

Triangle Insight Meditation Community

www.triangleinsight.org

Below are excerpts from Spirit Rock's document, "Calling All Kalyana Mitta Friends."
The complete document is on the [Spirit Rock website](#).

"Having admirable people as friends, companions, and colleagues is actually the whole of the holy life."
—The Buddha

It wasn't an accident that the Buddha highlighted the sangha as the third gem of refuge. Spirit Rock is committed to building a strong sense of community and feels that the Kalyana Mitta (spiritual friends) network can be the backbone of this effort. Kalyana Mitta (KM) groups offer a sense of involvement, ongoing support for study, and an aid in bringing the dharma into our lives. They are a more intimate sangha of refuge and support.

We are spiritual friends who meet together in small groups to explore the dharma through inquiry and experience in our everyday lives. Through our engagement we take practice off the cushion and relate to each other in a different kind of practice.

Senior dharma student and co-facilitator Quilley Powers, says she has learned to be open and listen to the other co-facilitator, and to guide rather than trying to control the outcome. This approach has changed her interactions both in and out of the group. Quilley acknowledges the biggest blessing of all is the depth of sharing in the group. She says, "... to be able to create the container for this to happen for myself as well as the others is an incredible fruit of my ongoing dharma practice."

One person who is in a KM group with a focus on metta practice reports that sitting and practicing in a small group has a power of opening the heart which she experiences as different from sitting alone or with a large group. She says that having this group in her life helps her to connect with her deep gratitude for being alive.

KM member Tom White says listening to all the other members talking about their struggles and concerns, viewed from a dharma perspective, is very special. Tom appreciates how each person has brought personal joys and woes to the gathering, and sees how practice has been working in their lives. There is a feeling of love and acceptance in his group, as they support each other's lives, practice and growth. Many of the members feel that, even though they have close friends and loved ones in their daily lives, the group is the only place where they are able to share their deepest experiences in the shared light of the dharma. The experience of meditating with people who grow to know and love each other is very powerful and supportive. The discussions on books which the entire group reads are rich with understanding. Tom says he is very glad for his group and encourages all practitioners to join one.

Through getting to know those who delight in the Buddha's teaching we create a connection with them; we establish a support system. This is the network of spiritual friendship. This is what really enables us as a human society to hold together. Political agreements don't work, laws don't work; it is our ability to strengthen and affirm our qualities of inner beauty, kindness and generosity, and to encourage those in others- that's what enables human beings to live in a wholesome and profitable way.

"In spiritual friendship, we can actually be with each other. We open ourselves to the other person, ready to notice any grudges that we have, or the opinions and obsession we have about them, as well as the attractions towards them. Then we can enter more into the place of listening, of forgiving, of letting go of the past and just being open to the present. And this is the most wonderful and beautiful gift we can give."
--Ajahn Amaro