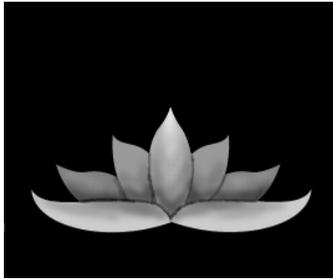


# Dharma Friends

**Dedicated to Sharing the Dharma, Healing Each Other, All  
Sentient Beings, and Ourselves**

May 2008 issue # 136 copyright 2008, Compassion Works for All

## The Dhammapada The teachings of the Buddha



### **Verse 2: Heedfulness**

Translated from the Pali by  
**Acharya Buddharakkhita**

Source: From *The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom*, translated from the Pali by Acharya Buddharakkhita, with an Introduction by Bhikkhu Bodhi (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1985). Transcribed from the print edition in 1996 by a volunteer under the auspices of the DharmaNet Transcription Project, with the kind permission of the BPS. For free distribution. This work may be republished, reformatted, reprinted, and redistributed in any medium. It is the author's wish, however, that any such republication and redistribution be made available to the public on a free and unrestricted basis and that translations and other derivative works be clearly marked as such.

1. Heedfulness is the path to the Deathless. Heedlessness is the path to death. The heedful die not. The heedless are as if dead already.
2. Clearly understanding this excellence of heedfulness, the wise exult therein and enjoy the resort of the Noble Ones.
3. The wise ones, ever meditative and steadfastly persevering, alone experience Nibbana, the incomparable freedom from bondage.
4. Ever grows the glory of him who is energetic, mindful and pure in conduct, discerning and self-controlled, righteous and heedful.
5. By effort and heedfulness, discipline and self-mastery, let the wise one make for himself an island which no flood can overwhelm.
6. The foolish and ignorant indulge in heedlessness, but the wise one keeps his heedfulness as his best treasure.
7. Do not give way to heedlessness. Do not indulge in sensual pleasures. Only the heedful and meditative attain great happiness.
8. Just as one upon the summit of a mountain beholds the groundlings, even so when the wise man casts away heedlessness by heedfulness and ascends the high tower of wisdom, this sorrowless sage beholds the sorrowing and foolish multitude.
9. Heedful among the heedless, wide-awake among the sleepy, the wise man advances like a swift horse leaving behind a weak jade.
10. By Heedfulness did Indra become the overlord of the gods. Heedfulness is ever praised, and heedlessness ever despised.
11. The monk who delights in heedfulness and looks with fear at heedlessness advances like fire, burning all fetters, small and large.
12. The monk who delights in heedfulness and looks with fear at heedlessness will not fall. He is close to Nibbana.



### Some thoughts about this *Dhammapada* Verse: *Heedfulness*

Some of you who have been in prison during the great technology revolution would not recognize how much of the world is now run by computer chips! One invention that helps me a lot is the GPS. I get lost wherever I go, even in this town that I've lived in for over 40 years. With the little hand-held GPS, you program in where you want to go and you get a picture on the screen with a little arrow that points you in the right direction on the map. Plus -- it speaks to you and tells you when and where to turn. If you are driving along and think you know better than the GPS and you do not do as you are told, *the voice* continuously commands you to right your course. For example, if you do not turn when it tells you to, it first tells you that you have missed your correct street and to turn around. When it sees that you have refused to turn around and then, when turning is no longer an option, it reprograms your directions and tells you to turn at the next possible place to get you back on the path. If you ignore these new directions, it patiently and endlessly keeps trying to get you to your proper destination in spite of your stupidity.

Hmmm. Wouldn't it be nice if we each had an inner GPS to so kindly direct us on our spiritual path? Ceaselessly, our inner voice would say – *Turn around and go back – You made a wrong turn – Turn here – Read this text – Do this meditation - Right this wrong – You missed your meditation sitting – Apologize to that person – Be kind*. But, in fact, developing *Heedfulness* is to listen to that inner guidance system, which is already trying patiently to give us these instructions that keep us on our path. Sometimes we make it exceedingly difficult for ourselves because we take so many wrong turns along the way. If we would just listen to that internal guidance that knows the fastest way, we might be able to save ourselves a lot of time wandering around lost on back roads – like I do! Our inner GPS may be only a whisper, but it is there, always was and always will be. It will grow stronger when we listen to it. Gradually, we can make it the most important voice in the cacophony of voices that chatter to us all day every day in our head.

We can know and trust that inner wisdom is always guiding us towards our supreme evolution and highest realization, but how can we learn to hear it? Meditation is one time during the day that we can notice our inner wisdom voice and strengthen it. When we are resting in stillness, something we have been suppressing or ignoring often gets a chance to break through our ordinary level of denial. Of course, we also hear a lot of gibberish and that is the stuff that we can just let fall away. But, in stillness, something may speak to us that we know has importance. It is the inner voice that is charting us towards a higher goal and wisdom knowing. When we hear that inner voice nudging us, it might be helpful to write out what was said after our meditation time is over and to explore it. It might be that we can write a dialogue on paper between EGO ME and WISDOM VOICE. Or you might like to draw or journal in a free flowing way and just see what appears on the paper. Your inner voice often uses quiet times and creative times to suggest the next steps on your path.

***When you are aware of your inner voice, put its suggestions into actions with as much Heedfulness as you can.***

#### **A COMPASS POINTING TO INNER WISDOM VOICE**

How can we know if what we hear is our inner wisdom voice rather than our ego voice? Kindness is the key. Ego is always self-serving and maybe even self-embellishing, but is not often kind without self-expectations attached. Any path to wisdom embodies great compassion. Compassion, especially practiced along with time spent in meditation to quiet the mind, will move us along through all of our ego obstacles because we have to purify our greed, anger, attachments, etc., etc., just to get the kind words and deeds to manifest as action! Practicing kindness moves us along faster and more truthfully than accumulating knowledge, meeting the right people, doing the “highest” practices, saying so many prayers or mantras, or finding the right “*ism*”.

Examining any path or teacher for inherent kindness helps us to discern whether it is a path of merit or that a teacher is a true teacher. If there is not kindness to all beings without partiality to some over others, then that path can only take us to

a limited realization of highest Self. If a teacher is not kind overall to everyone without disparaging any beings, then they themselves have not reached very high levels of realization. We can grow no higher than our teacher can guide us. A teacher of limited means might be better than nothing, but I say that your own inner wisdom voice is always your best teacher anyway – so always choose your inner wisdom knowledge over any external voice.

### **HEEDFULNESS – Listening, Watching, Being Mindful All-Ways**

If we do not have a base of awareness, we are constantly creating chaos as we mindlessly hurt others and ourselves. We are so busy trying to ‘clean up’ after all the messes that we are making, we do not have the equilibrium that allows us focus and clarity to enter more subtle states of meditation or to live our lives with equanimity. Nor do we have the deep sense of safety that allows ego to dissolve as our identity expands to recognize our inner Buddha nature or true essence. Read *Heedfulness* again and see how it offers rules to living a stable life. But don’t get too bent out of shape at being urged to follow these rules, as they are not the be all and end all of Buddhist practice. They are designed to bring focus and balance to our life at the very beginning of a vast process.



Now, read *Heedfulness* again. While we read it this time, know that in our essence as a Buddha or sacred being, we are the embodiment of heedfulness as a wisdom quality. The text says: *Just as one upon the summit of a mountain beholds the groundlings, even so when the wise man casts away heedlessness by heedfulness and ascends the high tower of wisdom, this sorrowless sage beholds the sorrowing and foolish multitude.*

Here is another translation of these same lines that seems a little clearer: *When the wise replace carelessness with care, they climb to the clear heights of wisdom and calmly gaze upon the mass of suffering beings, like someone on a mountain peak gazing on the plain.*

Imagine those times when you have rested in this *Heedful* perspective of the world. Resting, gazing, awe-fully awake while seeing all before you. In an effortless way, we have little sense of any ‘I’. We recognize a much truer perspective of our place in the universe with sky above, enormous mountains surrounding us, and an unfolding world below. How can ‘I’ affect much of anything in this unmistakable reminder of our part within the wholeness of All That Is? The sun crosses the sky, the clouds arise and fall away, people below walk along paths to their destinations, and dogs bark. All is perfection. All beings are seen with great compassion. Who could possibly think that heedfulness, even of the rules, could bring any desired change to that reality? But, *Heedfulness as a state of awareness* in which to live is a ferocity and clarity with which we hold enlightenment as the goal: it is our natural state. In your visualization, survey this wisdom view of the plain below while you sit on the edge of a very high cliff. How is *Heedfulness* embodied within your view of All That Is?



### **A MEDITATION – Walking Meditation**

As we begin our contemplations of each Dhammapada verse once again, this month we are exploring verse 2, **Heedfulness**, which is an awareness practice very close to what we often call *Mindfulness*. Last month, we reviewed a beginning meditation breathing practice that allowed us to still our mind and to begin the practice of mindfulness. We did this meditation sitting quietly on our cushion or chair. Our goal is to be comfortably in a state of mindful meditation as we

do all the activities of our every day life. **Walking meditation** is excellent to add to our daily meditation schedule. Just like sitting meditations, these periods of attentive focus are our training grounds where we learn how to weave these practices into every moment and activity. With a focus on impeccable mindfulness, we develop awareness of all our habitual thoughts, words and actions. When we watch intention arise to do or say a certain thing, we have far more spacious awareness to decide whether to move towards completing that intention or choosing to allow that energy to dissipate. When we practice mindful awareness just as in this walking meditation practice, we see a process unfolding and our actions are no longer the robotic programming of unconscious habit. I know you can see what enormous benefit this gives us to then act on our highest motivations and not to act on destructive thoughts.

### Here are some simple instructions for a **Walking Meditation**

- First, just as we do all spiritual practices, stand quietly and remember our motivation to do this meditation session in order to reach our highest expression of Self and to benefit all beings.
- You might lay your right hand in your left at the level of your waist, or you can hold the lotus bud mudra by placing your hands together prayerfully in front of your heart and tucking your thumbs in the palms of your hands, or you can just hang your arms down at your sides. Breathe gently.
- Feel or note the thought that marks your intention to pick up your right foot and to take a step forward as you begin your walking meditation.
- Feel the motion of slowly rolling your right foot up from the floor until it is just touching the ball of the foot.
- Feel your foot lift off the floor and rest it in the air while you balance on your left foot.
- Feel and note your intention to move the right foot forward to place your heel back on the ground.
- Feel your weight shift from one side to the other. Feel your balance. Feel your right foot solid again on the floor.
- Feel and note your intention to lift the heel of your left foot up as your foot rolls forward.
- Feel your left foot lift off the floor and rest it in the air while you balance on your right foot.
- Move your foot forward slowly feeling your weight shift and then place your left heel on the ground.
- Feel this slow, mindful process of walking continue, one foot moving forward and then the next.
- Experience the trust of balance and movement as your whole body participates in the process.
- Continue walking in this way as you allow about 10-15 seconds per step. If you are in a setting where there may be repercussions for doing this more unusual “walking” around a prison, you can walk normally and not as slowly as suggested and it is still a good teaching.
- Walk mindfully around a small area or from one place to another for about 20 minutes, or a little faster whenever you are going from place to place during your day.

This walking meditation allows you to become mindful or heedful of all your actions in just this same way, whether eating, talking, working, or doing any activity. No thought. No concepts. Just resting in awareness.



## From Your Letters

*Remember to try to remain as a meditative/observer as you read our letters without judgment, allowing each thought or concept to be a mirror of your ordinary mind, or recognizing vast wisdom display as you can.*

*First of all, do not predefine understanding, and do not make a principle of non-understanding. -Ying-an*

Adrian Chan-Wyles (Shi Da Dao), a Hinayana Buddhist practitioner, wrote last year to say he was available to help with guidance in Buddhist study and then he got lost in the universe by moving. He writes to say –

I have a new address: 1 Westfield Road, Sutton, Surrey, SM1 2JY Great Britain (note that you will have to check to see what the extra postage might be from your location). He continues: I hope that my details can be put forward once again to help others. As a matter of interest, here is the link to our website; Richard Hunn Association for Ch'an Study. Thank you.

<http://chanbuddhismuk.proboards34.com/index.cgi>

*Ch'eng-t'ien was asked, "How should I apply my mind twenty-four hours a day?" He replied, "When chickens are cold, they roost in trees; when ducks are cold, they plunge into water." The questioner said, "Then I don't need cultivated realization, and won't pursue Buddhahood or Zen mastery." Ch'eng-t'ien responded, "You've saved half my effort."*

**From J.H.:** Dear *Dharma Friends*, I don't want to take up much of your time, I just want to write and say THANK YOU FOR THIS PUBLICATION. I just finished reading the November 2006, issue # 118, this being my first time reading this. Although I am a Wiccan, I enjoy the Dharma and wisdom of the Buddha. My prison offers Sangha two times a month, which I attend and participate in. I also take the Three Refuges and the Five Precepts twice daily, when I wake up and before I go to bed, in Pali. I am currently incorporating some of the Dharma into my own religious practices. Which is not that difficult since we (our religions) share similar beliefs, although there are some differences. One of the major similarities is the belief in Kamma, or Karma, depending on your language preference. I wish you all many blessings. Not only for this publication and this life, but in your future lives as well. Blessed be,

*Namo tassa Bhagavato arahatto sammāsam buddhassa.  
Namo tassa Bhagavato arahatto sammāsam buddhassa.  
Namo tassa Bhagavato arahatto sammāsam buddhassa.*

P.S. If you know of any Wiccan monthly publications for little or no cost to prisoners, could you please inform me of the contact information?

**From Kristopher,** I don't know of any Wiccan newsletter but I did find this. Witch School, 112 West Main Street, Hoopeston IL 60942

***Enlightenment is a way of saying that all things are seen in their intrinsic empty nature, their Suchness, their ungraspable wonder. Names or words are merely incidental, but that state which sees no division, no duality, is enlightenment. -Prajnaparamita***

**From C.A.F.:** Hello, allow me to introduce myself. I am C.A.F. That name probably means nothing to you for I am not known by more than 5 people. People do not say much about me. I am writing because I am curious; curious about the sun; curious about the moon; curious about mud, and rubber. I am not too interested in man's ways, as they are sometimes, and at a lot of times, selfish. I am concerned with being compassionate. I do not know how to do this, however, so I am having troubles many, and I must be up front with you; I believe a lot of your readers do not share a common goal with the Buddha. I am no judge to be opinionated about such things, as I have very little experience with kundalini meditation and yoga. However, I am very curious about any particular information you have that may help me to be, or understand, compassion. I believe that your publication is sent with the intention of bringing happiness and peace to the world. I support you, and I wish to be on your mailing list, so that, when someone asks me for answers, I will have a response that may allow them to search as I have, and they might find the answer they were looking for. Sincerely,

And here are some quotes that he sent along: "*We are all as the tiniest of creatures as to the celestial skies who stand above us in awe of the many complexities of life.*" C.A.F.

*"What is funny? What is ironic? What is dumb? All the things we consider significant are not a part of our programmed minds. Our normal everyday life is just as significant and beautiful as the events that seem to have that special sense. We must realize this in order to make ourselves able to open our third eye."* C.A.F.

*"I do not speak because of the recognition of man. I speak in hopes that the average man might see what I have seen, and do better with it than I have done. No man will be the best, so he must be great!"* C.A.F.

And Anna says, I'll start this discussion of compassion with this quote: *Adopting an attitude of universal responsibility is essentially a personal matter. The real test of compassion is not what we say in abstract discussions but how we conduct ourselves in daily life. – from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, "Imagine All the People"*

**From F.V.:** Dear Anna, There's no other way to express this. You've been a real gift of guidance and knowledge and I can't thank you enough. I feel I owe you everything. Without you, this wouldn't even be possible... you have been giving me the tools to better understand myself so much better and the wisdom to help me communicate with my people. I wish I could do more to be willing to help, but I only have with me 20 stamps. You may use them to get the message out to others. You helped me realize life isn't just about me. This is why my path now is about being willing to help and never worry about how I look while doing it. Once again, I thank you for being who you are. May God bless you. I thank you for your equanimity in your attentions. Yours in the Dharma,

**Untitled By R.M. Jr.**  
**11-20-06**

I begin to touch on hope  
With out any stinkin' dope  
No need to cloud my mind  
Humble things I may find  
As it is a life long search  
I will now attend church  
You must agree, just stick around  
As you'll see, hope'll be found  
You know it is a must  
Hand in hand with trust

Hope is so darn strong  
Must believe you belong  
Do not let anger rule your being  
You'll be lost, what a cost  
Shun danger, or you've lost  
As you attempt to see  
Do your best to stay free  
Future, passion for nature

Slow down, stress becomes a clown  
It'll make you do tricks, for a few kicks

The way you became at ease  
Is simply to deeply breathe  
Breathe deep, stress will roll  
You will keep, and gain control

**War By R.M. Jr.**

Many things about war  
People truly abhor  
Families torn apart  
That's just to start  
Politicians want to even a score  
Now some loved ones, are no more  
To fight for the rights of people, good  
But for oil rights, wars misunderstood  
Copasetic, a way to treat each other  
Squabble, friendliness is now a bother  
To see a nation dissolve  
What did the war solve?  
Is it not, a huge sin  
Those who have war begin  
You raze a country, city by city  
Stupid way to find peace, such a pity

*Sitting peacefully on a cushion day and night seeking to attain Buddhahood, rejecting life and death in hopes of realizing enlightenment, is all like a monkey grasping at the moon reflected in the water. –Shoitsu*

**From S.M.:** *Dharma Friends*, I'm sending love and many blessings to you. First, THANK YOU with all my heart and mind. Your magazine has comforted me, touched me and taught me. Merci. I work hard and have decided to study all I can get my hands on and incorporate my learning into and apart of my daily life. I'm trying to understand what all is involved in taking my refuge vows and wondered if you have any information or past issues that may guide me to being able to do this in prison. I'm in AA and was wondering if you had any recovery book information, magazines etc... on alcoholism/drug addiction that's non-theistic or Buddhism based? With loving kindness,

**A few thoughts in response from Kristopher:** I am a Buddhist who is also an addict/alcoholic in recovery. If you are in the same boat as me, I highly recommend the following books: "The Zen of Recovery" by Mel Ash; "Cool Water" by William Alexander; "Still Waters" by William Alexander; "One Breath at a Time" by Kevin Griffin

**And from anna about taking your refuge vows of Buddhism:** If there is no teacher or Buddhist volunteer who comes to your unit to give these vows to you, you may take them yourself. Create a sacred space with an altar or perhaps a flower set before you if you can, and if not, create a sacred space in your mind and heart. Then, with great devotion, holding the wish to reach enlightenment and to benefit all beings, repeat these lines.

**Until I gain enlightenment, I go for refuge to the Buddha. I go for refuge to the Dharma. I go for refuge to the Sangha.** These are the essential vows and may be said with equal devotion in all various traditions. What we are vowing is that until we achieve realization of Enlightenment Mind or our Highest Wisdom Mind, we will place our devotion and trust in the **Buddha** – the beings who have achieved enlightenment already in the world but also in our own inner Buddha wisdom; in the **Dharma** or all the sacred teachings; and in the **Sangha**, all those who have gone before us to teach us and to benefit us and all those today who dedicate their lives to this same goal of liberating all beings from suffering.

**Pain is inevitable, suffering is not. -Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, Mindfulness in Plain English**

**From M.C.:** Dear Friends, Thank you for sending me you newsletter! It is an outstanding newsletter. I am gay and in prison. I also practice Buddhism. I have been added to the Gay Buddhist Fellowship Newsletter list. I thought that you had good advice. I affirm that it is Buddhist and almost all Buddhists do not discriminate because of sexual identity (Especially in the West). We are only concerned with the misuse of sex. So much of what is identified as "okay" in the gay community (ex. casual sex) would not be

okay for a practicing Buddhist. That is, at least, in my opinion. Thanks for all you do, **And here is a resource: Gay Buddhist Fellowship** 2215-R Market Street PMB 456 San Francisco, CA 94114

*Another shortcoming of desire is that it leads to so much that is undesirable. -Lama Zopa Rinpoche, "The Door to Satisfaction"*

**From L.T.:** Dear Anna and Compassion Works For All, I'm glad that I'm getting to know and learn about Buddhism because it is teaching me a lot about what went on in my life. It's really something that the first and only issue of *Dharma Friends*, #125, that I had ever received was about anger. Anger has been always been in me and in my family. I read the issue and said to myself, "I can now see how anger has influenced my whole life." I just never could see it until this little newsletter came to me. I can see why my Mom was so stressed out all the time. It's because my Father beat her that she was stressed out and depressed. I learned to be angry from my Father.

Anna, I want to thank you for sending me this first issue because it has opened my eyes to see why I'm the way I am today. It took me 41 years to figure it out. Until I read that article on anger, I didn't have a clue. I sure wish I could have been able to learn about Buddhism a long time ago. I never would have if I had not seen another inmate reading a book on Buddhism. Now I want to know more about Buddhism and the teachings of Buddha. Please continue to help me walk this path. Thank you so much,

*It is better to spend one day contemplating the birth and death of all things than a hundred years never contemplating beginnings and endings. -Buddha*

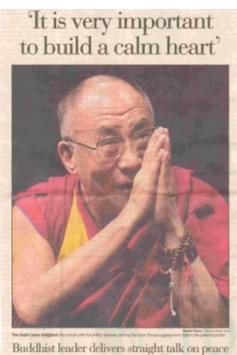
**From D.R.:** Dear Ms. Anna, First off, I would like to thank you very much for your support, concern, and love... You caught me at a time that I was very depressed and somehow you lifted my spirits with your words of encouragement, concern, love and support... It means a lot to me. Really, it does.

About the fresh fruit and vegetables that you suggested that I eat to help my condition, well, the only time that we are given fruit is, sometimes, at breakfast they will give us a small portion of pineapple or applesauce. As for the vegetables and beans, they are spoiled and so shouldn't be eaten. I'm on a diet as it is actually a diet for my health. I don't go to the store, so I don't get the food that I need. Please suggest other options as we really don't get fresh fruit and the vegetables are spoiled.

I do meditate, do my visualizations, and have started to exercise as you have instructed me to start. But this is a medical unit for the dysfunctional. We're all very poor and the food services department doesn't care about us at all. It's sad because we are all humans and should be treated like humans and not like some diseased animal in a cage. What's sadder is that without my meds, I'm barely able to function. I've written the mental health department a number of times, but they refuse to answer. At sick call, they make it their business to neglect me for no reason at all.

All of this has a lot to do with me depressed and stressed out. But, I'm willing to take your advice and any healing energy that you'd be able to send my way. I'm keeping this a short letter, as all I really wanted to do is inform you that I appreciate your support, care and love Ms. Anna. Thank you very much for caring for me, it means a lot to me, really it does. Thanks. Respectfully,

*From anna – we are all sending healing energy to you, D.R.. I know that resources and help are terribly limited for so many of you dealing with illness and depression. Meditate, meditate, meditate and exercise as much as you can.*



*At the end of one of the Dalai Lama's talks someone from the audience asked, "Why didn't you fight back against the Chinese?"*

*The Dalai Lama looked down, swung his feet just a bit, then looked back up at us and said with a gentle smile, "Well, war is obsolete, you know."*

*Then, after a few moments, his face grave, he said, "Of course the mind can rationalize fighting back... but the heart, the heart would never understand. Then you would be divided in yourself, the heart and the mind, and the war would be inside you."*

**And more quotes from the Dalai Lama sent by A.B.:**

*Without inner peace, it is impossible to have world peace. -Dalai Lama*

*"World peace must develop from inner peace.*

*Peace is not the absence of violence.*

*Peace is the manifestation of compassion."*

-- The Dalai Lama (Inscribed on the Congressional Gold Medal presented to His Holiness on 10/17/07)

**From Mark Louis Brown :** Dear Friends, I came very close to responding to K.W.'s invective, but decided to do so would just be "stirring the pot" in an equally a non-productive manner, so I declined. I feel compelled, though (Not necessarily a Buddhist impetus, but a human one nevertheless) to reply to both Joe Foy and Phillip Taylor as their letters to me deftly illustrate the creative tension that exists between the Big and Little boats of this system of belief which we are all studying.

From the Grove forward, there have been those who have thought it only necessary to have adopted the frame of mind (or frame of "lack of I") that Siddhartha Gautama encountered after his time under the bodhi tree. Thus, Theravadinism. Others observed the perpetual suffering of the world around them and posited a more proactive, broadcast, approach to alleviating such suffering beyond just the adept. Thus, the Mahayana.

It would be anti-intuitive, however, to speculate that without the missionary zeal of the Mahayana, Buddhism would be only a memory in the annals of world religion. Religions like Christianity and Islam feature "special" or "extemporaneous" events: all the g/God selects a certain time and place to deliver the vehicle of salvation to an errant people. The need for the message to be repeated after the disappearance of the messenger increases as time goes by if the religion is to perpetuate.

Buddhism, however, is of course the antithesis, because Siddhartha Gautama simply (yet profoundly) analyzed existence and understood its cause to be desire and its product, among the sentient at least, to be suffering. It follows then that as long as there is existence and those that have the capacity to analyze it as thoroughly as did Buddha, there will be Buddhism – it may have a different name, different exponents, but the basic equation is set by itself and could be said, in this part of the universe at least, to be incontrovertible.

Early Christians and Muslims formed churches because they believed they had been commanded to do so and it was expedient for their own survival. Such is part of the impetus for Sangha-building, as well as the condition of feeling good because you are amongst like-minded folks. Of course, Buddha counters with a warning to not get attached to any condition if doing so blurs its transitory nature. Such becomes a necessary dilemma for any who envision the physical or virtual construction of a Sangha, whether they do the building themselves or utilize the product of the effort.

Joe Foy echoes an earlier writer's opinion that lawsuits are violence. So is the consumption of a carrot. Yet, if I do not eat that carrot and enough nutrients each day for my body processes to function, I am committing violence against myself by killing myself. If I am eating a carrot instead of a steak, I am choosing to commit violence against an organism that is much less likely "to feel it." Such a choice sends out a little dab of good karma into the field of existence, and the sentients benefit. This has of course been going on as long as sentients have been choosing.

In my opinion, the process of suing should be put to as much analysis as Buddha gave to existence itself, but to ultimately rank it on the level of committing violence against a sentient is erroneous. When one sues, one commits violence against a system that has been created by adults who benefit from it as well as perpetuate it by not hoarding all of the resources they have accumulated. By suing, the plaintiff is simply saying, "I am here and something about the system injures me, so please adjust it." The prisoner should be one who is most acutely aware that the suit, despite the wet dreams of "jailhouse lawyers" (Which I could admittedly, at times, be termed) is merely a request.

I'm sure that there are many examples back in "The Motherland" of sanghas that would have ceased their physical existence had not their members told various kings with blueprints in hands, "Hold on a sec, please don't build your road on top of our temple." Still, just a request, but one that is legitimately made to if nothing else honor the fact that Buddha chose to sit under the bodhi tree all those years ago – not that others didn't before and wouldn't have done so later if Buddha's tree had been felled for such a road before he sat under it. Should you sue? Only a consideration of your resources, motivations, comrades, antagonists, time and consequences will answer that question for you. Happy meditating! In peace,

*One moon appears everywhere in all bodies of water; the moons in all bodies of water are contained in one moon. This is a metaphor for one mind producing myriad things and myriad things producing one mind. This refers to dream illusions, flowers in the sky, half-seeming, half empty. -Hsueh-yen*

**From Nathan Burgos Torres:** Dear Anna, Greetings. Approximately 4 or 5 years ago, I began to receive *Dharma Friends*. It has been a profound newsletter. Its teachings are a continuing encouragement to me. I know it has been a long time since last I said thanks, but, thank you so very much. I was deeply touched when I read my own letter in one of the issues. Unfortunately, I do not remember the issue number because, for safety reason, I had to get rid of some of the issues after I'd let some of my fellow inmates read it.

Being a self-motivated man of action, and knowing that you're in a financial need to keep us informed with *Dharma Friends*, enclosed please find 10 U.S. postage stamps. It's a very small contribution, but "actions" speak louder than words. There are some things bouncing around in my mind that I'd like to share with those *Dharma Friends* members who always want to correct others, and for the sake of space, I will keep it short.

Being a New Born Christian, I believe in the teachings of the Bible. However, my mind has opened up to and has embraced Buddhism. I meditate for at least an hour everyday. I also believe that in God's eyes, as well as mine, we're all special, regardless of where we are. When we send negative or positive thoughts to our loved ones and *Dharma Friends*, we have a profound impact whether we recognize it or not. So, please be positive.

Every day, when I end my meditation sessions, I send out these thoughts, “Blessings and good-will to all sentient beings, to my guardian Angel and myself as well. Anna, take care and please, please, keep up the good work.

Also from Nat: **What’s a Smile?** A smile is worth a million bucks. It will drive the fears away. It will brighten up our lives. It will dry the eyes of our tears. Yesterday is gone forever. But no matter where you are at, smiles are still worth a million bucks and they don’t cost you a dime. It’s the thing that you can give to others that can make their life worthwhile that has no cost and is worth so much. Just a pleasant smile. It’s welcome in the morning; from the Good Lord it is sent. It’s worth a million bucks. It doesn’t cost a cent. The smile that we give to our fellow man, if it’s filled with love and service, will drive away his sorrows and bring him joy again.

*And a few quotes from Nat:*

**GIVING IS CARING:** The charity that is a trifle to us can be precious to others. – Homer –

**GIVING IS CARING:** Grief teaches lessons that joy can never know. – Dr Ronald Meredith –



*A mind unshaken when touched by the worldly states, sorrowless, stainless, and secure, this is the blessing supreme.  
Those who have fulfilled all these are everywhere invincible; they find well-being everywhere, theirs is the blessing supreme.  
-(adapted from) Mangala Sutta*

**Drawing by Randal Parker**

## **28 Days From Nirvana by George Kayer**

My condition is so rare, on the North American continent less than 3,400 people are stricken by it. The population of this continent: home to Canada, Mexico and the U.S.A. is estimated at half a billion people. Through government reports, we know it's found in only 36 areas in the United States. The mortality rate is 40% to 93% depending on a state's resources and its government's willingness to aggressively combat this rare condition.

Regardless the name of your illness or circumstances it's the common threads called loss and helplessness I wish to explore with you. Loss of life, loss of control, loss of ability to make basic decisions about ones life or, ones death – I'll reveal my condition at the end. This is my abstract, true story about a real, sacred space on life's path. A place many souls are required to visit; few live to express the extraordinary emotions and thoughts permeating its environment. I've named this place: 28 Days From Nirvana.

Many of us have experienced the loss of an associate, an adoring pet, a confidant, perhaps a loved one. Loss is most always a kaleidoscope of blue-gray experiences Depending on how close to you your-loss you may have visited their hospice before their passing; sprinkling the hours with maudlin memories, a dash of morbid or inspirational humor, a farewell prayer? Or maybe your loss came suddenly. In such cases your experiences include; consoling, grieving, providing assistance within the social unit of the deceased. Ah, but when loss is the loss of your life, your candle is forced to burn upside down. American culture hardly expounds on issues concerning ones own death. It's not like there's a listing in Miss Manners or on [football.com](http://football.com). Knowing your own death is imminent this year or this month is as personal and real as loss becomes. Oddly enough, having had both experiences, I found watching the dying is more disquieting than personally experiencing deaths inevitableness – once I was willing to let go. I can imagine the disappointment incurred by those who resist death but not those convinced one of the hell realms is their destiny.

My father wasn't well known to me. One experience we shared, be it genetic or coincidence, we both tangled with moderate chest pains prior to a major heart attack. I'd just past downtown Oklahoma City on my way to Las Vegas. Having difficulty getting breath of air, I remembered a Veterans Hospital sign a few exits back on Interstate 40. I whipped a u-turn and found the emergency entrance: the good doctors prevented my certain death. I promised myself I'd be emotionally and spiritually prepared: next time. It doesn't make any difference where my father was during his attack, in 1958, people didn't generally survive heart attacks. He wasn't one of the exceptions.

Six months ago, I found myself facing another premature death. Once again, my survivor mode energized, my team of specialists research all options and hope prevails – I write my will. That part of me which considers itself in unity with our Creator is ready to obey the celestial call, to return to spirit. It's that self righteous side of me that considers itself

separate from you and our Creator, thus causing my distortion and conflict. This part of me is addicted to flesh and its sense pleasures. This part of me desires to live life in Hi-def fast forward; to travel, visit people whom I know and family. To be in photos taken by ones children; not photo shopped in. To barbeque; to move and groove, and drive with the top down one last time. Unfortunately, my condition leaves me confined to this facility; to my sterile – vile space with its matter-of-fact staff. What quality of life is possible in this, my soul's season of solitariness?

This afternoon, without invitation or warning, I was escorted to the conference room. Seated, I spy mostly strangers, suits and a priest: that's never good. Hmm, I request the priest to leave, he does so. Some suit reads my prognosis and states: "In all likelihood you have 28 days to live". Hope can be so damn deceptive. You never know your hope is false-hope until to late. No time now to create a legacy or right the wrongs. Remission and cancer-free aren't applicable; I still have all my hair.

As we left the conference room, I'm the only one unaware of my next destination. I simply followed the person in front of me: now encircled by an entourage. A woman captured my attention, introduced herself as assistant something Carrillo: "I'll be coordinating and directing all activities until your death. Whatever you need, I'll do my best to get it to you promptly." I assumed the entourage was hers and was taken by surprise; the standard detached, matter of fact attitude was missing, replaced by genuine kindness resonating clearly in everyone's voices. Carrillo continued: "Things will get pretty crazy from here on, are you going to want to speak to the press? All of them will be calling you." Carrillo paused for my reply. I could only shake my head in indecision- she continued: "We had a fellow in your same condition a few months ago, maybe you saw it on the local news. Mr. Burke's team of specialists came up with a temporary cure. He has asked to speak with you: I scheduled a conference call for you at 3pm.. Would you like to speak with him?" "Yes." "Will you have any out-of-state visitors?" -Another pause-"I can coordinate their visit schedule and brief them on contact with the press for you." "I'll have to get back to you on that, a few minutes ago I had a lifetime to live." We continue walking thru doors and long corridors. Carrillo says: "I notice you have a D.N.R. (Do Not Revive) in your file, do you wish to modify that at this time?" "No." Holding some papers in front of me Carrillo says: "Here are some forms, I need you to fill these out this evening I'll pick them up tomorrow." My hand took the forms. And here we are, your new room is ready. Your personal effects are being brought over; you're directly monitored by our staff at this station (pointing to a desk) 24 hours. If you need anything they can't provide, have them call me." "Alright, thank you." "Oh! I'll see you in about 41 minutes for your conference call with Mr. Burke." I was deposited without further adulation in my new room. The entourage exited with Carrillo: their collective sense of urgency remained.

Wee, nothing like having your reality rearranged and being the last one to know about it. I sat on the edge of my new bed anticipating some minutes for reflection, only to be distracted. Through the transparent front of my new room, a mere 20 feet away sat the exigent desk with its monitors, charts & logbooks. Where have all these looky loos come from? My reflection begins. Of all the places I've been on the North American continent I wind up here, in a fishbowl coffin. It is said by men wise: "There is no success like failure to learn by." Yea, if that's true, I'm a friggin' valedictorian. My old team of doctors and lawyers now impotent, my soul's future depends on strange abstracts like Grace and miracles; empirical and tangible are useless in this place. I glanced down at the forms still in my hand, the first subject header read:  
Disposition Of Remains:            Release To Family – Phone #            Notify Mortuary – Phone #            Other, List  
Contact Info:

The forms floated to the floor.

Well, all those years of mediation I've practiced, this is the place where I find out if that Buddha stuff really works. 28 Days From Nirvana: I struck a pose, Ommmm

Lost in the comfort of my tan lounge chair overlooking the pacific ocean – in meditation; like a thunder clap, all emotions known to me, powerful, towering emotions all seeking simultaneous acknowledgment. First in my mind, then my tear ducts and speechless voice.

Lately I'd ignored emotions that hadn't agreed with hope but hope just snuck out the back door. Sitting with these strangers that precede death I found them to be old Kodachrome; I remembered them from 1993 in Oklahoma City: peace and clarity returned. Upon opening my eyes I saw not the exigent desk but a hive of activity. Unknown moments later, Carrillo steps out of the blur directly into my gaze and says: "Are you ready for your call with Mr. Burke?"

Off we go, entourage and I.

I'm interested in this Mr. Burke, perhaps he possesses a few answers to the 88 questions I'd been holding back.

"Hello George, may we call you George?"

"Yes, of course."

"Wonderful, I'm Michael Burke, also here with me are various specialist in our office: Robin Konrad, Jennifer Garcia and Jasmine Teter. We are specialist in your condition, its what we work on every day and we'd like to work with you to save your life. If you agree to accept our services, your previous team is standing by to email your files to us. Also,

some of us, undetermined as yet, will come see you tomorrow to have some papers signed: At this point, every hour is critical to your survival."

Our first priority and major obstacle is to convince the Supreme Court to stay your execution which is scheduled to occur in 28 days.

End

**Authors Note:** Carrillo is: Associate Deputy Warden Carrillo, ASPC – Eyman. Michael Burke, Robin Konrad, Jennifer Garcia, Jasmine Teter are with the Capital Hebeas Unit, Federal Public Defenders Office Phoenix, AZ.

Nirvana: Sanskrit, means "Extinction", of the illusion of separation.

Source: **Sacred Language Glossary of Earth:** Kaye & Bernauer 2004.

Permission to reprint "28 Days From Nirvana" with "about the author" tag copyright 2008 is hereby granted.

About the author: on October 30, 2007 the Supreme Court of AZ issued a Warrant of Execution for Mr. Kaye. He was transferred to the unit's "death watch cell" and remained there until Nov. 8, 1:30pm. Although a stay was issued on Nov. 5, 11:36am it is unclear why Mr. Kaye remained on death watch three days and two hours after his stay. George Kaye and Gitta Bernauer authored Sacred Language Glossary of Earth, 2004 [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com). Mr. Kaye is a freelance writer, artist and creator of

DirectoryInmateShoppingServicesE-commerce.com. Your comments are welcome at gKaye. --George Kaye #77910, Eyman - SMU -2 / 3G34, PO Box 3400, Florence, AZ 85232-3400

*Since the old days, it is said that "anger is the fire in one's mind that burns away all of one's virtuous deeds." Anger should be absolutely surrendered. -Jae Woong Kim, "Polishing the Diamond"*

**Subscription information:** I have gladly been offering this newsletter free of charge to those in prisons. I am so happy to have a vehicle for those who have little dharma support to feel united with others who identify with their life situation. It is truly important to remember that we are all mirrors of each other. We are all one with each other. And we can recognize that samsara is suffering for us all whether behind the bars of a prison or behind the bars of our own ego structure. For anyone who is not in prison and who would like to subscribe to **Dharma Friends**, here is what to do. The fee is \$30 for one year. Mail a check or money order made out to **Compassion Works for All:** and send to **Compassion Works for All, Dharma Friends subscriptions, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, AR. 72217-7708.** This amount covers the subscription for you and a partial subscription for a prisoner. I also want to acknowledge the enormous generosity of many of those in prisons who have sent stamps and letters of support and appreciation. Far more important than anything material are the letters and notes that say that you are benefiting from being part of this sangha of **Dharma Friends**. I think that many feel less alone on their journey because we are connected beyond all time and space to each other.

*PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOUR ADDRESS CHANGES.*

**SOME NEW OPTIONS:** I shared in past issues of **Dharma Friends** that we are trying to be mindful of \$\$\$ in order to keep publishing our newsletter, as we scramble to get additional funding.

**Here are some ways that you can help us.**

- Keep us apprised of your address changes. Most of you have been very good at this and we hardly have any returned issues.
- If you are receiving **Dharma Friends** but do not read it or know someone else who does not read their issues, either donate them to your library, or write and tell us to take you off the **Dharma Friends** list. Now, some have written and said that others need them more than they do so take their name off. Don't be too generous!! **WE WANT YOU TO KEEP GETTING DHARMA FRIENDS IF IT IS HELPFUL TO YOU!**
- If you have family or friends, tell them that you receive support from **Dharma Friends** and we would be very grateful for any donations that they might make. I know that most of you have very little money but we are enormously appreciative when some of you have made donations as well, and for the stamps many of you have sent.
- If you know of anyone who funds philanthropic programs that are rehabilitative or supportive of those in prisons, send a copy of **Dharma Friends** to them and ask if they would consider reading a funding proposal from us. If so, connect us to them!

**Also: We are encouraging those who are not in prison and who have the ability to receive their issues by Email to let us know.** Of course, we can send these issues for no printing and no mailing costs, while generating more interest and support in the newsletter. Most of you in prison cannot do this, of course, but if you are a chaplain reading this who has email and can print copies off for your library, that would be helpful. Or – if you have family or friends who might like to receive **Dharma Friends** as well, they can send a donation of \$30 or more to us and receive **Dharma Friends** by email plus get a tax deduction receipt because we are not mailing a paper newsletter. It is important for us to keep those in prisons connected to society, and most especially to their families and friends. We greatly value the opportunity to bring a loving community of support to those who are connected to people in prison as they are often made to feel uncomfortable by society. If those you love receive **Dharma Friends** too, think of the common growth that you would share and the bond that could develop. So, you might suggest **Dharma Friends** as something your friends and family might like to donate to and receive via email. **And a bonus comes with the email subscriptions – extra pages!!** These pages will focus on issues and problems that those in the 'free world' might be more likely to experience, and we will explore life in ways that also draws from the connection to our **Dharma Friends** community.

Know that we are continuing non-stop efforts to secure funding so that we can all benefit from the loving and supportive Dharma Friends community you have all created. Thank you for all that you give to all of us.

***There is no specifiable difference whatever between nirvana and the everyday world; there is no specifiable difference whatever between the everyday world and nirvana. -Nagarjuna, "Mulamadhyamaka-Karika"***

## **The Screaming Man Moans** **By M.G. (June 1999 or thereabouts)**

This poem was inspired by my unfortunate circumstance of being arrested in Los Angeles, CA while addicted to methadone for two years. The Screaming Man Moans refers to myself being tied down in four-point restraint while kicking this powerful synthetic narcotic developed by Hitler's scientists. I was tied down for 7 days in a stark room, alone, and not given any medicine to help me "kick." I didn't sleep for 52 days. I hallucinated that I was consumed by fire and had faces melting all around me...

*There is a man here who has been screaming for 2 weeks now... continuously. He's been locked in some perpetual nightmare or agony, howling at any time that I take to stop and listen. At breakfast, listen... you can hear his unearthly ballad. At dinner, his screeching voice sounds counterpoint to the count clearing horn blowing in the distance. At 10:00 PM during the institutional alarm check, his shrieks join the bells and sirens. I was up as always at 3:30 AM. as his screams ejaculating unformed curses at the God who allowed him to live with this infinite pain in this unending hell. Again, up till dawn... I finally closed my eyes as they were tired orbs. The demons and devils were tearing at my flesh, gnawing at my abused liver, dining on my soul. Still up, the midday sun beat a tattoo through the narrow window on my face. I lay for a moment, caught between pseudo-sleep and consciousness in that nether land of half dream, half awake... basking in the fleeting peacefulness of silence before the implications of that quietude struck me with full force. I struggled to hear the cries for a moment. Then, what I heard sent chills straight to the core of my being... It seems that the screaming man has lost the will to fight anymore... because now, the screaming man moans.*

***Even a strong wind is empty by nature. Even a great wave is just ocean itself. Even thick southern clouds are insubstantial as sky.***

***Even the dense mind is naturally birthless. -Milarepa, "Drinking The Fountain Stream"***

### ***Compassion Works for All/ Dharma Friends***

PO Box 7708  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72217-7708

Webpage: [dharmafriendsprisonoutreachproject.com](http://dharmafriendsprisonoutreachproject.com)

RELIGIOUS MATERIAL

Permit NO. 160

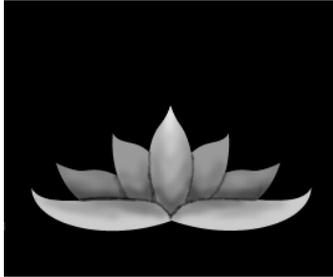
Non-Profit organization  
US Postage PAID  
Little Rock, AR.



***Develop the mind of equilibrium. You will always be getting praise and blame, but do not let either affect the poise of the mind: follow the calmness, the absence of pride. -Sutta Nipata***

# Dharma Friends

May 2008 issue # 136 copyright 2008, Compassion Works for All



Additional Pages for EMAIL VERSION of *Dharma Friends*

*"No one knows what makes the soul wake up so happy!  
Maybe a dawn breeze has blown the veil from the face of God."*

- Rumi

**A Wonderful WAND Mother's Day for Peace Luncheon May 9, 2008**



**Anna, Susan McDougal, and Jean Gordon, past honoree as Peace Maker of the Year and WAND organizer in Arkansas**

The Arkansas chapter of WAND, Woman's Action for New Directions, had a record turnout (almost 260!) of those affectionately called the Wild Women of WAND and a sprinkling of men. We all had a fabulous lunch at the Little Rock Club with vast views of the city from the 30<sup>th</sup> floor of Regions Bank. Susan McDougal gave the keynote address. Susan, you remember, withstood the unconscionable attacks and imprisonment of Whitewater prosecutor Ken Starr and wrote a book that is well worth reading: *"The Woman Who Wouldn't Talk: Why I Refused to Testify Against the Clintons and What I Learned in Prison"*. She spoke in moving, heartfelt ways of the women that she met while in prison and shared her own transformation and growth that came from that terrible ordeal.

There was an amazing synchronicity in that Susan shared her story that day at the luncheon for the first time from the perspective of her spiritual life journey. This is just as we emphasize in *Dharma Friends*. By seeing how our life lessons,

the challenges of life's toughest moments, are actually those teachings that take us to our highest realization of Self, we transform ordinary life into the fast path of a spiritual life journey. Susan touched everyone in the room as she told of how she went through times of great suffering and anger, but then, it was through the relationships with all the young women that she met in prison that she grew spiritually in all that unfolded for her. She said that she saw the face of God in those she came to know. Her anger led to wisdom rather than suffering by the time she walked out the doors.



Susan McDougal

Now, just as we urge each other to do as we awaken from our own miraculous lessons embodied in our own unique challenges, Susan too is telling her story as a spiritual teacher. Her life has taken a turn onto a spiritual path as she goes through the chaplaincy program at University of Arkansas Medical Center in order to mentor to others. What a great teacher with a very inspiring story to tell. Everyone in the room learned a powerful lesson about suffering that day from Susan. Thank you, Susan.

Here is a little more synchronicity. There surely are no accidents – somewhere there was a great choreographer putting together this event! WAND was also honoring me as Peacemaker of the Year, and our Compassion Works for All and Dharma Friends programs. So, I had snuck a little speech into last month's *Dharma Friends* newsletter that maybe you read. As people arrived, I handed them each a copy of our April **Dharma Friends**. Our **Dhammapada** verse last month was verse 1, *Twin Verses*. This was the verse that included the lines:

3. *"He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, he robbed me." Those who harbor such thoughts do not still their hatred.*
4. *"He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, he robbed me." Those who do not harbor such thoughts still their hatred.*
5. *Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is a law eternal.*

Susan and I had not talked ahead of time to coordinate our talks. But earlier she had picked up my **Dharma Friends** book and had begun to read it. In her talk, she shared from the book the story about death row prisoner, our late friend Frankie Parker, and how he had been such a bad prisoner that he was frequently thrown into "the hole". Once he demanded to have a Bible, the only book allowed in the hole. Instead of a Bible, the guard happened to have a copy of **The Dhammapada** on the desk and he threw that into Frankie, shouting, "Here's your damn Bible!"

When Frankie began to read this book, his life changed. He read the lines above (in a slightly different translation but the same essence) and realized that it was he who had created the circumstances of his life through his anger. And he realized that it was only in changing his behavior and his attitudes that he could make his life different. As Susan read this story, now so many years later, she identified and realized that she too had changed her view and that dramatically changed her perception of reality. At first, she was very angry as she lay on her bed each night, feeling victimized by Starr. Through the kind and compassionate interactions she shared with the other prisoners, the very best of her, her highest spiritual Self, was called forth, was strengthened, and became her full expression. Now, that is the path of her future.

As she shared her talk at the luncheon, Susan did not know that each person had in their hands those very same **Dhammapada** lines that Frankie had read that had changed his life and that she had identified with. A little extra punch to make sure that no one misses the message!

The message of WAND is to bring PEACE to the world. The members demonstrate against the Iraq war. They are supporting the incredible Woodruff School Nonviolence Program and have helped to secure funding for this ongoing and excellent opportunity for children to learn alternatives to anger and violence. WAND members ARE the peacemakers and the movers and shakers in Arkansas that heighten awareness to alternatives to war and violence.

Here is my little talk that I shared prior to Susan's. To repeat it here gives me a chance to thank everyone again that chose to honor me, who put the event together, and that attended. If you would like to see the pictures that were taken of the luncheon on the WAND web page go to: [arwand.org](http://arwand.org). Then go to the Photo Gallery and click on the luncheon photos.

### **Anna's WAND luncheon talk May 9, 2008**



I am deeply appreciative of this great honor. I want to thank our WAND board members, the team that put this wonderful event together for us all -Anncha and Antje, Katherine, Allison, and Jean- and all of you who are here.

So many of you in the room have been my heroes and role models, most especially Susan, and I honor you all for living PEACE.

Also in recognizing me, you are rightly recognizing our **Compassion Works for All** board – Robynn, Sandy, Kelly, our non-stop workers, Linda & Kristopher, and my husband Jim for all his support - and here he is in the hall selling books and asking you to sign the Arkansas Death Penalty Moratorium petition at the table.

What means the most to me though is that you are supporting and honoring the people behind bars who are trying nobly to heal and to bring healing to others. They are those most shut out from society, but you recognize their hope and their efforts and their humanness.

I try to never miss an opportunity to plant seeds whenever and wherever, and you will be glad to know that I snuck a much too lengthy speech into this ***Dharma Friends*** issue (page 13 or so) that I gave you and you can enjoy it at your leisure – a little light reading for later.

**I do want to say five key points about what we are doing with Compassion Works for All and our Dharma Friends newsletter.**

The first and most important thing is to say again and again that compassion, the practice of kindness, is the key to bringing about true healing change to our own self, our families, our community, our planet, and all the beings in our world, even and most especially to those we might feel are most undeserving of it.

Our focus at **Compassion Works for All** is on those most lost and those who have caused enormous pain and suffering to all of us. Our prisons are full. Although many good efforts are being made, little change has happened in the past hundreds of years to eliminate the cycle of violence, incarceration, and the social dysfunction that perpetuates a broken criminal justice system throughout the world. One of our most important offerings is the *Dharma Friends* newsletter that now goes out every month free (thanks to your kind donations) to about 2000 people in prisons – as well as to our free world subscribers. *Dharma* is a Sanskrit word that means spiritual path; the unique and right path for each person. *Friends* is, of course, our One Family that I am amazed and pleased has come together over these past eleven years into a most unusual community. It is kind of a combination of a monthly study group, group therapy session, and supportive family – often the only family and friends that many of our readers have.

Healing is happening as *Dharma Friends* read these newsletters together in their solitary cells around the country. I get letters every day that share the impact that this community is having on readers by increasing their awareness, awakening self love and a caring for others. Folks in prison are taking vows to be kind to all beings. Many are saying that they have found healing paths that are changing their lives.

We are also reaching into those pockets of society that are so hard to reach. Those in prison who are growing and changing are becoming the *change agents* that bring new values and perceptions to others. They have started many meditation and study groups, they share with cell mates and friends. They send the newsletters home to family, children, and friends. They take responsibility to parent and mentor others in disadvantaged and dysfunctional communities, -- hopefully changing those lives before they are lost in prison.

As a society, we must and can grow beyond the primitive thinking that vengeance is an acceptable approach to criminal and violent acts. Together we can transcend beliefs about ‘all good’ and ‘all bad’ people, the villains and the victims. We can transcend a belief that there are some who are ‘all bad’ that should be shut away forever and believing that there won’t be a cost to pay for that limited approach. Or the belief that the acceptable path to healing those victimized by violence is revenge against the perpetrators and that we won’t pay the cost of that limited view as well.

Of course, each of us is responsible for our wrong acts. But seeds of violence are planted long before a violent act is committed by any one perpetrator. We are all participants in creating the potential for violence. Only by compassionately perceiving all beings as members of our *One Family* and believing in healing can we find true solutions and bring PEACE to all.

THANK YOU and I APPLAUD ALL OF YOU FOR BEING THE PEACEMAKERS

*So much fear and desire come from that commitment to 'I am'--to being somebody. Eventually they take us to anxiety and despair; life seems much more difficult and painful than it really is. But when we just observe life for what it is, then it's all right: the delights, the beauty, the pleasures are just that.*

-Ajahn Sumedho, "Seeing the Way"

**Because I feel that brains and brain health are so important,** here are some recent articles to note that might help you and your family. They are a bit lengthy but I am including them in their entirety because they may hold clues if you or someone in your family is a substance abuser, has dementia, has had a stroke, or any other brain disability. The first article deals with substance abuse and anger. Most substance abusers that I know have issues with anger, which could possibly be due to many sources. Often their life is out of control and it makes sense that anger is a reaction to or an attempt to deal with these control issues. Or, those same issues that compel substance abusers who are possibly trying to self medicate away their feelings of internal imbalance or distress may also be living in an internal world of anger and trauma. There are so many possibilities in this very complex problem but we don’t want to ignore any possible easy solutions. What if it is just a lack of some component that helps the brain to function? Every hint at a solution may lead to healing for someone. So this article talks about the benefit of Omega-3 fatty acids. I want to honor the research that is being done that is reputable and this study does seem to hold some possibilities.

The next article is on dementia. Amazingly, it also suggests the benefit of Omega-3 fatty acids. Talk about two brain diseases that wreak havoc on the lives of so many but there may be a simple addition to one’s diet that could be helpful.

The third reference is to bring greater understanding to what happens during a stroke and it is quite a powerful video talk. I have read information that offers that Omega-3 fatty acids help to prevent strokes as well.

I want to put all of this in the forefront of our awareness because it may really be helpful to us all to investigate whether we and our loved ones should be taking Omega-3 fatty acids in our diet (fish, especially salmon) or with a supplement. What if this one thing could help those of us and those we love who suffer from these issues who are slipping away from our world? Without help, they can never have a happy, productive life. It sure won't hurt to add this one capsule a day.

I appreciate Daniel Amen for his efforts to help spread awareness of these problems and all the good work he does to educate us on brains. If you have never heard him speak, do so if he comes to your area.

### **Substance Abuse, Anger and Omega-3 Fatty Acids**

*Kirk Hamilton: Can you please share with us your educational background and current position?*

**Laure Buydens-Branchey:** I have an MD degree and was trained as a psychiatrist at the Payne Whitney Clinic, The New York Hospital (now the Weil Cornell Medical College) in New York, NY. I am presently a psychiatrist assigned to the Research Service at the New York Harbor Healthcare System – Brooklyn Campus in Brooklyn, NY.

*KH: What got you interested in studying the role of omega-3 fatty acids and the feelings of anger in substance abusers?*

**LBB:** There were some data indicating that fatty acids supplementation decreased hostility but these data were scant. We were interested in studying omega-3 effects in substance abusers because there are strong associations between high-frequency and high-severity aggressive behaviors and substance use disorders on one hand and because we had observed that the diets of substance abusers are deficient in many nutrients, including omega-3s.

*KH: When you say omega-3 fatty acids are you talking about eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)? What is the physiology of omega-3 fatty acids that might improve aggressive tendencies in substance abusers?*

**LBB:** There are two omega-3 fatty acids that have been shown to play a role in the pathophysiology of a wide range of psychiatric disorders. They are eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), used either singly or in combination. The effects of these fatty acids are diverse and complex and their respective roles in specific behavioral problems have not yet been completely elucidated. DHA is an important component of the membranes of neurons (brain cells) and could affect the function of neurotransmitters, including serotonin that has been implicated in violence. EPA, on the other hand, is not concentrated in neuronal membranes but may affect the function of neurotransmitter systems via neuroimmunological and vascular effects. It could for instance increase the blood flow in the brain.

*KH: Where did you come up with a dose of 3 gm/d of omega-3 fatty acids? What was the breakdown of EPA and DHA in mg per capsule? Were they given in a single dose or divided dose? With meals or away from meals?*

**LBB:** No consensus has been reached yet about the ideal dose of omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) that should be used to promote psychiatric health. Based on a review of major epidemiological studies conducted in the US, the daily intake of EPA and DHA recommended by the International Society for the Study of Fatty Acids and Lipids (ISSFAL) for cardiovascular health is 500 mg. More recently Hibbeln et al (2006)

have proposed that the daily allowance of long-chain (LC) omega-3 PUFAs that would protect the US population against both cardiovascular and major psychiatric diseases should be as high as 3.5 grams per day for a 2000 Kcal diet. Several studies had shown that a daily dose of 3 grams of omega-3 PUFAs was effective in alleviating a variety of psychiatric symptoms and was almost entirely devoid of side effects. No consensus has been reached about the relative proportions of EPA and DHA that should be used. Available evidence seems to indicate that EPA either alone or in combination with DHA is more effective than DHA alone. For these reasons, participants in our study taking the active substance were given capsules containing 450 mg of EPA, 100 mg of DHA and 50 mg of other omega-3 LC PUFAs and were told to take 5 capsules daily. They were not instructed to take the capsules with meals but were told that they could take them in divided doses.

*KH: Were fatty acids levels done on these patients before, during or after the study? If so did the levels correlate with supplementation or symptoms?*

**LBB:** Fatty acids profiles were obtained before and after the 3-month supplementation period used in our study. Our data show a strong correlation between changes in plasma levels of omega-3 PUFAs and psychological changes. More important increases in plasma levels were associated with more pronounced decreases in anger. These data have not been published yet.

*KH: Can you tell us about your study and the basic results?*

**LBB:** In a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study involving 24 subjects with substance use disorders, supplementation with omega-3 PUFAs was found to decrease feelings of anger. The subjects were randomized to one of two groups for 3 months: (1) PUFA group (n=13) receiving 3 g of omega-3 PUFAs (EPA + DHA) daily; (2) placebo group (n=11) receiving placebo daily. Subjects in the PUFA group showed a progressive decline in anger scores (assessed with a scale), with no decline observed in the placebo group. Following the end of the supplementation, 6 subjects from the PUFA group and 8 subjects from the placebo group were followed for 3 additional months. Anger scores remained significantly decreased among the PUFA group subjects. Though preliminary, these data indicate that n-3 PUFA supplementation could be beneficial in the treatment of some patients with hostile tendencies.

*KH: Were there any side effects with the therapy? How was the patient compliance?*

**LBB:** Side effects were almost non existent. Two patients reported having loose stools.

*KH: Do substance abusers have an increased need for omega-3 fatty acids?*

**LBB:** Yes, they do. Although we cannot generalize our findings to all abusers of substances, the different groups of patients we studied ate approximately one third of the long chain polyunsaturated fatty acids (which include EPA and DHA) of the daily amounts recommended by ISSFAL.

*KH: How do you determine who is a candidate for omega-3 fatty acid therapy?*

**LBB:** We cannot say for sure who the best candidates for omega-3 therapy might be. It would stand to reason that individuals whose omega-3 intake is suboptimal and who present psychological or psychiatric problems might benefit from supplementation. This would necessitate the recording of a dietary history or, better a determination of omega-3 blood levels but this determination is not part of routine laboratory tests.

*KH: Do you think that omega-3 fatty acids could be used for aggressive behavior in individuals other than those with substance abuse issues?*

**LBB:** The answer to this question is yes. In one study, DHA supplementation prevented an increase in aggression at times of stress in Japanese students. In another study, EPA was found more effective than a placebo in diminishing aggression in women with untreated borderline personality disorder and in yet another study, prisoners treated with a cocktail of supplements that included omega-3's had fewer disciplinary incidents.

What we put in our bodies really does affect our brain function and ultimately our behavior. I strongly recommend everyone take a good multi-vitamin and fish oil supplement every day. If you're not doing this, give it a try for 60 days – I believe you'll feel better and think more clearly.

**And an article on DEMENTIA from Daniel Amen's web page:**

### **3 Diet Keys to Reducing Dementia**

For many years I've been persuaded by my review of published research, and my personal experience with my own patients, that high-quality fish oil supplements are wonderful for brain health. Recently, WebMD published this review of a French study.

#### **3 Diet Keys to Reducing Dementia - Think Salmon, Greens Dressed in Walnut Oil, and Fruit for Dessert**

By [Miranda Hitti](#)  
WebMD Medical News

Reviewed by [Louise Chang, MD](#)

A French diet hit the headlines recently, and it's more about saving your brain than whittling your waistline. French scientists have spotted three dietary staples of seniors who avoid [dementia](#)...

- Eating fish at least once a week
- Eating [fruits and vegetables](#) (raw or cooked) daily
- Using fats such as walnut oil, soy oil, or colza oil (related to canola oil)

Those habits may make [Alzheimer's](#) disease and other types of dementia less likely, the researchers report in a recent edition of *Neurology*. They studied some 8,000 people aged 65 and over in three French towns -- Bordeaux, Dijon, and Montpellier -- for four years. The goal: See if what people eat is in sync with their dementia risk.

At the study's start, participants took dementia tests and completed dietary surveys. None had dementia at the time. Participants took dementia tests at least once more over the next four years. Those tests show 281 new cases of dementia. Most of those cases were Alzheimer's disease, the most common type of dementia in elders. Diet and dementia data lined up in three key patterns...

- Fruits & veggies: Dementia was 28% less common among people who reported eating fruits and vegetables daily.
- Fish: Dementia was 40% less common among fish eaters without the ApoE4 Alzheimer's gene glitch, compared with their peers who don't eat fish.
- Fats: People who regularly consumed fats rich in omega-3 fatty acids were less likely than people who skimmed on those oils to develop dementia during the study.

The balance of omega-3 fatty acids and omega-6 fatty acids also mattered. Favoring fats rich in omega-6 fatty oils such as sunflower oil and grape seed oil was linked to greater dementia risk unless people also ate fish or other dietary sources of omega-3 fatty acids. The findings held when the researchers considered other risk factors. But, the study doesn't promise that diet makes or breaks dementia risk. Observational studies such as this one don't prove cause and effect.

Alzheimer's Disease and other forms of dementia could become our next major national health issue as the "baby-boom" generation moves into their senior years. Unfortunately, many baby boomers haven't done a good job taking care of their bodies and brains – and now we're seeing the result in increased incidence of dementia. Fortunately, there is help and hope. I would recommend that everyone take a high quality multi vitamin and fish oil supplement every day. Exercise is vital to your brain health. Engaging in learning new things every day will help your brain function stay sharp.

Truthfully, you are not stuck with what you have. Your cognitive abilities can actually improve with age – if you take proactive steps to care for yourself. You can learn more about this at our website, [www.amenclinics.com](http://www.amenclinics.com).

To your brain health,

Daniel Amen, M.D.  
CEO, Amen Clinics, Inc.  
Distinguished Fellow, American Psychiatric Association

**And from Joel and Michelle Levey's web service, this is an amazing video that has been circulating the web about strokes:**

Dear friends, colleagues, and subscribers.

We just watched the most moving "TED Talk" and are moved to share it with our lists. Knowing that many of you work in medicine, neuroscience, nursing, and have a deep interest in the nature of the mind, healing, and human potential, the sense of wonder, insight, and profound inspiration offered by this talk is well worthy of the 20 minutes of time-attention you will give it. <http://www.ted.com/talks/view/id/229>

**Neuroanatomist Jill Bolte Taylor had an opportunity few brain scientists would wish for: One morning, she realized she was having a massive stroke. As it happened -- as she felt her brain functions slip away one by one, speech, movement, understanding -- she studied and remembered every moment. This is a powerful story about how our brains define us and connect us to the world and to one another.**

NOTE: The TED Archives offer a wealth of video's by some of the world's most respected leaders in fields of science, art, design, human nature, ecology, humanities, ad infinitum. We encourage you to explore the depths of this amazing resource.

*"The breezes at dawn have secrets to tell,  
don't go back to sleep!  
You have to ask for what you really want,  
don't go back to sleep!  
You know, there are those who go back and forth  
over the threshold where the two worlds meet,  
and the door, it's always open, and it's round,  
don't go back to sleep!" --Jalal al-Din Rumi*



## **DHARMA FRIENDS – PLEASE HELP ME TO FIND MY WAY! :**

Hi Anna,

I am separated from the mother of my children and our divorce should be final in the next few months. Trying to be cooperative, I left. I agreed to joint custody. I left because it appeared to be impossible to ever have anything but an angry, contentious relationship with her but I think I really ended up just running away in exhaustion. Now, with almost a year having past, I can look at her and her behavior with a different perspective. I thought that one reason I had to leave was because the anger between us was spilling over to the kids. She was yelling and even hitting the kids a lot. I thought that would stop when life was easier for her. It hasn't. I think she is abusing the children physically and emotionally and I am beginning to think she is mentally ill. I don't know much about mental illness but if I had to say, I would guess that she is very paranoid. I don't think she is psychotic paranoid or anything but sometimes I think she must be making things up or joking, she is so off the wall with her accusations. She always seems to be baiting me to get upset about something. I am doing better at not taking the bait. That is when I see her start to go round the bend, in a way. She keeps saying more and more crazy things to get me to fight with her. I see her do the same thing with the children and that really worries me. I think that they are confused and feel lost as to what to do when she gets into these tirades. I think now that I should ask for full custody but that will really push things into battle mode and I can't imagine how we could ever even communicate about anything if I try to get the children away from her and then I lose. How can I prove she is mentally ill and an unfit mother? If she is really crazy, will she make my kids mentally ill too? My biggest fear is that she is dangerous. If I don't try to get custody and then she hurts them, I could never live with that. My lawyer is a good guy but not very aggressive. He seems to just want to cooperate with her. I wish you knew her and could tell me if she is crazy!!

### **Dear Fearful Dad,**

First of all, strongly consider therapy for the children to deal with the anger and fear issues that they have been having to handle in that relationship with their mother while you work out a guarantee for their safety. Your leaving is a good reason for them to get therapy too.

Realistically assess your ex-wife's behavior with others. I know it is hard to be objective in these circumstances. If you distrust your perspective, ask for the confidential feedback of friends or family that are still in touch with your her. Tell them that your goal is not to put them in the middle or to secure testimony against her, but to make sure that you are making the right decision in keeping your children safe. If everyone else says that they think she is doing fine and it appears that the behaviors you observe happen only when you are around, wait a while before doing anything else – including waiting to determine the final custody agreement. If you do hear from others that they have concerns too, then move forward to make sure the kids get protection.

If others agree that her behavior is suspect, another visit with your lawyer should be your next step. I think it would help to write out some incidents that you have witnessed between you and her and between the children and her as objectively as possible. If you fear she is hitting the children, take pictures if you find any bruising. If this is a situation that might benefit from a video, you can have a video camera recording during a visit with her and share it **ONLY** with your lawyer. Then let your lawyer know clearly that you want full custody of the children. See if he will go that route with you. If not, ask for the names of someone else that he recommends that you might work with towards that goal. You fear that she might hurt the children, but I'm sure

you would agree that her present behavior is already hurting them. It is your number one job to give them protection.

If, as you fear, she may have paranoia, it is unlikely that she will trust you if you try to have a conversation with you about her behavior. If she is in therapy, ask her therapist if you can have a session with them to share some thoughts about her. Let the therapist know that you realize that they can legally/ethically say nothing about her at all, including whether or not she is even a patient. Let the therapist know your perspective, but know they will not say anything to side with you against her. They may or may not agree to see you under these circumstances. If not, you might see another therapist and then ask that therapist to send a report of your visit and concerns to your ex-wife's therapist or perhaps to her lawyer or personal physician. If your children are seeing a therapist, ask that therapist to send a report to your wife's therapist, lawyer or physician as well. As I expect you already know, our mental health laws are such that mandatory therapy or hospitalization is impossible unless she is shown to be of imminent danger to herself or to others. This means she almost has to hurt or be about to kill herself or others for a court order for hospitalization to be issued. Treatment has to be voluntary on her part. If she truly has paranoia, she is more unlikely than many others to seek treatment.

If you are very skillful and don't get hooked by her behaviors, you can try to have a conversation about your concerns. It might be better though if there is someone she trusts more than you and who also shares your concerns to talk to her. If you suggest this option to that third person, assure them of your complete confidentiality, and be very careful not to create a big drama. To be realistic, it is unlikely that anyone would want to take her on if her anger issues are as you describe them. But it is worth the try. It may come down to realizing that she will have to come to terms with her illness herself – and this is a tragic state of affairs with a scary future.

If there is no possibility to talk to your ex-wife or to get help for her, you must do all you can legally and emotionally to help your children stay safe. You didn't say how old they are in your email that I copied here, but I know from seeing them around town that they must be about 5 and 7. They are a little too young to understand that their mother may have a mental illness and to not take her behaviors personally. You can tell them that sometimes you know she gets angry and encourage them to talk about it. You must be very careful not to let them think that they are betraying her or that you think she is a villain. Help them learn how to handle her anger in the same way you would help them to handle a difficult fight with a good friend from school. Empower them, support them, and let them know it is still okay to love Mom even when she is a bit nuts. Don't say anything you wouldn't want them to repeat to their mother because they are very likely to do so just to make sure they aren't choosing sides.

Later, if you do get full custody, you will explain even more to the children that you chose this route because sometimes their mom is not always careful of what she says and does. You know that this scares them and you want them to feel safe. Promise them that it is still okay for them to love her. Tell them that you will work out a way for them to stay in a relationship with her but one that will always keep them safe too. As they grow, you can help them to grow in a compassionate perspective towards their mother and her mental illness, while never believing that her behaviors are a reflection of who they are or what they might have done to make her treat them in cruel ways. You will help them to learn that this was not their fault, but that they can learn many valuable lessons from having this challenge in their life.

***"Another name for God is Surprise!"  
- Brother David Steindl-Rast***



"Plant  
So that your Heart  
Will grow  
Love  
So God will think,  
Ahhhh,  
I got kin in that body!  
I should start inviting that soul over for coffee and roles.  
Sing  
Because that is the food  
Our starving world needs  
Laugh  
Because that is the purest  
Sound."  
--Hafiz

**We have BOOKS FOR SALE:**

Remember – both of anna’s books, **Just As the Breeze Blows Through Moonlight**, and **Dharma Friends**, \$15 each, and the **Healthy Living** pamphlet are all on our **Compassion Works for All** web site – [www.dharmafriendsprisonoutreachproject.com](http://www.dharmafriendsprisonoutreachproject.com) .

\*\*\*\*\*

**You may forward any of those documents or any past Dharma Friends newsletters, or this newsletter, on to anyone who you believe would benefit from them.**

**If someone has sent this *Dharma Friends* issue to you as a gift and you would like to join us each month, please email [anna@aristotle.net](mailto:anna@aristotle.net) for more information about Compassion Works for All, our *Dharma Friends* newsletter, and our prison outreach program. You may receive *Dharma Friends* by email for a \$30 tax-deductible donation. If you would prefer a hard copy, the subscription fee is also \$30, but unfortunately it is not tax deductible because you receive a paper publication for your donation.**

