Free from Notions: The Diamond Sutra
By Thich Nhat Hanh

Self-forgiveness in San Quentin
By Sister Jewel (Chau Nghiern)

Ten Breaths for Healing
By Glen Schneider
The Seeds of Love
Growing Mindful Relationships
By Jerry Braza
Tuttle, 2011
Soft cover, 192 pages
Reviewed by Karen Hilsberg

"As the gardener, such is the garden."
— Hebrew Proverb

"The foundation for developing mindful and healthy relationships begins with ourselves. Three practices—Seeing, Renewing, and Being—will support you as you become the master gardener of your life and your relationships." This opening passage from The Seeds of Love, by Jerry Braza, reflects the accessible yet deep lessons shared by the seasoned Dharma teacher in his new book. Braza emphasizes teachings and practices that help us nurture positive seeds in ourselves and our loved ones. He writes about how to transform seeds of fear, anger, jealousy, and doubt into love, compassion, and understanding.

While many of the teachings in The Seeds of Love reflect the wisdom of the Buddha and Thich Nhat Hanh, Braza brings a unique, modern, and American perspective to his presentations. He offers the insights of an experienced lay practitioner and college professor who has practiced with a Sangha for many years. The practices explored are not only for the purpose of individual self-healing, but also for promoting healthy relationships with our families, friends, and co-practitioners. As the Buddha teaches, we inter-are with each other, so healing within and without cannot be separated.

This book is both simply presented and dense in content. Braza includes beautiful poetry and illustrations that make the book an excellent practice companion. Furthermore, the teachings are accessible to people of all faiths, and Braza incorporates the lessons of many wisdom traditions, including Buddhism, Christianity, and Judaism. Appropriate for beginners and experienced practitioners alike, this is a wonderful continuation of the author's first book, Moment by Moment: The Art and Practice of Mindfulness.

As a gardener, I find the book's gardening metaphors and themes beautiful. They bring to mind the fact that one translation of an ancient word for "one who meditates or practices mindfulness" is "a cultivator." The Seeds of Love would be a great book for Sanghas or book groups to read together and use as a basis for meaningful sharing and discussion.

Walking the Tiger's Path
A Soldier's Spiritual Journey in Iraq
By Paul M. Kendel
Tendril Press, 2011
Soft cover, 247 pages
Reviewed by Judith Toy, True Door of Peace

Until reading Sergeant Kendel's book, I'd only heard news accounts of the war in Iraq. Although my two nephews have each done two tours in Iraq, they don't talk about their experiences. Kendel describes the precise type of hell realm this war has been. The "enemy" is both everywhere and nowhere, and compassion is considered a weakness.

In the course of serving with the Georgia National Guard, Kendel became a student of the Shambhala Buddhist teachings. He learned that the mind of a tiger, according to Sakyong Mipham, is a "mind of discernment," allowing us to "stop and think and make a decision based on wisdom and compassion, rather than on hate and fear."

With story after hair-raising story, Kendel outlines his gradual battlefield enlightenment through correspondence with Buddhist teachers, and through reading Pema Chodron's Awakening Loving Kindness while on patrol. He came within a fraction of an inch of blowing away a father and his little girl, but made split-second eye contact with the child. Instead of seeing the enemy, he "saw something positive. I saw hope in that little girl's eyes. Hope... even when the world around her seemed to be in total chaos."

When Kendel came home, his wife was having an affair and not only ended their marriage, but changed his close relationship with his two sons. And then his mother died. These events, along with haunting incidents in Iraq, constituted for Kendel both a crisis and an opportunity.

His saving grace was the Shambhala practice, along with Margot Neuman, a senior student who reached out and gave Kendel a peaceful place to take refuge. His subsequent visits to the Shambhala Mountain Center, and meeting Pema Chodron and Sakyong Mipham as well as Shambhala President Richard Roech, cemented Kendel's inner peace and gave him a Sangha. The Shambhala warrior, he learned, does not create war at all. The tiger sees with clarity how to act.