



# Meeting Facilitator Guidebook

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*Thank you!*

**NWBR** is a Northwest affiliate of the ***Buddhist Recovery Network***



Proud member of the ***Northwest Dharma Association***



Northwest Dharma Association

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# What's this? It's our new NWBR official LOGO!

For our new look, we hired artist **Dusty Peterson**, and asked him to create an image that would represent how using Buddhist practices can support us in living a happier and healthier life. In Buddhism the journey of eliminating Dukkha in our lives is often symbolized by the journey of the Lotus. The very existence of the flower is dependent on its' struggling to come up from the mud, through the water and eventually blossoming above the surface. This can easily relate to the journey from the greed, hatred and delusion we often spend our lives in, through the waters of mindfulness and meditation, into the clarity and wisdom of our "awakening".



We then handed the artwork over to **Jesse Burnett**, our creative website support volunteer, who was able to create a logo from the artwork for us to integrate into our website and all of our promotional materials.

We are so pleased that Dusty and Jesse were able to bring our vision to life, and create this artwork that will represent Northwest Buddhist Recovery and the path of freedom from the suffering of addictive behaviors.

Please let us know what you think! Look for our logo on our website, business cards and eventually some buttons, T-shirts or hats! And, don't forget to go to [www.dustypeterson.net](http://www.dustypeterson.net) to view more of Dusty's amazing artwork!

*"May you be free from the suffering of addiction.  
May you be happy"*



## What is a Buddhist recovery meeting?

*“Buddhism is almost exclusively concerned with the development of the individual, of improving ourselves by focusing on the mind, which makes it very suitable for people intent on fighting and winning the greatest of all battles: the battle with self. And its ideals of purity, clarity, tranquility and simplicity are attractive to people recovering from addictive, chaotic lifestyles.”*

*Paul Santlain, Founder, Buddhist Recovery Network*

Buddhism teaches that the root of all suffering lies in our human survival instinct of craving experiences or feelings that are pleasant, and being averse to those that are unpleasant. When we experience pleasure, we grasp onto it without the understanding that it is fleeting and will not last. When we lose that pleasant feeling or experience, we suffer. Developing awareness of this phenomenon, deepening our concentration and mindfulness of the present moment and becoming aware of the impermanence of all things can supplement beautifully any treatment program and bring deep, Spiritual healing to your recovery.

Buddhist Recovery meetings were created “for those seeking support with their recovery from addictive behaviors by using traditional mindfulness meditation techniques and study of Buddhist teachings.”

*NWBR mission statement .*

Today, many people are finding peace and happiness in sobriety and freedom from their addictive behaviors through Buddhist practice and meditation. While many types of meetings and groups have evolved based on the Buddha’s teachings of mindfulness and meditation, there are three common threads in every Buddhist-oriented or meditation based meeting. Meetings supported by Northwest Buddhist recovery;

- ❖ sit and meditate together, either at the start of the meeting or at the end,
- ❖ share teachings rooted in Buddhist Dharma, mindfulness & meditation as related to recovery,
- ❖ nurture the development of a strong “Sangha”, or peer group, to support each other on our recovery path.

If your meeting uses the guidelines above, you could be considered a Buddhist Recovery meeting. The following guidelines can be used to assist people find a meeting to support their individual recovery program.

### Is Buddhist Recovery right for you?

- ❖ Are you interested in Buddhist teachings to help ease the suffering of your recovery from addiction?
- ❖ Are you currently working a 12-step recovery program, and looking to incorporate meditation into your program?
- ❖ Are you currently working an alternative recovery program that stresses mindfulness techniques and meditation as a tool for your recovery from your addictive behaviors?
- ❖ Would you like to meet new people from many recovery paths and experience a more intimate way to connect with others on the road to freedom from addiction?

Buddhist recovery has grown into an inclusive support system for all those wishing to lessen their suffering and live a more healthy, happy and wholesome life. Groups are now forming with a wide variety of themes, from various Buddhist traditions, offering support for anyone from any or no recovery program.

They encourage practitioners to develop a regular meditation practice and encourage exploration and discussion of Buddhist Dharma as related to recovery. There are also resources online that promote events that bring Buddhist authors and teachers to the recovery community to support the pursuit of mindfulness, peace and freedom from the suffering of the addicted mind.

## **What type of meeting will you offer?**

One of the things that I love about the Buddhist recovery meetings in the Northwest is that you can go to any one of them and have a different experience. On Monday evening, you may attend a Dharma topic and discussion meeting, on Wednesday a Shambhala tradition Dharma study meeting. On Thursday, you can read and discuss books by many Western Buddhist Dharma teachers with your peers. In Olympia, you can attend a meditation and recovery meeting with an ordained Bhikkhu. Or, how about a morning meditation meeting where you study and practice Metta (Loving kindness meditation) and the Buddhist path of morality as it relates to your recovery? When creating a new recovery Sangha, think about how your mindfulness and Buddhist practice has changed or healed your life. There are sure to be others who share your thinking and could benefit from your experience as well. What “type” of meeting would you start? Whatever group you wish to start, it probably will fit into one of the following six “types” of meetings:

**Meditation & Recovery** – Emphasis on integrating a regular meditation practice into your addiction recovery program. All welcome, from any program of recovery.

**Buddhist Recovery** – Emphasis on meditation to develop mindfulness, and the study and practice of Buddhist principals from many or one tradition and using those principles as a path of recovery from harmful addictive behaviors. All welcome.

**Refuge Recovery** – A program of recovery based on the book “*Refuge Recovery*” by Noah Levine. The book is used as study material for support groups, and peer facilitators use guidelines outlined in the “*Refuge Recovery*” program to format and run their meetings.

**Eight Step Recovery** - A path of recovery based on the book “*Eight Step Recovery-Using the Buddhas’ Teachings to Overcome Addiction*” by Dr. Valerie Mason-John and Dr. Paramabandu Groves. Group members use the book as a reference in working these steps, and facilitators use “*Eight Step Recovery*” meeting guidelines to format their meetings.

**Heart of Recovery** – A Buddhist-oriented recovery support group developed using teachings from the Shambhala tradition.

**\*Buddhist 12 step** – Emphasis on the integration of meditation and other Buddhist practices into your 12 step recovery program.

**\*While peer facilitators for these meetings are or have been in a “12 Step” program, these meetings are not supported or endorsed by AA or any “12 Step” programs.**

## The Buddhas' Path to Addiction Recovery

Some practitioners may want to embark on a path of recovery supported by their Buddhist teacher, tradition or a specific temple. Support for addiction recovery can be found within many Buddhist traditions, such as “Eight Step Recovery” in the Triratna Buddhist community, “Refuge Recovery” in the Mindfulness and Theravada Buddhist communities, and “Heart of Recovery” in the Shambhala tradition. Some Zen and Tibetan temples have recently inquired about how to start Buddhist recovery groups for their communities. Practitioners can form Sanghas that meet regularly at a temple or meditation center, guided on a course of Buddhist study by a qualified Buddhist Dharma teacher as related to addiction recovery.

### A possible path of study for a Buddhist-oriented recovery Sangha

Generosity and ethics (Sila), mindfulness (Samadhi) and study of Buddhist Dharma (Panna) is a traditional Buddhist path that can be followed by a Buddhist-oriented recovery group. Further study of meditation and Dharma by qualified instructors is important to make sure the practitioner does not develop wrong view.

**Sila** - Practitioners begin their meeting by taking refuge together in (the Triple Gem), which is:

- ❖ taking refuge in the Buddha (the Awakened one),
- ❖ taking refuge in the Dharma (the teachings of the Buddha)
- ❖ taking refuge in the Sangha (Buddhist practitioners supporting each other on The Path).

Practitioners also recite the five Buddhist precepts, or ethical practices, with an emphasis on the fifth precept (vowing to abstain from intoxicants), reciting them as a part of their regular meditation practice. Individual mentoring programs are currently being developed to support Buddhist recovery practitioners to maintaining integrity in their practice and fellowship on The Path.

For the ethical part of the path (Sila), meetings can have a discussion of Generosity (Dana) and encourage being of service somewhere in their community by having resources available.

**Samadhi** –Finding a qualified meditation instructor will be important to help develop a regular sitting practice and investigate the Dharma as related to recovery. Meditation is where we experience directly the Dharma and walk the path “from Hungry Ghost to being Human”. *Vince Cullen, Fifth precept “sit and share” meetings.*

**Panna** – The wisdom part of The Path is developed with regular study of Buddhist teachings with a qualified Dharma teacher, emphasizing The Four Noble Truths and Satipattana practice.

**Sangha** – The development of a group of practitioners that support each other on their individual paths is important. The term Sangha traditionally refers to the Bhikkhu Sangha of ordained Monks and Nuns who have devoted their lives to the Dharma. Western practitioners have come to use this term to refer to a group of Buddhist practitioners who gather to study and practice the Dharma. Friends on the path will prove invaluable as we change and grow with this practice.

## Facilitator Code of Ethics

What does it mean to “behave like a Buddhist”, and how do we bring that across in our recovery sangha? The Buddha helped us by developing a path which included five precepts that laypeople could follow that would lead to ethical and wholesome lives.

The following is an excerpt from an article written in August 2012 by Ven. Thay Kobai Scott Whitney, where he talks about why he recites and attempts to follow these precepts daily,

“In one Buddhist tradition people recite the Four Bodhisattva Vows. The first one says: “Beings are numberless; I vow to save them all.” For years I puzzled over this preposterous, grandiose vow until one day I realized, *Oh, yes, I’ll save them from me! By keeping the precepts I can save others from my own cravings, hatreds and muddled ideas.* That’s the least I can do. That’s the least any real Buddhist can do”.

In the on-line documents provided by “Refuge Recovery” for new meeting facilitators, author and teacher, Noah Levine stated that “group facilitators are peers in the community who generously offer their time and energy to enable meetings to take place.” Although we are all peers in recovery, a facilitator has a responsibility to provide an example of what works in this program, after successfully working it themselves. Usually, the reason anyone wants to start a group is because they found a tool that they used that worked for them, and they feel passionate about sharing it with others. In doing this we are saying we believe in our path, that we truly believe it can help others, and be an inspiration to anyone who is looking for a path to freedom. As a facilitator, you become a mentor to others, and you want them to see your own personal success. This means we have to be mindful to “walk the talk” and model the changes that helped us to make positive life changes.

Basically, if we follow our own guidelines, we (as facilitators):

- ❖ Are working on or have a regular meditation practice.
- ❖ Have a period of abstinence from our addictive behavior, and belong to a home group where we continue to get support for our own sobriety.
- ❖ Cultivate safety and trust within our recovery sangha by not engaging in sexual relationships with members of your group.

You may have other ethical guidelines that you follow according to your own practice. As you plan the type of meeting you want to offer, think about how the people in your group will see you and your own recovery.

## Mentoring in Buddhist-oriented support groups

In developing a mentor/mentee relationship, the mentor should have successfully walked a path that has helped them in maintaining sobriety and developing a strong Buddhist practice of study and meditation. A great example of a Buddhist-oriented mentor program can be found in the book “Eight Step Recovery-Using the Buddhas’ teachings to overcome addiction” or on [www.eightsteprecovery.org](http://www.eightsteprecovery.org).

## Developing your meeting format and guidelines

As a new facilitator, you should reflect on your intention for starting a meeting, and what style of meeting you would like to have. Would you like to facilitate a book study group or the 12 steps from a Buddhist perspective? Maybe you went to a traditional meditation / Dharma study meeting that you loved. Buddhist recovery meetings are as diverse as the facilitators who offer them, and as long as you offer sitting practice, study Buddhist teaching as related to recovery and provide a sacred circle for mindful sharing, you could be considered a Buddhist recovery meeting. You can use your imagination and your personal experience on your own unique path to create a meeting that will resonate with other Dharma friends. Maybe you have an idea we haven't thought of yet! Samples of several meeting formats and guidelines can be found in this section, as well as online at [www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org/nwbr/formatsandguidelines](http://www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org/nwbr/formatsandguidelines).

The following is an excerpt from “**Buddhism/12 step guidelines**” by Kevin Griffin:

“Setting a clear intention is the vital starting point for someone thinking about forming a group. Is your main focus going to be in deepening your step work, deepening your meditation practice, Dharma study or forming community and giving a place to share? Answering these and other questions about what you want from your group will help you to decide on the other questions of leadership, membership, form, and content. For instance, if your main interest is in growing the community, you might want open membership, whereas, if you want to focus on deepening meditation and forming intimate connections, you might want a closed membership. What might be more critical in thinking about intention is in distinguishing the purpose of a Buddhism/Twelve Step group from that of an ordinary Twelve Step group. What I always try to look for in any Buddhist discussion is, ‘How does what we’re talking about relate to the Dharma?’ So, if someone is helping a sick relative, to put it in the context of the Buddha’s teaching on suffering, that we are all subject to sickness, old age, and death. This doesn’t mean that we deny people their need to process grief or any difficult emotions—on the contrary, being fully present with those painful experiences is vital to the process of moving through them and healing—but it does mean that at some point we remind ourselves of the context of our experience and don’t stay stuck in the “story.” This is a common difficulty in any group focused on spirituality and healing— it’s so easy for us to stay in the “problem” and forget the solution. While it’s helpful to talk about our difficulties, if we don’t move beyond examining our pain toward looking at the Path of freedom, we miss the point of the spiritual teachings. So, whoever is facilitating, be it a teacher or just a member of the group, this focus on intention should be kept very strong. In Twelve Step groups we call this “primary purpose” and in Buddhism “Right Intention.”

Regardless of the type of meeting you intend to start, there are a few things you could do.

- ❖ Make use of the **BRN** and **NWBR** website resources for new meeting facilitators, with examples of meeting guidelines and other new meeting support.
- ❖ Figure out what “type” of meeting you want to have and the day and time.
- ❖ Write a description, meeting guidelines and a meeting format.
- ❖ Find a venue – start small, try to find a free space.
- ❖ Go to a meeting you like, and ask to be a peer facilitator.
- ❖ For meetings in the Pacific Northwest, contact **NWBR** through the “meetings” tab on the website, and fill out a meeting registration form to be listed on the NWBR website.
- ❖ Contact **BRN** to list your meeting on their international website.



## **Facilitators, Co-facilitators & “peer facilitated” meetings**

When you create your meeting, you will want to make sure that you have someone who can act as a co-facilitator. It is very easy to get burned out if you are at every meeting, every week without a break or anyone to ask. Having a co-facilitator (or two!) can really help to make your recovery meeting sustainable if you cannot make it to a meeting and you need a substitute. Everyone at the meeting should be included in running the meeting.

If you are starting a peer facilitated group, you will be responsible for getting people to either sign up on a rotating schedule, or just ask during announcements “who would like to facilitate next week?” and make sure they are on board with where everything is and what to do. It is important in the peer-facilitated groups that someone makes sure there is someone there every week to organize things, and that the group is following some written guidelines. One very busy peer facilitated support group created an online calendar for facilitators, which they would check in on and sign up for. He then would check and send out reminder emails to make sure the person would show up for their scheduled meeting. This way, once the meeting is set up and running, you do not have to be at every meeting. But, you would be responsible for making sure someone was and manage the calendar.

MANY FACILITATORS ARE NOW LAMINATING THEIR MEETING FORMAT AND GUIDELINES TO MAKE IT EASY FOR ANYONE TO JUST COME AND READ FROM THE SCRIPT. “Refuge Recovery” and “Eight Step Recovery” have specific guidelines for facilitators to set up and run a meeting. There are even meditations in the prospective books that can be printed out, laminated and kept at the meeting location. Most groups have these “scripts” available at the meeting venue. If you have somewhere to keep a small tote, you can put a couple of books, some recorded meditations (CD’s), and the laminated meeting “script” at your meeting venue. This way, someone can always step in and facilitate.

If you do not have a co-facilitator, you can ask at the beginning of the first meeting for a volunteer. Then, have something for them to read or be in charge of. You may want them to read the group guidelines, or maybe the dedication of merit at the end, or do a reading or bring up a discussion topic. Sometimes meetings are started with two people, one acting as facilitator and contact person, the other acting as the co-facilitator. They set up, run and clean up the meeting together, sharing tasks. Usually the lead facilitator would want to act as treasurer, until the group got going and they could vote on one. That person would keep track of any donations collected, make sure the room gets paid for (if you are renting space), delegate meeting donations or plan group events.

However you decide to organize your meeting, some people believe that the most sustainable model of support groups will be the peer facilitated groups, where people share the responsibilities of opening the doors, setting up the meeting and facilitating if necessary. This should be considered as “service work”, which is an important aspect of any recovery program.

## Meditation instruction – Rely on the Professionals!

There are several ways you can run the meditation portion of your meeting, but none of them involve “teaching” your group how to meditate, unless you are a qualified professional. We have pulled together a few meditations on our website that are great for downloading onto your phone or laptop and playing at the meeting. Just set up a small table in the middle of the room and put your device where everyone can hear it. If you have a favorite author or speaker, many times if you google them or go to their websites, you can find downloadable meditations you can use.

Some groups use meditations that they get from books or online that they have on a printout that can be read aloud. As long as it indicates where and how long to pause, anyone should be able to do it. The important thing is to not try to be a “teacher”, but to find a meditation by a qualified meditation instructor and just listen to or read that for your group. You can find some other audio meditations on our website at [www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org](http://www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org) in the “audio and video” section to use in your meetings.

The following is an example of a simple guided meditation that can be read to the group by the facilitator.

### **Sample guided meditation instruction:**     **Basic mindfulness of breath meditation**

FACILITATOR – READ ALOUD SLOWLY AND WHEN YOU PAUSE, MAKE SURE YOU PAUSE FOR LONG ENOUGH FOR PEOPLE TO PRACTICE THE INSTRUCTION FOR A FEW BREATHS. THE READING SHOULD TAKE NO LONGER THAN 10 MIN, THEN, SIT SILENTLY FOR THE REST OF THE SITTING.

Everyone settle into their chair or cushion, bringing your awareness to the connection of your feet to the floor or your seat on the cushion. Sense the solid connection with the earth as you bring your mind/body together into an awareness of the present moment and your intention to be mindful. Check your posture that your spine is straight, but shoulders lowered and relaxed. Your hands should be soft in your lap or on your knees and your belly should be soft and relaxed. Your face, jaw and eyes should be soft, gentle, relaxed and at ease, and as you take a few deep breaths in and out, allow yourself to feel happy and at peace. Acknowledge the gift you are giving yourself and let go of any need to be anywhere or doing anything else at this moment. Allow yourself to feel relaxed, cheerful, happy. ~pause~

Breathing in, breathe in peace....     breathing out, let go of stress, anxiety or worry

Breathing in, I am peaceful.....     breathing out, I am letting go     ~pause for a few breaths~

When you feel you have brought yourself to this moment from the busyness of your day, allow your attention to become focused on the body breathing. Try to pay attention to where you notice the breath, whether it is the rising and falling of your chest, the sensation of the air as it passes in and out of your nostrils, or maybe your abdomen as it rises and fills like a balloon on the inhale, and deflates and softens when you exhale. ~pause for a few breaths~

Rest your attention where you are most aware of the breath, and begin gently noting the inhale and exhale. Try to notice the quality of the breath, is it short, long, deep or shallow? Gently note either the number of breaths, softly like a whisper in your mind, inhale “one” / exhale “one”, inhale “two” / exhale “two” and see how many you can count before the mind wanders to the past or future. When it does, as it will over and over again, be very gentle with yourself and just note “thinking” and bring your attention back to your breath, starting at the beginning.

This is our practice, training our mind by focusing on the breath and allowing everything that happens to just be, without judgment, anxiety, desire or aversion pulling us from our practice. We will practice this together now until we hear the bell

~ring bell once and sit in silence, then again three times to signify the end of the meditation~

## **Your Sangha – Bringing it together in the “Sacred Circle”**

A very important time in your meeting is the open sharing and support period. This usually comes after the meditation and reading portions of the meeting. When you all meditate together, it creates an energy that is supportive of very clear, kind and mindful communication within the sangha.

These are a few things you can do to encourage a closer sangha:

- ❖ Welcome newcomers, and always gear your meditation to the newest member;
- ❖ Encourage people to introduce themselves by their first names only, letting go of their personal stories. This creates a sense of freedom, and a place where everyone’s suffering is equal, and equally deserving of the support of the sangha;
- ❖ Discuss and practice “mindful listening” and encourage people to bring their mindfulness to the sacred circle;
- ❖ Arrange chairs or cushions in a circle whenever possible. Always have at least one chair empty for late comers to make them feel welcome;
- ❖ Encourage people to support the meeting by talking about meeting “DANA” and what you would use it for - making sure there is a basket available;
- ❖ Talk about events that people in the sangha can possibly attend together and arrange field trips;
- ❖ Keep a current email list. Some facilitators send out weekly emails to their sangha with upcoming meeting themes, study materials or meditations to be practiced at home;
- ❖ Provide a break time, or extra time after the meeting for people to socialize. You can even do coffee/food after your meeting.

### **Challenges within your group-maintaining safety of participants**

There can be times during your meeting when someone in the group causes others to feel unsafe, or creates a negative atmosphere in the group. We create our own group guidelines to let the group know what is expected from the participants. It is expected that everyone follow the guidelines once they are established.

As the facilitator, you will be looked to when the meeting spins out into negativity (or someone is acting out), and will need to be comfortable setting limits in a calm and supportive way. It is perfectly acceptable to, when you notice a situation arising, watch it for just a moment to see if it blows over. If it starts to get heated or uncomfortable, there are a couple of ways you can bring it to a halt. The use of a “mindfulness bell” is effective in gently getting everyone’s attention, at which point you can announce a moment of silent reflection and calming. Then, bringing attention to the specific issue at hand, either read the guidelines again as a reminder to the group, or acknowledge the issue and open it up for discussion.

If you are having trouble with cross talking, some meetings have used a talking stick, mala beads or some other object to hold while they are talking, with the rest of the group practicing mindful listening. If that gets out of hand, or someone starts to share inappropriately (triggering or offending others ) you can suggest “you know, that sounds like something you might like to discuss during the break or after the meeting” and direct them back to the topic and ask their opinion. The important thing is that you are not afraid to facilitate, people seem to really appreciate a meeting that is open and chill, but within a specific structure.

## SAMPLE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ❖ Why do you want to start a Buddhist Recovery meeting, and what do you hope to share with others in regard to your own experience with mindfulness and/or Buddhist practice and recovery?
- ❖ What type of group would you like to start and what would the focus of healing be?
- ❖ Is it important to practice “ethical behavior” when helping others on their path to recovery? What does the word “ethical” bring up for you and your recovery path?
- ❖ Is it important for the facilitator to model behavior for the rest of the group? Why?
- ❖ How can the facilitator of the meeting model appropriate sharing in regards to content and length of share?
- ❖ How much sobriety do you feel a facilitator should have to run a meeting?
- ❖ What should a facilitators meditation practice should look like?

## Sample Meeting Formats & Guidelines

The following examples of group formats and guidelines were reproduced with permission of the groups' facilitators for the purpose of training new facilitators and offering them insight into the options currently being offered to the recovery community. All of the meetings listed here are from actual Buddhist recovery meetings, created with the support of NWBR's facilitator training and website promotion.

### **Buddhadharma Meditation & Recovery**

This is an outline for a meeting that had open meditation practice for the first half, then a recovery based Dharma study and sacred circle for the second half. It was formatted to allow people who are not in recovery to participate in the meditation portion, while maintaining the safety of the recovery circle. This meeting was developed by the sangha as it evolved over a two year period.

This format as follows is for a 2 hour meeting with 15 min. social break:

1. The meeting begins with a reading of a preamble welcoming members to the sangha, guidelines for sharing and brief introductions. It is important that as the facilitator, you follow the guidelines to model sharing techniques, particularly with cross talking or commenting on peoples shares.
2. After introductions, the meditation facilitator is introduced and leads a meditation for up to 30 minutes, after which the meeting is open for questions relating to the meditation or to our practice over the week at home. This time should be focused on meditation and instruction, as there may be people there who will not be attending the recovery Sangha during the second part of the meeting (for groups offering open meditation practice separate from the recovery meeting).
3. After meditation a social break is announced by the meeting facilitator, where any handouts are brought to the groups' attention. This is also a good time to remind the group about "Dana" and let them know where the basket is. Tea and water is always appreciated, and the sangha takes turns bringing a snack. At this time, anyone not staying for the recovery sangha leaves.
4. After break, the group goes right into the reading or discussion topic, with open share time afterward. The reading is usually no longer than 10-15 min., leaving at least 30 min. for the final share. The reading should inspire sharing and discussion about Buddhist practice and recovery. After the reading, the meeting is opened to sharing about our practice, celebrations, concerns or whatever is on your mind. We promote the "silent witness" as a tool in our share time whenever possible, practicing comfort in silence allowing people to speak when they are comfortable.
5. We mindfully end the meeting with a 5-10 min. silent meditation, then announcements (about other meetings or Dharma talks of interest ) and a final reminder of our "Dana" practice. The group helps put the room back in order and the facilitator is in charge of getting any DANA collected to the drop box. We end the meeting on time out of respect for the facility and staff.

**Buddhadharma Meditation & Recovery - Meeting preamble and facilitator guidelines**

Welcome to Buddhadharma Meditation & Recovery, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I will be your peer facilitator tonight.

We are a Sangha that was created to support those in recovery from addiction, working together to deepen our meditation practice as a tool for our spiritual healing. We represent the Buddhadharma with a specific emphasis on the Theravada tradition, working in conjunction with your current recovery path to enhance your experience with the wisdom of the Buddha's teaching. Anyone with an interest in Buddhism as related to meditation & recovery is welcome to attend, regardless of your current recovery program.

In order to promote a feeling of safety, confidentiality and trust within our Sangha, we agree together to adhere to the following group guidelines:

- We will arrive to our group in a substance free state.
- We begin and end our meeting on time, out of respect for each other and the facility staff.
- Anything shared here remains in our fellowship and trust.
- We will resist the urge to crosstalk or directly address or comment on another's share.
- We practice comfort in silence, and compassionate listening to allow each share to be complete.
- We will be mindful of our share time and the size of the group, keeping to the appropriate topic.

While these guidelines may feel restricting to some, keeping to a format of mindfulness meditation instruction and readings of Dharma as tools for our recovery will help newcomers know what to expect of a Buddhist Recovery meeting and decide if it's something they feel would help them on their recovery path.

We end each meeting with a dedication of merit, which we read together aloud:

"May we all be well, may we be free from suffering, may we be safe and sober and able to care for ourselves with ease and joy.

**Buddhadharma Peer Facilitator guidelines**

The facilitator of the meeting is responsible for the following:

1. Be there a few minutes early and set up the altar and chairs/cushions in a circle, with extra chairs around the perimeter of the room
2. Make sure the heat is comfortable, usually no more than 68 degrees
3. Set up tea and snack table (if applicable)
4. set out any handouts and referral information on a table or counter
5. Have sign in sheet, preamble and guidelines out with clipboard and pen
6. Start the meeting promptly and invite members to sign up for email list if they like.
7. Lead the meditation practice with simple breath meditation, or using a pre-recorded meditation from a qualified meditation instructor (we have several available on NWBR website)
8. Adhere to the guidelines for group sharing by modeling behavior for the group participants, and help others by gently ending a too-long or inappropriate share, keeping an eye on the clock and the meeting on track.
9. Bring in and facilitate a reading or discussion topic on mindfulness or recovery and guide the discussion and open shares.
10. Make sure the room is clean & back to its original condition and the lights and heat are off on time. Also collect any Dana and put in an envelope, and distribute properly.



# Mindful Recovery

## Meeting Attributes



**Introduction** The mindful recovery meeting is an intersection of a modern support group with meditation, traditional Buddhist thought and with some psychology and relapse prevention mixed in. How we differ from some groups is that we neither wish to obsess with using nor obsess with not using. Instead we wish to change our relationship of the obsessive thoughts such that we recognize them for what they are and are able to make healthy choices instead of reacting.

The four attributes of the Mindful Recovery meeting -

1. Meditation - We have altered our states of mind in the past thru substances, behavior patterns, or people that no longer serve us and now choose to alter our minds in better, more permanent ways that prove to be beneficial.
2. Dharma study - We seek out teachers both modern and ancient that have wisdom and knowledge to share that supports our recovery ideals. We discuss these teachings in group to help process and absorb the content.
3. Share - We discuss challenges of life and recovery in a supportive safe environment. We believe shared pain is lessened and shared joy is increased.
4. Fellowship and Sanga comradery - We practice getting and giving advice and knowledge to help in supporting sober living and a solid meditation practice

### Meditation (What meditation does for people and how it helps in recovery)

- Soothed anxiety and depression — and greater calm, peace, and joy
- More genuine intimacy and compassion with others and the self
- Greater resilience amidst whatever arises
- Richer appreciation for the full human experience
- Expanded presence, spaciousness, and awareness
- Curiosity, wonder, and amazement of this great mystery of life.

### Dharma study

(What Dharma study does for people and how it helps in recovery)

### Share

(What sharing does for people and how it helps in recovery)

### Fellowship and Sanga comradery

(What sanga does for people and how it helps in recovery)

**Legal Disclaimer** - We are a peer led group and all opinions of the group are the sole responsibility of the individuals and should not be relied upon as being comprehensive or error-free. Please use your own judgement and experience when evaluating anything said. Any information is not to be considered medical advice and is not intended to replace consultation with qualified psychotherapists, mental health professionals, counselors, meditation teachers, dharma teachers, or the Buddha.



# Mindful Recovery

## Meeting Process



Welcome to Mindful Recovery. We come together to acquire mediation skills, study teachings that help in our recovery, share our words with each other, and create group support. Mindfulness practice helps us develop the capacity to see clearly what we're attached to, so that we can let go of our clinging and aversion in order to ease the dis-ease of our recovery. How we differ from some groups is that we neither wish to obsess with using nor obsess with not using. Instead we wish to change our relationship of the obsessive thoughts such that we recognize them for what they are and are able to make healthy choices instead of reacting.

Is there anyone here for the first time? (IF YES READ)

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### Schedule

7:00 - 7:15 Check-in/introductions

7:15 - 7:45 Half Hour Meditation Practice

7:45 - 8:00 Social Break (tea/snacks and conversation)

8:00 - 8:15 Dharma Reading and Discussion

8:15 - 9:00 Recovery Group

The first portion of our meeting is open to all, the recovery portion is specifically for those wishing recovery support.

### Check In

Please go around the room and introduce yourself. If you want to please say something briefly about your path, practice, recovery, how your week was or what brought you here.

### Meditation Practice

Before we meditate let's set the intention for the sit, does anyone wish to set an intention aloud or silently?

We will now meditate for the next 30 minutes. I will ring the bell once at the beginning and three times at the end. Does anyone wish for some guided instruction?

(If yes choose one of the meditation pages)



## **Social Break**

We will now have a 15 minute break to get some tea and snacks. Please feel free to converse and ask questions or look at the handout materials and books.

## **Dharma Reading and Discussion**

The topic of this weeks discussion is \_\_\_\_\_.

We will pass the material around for people to read aloud. Please feel free to pass it along if you do not wish to read.

## **Recovery Group**

We will now start the recovery support portion of the meeting. While participating in our group we ask that you observe the following in order to promote and trust the confidentiality of the group.

- Be aware of the size of the group when sharing, to allow all a turn who wish to speak.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times, what you hear in this group remains in our fellowship and trust.
- Give each speaker your full attention & listening with an open heart and mind.
- Do not cross talk or interrupt a speaker so that all can complete with their share.
- Pauses are ok and are needed to let people get in touch with their feelings.
- If a speaker wishes feedback they should say at the end of their share "I am open to feedback" or they will receive none.
- If you offer feedback please be brief and speak from direct experience using "I" statements not "You shoulds"

## **Dedication of Merit and Metta**

It is said that when we practice together that we create Merit. Instead of keeping this merit for ourselves we wish to share it with all beings.

For those who have fed, sheltered and clothed us, Who have loved and supported us, who have forgiven our faults and whose faults we strive to forgive, for all sentient beings known and unknown we now joyfully dedicate this merit.

May all beings be happy, May all beings be healthy, May all beings be healed, May all beings love themselves with great kindness, just as they are now, May all beings be free from suffering, May all beings be at peace

## **Business**

Announcements

Other meetings - Tuesday morning at SASG, Wednesday in Fremont, Thursday at SASG

There is a donation basket where we collect Dana for the church, please feel free to give.

Thank you for coming tonight

## **BUDDHISM & RECOVERY MEETING**

*[ Hello facilitator! Please use these documents to run your meeting. All instructions for you will be in bold in [brackets ] and italicized. All other text designated with a \* is to be read aloud. Please try to follow the times outlined so you can start and end on time. HAVE FUN, and thank you ! ]*

- *[Get the clipboard from the volunteer desk when you come in, and the **Buddhist Recovery Network** tote bag out of the closet by the bathroom.*
- *Take out the meeting instructions and books (if needed) from the bag and put on the clipboard with the house rules and guidelines.*
- *Set up the Buddha, the DANA (donation) basket and the gong on the small coffee table, along with any handouts in the bag.*
- *Make sure there are several chairs set up in the back of the room for late comers*
- *Put sign on the sliding glass doors with arrow instructing late comers to enter through back door.*
- *Close sliding doors and begin meeting promptly at 7:30pm ]*

### **MEETING FORMAT**

#### **7:30pm Begin meeting**

\*Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I will be your peer facilitator for tonight's meeting.

We come together in these meetings to study the teachings of The Buddha regarding the nature of our minds, and to support each other in developing a daily meditation practice. Anyone is welcome, regardless of your chosen recovery path or level of experience with Buddhist teachings. You do not need to be a Buddhist to integrate meditation and these teachings into your current recovery program.

We will begin our meeting with introductions. Please introduce yourself by first name only, as we choose not to identify ourselves by our individual addictive behaviors. Everyone here is in recovery, and we are here not to tell our old story, but to begin on a new path to healing. Let's go around the room and say hello, starting with me... Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_.

\*Will someone please read the house rules? (Give sheet to volunteer to read aloud)

#### **7:45pm**

\*Now we will practice meditation together. Please silence any cell phones or electronic devices for the next 20-30 minutes. If you must take an emergency call, please mindfully leave the circle and return after the meditation is finished.

***[READ ALOUD MEDITATION PROVIDED, PLAY A RECORDED MEDITATION, INTRODUCE YOUR GUEST MEDITATION TEACHER OR LEAD IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCED IN BUDDHIST SATIPATANNA MEDITATION. Begin the meditation with one bell - end the meditation with three bells]***

\*Does anyone have a question or comment about their meditation today, or their practice in general? At this time we can take a short break, then come back for our study and discussion time.

**8:15 pm**      *[BREAK FOR 5 MINUTES ]*

**8:20 pm Study/group reading**

\*Welcome back for our study and discussion period. Today's reading is \_\_\_\_\_ .

*{Keep the reading to no more than 15 minutes, to allow ample share time, as this group can be large. If you choose a meeting topic, you will read or choose someone to read and then open the meeting to discussion. If you have a book or article, you can pass it around the room, asking everyone to read a paragraph or two. Let them know it is OK to "pass" on reading aloud, as not everyone is comfortable}*

\*Now we will open the meeting for discussion. We ask that you follow group guidelines during our group share:

- Practice mindful listening – suspending judgment and listening with your full attention and an open heart to each speaker.
- Be comfortable with silence, give speakers the opportunity to pause and collect their thoughts, and clearly state when you are finished speaking.
- Keep in mind the size of the group and limit your share to allow each person an opportunity to speak.

**8:50pm End meeting**

\*I want to thank you all for coming tonight. At this point we will pass the DANA basket, so we may practice generosity for SASG for providing this space for us to practice together. Please see the volunteer sign up list on the table and consider joining the Northwest Buddhist recovery team. They need volunteers for events happening every month so they can continue to provide them for free. While we are passing the basket, I have some announcements :

*[ at this point, please direct people to the NWBR website for information about meetings and articles and information about Buddhism and recovery, announce any upcoming events and ask others to share any meditation or recovery related events they know of ]*

*[optional prayer or words to end the meeting – you may have something of your own, or use the Loving-kindness verses I have provided. Please make sure you leave the room tidy, put away all materials and signage in the bag and return the clipboard to the volunteer desk.*

## **LOVING KINDNESS VERSE**

(offering loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and serenity)

Buddhist practitioners can develop much benefit from coming together, studying the Dharma and supporting each other in health and well being. This benefit, or “metta” is then shared with an open heart, thus continuing the circle of goodness among all beings. Starting with ourselves and offering words of love and compassion, we then radiate this goodness outward from our own hearts, to each other and to the whole world.

Listen to these words and repeat them silently to yourself as we wish other well.

**“MAY I BE HAPPY AND HEALTHY, MAY I BE COMFORTED AND HEALED,  
MAY I REJOICE IN ANOTHERS BLESSING, AND MAY I BE AT PEACE ALWAYS.**

**MAY ALL OF YOU BE HAPPY AND HEALTHY, MAY YOU BE COMFORTED AND HEALED,  
MAY YOU REJOICE IN ANOTHERS’ BLESSINGS, AND MAY YOU BE AT PEACE ALWAYS.**

**MAY ALL BEINGS BE HAPPY AND HEALTHY,  
MAY ALL BEINGS BE COMFORTED AND HEALED,  
MAY ALL BEINGS REJOICE IN ANOTHERS’ BLESSINGS  
AND MAY ALL BEINGS BE AT PEACE ALWAYS.”**

## Other Resources for New Buddhist Recovery Meetings

The following is a list of teachers and authors who have developed programs and guidelines for Buddhist-oriented recovery support groups. Information about their meetings can be found online at [www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org/nwbr/formatsandguidelines](http://www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org/nwbr/formatsandguidelines) along with links to the authors websites for additional resources and event information.

- ❖ Kevin Griffin 12 Step Buddhism & Recovery  
[http://www.kevingriffin.net/pdfs/study\\_guide.pdf](http://www.kevingriffin.net/pdfs/study_guide.pdf)
- ❖ Therese Jacobs Stewart -  
<http://tjacobsstewart.com/media/>
- ❖ Vince Cullen-5<sup>th</sup> precept “sit and share” meetings  
<http://www.5th-precept.org/html/sit-and-share.html>
- ❖ Eight Step Recovery – Valerie “Vimalasara” Mason-John and Dr. Paramabandu Groves  
www. <http://www.buddhistrecovery.org/downloads.html>
- ❖ Refuge Recovery – Recovery program developed by Noah Levine and “Against the Stream” society  
<http://www.refugerecovery.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Starting-a-Meeting.pdf>
- ❖ Rev. Alex Holt – “Sit Happens” Buddhism and 12 Step meeting  
[http://www.buddhistrecovery.org/uploads/files/Buddhism\\_&\\_12\\_steps\\_Meeting\\_Format.pdf](http://www.buddhistrecovery.org/uploads/files/Buddhism_&_12_steps_Meeting_Format.pdf)
- ❖ Heart of Recovery-Recovery support from the Shambhala tradition  
<https://seattle.shambhala.org/heart-of-recovery-group/>

More new meeting resources and support can be found at the Buddhist Recovery Network website at [www.buddhistrecovery.org](http://www.buddhistrecovery.org)

## Links to On-line Buddhist Recovery Dharma, Meditation & Meetings

- ❖ Kevin Griffin (You tube Dharma talks & meditation videos)  
[www.youtube.com/user/kevgriffin22](http://www.youtube.com/user/kevgriffin22)
- ❖ Vince Cullen (Wholehearted Recovery – Virtual Sit and Share meeting)  
[www.5th-precept.org/html/how-to-attend-a-virtual-sit-an.html](http://www.5th-precept.org/html/how-to-attend-a-virtual-sit-an.html)
- ❖ Valerie (Vimalasara) Mason-John (Eight Step Recovery)  
[www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=LOC1920](http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=LOC1920)  
What is Eight Step Recovery?  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=NL7OifdPSpk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NL7OifdPSpk)  
Interview with Vimalasara  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=92N\\_jY9-ww](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92N_jY9-ww)
- ❖ Worldwide Insight/ Healing and Insight  
[www.worldwideinsight.org/recorded-classes-healing-insight/](http://www.worldwideinsight.org/recorded-classes-healing-insight/)

## Community Outreach & Promotion

**NWBR** can help with promoting new meetings and finding participants by;

- ❖ listing your meeting on **NWBR** and **Buddhist Recovery Network (BRN)** websites;
- ❖ bringing your meeting challenges and successes to the attention of the **BRN** board ;
- ❖ providing upcoming event, current **NWBR** news and updated meeting lists on the website to print out for your meeting;
- ❖ having educational materials available on our website regarding Buddhist-Oriented recovery and peer support group facilitating;
- ❖ connecting you to other meeting facilitators for support!

## CONTACT US

We want to be available to you for all your questions as your meeting unfolds, please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns @ [nwbuddhistrecovery@gmail.com](mailto:nwbuddhistrecovery@gmail.com), or go to our website at [www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org/nwbr/contactus](http://www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org/nwbr/contactus) for specific questions.



**Northwest Buddhist Recovery** was founded in 2012, as a resource for those interested in using Buddhist practices to enhance their addiction recovery program. Buddhist –oriented support groups have now expanded to include anyone whose life is impacted negatively by a wide variety of unwholesome addictive behaviors. The inclusiveness that has developed is in line with Buddhist teachings of compassion, loving kindness and our connection with all beings.

**NWBR** is an affiliate of the **Buddhist Recovery Network**, an international charitable organization, and all donations made to **NWBR** are tax deductible. Everyone on the **NWBR** team are currently volunteering their time and passion to this and other Buddhist organizations.