

Nourish Awareness While Working

Thich Nhat Hanh

In my community, I bind books. Using a toothbrush, a small wheel, and a very heavy fire-proof brick (about 4 or 5 pounds), I can bind 200 books in a day. Before binding, I gather all the pages and arrange them numerically around a long table. Then I walk around the table, and when I have walked all around it, I know that I have the correct number of pages for one signature. Walking around the table, I know that I am not going anywhere in particular, so I walk slowly, gathering each page, conscious of each movement, breathing softly, conscious of each breath. I am at peace while assembling the pages, gluing them, and putting the cover on the book. I cannot produce as many books in a day as a professional bookbinder or a machine, but I also know that I do not hate my job. If you want a lot of money to spend, you must work hard and quickly, but if you live simply, you can work gently and in full awareness. I know many young people who prefer to work less, perhaps four hours a day, earning a small livelihood, so they can live simply and happily. This may be a solution to our society's problems--reducing the production of useless goods, sharing work with those who have none, and living simply and happily. Some individuals and communities have already proved that it is possible. This is a promising sign for the future, isn't it?

Excerpted from *The Sun My Heart*, by Thich Nhat Hanh, Parallax Press, 1988, pp. 18-19.