

# Meditation for Real Life

Stilling the mind is a challenge in the most serene of locations.

Meditation teacher Margot Sangster leads her participants in one of the busiest areas of the Downtown Eastside. At Hastings and Main, the practice of loving kindness is ongoing.



Left to right, Ayren, Margot Sangster, and René practice Metta meditation at the Listening Post.

PHOTO BY BARRY CALHOUN

BY TUIJA SEIPPELL

Every Wednesday evening, a small group of men and women gathers at the Listening Post in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. At the rough and noisy Main and Hastings intersection, the group participates in an hour and a half of Metta meditation, in the glow of live candles, sitting shoeless in a circle on big colourful pillows. Guided by volunteer Margot Sangster, a respected Buddhist meditation instructor, they

go inward, ignoring the screech of ambulance sirens outside, and the gurgle of the exposed water pipes in the two-storey-high space. Many of the participants have experienced, and still live with, difficulties of the worst kind—AIDS, abuse, and addiction. They say that they come to the Metta, or loving-kindness meditation, because it helps them deal with, and solve their problems.

## Meditation rediscovered

Meditation, an ancient practice at the core of virtually every spiritual tradition, has been particularly essen-

tial in Eastern traditions, and is now being rediscovered in the West. Research results now prove what ancient meditators knew all along: meditation can alter both the body and mind. In her new TV series, *Quiet Mind—Meditation for Real Life*, Vancouver-based film maker Gabriela Schonbach of Omni Film, has captured on film our increasing desire to quiet down, become calm, go inward, and look for a deeper meaning in our lives. In the beautifully photographed series—Schonbach herself is behind the camera—aired recently across North America on Vision TV, she

looks at six of the ways we have discovered to do accomplish this. "It was difficult to narrow it down to six," Schonbach says, "but the writer, Connie Moffit, who is a Buddhist herself, had criteria that included authenticity, well-respected teachers, and as much variety of traditions as possible."

One episode—Metta Meditation—introduces viewers to Margot Sangster, who during intensive study of various forms of meditation in Asia and in California, and throughout her travels around the world, encoun-

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