a supportive community dedicated to exploring and embodying the Dhamma. May your efforts bring wisdom and compassion to your life and to the world.

Questions? Contact: Matt Warning mattwarning@gmail.com Also, please let Matt know of any significant changes to your group, for example, starting a new text, changing your meeting location or discontinuing the group.