



Insight Dialogue Community

Living Relational Dhamma

Possibilities of Engagement Insight Dialogue Teaching Community

This document presents a flexible map of teaching/learning relationships and possibilities for engagement within the Insight Dialogue Teaching Community (IDTC). It reflects the wisdom and structures that have organically emerged over the years in the Insight Dialogue Community (IDC).

Many people are inspired to practice Insight Dialogue (ID) after attending their first retreat. A good first step is to find one or two people locally who can practice together or online. Other steps grow naturally out of this engagement. While we do not specifically offer a training program, we do support people as they ripen together in their capacity to offer ID practice. There is an emergent synergistic effect: as we practice together we grow in relationship with the Dhamma, with each other, and within the larger Sangha of awakening.

Through actively participating in learning communities and taking refuge in Buddha- Dhamma- Sangha, transmission of the teachings become possible and more evident. This typically is a long and gradual path involving study, meditative insight, direct experience, and wise and ethical relationships. It is the path taken by all teachers and facilitators. We recognize the community as this stream of awakening together. Letting go of the defilements individually and collectively, we grow in confidence and capacity. Rooted in silence, what can be offered is unique, non-identified, and balanced. The Dhamma shines through the offering more and more.

With development and maturation:

“S/he/they acquire(s) unwavering confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha thus... The Dhamma is well proclaimed... visible here and now, immediately effective, inviting inspection, onward leading, to be experienced by the wise for themselves.... (They) acquire unwavering confidence in the Sangha, thus: The Sangha is practicing the good way, the straight way, practicing the true way, practicing the proper way... this Sangha is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation, the unsurpassed field of merit for the world.”

Adapted from MN 7: 5-7

Insight Dialogue Teaching Community

IDTC members include Insight Dialogue founding teacher Gregory Kramer, recognized Retreat and ID teachers, facilitators, peer group leaders and those involved in the process of development.

Community members have access to Insight Dialogue Community (IDC) and IDTC offerings and learning resources. Members may propose online programs and participate in IDC leadership and working teams. They are encouraged to initiate and grow opportunities for offering ID within the dedicated ID community as well as beyond the IDC. Guided by gratitude and generosity, teachers and facilitators offer the practice and teachings freely. As appropriate, communities and individuals are encouraged to engage practices of dana as ways to support teachers and facilitators and sustain accessibility to the teachings for all.

Our intention for articulating an IDTC structure is to provide benefit to the community and all beings by:

- Cultivating deep spiritual friendships and mutual accountability among those sharing the teachings.
- Maintaining quality and coherence in how Insight Dialogue and relational Dhamma are taught.
- Supporting more opportunities for connection, learning, and skill development in sharing the teachings.
- Maintaining a shared community ethic of doing no harm, loving kindness, and giving freely.

Sustaining Community

Just as the monastic community creates and maintains a home for the formal teachings of the Buddha, as a lay community we are committed to creating and maintaining a home for relational insight practices and a living community of awakening. We have found that the vitality of the Insight Dialogue Teaching Community is sustained when members:

- Participate monthly in a local practice group or an online offering, and/or listen to or watch a video of a Dhamma talk by a seasoned ID teacher or other Dharma teacher.
- Attend an in-person residential ID retreat or a teaching community retreat preferably every year but at least every other year. Retreats are listed on the IDC website*. (www.metta.org until the new website is launched.)
- Share ID practice as a peer group leader, facilitator, or teacher.
- Participate in a learning cohort of spiritual friends and/or connect with somebody with an interest in the same skill development.
- Support others at an earlier or equivalent stage of skill development.
- As appropriate, contribute to and develop teaching resources for the community.
- Actively invite, receive, and develop processes for offering feedback regarding how they and others are sharing ID and participating in communities of practice. Participating in wholesome cultures of mutual reflection and feedback safeguard our community and illuminates our strengths and challenges. We cherish the gift of seeing through each other's eyes and attuning to ethical behaviors that do no harm. (The capacity to offer authentic

feedback and to derive learning and growth from that process is a hallmark of healthy community.

- Participate in mutually engaged discernment and recognition processes with the IDTC and Teachers' Council before publicly identifying as an Insight Dialogue Facilitator, Teacher, or Retreat Teacher.

Possibilities of Engagement (POE)

What follows is a listing of some of the current forms that have manifested in our community for those interested in offering the practice. You are encouraged to initiate contact with the IDTC if you would like more information. Anita Bermont at anita@metta.org is happy to receive your inquiries. Recommended qualities, experience, and knowledge are included with each category. These are guidelines and forms for going forward together in good faith and mutual accountability.

ID Peer Groups: Peer Group Leaders and Group Representatives

The peer group meets regularly for Insight Dialogue practice and study. The group is listed on the IDC website to give location and email contact. When the leadership is shared, one person may be designated or volunteer to represent the group by keeping a relationship of mutual support flowing between the group and the IDTC. The representative or group meets with an IDTC mentor on a bi-annual basis. Where there is a regular Peer Group Leader, they are invited to maintain this connection on behalf of the group.

Recommended Qualities, Knowledge, and Experience for Peer Group Engagement:

- commitment to silent meditation practice and regular ID practice
- feels an immediate personal inspiration from the Buddha's teachings on the human experience and living a skillful life
- lives the relational qualities of friendliness and compassion
- observes the 5 Precepts*
- offers the practice freely
- group leaders have prior Silent and Insight Dialogue retreat experience

ID Facilitators

Facilitators regularly offer non-residential group practice (local or online) and participate in a mentor-led practice cohort, where they actively contribute to their cohort and the larger community by training and practicing together, co-creating materials and teaching resources, supporting facilitator forums, etc. Facilitators engage with mentors when initiating new offerings.

Facilitators and their bios and photos can be listed on the IDC website. They receive referrals, as available, to communities seeking ID practice guidance. Facilitators maintain learning relationships with their cohort and mentor and have the opportunity to mentor peer group leaders or other facilitators. They participate in the flow of dana that allows the Dhamma to continue flowing freely.

Recommended Qualities, Knowledge, and Experience:

- All of the above qualities
- *Meditation*: Commits to daily silent practice and regular ID practice. Regularly attends silent and Insight Dialogue retreats.
- *Dhamma*: Engages in regular study of Buddhist thought, practice and ethics. Reads or listens to teachings by contemporary Dharma teachers.
- *Relationship*: Engages the power of relationship to foster an ethical and caring life as well as to foster wisdom, insight, and compassion. Actively learns about human relatedness from a physiological, psychological, and meditative perspective. Cultivates relatedness illuminated by the Seven Factors of Awakening. *
- *Six Area Assessment*: Uses the Six Area Assessment tool for self-reflection and mapping one's development on this path.

ID Teachers

ID Teachers teach and co-teach on an on-going basis. In addition to leading non-residential practice opportunities, they may lead daylongs and when authorized, up to 3-day residential weekends. They participate in a cohort of spiritual friends committed to developing competency in the Six Areas of Development*. Each cohort engages with the TC to identify a suitable group mentor.

Teachers attend an annual Teacher's development retreat, and incline toward teaching and mentoring in their local communities, in the IDTC, and online through IDC. They stay actively engaged with their learning cohort and mentor. They may choose to mentor facilitators, teach online cohorts of Peer Group Leaders or Facilitators, contribute teaching resources (such as curriculum, Dhamma talks, and contemplations) to the IDC website and the larger community, and reach out to new populations, developing resources for teaching diverse groups. They participate in a mutually engaged assessment and recognition process with the Teachers' Council before publicly identifying as an Insight Dialogue Teacher. Once recognized, they maintain an ongoing relationship with the ID community, attending Teacher development retreats/meetings at least once every two years, with mutually agreed upon exceptions.

The IDC website will carry teachers' bios and photos, and list events that include Insight Dialogue, Dharma Contemplation, and relational teachings. Teachers can receive administrative support from the IDTC for their online and in-person teachings and also referrals, as available, to communities seeking ID practice guidance. Teachers have the opportunity to be mentored by more experienced ID teachers, to consult with members of the Teachers' Council, and to access occasional cohort time with the Founding Teacher. Teachers may request to shadow daylong and weekend retreats, or to organize retreats and invite more experienced teachers to co-teach. They may request specific support for developing ID offerings to special populations.

Recommended Qualities, Knowledge, and Experience:

- All of the above qualities

- In giving and receiving teachings, the active cultivation of the *Six Areas of Development** has naturally arisen as an ethical value that threads throughout their actions and relationships
- They actively engage in teacher development with ID teachers and as appropriate shadow, assist, and co-teach, and also engage in other teacher training programs.
- They are committed to actively teaching whole life Dhamma, especially relational Dhamma and Insight Dialogue, in daylong retreats, online, and in other forms.
- Their daily lives reflect psychological maturity and embodiment of the Eightfold Path.
- They have maintained a consistent practice of silent meditation for five years or longer.
- Silent retreat and Insight Dialogue retreat practice is on-going.
- They are committed to and seek peer and mentor review as a lifelong student of Dhamma.
- They are committed to life-long learning and Dhamma study.
- Spiritual friendship, mutual accountability, and regular participation in learning cohorts undergird and actively support their practice.
- They are committed to sharing Insight Dialogue on a dana basis.

*** Six Areas of Development and Assessment**

(This document is available by request from the IDTC team.) In brief the six areas to be developed are as follows:

1. Meditation
2. Dhamma
3. Sangha: Relational Capacity (Or Relatedness)
4. Personal Character & Psychological Knowledge
5. Teacher Formation & Roles
6. Teaching Insight Dialogue

ID Retreat Teachers

ID Retreat Teachers are recognized as qualified to teach and co-teach ID at all levels, including long residential retreats. They maintain on-going connection with the Teachers Council, check in with a TC member yearly (or more often), and coordinate whatever mentoring they offer with the TC and IDTC. All retreat teachers are considered a part of the retreat teacher cohort and commit to turning towards each other as spiritual friends, co-teachers, and resources for learning, accompaniment, and mutual reflection. Retreat teachers attend IDTC or a Teachers' retreat/meeting at least once every two years, with mutually agreed upon exceptions. They offer service to the community through mentoring, allowing themselves to be shadowed during retreats by teachers, contributing teaching resources, etc.

As with all Teachers, the IDC website will feature their bios and photos, and list events that include ID, DC, and relational teachings. As available, they will receive referrals to communities seeking ID practice guidance and retreats. Administrative support for their online and in-person teachings may be requested.

Developing ID Retreat Teachers

ID Teachers who are learning to teach retreats will also engage regularly with a retreat teaching cohort and cohort mentor to review learning aspirations and specific needs.

They may have opportunities to shadow retreats and co-teach. They must be willing and able to travel.

During the development process, retreat teachers may teach online cohorts, serve as mentors and contribute teaching resources such as retreat structures, curriculum, Dhamma talks, and contemplations to the website and the larger community. They agree to only teach at a level that matches their skill development until fully recognized as an Insight Dialogue Retreat Teacher by the Teachers' Council. They have on-going access to the Teachers' Council for consultation as needed, as well as personal or cohort time with the Founding Teacher.

Recommended Qualities, Knowledge, and Experience:

- In addition to the qualities mentioned above, they actively shadow, assist, and co-teach with recognized ID retreat teachers and also engage in other teacher training programs.
- They are committed to traveling and teaching within their own communities, countries, and internationally.
- They teach Insight Dialogue regularly.
- Even as they speak with their unique voice and style, they teach Insight Dialogue in the basic form developed by Gregory Kramer and authorized by the Teachers' Council.
- As a whole life understanding of the Dhamma matures, and as new forms of Insight Dialogue develop, they commit to sharing their discoveries with the rest of the ID teaching community and inquiring together as to whether a given innovation is appropriate and acceptable.

Teacher Commitments

*In summary, all Retreat Teachers in Development and Teachers in Development commit to the *Six Areas of Development as an on-going practice of learning and effacement by:*

- Learning together – developing a learning community in which to train and develop together.
- Learning independently – by contemplating, practicing, writing, studying with other teachers.
- Cultivating in-person practice by participating, shadowing, assisting, co-teaching, and teaching in cohort, in their communities, and in teacher meetings.
- Actively initiating, inviting, and engaging in mutual reflection and feedback processes with students, peers, and the IDTC.
- Developing an annual learning plan (Six Areas) with their cohort and mentor by personalizing learning goals and methods.
- Participating in a mutually engaged assessment and recognition process with the TC before publicly identifying as an Insight Dialogue Teacher.
- Actively partnering with and nurturing the world community by offering teachings.

IDTC Affiliation

Not all Insight Dialogue peer groups, facilitators, and teachers will choose to actively participate in the IDTC. Only those who uphold the standards and ethics of the community as conveyed by this document and who are actively engaged in groups or co-teaching with community members will be listed on the website. In this way we create and sustain a community that is mutually accountable and devoted to shared standards and ethics. Each person or learning cohort of persons commits to providing an annual report of activities and engagements to the IDTC and maintaining collaborative connection and annual conversations with the TC. A form for this purpose will be sent annually by the IDTC to active participants and/or cohorts.

For more information or support for establishing peer groups of practice, or developing as an ID facilitator or teacher, please contact Anita Bermont at anita@metta.org.

Glossary

- IDC: Insight Dialogue Community
- IDTC: Insight Dialogue Teaching Community
- TC: Teachers' Council
- IDC website refers to www.insightdialogue.org
- POE: Possibilities of Engagement

Terms

- Five Precepts: the basic code of ethics undertaken for developing mindfulness, heartfulness and character. Recognizing that we are all interconnected, we commit to abstaining from killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication.
- Seven Factors of Awakening: meditative qualities of the heart mind that support awakening, e.g., mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity.