




# Northwest Buddhist Recovery

 Quarterly Newsletter   
Meeting Facilitator Resources

## WELCOME FRIENDS!

Volume One – January 2014

Hello, friends in the Dharma!

I'm so happy to bring you this newsletter for the New Year! It is my hope that it helps to keep you inspired as you provide support and fellowship to all of our "friends on the path".

As facilitators and supporters of Buddhist Recovery meetings, we understand the benefits of combining our own personal recovery programs with our meditation and Buddhist study and practice. In the last 5 years, I have personally undergone a tremendous transformation on my own path. Through my own dedication to my sobriety, meditation practice and the study of the teachings of the Buddha, I have found a life filled with loving kindness and compassion, and have acquired many new like-minded friends.

When I think back 5 years ago when I first embarked on this journey, I never would have dreamed I could have achieved the milestones reached in both my personal life and with NWBR. I am so proud to be involved in such an insightful, compassionate and worthwhile cause, with such a group of wonderfully illumined people.

I am so grateful to all of the people who are walking this path with me, and wish you all as much happiness and success on your own journeys as I have experienced with mine.

May we all be happy and healthy, free from the suffering of addiction.

Debra Greenfield, founder  
Northwest Buddhist Recovery  
[www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org](http://www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org)



**WHAT IS NWBR?** We first introduced the website, "*Seattle Buddhist Recovery*" in January of 2012, as a Seattle chapter of the *Buddhist Recovery Network* [www.buddhistrecovery.org](http://www.buddhistrecovery.org). We wanted to pull together one place for people in the Seattle area who were interested in how they could integrate their program of recovery with their Buddhist practice, and meet others on the same path. We quickly discovered that there were meetings already happening, not only in Seattle, but South in Olympia and Tacoma, and North in Bellingham that would like our support, so we changed our name to "*Northwest Buddhist Recovery*" to expand our network of support resources, eventually throughout the Pacific Northwest.

We currently support (5) meetings in Seattle, (2) in Olympia/Tacoma and (1) in Bellingham, listing them on our website as well as in any promotion of NWBR and offer the fellowship of our "facilitator sangha". Any promotional materials for events are made available to facilitators, as well as access to workshops and materials for anyone wanting to start a Buddhist recovery meeting.

Our mission statement declares that we are "*dedicated to providing resources for those seeking supplemental support with their recovery from addictive behaviors using traditional Buddhist mindfulness meditation techniques and study of Buddhist teachings.*" No matter which tradition of Buddhism you embrace, regardless of which recovery program you are working, it is my hope that you find within one of our meetings a place to come and "let go" of your grasping and aversion, of the "dukkha" that is this life, and find a fellowship of people that welcome you and celebrate your journey, no matter where you are on your path.

## A LOOK BACK AT 2013

This past year was such a whirlwind, it was humbling to see so many people come out to support our activities and events. New meetings blossomed, benefactors came on board with venues for events and meetings and our website continued to grow and change. Please refer to our website regularly for upcoming events in 2014, and use our NWBR cards to pass out in your meetings to guide participants to the site and its' resources. The following are some of the highlights of past year:

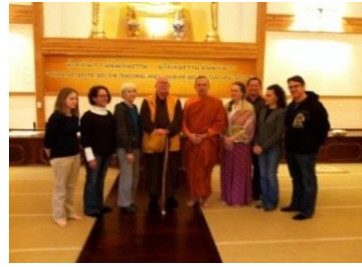


**Dec. 2012 –  
Evening of  
Loving -  
kindness  
with  
Jude Rozhon**

This was a special event for me, welcoming my metta teacher, Jude to our first NWBR event of the year (even though it was officially still December) in the sanctuary of the beautiful Center for Spiritual Living in Sandpoint. The Center hosted “Buddhadharma Meditation and Recovery” from 2010-2012, when it was only one of 3 Buddhist recovery meetings in Seattle. Jude set a precedent for our subsequent events by receiving our “intimate”, but eager group with a loving and open heart. Please go to [www.easeandjoy.com](http://www.easeandjoy.com) to learn more about Jude. Her website as well as several of her audio meditations are also available on [www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org](http://www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org) for use in meetings or as a resource for meeting participants.

### **February 2013 – Weekend Vipassana retreat at Wat Atammayarama with Ven. Santidhammo**

What a gift to have been so welcomed by this wonderful Thai Buddhist temple in Woodinville. Ven. Santi is an American monk, who, with the blessing of Ajahn Ritti (the Abbot of the temple) and the temple board of directors agreed to host our first weekend retreat for people in recovery. The opportunity to sit together with our peers and practice meditation in such a healing environment was humbling. What a gift to our community to go and be supported in our meditation practice and recovery. We look forward to another weekend this year.



NWBR facilitators from Olympia and Seattle at Wat Atamm

### **February 2013 First annual NWBR conference!**

What started out as our quarterly facilitator meeting was soon realized to be much more than that. Hosted by the Wat Atamm, we had the largest group of facilitators gathered yet, and enjoyed a day of business discussions, swapping ideas and challenges of our meetings and had the opportunity to offer the noon meal to the resident monks of the temple. We plan on having our second annual facilitator meeting at the temple in the spring, and I hope you all will consider attending this day of support and friendship with your facilitator “sangha”. Please look for a personal invitation coming this spring.

### **June 2013 – Dharma talk and day retreat with Kevin Griffin**



Ven. Santidhammo, Kevin Griffin, Ajahn P.Phrayad & NWBR founders

This weekend event came together with the gracious donations of many individuals, and the generosity of Kevin and our hosts at the temple. What lovely hosts the temple monks were, inviting Kevin to come and teach as their guest. We were so lucky to have had the opportunity and I know everyone who attended benefitted greatly from his teachings and the temple experience.

A recording of Kevin’s Dharma talk can be found at [www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org](http://www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org) under the “audio” tab on the home page, along with a link to Kevin Griffin’s website with audio meditations and articles for meeting study. For more information about Kevin and his current projects and events, go to [www.kevingriffin.net](http://www.kevingriffin.net)



*"He who sees the Dhamma, sees me,  
he who sees me, sees the Dhamma"*

*Vakkali Sutta. SN*

## June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013 - Facilitator workshop

Hosted by **Seattle Area Support Groups  
Community Center**

This daylong training workshop was held at the Seattle Area Support Group house [www.sascc.org](http://www.sascc.org), the home to a myriad of recovery and other support groups for the whole community. Nine people interested in starting Buddhist recovery meetings came and participated in a day of group discussion and interactive exercises designed to create a feeling of cohesiveness within all of the Buddhist recovery groups. While each potential facilitator brings their own Buddhist tradition to their meeting, we encouraged new meetings to maintain some simple guidelines, encouraging meditation and Buddhist study (secular or spiritual based) as the framework of the meeting. If you are interested in starting a meeting in your area, please contact me directly through the website and I can send you the NWBR facilitator training guidebook. **We are currently seeking new meetings south of Seattle, in W.Seattle, Burien and Seatac areas.**

## August 2013 –“Day of Mindful Recovery” at the Wat Atamayarama in Woodinville, WA



Our first daylong retreat for people in recovery was hosted by the Wat Atam, and included a beautiful meal and Dharma talks with Ven.

Santidhammo. We were able to experience a full day of walking and sitting meditation, having all of our needs taken care of by the wonderful laypeople of the temple. This temple offers regular daylong and weekend Vipassana retreats which are open to the public. You can find information about the temple on the “meditation” tab at [www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org](http://www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org), or go to the temple website at [www.attama.org](http://www.attama.org) for more information about the temple and a complete calendar of their events. . Look for more “Days of Mindful recovery” beginning in March of 2014.

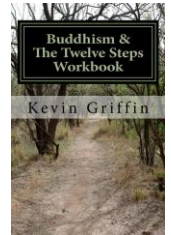


## BOOK HIGHLIGHT:

### Buddhism &The Twelve Steps Workbook by Kevin Griffin

Available at

<https://www.createspace.com/4580491>



Last year in June, we had the privilege of hosting Kevin Griffin for an evening Dharma talk and a daylong meditation workshop at a beautiful temple here in Woodinville, WA. It was a great success for our organization and the participants raved about their experience for quite a time afterwards. One of the things I had the opportunity to discuss with Kevin was our mutual goal of working to provide more guidelines for facilitators of Buddhist recovery groups, and materials for study for the practitioners to help them develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be Buddhist in recovery from addiction. In our Buddhist recovery groups, members study the practices laid out by the Buddha to get to know our addicted minds and let go of our addictive behaviors. But Buddhist recovery is still just a baby, (well, maybe a toddler at this point) but growing every day into pretty much uncharted territory. Kevin is one of the modern Western meditation teachers to have lived the experience of blending his 12 step AA recovery program with his study of Buddhist teachings. He recognizes the need to develop guidelines to help the Buddhist recovery practitioner to go beyond just sitting in groups and discussing Dharma related to recovery, but to develop practical tools to move forward on a clear path of maintaining our sobriety.

This new book is just that, not just a book to study and read in groups, but a workbook to deepen our understanding and provide a path laid out by someone who has walked it and had positive results. On Kevin’s blog <http://kevingriffin.blogspot.com>, he provides that for us in a language that is accessible and thought provoking. I love the exercises at the end of the chapters, which engage me into taking action, which is something that works in the AA tradition that we want to incorporate into the Buddhist Recovery program. Creating this tool for the Buddhist recovery community is invaluable as we move forward in promoting this healing path.

If you are a group facilitator and wish to start a study group around this book, contact Kevin at [www.kevingriffin.net](http://www.kevingriffin.net) for a discount on purchasing 10 or more workbooks. Let him know that you are with **Northwest Buddhist Recovery!**

We are so grateful to Kevin, for all of his work bringing this message to our community.





## **BUDDHIST RECOVERY AROUND THE WORLD**

### **Interview with a teacher**

**Valerie Mason-John**

Valerie (Vimalasara) Mason-John is a vibrant and impassioned speaker, sharing her own path of spiritual growth and personal healing with grace, beauty and a poetic fervor. She is inspirational to watch, engaging the audience with her striking stage persona and elegant prose as she pulls you into her inspiring journey from suffering to equanimity. She is a playwright and author of seven books including Detox Your Heart – working with anger, fear and hatred – Epub and course published 2013, and the co-author of Eight Step Recovery – Using The Buddha’s Teachings to Overcome Addiction. She is also the author of The war done done– a new unpublished novel (publisher welcome)

**Q. Many people discover Buddhist teachings as they work their recovery program, others develop an awareness of their addictive behaviors on their journey on the Buddhist path. When did you discover the advantages to integrating your Buddhist and recovery paths and what did your own journey look like?**

For as long as I can remember I always wanted to learn to meditate. At the age of 15 I was locked up in a youth prison for shop lifting. I lost a lot of time, and ended up in solitary confinement for many weeks at a time. It was there I must have learned unconsciously to meditate. I had touched on altered states, and tried very much to find it when I was released aged 17. I found it on the dance floors when I was clean and sober, but I also thought I found it when I was intoxicated with acid or cocaine, or any other upper I could take. A friend took me along to a transcendental meditation teacher, and after one sit I knew I had found what I was looking for, a natural high (and I didn't have to pay for it!) . But at the same time I knew it was a therapy for me.

My root addiction is sugar. Yes, I drank socially, but I could take it or leave it. Uppers were different I was a functioning addict, but refined sugar is my disease. At the peak of my disease I was bingeing and purging over 40 times a day. I used other intoxicants to give me respite. I could not stop, I did not know how to stop. I lived in the hell of that addiction from the age of 17 to 37.

I went on my first retreat at age 28 and experienced abstinence of more than one day for the first time. I began going on retreats for respite. While I had moments of a sober mind, abstinence was most definitely an issue. Without abstinence there was no chance of sobriety of mind.

### **Interview with a teacher Cont...**

Once upon a time my black identity, my queer identity, my bulimia Nervosa were at the center of my life. These were false refuges because they brought about suffering. I bring this part of my personal practice to people in recovery. I ask them to reflect on what they spend most of their time thinking about, what is at the center of their life. Of course I don't say “you must have the three jewels!” but that they do need something positive, whether a “God of their understanding” or some other spiritual ideals. When we can see the impermanence of everything, we can accept the unsatisfactory nature of life. We can see that the person we think we are is an illusion based on our thinking, or based on other people's thinking. In essence when we can see there is no self to hate, blame or berate, that all we are is a flow of conditions arising and ceasing, then this is sobriety of mind; peace from the mayhem that can whirl inside our heads.

**Q. What inspired you to write your new book” Eight step recovery-using the Buddha’s teachings to overcome addiction”. What can you share about the book and your downloadable “21 day meditations for recovery” with our community here in the Pacific Northwest as to how it can help to ease the “disease” of our recovery paths?**

There is more than one way to recovery, 12 steps is not the only way and I am proof of that. My co- author is a psychiatrist specializing in addiction who treats people who are suicidal, They have been led to believe if they can't get clean in the 12 step rooms they are doomed and there is no hope. This is a tragedy. Both of us through our own insights into Buddhist teachings wanted to mark clearly a Buddhist pathway to recovery that could be used by anyone. We want to put the Buddhism back into the mindfulness practices. Mindfulness is not enough for the addict to maintain abstinence and develop sobriety of mind.

The Buddha was in recovery. He went beyond recovery when he woke up to seeing things as they really are. The Buddhist teachings guide us to see things as they really are, offering us a way out of suffering. Addiction is suffering and at the root of it is craving and aversion, which are two of the poisons the teachings talk about.

We have delivered training to professionals working in the field of addiction, and inevitably some of them are 12 step or SMART recovery members. The feedback has been inspiring. They have always known that what I call “stinking thinking” has been the cause of a relapse, but have never had it explained in a way that they can see how that actually plays out in the mind We also help them to see the importance of Buddhist loving-kindness (metta) practices.



## Interview with a teacher      cont...

Regarding the “eight steps” program and the “21 day meditations for recovery”, log onto the site [www.thebuddhiscenter.com/eightsteps](http://www.thebuddhiscenter.com/eightsteps), download the meditations and do one a day and see for yourself. They are a gift with no fee attached. In the spirit of Shakyamuni's words , *don't believe anything you have just read, try for yourself and see.* You cannot put a price on Buddhist teachings, they must be accessible to everyone. Of course if people want to donate that is great, generosity is part of recovery. People like Thich Nhat Hanh and Kate Munger the founder of “the Thresh Hold Choirs” have given generously their creativity and time to help ease the dis-ease in the world. We want the book to go into the world, for people to make it their own and create their own meetings like in the 12 step community. We live in a culture now where MEET UP is booming. We have set up a website to help people can create their own groups using the book as a study guide. We are trying hard not to steer it, but to let people steer it. We also see the book being used by Buddhist communities of any tradition and hope they will make the space to embrace the Buddhist recovery groups. We also see it as a book that some people will use to explore their 11th step. If the Lord's Prayer can creep into many of the 12 steps rooms, I'm sure others will be open to exploring this book as a way to support their meditation practice.

This is our vision, but in the end we are just happy to add to the cannon of recovery. It is a matter of urgency to put Buddhism back into mindfulness if we are to see full recovery from our addictive behaviors. Take the raft as far as it will take you, and when you are stuck take another raft to carry you further on the journey. You can begin renouncing now, or wait until the point of death. We all have to renounce in the end. We can choose to do it calmly, peacefully and with loving kindness, or we can fight to the bitter end. How do you want to continue to live your life?

Sign up for Vimalasaras' free “21 day Meditations for recovery” at

[www.thebuddhiscenter.com/eightsteps](http://www.thebuddhiscenter.com/eightsteps)

Look for Vimalasara here in Seattle in the summer of 2014 promoting her new book and bringing her message of recovery and hope to our community. Read more about Vimalasara at :

[www.windhorsepublications.com](http://www.windhorsepublications.com)

[www.facebook.com/eightsteprecovery](http://www.facebook.com/eightsteprecovery)

[www.valeriemason-john.com](http://www.valeriemason-john.com)

[www.bullyvictimbystander.com](http://www.bullyvictimbystander.com)

## MEETING HIGHLIGHT:

### **Buddhism & Meditation**

SASG community center, Capitol Hill Thurs.  
7:30-9:00pm

Situated conveniently on bus lines in the healing energy of the SASG community center, this is the largest and one of the first Buddhist recovery meetings in Seattle, now in its' fifth year.

The founder and lead facilitator of this peer led Buddhist meditation group has ties to Seattle Dharma Punx, and brings his experience as a yoga instructor and passion for his own Buddhist recovery path, as well as his AA background to his recovery sangha, providing a constant and calming presence for the meeting participants. The venue is a hub for the AA community as well as several Buddhist meditation groups which serve not only the LBGTQ, but the entire recovery community, regardless of sexual orientation.

With as many as 20-25 participants at a time, the large crowd does not take away from the warmth and intimate feel of this wonderful recovery sangha. Meetings begin with reading of the house guidelines, bringing everyone on board with expectations of ethical behavior while attending the group, creating a safe and inviting experience for all. They then go into a 30 minute meditation with some initial guidance, which brings the energy of the sangha together and unifies the group. They then share aloud a reading from a variety of both Western and traditional Dharma books and articles, finally opening the group to sharing and discussion for the last half hour or so. There are many in the group who have been there from the beginning, who rotate as peer facilitators, offering the same energy of mindful listening and non-judgement.

Between the wonderful energy of the house and the open hearted presence of all of the participants, this is a welcoming group for anyone regardless of their meditation experience or knowledge of Buddhist practice.

For directions and more info about this group, go [www.sasgcc.org](http://www.sasgcc.org) .

*“We have the power to bring Sanghakaya, the Sangha body, and Maitreya Buddha into existence just by sitting together and practicing deeply.”*

Thich Nhat Hanh,  
from “Friends on the Path, living spiritual communities”

## NWBR BUSINESS NEWS

### NWBR CHARTER

The purpose of this organization is to provide resources for those seeking supplemental support with their recovery from addictive behaviors using traditional Buddhist mindfulness meditation techniques and study of Buddhist teachings. We support Buddhist recovery groups in the Pacific Northwest with promotion on our website, and events throughout the year with meditation teachers and recovery professionals. We provide facilitator support through a quarterly newsletter and written materials with guidelines on setting up and running a Buddhist recovery meeting.

Our current board of directors consists of :  
Debra Greenfield, Founder and treasurer  
Calico Cook, Co-founder and website manager  
Kristin Fiore, Web design and technical support

Our business address is :  
**Northwest Buddhist Recovery**  
7239 Sand Point Way NE #208  
Seattle, WA 98115

The primary contact is :  
**Debra Greenfield** at (206) 729-2082 or  
[nwbuddhistrecovery@gmail.org](mailto:nwbuddhistrecovery@gmail.org)

We are currently operating as an unincorporated non-profit, in the process of applying for 501c 4 status as a social welfare organization. We have acquired an EIN # and can accept donations to **Northwest Buddhist Recovery**. A current copy of our donations and spending are available upon request.

We are seeking qualified individuals committed to the Buddhist recovery program to fill positions on the board as treasurer, secretary and marketing specialist. These volunteers will be expected to contribute a minimal amount of time in quarterly meetings, as well as offer DANA to help support the organization financially. Board positions will last one year, and next year the positions will be open to vote in new members as we grow.

If you would like to be a part of our board, or offer a personal donation, business sponsorship or an annual donation, please contact Debra Greenfield. We also have available for download on our website new facilitator guidelines and a workbook on creating a Buddhist recovery meeting.

Thank you to all of our benefactors, facilitators and meeting participants for your support and generosity in providing these healing resources to the recovery community.

## WHAT'S COMING UP...

### WINTER EVENTS

*In the spirit of the Buddhist practice of generosity, all NWBR events are free, but DANA is gratefully accepted. All are welcome, regardless of your ability to pay. Please consider what heart felt donation you are able to afford to help support those who cannot. Blessings!*

### **FEBRUARY 15<sup>TH</sup> 2:00-5:00pm**

#### **BEGINNER MEDITATION WORKSHOP with Ven. Santidhammo**

**SASG community center** [www.sasgcc.org](http://www.sasgcc.org)

This 3 hour workshop will introduce you to the basic Vipassana meditation practices that we can use together in our Buddhist recovery meditation meetings. Please go to [www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org](http://www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org) to pre-register for this event as space will be limited, or sign up with your meeting facilitator.

### **MARCH 15<sup>TH</sup> – 9:00AM – 5:00PM**

#### **DAY OF MINDFUL RECOVERY at Wat Atamm Buddhist Monastery** [www.atamma.org](http://www.atamma.org)

This is a full day workshop, we will practice sitting and walking meditation with our peers in recovery and listen to Dharma talks by Ven. Kobai Scott Whitney of the Plum Mountain Buddhist Community in Aberdeen, WA. You MUST preregister for this event, and overnight accommodations are available for out of town participants.

Go to [www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org](http://www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org) to register, or sign up with your meeting facilitator.

