

Bruce and Maureen Stewart are the Teachers responsible for Dhamma Patapa. Bruce conducted the first 20-day course at the center and answers some questions about the course.

How is the experience of a 20-day course different than a 10-day course?

The longer courses provide the opportunity for students to go much, much deeper than in a regular 10-day course. Hence, the students' understanding of and confidence in Dhamma is that much more profound, based solely on their own experience.

It's an opportunity for students to work without the distraction of new students who are learning the technique. Students are really encouraged to be so much more self-dependent. There's few instructions. They can sit most group sittings in their cells. The only time a student is required to be in the hall is for the evening group sitting and discourse. The rest of the time, they're working independently.

Who can sit a 20-day course?

Students who have sat five 10-day courses and a Satipatthana course. They must have maintained their daily practice of two one-hour sittings for two years and also have upheld the five precepts. An assistant teacher who knows them well must also give them approval.

What purpose do these requirements serve?

They are there because it's really important that people have the maturity, the strength, and confidence in Dhamma to face the deep work and the inevitable storms that come with this practice. They must be established to some degree with equanimity and the understanding of Anicca.

Who can serve a 20-day course?

Ideally servers should have sat a long course themselves. However if we cannot find people who have sat long courses, we're looking for people who have a strong practice and are mature enough to work in a harmonious way over the extended duration of a long course. This is really critical for the success of the course.

What significance is the 20-day course to the center?

My feeling is that it's like the center coming of age. This is a relatively new center and for it to be holding long courses like this is so wonderful. Because of the deeper and more serious nature of the course, it enhances the atmosphere of the center. Having trust members, regional students, managers and servers sit these long courses changes the way they serve. They become more mature in their

understanding of Dhamma, so when they go about their responsibilities, they do so with much more insight, confidence and metta.

What is the future of long courses at Dhamma Patapa?

The long courses are really critical for the development of the center. As the center ripens and matures, we need to be providing the opportunity for people in this region to sit these deep courses. Our hope is as the center continues to grow, we will have a pagoda with proper meditation cells and at that point we will have 30-day and 45-day courses, but in the meantime we'll have 20-day courses.

What has your experience been as the course teacher?

This course has been so successful. We have an incredible group of Dhamma workers serving. They're serving up delicious meals so lovingly. They are so respectful and supportive of the students sitting. They're sitting too, but they don't come into the hall. There is a separate meditation hall for the servers.

The center is really protected from the outside world during the long courses. Outsiders are not allowed to come to the center. I'd just like to get across the serious nature of these long courses. Students are asked to focus just on what's going on inside of them. Any distraction, even minor, from the outside can pull them away from their work. It's a great opportunity people have to do this here. It is very unique.