



Virginia B. Foulmin
FOUNDATION

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APRIL 24TH - APRIL 27TH

**WORLD MENTAL HEALTH
CONFERENCE & RETREAT**

2025

Better mental health, Better well-being, Better World



THE AMERICAN SCHOOL OF BANGKOK GREEN VALLEY

PRESENTED BY:
THE MINDFULNESS ACADEMY OF ASIA &
THE HARTANTO GUNAWAN FOUNDATION FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

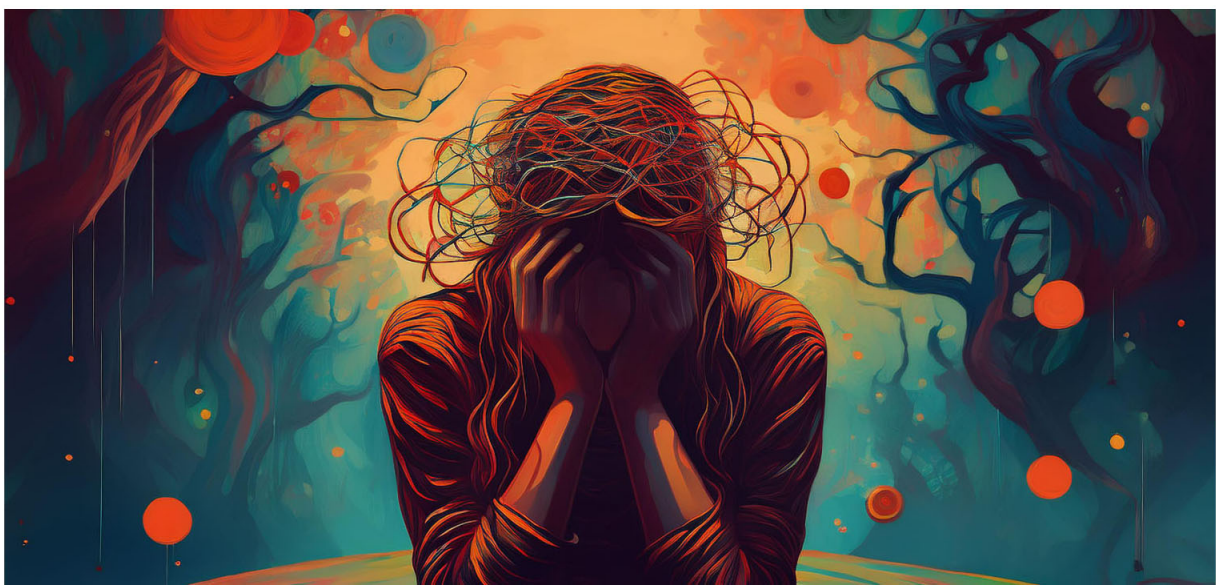
BACKGROUND

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the current world we are living in has become increasingly challenging to navigate, marked by crime, poverty, social media misuse, substance abuse, addiction, war, and hatred, among other societal issues. Incidents of harm and abuse within families have become more prevalent, with some cases escalating to severe violence, including rape and murder. Teenagers committing homicide in public spaces has become disturbingly frequent, while mass shootings in schools and hospitals have seen a significant rise. Racism and ethnic conflicts have also intensified, resulting in greater loss of life and deepening division amongst racial and ethnic groups.

The era of COVID-19 is thus one of the most unprecedented periods in modern history, characterized by unparalleled levels of physical, emotional, and mental suffering on a global scale. During the height of the pandemic, people lived in constant fear of losing loved ones while also grappling with the persistent threat of the virus and its evolving variants. The prolonged periods of quarantine brought additional stress, as many faced anxieties about financial stability and the quality of their children's education. This collective experience has inflicted profound pain and mental anguish, causing a ripple effect through society, and shaping the challenges we face today.

In today's world, people are living with stress, anxiety, fear, and other mental vulnerabilities caused by the past, present, or future. Simultaneously, many seek alleviation through social media, alcohol, and drugs, hoping to find relief and happiness in these coping mechanisms. We worry about young, impressionable minds being impacted by the latest AI-driven algorithms on social media that perpetuate endless scrolling and disengagement from reality, offering an escape from the pain of living. Young people, in particular, may feel inadequate by the constant comparisons fostered by social media, for not having enough, not being good enough, not being strong enough, and not being smart or skillful enough. Such fears are escalating online. At what point do we recognize these kinds of harm and say, "Enough is enough? Our minds will never be at peace and harmony if we do not prioritize and cultivate the training of the mind.

Amidst this backdrop of COVID-19 and the influence of social media, there has been a rise in addiction, depression, suicidal rates, and violence worldwide. Recent estimates indicate that in Thailand alone, at least 10 million people suffer from depression. Similarly, teen depression statistics in the United States are currently on the rise as well. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of those affected have received treatment. When young people face difficult family situations, they often feel hopelessness and some may resort to self-harm or harm others. When young people feel unloved and misunderstood, they may resort to self-inflicted pain such as cutting themselves as a means of coping. To some, expressing that physical pain supersedes their emotional suffering. These actions are desperate cries for help.



The question is: why do human beings reach such extremes? Why do we hurt and harm ourselves and others? Why do some people experience such hopelessness? Why do some people kill each other without conscience? The cause is the lack of genuine understanding of life's meaning. This lack of awareness often leads to mental suffering. Conditions such as depression, panic attacks, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, suicidal ideation, ADD, and ADHD are prevalent among those grappling with deep emotional pain. These mental illnesses and disorders manifest as excruciating experiences in life where their bodies and minds lose control and lack effective coping mechanisms.

According to The World Health Organization (WHO), "More than 700,000 people die by suicide every year, which is one person every 40 seconds. Suicide is a global phenomenon and occurs throughout the lifespan. Effective and evidence-based interventions can be implemented at population, sub-population, and individual levels to prevent suicide and suicide attempts. There are indications that for each adult who died by suicide, there may have been more than 20 others attempting suicide."

The world is experiencing an unprecedented demand for stability, harmony, and healing amidst escalating global challenges, such as armed conflicts, environmental crises, rapid technological advancements, and societal division. Achieving these essential goals begins at the individual level, as the foundation of collective well-being lies in the minds and actions of individuals. Mental well-being plays a critical role to foster harmony and healing on a broader scale and it is imperative to cultivate inner peace and resilience through disciplined mental training. Meditation, celebrated for its universality, is practiced across cultures, age groups, and lifestyles, fostering empathy, collaboration, and a sense of shared purpose. Recognizing the transformative potential and its contributions to mental health, the United Nations has declared December 21, 2024, as World Meditation Day ("World Meditation Day," n.d.).

The World Health Organization recognizes meditation as an effective self-care tool that can aid in treatment and improve overall well-being. Even a few minutes of daily practice can help individuals cultivate a state of calm and focus that is essential for navigating life's complexity. Beyond individual benefits, meditation serves as a unifying force for societal resilience. By fostering inner harmony, individuals contribute to building stable, inclusive communities and fostering mental health, a fundamental human right, as emphasized in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 3, "Good Health and Well-Being." (World Health Organization, n.d.). World Meditation Day stands as a reminder of the profound impact of nurturing human consciousness. By prioritizing practices such as meditation, individuals can develop the emotional intelligence, empathy, and focus to navigate challenges, contribute positively to their communities, and create a sustainable and harmonious future for generations to come.

The escalating crisis facing humanity calls attention to the urgent need to address the root causes of mental suffering and societal disharmony. A lack of understanding life's meaning, coupled with inadequate coping mechanisms, has led to widespread mental health challenges, affecting individuals and communities alike. Meditation offers a pathway to inner peace, resilience, and empathy - key elements in fostering stability and healing. The United Nations declaration of World Meditation Day serves as a call to action, reminding us that cultivating mental well-being is not just an individual endeavor but a collective responsibility. Through meditation and mindful practices we can empower ourselves and others to navigate life's complexity, reduce suffering, and build a more compassionate and unified world.

References:

- **World Health Organization. (n.d.). Suicide data. Retrieved from** <https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/data-research/suicide-data>
- **United Nations. (n.d.). World Meditation Day. Retrieved from** <https://www.un.org/en/observances/meditation-day>

OBJECTIVES

The Mindfulness Academy of Asia and The Foundation for Human Development are proud to present the World Mental Health Conference and Retreat 2025, with the mission of improving the mental health and well-being of adults and children worldwide. Through collaboration with institutions of international education, foreign diplomacy, public health, and the business sector, we are committed to promoting mental health and well-being in our society, families, schools, offices, companies, organizations, institutions, and government agencies.

As mental suffering becomes increasingly pervasive— manifesting in forms such as stress, anxiety, depression, addiction, rage, and suicide— we recognize the urgent need to address these problems. Our mission is to educate society on the transformative benefits of practicing mindfulness and research meditation to restore mental health and well-being. We strive to help individuals understand the critical importance of caring for the mind in daily life to achieve a healthy mind and mental health/well-being.



The Mindfulness Academy of Asia has implemented mindfulness practices for over a decade with remarkable results. Children, teachers, healthcare professionals, government officers, and entrepreneurs have experienced the profound benefits of being aware of the present moment. The Foundation for Human Development, founded by Ajarn Hartanto Gunawan, has been instrumental in rescuing over 400 young girls from human trafficking and restoring their futures by providing them with education for over two decades.

Ajarn Hartanto Gunawan has also taught meditation to help individuals heal from trauma and mental suffering, strengthen their minds, and build self-confidence and empowerment in society. His work extends to training programs for organizations such as the New York Police Department (NYPD), where he has contributed to their 'Self-Care Program,' as well as at institutions of higher learning across America and Europe, including Georgetown University, the University of Richmond, Northwestern University, Central Florida University, and Case Western Reserve University.

To celebrate our achievements and continue the mission of promoting awareness and understanding of the importance and benefits of mindfulness and research meditation, we are proud to launch the initiative:

“WORLD MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE AND RETREAT 2025”

Better Mental Health, Better Well-being, Better World

This project aims to educate parents, children, educators, professionals, and people from all walks of life on the application of mindfulness and research meditation techniques in schools, homes, and the workplace. The goal is to equip people with the tools to navigate daily stressors, which often lead to anxiety, depression, anger, rage, sadness, and other forms of mental suffering.

The initiative also seeks to provide companies, government agencies, and businesses with techniques and strategies of mindful practice and research meditation. By fostering mindful and wise leadership, organizations and institutions can train their staff and employees to perform effectively and efficiently while managing stress. Addressing mental health proactively is essential, as the toll of mental illness/suffering in the workforce can be significant.

Additionally, the initiative aims to support social workers, doctors, nurses, and healthcare professionals with techniques and the application of mindfulness and research meditation for their personal well-being and the benefit of their patients. These practices are critical for preventing the development of mental illnesses and emotional distress in children, students, and patients. If physical suffering is not prevented from spreading, it will affect the mind, leading to mental distress and ultimately causing both physical and mental suffering.



BY AJARN HARTANTO GUNAWAN

UNDERSTANDING CONCEPTS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Participants will learn and understand key ideas towards the understanding of mental health and well-being such as:

- **Law of Nature** - Human beings have greed, lust, hatred, and an ignorant mind. By understanding the Law of Nature, we will have the ability to change the nature of our minds. This refers to absolute law, or the law of cause and effect. To understand the Law of Cause and Effect is to be able to prevent bad consequences. This can be linear, like a chain reaction, or multi - dimensional. The law of nature is the law of cause and effect, the law of action and reaction. There is a chain reaction to every action in the law of cause and effect. There is a ripple effect of every action we take, large or small.
- **Impermanence** - Just as a ball is thrown up in the air, it surely falls back down. This law of gravity is the first step to understand impermanence. Just as a falling ball's position and speed change every instant, all phenomena undergo perpetual change. The true characteristic of nature is impermanent. For example, cells divide, babies are born, and new stars coalesce from celestial gasses as others explode in supernovae. Just as it is inevitable that the ball will fall back to Earth, so too is the law of change an inevitable fact of nature. Mental phenomena are not exempt from this "gravity" of impermanence. Memories, feelings, and perceptions arise and dissipate. Our sense of "I," as the protagonist of our own narrative, can be revealed to be merely the progression of impermanent mental processes. Understanding this is liberating. We are free to let go of anxieties and prior conceptions of ourselves. Understanding impermanence provides the basis for nonattachment and to understand life more deeply and see things as they really are. Suffering results from clinging to phenomena that inexorably change. Peace of mind can be found in simply letting go.



- **Research Meditation** - this is a mental discipline that helps human beings research their minds and find out the causes of their suffering and how to cease that suffering. This is a skill that can help people who suffer from depression, suicidal thoughts, panic attacks, and obsessive-compulsive behaviors reduce these symptoms or mental suffering. Research Meditation is to research the Law of Nature and Impermanence to understand things as they really are and use these insights as tools to cope with all forms of mental suffering/illnesses.



- **Mindful and Wise Leadership** - This is the ability to be aware of the present moment with a nonjudgmental perspective, see things objectively as they really are, be accountable for one's duties and responsibilities,, empathize with others, inhibit the expression of negative emotions, and lead by example. Mindful and wise leadership is a process in which we learn to think, speak, and act based on the law of nature, and respond wisely based on the law instead of reacting based on our emotions. This process helps us understand the true nature of things and understand who "I" really am.

- **Various Mindfulness Disciplines** - Mindfulness can be practiced in many different ways. One can simply sit, walk, eat, stand, and lie down. Practitioners will be taught fun mindfulness games in the classroom, along with relaxation techniques, mindful coloring, mindful movement, etc. Participants will learn tricks and tips on how to apply mindfulness in schools and the workplace.

PARTNERSHIPS

- Royal Thai Government
- The Ministry of Education of Thailand
- Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (Thailand)
- Ministry of Public Health (Thailand)
- The Embassy of The United States of America in Bangkok
- The Embassy of The Republic Indonesia in Bangkok
- The Embassy of Japan in Bangkok
- Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation of The United States
- New York Police Department
- World Health Organization
- The American School of Bangkok Green Valley
- Siam University
- University of Richmond
- Georgetown University
- Oklahoma State University
- Princ Hospital Suvarnabhumi
- NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation)



KEY PRESENTATIONS

TITLE: REVOLUTIONIZING MENTAL HEALTH CURRICULUM IN EDUCATION

PRESENTERS: AJARN HARTANTO GUNAWAN, Director, Foundation for Human Development

BIO: Ajarn Hartanto Gunawan is a former CEO who left his lucrative businesses and became a Buddhist monk in the Thai forest tradition for four years. After he left his monkhood, he dedicated his life to being a social worker and a teacher. He has received an Outstanding Person Award for Preventing and Suppressing Human Trafficking from the Thai Prime Minister, the US Federal Assistant Award from the US State Department, and the award “Semanukaprakarn” from the Thai Ministry of Education. Ajarn Hartanto’s work has also earned international recognition from the governments of Japan, Indonesia, and the United Kingdom. He has rescued more than 400 young girls from human trafficking and domestic abuse/violence. He has taught the NYPD, Case Western Reserve University, Georgetown University, University of Richmond, public schools in Harlem and the Bronx, New York, and incarcerated persons in the Richmond City Jail, to help their mental well-being. In addition, he also teaches families, and individuals with suicidal thoughts, depression, and other mental illnesses/suffering.

ABSTRACT: For more than 25 years of social work and dharma teaching, Ajarn Hartanto Gunawan had introduced Research Meditation, a unique style of meditation, that helped all of his students and practitioners overcome trauma and mental illnesses. Rescued victims, government officers, doctors, educators, Wall Street investors, etc. have improved their mental well-being and strength, overcome their mental suffering, and returned to school and the workforce, with confidence and wisdom. The Research Meditation curriculum combines the principles that contribute to good mental health and well-being, beginning with the understanding of the Law of Nature which focuses on the Law of Cause and Effect, the Law of Action and Reaction, and the Law of Impermanence.

Participants will understand the profound impact that Research Meditation has made on human development. Thus, it is very important to realize that mental education is an integral part of education, the most crucial ingredient that helps human beings navigate the complexity of today’s world. In the past, education across the globe has put a strong emphasis on taking care of the body in our daily lives. Schools up to the university level all have Physical Education (PE) 101 and PE 102 in all their curriculum. However, there has never been any standardized curriculum that teaches Mental Education (ME) 101 and ME 102 to balance PE 101 and PE 102. A healthy life is not only about having a healthy body; it must be all, including having a healthy mind, body, and mental state. Mental Education (ME) is equally important as PE and ought to be part of a mandatory curriculum.

If children receive a proper education about how to cope with their mental states, this can create a foundation to prevent mental illness. Ultimately, if we implement mental education in schools and universities, the next generation will live their life with wisdom. They will be taught to research and understand their mental states, how to overcome pain and fear, and how to let go of negative thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and emotions of the past and future. They will enjoy living in the present moment with peace and happiness while making decisions based on the law instead of based on their emotions. They can experience a state of equanimity.



KEYNOTE PRESENTATION DAY 1:

DR. MONTI DATTA,

Associate Professor of Political Science, at the University of Richmond

BIO: Raised in Los Angeles and educated at UC Berkeley and Georgetown University, Datta spent time teaching in South Korea and Japan before pursuing his PhD in political science at UC Davis. Since 2016, after meeting with Ajarn Hartanto, Monti has been active in developing a variety of meditation programs at the University of Richmond, helping students better understand their minds while pursuing a college education. He is passionate about travel, considers it soul-enriching, and is actively involved in promoting social justice awareness alongside students on campus.

ABSTRACT: Participants will learn about different mindfulness initiatives Monti has grown and developed at the University of Richmond since 2016, in partnership with Ajarn Hartanto, seeking greater well-being on campus for college students and community members in the Greater Richmond Virginia area. Monti will also speak about a course he developed, Mindful and Wise Leadership, which is aimed for first-year students as they learn the principles of research meditation and apply them to their academic curriculum.

WILLIAM VILAFRANCO,

Trustee Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, Entrepreneur and Philanthropist

ABSTRACT:

NYPD, OFFICER

ABSTRACT:





KEYNOTE PRESENTATION DAY 2:

TITLE: Happy and Wise Teachers Make a Better World

PRESENTERS: **NISANART DHARMAGEISIRATTANA**, Director of The American School of Bangkok Green Valley and Mindfulness Academy of Asia

BIO: Gift earned her Bachelor's Degree in Film and Television from New York University (1998) and her Master's Degree in Education Administration in Public Education from Teachers College, Columbia University (2013). Currently, she serves as Director of The American School of Bangkok Green Valley. She founded the Mindfulness Academy of Asia to help parents, students, and educators understand the importance of well-being in schools. Among her trainees are international educators worldwide, university students, doctors, and healthcare professionals. In 2018, she published her new mindfulness book, "The Mindful Way" to help teachers and administrators implement mindfulness in schools.

ABSTRACT: Participants will learn how The American School of Bangkok Green Valley trains our teachers in various disciplines to foster well-being and happiness in our school community. The success of our practice has triggered interest from other educators and institutions, and we now have partnerships with; the Ministries of Education in Thailand and Indonesia, the International School of Dhaka, Oklahoma State University, Busan National University of Education, Principal Capital, Satit Pattana School, and the University of Richmond, USA. Find out how mindful practices in schools can impact well-being, mental health, academic rigor, performing arts and performance in sports.

In this post-pandemic era, institutions of every kind have found themselves struggling to navigate a range of new wellbeing challenges. At The American School of Bangkok, we have built a culture of mindfulness across the school, helping our community deal with all kinds of challenges, ranging from finding focus in pressured sporting occasions to coping with diagnosed anxiety. The techniques we have developed are tried and tested by various disciplines, and our techniques have already been successfully introduced in several organizations with whom we have formed partnerships.

TITLE: Revolutionizing Mental Health Curriculum in Education (Part II) Panel Discussion

PANELISTS: **AJARN HARTANTO GUNAWAN**, Director, Foundation for Human Development

Abstract: Schools, universities, and organizations worldwide are struggling with students, staff, and workers who suffered from mental illnesses. Young people and adults are struggling to cope with anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts due to massive loss during the pandemic, war, domestic violence. Recent statistics have shown that counseling services are high on demand by students worldwide. This has led to many organizational leaders thinking deeply about what they can do to improve the mental health and well-being of their stakeholders. Is it really possible to teach students and adults about mental health education? Can educational institutions focus their mental health subjects? Does a mental health curriculum exist?





SCHEDULE OF THE CONFERENCE

DURATION : APRIL 24 TH - APRIL 27 TH 2025			
APRIL 24 TH	APRIL 25 TH	APRIL 26 TH	APRIL 27 TH
8:00 - 9:00 a.m.	9:30 a.m.	9:00 a.m.	9:00 a.m.
Registration:	Keynote Presentation 2:	ME 101 Mindfulness:	ME 101 Mindfulness:
9:00 - 10:30 a.m.	Mindfulness Boosts High Performance in School	Mindful Walking, Mindful Movement and Mindful Listening	Mindful Walking, Mindful Movement and Mindful Listening
Grand Opening:	10:30 - 10:45 a.m.	10:30 - 10:45 a.m.	10:00 a.m.
Opening Remarks by Special Guest Speaker	Break	Break	Break
Keynote Presentation 1:	10:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	10:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	10:15 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Revolutionizing Mental Health Curriculum in Education	Panel Discussion:	ME 102 Research Meditation	ME 103 Research Meditation - "Who Am I? What Am I?"
10:30 - 10:45 a.m.	Revolutionizing Mental Health Curriculum in Education Part II	"The Law of Nature: Law of Cause & Effect and The Law of Impermanence"	Reflection- MAA Curriculum
Break	12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	12:45 p.m.
10:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Lunch	Lunch	Departure for Sightseeing Tour to The Emerald Buddha Temple (Wat Prakaew) & The Reclining Buddha Temple (Wat Pho)
Mindful and Wise Leadership at the University of Richmond	1:00 - 2:30 p.m.	1:00 - 2:30 p.m.	5.00 p.m.
Virginia B. Toulmin Scholarship	Student and Adult Led - Conferences:	Discussion: "Well-being in the Workplace"	Tour Ends
NYPD	Pressure from High Academic Achievements	2:30 p.m.	
12:00 p.m.	Mindfulness in Sports Psychology	Mindfulness in Movement	
Lunch Break	Mental Well-being for Teens	Mindfulness in the Arts	
1:00 p.m.	Overcoming Family Pressure	3:30 p.m.	
Student and Adult Led - Conferences:	2:30 p.m.	Day Ends	
Various topics for delegates to attend	Mindfulness in Movement		
2:30 p.m.	Mindfulness in the Arts		
Mindfulness in Sports & Daily Life	3:30 p.m.		
3:30 p.m.	Day Ends		
Day Ends			

ABOUT US

BIOGRAPHY OF HARTANTO GUNAWAN:

Co-Chair of World Mental Health Conference and Retreat 2025

Ajarn Hartanto Gunawan is the Director and Founder of the Foundation of Human Development. With the support of the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation from the United States of America, the Foundation provides room, board, education, and job opportunities for at-risk youth, and victims of human trafficking and domestic abuse/violence. Collaborating with the Thai Ministry of Education, Siam University, and local hospitals, the Foundation equips students with the skills needed to become qualified nurses and nursing assistants. Drawing from his unique background as a former CEO turned Buddhist monk, Hartanto leverages mindfulness and contemplative training to develop resilient students, empowering them to pursue successful careers and in turn contribute to their communities.

Originally from Indonesia, Hartanto previously held the role of CEO of a multi-industry holding company in Jakarta. Despite his professional success, living a life of luxury, and socializing with industrial and political figures, he felt a profound sense of disarray. His high-pressure lifestyle resulted in significant health challenges, including stress, high blood pressure, fits of temper (rages) and migraines. Reflecting on his former self, a stark contrast to the calm demeanor he exhibits today, he recalls, "If someone honked their horn (in traffic) I would get out and scold him," adding "At that time, I didn't know..."

In 1997, amid financial difficulties faced by his family, Hartanto's mother sought the guidance of two well-reputed monks named Phra Somchai and Phra Somnuk in Singapore. Following Phra Somchai's advice she encouraged one of her five sons to ordain as a monk for two years. On September 4, 1997, she presented this proposal to her five sons. Hartanto alone volunteered, viewing it as an opportunity to atone for his actions toward his mother in the past. Ever the decisive CEO at heart, he departed for Bangkok just two days later, on September 6th, 1997, embarking on a transformative journey that would shape his life and work.



Hartanto arrived at Bangkok's renowned Wat Arun, only to discover that his mother's acquaintance, the venerable Somnuk, was not in Bangkok but in Sakon Nakhon, a rural province in northeastern Thailand, hours away from the capital. Undeterred, he traveled to Sakon Nakhon that same day, where he met Venerable Somnuk and was ordained the following day. Shortly thereafter, Venerable Somnuk brought him to Donsawan, a remote island in Lake Nong Han. Hartanto arrived on the island with nothing but the orange robes of a monk, an alms bowl, a prayer book, a flashlight, a lighter, candles, an umbrella, and a mosquito net. He had no money, mobile phone, luggage, or other possessions. As he stood on the desolate island, surrounded by thick jungle and devoid of buildings, electricity, food, or inhabitants, Venerable monk Somnuk simply instructed "Just wait here, I'll send your mother back." With that, the monk departed, leaving Hartanto alone. As night fell, the jungle came alive with the movements of snakes, scorpions, and spiders. Hours went by and still no one arrived. Consumed by fear, loneliness, and despair, Hartanto wrapped himself in his robes and wept in the darkness.

The following morning, to his immense relief, the droning sound of an approaching skiff broke the silence. He was transported to a nearby village to beg for alms. The stark contrast between his previous life as a CEO living in luxury and his new monastic existence was overwhelming, and the psychological strain of the adjustment was immense. It took several months for him to acclimate and accept his new circumstances.

Initially, Hartanto struggled with bouts of stress, anxieties, fear, anger, depression and all mental suffering/illnesses. However, through persistent meditation and self-reflection, he experienced a profound psychological transformation. He observed that "the snakes are calm, the scorpions are calm, the forest is calm." He realized that the turmoil he felt created and resided solely within his own mind. With only a chanting book as his guide, he began to contemplate the Buddha's teachings, which ultimately led him to develop a meditation technique he termed Research Meditation, rooted in the principles of Vipassana. Through this practice, he came to understand the laws of nature, the true characteristic of nature, the "self," and eventually cultivated equanimity. Over time, he was able to relinquish his anger, hatred, greed, and lust, alleviating his mental suffering, and learned to embrace the tranquility of life as a forest monk.

Two years later, Hartanto returned to Wat Arun to formally conclude his monastic term. However, upon re-entering urban life with its noise and chaos, he found himself once again grappling with anger. Recognizing he was not yet ready to leave the monkhood, he informed his mother of his decision to extend his ordination. He spent an additional two years at Wat Arun, engaging in research meditation and introspection to uncover the root causes of mental suffering.

After the Lasikka ceremony, which marked his formal exit from the monkhood, Hartanto realized he could not return to the life of a CEO. He felt the calling to contribute to humanity, he resolved to share the knowledge and insights he had gained during his monastic years. Profoundly moved by the plight of human trafficking victims, whose suffering he deemed even greater than his own, he decided to take action, though uncertain about the exact path forward. Embracing a new purpose, he remarked, "I set out to make merit, rather than money." His first step in this new journey was to take a position as a driver for a tour company, embarking on a mission to serve others and make a meaningful difference in the world.



During his monkhood, Hartanto developed a sense of frugality and patience. Using the tips he earned as a driver, he began teaching meditation within the pagoda of Wat Arun, also known as the Temple of Dawn. During this time he developed a meaningful connection with an American client of the tour company who sought assistance in adopting two Thai orphans. Hartanto facilitated the adoption process, and in gratitude, the client invited him to their home in Naples, Florida. During his stay, the client inquired about Hartanto's aspirations. He shared his vision of rescuing victims of human trafficking and spreading his knowledge and experiences to benefit humanity. Grateful for his help with the adoption and inspired by his vision, the client provided the financial support necessary to establish the Community Learning Center.

Leveraging his administrative expertise, Hartanto effectively organized the center's operations. Using the funds provided, he constructed classrooms and designed a comprehensive learning program rooted in the principle that morality, discipline, and wisdom are the foundation of success and happiness in life. The center's curriculum emphasized a disciplined daily routine which included hours of mindfulness training and discipline along with classes to learn IT, English, and traditional handicrafts. Collaborating with the Thai Ministry of Education and with hospitals around the country, he also secured nursing internships for all his students.

The Community Learning Center quickly flourished under his leadership. Since its inception, hundreds of students have passed through the program, many graduates securing employment in Bangkok's top hospitals, and others completing four-year university degrees. A survey assessing its impact has recognized the center's excellence.

Hartanto remarked, "Providing money and scholarships does not equal teaching research meditation, which gives birth to the wisdom to take care of one's mind and emotions/mental well-being." This philosophy is essential to the center's success. Students graduate with both discipline and wisdom. Having overcome poverty and difficult circumstances, the graduates serve as an inspiration to others in their villages. Younger students follow in their footsteps, and those who return to their villages often support their families by building homes and offering assistance to others in need.

Hartanto's transformative vision extended beyond the center. He has since taught mindfulness and Research Meditation at esteemed institutions and organizations including the University of Richmond, Georgetown University, New York Police Department, Case Western Reserve University, Center of Excellence for Breast Cancer Mount Sinai Hospital (New York), The Ministry of Education of Thailand, Siam University, and The American School of Bangkok Green Valley. His deeply impactful work has been recognized by the governments of the United States, Indonesia, Japan, and the United Kingdom, as well as support from charitable organizations such as the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation.

Through 27 years of tireless dedication, perseverance, and service to humanity, Hartanto Gunawan has earned the reverence of his students, colleagues, friends, and practitioners. He is widely honored as Ajarn Hartanto Gunawan, where "Ajarn," a Thai word signifying mastery in their skills and highest teaching abilities. In addition, he has received an Outstanding Person Award for Preventing and Suppressing Human Trafficking from the Thai Prime Minister, the US Federal Assistant Award from the US State Department, and the award "Semanukaprakarn" from the Thai Ministry of Education.





BIOGRAPHY OF NISANART DHARMAGEISIRATTANA:

Co-Chair of World Mental Health Conference and Retreat 2025

Nisanart Dharmageisirattana has always been referred to as Gift, a nickname given by her parents as a tribute to her father's achievement when he earned his PhD in Political Science from the University of Nebraska in 1976. Her birth marked a significant milestone in their lives, symbolizing a cherished gift.

Gift holds a Bachelor's Degree in Film and Television from New York University (1998) and a Master's Degree in Education Administration in Public Education from Teachers College, Columbia University (2013). From 1990 to 2004, she hosted and produced numerous documentaries and various TV shows that were broadcast on Thailand's national television channels. Currently, she serves as the Director of The American School of Bangkok Green Valley. Drawing from her training at Columbia University, Yale University, as well as institutions in India, Thailand, and France on various mindfulness disciplines, she pioneered the Mindfulness in Education program at The American School of Bangkok Green Valley, which was well received by students, parents, and educators alike. She is certified in ".b", a mindfulness curriculum developed in the United Kingdom.

Gift's expertise encompasses a comprehensive range of mindfulness techniques, including the awareness of the present moment with a nonjudgmental attitude, the ability to understand, differentiate, and regulate positive mental formations, and the ability to inhibit negative actions and reactions. Her students are trained to connect with their chakras, the energy points in the body to enhance their intuition, love and compassion, communication skills, and the recomposition of emotions. These practices are seamlessly integrated into all areas of learning. As the human mind becomes alert and focused, it is easy to recall and retrieve information, a skill that is very beneficial for examinations and beyond.

Gift has shared her insights on mindfulness and delivered mindfulness presentations at esteemed international conferences, including the EARCOS Leadership Conference in Malaysia and the Asia Pacific International School Conference in Hong Kong. Additionally, she also taught mindfulness in education at the ECIS Leadership Conferences in Portugal, Luxembourg, and London. As the founder of the Mindfulness Academy of Asia, she collaborates with the International School Association of Thailand to provide professional development for international educators.

In 2018, she published her mindfulness book, “The Mindful Way,” a guide for teachers and administrators to incorporate mindfulness in schools. Her mindfulness training has benefited a diverse group of organizations and individuals, including the multi-billion dollar enterprise Amata Nakorn, Axa Insurance Company, esteemed medical institutions like Bumrungrad Hospital and Princ Hospital, professional golfers, executives, and doctorate and graduate students from Thammasat University.

Between 2018 to 2024, she was mentored by Hartanto Gunawan who introduced her to the practice of research meditation. This advanced form of meditation enhanced the mindfulness program at The American School of Bangkok Green Valley (ASBGV), transforming it from a focus solely on improving concentration and attention to a comprehensive approach that addresses mental suffering. Through research meditation, Gift has been able to provide effective counseling and training to students and adults dealing with trauma, stress, anxiety, and depression. Under Ajarn Hartanto’s guidance, she has also served as a mentor to parents, students, staff, and teachers at ASBGV, significantly improving the mental well-being of the entire school community.

Gift has extended her mindfulness and research meditation teachings to athletes, including basketball teams and young golfers who face intense mental pressure in highly competitive environments. Her training helps them block out the fear of failure and maintain focus, allowing them to excel in their respective sports. Additionally, her students have learned strategies to cope with challenges at home while achieving outstanding academic success. Many have been admitted to prestigious universities such as the University of California Los Angeles(UCLA), Columbia University, and Northwestern University. Notably, the ASBGV graduating class of 2025 has, thus far, collectively earned scholarships totaling \$40 million US. The success of her mindfulness and research meditation programs has enabled Gift to extend her expertise to various institutions, including Rajaprajanugroh schools under the Royal Patronage, The Thai Ministry of Education, Cesar Ritz College in Switzerland, International School of Dhaka, Satit Pattana School, and Siam University. Her work continues to inspire and empower individuals across diverse educational and professional landscapes.



BY AJARN HARTANTO GUNAWAN

FOOD FOR THOUGHT (FOOD FOR THE MIND)

IN OUR DAILY LIFE, EVERYTHING WE DO IS TO TAKE CARE OF THE BODY SINCE WE ARE BORN UNTIL WE DIE:

1. Shower to clean the body
2. Breakfast, lunch and dinner to feed the body so the body has energy and strong
3. Exercise for a healthy body
4. Taking vitamins for a healthy body

QUESTIONS:

1. Have we done the same for the mind everyday?
2. Do we shower or clean our minds everyday?
3. Have we fed the mind everyday?
4. Have we exercised the mind everyday for a healthy mind?
5. Have we given vitamins for the mind everyday for a healthy mind?

If the answer is "no", then, we'd better start taking care of our mind daily lives. We all human beings take care of our body everyday.

PLEASE KEEP IN MIND:

1. Without the mind, this body will not move at all; it is the mind that orders this body to get up, walk, run, jump, etc..
2. Guns don't kill - we put a gun in a locker for 100 years and the gun will not hurt or kill anyone. However, in the hand of an evil mind, sick mind, or dirty mind, then, a gun is used as a tool for the mind to fulfill its desire. So, the real killer is the mind, not any weapon.
3. Bomb does not and will not explode without the mind.
4. All actions that wholesome and unwholesome, good or evil are caused by the mind and carried out by the mind.

THE RIGHT MEDITATION IS THE ONLY WAY TO:

1. Shower/clean the mind
2. Feed the mind
3. Exercise and vitamin the mind

A healthy life is having both a healthy mind and body. In a healthy mind there is a guarantee of a healthy body and a healthy mental health; but in a healthy body, there is NO guarantee of a healthy mind and healthy mental health.

MEDIA RECOGNITION



LIFE, BUT BETTER - MINDFULNESS

Learn how to meditate like a Buddhist monk in Bangkok

Joe Cummings, CNN • Updated 3rd November 2021


Hartanto Gunawan, the meditation center's director and instructor, hails from Indonesia, where he left a position as CEO of a multinational to live as a monk in northern Thailand.

He left the monkhood after four years to establish a nonprofit school at Wat Arun for disadvantaged girls vulnerable to human trafficking, with the meditation center as an adjunct to help deal with trauma.

People of all religions and meditation traditions are welcome to practice here and even to stay overnight without cost. Normal hours for the center are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily; unlike other Bangkok centers, this one has remained open during the pandemic.

Ajahn Hartanto speaks perfect English, and teaches what he calls "research meditation". Rather than simply concentrating or quietening the mind, he says we must use it for self-enquiry; to understand who we are and why we're here.


"A terrorist or criminal can have a concentrated mind and still pull the trigger," he explains. "So, a concentrated mind can still be very dangerous."



The ex-monk and the Thai sex mafia: helping victims find another way

Human trafficking for enforced labour, the sex trade and coerced marriage engulfs an estimated 40 million victims world-wide, most of them women and children. Many, too, are destitute refugees and migrants. Every year, more risk being drawn into this illicit trade, a highly lucrative form of organized crime estimated at 150 billion USD a year. Operating out of a Buddhist monastery in Bangkok, Indonesian Hartanto Gunawan, a former businessman and monk, has dedicated the past 16 years to providing girls from northern Thailand with another option to selling their bodies.

By Edward Girardet - January 4, 2021 • 312




Saved by the temple: the girls of Bangkok striving for a better life

Melanie Swan travels to Wat Arun to meet the young women working hard to lift themselves out of the dangerous cycle of human trafficking



The girls at Wat Arun with their teacher, Sasamon Wattanasangman for the National

Melanie Swan



EX-MONK TAKES ON THE THAI SEX MAFIA



We have selected Hartanto Gunawan as one of our Global Genevans. These are inspired individuals whose work or legacies represent key issues ranging from human rights and



Temple of Dawn offers a beacon of hope

We are truly in a position to help them to get a better life, better future and better jobs without expecting anything in return.

Wat Arun's training center has become a symbol of support for the underprivileged, writes Acharya Acharyasachal




Proof of Making a Difference

whichcountryfrom Asia Bangkok, Thailand Travelling April 13, 2023 3 Minutes



When I stumbled upon the Research Meditation Center inside Was Arun, a Buddhist temple in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2018, I had no idea how much it would impact my life. As a student and instructor of meditation for the past 2 decades I was intrigued by the story of Hartanto Gunawan, the meditation teacher at this center. I've written about Hartanto on this blog [here](#). Former CEO, former Buddhist monk, meditation teacher




Why I need YOUR help with MY New Year's Resolution

whichcountryfrom Asia, Bangkok, Thailand, Travelling January 1, 2020 5 Minutes

UPDATED: [Link to donate](#) - [click here](#).

I don't normally make resolutions for the new year. I usually just make adjustments and changes to my lifestyle on an ongoing basis. Knowing what needs to be done and doing it. But something significant happened on Monday. I opened my mouth and some words came out. I don't know where they came from, but I was somehow perfectly comfortable with it. After sitting with it for 24 hours I came to think of it as my New Year's Resolution. As of today, I have a new role, new title, new responsibilities. The story begins here.

Remember I wrote a blog post in March of 2018 about 3 remarkable and inspiring people I'd met during the first 4 months of our year-long journey? You can read it [here](#). For me, meeting those 3 people was the highlight of our trip. Yes, I had a great time travelling to 11 different countries. We met a lot of great people that we're still friends with. But meeting those 3 remarkable and inspiring people forced me to do some soul searching, digging deeper into what I've done with my life and how I've spent my 60 years on this planet. The self-study was



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Uncategorized

Hartanto Gunawan's Learning Center: The Role of Discipline and Education in Combating Human Trafficking

May 27, 2019 • 639 Views

Hipofit: Sistema de Bienestar Integral

Mejora tu calidad de vida con un sistema que combina las últimas tendencias en entrenamiento, hábitos de vida saludables, nutrición, y entorno. "Si quieres cambiar el mundo, cámbiate a ti mismo" Gandhi

English articles

MEDITATION IN BANGKOK

The deep-voice monk who reaches your heart and mind

"... if you wash your body every day why don't you wash your mind every day meditating"

Hartanto Gunawan is an Indonesian-born monk who left a stressful working life as a multinational executive to become a Buddhist monk.

He created a teaching center in 2007 located in the Wat Arun temple in Bangkok and since then he has trained almost 1000 monks who leave there with work. The students are girls who come from poor villages in the mountains and are recruited by the mafias to prostitute them.






Meditating with Hartanto Gunawan

The teacher struggles and puts himself in danger to rescue them and give them a future, but as he says: "The fight and the risk are worth it, I would regret it if I didn't rescue them knowing that I can save them."

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