

# Plum Village Guidelines

Excerpt from *How to Enjoy Your Stay in Plum Village: A Guide to the Practices & Activities*  
- by the monks and nuns of Plum Village

*Dharma sharing is an opportunity to benefit from each other's insights and experience of the practice. It is a special time for us to share our experiences, our joys, our difficulties and our questions relating to the practice of mindfulness. By practicing deep listening while others are speaking, we help create a calm and receptive environment. By learning to speak out about our happiness and our difficulties in the practice, we contribute to the collective insight and understanding of the Sangha.*

## Guidelines for Dharma Sharing

Adapted from <https://thichnhathanhfoundation.org/>, The New Sangha Handbook, pp. 17-19

1. Dharma sharing is an opportunity for each of us to share our personal practice. We can share what has been a challenge, what has worked well, or we can ask a question to the group to get guidance in our practice.
2. We speak from our heart. We focus on what we are experiencing with the practice.
3. We share our first-person experience with the practice – using “I” statements rather than “you” or “we.”
4. We take our time to share our full thought. And we are considerate of time, making sure that there is enough time for everyone to share equitably. We say what we want to say with a mind toward conciseness. This allows all a chance to share.
5. It is wonderful if the group can breathe 3 times before the next sharing.
6. Dharma sharing is equally about deep sharing and deep listening. We practice deep listening by being fully present for the person that is sharing. We focus on understanding them rather than on constructing our own thoughts or preparing our own sharing.
7. If moved by what someone has shared, then in our sharing we can share our own personal experience on the subject. We share our own experience rather than give advice to someone else, unless specifically asked.
8. We share to the group as a whole, rather than directing our sharing to any specific person or people. We refrain from asking specific people about their experience or opinion – we are all free to share or not share as we choose, rather than being “called on” by anyone.
9. When we have shared once, we let others share before we share again. Once everyone has shared (or there is an extremely long silence), the facilitator will ask if anyone who hasn't shared would like to, before those who have shared can share again.
10. Since we practice deep sharing from the heart, we do not always know what we will say. We speak freely to the group and may not want to be reminded of what we said or discuss it further afterwards. To support each other in this practice, we let what is said in this time and place remain here. If we want to share about “our experience” at Dharma sharing with another that is fine, if done preserving confidentiality.
11. We sit in silence and “hold the space” -- wait for individuals to offer to share. We are not concerned with long silences. Sometimes a long silence will draw out someone to share that normally wouldn't.
12. If there is strong emotion rising during sharing, the facilitator may invite the bell and invite the group to enjoy three breaths.
13. About 5 minutes before the end of sharing, the facilitator invites the group to allow those who have not shared yet to have a chance to share. The facilitator reminds everyone that sharing is voluntary and one should not feel pressured to share. Deep listening is as valuable as sharing.

**Some possible topics or questions to reflect on:**

- What are the conditions for our happiness and joy?
- What really brings contentment in our lives?
- What do I 'feed' myself every day that waters my unwholesome seeds?
- What can I do to nourish my seeds of happiness, joy and gratitude?
- Do my thoughts relate mostly to the future, the past, or the present?
- What stories do I keep telling myself about interactions, people, and situations?  
Do these make me a happier person?
- Do I listen deeply to others? Do I listen deeply to myself?
- What things are easy for me to put effort into? Why?
- Are there obstacles or hindrances to growing and deepening my practice?
- Do I reflect on all my conditions of happiness every day? How often?
- What 'habits' do I have that I rely on to cover up my unhappiness, anxiety, suffering, worries?
- (add your own reflection questions here)