

# FROM HUNGRY GHOST TO BEING HUMAN



## WAKING UP TO THIS LIFE

*There is life without alcohol, other drugs, and compulsions  
- a life free from shame, free from blame and free from guilt –  
a life free from craving, free from aversion and free from confusion.*

**Everyday Nirvana - every day.**

## *For clarity and the avoidance of doubt:*

**What's the difference between the Fifth Precept fellowship, Hungry Ghost retreats, and Nalagiri House?**

**Fifth Precept Sangha (Fellowship):** is a peer-led mutual-help organisation that uses Buddhist mindfulness teachings and practices to help people wake up to this life. For some, this manifests as a wholehearted recovery from the suffering caused by addictive behaviours. This approach encourages individual [commitment](#) to living life in harmony – as best we can - with the [Five Universal Precepts](#) which includes total-abstinence. – [www.5th-precept.org](http://www.5th-precept.org)

**Hungry Ghost Retreats:** are an opportunity to explore and cultivate some of the principles and practices of the Fifth Precept Sangha's approach to waking up to this life (i.e. recovering from life's difficulties) and embracing the possibilities and potentiality of a life without alcohol, drugs and other compulsions; making the dreams you didn't know you had, come true - all within a retreat setting –[www.HungryGhostRetreats.org](http://www.HungryGhostRetreats.org)

**Nalagiri House :** is a mindfulness and meditation centre in Tipperary, Ireland due to open in late 2020. In the main, Nalagiri House will offer 6-night '**Everyday Mindfulness**' retreats which will be experiential explorations of 'Sati' or 'Mindfulness in a Buddhist context'. These weeks be relaxed with 3 x 40-minute meditations throughout the day, a mindful work period in the morning, free time in the afternoons, and an evening group 'Sit-and-Share' meeting. These retreats will not be entirely silent but there will be periods of silence including one complete Day of Silence each week.

Occasionally, Nalagiri House will offer '**Hungry Ghost**' retreats which will be much more experiential, interactive and instructive. Individuals looking for help with stress, burnout, anxiety, depression, trauma, or addiction have found these retreats very helpful in the past – [www.Nalagiri-Mindfulness.ie](http://www.Nalagiri-Mindfulness.ie)

*['Waking Up to This Life'](#) is a work in progress.*



*This booklet is intended primarily as a hand-out at 'Hungry Ghost' retreats (see [www.HungryGhostRetreats.org](http://www.HungryGhostRetreats.org)) and secondly as a Handbook for the Fifth Precept Sangha (see [www.5th-Precept.org](http://www.5th-Precept.org)).*

*The latest version of this booklet can be freely downloaded from:  
[www.5th-precept.org/fifth-precept-sangha-downloads/](http://www.5th-precept.org/fifth-precept-sangha-downloads/)*

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## Introduction

The Realm of the Hungry Ghosts - *the condition of unsatisfiable cravings; unrewarding compulsions* - for example but not exclusively as experienced by alcoholics and drug addicts - is not a physical place but simply a **mind-state**; a state of being in the world.

In fact, all of the 'Realms of Becoming', as illustrated in the Buddhist Wheel of Life which depicts various Heaven and Hell territories - ([see page 8](#)) - including the **Realm of Human Beings** are also mind-states; states of being in the world that we move through from moment to moment, often unconsciously, throughout each and every day.

In Buddhism, all situations are temporary, transient and impermanent; even Heaven and Hell mind-states. Therefore, it is possible through our own conscious thoughts, words and actions to move away from the destructive suffering of addictions and compulsions – *the living hell of the Hungry Ghost* – to live in harmony and balance with the 10,000 sorrows and 10,000 joys of everyday life; embracing the ordinary and the mundane of just **being human**.

The **Realm of Human Beings** is where we cultivate self-discipline, make wise choices and take skilful actions. The **Realm of Human Beings** is the world of opportunity, the world of possibilities, and the world of things as they really are. There are many paths leading away from the **Realm of the Hungry Ghosts** – *the world of addictions and compulsions* – to the **Realm of Human Beings** and this little booklet tries to describe just one such path; the path of **Sajja**<sup>1</sup> [pronounced: 'Sat-cha'].

## Setting your Highest Intention ~ a Path of Sajja

**Wat Thamkrabok** monastery in Thailand has treated more than 110,000 addicts since 1957. The monastery is world-famous for its herbal-medicine induced vomiting treatment, its herbal-pills and herbal-tea, and its herbal steam-baths; all employed in the very real and very rapid detoxification of the physical body. But a 'clean' body is just the start of the path of recovery. The core element of the treatment of addictions and compulsions at Wat Thamkrabok is an apparently simple vow or promise; a personal commitment that is called '**Sajja**'.

But **Sajja** is not just a simple promise to stop taking intoxicating substances; it is much more than this. **Sajja** is made in full acknowledgment of - and in accordance with - the law of Karma (*intentional actions*) and the reality of Karma's results – "**Actions do not die**"<sup>2</sup>. The **Sajja** (see examples on pages 36 and 37) is a commitment to starting a new life, a life that embraces truth and truthfulness, honesty and **abandoning** all forms of intoxication; a commitment to accepting responsibility for all of our thoughts, our words

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<sup>1</sup> English spelling '*Sajja*' from the Thai, or '*Sacca*' from the Pali, or '*Satyā*' from the Sanskrit.

<sup>2</sup> Luang Por Charoen Parnchand, late Abbot of Wat Thamkrabok monastery in Thailand

and our actions. **In short, Sajja is an embodied intentionality.**

There is a saying at Wat Thamkrabok temple that is sometimes printed on tee-shirts:

***“Clean body with herbs – clean mind with Sajja”***

## The Journey of the Hero

The treatment at Wat Thamkrabok has been likened to the archetypal '**Journey of the Hero**' as described by Joseph Campbell; This 'Journey' has three steps -

1. A Separation from home and family, and all that is familiar.
2. A (sometimes) frightening, difficult, but exhilarating journey, helped along by unexpected hospitality from strangers and help from mystical allies. So you face your vulnerability and break out of many youthful fears and neuroses.
3. Finally, a return home: the traveller apparently the same person, but forever changed.

It does not matter whether you travel half-way around the world to vomit in a gutter in public, or whether you just make a simple resolution in the privacy of your kitchen in England; getting clean - anywhere, anyhow - is your *personal* Journey of the Hero.

## Waking Up to Life's Possibilities and Potentiality

### There is no such thing as 'Buddhist Recovery'

Although I have used the word '*recovery*' throughout this booklet I am increasingly uncomfortable with this term. The Buddhist universal characteristic of impermanence [see Anicca on page 40] implies that there is nothing to recover; we are a work-in-progress; we cannot go backwards! It may be better to describe this process as '*Life after Addictions*', or simply as '*Waking Up*'. For the purposes of this booklet and our common understanding I will use the words '*recovery*' and '*awakening*' interchangeably; for they are one and the same thing.

When we 'Wake Up' we recover all of our life's possibilities and potentiality.

***“No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.”<sup>3</sup>***

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<sup>3</sup> Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 535 BC – 475 BC) a Greek philosopher known for his doctrine of change being central to the universe.

## The Buddhist Wheel of Becoming and the 12-links of Dependent Arising



***Samsāra: suffering in motion - going around in circles- again and again!***

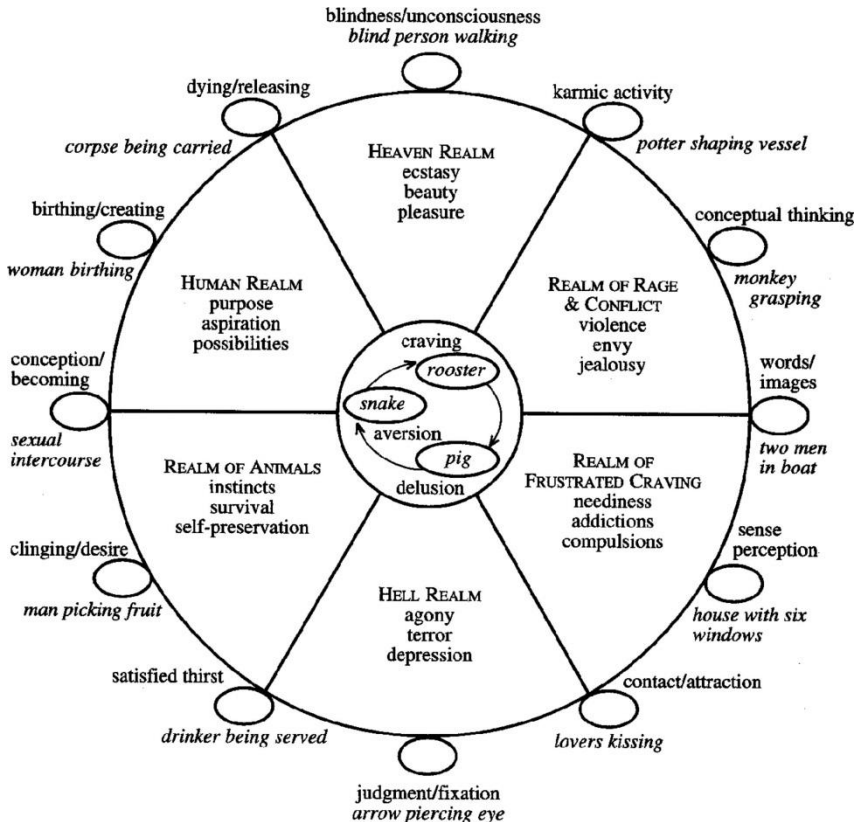
Image used with the kind permission of Kulananda, author of 'The Wheel of Life (Buddhist Symbols)'  
- Published by Windhorse Publications (2001)



## Six Realms of Consciousness & Reality

### *A map of the mind: the landscape of Addictions & Compulsions*

Our mission, should we decide to accept it, is to get from the realm of the **Hungry Ghosts** (Frustrated Craving) to the **Human Realm** without stopping – *for too long at least* – in any of the other Hells! The mission is not easy but also it is not impossible. Freedom from the struggle and stress of addictions and compulsions is possible – here and now.



### Obstacles to Waking Up to This Life

- (1) Switching our craving to other sense pleasures (*changing addictions*);
- (2) Anger, ill-will, hatred for our 'self' & others;
- (3) Laziness, boredom, dullness, lack of interest & effort;
- (4) Restlessness, agitated or stressed mind (*shame, remorse, guilt*);
- (5) Fear, paralysing doubt and a lack of trust in ourselves and in the path.

Image used with the kind permission of Ralph Metzner from his article: 'The Buddhist six-world model of consciousness and reality' (Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 28(2), pp155-166)

## Challenges and Hindrances to Meditation, to Mindfulness, and to Life in General<sup>4</sup>

### Desire for Sensuous Experience [Craving]

The mind ‘hunts’ for sensual pleasure. We lose interest in the object of meditation. Our desiring mind ties us to the sense-world, preventing concentration. We become lost in recollections or anticipations about sex, food, flat/house, vehicle, holidays, iPod. The pervasive doctrine of insufficiency – “I don’t have what I need to be happy”.

#### Simile:

Mind like water dyed with bright enticing and alluring colours

Antidotes: Recognise and acknowledge it for what it is. Resist indulging. Be content with the here & now.

### Ill Will [Hatred]

The mind is attached to painful experiences, unable to let go, perhaps re-enacting, “I wish I’d said or done...” We can be consumed by such negative feelings. Aversion, ill will towards the practice, irritation, frustration. Also, this may manifest as ill will towards oneself: self-judgement, guilt, a feeling of constantly failing and lack of self-forgiveness.

#### Simile:

Mind like bubbling, boiling water

Antidotes: Recognise anger/hatred/irritation and develop Mettā towards the object of ill will. Be openhearted.

### Sloth & Torpor [Dullness]

Dullness, Sleepiness. Heaviness & laziness of body and mind, drifting into semi-consciousness, boredom and sleep. Though relaxed and comfortable, don’t confuse this with a real meditative state. It should be thrown off “like a poisonous snake in your lap”. Non-association; not wanting to wake up but to go back to sleep! (Avijja)

#### Simile:

Mind like a stagnant pool, choked with weeds

Antidotes: Recognise and name it, use body scan, count breath, open eyes for a while. Be bright & alert.

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from ([http://www.bristol-buddhist-centre.org/media/\\_5\\_Hindrances\\_Handout\\_-\\_single\\_side\\_May08.pdf](http://www.bristol-buddhist-centre.org/media/_5_Hindrances_Handout_-_single_side_May08.pdf))

## Restlessness & Anxiety [Fear]

Agitation, restlessness, worry, anxiety. Inability to settle both mentally & physically. The desire to fidget, move, cough, scratch, leave the practice, leave the situation. Lack of calm, 'monkey-mind', the possible feeling of panic or dis-ease.

### Simile:

Mind like waves on the water's surface whipped up by the wind

Antidotes: Be persistent – understand it will pass & keep returning to the practice. Be calm, still, spacious & relaxed.

## Doubt, Uncertainty [Confusion]

Having paralysing doubt/indecision about the practice & whether we can do it effectively. Lack of inspiration to apply oneself effectively to meditation. This could be a reaction to uncovering "less acceptable" aspects of oneself. Our insecurities and inadequacies: "Who am I?", "Where do I go?", "Does this really work?", "Can I actually do it?"

### Simile:

Mind like water clouded with mud

Antidotes: Name it, be clear about your purpose, make a provisional commitment (Sajja). But do have the courage to doubt.

## General Principles for Working with The Hindrances

1. Recognise & acknowledge – "Name that hindrance".
2. Consider the consequences – What would happen in I continue to dwell in this hindrance? But be non-judgemental. Simply consider where this will go; will it take me to a Heavenly mind state or a Hellish one?
3. Cultivate the opposite - e.g. Mettā for ill will, mindfulness for wandering, calm for anxiety, stimulation for sloth, clarity for doubt).
4. Cultivate a "sky like" attitude i.e. imagine thoughts are like clouds passing across an empty blue sky. Look for the gaps between thoughts and rest there for a while.
5. Apply effort – '**MARA, I SEE YOU!**'<sup>5</sup>. Don't give in to mental distraction, don't scratch that itch!

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<sup>5</sup> Mara ~ the Killer, the Destroyer, the Deceiver; the personification of self-sabotage,  
[www.5th-Precept.org](http://www.5th-Precept.org)

## A Buddhist Oriented Approach: Waking Up to This Life

There are many paths to and of 'recovery', or 'waking up' to this life. Some are short term interventions; some are lifetime commitments. Here, is an approach to Buddhist 'recovery' that is based on the following multidimensional practices.

**Truth, Truthfulness and Commitment (*Sajja/Sacca*):** pain is inevitable - suffering is optional. The truth of Karma; and the truth of the way things really are. Our commitment to seek the freedom that we have set our Heart upon.

**Generosity (*Dana*):** the antidote to the selfishness of the 'addict self'. A generosity of heart and mind expressed in our thoughts, in our words and in our actions. Generosity gives rise to ethical living, to kindness, to the ability to forgive and to fellowship; and it supports our meditation practice.

**Harmlessness (*Sīla*):** the aspiration to live fearlessly and blamelessly in skilful harmony with the self-help advice of the Five Precepts; using these great gifts to prevent relapse and to reduce the harm in our life; and in the lives of our family, our friends and our communities.

**Friendliness (*Metta*):** the regular practice of Boundless-friendliness cultivation to lift our self-esteem and promote our well-being, and the well-being of all those around us. We can in time expand our practice to include Compassion, Joy-Gladness and Equanimity. *"There is no finer mindfulness"* – Buddha.

**Forgiveness (*Khama*):** the regular practice of forgiveness meditation to skilfully examine and let go of the past; healing our present moment and embracing our future - whatever it may hold. Forgiveness is a gift to ourselves.

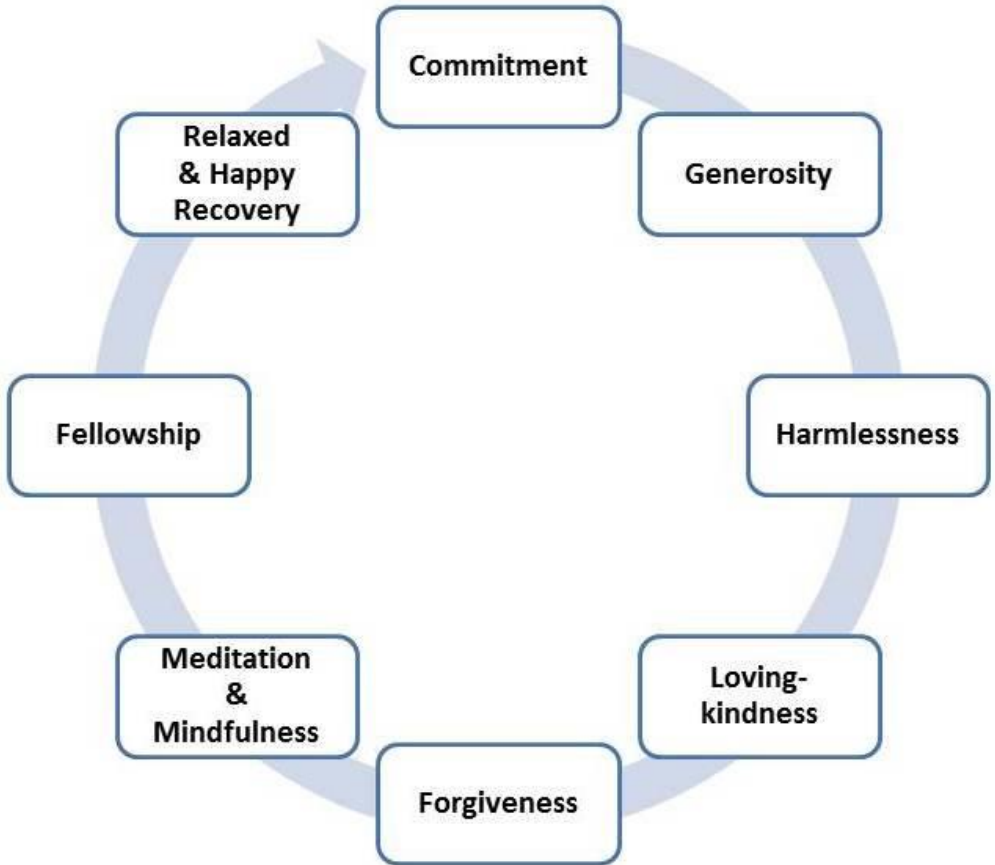
**Meditation and Mindfulness (*Bhāvanā and Sati*):** the practice of meditation of body, feelings and mind; and the cultivation of an ethically focussed mindfulness that supports and protects our recovery.

**Admirable Friends & Fellowship (*Kalyāna-mittatā*):** we may join a support group or start our own. *"Admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie is actually the whole of the spiritual life."*

It is important to note that we do not have to be 'a Buddhist' to cultivate any of these qualities or to adopt or adapt any of these meditation practices.

You must be kind to be a Buddhist, but you do not have to be a Buddhist to be kind!

## A Wholehearted Path of Recovery might look like...



[www.5th-Precept.org](http://www.5th-Precept.org)

*... a process, a journey, a gradual awaking...*

*... a joy, a delight, a gift.*

## Sajja: a Starting Point for Recovery

The gift of Sajja is beyond giving.  
 The taste of Sajja is beyond sweetness;  
 The joy of Sajja is beyond joy.  
 The end of addiction is the end of sorrow.

(354 Dhammapada - alternative version)

All ex-addicts are 'in recovery' or 'waking up' from Craving, Aversion and Confusion. But everyone on the Buddhist path - *whether they know it or not* - is 'in recovery' from Greed, Hatred and Delusion; all are 'in recovery' from Infatuation, Repulsion and Illusion.

From a Buddhist perspective, everybody is subject to suffering to a greater or lesser degree, in one way or another. But as addicts our suffering is greatly amplified by our exaggerated craving for pleasure or relief; and our aversion to pain and the discomfort of withdrawal. It is this craving and aversion together with a confused and deluded understanding of reality that leads directly to our own personal unhappiness.

There is a path to freedom from **avoidable** suffering - *including our addictions and compulsions* – that is open to everyone. As the saying goes, pain is inevitable - suffering is optional. We do have a choice – here and now.

Our first and most important step on this particular path of recovery is *Sajja*. Sajja has three broadly distinct meanings:

### Sajja as a statement of Truth

In this sense, the word *Sajja* means the truth of the way things really are; including all earthly events such as birth, aging, illness, and death, which are **unavoidable** by all human and non-human beings.

*Sajja* is also, knowledge of the Truth; for example, the Buddha taught the Four Ennobling Truths, the second of which can be directly and experientially understood by addicts as "*the source of our suffering is craving*". *Sajja* includes an awareness and acceptance of the law of Karma and other natural laws. When we can see clearly the truth of Karma, we will see in essence that we are the inheritors of the fruit of all of our actions; bright and dark, skilful and unskilful, wholesome and unwholesome. ***The Law of Karma means we don't get away with anything!***

When we can see - *and accept* - the ennobling truth of our addictions and compulsions; this is **wise understanding**.

## Sajja as Truthfulness

This is *Sajja* as a virtue; as a positive quality of mind, body and speech. This includes the aspiration for the non-deception of our 'self' and others. In this sense *Sajja* means sincerity and honesty with no intention of concealment; this is a virtue that we should try to cultivate in the service of trust, respect, and security.

Some 2,600-years ago the Buddha provided some simple but effective universal guidelines to move us away from suffering. These guidelines known as the **Five Precepts** include commitments to harmlessness, honesty, truthfulness and sobriety.

## Sajja as a Sacred Vow, Intention, Commitment

Sajja is the true way of spiritual life:  
 To speak truly,  
 To act truly,  
 To believe truly,  
 And to see truly.

*(Luang Por Charoen - 2nd Abbot of Thamkrabok Monastery)*

This is the meaning of the term 'Sajja' that is most commonly associated with the world famous Wat Thamkrabok monastery in Thailand; that is Sajja as a commitment, as a promise or as a vow (see pages 36 and 37). The Thamkrabok **Sajja** may be considered by some to be 'holy' or 'sacred' but maybe it is more logical than spiritual. It is a promise to ourselves - *with the Natural Elements as our witnesses* - not to indulge in our addictive or unskilful behaviours.

*The Abbot at Thamkrabok Monastery will tell addicts that the Herbal Detox is only 5% of the process of ending the suffering of addiction; the other 95% is the commitment to Sajja.*

The Sajja is more rational than mystical. But in the sense of the extraordinary, it really does work if you keep it! And that is a blessing or the natural result of a skilful choice and action - *bright Karma* - as best fits your personal belief system.

It must be said that Thamkrabok Sajja is not simply a promise or a vow to stop taking intoxicating substances; it is much more than this. Sajja is a solid commitment - **a noble intention and resolution** - to change, to start a new life, to embracing truthfulness and honesty. A new life committed to knowing and accepting things just as they really are.

Effectively, as addicts, we must come to change our view of our 'Self', our view of the 'World', and our view of our 'Self' in that 'World'. This is **wise intention**.

## Taking Sajja beyond Wat Thamkrabok

To paraphrase the Buddha's teaching on the Four Ennobling Truths –

There is addiction  
 There are causes of addiction  
 The suffering of addiction can be ended  
 There is a path leading to freedom from the suffering of addiction

If we look truthfully at our own addiction, we will see the pain and harm it causes our 'self' and those around us. Seeing the truth of our addiction and the results of our behaviour, we can **resolve** to break those negative habits in skilful ways that move us away from the avoidable suffering that results from cravings and compulsions.

'Sajja' in all its meanings, is a doorway to recovery, it is the starting point of our healing but it can also be the end point of this approach. There are many addicts who have regarded the Thamkrabok Sajja (see pages 32 and 33) - *simply to stop using their drug of choice* - as a total recovery plan. While it is true that this approach has worked for some, it is also true that it has not worked or lasted for everyone. Sadly, some people relapse - *and even sadder* - some people die.

Experience shows us that the more dimensions of practice that you can include in your life, the more assured you can be of a simple, relaxed, secure and happy recovery.

At this point it is important to emphasis again, that you do not have to be **'a Buddhist'** to cultivate any of these qualities; or to adopt or to adapt any of these principles or meditation practices.

To further paraphrase the Buddha's teaching on the Four Ennobling Truths –

There is unhappiness  
 There are conditions leading to unhappiness  
 There is happiness  
 There are conditions leading to happiness

The rest of this booklet is intended to support 'taking Sajja beyond Thamkrabok'; to encourage an ethical-mindful path of awakening; to support a 'wholehearted recovery'.

Whoever you are, and wherever you are, may you find the freedom that you have set your Heart upon; may you find **everyday Nirvana – every day.**



## Generosity

### *The Antidote to Selfishness*

The gift of Dhamma conquers all gifts

*(354 Dhammapada)*

After investigating the truth and reality (**Sajja**) of our addiction, the second part of this Buddhist path of recovery is generosity. Generosity is the antidote to the selfishness of the 'addict self'. Particularly, the generosity of heart and mind that is expressed in our thoughts, expressed in our words and expressed in our actions.

This is a generosity of open-heartedness as much as open-handedness; but more than just the generosity of material things - money, time etc.

Generosity gives rise to **living harmlessly**, to **kindness**, to the ability to **forgive** and to **fellowship** and **service**; and it supports our **meditation** practice.

To give to ourselves - *and to others* - the gift of fearlessness cultivated through the Five Precepts. To give to ourselves - *and to others* - the immeasurable and unconditional gifts of the Brahma Viharas - **Boundless-friendliness, Compassion, Joy** and **Equanimity**. And not least, to give to ourselves - *and to others* - the gift of **Forgiveness**.

This generosity includes a willingness to give to ourselves as much as we give to others. We can give to ourselves whatever it is that is needed – *that is wholesome, skilful and wise* - to heal the Heart and Mind in recovery.

### *The first part of this Buddhist path of recovery is generosity.*

The **Fourfold Training** taught by the Buddha is *Generosity, Ethics (Harmlessness), Mindfulness and Wisdom*; these four functions are the core path to liberation; to freedom from fear, freedom from guilt, freedom from shame and freedom from remorse.

"These are the five rewards of generosity: One is dear and appealing to people at large, one is admired by good people, one's good name is spread about, one does not stray from the rightful duties of the householder, and with the break-up of the body at death, one reappears in a good destination, in the heavenly worlds."

*(AN 5.35)*

## Harmlessness through the Five Precepts

### *Not to harm ourselves or others.*

I will train myself to refrain from killing and harming living beings.

- This cultivates and promotes compassion.

### *Not to take what has not been freely given.*

I will train myself to refrain from stealing and taking that which is not mine.

- This cultivates and promotes generosity and contentment.

### *Not to cause harm through our sexual and sensual behaviour.*

I will train myself to refrain from causing harm through sensual misconduct.

- This cultivates and promotes restraint, respect, fidelity and harmony in relationships.

### *Not to speak untruthfully.*

I will train myself to refrain from false speech, harmful speech, gossip, and slander.

- This cultivates and promotes truthfulness and honesty.

### *Not to take intoxicants.*

I will train myself to refrain from intoxicants such as alcohol or drugs that cause carelessness or loss of awareness.

- This cultivates and promotes restraint and renunciation leading to clarity of mind.

Whoever destroys life,  
disregards truth,  
is sexually irresponsible,  
takes what is not rightfully theirs,  
and heedlessly indulges in drugs,  
destroys the very roots  
of their own life.

(246 – 247 Dhammapada)

We can **choose** to experience freedom from conflict, freedom from fear, freedom from blame, freedom from guilt, freedom from shame, freedom from remorse. Freedom from the struggle and stress of addictions and compulsions.

This tangible liberation can be experienced here and now. Everyday Nirvana, every day!

*The absence of **avoidable** suffering is true happiness*



## Precepts for Harm Reduction and Relapse Prevention

### *Living skilfully and wisely through the generosity of the Five Precepts.*

The **Five Precepts** are the original Harm Reduction Programme steering us away from avoidable suffering. Training in the **Five Precepts** is a commitment to non-harming of ourselves and others.

The Buddha said that to practice mindfulness without the **Precepts** is like trying to row your boat to the other shore without first untying it from the bank. You might put in a lot of effort but you're not going to get very far!

The **Five Precepts** are essential to any mindfulness-based recovery programme. The Precepts are like a Harm Reduction Programme and when combined with mindfulness they function as Relapse Prevention tools.

The **Five Precepts** are like a Karmic Compass, pointing us in a wise and skilful direction away from harm and avoidable suffering.

By adopting the **Five Precepts** we cultivate self-respect for ourselves, self-trust for our actions; and consequently, we move towards freedom from guilt and remorse.

These commitments to cultivate a safe, non-harming and fearless environment come internally from the individual - not from a commandment or rule 'outside'. The **Five Precepts** can be seen as the original 'Relapse Prevention Program' benefiting both the individual and the community.

The **Five Precepts** support *Sajja*, they promote harmonious living, and in any Buddhist tradition, they are essential to developing a meditation practice. They are also essential for spiritual maturity. All of these precepts together lead to a peaceful and calm mind.

The precepts are completely intertwined with mindfulness practice in the Buddhist teachings on the path to liberation *or the path to freedom*: The Fourfold Way: Generosity (*Dana*) - Precepts (*Ethics*) – Meditation & Mindfulness – Wisdom & Insight.

This is a progressive path, as generosity upholds ethics leading to a clear conscience that provides an indispensable basis for meditation, and meditation is the ground on which wisdom can develop.

## The Karaniya Mettā Sutta: The Buddha's Words on Boundless-friendliness<sup>6</sup>

*For one who is skilled in working out their own well-being,  
and who wishes to attain that state of perfect peace should act thus:  
They should be able, honest and upright; gentle in speech, humble, not proud.*

*They should be contented, easily supportable, not overly busy, and simple in living.  
They should be controlled in their senses, serene, prudent, courteous and enjoy solitude.*

*Also, they must refrain from any action for which the wise would find fault.  
Let them cultivate these thoughts: May all be well, happy and peaceful.*

*Whatever living creatures there may be, without exception;  
Weak or strong, short or tall, small, middle sized or large, visible or invisible.*

*Those living near or far, born or yet to be born;  
May all beings be well, happy and peaceful.*

*Let no one deceive nor despise another in any way;  
Let no one wish another harm in anger or frustration.*

*Just as a mother would protect her only child with her life, even so;  
Let one cultivate unconditional Boundless-friendliness towards all beings.*

*Let them radiate boundless friendliness towards the entire world,  
Above, below and all across, unrestricted, with compassion for all.*

*Standing, walking, sitting or lying down, as long as they are awake,  
Let them develop this mindfulness.  
This, they say, is 'Noble Living' here and now.*

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<sup>6</sup> Karaniya Mettā Sutta : Suttanipāta (Sn 1.8) and Khuddakapāṭha (Khp 9).

## Eleven Benefits of Friendliness (Mettā)

### *The natural results of Mettā (and Brahma Viharas) practice<sup>7</sup>*

1. *You will sleep easily.*
2. *You will wake easily.*
3. *You will have pleasant dreams.*
4. *Human beings will love you.*
5. *Non-human beings and animals will love you.*
6. *Devas [benevolent beings] will protect you.*
7. *External dangers [poisons, weapons, and fire] will not harm you.*
8. *Your face will be radiant.*
9. *Your mind will be serene and easily concentrated.*
10. *You will die unconfused.*
11. *You will be reborn in happy realms.*

*"May I be loving, and if I can't be loving, may I at least be kind. And if I can't be kind, may I at least not cause harm. And if I can't avoid causing harm, may I cause as little harm as possible."*

— Facebook wisdom

*"If you can, help others; if you cannot do that, at least do not harm them."*

— Dalai Lama XIV

*"Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind, and the third is to be kind."*

— Henry James

*"My religion is very simple. My religion is Kindness."*

— Dalai Lama XIV

*"Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love."*

— Lao Tzu

*"Boundless-friendliness, there is no finer mindfulness"*

*"This is my simple religion. No need for temples. No need for complicated philosophy. Your own mind, your own heart is the temple. Your philosophy is simple kindness."*

— Dalai Lama XIV

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<sup>7</sup> Extract from Metta (Mettanisamsa) Sutta: Good Will [An 11.16]

## Mettā

### *Boundless-friendliness for our 'Self' and for Others.*

As addicts, we often indulge in self-loathing. We harbour harsh thoughts and feelings about ourselves. Many people experience these feeling to a greater or lesser degree, but with addicts, these may be greatly intensified. These negative thoughts and emotions can be overwhelming so that - *when combined with our cravings* - we cannot and sometimes refuse to see that there is a skilful solution.

This door to relapse can be closed by cultivating **Mettā** (*Boundless-friendliness*). We can learn not to judge ourselves - to be gentle and kind to ourselves - as we are - here and now.

**Boundless-friendliness** is the wish for the welfare and happiness of all beings everywhere – without exception – so that includes ourselves.

**Metta** is a boundless friendliness with all things, beings and experiences. Of course, we cannot love – or even like - everything, everyone and every experience but we can at least be kind and friendly.

The Heart has around 40,000 (brain-like) neurones. So as one teacher says of Boundless-friendliness, ***“We should stop feeling with the head and start thinking with the heart.”***<sup>8</sup>

The ancient texts say ***“Whatever one thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of one's mind”***, or as another teacher says ***“What the mind thinks and ponders shapes the mind – the shape of your mind shapes your world.”***<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, we practice **Boundless-friendliness** to deliberately incline the mind to kindness to dispel ill-will, anger and hatred.

When we develop and practice **Boundless-friendliness** both on and off the cushion, our mind will incline towards **Boundless-friendliness**; it becomes a natural process. There are some habits that we most definitely want to let go off and there are many new habits that we most definitely want to cultivate so that they become natural to us; they become second nature... or even first nature!

Whether we are addicts or not, we should remember the Buddha's teaching that ***“you can search the whole tenfold Universe but you will still not find a single Being more deserving of your Boundless-friendliness than the one right here now - you.”***

So, take care of, and make friends with your 'self'!

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<sup>8</sup> John Peacock (Pali Scholar and Dhamma Teacher)

<sup>9</sup> Christina Feldman (Dhamma and Meditation teacher).

## Phrases for the cultivation of Boundless-friendliness

May I be safe [*from all dangers outside and within myself*]

May I be well [*free from all sickness and disease*]

May I be happy [*and free from all distress*]

May I love myself just as I am right now.

Use the phrases and images that work for you; it's OK to drop the others.

The phrases can be used during normal meditation or during dedicated sitting periods. You can also use the phrases before going to sleep; or even before difficult meetings!

The regular practice of Boundless-friendliness cultivation can lift and heal our 'self' esteem and promote our well-being; and as consequence, the well-being of all those around us.

The Buddha said that Boundless-friendliness should be practiced in thought, practiced in word and practiced in deed. It should be practiced in public and in private. Everything we do in recovery should be infused with Boundless-friendliness. ***"There is no better mindfulness here" – Buddha.***

## Brahma-Viharas (*the Devine Abodes*)

The '*Brahma-Viharas*' pre-date Buddhism and as such, they have a Universal quality.

Boundless-friendliness is the first of the four Brahma-Vihara practices intended to develop '*Immeasurable, Boundless, Qualities of the Heart*'. The other three Brahma-Viharas are **Compassion, Joy-gladness** and **Equanimity**. Together they are the doorways to self-love, self-compassion, self-appreciation and self-balance.

Let the beautiful bloom of **Compassion** grow  
 Out of the soil of **Friendliness**.  
 Water it with tears of **Joy-gladness**.  
 In the cool shade of **Equanimity**.<sup>10</sup>

As '**concentration**' meditation practices the Brahma-Viharas can train the mind to stay focused on a single object and transform our relationship to ourselves and others.

These are a gradual training; you only take on that which you can skilfully and wisely deal with. These practices of Friendliness, Compassion, Joy-gladness and Equanimity are a prescription for healing the Heart-mind (*Citta*). Through the Brahma Viharas practices, we can experience and actually live, or dwell in 'wholehearted recovery' or 'wholehearted awakening'.

<sup>10</sup> Longchen Rabjampa, Drimé Özer (1308–1364)

When the *Brahma-Viharas* are cultivated as ‘**insight**’ practices they inform - and transform - our relationship to ourselves and to our present moment experience; helping to overcome many of the obstacles that we may meet on the path of recovery.

### *Karunā ~ Compassion (empathy, self-care).*

“Authentic happiness can only come from the long-term cultivation of wisdom, altruism, and compassion, and from the complete eradication of mental toxins such as hatred, grasping, and ignorance.” (*Matthieu Ricard*)

### Phrases for the cultivation of Compassion

May I be free of fear and danger.  
 May I be free of pain and sorrow.  
 May I hold myself with great care and compassion.  
 May I find peace and healing in this moment.

### *Mudita ~ Joy-gladness (gratitude, self-appreciation)*

“So there is a place every day for a little rejoicing, a rejoicing in one’s own good fortune and good work. And when we practice this - even in ordinary daily life - it comes so naturally to rejoice in the good fortune and good qualities of others.”  
 (*Bhante Bodhidhamma*)

### Phrases for the cultivation of Joy-gladness

How wonderful I am in my being,  
 I delight that I am here,  
 I take joy in my good fortune;  
 May my happiness continue and increase. (*Translated by John Peacock*)

### *Upekkhā ~ Equanimity (acceptance, self-balance)*

“Even a happy life cannot be without a measure of darkness, and the word happy would lose its meaning if it were not balanced by sadness. It is far better to take things as they come along with patience and equanimity.” (*Carl Jung*)

### Phrases for the cultivation of Equanimity

May I know and accept that thoughts, words and actions have results.  
 May I know and accept things just as they are.  
 May I find stillness within change.  
 May I be at peace and balance in mind.



## Near Enemies and Far Enemies of Brahma-Viharas

Each of the four Brahma-Viharas has what is called a near enemy and a far enemy. The near enemy is a state of mind that is close to the Brahma-Vihara and is sometimes mistaken as the good emotion but is actually “a near enemy” and not the desired mental state. The far enemy is virtually the opposite of the Brahma-Vihara and is completely off the mark for the emotion that is strived for. This is shown in this table<sup>11</sup>:

<i>Brahma-Vihara</i>	<i>Near Enemy</i>	<i>Far Enemy</i>
<b>Mettā</b> <i>Boundless-friendliness</i>	<b>Selfish affection</b>	<b>Painful ill-will, Self-loathing</b>
<b>Karunā/Anukampa</b> <i>Compassion</i>	<b>Pity</b>	<b>Cruelty</b>
<b>Mudita</b> <i>Joy for self &amp; others</i>	<b>Exuberance</b>	<b>Resentment, Jealousy</b>
<b>Upekkhā</b> <i>Equanimity</i>	<b>Indifference</b>	<b>Craving, Clinging</b>

As we wake up to this life, we might use one or more of the Brahma-Viharas to soften and stabilise the fluctuating influences of the 10,000 sorrows and 10,000 joys that we will inevitably encounter as we journey through this life of just being human.

How will we meet this present-moment-experience; with ill-will or anger; with cruelty or pity; with jealousy or envy; with fear or indifference; with clinging, craving or aversion?

Or can we respond to this present-moment with an open heart; with joy or appreciation; with simple compassion; with human warmth and kindness; or simply with a wise self-balance and affectionate understanding that I am the only person responsible for my happiness or for my unhappiness.

<sup>11</sup> [www.dhammadownload.com/index.php?title=4\\_Brahma\\_Viharas](http://www.dhammadownload.com/index.php?title=4_Brahma_Viharas)

## Finding Peace with Forgiveness

"These two are fools. Which two? The one who doesn't see his/her transgression as a transgression, and the one who doesn't rightfully pardon another who has confessed his/her transgression. These two are fools.

"These two are wise. Which two? The one who sees his/her transgression as a transgression, and the one who rightfully pardons another who has confessed his/her transgression. These two are wise."

(AN 2.21)

In **waking up to this life** we can be immobilised by our sense of guilt and shame about events that have happened in the past.

We can close this potential door to yet more suffering through the cultivation of **Forgiveness**.

It can be very positive and beneficial to cultivate Forgiveness, particularly in the early stages of 'waking up' or 'recovery'. We can learn to ask for forgiveness, to forgive ourselves and we can also set the intention to forgive others. We can bring forward memories of things that have happened in the past in a way that is skilful, without re-traumatising ourselves.

It is important to be aware of the difference between **Guilt** and **Remorse**.<sup>12</sup>

Guilt is 'unskilful' in Buddhist terms, as it has the tendency to solidify into *"I'm a bad person"* and even *"I'll always be a bad person"*.

Remorse, on the other hand, is a skilful expression of personal regret for a thought, word or act which we feel has caused ourselves or someone else suffering and hurt. Remorse views things in terms of cause and effect (*Karma-Vipaka*) :

***"When these causes and conditions arise AND when these choices are taken, then these results will follow. There may be suffering for me and others."***

This mindfulness based remorse does not solidify into negative self-views but acknowledges that we can and do change:

***"That was who I was, not who I am; and not who I will be!  
I am changing... I forgive myself!"***<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Amma Thanasanti Bhikkhuni - "Four Foundations of Mindfulness" (Sunrise Ranch Retreat - April 30th - May 6th 2010), Awakening Truth - <http://awakeningtruth.org/Sunrise-Ranch-May-2010/>

<sup>13</sup> 'Forgiveness for Everyone' (p.105) by Jeff Oliver

## *What does the act of Forgiveness mean?*

We can use this healing practice to examine the ways in which we have harmed ourselves and other people; and how we have been hurt by others, then we can let it all go.

To paraphrase Jack Kornfield:-

- We have all been harmed or betrayed; just as at other times we have harmed or betrayed ourselves or others. In undertaking this practice, we set forth the intention to **forgive**, to ask for **forgiveness** and to ask-extend **forgiveness** to ourselves.
- **Forgiveness** does not justify or condone harmful actions. While we may **forgive**, we do not have to forget; we may say *“never again will I allow this to happen!”*
- **Forgiveness** does not mean that we have to seek out and speak to those who have caused us harm.
- Sometimes **forgiveness** does come naturally from this practice; sometimes it can have quite the opposite effect; uncovering all of the pain, anger and resentment that we still carry. In this instance, we offer Boundless-friendliness for ourselves.
- **Forgiveness** is an act of the heart. We let go of the burdens of the resentment, ill-will and outrage that we have carried for too long.
- The process of **forgiveness** cannot be faked or rushed. In some situations and circumstances, full **forgiveness** may take many years. This is OK! But in the end, **forgiveness** will come as a relief; as a release of the heart.
- We enter gently into the practice of **forgiveness**. This is a practice that can be done a hundred times. Gradually, little-by-little, it will liberate us from the past; and open our hearts to the present, letting us move on with our lives.<sup>14</sup>
- Fundamentally, **forgiveness** is for our own sake; a way to no longer carry the pain of the past. Forgiveness is essential for ‘wholehearted recovery’.

## *The Generosity of Forgiveness*

We should forgive one another and wash away that stain from our hearts. Why? Because otherwise, it turns into animosity and enmity. The act of forgiving is called the gift of forgiveness.

*(Source: Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo - [www.accesstoinight.org/lib/thai/lee/everyone.html](http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/thai/lee/everyone.html))*

<sup>14</sup> Amma Thanasanti Bhikkhuni - "Four Foundations of Mindfulness" (Sunrise Ranch Retreat - April 30th - May 6th 2010), Awakening Truth - <http://awakeningtruth.org/Sunrise-Ranch-May-2010/>

"Look how he abused me and beat me,  
How he threw me down and robbed me."  
Live with such thoughts and you live in hate.

"Look how he abused me and beat me,  
How he threw me down and robbed me."  
Abandon such thoughts, and live in love.

*(Dhammapada verses 3 & 4 translated by Thomas Byron)*

### *A Prayer of Forgiveness* (also see Sajja pages 32 and 33)

*"If I have harmed anyone in any way  
either knowingly or unknowingly  
through my own confusions  
I ask their forgiveness.*

*If anyone has harmed me in any way  
either knowingly or unknowingly  
through their own confusions  
I forgive them.*

*And if there is a situation  
I am not yet ready to forgive  
I forgive myself for that.*

*For all the ways that I harm myself,  
negate, doubt, belittle myself,  
judge or be unkind to myself  
through my own confusions  
I forgive myself."*

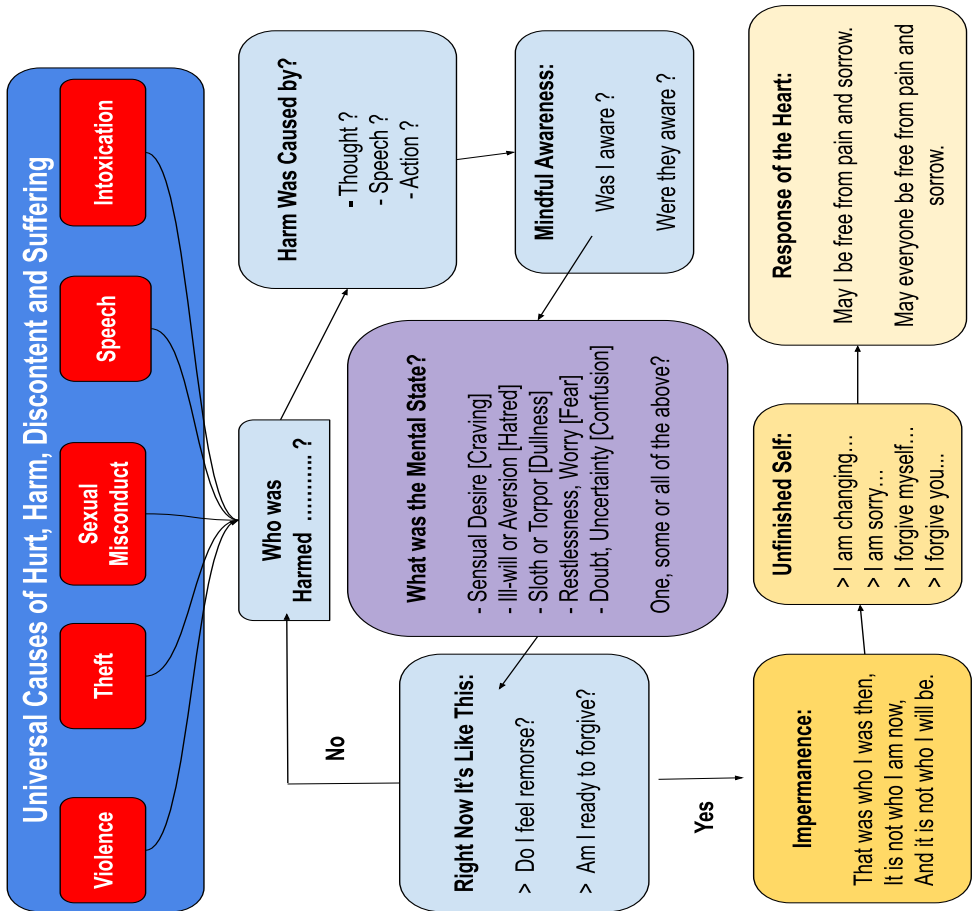
It is through the spirit and practice of forgiveness that we can be freed from the past to live more fully in the present; we can radically change our lives for the better, here and now.

Hatred never ends through hatred,  
By non-hate alone does it end.  
This is an ancient truth.

*(Dhammapada verse 5 translated by Acharya Buddharakkhita)*

## Investigation & Insight into Personal Remorse & Forgiveness

This diagram depicts a possible course of investigation into how and why personal hurt and harm arises. This deeper examination is not essential, but it may provide valuable insights into our own and other people's behaviours.<sup>15</sup>



<sup>15</sup> Based on and adapted from the free book 'Forgiveness For Everyone' by Jeff Oliver.

## Meditation and Mindful Recovery

*Developing mindful awareness through meditation practice.*

Quieten your mind.  
 Reflect.  
 Watch.  
 Nothing binds you.  
 You are free.

*(350 Dhammapada - translated by Thomas Byrom )*

The Buddha said that to practice **mindfulness** without the **Precepts** is like trying to row your boat to the other shore without first untying it from the bank. You might put in a lot of effort but you're not going to get very far!

The practice of ethically focussed **mindfulness** puts a space between you and what's going on for you. Meditation on your breath, your body, your thoughts and your feelings can let you see "this is pain", "this is love", "this is fear", "this is joy", "this is craving", mindfulness reveals them all, and all can be met with non-judgement and kindness.

Kevin Griffin (author of 'One Breath at a Time') says that mindfulness is not just concentrating on something. Mindfulness is a focused, non-judgmental awareness of what is happening in the present moment. **Mindfulness** helps us to let go of stress and connect with the beauty and joy of our ordinary daily life.

Mindfulness in recovery has the potential to bring the benefits of:

- Calming - relieves the stress of recovery.
- Insight - reveals destructive thought patterns.
- Patience - sitting with urges helps us to let go.

John Kabat-Zinn (founder of MBSR) makes the point of saying that **mindfulness** is not r.e.l.a.x.a.t.i.o.n. spelt differently! His definition can be paraphrased as:

***"Mindfulness is paying attention; on purpose; in the present moment; non-judgmentally; as if your life depended upon it."***

As addicts in recovery we have to agree with Jon Kabat-Zinn; when it comes to the cultivation of **mindfulness**, one day our very life might just depend upon it.

"There is now scientific, as well as anecdotal, evidence of the benefits of **mindfulness** and meditation for recovery but knowing this is not enough... *it is the time spent on the cushion that counts*".<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Dr. Kathy Lustyk at Buddhist Recovery Network inaugural conference – Los Angeles – October 11, 2009

## Surfing the Urge

Here are a couple of **relapse prevention** tools intended to bring you back to reality – to *give you some breathing space* - in times of great stress or craving.

### M.A.R.A.

Even after his awakening, the Buddha was visited many times by Mara, the ‘Evil One’. Mara has many faces and many moods and is more of a nuisance than an all-powerful ‘Lord of Death’.<sup>17</sup> Mara is the personification of unskillful emotions, the devil of temptation and compulsions (*Craving*). Mara is the inner saboteur; the inner vandal.

Mara is that part of ourselves that distracts us and blocks our path to freedom from struggle and stress. Mara is that part of us that seeks to disrupt our own recovery.

- M** – Mindful : present-moment-recollection. Remember to remember!
- A** – Awareness : what is happening right now in body and mind?
- R** – Responds : as opposed to reacting automatically or habitually.
- A** – Appropriately : wisely and skilfully, with kindness, to whatever situation you find yourself in.

***“Mara - I see you!!!”***

### S.O.B.E.R.

This **‘surfing the urge’** technique was developed by the late G.Alan Marlatt<sup>18</sup>.

Surfing the urge is “...*how to cope with triggers and high-risk situations, how to manage urges and cravings. It also helps people get a better sense of their own personal journeys and the forks in the road that lead either to recovery or to falling off the wagon.*”<sup>19</sup>

- S** – Stop : pause wherever you are.
- O** – Observe : what is happening in your body & mind?
- B** – Breath : bring focus to the breath to help you focus and stay present.
- E** – Expand awareness : to your whole body & surroundings.
- R** – Respond : mindfully vs. automatically.

<sup>17</sup> With acknowledgement to Stephen Batchelor for his reflections in the book 'Living with the Devil : A Meditation on Good and Evil'

<sup>18</sup> Founder and director of the Addictive Behaviors Research Center at the University of Washington

<sup>19</sup> Surfing the Urge ([www.inquiringmind.com/Articles/SurfingTheUrge.html](http://www.inquiringmind.com/Articles/SurfingTheUrge.html))

## Admirable Friends and Fellowship

Don't associate with bad friends.  
 Don't associate with the low.  
 Associate with admirable friends.  
 Associate with the best.

(78 Dhammapada - Thanissaro Bhikkhu)

Joining a 'recovery' or 'support' group of any type is an act of **generosity** and **compassion** both for yourself and the other members of that group. It doesn't matter whether it's a Buddhist community (e.g. 5<sup>th</sup>-Precept Sangha, Refuge Recovery, 8-Step Recovery etc.), a 12-Step Fellowship or a SMART group etc. As long as you can get and - in time - give support as appropriate.

If you decide to join a Buddhist recovery group [or even start your own 'Sit-and-Share' or another support group] then you might also consider an occasional 'retreat' to refresh and energise your recovery and your practice e.g. 'Hungry Ghost Retreats' specialise in recovery workshops.

Recovery groups are for mutual aid and support, for sustenance, and for community.

In the ancient Buddhist texts, there is a conversation between the Buddha and his cousin and disciple Ānanda in which Ānanda enthusiastically declares,

***'This is half of the spiritual life, lord: admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie.'***

The Buddha replies:

***'Don't say that, Ānanda. Don't say that. Admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie is actually the whole of the spiritual life.'***

If you find a good companion,  
 of integrity and wisdom,  
 you will overcome all dangers  
 in joyous and caring company.

(328 Dhammapada)

Links:	Fifth Precept Sangha	<a href="http://www.5th-Precept.org">www.5th-Precept.org</a>
	Buddhist Recovery Network	<a href="http://www.BuddhistRecovery.org/meetings.htm">www.BuddhistRecovery.org/meetings.htm</a>
	Hungry Ghost Retreats	<a href="http://www.HungryGhostRetreats.org">www.HungryGhostRetreats.org</a>
	Thamkrabok Monastery	<a href="http://www.Wat-Thamkrabok.org">www.Wat-Thamkrabok.org</a>
	Nalagiri House, Ireland	<a href="http://www.Nalagiri-Mindfulness.ie">www.Nalagiri-Mindfulness.ie</a>
	New Life Foundation	<a href="http://www.NewLifeThaiFoundation.com">www.NewLifeThaiFoundation.com</a>



## Okay, what do you do now?

Your 'recovery' from whatever it is that stops you finding happiness is **your** 'recovery', or waking up to **your** life.

What follows is a summary of **my** 'recovery' as practices and principles that have played themselves out and continue to play themselves out in my life.

'Buddhist Recovery' might be broadly summarised simply as an **embodied intentionality (Sajja)** interlinked with an **ethically focused mindfulness (Sati)**; both in the service of moving us away from suffering towards the end of suffering. When I use the word 'recovery' in this process of waking up and finding true happiness; it is in terms of recovering life's possibilities – recovering life's full potential. Recovering all of the potentialities stolen from us by our addictive and/or compulsive behaviours, and our unhelpful thinking; or what the Buddha called the 'intoxicating inclinations'.

### So, what does this mean practically?

First of all, **Sajja**, which falls under the column of embodied intentionality. In particular, Sajja as a truth and our acceptance of the truth. Sajja as a surrender to the truth. A realisation of the truth; and recognition of the truth, and an acknowledgement of the truth. The truth of our addictions. The truth of our compulsions. The truth of our untamed and untrained heart-mind. Right Now It's Like This!

Then, after surrendering to the truth of how things really are, the other aspect of Sajja; as a commitment; a promise; an intention; an aspiration to live a life free from addictions, free from compulsions, and free unhelpful thinking.

Whether you set this intention by way of a formal Sajja (vow) taken in front of a monk in Thailand or taken sitting at your kitchen table at home, is no great matter. What matters is your **wholehearted commitment** to your aspiration, to your noble desire to move away from suffering.

The next factor of this path is **Generosity (Dana)**, cultivating all the ways that generosity might manifest itself in your life can start with - and be as simple as - giving yourself time to heal. Then cultivating generosity beyond yourself with generosity to others.

This generosity flows naturally into the **Five Precepts (Sila)**. These five ancient suggestions that practically and pragmatically remove so much suffering from our lives; and in turn removes suffering from the lives of those people around us.

The intentional cultivation of Loving-Kindness or **Universal Friendliness (Metta)** and goodwill firstly for yourself, then for all beings is yet another aspect of generosity. This practice will naturally flow into the cultivation of the other Brahma Viharas i.e. Compassion, Joy and Equanimity.

The open-hearted practice of forgiving ourselves; and of forgiving others for the mistakes of the past. Remembering to forgive ourselves and others for not understanding.

**Forgiveness (Khamā)** is practiced in full recognition of life as a process – we are a great unfinished being – a work in progress. The truth is *“that was who I was, it is not who I am now, and it is not who I will be”*. Through forgiveness, as we let go of the past, the process of growth continues, and the possibilities & potentiality of our life expands.

All of the previous factors overlap in terms of **Ethically Focused Mindfulness (Sati)**. But up until this point, you don't actually have to practice meditation and mindfulness, and yet you can still remove so much avoidable suffering from your life.

Having said that, there is no doubt that the formal practice of **Meditation (Bhāvanā)** e.g. to calm the breath, to relax the body, and to quieten the mind is a doorway to seeing things more clearly and leading to a contented happiness. To develop the skill of being mindful of our total experience; through the lens of all six sense doors, no matter where we are or what we are doing has great rewards. Meditation and Mindfulness can support us in all our efforts to move away from suffering towards the end of suffering.

And lastly, but no less importantly is **Fellowship (Kalyāna-mittatā)**. The basic human need for contact, the healthy desire to be supported and to support others. Our relationships in Fellowship (or **Sangha**) can be a manifestation of many of the other parts of this path; the intention not to harm anyone; the intention to be generous and kind; the intention to be forgiving; and the intention to practice and to support each other in formal meditation.

I hope that some or all of these factors work for you on your path to wellness. I wish you a long happy and contented life, a life free from shame, free from blame, free from guilt.

I wish you a life free from craving, free from aversion and free from confusion.

May you follow your heart's desire to move away from suffering; to move towards the end of suffering, and to find that perfect, unshakeable liberation of the heart and mind.

*Vince Cullen*

## In Summary

- **See the truth and act on it**
  - Truth, Truthfulness & Commitment – Sajja – [page 14](#)]
- **Be generous with yourself and others**
  - [Generosity – Dana – [page 17](#)]
- **Be harmless, blameless and guilt free**
  - [The Five Precepts – Sila – [page 18](#)]
- **Befriend yourself and be kind to others**
  - [Boundless Friendliness – Metta – [page 20](#)]
- **Practice forgiveness for yourself and others**
  - [Forgiveness – Khama – [page 26](#)]
- **Cultivate serenity and insight**
  - [Meditation & Mindfulness - Bhāvanā & Sati – [page 30](#)]
- **Don't do it alone, find a Sangha**
  - [Fellowship - Kalyāna-mittatā – [page 32](#)]

*There is a life after alcohol, drugs and other compulsions...  
...it can be a very good life.*

## APPENDIX A: Sajja to Abandon Intoxication (example)

To undertake a **Sajja**<sup>20</sup>, insert your **intention-commitment** and recite each line to yourself [or if at Wat Thamkrabok then repeat each line after the 'Sajja Monk']:

***I ask for forgiveness from others for whatever harmful things I have done:  
the mistakes, failures and wrong-doings  
that I have intentionally or unintentionally done with body, word and heart.***

***I ask for and extend forgiveness to myself for whatever harmful things I have done to  
myself: the mistakes, failures and wrong-doings  
that I have intentionally or unintentionally done with body, word and heart.***

***As far as I am ready and able; I forgive others for whatever harmful things they have  
done: the mistakes, failures and wrong-doings  
committed intentionally or unintentionally with body, word and heart.***

***In this place of mindfulness,  
with the natural Elements [and those present] as my witnesses,  
I knowingly and openly commit to the following Sajja:***

***I will not take alcohol or other drugs that lead to carelessness for  
the rest of my life. [ for one year ] [ for one week ] [ for one day ]***

***I will practice this Sajja 1 breath at a time, 1 step at a time, 1 day at a time.***

***May the merit and benefits from the fulfilment of this Sajja relieve the suffering of  
those beings currently experiencing Hell realm mind-states; may it be shared around  
the whole Universe.***

***In the realm of the Human beings; may the merit and benefits be shared with my  
family, with my benefactors and with my friends;  
and may it relieve the suffering of all the people that I have hurt or harmed.***

***May I and all beings - be free from the pain and sorrow of addiction.***

***May I and all beings - be filled with Boundless-friendliness.***

***May I and all beings - be safe from inner and outer dangers.***

***May I and all beings - be well in body and mind.***

***May I and all beings - be happy and at ease in the world.***

- (bow three times) -

[If witnesses are present: Response: -- ***Well said, well said, well said!***]

<sup>20</sup> Adapted by [Vince Cullen](#) from an original translation by Phra Hans Piyathammo Ulrich Kamperer.

## APPENDIX B: Personal Sajjas - Intentions & Aspirations


### Ways of working with a personal Sajja

At Wat-Thamkrabok after an individual has completed treatment when he or she is clean and sober, then dreams, memories and unwanted thoughts may start to surface, so **specific Sajjas** may be beneficial for future support. These personal Sajjas are usually dispensed by the Abbot but they can be chosen for oneself. A personal Sajja is for ongoing rehabilitation and for guidance in life.

Some personal Sajjas are very demanding, such as “Honour your Mother and Father”. For many individuals, this means honouring the wounds of the past and challenges of the present.

Personal Sajjas help the individual to step out of perpetrator and/or victim mode and support the cultivation of healthy boundaries e.g.

- *“I will not look outside of myself for happiness”.*
- *“I will not be dependent on someone else”.*
- *“I will not love anybody more than I love myself”.*
- *“I will not let others make me suffer”.*
- *“I will not worry about problems that have not yet happened”.*
- *“I will not let problems of the past influence the present”.*
- *“I will not let anybody dominate me”.*
- *“I do not depend on anybody else”.*
- *“I will not get angry for one month”.*
- *“I will not judge others”.*
- *“I will not look at the mistakes of others”.*
- *“I will try to live in harmony with the Five Precepts”.*
- *“I will sit in meditation every day for 10-20-30-minutes”.*

 Feel free to add your own .....

.....

## APPENDIX C: Directions for Brahma Vihara Practices

### Self

As much as possible, let go of analysis and expectation... call to mind something you have done or said that you feel was a kind or good action—a time you were generous, or caring, or contributed to someone's well-being. If something comes to mind, allow the happiness that may come with the remembrance. If nothing comes to mind, gently turn your attention to a quality you like about yourself. Is there an ability or strength within yourself you can recognize? If still nothing comes to mind, reflect on the primal urge toward happiness within you, and the rightness and beauty of that.<sup>21</sup> Acknowledge with gratitude that you are sitting here today with a whole new life before you.

### Benefactor

Visualise a benefactor, for example, this could be a mentor or Dhamma teacher; a life coach or sponsor. It should be someone for whom you have great reverence, strong respect and great gratitude. This person will have positively influenced your life and how you now live in the world. You should be able to bring this person to mind without any romantic or sexual aspirations.

### Spiritual Friend

A "spiritual friend" is someone who, when you think of them and their good qualities, it makes you happy. This is a friend who is alive, and not a member of your family. You should be able to bring this person to mind without any romantic or sexual aspirations.

[This is for right now, later you will be able to practice the Brahma Viharas for all of the members of your family, but for this training period please choose another friend.]<sup>22</sup>

### Neutral Person

Visualise a neutral person, someone for whom you have neither like or dislike. Perhaps a shop-assistant or delivery person. You should be able to bring this person to mind without any romantic or sexual aspirations. Though we might have an aspiration for the happiness of all beings, you should have no direct vested interest in this person's well-being.

### Difficult Person

Visualise a person with whom you have experienced some conflict, fear or anger ( ill-will, resentment, bitterness or hostility ). Do not choose your worst 'enemy' to start these practices. We only take on the tasks manageable at this time until we become comfortable, competent and confident in cultivation of these **heart practices**.

## APPENDIX D: Preparation for Forgiveness Meditation

For the **Cultivation of Personal Remorse & the Practice of Forgiveness**, it is suggested that **remorse** and **forgiveness** are cultivated through the lens of one Universal Precept at a time.

See ‘**The Forgiveness Workbook**’ available for download from [www.HungryGhostRetreats.org](http://www.HungryGhostRetreats.org)

### **Forgiveness – for violence**

For all the ways that I have hurt you physically..... I am sorry.

For all the ways that I have hurt myself physically..... I forgive myself.

For all the ways that you have hurt me physically..... I forgive you.

### **Forgiveness – for stealing or taking what was not freely given**

For all the ways that I have harmed you by taking what was not mine..... I am sorry.

For all the ways that I have harmed myself by taking what was not mine..... I forgive myself.

For all the ways that you have harmed me by taking what I did not freely give... I forgive you.

### **Forgiveness – for sexual misconduct**

For all the ways that I have betrayed you through my sensual misconduct..... I am sorry.

For all the ways that I have betrayed myself through my sensual misconduct..... I forgive myself.

For all the ways that you have betrayed me through your sensual misconduct... I forgive you.

### **Forgiveness – for false speech or harsh words and thoughts**

For all the ways that I have abused you through my harsh speech or lies..... I am sorry.

For all the ways that I have abused myself through my harsh speech or lies..... I forgive myself.

For all of the ways that you have abused me through your harsh speech or lies..... I forgive you.

### **Forgiveness – for the suffering caused by intoxication**

For all the ways that I have abandoned you through my intoxication or drug use..... I am sorry.

For all the ways that I have abandoned myself through my intoxication or drug use..... I forgive myself.

For all the ways that you have abandoned me through your intoxication or drug use..... I forgive you.

<sup>21</sup> “Lovingkindness – The Revolutionary Art of Happiness” by Sharon Salzberg

<sup>22</sup> “Smiling Meditation” by Bhante Vimalaramsi - [www.dhammasukha.org/Study/Books/Metta\\_Booklet.htm](http://www.dhammasukha.org/Study/Books/Metta_Booklet.htm)  
[www.5th-Precept.org](http://www.5th-Precept.org)

## APPENDIX E: From Ignorance to Awakening

*From Avijja to Nivana ~ From Not-knowing to Knowing ~ From Asleep to Awake ~  
From Confusion to Understanding ~ From Bondage to Freedom ~*

### Some important Buddhist words that are difficult to translate

**Avijja**<sup>23</sup>: Delusion, Ignorance, not-knowing, confusion; our basic human biases and distortions.

**Anicca**: The impermanent, temporary, transient nature of all (conditioned) things. Along with Anatta and Dukkha, one of the 3 Characteristics of Existence; ***“Everything changes.”***

**Anatta**: Non-self, non-ego, egolessness, impersonality, without substance or essence.

**Dukkha**: Stress, anxiety, suffering, unsatisfactoriness, dis-ease; all caused by craving.

**Taṇhā**: Craving, ‘unquenchable thirst’, an unsatisfiable desire based on ignorance; arid; barren; boredom; ***“a desire to be any place else but here”***.

**Lobha**<sup>24</sup>: Greed, lust, craving, ***“I want it, I want it now, I want it forever.”***

**Dosa**: Hatred; anger; ill-will; fear; aversion, ***“I don’t want it, I want it to go away now, I never want it.”***

**Kamma** (also spelled *Karma*): Something that is done; our thoughts, our words and our actions. We all inherit the results of our Kamma; ***“Actions do not die”***.

**Samsāra**: Perpetual wandering, the world of Dukkha, going around in painful circles.

**Sajja / Sacca**: truth; reality; acknowledgement of the truth (*particularly a surrender to the truth of my addictions and/or compulsions*); a vow or promise; absolute and wholehearted commitment. The recognition and realisation of the difference between ***abandoning and abstaining*** from intoxication.

**Sati**: Mindfulness, present-moment-recollection, ethically-focused-awareness.

**Samādhi**: Meditation - a calm, one-pointed state of concentration of mind.

**Vipassanā**: Meditation – cultivating insight into the true nature of reality.

**Mettā**: Boundless-friendliness, ‘Love and Kindness’, universal friendliness, self-love; ***“I love myself just as I am now”***.

**Karunā**: Compassion, empathy, self-care; ***“I care about my pain”***.

**Mudita**: Joy-gladness, gratitude, self-appreciation; ***“I am grateful for, appreciate, and take joy in my life”***.

**Upekkhā**: Equanimity, acceptance, self-balance; ***“Right now it’s like this”***.

**Nirvana** (also spelled *Nibbana*): Liberation, freedom, the fading away of craving and aversion; breaking the spell of ‘likes’ and ‘dislikes’, waking-up, fully understanding just what is; the state of being satisfied, content, happy in the here and now.

***“The Great Way is not difficult for those not attached to preferences.”***

<sup>23</sup> Synonym of Moha (*delusion*) often linked to Lobha (*greed*) and Dosa (*hatred*)

<sup>24</sup> Synonym of Rāga (*lust, passion*) & Tanhā (*craving*).



## APPENDIX F: What is a ‘Sit-and-Share’ Meeting?

‘Sit-and-Share’ peer led meetings are an opportunity for individuals to come together to practice and cultivate calmness of mind and body, and to develop and practice communication skills within a safe and supportive environment.

Each ‘Sit-and-Share’ meeting is offered by a peer of the group. Ideally, each meeting is led by a different peer of the group so that no one becomes ‘the expert’ or ‘the leader’.

Each meeting opens with a preamble - read by the peer host - that specifies the format of the meeting, including a statement on confidentiality and anonymity. Various formats can be adopted as suggested in the ‘Sit-and-Share’ Starter Pack available for download from [www.5th-Precept.org/fifth-precept-sangha-downloads/](http://www.5th-Precept.org/fifth-precept-sangha-downloads/); a common format being as follows:

### **10-minutes Serenity Breath Meditation**

To calm the breath, relax the body, and quiet the mind. This meditation simply encourages us to be aware of the in-breath, and to be aware of the out-breath; just being with and enjoying the breath. “for the next 10-minutes there is nowhere else to go, and no one special to be”. This period also allows for people arriving late.

### **10-minutes of Mindful Movement**

Some gentle exercises that help to bring individuals in touch with their body.

See [www.5th-precept.org/mindful-movement/](http://www.5th-precept.org/mindful-movement/) for details and guidance.

### **5-minutes of Contemplation of a Topic**

A suitable topic is chosen by the meeting’s peer host to encourage self-enquiry and to further encourage the focusing on a single object of meditation, in this case, the topic to be contemplated rather than the in and out breath. As one of the underlying imperatives

of a ‘Sit-and-Share’ community is to promote ‘harmlessness’ this should be reflected in the choice of topic – see the examples in the [‘Sit-and-Share’ Starter Pack](#).

### 30 minutes of Sharing and/or Discussion

An opportunity for individuals to voluntarily and optionally offer their personal reflections on the topic contemplated. There are no right or wrong answers. Views and opinions are simply views and opinions and not necessarily the truth!

### The Closing Meditation

The closing meditation can be of any length but it is suggested that it is at least 15 minutes long and no longer than 30 minutes. It may be silent or guided as decided by the meeting’s peer host.

**The meeting preamble and format can be changed** to suit the group as appropriate but trying not to lose the desired outcomes of offering and partaking in such a meeting. Some potential outcomes are:

- To cultivate ‘harmlessness’ as individuals and within our communities
- To develop and practice ethically-focused mindful meditation; “to calm the breath, relax the body and quiet the mind”
- To develop an accepting relationship with our body through mindful movement
- To develop concentration and contemplation skills; and non-judgemental self-reflection
- To develop talking and listening skills
- To cultivate a group awareness and identity

A complete **‘Sit-and-Share Starter Pack’** & **‘Additional Topics’** can be downloaded from [www.5th-precept.org/fifth-precept-sangha-downloads/](http://www.5th-precept.org/fifth-precept-sangha-downloads/)

## APPENDIX G: Example 'Sit-and-Share' Instructions

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

7:30 pm – Read the opening aloud.

**Welcome** to this 'Sit & Share' meditation meeting.

*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, Harmlessness, Friendliness, Forgiveness, Mindfulness and Fellowship. This Sangha is grounded in the Universal principles of compassion and interdependence.*

*This meeting is open to any individuals aspiring to live their lives in harmony with the Five Precepts; that is –*

- *To refrain from harming ourselves or others by our thoughts, our words or our actions.*
- *To refrain from taking anything that has not been freely given;*
- *To refrain from sexual misconduct;*
- *To refrain from false speech, harsh speech, gossip and slander.*
- *To refrain from taking alcohol and other drugs that lead to suffering.*

*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 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 our personal stories; 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 followed by some mindful movement exercises. After that, I will then read tonight's topic for reflection and we will settle into 5-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 the bell (x1) to begin the 10-minute 'serenity' meditation.

*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 smile and make a friendly, gentle, silent, non-judgmental note of "not-breath" and return your awareness to your breathing.*

- *Our whole practice is grounded on Boundless-friendliness; so you are encouraged to smile inwardly and outwardly; you are encouraged to take delight in this moment – this only moment.*

7:40 pm – Ring the bell (x3) to end the 10-minute ‘serenity’ meditation.

7:40 pm – Mindful Movement (Qigong or Walking Meditation) about 10-minutes.

7:50 pm – Read the prepared meeting topic -

“Tonight’s topic for contemplation and reflection is.....”

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 5 minutes. You will then be invited to ‘share’ on the topic, as it relates to your aspirations, or as it relates 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 5 minutes of 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 meditation.

7:55 pm – Ring the bell (x3) to end the topic contemplation 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. Text-book answers are not necessary for sharing, but your own experiences and understanding are most welcome. There are no wrong answers, only your personal wisdom. Would anyone like to start?*

8:35 pm or earlier – The presenter shares.

8:40 pm - Close topic discussion and proceed to silent [or guided] meditation (at least 15-minutes)

*There will now be a 15/20/30-minute silent [or guided] meditation.*

8:40 pm – Ring the bell (x1) to begin the [silent/guided] [serenity/insight] meditation.

9:00 pm – Ring the bell (x3) to end the final meditation.

9:00 pm – Announcements

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

## OPTIONAL: Dedication of Merit

(a volunteer may be asked to read the 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 beings.*

*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.*

9:00 pm – Tea, Q&A and discussion, if requested.

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### Acknowledgement and thanks

The Sit-and-Share meeting formats were inspired by and adapted from –

Wat Thamkrabok Tudong Sajja Practices & Contemplations: [Wat-Thamkrabok.org](http://Wat-Thamkrabok.org)

Refuge Recovery Meeting format: [www.RefugeRecovery.org/meeting-formats/](http://www.RefugeRecovery.org/meeting-formats/)

Awakin Wednesday Gatherings: [www.Awakin.org](http://www.Awakin.org)

‘How to start a 12-step Sangha Meeting’ (Darren Littlejohn):  
[The12stepBuddhist.com/how-to-start-a-12-step-sangha-meeting/](http://The12stepBuddhist.com/how-to-start-a-12-step-sangha-meeting/)

Buddhist Recovery Network (Kevin Griffin):  
[www.BuddhistRecovery.org/doc\\_brn\\_group\\_guidance/chapter/Preamble.htm](http://www.BuddhistRecovery.org/doc_brn_group_guidance/chapter/Preamble.htm)

*All that you are now  
is the result of what you were yesterday,  
and all that you will be tomorrow  
will be the result of all that you are now.*