



*Testimonials from past participants of Commit2Dharma (C2D)*

One thing that recently struck me about the C2D group is how now, 7 months after the ending of the group, my formal friendships or meetings—whether running into them in coffee shops, seen them walking in the distance walking down the street—with these folks warms my heart. And the more established friends have been there for me through both joyful and difficult times.

C2D also made more aware in my day to day life of living in the present moment with awareness, but in a gentler and "just living" kind of way. These may just be mini-awakenings of being present in the moment—"Hello—living room, or tree, or people on the street". Or they may be more loaded with emotions... "hello anger, anxiety, tender heartedness". It doesn't feel so much like a formal practice.

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For me, the Commit to Dharma (C2D) Sangha has been like a spiritual loom that has woven together threads of varying hues and circumstances - us dedicated practitioners hungry for deep truth and an end of our suffering into a beautiful tapestry rich in depth, diversity and divinity. Over the past months, we dharma sisters and brothers have bonded one to another. We have shared assignments, broken bread at one another's homes and have sat silently at retreats together. Whether gathered collectively in large group or during our one-on-one conversation with dharma partners, we have supported each other through triumph and tragedy with an openness and compassionate concern that is of nothing short of a "love thang."

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I guess I can call it fate that the C2D program began the same month that I transitioned to a new job. While I knew the new gig would be a fast paced, stressful one, I had no idea how foreign it would be for me in terms of environment, culture, and interpersonal dynamics. Sitting regularly, feeling the support of our amazing C2D sangha and fabulous DB (dharma buddy), and studying different elements of the dharma each week kept me sane and open in those first few months. In the midst of a high pressure day when I barely had time to eat, my C2D practice allowed me stop and take a deep breath, or walk consciously to the next meeting. These little moments have really changed how I live. When confronted with difficult people and dubious behavior, the practice gave me space to not take it personally, and instead focus on how to move forward. All the lessons I drew from our classes and readings and sitting taught me that the process of getting there is as important as the "there".

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C2D, Larry, and the teachings have been very helpful to me and I feel blessed to be a part of this experience. I've enjoyed getting to know new people that I may not have had a chance to know outside of this context and through it, recognizing the connections we all share as fellow beings on a spiritual path. I especially enjoy the connection with my dharma buddy (great match Larry!). C2D has helped me to keep my practice at the forefront of my mind, even the days when I forget to sit. I like learning the dharma in a systematic way, increasing my understanding of the teachings and how it relates to my daily life. It has highlighted for me some of the areas where I need to put in more effort. The overall impact for me has been very positive. Since I've opened myself to the teachings of the dharma, I feel that I've been able to flow with life a lot easier than before, learning how to take one breath and one day at a time. I highly recommend it!

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The opportunity to study and practice with such a diverse, committed and compassionate sangha has been a true gift and an important step in my spiritual development. Larry created a container with all of the components one could wish for... an amazing teacher, the perfect blend of participants and study materials that resonated deeply.

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C2D has benefited my life by supporting me in my highest aspiration: to be present.

For me, being present comes with greater ease when my routine includes quieting the mind through a regular meditation practice, as well as studying the dharma. C2D has provided me with a framework to nurture my meditation practice, and the assigned readings have been relevant and insightful.

A highlight of the program is the monthly meetings, where the wisdom of the C2D community coalesces and blossoms. The insight of the sangha is always awe-inspiring, and I've learned a tremendous amount about the dharma through our regular meetings.

I'm especially grateful for the guidance and encouragement provided by Larry Yang. His support has nourished my faith in the practice and my love of the dharma.

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The C2D program has provided me with a space to explore, experiment, and deepen my meditation practice. The meetings have been the perfect venue for me to push myself out of isolation and enter into a space of discomfort. I cannot avoid how much I project onto the 'outside', the reasons I do not take the time to sit. I've learned to face myself, honestly and subjectively. The readings and discussions have further enriched my passion for the teachings of the dharma. You will not be disappointed in participating in these teachings, you will be surprised!

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I originally applied to C2D because I wanted to explore being apart of a Sangha community. I was also interested in learning about the teachings in a more structured way. I had been practicing Buddhist meditation regularly for about 5 years, which included a daily practice and retreats whenever I could spare/afford the time. Lastly, I wanted to have more contact or access to a teacher who could offer guidance as needed.

Largely, C2D has assisted in helping me get clearer about what I wanted from life. Not that I wasn't clear before C2D, rather C2D has been apart of many spiritual commitments that I made to myself for fully integrating my Buddhist practice into all facets of life. I'd say it has benefited my practice by helping me stay connected. Whether it was the practice letter or a bi-weekly call from a Dhamma buddy, C2D added value to my already flourishing practice.

I've learned different perspectives to the Buddhist teachings, helping me see the differences in teaching methods of lay teachers and monastics. I've learned different meditation techniques within the Theravada traditions, thereby helping me discern which ones best suit my practice. I learned that it would be very easy for a new comer to Buddhism to get confused and having a framework like C2D can really help pull things together. For me, it has filled in all the blanks from when I was a newcomer to Buddhism in the mid 1990's. I drifted along in a vague haze till about 2004. So a good 10 years drifted by before I started to become committed to a spiritual life and have an understanding of Buddhism and its practices. I'd highly recommend anyone with a similar story as mine to commit to a year long program like this one.

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The East Bay Meditation Center's Commit to Dharma 2 Program facilitated by Larry Yang continues to have a big impact on the deepening of my practice both internally and externally. Internally, I continue to be transformed by the invitation I took of looking more deeply into the core Buddhist teachings, especially Metta and Dependent Origination. Externally, I felt seen and reflected in a way I had never felt before in my 15 years in the Western Dharma world, as this was the most diverse sangha I've ever experienced and this greatly inspired me.

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C2D was a precious experience - I was fairly new to Buddhist teachings when I was accepted into the program. It became the key to opening a profound door into my understanding of Dharma. My practice has since become a daily wellspring that sustains me in my social justice/activism work.

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Commit2Dharma is a gift of insight that I am still unwrapping. Being a part of C2D was like having a mindfulness bell set to ring rhythmically on cue throughout the year- bringing my attention back to the practice, back to my breath and back to all of my best intentions. Every element of the program exceeded my expectations, from the reading materials offered to the development of Dharma-based community. I am deeply thankful to Larry and my cohort for sharing this experience of focused practice together.

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I feel deep gratitude to Larry Yang and EBMC for being able to participate in C2D2. C2D2 provided tremendous support for me to deepen my understanding of Buddhist teachings and practices and feel connected with other practitioners.

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C2D propelled me into daily meditation. I talked about doing it for almost 8 years but it was the intimacy and sincerity of the sangha we developed in C2D that helped me make real progress. It's called Commit to Dharma but it has actually been a commitment to myself, to my own daily practice. The C2D Sangha bore witness as I took one giant step forward. Now I wonder what I was so afraid of. What took me so long?

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When I first heard about the C2D invitation, I thought I did not have the credentials to apply. In true fashion, I applied anyway. I can say now that it is one of the best commitments I've ever made for myself, in my life! My decision to apply and participate has given me a new life of increasing clarity and thus, increasing beauty.

Little did I know just how ready I was to join C2D2, and even less did I understand how deeply it would commit me to the dharma. My life has changed so vastly that I feel I am becoming the crystal spirit I was originally born as, the one embodied before the fetters of the world built its armor around me and tinted the lense of my vision. The difference between the me of now and the me as that newborn is a deeper awareness of myself in the world, as the world, and an energetic commitment to meet reality just as it is.

I cannot say that the path to freedom is easy. What I can say is that it is rewarding beyond imagination. I can't say that learning to forgive those who have left me bleeding and traumatized is an easy road, but I can say it is essential if I can even hope to develop the true compassion and empathy that will make the world more peaceful. I cannot say that learning to forgive myself for doing the same harm to others that has been done to me has been a walk in the park, but I know now that I cannot begin to know forgiveness if I cannot forgive myself. Nor can I say that embracing my shortcomings so that I may claim and change them into gifts is a piece of cake. But the mere task of undertaking these difficult realities has infused me with more life than I have ever been willing to live. Now I am learning to take the ride of my life with my eyes fully open.

My practice in, and study of the dharma with my C2D2 sangha, and leader Larry Yang, a beloved teacher and compassionate brother, has set me on a road to a new freedom and richness in my life, and that's just for starters. There's more coming every day...

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C2D ensured that the dharma was kept thoroughly entrenched in my mind, heart, and practice.

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My participation in Commit to Dharma lay the foundation for a turning point in my spiritual life. With the support of this program, I have a strong and regular meditation practice, I am surrounded daily by inspirational and supportive community members, and I am a student and teacher of wisdom teachings. I am so grateful for my time in this program and cannot recommend it highly enough to those who wish to strengthen and deepen their own spiritual practice.

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Here are a few of the ways that C2D has affected my life. First of all it gave me a good working knowledge of the teachings of the Buddha. This knowledge continues to inform the way in which I interact with and in the world.

It also gave me a friend, a friend with a shared experience, and a shared level of commitment to understanding of the Dharma in day to day existence. It's helpful to have a friend to remind you of the way things are, to help bring you back to the truth of the matter.

The third thing C2D has done is shown me ways in which I can support and share the Dharma in my community.

I'm so very glad that I decided to make the commitment to take C2D. I don't think my practice would have the richness that it does without the teachings that were so beautifully and skillfully communicated under Larry's guidance.