

25 July 2021

Greetings my LGBTQ+ sibling or ally,

No one at the DSMC asked me to write this, but I wanted to reach out to you if you, like I, encountered something in the suggested readings for Tranquil Wisdom Insight Meditation (TWIM) that gave you cause for concern. I am referencing specifically the passage on page 128 of *Life is Meditation-Meditation is Life*, where gay and bisexual “personality types” are cautioned that TWIM is not recommended for them.

First, thank you for reaching out to the DSMC for clarification. I almost didn’t do that and, if I had decided I could not go there, would have missed out on what was a truly transformative experience. Perhaps you, too, have already begun incorporating TWIM into your meditation practice and see the incredible benefits of its Mettā focus. Or, perhaps you also see that, despite the recommendation that gay and bi folks not use this method, there is considerable compassion in the passage and recognition that the Buddha did not teach that homosexuality and bisexuality are wrong. Or maybe you noticed that this recommendation occurs exactly once in all of the literature about TWIM and nowhere else. Whatever the case may be, you didn’t let that one passage keep you from making inquiries to the DSMC. Good!

I want to assure you that my experience on retreat was profound and meaningful. I did not hide who I am as a fifty-six year old gay man who has been out and an activist for LGBTQ+ rights since my early 20s. I felt seen as I am and accepted into the *sangha*. My queerness was a problem for no one, Bhante Vimalaramsi included! It rarely came up in the course of doing the work, and when it did, it was fully acknowledged.

For sure, you will need to do some work to adapt the teachings to your own needs. First and foremost, make your own choices about the gender of your “spiritual friend,” who will be the sustained anchor for your meditation in the early stages of TWIM. Perhaps, before attending a retreat, spend some time “auditioning” some potential spiritual friends, making sure they bring up neither feelings of physical attraction nor resentment. Regardless of sexual orientation, I think the selection process of a spiritual friend as initial meditation anchor takes time and careful attention for all of us.

TWIM and Forgiveness Meditation are both powerful meditation techniques; I think that you will find them very beneficial in your practice. I do not know why that recommendation concerning gay and bisexual people showed up in one of Bhante’s books, but it is clearly no longer the position of the DSMC. And you, my friend, can let any concerns about it go from your mind as you settle into what I hope will be a truly transformative and beneficial meditative experience.

If you would like to contact me about my experiences with TWIM as an out queer man, I would be happy to talk with you. Email is probably the best way to initiate contact; I can be reached at jmgray32@gmail.com. And, of course, I encourage you to be frank and honest in your questions and correspondence with the DSMC. The directors and staff there are truly overflowing with loving kindness and are eager to support you in your meditative journey.

Mettā,

Jonathan “Jonny” Gray

