



### **Filling Your Cup - July 2025**

#### **“No Mud, No Lotus”**

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As pediatricians, we have the opportunity to observe our patients and our own children in states of sheer joy, and the abrupt descent into crying, screaming, and dropping onto the floor. Metaphorically, our life journeys take us to very similar locations. When we purchase a new outfit, pair of shoes, car, purse, we have a little rush.

It comes to a screeching halt when we have a disagreement or other inconvenience. Thich Nhat Hanh calls this concept “No mud, no lotus”. We have experiences of happiness, sometimes quickly followed by suffering.

In the story of Siddharta Gautama, who eventually became the Buddha, or enlightened one, he spent much of his childhood and young adulthood living as a prince in a beautiful palace. He was a handsome man with a beautiful wife and child. One day, when he left the protective walls of his palace, he encountered a man who was old, a man who was ill, a man who had already died, and a wandering sage, an experience known as “The Four Sights”. This led him to question his life, and he set off to find the true meaning. He then sat under the famous Bodhi tree, where he meditated and achieved enlightenment, to be known as the Buddha.

The concept of “no mud, no lotus” really speaks to how temporary all of these experiences are. Thich Nhat Hanh explains that when we have a flower, it will die and become compost. However, from that compost, we grow another flower. Life is a cycle

of happiness and suffering. The key is not to allow ourselves to be trapped in external circumstances. In other words, we shouldn't define ourselves by these events. For example, when we are in a situation which is identified as suffering, it is difficult not to wear this as a coat of depression or anxiety. When we really reflect, it is these experiences that lead us to a beautiful place.

Lotuses require some time to germinate in thick, muddy water. This is an analogy to the dark times in our lives. When the lotus emerges from the mud, it opens to receive the sunlight and opens into a beautiful flower. When we emerge from those dark places, we are exposed to light, which opens our hearts and our souls to receiving beautiful blessings. Then, the cycle repeats itself. From our suffering, we receive happiness and our happiness can bring us suffering.

When we find ourselves in these moments, where we feel overwhelmed or stuck, a simple meditation can help. You can find a quiet place, and create a sacred space for yourself, and just spend about one minute repeating the phrase: "No mud, no lotus". It is important to remember that these events do not define who we are. They only help us grow into who we are meant to be.