

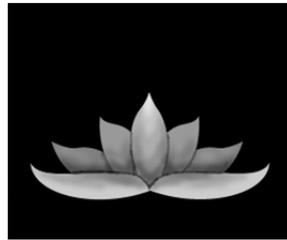


Dharma Friends

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

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The Dhammapada The teachings of the Buddha



Verse XXV: The Renunciate

1. It is good to restrain the eye. It is good to restrain the ear. It is good to restrain that nose. It is good to restrain the tongue.
2. It is good to be restrained in body. It is good to be restrained in speech. It is good to be restrained in the mind. It is good to be restrained in everything. The renunciate who is restrained in every way will realize freedom from suffering.
3. One who is rightly disciplined in all actions, who is composed, contented and delights in solitary contemplation - such is a renunciate.
4. It is pleasing to hear the words of a renunciate who is wise, not inflated, whose mind is composed and whose speech is contained and clear in meaning.
5. One who abides in dhamma, who delights in dhamma, who contemplates dhamma, who memorizes dhamma, does not lose the Way.
6. Bemoaning your own lot or in envying the gains of others obstructs peace of mind.
7. But being contented even with modest gains pure in livelihood and energetic, you will be held in high esteem.
8. True renunciates regard the entire body/mind without any thought of "I" or "mine" and are devoid of longing for what they do not have.

9. A Renunciate who abides in loving kindness with a heart full of devotion for the Buddha's teachings will find peace, stillness and bliss.
10. Bail out the water from your boat; cut loose from the defiling passions of lust and hatred; unencumbered, sail on towards liberation.
11. One who has cut off coarse attachments, cut off subtle attachments, who cultivates the spiritual faculties, is the one who finds freedom from delusion.
12. Be careful! Do not neglect meditation, nor allow the mind to dwell on sensuality lest you might heedlessly swallow a red hot ball of iron and find yourself crying out, "Why am I suffering?"
13. Concentration does not arise without understanding, nor understanding without concentration. One who knows both approaches liberation.
14. A happiness transcending ordinary bliss is experienced by those renunciates who have entered into seclusion with tranquil heart and clear understanding of the Way.
15. When those who are wise dwell in contemplation of the transient nature of the body/ mind, and of all conditioned existence, they experience joy and delight seeing through to the inherently secure.
16. This then is the beginning for a renunciate who takes up the training: wisely control your faculties, commit yourself to the instruction, seek contentment; cultivate the company of those who support your aspiration for energetic practice of the teachings. The beauty of pure conduct conditions wholehearted well-being, giving rise to complete freedom from remorse.
17. As old flowers fall from a jasmine plant, let lust and hatred fall away.
18. I call them the peaceful ones, who are calm in body, in speech and in mind, and who are thoroughly purged of all worldly obsessions.
19. Scrutinize yourself. Examine yourself. With right attention to self assessment, you will live at ease.
20. We are our own protection; we are indeed our own secure abiding; how could it be otherwise? So with due care attend to ourselves.
21. A monk, a nun, who cultivates a joyous disposition and is filled with confidence in the Way will find peace, stillness and bliss.
22. Yet still a youth, a renunciate fully devoted to the Way lights up the world like the moon emerging from clouds.



Some thoughts about this *Dhammapada* Verse: The Renunciate or The Monk

"As the jasmine lets fall its withered flowers, let monks abandon all attachment and hatred."

The teachings in the **Dhammapada** as in many other ancient sacred texts are often like poetic imagery that points the way to the deepest truths that we already know within ourselves. Very often we intuit these truths that have been said through the centuries by great teachers. When we become peaceful and enter those states of "not thinking" and "not analyzing"; we "know". Thinking often gets in our way of knowing, whereas resting, meditating, or walking in beautiful outdoor places invite deep insight. Nature especially surrounds us with her teachings in every way. Whether looking at the sky, or walking in the woods, or watching the ocean waves roll in and out, we are continuously receiving profound

lessons about All That Is. (And just to say, for those behind bars, some without even a window, you can find your own deep memories, look at a picture, or enter visualizations of nature and rest there in meditation. That is equally beneficial.)

Often though, even in the most spectacular natural settings, our ordinary mind is occupied somewhere else. We are barely noticing the dynamic truths that are displaying themselves to us. And, sometimes, especially for the scientifically minded among us, our busy little brains set to work trying to measure, explain, or describe this world around us, which is truly beyond any describable or understandable explanation.

Personally, I love the descriptions in the **Dhammapada** of nature and natural phenomena. I expect that if we could enter deeply into these descriptions of patterns and dynamics in nature, we would experience greater realization than from what we intellectually ponder in the great, esoteric lectures given by important people.

Take this one line, for example. *As the jasmine lets fall its withered flowers, let monks abandon all attachment and hatred.*

Here, we are reminded of our innate knowing of the wisdom of life's cycles and evolution. How often do we all look around and judge who is doing what, when, and how. How often do we compare ourselves to others and judge who we should be like? We expect that we should somehow see what is right and true for us by measuring ourselves up against others. This one habit of measuring and judging ourselves causes great distress.

But in the evolution of nature, we see that no one needs to tell the jasmine plant when to drop their flowers! There is no judgmental push from within the jasmine bush to be like the others around it. It doesn't ask if it is appropriately dropping its flowers or holding on too long. It does not struggle with - maybe I should hold on just a little bit longer,- or even, never "*let fall its withered flowers*". In a natural, gentle way, all flowers bud, bloom, wither and fall. And in an equally natural way, all manifestations, all qualities, all expressions of our life cycle, all of our gifts that we give to others, all relationships, all that we own, all that is the evolution of our own bodies and life, all that we are in every way, first produces a bud, then a flower, the flowers flourish, and then they wither and fall away. Can we "*let fall*"? That is our teaching.

Clinging or attachment to our "*withered flowers*", especially when it means ironing them, re-painting them, and sticking them on with super glue, leads to a life of desperation, fear and suffering. Does the jasmine know how long the flowers are meant to last? Does the jasmine hold onto a self image of how they are supposed to continuously look beautiful with blooming flowers? How does the jasmine know this process of budding, blooming, and letting fall? How do we know to surrender to our own wisdom of budding, blooming, and letting go?

Our verse says that it is the renunciate, the monk, or the spiritual practitioner of any tradition, that abandons attachment or hatred. That is what the word *Renunciate* means; one who has let go of worldly things. The practitioner, through the wisdom of equanimity and deep listening gained through meditation enters into that same knowing of the timeliness of budding, blossoming, and letting fall away. For the practitioner, it is not effortful; not a process pushed by psychological judgments, comparisons, or self scolding. As we rest in meditation, we find equanimity, balance, harmony, and a wisdom that allows those profound, inner evolutionary processes to arise, manifest fully, and to fall away. All arisings, even hatred, that emotional scarring that motivates hurtful words and actions, can be understood with more clarity through the lens of examining nature's teachings.

Hatred, as a ferocity of our emotional self, arises from circumstances that produce great energy. But just as in nature, ferocity is a part of the whole of universal expression. It has deep and essential purposes. Without judgment, we can watch our own ferocity arise. In watching and not judging, we can allow the storm within to find expression, to be honored, to

be seen and known. When known and released, balance and harmony returns, bringing with it a capacity to appreciate it for the enormity of all our powers and all that we are. With this comes greater choice and a freedom from fear. This, too, we learn to feel and let go.

A reader recently asked how to find forgiveness. Although there are many detailed explanations of why and how to accomplish forgiveness, in meditation, with balance and resting in peace, forgiveness, hatred, greed, attachments, all that we are, follows our unique cycles of arising and falling away; budding and letting go. We can't hurry or push or hold on. The time will be right for the dying flower to fall when it falls.

Forgiveness and hatred and all of our human struggles fall away as we rest in stillness. The renunciate, the monk or practitioner that rests in stillness without a need to curtail or closet or control those profound forces within, finds that always we have a choice in our thoughts, speech, and actions as they manifest in our life. Hatreds and loves, repulsions and attachments, all merely fall away as we know them. The renunciate or practitioner harmonizes into the totality that we are. We grow beyond each rising force of holding on, letting go into the ever-enlarging and vast experience of All That We Are - All That Is.

*My hut lies in the middle of a dense forest;
Every year the green ivy grows longer.
No news of the affairs of men,
Only the occasional song of a woodcutter.
The sun shines and I mend my robe;
When the moon comes out I read Buddhist poems.
I have nothing to report my friends.
If you want to find the meaning, stop chasing after
so many things.*

- Ryokan



A MEDITATION – on the Renunciate or the Monk

A Meditation in the jasmine forest

When we consider the teaching of the jasmine, we remember the beautiful scent of the jasmine flower and know that we need not even see a jasmine vine but we know its presence by its subtle perfume. Can it be that our most subtle expression, the breeze blowing our presence, can carry our highest self, our love and compassion, out to all those who are affected merely by our energies as well? Just like the perfume of the jasmine, others know they are in the presence of the sacred long before they even see the bushes in the forest. Before they see you, too.

Here is a visualization meditation to invite that deeper knowing of who you are and your subtle capacities as an awakening being.

First, let us all remember that ancient wisdom teachings have many tools in the meditation toolbox of all of our many traditions. The brain has an amazing capacity to have a meditative, visualization experience, and to register it as a biochemical and physiological reaction as though we are actually living that experience. Such visualizations have an almost identical power, or maybe sometimes more, as an experience that we might call "real life". So as we do this meditation, we are inviting an experience through our meditation/visualization that benefits us just as it would if we were actually in India or Thailand walking through a jasmine forest. So much for those cell bars imprisoning you....

Begin by sitting comfortably, keeping your back straight, and focusing on your breath. Be aware of any places in your body where you have tension. Breathe into those muscles, maybe tighten them up, and then let go. Take 5 or 10 minutes of just focusing on your breath, finding balance and equanimity, focus and clarity.

Now, with your eyes shut or open, see yourself in a jungle forest. It is early in the morning and the sun is rising. Even if you have never been in a jungle forest, allow your imagination to present whatever offers itself to you on your walk. Perhaps you begin by following a little stream with a tributary that gently weaves its way from the stream bank and meanders off into the jungle. Follow along beside the stream. Maybe it is a little wet and mossy as you walk this path. Look around as the trees become more dense. Smell the earth, the grass, the leaves that have fallen. See that animals have created a trail that has a rich, strong scent of loam. Listen to the wind. See the blue sky sparkling through the branches. Feel the breezes blow. Hear the birds sing their songs as they call to one another. Be dazzled by the bright glimpses of color as the parrots leave one perch and fly to another. Insects fly around curiously to see who you are or to nibble on you. Little animals scamper on the leafy ground just far enough away to not be caught. Monkeys are high up in the trees, watching you and calling out signals to their band.



Keep walking beside this little stream as you go deeper and deeper into the woods. The trees are becoming bigger as you go into the old growth forest. Perhaps no one has been here for hundreds of years or has ever lived here. Feel the sense of invitation from the forest. It is glad to have you present because your heart is filled with appreciation of the water, the trees, the wild flowers, the animals and birds. Sunshine glints through the leaves of the trees and sparkles on the path before you to beckon you on.

On you walk. You are relaxed and enjoying the cooling breeze on your skin, the smells, and the forest noises. You feel yourself dissolve deeply into the movement of your body, and the ever-changing display of beauty before you. You feel more profoundly a part of all that you see and hear than you have ever felt.

Gently, a new scent is flirting with your awareness. A sweet, flowery perfume invites a feeling of sacredness. You feel that you are entering into a sacred presence. You look around and appearing before you are clusters of little white flowers against dark green leaves. You look up through the jungle. As far as you can see, there are thousands of these dark green jasmine bushes and jasmine vines have climbed to the tops of the taller trees. Everywhere, bushes and vine covered trees are bearing millions of delicate white blossoms. It is beautiful. You've never seen anything like it. Gently you walk deeper into this jasmine forest until you are surrounded by flowers. Everywhere are the shorter bushes and the tall jasmine covered trees, filled with the intoxicating scent of flowers. The white blossoms slowly blow free and fly everywhere, dancing on the winds.

This place of sacred retreat is your personal and profound discovery. Make yourself a comfortable place to meditate here. Take your time. Just sit comfortably and look around at the beauty. Breathe the beauty into yourself. Breathe in the jasmine perfume. Feel as if this magical, every-changing universe is presenting you with flowers. Sit and dissolve your entire body into this sacred space. This is your beautiful jasmine forest retreat. Just rest here.

Ask - *Who was it that came into the forest? Who are you now? What is this forest giving to you? What do you know about yourself here in this forest that you did not realize before you came?*

You may stay in your forest for as long as you like. Even if you leave, you will always carry the knowing of the forest within you. And when you do leave the forest, be aware that you, like the jasmine, will always announce your sacred presence, to all who see you or know you, forever.



From this point on you really know. This is called the pinnacle of Zen, the sovereignty of Zen. It is also called knowledge of what is knowable; it produces all the various states of meditation, and anoints the heads of all spiritual princes. In all fields of form, sound, fragrance, flavor, feeling, and phenomena, you realize complete perfect enlightenment. Inside and outside are in complete communion, without any obstruction at all.

Pai-chang, "The Sphere of the Enlightened"



From Your Letters

Lots of new Dharma Friends reminders from Anna -

Dear readers, We are having to adopt some clean and lean policies. We are greatly appreciative of your enthusiasm and responses to all of our offers for you. **BUT** in our excitement about making these offers, we were breaking the bank! As our board president says, we were like the little frog simmering in the pot as the water got hotter and hotter. Now, finally, we realize we have to jump! As you know, it is just a few of us filling all requests. We are growing fast and are limited by fewer people and money and our limited resources must stretch farther than ever before.

Our first priority is to get the newsletter to you. So here are some changes and also some ways you can help.

1. Please let us know of all address changes as that costs us big \$\$\$ to send newsletters to those long gone. If you have not received an issue of Dharma Friends -first consider if your address has changed - even your bunk - and that is the most likely reason. If you are at the same address, the chances are that nothing has changed in our database and the newsletter went off to you as usual. Write and let us know if you are not getting your newsletter. If you miss an issue, sometimes we have a few extras if you write to Kristopher for one.

2. If you are a new subscriber, please put that on an envelope. Also put on the envelope the person you are writing to and what your are writing for. For example: NEW SUBSCRIBER. That saves reading every letter before passing it on to its proper recipient.

3. NO MORE BOOKS. We are so sorry that we have to suspend sending out free books. For one thing, we have run out of the books we were offering. So please don't write for any of the books that we offered in the past or for the books in the Book of Knowledge program, which we were generally not able to offer anyway. We do have Dhammapadas however.

4.. ASK TIM - we will continue ASK TIM but with some limitations as to what Tim is able to do. These are the changes we ask:

1. Tim is not qualified to counsel about personal and/or relationship problems.
2. Money or 'thing's' will never be given to any writer.
3. Tim receives so many letters that he will probably only be able to answer one letter per inmate every 6-8 weeks.
4. We will not provide addresses of individuals in the free world to anyone.
5. We cannot provide information obtained from Facebook or other social media websites.

6. Dictionary Drop Program - We are out of dictionaries. We will continue to put the word of the month in the newsletter so that you can write with your description and story and still get your certificate after twelve letters of definitions. But if you are playing, please use the dictionary in your library, if possible, because we have exhausted our supply.

7. A little tough love - Since I have taken over reading all letters to process them is something that I have not done for many years, I enjoy being connected to all of you again until a volunteer can take over . **BUT** - I am amazed at the number of inappropriate letters with sexual content. Oops - not what I want our volunteers to deal with! Now - I know that there are a few people with poor communication skills who live in our prisons, and most are not participants in Dharma Friends. But there are a few who seem confused, believing that people who spend 10 -15 hours a day to provide you with all of our Dharma Friends programs might be enticed into a meaningful relationship by your pornographic letters. Wake up, guys, and know that no one will ever appreciate such letters. Of course, we still send you compassion for your confusion and pain. And -we will not keep you on our mailing list or answer your letter. Same thing with scams you will not get a response but you will receive subtle blessings.

8. And sorry, no calendar until I can get a little help....



OUR DICTIONARY DROP WORD for July is PONDER

From Daniel Lehl:

Clouds are gone,
Sun shines bright,
We are light.
Lost a battle,
But not the fight,

We are light.
We will rise,
Walk in light,
Abandon the night.



drawing by Anthony Mario

From T M: to **Jeff and Dharma Friends** - My wishes for your peace and unity and thanksgiving for allowing me to participate in **Jeff's Kids** goes out to all of you. This is also my third **Dictionary Drop Word** exercise. It has gotten so that about half way into the month I look forward to **Dharma Friends** not only for the lessons it offers but also for what **Drop Word** will challenge me. I made, for myself, a contract to write eight **Jeff's Kids** letter for every month of this year, incorporating it into the **Dictionary Drop Word** as my team. For my most recently received **Dharma Friends** issue, using the outline of the **Dictionary Drop Word** game of including a definition and how it was applied, I apply it to my life. No small part of my mission is to not only let these young people know they are not alone in their experiences but to do so without projecting bitterness or other negativity as well. It is a lesson in overcoming and sharing how in my own life to let them know it can be done.

March in the newsletter was for the word integrity, so here is my response.

How did you come to find yourself where you are? I used to ask myself that very same question. Am I the result of a poor gene pool? Some would have had me believe that, including my own family. That was, and still is, so much crap. How about what seemed like a good idea, at the time, gone bad? Nah.... Try again. What about being so upset with the environment I was in that I lashed out in ways from petty theft and truancy to vandalism and substance abuse? Maybe sometimes being so freaking angry that I would engage in various self destructive behaviors, just to show one? Eventually, the criminal district atty. had something to show me; exactly what is meant by a period of no less than 15 years and not to exceed life behind bars.

Now, it's my turn; I'm showing them. I mean really showing them. Not only do I no longer fit the profile of a career criminal but some prison employees actually respect me more than they do some of their own coworkers and supervisors. I am the only member of my family internationally recognized for my youth humanitarian efforts, I'm regularly contacted for mentor ship and practical living skills advice, fully expect to walk out of prison after only 20 years to complete their life sentence on parole and even in this economy, not only are my job prospects very good, they are getting better. How's that for showing them?

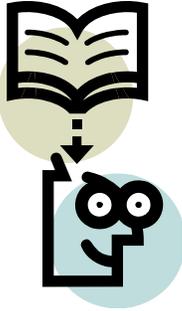
My secret? Something I wish I had developed at your age, which would have prevented my desire to develop it all these years later; **integrity**. Webster's dictionaries defines integrity as: 1. Strict adherence to a standard of values are conduct. 2. Personal honesty and independence. 3. Completeness. Unity for. Soundness.

My own definition, as I apply it to my life, is to live a responsible and caring lifestyle.

The very people who brought me into this world pretty much sentenced me to a lifetime of lock up before I had even graduated from elementary school. I was the "bad seed," the "black sheep," the "one in every bunch." It is no mistake that a synonym for angry is mad, which, in turn, is synonymous with crazy. I allowed myself to prove those who condemned me to be right. If only I had been told all those years ago, if you really want to mess with their heads; get your act together, develop some integrity and show them all exactly who really outclasses whom. The good place to begin is by keeping in mind that when one person says, "I can," and another says, "I can't," the odds are they are both right. Integrity; independence.

"In your seeing," he said, "there should be only the seeing. In your hearing, nothing but the hearing; in your smelling, tasting, and touching, nothing but smelling, tasting, and touching; in your thinking, nothing but the thought." - Khuddaka Nikaya

*** a reminder - We are not able to supply you with this book in this Book of Knowledge section.



Book of Knowledge - Omar's dream:

A new book to recommend: A great Buddhist book I recently read was called "**Be A Lamp Unto Yourself**" published by Kong Meng San Phor Kark See monastery. I would say this is a must read. I read this book at the department of mental health while I was there. I will try to get books published by them that I haven't read to read in the future. From Jonathan

From James Halbirt (Gan Kan) Why do we abuse others?

Many of us have been abused in our early life. But why do we have to abuse others? So we have been abused, conditioned by an earlier life tends to overwhelm us and truncates our journey in life. Been there and done that.

Let me tell you what the Buddha so often said that we are the cause of our own suffering, but there was a way out of it, and he gave us the guidelines to do just that. Yes, I agree, I caused my own suffering by how I dealt with my life. I created my own suffering by listening to a man who I thought was a good authority with advice. I have learned to forgive him. His advice was that a man does not have fear, does not cry. I believed this statement, and physically I conducted my physical life with no fear, and any crying I may have did was in word. When I was taken away from my home as a young boy, I felt the fear of abandonment and loss of love feelings, but I summarily suppress them.

In my adult life these feeling surfaced at various times and I had no understanding of what was going on in my mind. They invested my mind with a "overwhelming anxiety", the cousin of fear, and it caused me to have a manic state of "sleep deprivation". With alcohol it can become a deadly mixture over time. Any one that has been in combat will tell you that in three days if you have no sleep you will become psychotic. These feelings began with the pending loss of a loved one, a hostile interject that I was losing due to divorce and separation. Because this loss of love was considered mine, I didn't want to lose what I considered mine. Consequently it was evident that I was entrenched in attachment and dependency. For three months I was in this state and I couldn't let go, so my violence caused an instant divorce of extreme abuse, and an extreme abuse of violence. I gave myself up and went for help. My life was saved and a victim was saved. Here I am imprisoned, the victim of my own ignorance and stupidity. For years I beat myself up for my violence until the study of Buddhism and my conversion sent me on a proper course of maturity and wisdom. My studies and the guidelines that I've followed has helped me understand my mind and the causes of my suffering.

Many of us here today have experienced betrayal, abandonment, and abuse from either our parents or authorities that were our care takers. All of this becomes our emotional companions. It has a way of destroying our innocent natures, and they become like it. They are our shadows and our evidence is how often we are addicted to love, drugs, and so forth. We tend to adapt coping strategies that range from avoidance, gaining control with manipulative behaviors, control over others, or searches for connections and reassurance. Also we develop compensating behaviors ranging from self sabotaging to narcissistic domination of others, to dependency patterns. It is much too much to blame others for what we cause to ourselves and others, but that is what most prisoners do, or have done. Who among us can say that we are free and immune to these threats?

Many of us had become fear driven and have acted out of what we fail to understand. We have found it hard to find healthy connections to the instinctual truth and development that deserves to be at the heart of our being. If you haven't noticed our provisional selves, our counterfeit identities, they are essentially anxiety management systems that are deeply based in our psyche that we seldom know of their presence, or what delegated authority they carry in the extent to which they govern our lives.

Only when we focus with clarity and effort to find the wisdom within are we able to pay attention to our symptoms, our patterns, our painful encounters with ourselves where we may begin to discern the alien implanted "ideas" to whence our history has long been in service. All of our negative behaviors are lessons to be learned and transcended.

Only when we look at the patterns of our personal history do we see the patterns, the shadow systems of complexes, that create recurrent suffering and pain and the outcomes in our involvement with others. Thus we need to construct a hierarchy of values that can give us a mature approach and a viable history of mindfulness and loving kindness. We have to start with forgiveness.

The other is not the enemy. Life is not your enemy. Look into the diminished corridors of lost possibilities. Ask yourself of every dilemma, every choice, every relationship, every consequence and responsibility, does this choice diminish me or enlarge me. Does your failure to commit to a life with maturity and morality give your essence to mindlessness? We are not really separate from anything in the universe. Why do we separate and become divisive to each other?

So here we are, and many of us are in prison of our minds within a prison, with many lessons to learn. Don't we tend to hold onto the past, especially our hurting past? We can hold grudges, slights, injuries, passed wounding, and allow them to dominate the present. We really only have the present. We tend to refuse to step into our larger selves or to look inward and accept responsibilities for what we find. When we do, some of us will find our innate wisdom will flourish. When we forgive ourselves and others we have come home to our human nature. So we must learn to admit that parts of us, if this is your case, are needy, frightened, and dependent. Only our boldness will deliver us from our fears, and if the risk is not taken, the meaning of life will be violated. That is a given. Some of us have been abused and then delivered it to others. Today, I honor all victims of abuse and violence, not only my own. It is up to us for the abuse and violence to end with us, otherwise somewhere in the line of cyclic existence it will happen to us, the law of cause and effect. It is obvious, that many of us prisoners were neglected and abused in various ways early in life. It is up to us to change this script, those maps we have been living with, and enter into our proper human nature, that of loving and assisting each other in our lives. We can't continue to live in a cesspool of demons of our own creation. Enter into the dragon's mouth and surrender to life. Life will find you and embrace you!

I recommend that you read some Buddhist books and practice with a meditation group and get in touch with some of the guidelines to find your true nature. It has helped me tremendously. It won't hurt to ask for help. Buddhism does not take away from your religious affiliation but enhances the understanding of your mind and life. We have complexes because we have histories, and histories had extraordinary power to write our biographies, frame our futures, and circumscribe our freedoms. We have lots of deadly ideas that manifest in our minds, but we need to stop feeding them and put some virtues into the shadows.

It is very important that you do not compare your actions to your partner's or judge your partner's behavior as unskillful. Rather, focus on your own actions and take responsibility for them. Recall those times when you looked into your partner's eyes and saw the pain you caused this person you love to suffer. If you can admit your own faults, if you can see how hurtful your actions were and tap into a sense of concern for your partner's well-being, then compassion and loving-friendliness will flow.
- Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, "Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness"

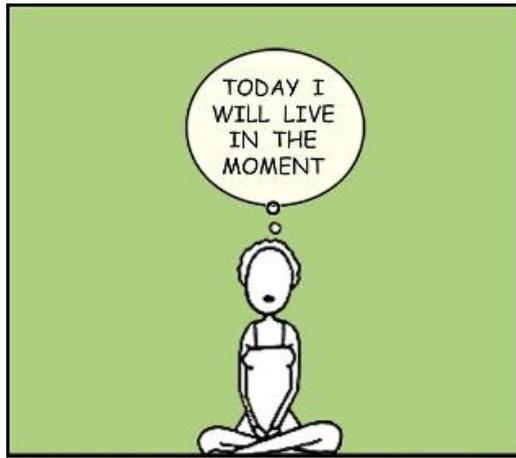
From D.S.: Dear Kristopher, I'm writing to ask if you can please send me some addresses that I can write to in order to receive some Buddhist books? At the beginning of this year, I decided to try and get into the Bible. I guess that because it seems to be a very violent book, and also the fact that my mind and heart seem to want to go back to the Dharma, I've decided to get back on the Middle Path. And what a beautiful path it is! I can't believe that I ever stepped off of it. I love the Buddha's teachings and I love the way in which he taught. While reading the Bible, I felt like I had to be something I wasn't. It made me a very prideful and materialistic person. I was being chained down by the fetter of life, and I didn't like it. Buddhism helps me break free from those handcuffs and shackles and be a mentally free being. I want to live a non-materialistic and spiritually rich life. I once again no longer have the urge to prove myself or to get out and have the nicest truck or the biggest rims. I just have the urge to learn the Dharma and to be the best man, husband and dad I can be. I thank a thousand times the Buddha, and also you and your team for your work. Thank you. With much love and respect, D.

Subscription information: We have gladly been offering this newsletter free of charge to those in prisons. We are 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*, please email annacoxar@gmail.com and we will put your name on our email list. If you need a paper copy, and if you are a family member of someone in prison, we will put you on our paper copy list. Send your information to **Compassion Works for All, Dharma Friends subscriptions, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, AR. 72217-7708.**

If anyone would like to make a donation that supports the almost 5,000 thousand paper copies that go out to those in prisons around the country, we are most appreciative of your help.

We 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.



UNLESS THE MOMENT IS UNPLEASANT,
IN WHICH CASE I WILL EAT A COOKIE

From Bert Hansen: Dear Dharma Friends, It is with an open heart that I write sending love and compassion to all of this world. I do this because, as Bo Lozoff points out in the dedication of his book, "We're All Doing Time," is all who needs all the love and encouragement we can possibly give. I would recommend this book to everyone. I have been seeking spiritual knowledge since '06 and can hardly express the heartfelt spiritual joy I have of Kristopher's help this past year or so. I've been trying to understand the spiritual universe and have understood nothing. But now, seeking my spiritual self, my knowledge seems even less. Yet, I have come to know to seek first the Kingdom of God so everything else may be added. In so doing, I have come to know that I cannot say here it is, nor can I say there it is, for the kingdom is within me and you.

Nothing that we ever get, see, taste, smell, touch, hear, or think about is going to give us the peace we really seek. This is what the Buddha called the First Noble Truth. Oh, please don't take this to be my knowledge, as anyone who has or ever will read Bo Lozoff's book will be able to attest to it is not. Okay, enough about that, what I really would like to say and ask is I am currently taking a Buddhist correspondence course, and so have become interested in theology. So much so that I've even decided to pick up my Bible correspondence course. What I wish to ask is if anyone has any other type of spiritual correspondence courses addresses if they might send it to me. Those of any spiritual belief. Please send it to Bert Hansen # 23223 - PO Box 5001 – Seward AK 99664-5001. I figure that if I can't go to college to take theology through correspondence is the next best thing. NAMASTE

If you don't understand the Way as it meets your eyes, how can you know the Path as you walk?- Shih-t'ou

Fighting to Live . . by James Carter

In the solitude of my mind,
I fight for the chance to live,
Opposed by demons of every kind,
Tooth, nail, fist and claw,
The only weapons we have,
To the death, winner take all, that is the law,
To the victor go the spoils,
Sanity slipping into madness,
Desperation like a serpent wraps me in its coils,
Don't know where to go,
Or who to turn to,
What's happening to me, I just don't know,
In my heart, I silently weep,

Tears that cannot be seen,
Pain so intense, there is no sleep,
There are no peaceful dreams,
Only frighteningly real nightmares,
My throat bleeds from the screams,
My soul ripped apart,
By demons that torment me night and day,
The pain I experience is only the start,
Peace I seek, yet cannot find,
If this keeps up,
I feel that I will truly end up losing my mind.

What, monks, is totality? It is just the eye with the objects of sight, the ear with the objects of hearing, the nose with the objects of smell, the body with the objects of touch and the mind with the objects of cognition. This, monks, is called totality.

- Samyutta Nikaya

From G.G.: Dear Dharma Friends, Hello and a big thank you for your continuing enlightening publication. I still keep “fighting and fleeing” from the sacred and subtle view as you say in issue # 168. Why my ego cries itself unique and different is because it is a parasite that feeds on my suffering. Why does it seem every time I try and go “against” it – it punishes me? Is that Illusion? I confuse my hate for it as an overall self-hatred, and maybe in a sense, it is, but how do I go about destroying it without destroying myself in the process? I am torn. Maybe going on 10 years of incarceration will do that to some people. But I'm still reading your publication – maybe I should quit the ego-excuses and start practicing the meditative techniques. Yet, subtle are the thousand different distractions. Ha. Anyway, I wish you all love and light. Thank you for your time and passion. Namaste,

If you turn your light inwardly, you will find what is esoteric within you.- The Sutra of Hui Neng



Here is a letter that you can send to your loved ones if you wish.

Hopefully, this invitation will benefit your important relationships and your families. It might be a drop starting off ripples and changing your family and maybe even dysfunctional communities.

Dear

Here in prison, I receive a monthly newsletter from Compassion Works for All called Dharma Friends. It offers support from ancient wisdom with which we explore our spiritual path, no matter what tradition someone follows. We learn meditation teachings, psychological and emotional healing, and we build a community between those in prison and those out in the world through letters.

Compassion Works for All encourages communication and healing of old family patterns and relationship issues with those I have left behind - like you. If we are both reading Dharma Friends issues, one way to support such discussions between us is to use the issues as a basis for our discussions. I welcome this opportunity to share such healing and growth talks and letters with you and would like to ask you to go to www.CompassionWorksForAll.org and sign up for the twice monthly emails that will bring you Dharma Friends newsletter and also the Compassion Works for All web site updates. There are lots of healing videos on the web site as well, some especially for those with family members and friends who are in prison.

I greatly regret that we are spending this time apart and the challenges that it imposes on our relationship. I also look forward to being able to use all of these traumatic events as a way to grow beyond the issues of our past and find a stronger healing that will benefit not only me and you but all those that we love.

Thank you for considering sharing Dharma Friends and this part of my life with me. I hope it helps you as much as it has helped me.

Love,

Compassion Works for All/ Dharma Friends
PO Box 7708
Little Rock, Arkansas 72217-7708
Webpage: www.CompassionWorksForAll.org

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FREE RELIGIOUS MATERIAL
Please return any issues with a wrong address



Monks working on a sand mandala which depicts the sacred universe. Following its completion, it will be blessed and then the sand will be scooped up and gently poured into a nearby river as prayers for world peace are said.

When other beings, especially those who hold a grudge against you, abuse and harm you out of envy, you should not abandon them, but hold them as objects of your greatest compassion and take care of them. - His Holiness the Dalai Lama