



Facilitator workshop June 29th, 2013

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

www.sasgcc.org

Debra Greenfield, workshop facilitator

Northwest Buddhist Recovery

www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org

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Thank you!

Northwest Buddhist Recovery is a local chapter of the Buddhist Recovery Network.



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Introduction to Buddhist recovery and the Northwest Buddhist Recovery resource

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 Saintilan, 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 adverse 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 Buddhist mindfulness meditation techniques and study of Buddhist teachings. 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 meditation & recovery meeting. In our meetings, we:

- Sit and meditate together, usually at the start of the meeting
- Share teachings rooted in Buddhist Dharma, mindfulness & meditation as related to recovery
- Practice Mindful listening, paying attention to the person sharing and opening your heart to listen fully to their share

If your meeting incorporates these three things, you meet the criteria for a Buddhist recovery meeting and we would like to support you on our website.

The following list appears on our website to help people decide if our meetings are a good fit for them as support in addition to 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 for step 11 support?
- 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

If you answered YES to any of these questions, then Buddhist recovery may be just the support for your current program that you are looking for! It is important that we state that you do not have to be Buddhist or have meditation experience to benefit from Buddhist Recovery. An interest in Buddhist philosophy or meditation practice IN ADDITION TO your current recovery program is all that is required.

What Makes a Buddhist Recovery Meeting Special?

By Debra Greenfield

What makes a Buddhist Recovery meeting different from other recovery meetings? The first difference is that we begin all meetings by practicing Buddhist mindfulness meditation together. The amount of instruction will vary with each meeting, depending on the meditation background and credentials of the calendar. For peer facilitated groups, audio CDs of meditations can be used, as well as someone in the group reading a meditation from a book or article by a skilled meditation teacher, with everyone practicing together. Most of the time, a simple statement of intent to sit and meditate, someone ringing a meditation bell to begin the sitting and then again to end, anywhere from 10-30 minutes on average is sufficient. Members who are new to meditation can be guided for the first few minutes to be aware of their posture, bring their mindfulness to the sensation of their breath and when their mind wanders, gently bring it back to the breath. Counting each breath, or the rising and falling of the chest or abdomen are good beginning guidelines.

It is also good to let each person have their own experience in their first initial meditations without too much instruction. Guided meditations other than Samadhi (concentration on the breath) are generally not recommended. We want to practice mindfulness of our breath and of our mental states, both the kilesa (unwholesome mental states) and the kusala citta (wholesome mental states), observing them arising and passing away, to bring us to the awareness of the impermanence of our thoughts, in particular craving and aversion. These tools are helpful to those in recovery from addictive behaviors as we learn not to react to our mental states, but merely observe their characteristics with serenity and mindfulness.

Another aspect of Buddhist recovery is the study of The Buddha's teachings, or Dharma as related to addiction recovery. There are many original Suttas (discourses by The Buddha to his disciples) that relate suffering to craving and aversion, as well as The Four Noble Truths and The Noble Eightfold Path that can be read and discussed at meetings. Some meetings use these as the basis of a recovery program; information about these groups can be found on our website. There are also many modern Dharma teachers who have written books on Buddhism and addiction recovery that have a wealth of information that can be shared in a group.

Without a qualified Dharma instructor, it is best for peer groups to stick with the books or articles written by modern Buddhists like Noah Levine, Kevin Griffin and Darren Littlejohn or Spiritual leaders like Thich Nhat Hanh, Pema Chodren or even the Dalai Lama on compassion, community and living a wholesome life through the practice of Sila (morality) as laid out by The Buddha. Many groups like to read a book together and discuss it at the meeting. There are recovery book study meetings that are easy to start and facilitate that can be very rewarding. A list of recommended books can be found in the "books" section of this website.

What makes a Buddhist recovery meeting special? Cont...

The last difference is the open sharing and “mindful listening” that is practiced in Buddhist Recovery groups. Having an open discussion time when each member is invited to share the celebrations and challenges of life opens up the door to true connection with your sangha members. “Mindful listening” is something that should be practiced at every Buddhist Recovery meeting, using the skills we learn with our meditation practice to be in the present moment when others are sharing, listening with an open heart, practicing compassion and equanimity, without cross talking or commenting. In practicing “mindful listening” we are acting as sacred witness to another person. We listen only to them, not thinking about anything else, and when our mind wanders, gently bring it back to their share.

This is a skill that we can take out into our daily life and practice with friends, family and co-workers that changes the way we interact with people. In combination with establishing a regular meditation practice, we practice staying in the present moment no matter what the circumstances are around us, and learn to interact with others with serenity and non-judgement. Also, being on the receiving end of someone who is mindfully listening to us creates a very deep sense of trust and genuine caring within the group.

When starting a Buddhist Recovery group, remember these things as keys to creating a place where people can come together to meditate and read Dharma together, practicing loving kindness (metta), compassion (karuna), joy at a sangha members happiness or success (mudita) and listening quietly and openly with non-judgement (upekkha). These four things are the Brahma Viharas, and when we practice them together in our groups, we become better human beings for ourselves and everyone who comes into contact with us.

A meeting for everyone-setting your intention

One of the things that I love about the Buddhist recovery meetings in Seattle 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 attend a secular Buddhist meeting and read from books by many Western Buddhist Dharma teachers from many traditions. In Olympia, you can attend a meditation and recovery meeting with an ordained Bhikku, 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? As a new facilitator, you will be asked to 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. Our 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 are 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! We are here to support you in creating a space where others can share your vision.

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

“Intention-

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? 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.” “

Meditation for Recovery

All Buddhist recovery meetings have one important component that sets us apart from AA or other recovery support groups, and that is that we sit and support each other in developing a meditation practice.

Because our meetings are peer led, we must find a way to practice meditation together without the presence of a qualified meditation instructor. It is easy to find ourselves in a “teacher” position in the meetings and this is a very slippery slope. As facilitators, we are there to share our experience with meditation and recovery only as we have experienced on our own recovery path. In our preamble we need to make clear that we are not here as Dharma teachers or meditation instructors, but as peers in recovery. Our role as facilitators is to provide a space for us to practice together, and to provide resources to qualified meditation instruction. This can be offered effectively using several techniques, studying and learning together as we go. Whatever method of instruction you choose, it should be something that anyone in the group can facilitate.

A few tips on meditation instruction are :

1. Keep the meditation period as short as 10 minutes, no longer than 30 minutes. If you are leading a group of experienced meditators, the length can be longer if the group decides it would benefit. Usually, if you have an experienced group, a simple ringing of the bell to signify the beginning of the meditation, and again to end is sufficient. The meeting facilitator would usually facilitate the meditation as well, or you may choose to rotate with interested members of the group.
2. Look around and see if you have new members, and if you do, give basic instructions each time on posture, watching the breath, awareness of the body and feelings and dealing with distractions (see sample meditations pg.6). Samadhi, or meditation on the breath, is the most common meditation practiced in recovery groups, as it is the gateway to Buddhist mindfulness practice and a simple meditation object to explain to beginners without a teacher.
3. Use the same basic meditation each meeting to provide the group with some continuity of practice. When a member begins to develop a daily practice and is looking for more advanced instruction, use the resources on the NWBR website to help them find a meditation class or teacher to explore outside of the group.
4. You may choose to use pre-recorded audio meditations, available from a wide variety of meditation teachers. Incorporating them into your meeting even once a month can be a nice change and expose a member to a teacher that resonates with them. These can be found using the name of a particular teacher or by searching under “audio meditations for addiction recovery” or “meditation and recovery”. Downloading appropriate meditations onto an I-pod or MP3 player or CD and playing them at a meeting can be very effective. Have the recording cued and be ready to stop the recording when finished. You should look for a recording that is anywhere from 10-30 minutes in length, depending on the experience of the group and your particular practice of focus.

I have used meditations from the University of Washington mindfulness based addiction recovery program (MBRP) that are very specific to addiction recovery, as well as meditations from teachers such as Noah Levine, Kevin Griffin and Darren Littlejohn (see links in the back of the workbook) that are specific to supporting those in addiction recovery with Buddhist meditation techniques. If you are leading a secular meditation recovery meeting, you can find meditations by Jon Kabat-Zinn and others that are not particularly based on Buddhist philosophy, but talk about mindfulness as a tool for your recovery program. Again, searching on-line under “mindfulness and recovery” or “mindfulness meditation” will bring up several website choices with audio meditations you can download.

Recently, there has been more information online regarding 12 step meditation meetings, and you may find meditations based on the 12 step program of recovery. Again, search on-line under “12 step meditation” and you should find a number of meditations suited to a 12 step meditation and recovery group.

Meditation for recovery cont...

5. Book meditations – There are many books on meditation and recovery available that have written meditations that can be used effectively at meetings. I find that practicing reading these first aloud a few times at home helps with the timing, leaving appropriate pauses for people to practice. Make sure when reading meditations you leave room to pause after each instruction for at least a few breaths to give people time to practice. You can download and copy several meditations, but it is good to practice the same meditation again and again for a while to learn to do it properly. You may choose a breath meditation as your regular practice, and once a month, introduce a Metta (loving-kindness) meditation or a guided visual meditation to your group. Finding one that works for your vision of your group and meeting format will also enable others to facilitate the meditation when you cannot be at the meeting.

6. Facilitator led meditations – A simple mindfulness of breath meditation can be found in a number of books, or you can use one of the examples provided below. You can keep this with your group paperwork to be read by the group facilitator or a group member, rotating among volunteers if desired. You do not need to be a meditation teacher to read these aloud with your group, remembering to pause when appropriate to give the group time to practice each instruction. These are just guidelines to get the meditation sitting started, and should be no more than 5-10 minutes in length. Remember to always give instructions to the newest members, experienced meditators can proceed on their own if they like.

The following meditations are simply to bring to group to an awareness of their body/mind connection, and the sensation of the body breathing as a meditation object. The meditation facilitator can read this aloud to begin the sitting.

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

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.

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 your body breathing. Try to pay attention to where you notice your 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 your breath, and begin gently noting the inhale and exhale. Try to notice the quality of your 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 your attention 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.

Sample meditation #1 - Basic mindfulness of breath meditation cont...

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, then again three times to signify the end of the meditation~

5th precept sangha basic breath meditation www.5th-precept.org

For those who are new to meditation, here are some guidelines:

- For the next 10-minutes, you are invited to practice 'calm and pleasant abiding' in the here and now.*
- There is nowhere to go - there is nothing to be done - there is no one to be or to become.*
- Sit with your back straight, feet on the floor; let your eyes gently close.*
- Take 2 or 3 deep breaths in... and long breaths out; feel the breath in the whole body.*
- Let your face be soft and your jaw relax.*
- Let your shoulders drop back to open up the heart area; let your arms and hands rest easily.*
- If your mind wanders away from your breath, just make a gentle, silent, non-judgmental note of "not-breath" and return your awareness to your breathing.*
- Our whole practice is grounded on Loving-kindness; so you are encouraged to smile inwardly and outwardly; you are encouraged to take delight in this moment – this only moment.*

~Ring bell once to indicate the beginning of the sitting, then ring bell three times to indicate the end of the sitting~

revised excerpt from the book “Against the stream-Meditative trainings”

“Find a comfortable place to sit, closing the eyes and relaxing the body.

Bringing attention to the sensations of breath, continue redirecting the attention to the breath each time it wanders. Continue to be as friendly and kind as possible to your mind’s tendency to wander.

~pause for 5-10 breaths~

Now expand your attention to the whole body. Bring your attention to your posture. Feel the pressure of your body on the cushion or chair. Feel the contact points of your hands touching your legs or resting in your lap. Direct the attention to sensations in the body sitting.

~pause~

With the foundation of present time awareness as established by your practice of continually returning your attention to the breath and body, you can now expand your awareness to include all of your sense doors.

Begin with the awareness of hearing. When you become aware of sound, simply pay attention to the experience of hearing – the bare experience of sound being received by the eardrum. Although the mind wants to instantly name the object being heard, the direct experience is just variations of sound. Using memory and conditioning, the mind immediately tries to label the sound as a car passing by, or the wind in the trees, or the refrigerator turning on. In this level of practice, try to see the difference between the direct experience of sound and the mind’s conditioned labeling of the experience. Keep it simple; it is just “hearing”.

~pause~

Expand your attention to seeing, tasting, and smelling in the same way. Just “seeing” and the direct experience of what’s being seen – color, shape, form, etc. Just “taste”, just “smelling”.

~pause~

Notice how quickly the mind names and classifies things based on memory. This level of mindfulness allows us to see how the mind is constantly trying to sort and name experiences based on memory, rarely allowing for new or fresh perspectives.

~pause~

When the attention gets drawn back into thinking, simply return it to the breath. Then continue to extend mindfulness to the direct, moment to moment sensory experience of the whole body.

~pause~

Allow the attention to be drawn to whatever experience in the body is predominant. When sounds arise, know them as “hearing”. When visions arise (either through the eye door or in the mind) know them as “seeing”. Don’t settle for the mind’s labels and conventions. Experience each moment as if it were the first sensation of its kind ever. Bring childlike interest and curiosity to your present-time experience. What does this moment feel like? What is the temperature, texture, or pressure of this sensory experience?

~pause~

Continue to connect the attention with the felt sense of the breath and body. Begin refining the attention to the moment to moment flux of sensations. Investigate the constantly changing nature of each experience.

~pause~

With clear comprehension receive the transient phenomena with nonjudgmental awareness. Attempt to sustain awareness of the arising and passing of each chosen sensation.

Continue redirecting the attention and reconnecting with the present moment each time the attention is drawn back into the contents of the thinking mind. Attempt to rest in the direct experience of the breath and body, relaxing into the present-time awareness of impermanence. “

~ring bell once, sit in silence for 15-20 minutes~

~ring bell three times to signal the end of the meditation period~

End with questions or comments about the meditation experience, and encourage participants to share their experience

The sacred circle – creating a safe place to share and support

This time in your meeting will be a time when the Sangha is solidified as you create a space that is welcoming, safe and supportive while maintaining a sense of order with guidelines you will share with the group. These guidelines should be kept with the group paperwork to be read aloud either at the beginning of the meeting before the meditation period, or just before the share time starts (see sample group guidelines on pages 10-15). Having boundaries creates a safe environment where people can share and feel truly heard. One of the guidelines is referred to as “mindful listening” where the group is encouraged to use their mindfulness when others are speaking, giving them their full attention while listening with an open and non-judgmental heart (see about mindful listening on page 3 of “What makes a Buddhist recovery meeting special”) Others, such as no cross talking, keeping confidentiality and being “drug or alcohol free” when arriving should be already written out for your first meeting, and read at each meeting thereafter.

As the meeting facilitator, you are responsible for setting the framework for mutual respect, compassion and understanding with the group by setting boundaries for behavior in the group. If someone is a risk to the safety of the group, having a co-facilitator on hand, or someone willing to take over the meeting is helpful. Taking someone aside and giving them attention while removing them from the group may be needed, gently explaining they may not attend if they cannot abide by the group guidelines. Encourage them to return in a drug free state, or suggest another meeting may be appropriate for them. It is difficult, but you are not alone, you should have a Sangha member willing to step in if needed for you. You may find someone on the first day you meet willing to be a co-facilitator. The meeting should be able to be facilitated by anyone in the group, provided you have the resources for them on hand.

BUDDHIST RECOVERY GROUP EXAMPLES

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. These are examples of existing meetings and hopefully cover a variety of meeting styles that you can use as a starting point for your group.

“SIT AND SHARE” 5th precept sangha meetings

www.5th-precept.org

Presenter, please follow this format closely. Everything that you say is in *italics*.

7:00 – Read the opening aloud

Welcome to this ‘Sit & Share’ meditation meeting of the Fifth Precept Buddhist Group.

This is a Peer Led group that is open to people of all backgrounds. The group is founded on the principles and practices of Truth and Truthfulness, Generosity, Ethics, Loving-kindness, Forgiveness, Mindfulness and Fellowship; and is grounded in the Buddhist principles of non-harming, compassion and interdependence.

This meeting is open to people with any addiction and to any individuals choosing abstinence from intoxicants as their preferred lifestyle. Importantly, we abandon attachment to negative self-views by announcing ourselves by our first name only, without identifying ourselves with any addiction. With the aspiration to build community and to get to know each other, we start each week by introducing ourselves. There is no need to identify yourself by anything other than your name. In the spirit of this intention, I will start by introducing myself as _____ ... and I wish you all a very good evening! Now would you like to introduce yourselves...

Other participants introduce themselves by name.

If you need to leave the meeting, please feel free to silently leave at any time.

If you have any questions, there will be an informal opportunity after the closing dedication.

Statement of Anonymity and Confidentiality

In order for this group to be a place where we can feel safe to share about our practice, to share about our spiritual aspirations or to share about our recovery; and to create an atmosphere of openness, we ask that -

- who you see here remain anonymous,

- and what you hear here remain confidential.

Tonight’s meeting will begin with 10-minutes of serenity breathing meditation. I will then read tonight’s topic for reflection and we will settle into 10-minutes of silent but active contemplation. You will then be invited to ‘share’ your thoughts on the topic.

Please join me now for 10 minutes of serenity breathing meditation to calm the breath, relax the body and quiet the mind.

~ring bell once to signal beginning of meditation period~

Group examples – 5th precept “sit and share” meeting cont...

7:10 – Ring the bell (x3) to end the 10-minute ‘serenity’ meditation.

7:10 – Read the prepared meeting topic - (for examples see www.5th-precept.org/html/topic_basket.html)

“TOPIC.....”

[OPTIONAL : Introduce/explain why you choose this topic] and then read this aloud:

Now we’ll contemplate and reflect silently on this topic for about 10 minutes. You will then be invited to ‘share’ on the topic, as it relates to your aspirations, or as it relates to your resolve, or to your practice or to your experience on this path of harmlessness. If you wish to share at that time, please make me aware.

Ring the bell (x1) to begin the 10-minute topic contemplation.

Here are some guidelines:

- *Sit with your back straight, feet on the floor, eyes gently shut.*
- *Breathe naturally.*
- *From a place of non-judgmental calmness, reflect on the topic.*
- *Be gentle with yourself.*
- *If you get lost, just practice serenity breathing meditation again to become calm and focused.*
- *Befriend your practice – befriend yourself.*

[OPTIONAL : After a minute or two, it may be appropriate and helpful to ‘drop’ one line from tonight’s topic into the mediation].

7:25 – Ring the bell (x3) to end the 10-minute topic meditation. Read the topic again, without commenting.

Then read the following aloud:

As tonight’s presenter I will share last. You are now invited to share for a few minutes your thoughts about tonight’s topic. Would anyone like to start?

7:55 – The presenter shares.

8:00 - Close topic discussion and announce 30-minute silent [or guided] meditation:

There will now be a 30-minute silent [or guided] meditation.

8:00 – Ring the bell (x1) to begin the 30-minute [silent/guided] [serenity/insight] meditation.

8:30 – Ring the bell (x3) to end the 30-minute meditation.

8:30 – Announcements

- *Thank set up person*
- *Cleanup*
- *Telephone / email list*
- *Miscellaneous*
- *Dana for room hire*
- *Volunteer reads the Dedication of Merit*

Dedication of Merit

Please join me in the dedication of merit by repeating after me, the following aspirations:

We dedicate the merits of this practice

to all suffering addicts.

May everyone be free of suffering,

and the causes of suffering.

May everyone enjoy happiness,

and the causes of happiness.

Keep sitting; and keep smiling.

[08:30 - 9:00 – Tea, Q&A and discussion, if requested.

Buddhadharma Meditation & Recovery meeting format

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 format, 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 Buddhas' 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:

Buddhadharma Meditation & Recovery guidelines cont...

- 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 anothers' 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.

“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 FACILITATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

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 it's original condition and the lights and heat are off on time. Also collect any Dana and put in an envelope, and distribute properly.

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.

Mindfulness & 12 step meeting format Therese Jacobs-Stewart

Adapted from Mindfulness and the 12-Steps by Thérèse Jacobs Stewart (MN: Hazelden Publications, 2010.)

We meet for 75 minutes, from 7:00-8:15 PM.

Meeting Structure:

- 1. Ring the mindfulness bell to begin the meeting and make introductions.** After the bell, we go around and introduce ourselves with our first name and 12-Step affiliation.
- 2. Read the Preamble.**

We read a preamble, which is a paragraph adapted from my book *Mindfulness and the 12-Steps*. We are using this for now, but hope to get a group to work on editing the Preamble sometime next year. We realized we needed to have something to introduce the meeting, so people would realize this group is a hybrid of sorts. We are not quite as casual as a 12-Step meeting, since we maintain an atmosphere of “sacred space” in the meditation room where we meet, but not quite as strict as a formal practice center, either.

This is the Preamble we are using for now:

“WE MEET MONDAY EVENINGS, one chapter in a nation-wide community of Twelve Steps and Mindfulness meetings. Our addictions are wide-spread: drugs, alcohol, food, gambling, cigarettes, or codependency. Everyone is welcome.

We introduce ourselves by going around the circle, saying our first name and Twelve Step affiliation. We have a common interest in meditation practices and how they can inform our recovery from addiction. Each month, we discuss one of the Twelve Steps and how Buddhist thought, meditation, and mindfulness practice can be applied to our life in recovery. We sit in silent meditation together, hear a talk by one of our members, and share our reflections.

As with many Twelve Step meetings, we are a diverse group of people, yet we are part of the great stream of beings seeking deeper serenity in our lives, grounded in sobriety by the Twelve Step program, inspired to awaken and live in the present by the practices of mindfulness meditation. In our addictions, we were never here in the moment. We *wanted* to be gone. Now we are learning to wake up to the joy of being alive. Please make yourself at home.”

(We also hand out a “Meditation Room (‘Zendo’) Etiquette sheet” to people who are new to the meeting, which I will attach for your reference.)

- 3. Do sitting meditation for 20-25 minutes.** I usually guide this for the first 10 minutes or so and then let it be completely silent until the end of the sitting period.

We then invite any questions people may have about sitting meditation in general.

Mindfulness & 12 step meeting format cont....

4. **Give a 30-35 minute presentation on Buddhist thought, mindfulness practice and the Step of the month.** Our speaker of the evening gives this talk. We are starting to upload some of my talks on the MindRoads Meditation Center web site, if you want to listen to them to get a flavor of the kind of presentation that is given at our meeting and/or play them on an MP3 for the group in lieu of a live talk. The link to our library page is:<http://mindroads.com/audio.php?cat=16>

I have also heard of several groups around the area using my book as a “guide” and teaching from it for their meetings. That could possibly be a way to start for the first year, since I go through each of the 12-Steps and weave it together with Buddhist thought and mindfulness practice. Sometimes the presenter will not speak for quite as long and do a guided meditation instead.

5. **Open the meeting up for comments and reflections from the group members.** We play this by ear, usually it’s about 10 minutes of open sharing. If people are not inclined to talk, we do a second, short sitting meditation, sometimes structures, sometimes not.
6. **Have a short, 5-mn business meeting, conducted by our trusted servant.** He or she asks for announcements of meditation activities going on around town, or a 12-Step speaker talking about mindfulness, retreats, etc.
7. **Pass the basket for donations.**

“In the spirit of the 7th Tradition of AA, that ‘every group be self-supporting’ and also the Buddhist tradition of ‘dana,’ which encourages us to give back when we have received benefit, we are now going to pass the basket.”

We give ½ the collection to the speaker (if he/she is a visiting guest) and the rest to MindRoads Meditation Center to cover rent, cushions, heat, lights, etc.

[Eric-this is something we need to take up with the group at the last meeting of the month in February. The Buddhist Recovery Network has asked that all Buddhism and 12-Step groups consider giving a donation (monthly, quarterly, or one-time) to the Buddhist Recovery Network to support their work of bringing recovery through the Dharma to others suffering with addictions. They’ve said any help is appreciated. Donations can be made directly via their website, www.buddhistrecovery.org.]

8. **Close with the “We version” of the Serenity Prayer.**

The group stands in a circle, while trusted servant conducts the closing prayer and meditation:

- Take a moment to settle into quiet.
- Do a few breaths of *tonglen* (compassion) meditation.
“Take a moment to breath-IN the suffering of those still in the throes of addiction, and breath-OUT the energy of compassion and loving-kindness to them and their loved ones.”
- Say the “We version” of the Serenity Prayer aloud.
- Brush off zafus and zabutons (cushions) and stack them *neatly*-all in the lengthwise direction against the wall in the corner.
- Adjourn the meeting.

Overall (Notes)

- We structure the group to discuss one step of the AA 12-Step program per month, looking at how mindfulness meditation informs the understanding and application of that step in our lives in recovery. The step we discuss coordinates with the number of the month.
- We are not an affiliate of AA's InterGroup, because we do not contribute financially to InterGroup and do not offer a 1st Step group or sponsorship at our meetings. We suggest to people that they have a home group (with sponsor) and use this meeting as an enrichment to their recovery program.
- We welcome people from all 12-Step affiliations to the meeting.
- We elect a trusted servant once every 6-months.

DARREN LITTLEJOHN Buddhist 12 step meeting instructions and format

Downloaded from "The 12-step Buddhist" website www.the12stepbuddhist.com

How to Start a 12-Step Sangha Meeting

Create. Write up a format. Think about what you want to offer, what's missing from your regular meetings and what will keep you interested during slumps. Don't try to "people please." Just make an interesting meeting based on what you think would be beneficial. Be open to a group conscience. Use our format, modify it to suit your needs or create your own from scratch.

Locate. Find a centralized location and get a good deal on the rental agreement. Explain that you're just starting out and it might take time for the meeting to catch on, particularly if it's a new type of service.

Coordinate. Get people involved. Connect with local community groups to let them know about the new meeting. Don't rely solely on your usual AA or NA groups. You may meet with some resistance. If you choose to make an announcement during regular meetings, be careful. You may be asked not to do that.

Promote. Don't be afraid to send out a text announcement, keep an email list or Google group for your meeting. Use other forms of creating community to help people stay connected.

The How and Why

The types of meditation meetings that you'll see around the country are mostly from the view of Buddhists in recovery. The way we set up our 12-Step Sangha meeting here in Portland is more like, "Meditation for Recovering People." This keeps it open to anyone who may be interested and serves the greatest number of addicts. There are other ways to look at it, but I'll give the reasons why we did it this way. Regardless what you decide, it's definitely a step in the right direction to create some kind of mediation meeting. As you know, some with years of sobriety don't know how to meditate or have limited experience.

It's a good service for the recovery community to have this kind of meeting and to offer some simple, written instructions at the beginning of each meeting. Having them in the format keeps the teachers and pontificators off their soap boxes. It also lets those new to meditation have a fair shot at developing a new skill without feeling like they have to know what they're doing.

The reason I started 12-Step Sangha was to focus on meditation as part of a recovery program, not as a substitute. I've included the format we've been using below, but in a simpler version. The idea was to use some Buddhist meditation techniques, but to keep the style, topics and sharing oriented to recovery. This is different than a Buddhist style group that allows recovering people. 12-Step Sangha is a 12-Step group that focuses on meditation for recovering people. While familiar, it breaks free from normal meeting rhetoric, which is very refreshing. It's a very positive and supportive environment and many have shared how they can't do this on their own.

You may choose to have a regular AA or NA type meeting, with a focus on meditation. That's fine. But don't be shocked when the standard sharing goes right into the mainstream groove and the meeting becomes just another meeting. With our format people who've been in recovery for years get into it and find it refreshing—although it takes some a bit of time to adjust.

The Topic Basket

I was surprised to find out that most of the attendees don't choose topics from regular 12-Step literature. They bring their own books to donate to our "topic basket" which can be a stack of books or topics written on slips of paper. We use books. Most people pick Thich Nhat Hahn over anything else. Occasionally they grab something from a daily meditations book. But they almost never pick up the big book or the 12×12.

Time and Place

To get started, I went to the local Alano club and talked to the director about my idea. He's a younger guy with a Master's in Public Health, so is much more forward thinking than his predecessor. You might not be so fortunate, depending on where you live. Most of the Alano clubs around here are pretty traditional. I was stunned to find out that there were nine different 12-Step meetings going on at the time I was looking at having the meeting.

I picked a time that wouldn't conflict with popular meetings. Consider something similar to increase participation, particularly if you're in a small town. But I've lived in small towns, and was surprised at how many interesting, educated people I met. If you plan well, you'll be more likely to get a great response.

Setting up a meeting is all about being willing to show up, take responsibility and make sure that the meeting is happening—no matter what. We call it a commitment for a reason. So pick a good time and a central location that people can find, with good parking. If you have no churches or Alano clubs or hospitals in your area, then you can have it at someone's house. But work with someone who is very active in the 12-Step community. They'll have connections, which will help you get the word out.

When I began 12-Step Sangha, I listed it in the AA directory. Technically, according to the literature on what defines a group, I felt that the meeting was within the guidelines. But old-timers disagreed, and pulled the meeting out of the guide. So we went from 30+ people to about 5-7 sometimes. When they yanked it from the schedule I figured, fine, we're not stuck with the traditional rules. I put a notice on Craigslist and in bookshops and the online local entertainment magazine. I put up the occasional flyer in places where regular 12-Step meetings were held. But after a while, word of mouth spread through people who liked it. In our second year we have about 15 members on average.

I enjoyed the freedom of not being bound by the typical traditions, but still wanted to keep the meeting on track as recovery oriented. In my book, I make it clear that I'm not trying to reinvent the 12-Step wheel. I started 12-Step Sangha while I was still writing the book, so some of the ideas were pretty fresh at the time. The format works very well. Participants almost always keep it real. I'd say one or two times in 15 months somebody said something kooky, but it was because they came in late and didn't hear the format where we emphasize that this is a recovery meeting, for people working a 12-Step program.

Keeping it from Getting Kooky

We set up the room with the lights low, a Buddha crystal on an LED turnstile, some flowers or a candle. To create a feeling of unity, we sit in a circle. If people come in late and sit outside the circle, we invite them to come in the circle with us.

When people share, they readily keep it about recovery. The format is clear in this regard. In the secretary announcements I usually let newer people know what the expectation is. We announce ourselves by first name, and do not disclose our particular addiction. This is so we can discuss addiction generally and without alienating anyone. Members enjoy the privacy. We tell people the meeting is open to anyone from any 12-Step program. This is a very welcome point. People don't have to feel like they're lurking at an AA meeting, for example, if they have food issues.

One reason I wrote the 12-Step Buddhist is because I've always been the token recovering guy in my Buddhist or other spiritual groups. You know how we addicts are. We tend to stand out, especially in Zen or Vipashyana style groups where the vibe is kind of subdued. The 12-Step Sangha meeting allows us to do a good, solid, quiet mediation practice, with other recovering people. It also gives us a forum to share in the style to which we've become accustomed over the years in 12-Step groups, but without having to watch our words as much. If we mention Buddha, nobody freaks out, although if we say the word "God", Buddhists in the group may not like it. But we state during announcements that this isn't a Buddhist group, or an AA, NA, OA, CA, GA, SAA or any other A group per se. It's a little bit of both worlds.

In my book I explain why I feel this way and am confident to make such recommendations. But the main point is no secret: Buddhism in general and meditation in particular are supplements to, not substitutes for regular 12-Step work. But in the context of 12-Step Sangha, it's the main focus and is integrated with the regular meeting process.

Two Meditations

The first meditation period is five minutes long, with an emphasis on watching or counting the breaths. This goes until about 10 past the hour and helps get everyone settled. When late-comers arrive, it doesn't disrupt the flow too much. After the five minutes session, the leader reads a topic and some short instructions on how to mediate on a topic. This kind of analytical meditation is pretty new to most people and hard for even those of us who've been around for a while. The leader reads a short topic, no more than a paragraph or two. Then we meditate for 20 minutes on the topic. If we can't do that, we just focus on breathing. I was amazed to find that even people who are new to mediation can and do sit perfectly still and silent for 20 minutes. Occasionally someone gets squirmy and leaves.

Another thing that makes this format different is that the leader shares last. I did this by accident because I led the first meeting and it worked out so well that it stuck. The leader decides if it's a circle, tag, volunteer or call-on style meeting. This gives them input on how the meeting will go. Listening to everyone share on the topic they have chosen is part of their meditation experience.

We use a nice sounding meditation bell for the beginning and end of the 5 and 20-minute meditations. I have a Radio Shack timer that I use to make sure the leader can rest easy without watching the clock. I sit next to the leader always because we normally space out a bit after the 20-minute session and it's easy to get lost. So I gently remind them where we are, or that they share last, or that it's time to ring the bell. We've often had leaders who've never been to the meeting. This can be fun, but you have to keep an eye on things.

For the closing prayer, we use a maitri or loving-kindness dedication, modified for addicts. This is a Buddhist principle, but isn't so over-the-top to alienate anyone. Since people aren't as familiar with this as they are the Serenity Prayer, it's helpful to have laminated 3x5 cards place around the room. Alternately you could put one larger sign where everyone can see it.

Fellowship

We always invite everyone to go have sushi with us after the group. We typically have 7-10 members eating with us each week. This is a big part of recovery. We call it the meeting after the meeting. Be sure to find a good, cheap place to eat after your meeting. It really helps people feel connected.

12 STEP SANGHA (pronounced san-ga) MEETING FORMAT

Leader, please follow this format closely. Everything that you say is in italics.

1) Read the opening aloud

“Welcome to 12-Step Sangha, Meditation for Recovering People. The meeting is open to people with any addiction, from any 12-Step program. For the privacy of our members, we announce ourselves by first name only, without disclosing our particular addiction. Please take a flyer, which lists our website, 12stepsangha.com, and many good meditation resources.

My name is _____ (please don't use an addiction identifier)

Step 11 says, We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with a Higher Power as we understood it, praying only for knowledge of our Higher Power's will for us and the power to carry that out.

The format of this meeting is 5 minutes of breathing meditation, followed by a short reading of tonight's topic. Then we sit silently to contemplate the topic until 7:30. I'll ring the bell at the beginning and end of the meditation periods. At 7:30, I'll reread the topic without commenting after secretary announcements. I will call on people to share on the topic, as it relates to recovery. The leader shares last.

During the meditation period we ask that everyone be quiet and still out of respect for the practice. If you need to leave, please do so silently. If there are questions, someone will talk with you after the meeting.”

2) Read the instructions aloud, then ring the bell to begin 5 minute breathing meditation.

“Instructions for breathing meditation. Please join me for 5 minutes of breathing meditation to focus the mind. For those who are new to meditation, here are some guidelines: Sit with your back straight, feet on the floor, eyes open but still, at about a 45 degree angle. Breathe naturally. Notice where the air enters your nose. Put your attention there. Count your breaths up to four and backwards down to one. If you lose your place, start back at one.”

Leader rings the bell to begin the 5-minute meditation.

7:05 – Ring the bell to end the 5-minute meditation.

3) Select and read a SHORT topic: one paragraph maximum. Choose from 12 Step literature, or from the Topic Basket. Please keep the topic short. Do not share until everyone else has shared.

Leader reads the topic, then reads this aloud:

“Now we'll meditate silently on the topic until 7:30. Here are some guidelines. From a place of non-judgmental calmness, reflect on the topic. Be gentle with yourself. If you get lost, practice counting breaths again to become calm and focused.”

Leader rings the bell to begin the 20-minute topic meditation.

4) 7:30 – Turn it over to the secretary to pass the basket and make announcements

5) Read the topic again, without commenting. Then read the following aloud:

“The leader shares last, after reflecting on everyone's input. We share about our experience with the meditation on this topic, as it pertains to our recovery. You can pass or share for a few minutes. At 7:55, we'll stop to let the leader share.”

12 STEP SANGHA (pronounced san-ga) MEETING FORMAT cont...

Leader chooses how people will be called on, tagged, go around the circle, etc. At 7:55, you share.

6) 8:00: Lead the group in the closing dedication.

"We remain seated for the closing dedication, printed on the 3x5 cards. Please join me.

We dedicate the merits of this practice to all suffering addicts.

May everyone be free of suffering, and the causes of suffering.

May everyone enjoy happiness, and the causes of happiness.

Keep coming back, it works."

Morning meditation & recovery meeting – Book study

This is a new meeting that is currently studying the book "Heart of the Revolution – by Noah Levine" which discusses in depth the Metta Sutta on Loving kindness, compassion and forgiveness. Book study groups will be smaller, but can be very rewarding in studying and discussing books by Buddhist authors relating Buddhist Dharma to recovery.

Preamble and meeting guidelines

Welcome to Morning meditation & recovery, my name is _____ and I will be facilitating this morning. I am not here as a Dharma teacher or meditation instructor, but as a peer in recovery, sharing my experience with meditation and Buddhist practice as related to my recovery path. In this group we will study and discuss teachings on meditation and Buddhism and, together, support each other in developing a daily meditation practice.

This meeting is open to all on any recovery or Buddhist path, all that is required is an interest in developing a regular meditation practice as a part of your recovery program.

In order to promote the safety and well being of all who participate, we ask that you follow the following guidelines:

Meeting guidelines:

- Refrain from cross talking, allowing all who wish to speak your full attention and completion of their share
- Use "I" statements and speak from personal experience
- Arrive to the meeting sober, fully present and open to the Dharma
- Be aware of the length of your share in relation to the size of the group, allowing all who wish to speak a turn
- Refrain from commenting or directly addressing another persons' share unless requested.
(Personal connections can be made in private after the meeting)
- Listen with an open heart, giving your full attention to the speaker so that all can feel heard and supported

Morning meditation & recovery meeting cont...

The format of the meeting will be:

- Beginning introductions
- Meditation period with brief instruction
- Reading and discussion period
- Open sharing and recovery support
- Ending meditation and announcements

This group is supported by the Northwest Buddhist Recovery group with a website of resources for Buddhist recovery meetings, facilitator support and regular meditation & recovery talks and retreats. Please see your facilitator for more information. www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org

The Four Brahma Viharas – Closing blessing for each other and the world

The Four Brahma Viharas

(Metta) – Loving kindness (Karuna) – Compassion (Mudita) – Sympathetic joy (Upekka) – equanimity or grace

May *you* be happy and healthy, (Metta) may *you* be comforted and healed (Karuna)

May *you* rejoice in another's blessings (Mudita) and may *you* be at peace always (Upekka)

May *I* be happy and healthy, May *I* be comforted and healed,

May *I* rejoice in another's blessings and may *I* be at peace always

May *all beings* be happy and healthy, may *all beings* be comforted and healed,

May *all beings* rejoice in another's blessings and may *all beings* be at peace always.

May all beings share in any goodwill or benevolent feelings we have generated with this practice together today.



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 recognise 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)

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.

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)

Mindful Recovery meeting cont....

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



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 recognise 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)

- Soothes 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)

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Shambhala

Heart of Recovery Program and Meetings

The Heart of Recovery is a meditation and discussion group that brings together Shambhala Buddhist meditation practice with our individual paths of recovery from compulsive and addictive thoughts and behaviors. Meetings are anonymous and confidential and explore the relationship of addiction and recovery to our personal paths as warriors, Bodhisattvas, and meditation practitioners.

We welcome everyone who wants to make the effort to abstain from their compulsive, addictive behaviors, and wants to integrate the strength, clarity, and basic goodness of Buddhist meditation into their recovery.

Meeting format includes:

- Meditation instruction and practice (if an authorized Shambhala Guide, Meditation Instructor, or teacher is not present, the approved meditation instruction can be read).
- A topic offering in the form of a brief share, dharma talk (when an authorized teacher is present), or a reading.
- Sharing of personal experience and exploration by group members.
- Dedication of merit.

Dharma talks and readings draw on the Shambhala Buddhist tradition which emphasizes the belief that our inherent nature as human being has a fundamental nature of goodness, warmth and intelligence. This nature can be cultivated through meditation and further developed in daily life, so that it radiates out to family, friends, community and society. It is this fundamental goodness that provides the ground for us to overcome our constant struggle to escape the present moment through addiction, fantasies and conceptual stories, grasping and clinging, and closing down to ourselves and our world.

Shambhala teachings provide a practical path – grounded in meditation - for recovery from addiction, ego-clinging, and the small-minded “me plan” that repeatedly leads us to suffering, discontent, and harmful actions. The Shambhala path of warriorship supports practitioners not only connecting to our inherent goodness, warmth, and intelligence as human beings, but also in engaging with our world as further manifestations of these qualities.

Shambhala Heart of Recovery Program and Meetings cont...

Additional Notes on Heart of Recovery Meetings

1. As an offering of the Shambhala Centers, these meetings fall under the direction of the Shambhala Center's hosting them (this applies to groups that are hosted at the Center's main address or at off-site locations);
2. The Heart of Recovery is not affiliated with any 12-step program nor does it specifically adhere to the 12 Traditions associated with 12-step programs;
3. Wisdom from various 12-step and other recovery programs will enter Heart of Recovery through the experience and shares of some of its members;
4. The Heart of Recovery welcomes and brings together individuals touched by addiction. This includes individuals recovering from substance and behavior based addictions as well as those whose lives have been impacted by the friends and family member's addictions.
5. Heart of Recovery is intended to support individuals in recovery whether they are currently in a program of recovery or not. However, it is not intended to replace 12-steps, inpatient or outpatient rehab programs, or any other model of recovery.

See also, www.HeartofRecovery.org

(Read at the beginning of the meeting)

The Heart of Recovery
Meditation and Recovery Group*

Welcome to the Heart of Recovery Group. My name is _____.

I will be the host and leader for this evening.

- Please turn off cell phones, pagers, or other electronic devices that may disturb the meeting.
- We will begin this evening's meeting with mindfulness meditation practice for 20 minutes. We can arrange a more formal meditation instruction at the end of the evening for anyone who wants instruction, or to discuss your meditation practice.

(Read the following section clearly and slowly)

- Take a relaxed but upright posture, with your hands resting on your thighs.
 - If sitting on a cushion your legs should be loosely crossed in front of you.
 - If sitting on a chair, your feet should be flat on the floor and you should not be leaning against the back of the chair.
 - Your shoulders are back slightly and your chest is open - a posture of having a strong back and an open heart.
 - Relax your jaw.
 - Looking straight ahead, lower your gaze to about 4 to 5 feet in front of you. Maintain a soft focus, allowing visual perceptions to come in, but not specifically focusing on any one thing.
 - Let your awareness rest on your breath.
 - As you breathe out, relax your mind and allow your thoughts and feelings to go out with your breath.
 - As thoughts arise, label them "thinking" and go back to the breath.
 - Treat all thoughts and emotions that arise without judgment. Label them, then, with gentleness and precision, return to the breath.
- To begin sitting I will strike the gong. I will strike the gong again to close the meditation session.

** Adapted from original format and materials developed by members of the Boston Heart of Recovery Group and the Boston Shambhala Meditation Center*

ARTICLES AND BOOKS / LINKS TO RESOURCES FOR DHARMA STUDY

Links to articles and topics for Dharma study related to recovery

For more links, google “Buddhism and recovery” or “meditation, mindfulness and recovery”

www.5th-precept.org/html/topic_basket.html

www.dharmanet.org (* Buddhist recovery articles)

www.nwbuddhistrecovery.org

www.buddhistrecovery.org

www.kevingriffin.net

www.easeandjoy.org (* loving-kindness and forgiveness)

www.the12stepbuddhist.com

www.noahlevine.com

www.hardcorezen.blogspot.com

www.http://mindroads.com/mindfulness-12-steps.php

www.plummountain.org

www.liberationpark.org

www.nwdharma.org (*Buddhism and recovery articles)

www.amazon.com (*Buddhism and recovery books)

www.inquiringmind.com/Archives.html - spring 2010 edition - Addiction