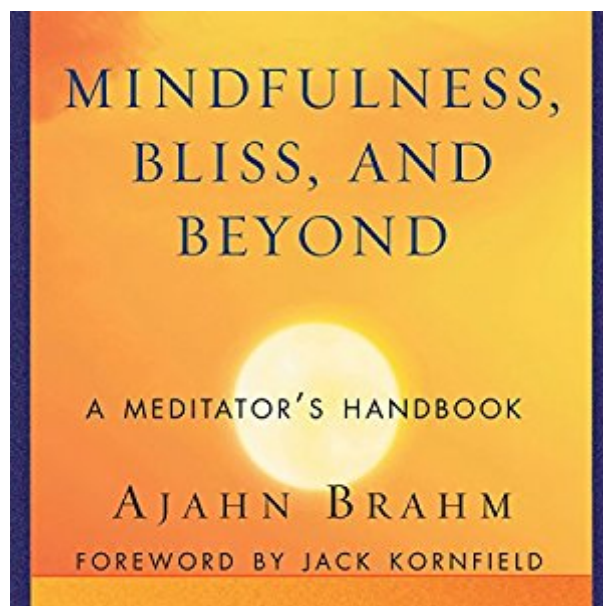


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# Mindfulness, Bliss, And Beyond: A Mediator's Handbook



## Synopsis

Meditation: It's not just a way to relax, or to deal with life's problems. Done correctly, it can be a way to radically encounter bliss and to begin - and sustain - real transformation in ourselves. In *Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond*, self-described meditation junkie Ajahn Brahm shares his knowledge and experience of the jhanas - a core part of the Buddha's original meditation teaching. Never before has this material been approached in such an empowering way, by a teacher of such authority and popularity. Full of surprises, delightfully goofy humor, and entertaining stories that inspire, instruct, and illuminate, *Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond* will encourage those new to meditation, and give a shot in the arm to more experienced practitioners as well.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

For over thirty years, Ajahn Brahmavamsa has been a monk in the Thai "forest tradition," a branch of Theravada Buddhism known for its strict adherence to both the spirit and the letter of the Buddha's teachings. Tibetan Buddhism is exotic and Zen is aesthetically pleasing, but for the meditation that led the Buddha himself to enlightenment, we must look to the Theravadans. Now one of the best-known faces of Buddhism in the world (although just becoming known in the States), Ajahn Brahm is one of the most admired meditation teachers in the world, and this book shares EVERYTHING. You can take this book to your hut in the woods (or spare bedroom in your house) and work its plan to ultimate bliss. I was lucky enough to meet Ajahn Brahm last year in Chicago at

Transitions Book Place, when he was visiting in support of his book of teaching stories, *Who Ordered This Truckload of Dung?* (An excerpt from the interview with him appears below.) As wonderful and inspiring as his first book is, *Mindfulness, Bliss, and Beyond* is what we've all been waiting for, an encapsulation of the meditation wisdom Ajahn Brahm has cultivated since 1973. If you're interested at all in what happiness comes from meditation, PLEASE do yourself a favor and read this book. It is everything I had hoped it would be -- and let me tell you, that was a tall order after meeting the writer himself!

Q. People call you "the Elvis of Buddhism," "the Seinfeld of Buddhism." They want to make you into a celebrity. Do you ever have difficulty reconciling that with being a monk--and not just a monk, but a forest monk, which is very different from living as a famous person?

A. You know, I think one of the first times when it really hit me is I was giving a talk in Singapore.

Ajahn Brahm is certainly one of the most dynamic and charismatic Buddhist speakers nowadays. His Friday Night Dhamma talks and seminars have now gained worldwide acclaim and have even won over my mother. Indeed, along with Ajahn Sucitto and Jack Kornfield, Ajahn Brahm was one of the first masters I encountered when I was first introduced to Theravadan Buddhism. His talks have since provided me with a lot of inspiration over the years and have helped me through some very trying times. His previous book *"Truckload of Dung"* contains many of his jokes, stories and anecdotes that neatly illustrate the main aspects of Buddhism and is vintage Ajahn Brahm at his best. I must confess, however, that I found his latest book *"Mindfulness, Bliss..."* along with his most recent Dhamma talks on enlightenment to be somewhat troubling, not necessarily in their content, but in their absolute tone or attitude towards Buddhist practice and enlightenment. While this book contains many useful insights and references about jhanas, his relentless and recurring insistence that experiencing and attaining jhanas is the only true way of achieving enlightenment, borders on the dogmatic and could be misleading especially for beginners in Dhamma practice. His assertion that achieving or experiencing jhanas is either the best or only way to enlightenment flies in the face of other teachings by renowned meditation masters including more senior teachers such as Ajahn Sumedho and even his own teacher Ajahn Chah. The jhanic bliss or nimittas experienced during meditation should not be attached to, nor do they in themselves constitute enlightenment and nor are they a necessary or sufficient condition for enlightenment.

Presently when you learn meditation almost any teacher will tell you that what you are learning is from the master himself. However this unusual English book is method specific and teaches the

same method that the Buddha himself was practicing and teaching in over 32 suttas of the Tripitaka. It teaches you in a practical way how to develop samadhi. Very rare to find in modern Buddhist writings. Though many reviews on here might question the validity of Ajahn Brahm's teaching, they are not following Buddha's actual teaching but merely repeating the cultural constructs of Buddhist practice as learned through the voices of teachers. When reading some of the reviewers, you have to wonder if anyone anymore actually reads through the Buddha's teaching (Tripitaka)? Or they just repeat like parrots what they learn from teachers who are not the Buddha? If you have read more than just the standard suttas like the sattipattana etc.? Buddha recommends jhana in over 32 suttas. In fact there is nowhere in the 3 sets of suttas that Buddha teaches meditation where he also does not mention jhana. This is because it was meant to be the precursor to Vipassana. He does not recommend styles of practice like U BA Khin's (S.N. Goenka) or various other supposed vipassana styles. Have you read the LAM RIM (from Tibetan Buddhist) teachings of Tsong Kha Pha? you can actually find jhana being taught in there. Buddha taught a system of meditation called Samatha Vipassana. The 1st part was the development of concentration and serenity or samadhi. This has 8 stages and is what Ajahn Bhram has been generous enough to teach openly.

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