

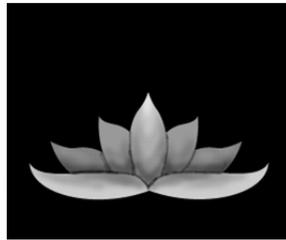


Dharma Friends

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

November 2012 issue # 189 copyright 2012, a project of Compassion Works for All

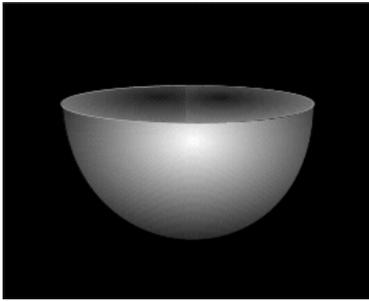
The Dhammapada The teachings of the Buddha



Verse III: The Mind

33. Just as a fletcher shapes an arrow, so the wise develop the mind, so excitable, uncertain and difficult to control.
34. Like a fish which on being dragged from its home in the water and tossed on dry land will thrash about, so will the heart tremble when withdrawing from the current of Mara.
35. The active mind is difficult to tame, flighty and wandering wherever it wills: taming it is essential, leading to the joy of well-being.
36. The protected and guarded mind leads to ease of being. Though subtle, elusive and hard to see, one who is alert should tend and watch over this mind.
37. Wandering far and wide on its own, without form, the mind lies in the heart-cavern within. To bring it under control is to be freed from the bonds of ignorance.
38. In one whose mind is unsteady, whose heart is not prepared with true teachings, whose faith is not matured, the fullness of wisdom is not yet manifest.
39. There is no fear if the heart is uncontaminated by the passions and the mind is free from ill-will. Seeing beyond good and evil one is awake.

40. Seeing this body to be as fragile as a clay vessel, and fortifying the heart like a city wall, one can confront Mara with the weapon of insight. Having the advantage of non-attachment, one protects what has already been gained.
41. Certainly this body will soon lie lifeless: cast aside on the ground, devoid of consciousness and as useless as a burnt-out log.
42. More than a thief, more than an enemy, a misdirected heart brings one to harm.
43. Neither mother, father nor any member of a family can give you the blessings generated by your own well-directed heart.



Some thoughts about this *Dhammapada* Verse: The Mind

- 41. Certainly this body will soon lie lifeless: cast aside on the ground, devoid of consciousness and as useless as a burnt-out log.*
- 42. More than a thief, more than an enemy, a misdirected heart brings one to harm.*
- 43. Neither mother, father nor any member of a family can give you the blessings generated by your own well-directed heart.*

There are a huge number of people throughout our world who are so absorbed in their own suffering and fear, they cannot embrace a view of offering kindness to others. In *Dharma Friends*, we try to teach and support a compassionate view. For eighteen years now, I have talked to many of you, our readers, in person and I have meditated with you. For those more distant, I have read your letters that shared very inspiring thoughts. I have come to know those of you in prisons very well. I know that there are some who are lost and some that have no way to handle life other than to react with violence and rage. But most of you that care enough to participate in a community like **Dharma Friends** are developing your highest potential, have made amazing changes in your life, and are mentors and teachers helping others in your world and throughout the world. You are compassionate beings.

For those in prisons, it is likely that the reason you are there has roots from your early life. Yes, there are many in prison that did not do the crime for which they are convicted. And yes, the criminal justice system has a great many flaws and it may well be that you see yourself in prison for reasons that are not your fault. But most of us can see that our life is as it is because of our own actions. Technically and karmically, we are each responsible for our path through life even though the cause and effect may not be quite as clear as the legal system makes it out to be. Often, harm and hardship affected our path. And, tragically, as a result, many then plotted and lived a course of harm and destruction.

But in healing, we all must look at a vast view of reality unfolding. We all must know clearly that our beneficial future relies on not causing harm to others. It truly takes all of us embracing the view that all beings are worthy of love, compassion, and a chance for a good life to make this happen for all around us. We then create a good life for ourselves too. By helping others, we help ourselves. This is the seed that we can all plant for the entire human family.

But the truth is, there are more people who focus on their own needs at the expense of others. Most even put their needs ahead of innocent children who rely on them for care and a healthy future, When people can't even set aside their own self-serving for those they love and for their own children, we understand why there is so much suffering continuously creating more suffering everywhere. Those who hold hope that people will live free of suffering and abuse are rare.

Read our few lines again from the *Dhammapada* verse. We are reminded that most human beings have misdirected hearts that bring them, their children, their communities, and others to harm. The verse says that their lives are useless if they only served themselves while the true value of life comes from benefitting others. We read our last line. ***Neither mother,***

father nor any member of a family can give you the blessings generated by your own well-directed heart. This means only WE can create lives of value.

To do so, first we must walk our own path of healing and clarity. We can't offer compassion and kindness to others until we can offer it to ourselves. Then, as we heal, we can consider a promise to try to help all others in their suffering, even if their suffering is caused by a mind of self-absorption and callous disregard for others. Even if they attack us with criticisms or violence. Our path to happiness lies in wishing them to be free of suffering and working to help them. It is up to each of us to make those changes despite what any other person can do for or to us. It is planting in our own mind the vision that in helping others, no matter what they do, we will then achieve our highest realization. When we are on the path to our own awakening, we can and must benefit others.

This is tough. Some become martyrs and try too hard in a way that endangers themselves. Some get lost in 'idiot compassion' where they get caught in the manipulations of others who then take everyone down around them. So we need to always monitor our own capacity to help and to use wisdom to help without destroying ourselves in the process.

With this balance, find the way to offer healing to those in the small part of the world that we inhabit. Usually that way is right before us if we just look. Prisoners will liberate the prisons of violent, self-serving and rageful brothers and sisters by becoming their healers and supporters. Be the prison change-agents so that prisons become peaceful and kind places. It is up to you. We must all reach back to those left in our communities at home. Those in poverty must change the worlds of those they contact who live in their neighborhoods of poverty. Those who live in the upper 1% of our financial and social strata must reach out to help to change the minds and the lives of those who live in that world. Homeless people, those in ghettos, gang members, addicts, middle class suburbanites, professionals in any field, Junior Leaguers, Baptists and Hindus and Muslims... Democrats and Republicans... wherever you have landed in your life, it is your assignment to bring healing and transformation to those in your small piece of the world. That is where you can and should focus on healing and change. No one else can affect that community better than you.

At a recent commemorative service for 9-11, I was asked to offer a blessing for all the interfaith leaders who were present. These leaders are the change agents for all those in their spiritual communities and altogether, they all lead the way to our one compassionate world family. I count each and every one of you as a compassion leader as well. Here is the prayer that I offered to the interfaith leaders. I want to invite you too to feel that you are receiving this energy into your heart to bless you on your journey of healing all beings:



YOUR BLESSING

As human beings, we often get lost in grand ideas, beliefs, ideologies, differences, identities, and even in our great wisdom teachings . Sadly, lost sometimes even to the point of warring over them as 9-11 showed us so tragically and as such wars have been waged around our planet every day since.

But reminders of ultimate truth peacefully surround us, subtly offering a template from which to know All That IS as One World, One Mind, One Heart, One Supreme Essence.

In this lovely garden of flowers, without a word needing to be said, we profoundly feel this message in a diversity of colors, shapes, species, fragrance, and delicate design. All together, we are presented a sacred mandala of perfection.

We too are a sacred mandala. In all of our diverse and unique selves, we come together in beauty, subtle essence, heart messages, and miraculous creation beyond description or understanding.

We are each 'flower' and together, we are ONE in an exquisite garden. As faith leaders, we must live the message of One Human Family in Compassion for All until all beings know and live this reality as well.

All the world's major religions, with their emphasis on love, compassion, patience, tolerance, and forgiveness can and do promote inner values. But the reality of the world today is that grounding ethics in religion is no longer adequate. This is why I am increasingly convinced that the time has come to find a way of thinking about spirituality and ethics beyond religion altogether.
His Holiness the Dalai Lama



A MEDITATION – on The Mind

This meditation offers a very easy idea of what to do and yet it is very, very hard to do it.

Offer unconditional love and compassion to all those you see, hear and think of... nothing to say, no need to offer advice, no need to encourage them to adopt a better political party or your perfect religion or to fix anything in their life with a program or agenda. Just give them loving acceptance. In your love, be the mirror that allows them to feel, trust and know their deepest essence.



From Your Letters

Here is a reminder of some of our on-going programs for you with a few refinements!

Thank you thank you – some of you have very kindly offered to send your wonderful art work as a gift for us to use for fundraising efforts and helping the world to learn the benefits of compassion. If you would like to donate art to CWFA, please send art that is not folded in the envelope – either very small pieces or in big envelopes! Please enclose a short biography of you with your art or written on the back. We appreciate all of you for all of your talents.

One -The Dictionary Drop program – although we are no longer (for a while) able to mail out dictionaries, please use your library dictionary to continue to play the **Dictionary Drop** game. For each word of the month, read the dictionary definition and then write a short essay about how it applies to your life. Then send it to us. Put **Dictionary Drop** on the envelope.

OUR DICTIONARY DROP WORD for November is OODLES (good luck)

Two - Jeff's Kids is our program where you are invited to write a letter to kids in juvenile detention telling them what you wish someone had told you when you were a teen. The letters are read to the kids in group therapy by their counselor, Jeff. If you want to write a letter to Jeff's Kids, put **Jeff's Kids** on your envelope when you mail it to us and then we pass the letters on to Jeff. We are also putting the letters on our web site.

Three -ASK TIM: Ask Tim is a god-send for some of you that have very important things that need to be researched or you need help with but have no one else to ask. Write to us with your question and put **ASK TIM** on the envelope. Tim will help you as he can, but there are some limitations as to what Tim is able to do. These are the limitations:

1. Tim is not qualified to counsel about personal and/or relationship problems.
2. Money or 'things' 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. Tim cannot research or give legal help.

Four -Here are some ways you can help us in being more efficient and saving us money to offer our programs to you.

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 in some way and let us know. Then check with your mailroom. If all is ok, then check with us if you think we made a mistake with our database.

2. If you are a new subscriber, please put that on an envelope. Also put on the envelope the person you are writing to, if you know, or what you are writing for. For example: **NEW SUBSCRIBER**. That saves reading every letter before passing it on.

Five- **BOOKS**. We are so sorry that for a while we have to suspend sending out free books. For one thing, we have run out of some 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 not able to offer anyway. We are redesigning our books program so soon we will let you know more about books, along with anything else we can offer.



Arouse your will, supreme and great, Practice love, give joy and protection; Let your giving be like space, without discrimination or limitation. Do good things, not for your own sake But for all the beings in the universe; Save and make free everyone you encounter, Help them attain the wisdom of the way. - Prajnaparamita

A letter from Chris Shira: re: Dharma Friends newsletter suggestions: Dear CWFA team:

I just got the Mother's Day issue and found the teachings refreshing. I particularly enjoyed it as it spoke to many of our situations I am sure. I also found the letters from the other inmates inspiring. I don't know how to thank you for sending the picture of the Buddha and the nice glossy peace but I am in prison, and there is not a lot else to do!

Any way I am currently reading "Turtle Feet" by Nikolai Grozny and realize there is something lacking in the materials I have been reading. That is: a pronunciation guide to common terms. I thought that I would write you with the following requests/suggestions:

- 1..Provide a pronunciation guide for common terms and the most widely used mantras.
2. While most are familiar with the "Om mani padme hum" mantra, could you provide others and their meanings?
3. Could you design a bookmark so it could be cut out and used as a bookmark?
4. One month (December?) It would be nice to have a yearlong calendar with important dates such as Siddhartha's birthday, a day of enlightenment, etc, all listed.
- 5 Could you print the OM symbol?
6. Could you print an image of the Buddha and the dharma wheel or perhaps some other mandalas?
7. Could you provide some information/instruction on meditation with mandalas?
8. Could you provide some instruction on some of the symbols and images such as the dharma wheel. I forgot the significance of the Lotus. Was the Buddha born on a bed of Lotus flowers? Did they spring up where he walked? I forget.



Anyway, keep up the great work. I have found that newsletters to be very helpful, and I share them with a couple of my fellow inmates. I hope the award/fundraiser dinner went well. You surely deserve the accolades. Thanks for all that you do.

Namaste -- Hey, another thing to explain! Chris

Chris – we shall have to incorporate the answers to all these questions in our resource list – soon!

I often see students who are narrow-minded, who gain a little bit in a limited context, with a limited perspective, and consider this enough, immediately insisting on stopping and resting. Eating their fill and sleeping, not taking care of anything at all, they consider themselves lively, but they are destitute ghosts. - Hui-k'ung

Readers – Here is a story about t last year's Losar meditation retreat at one of your prisons. I wish we had room to share this entire teaching because it is excellent. Hopefully I have captured below some of the essence. I am so happy for those who participated. A

Dear Compassion Works for All, Thank you for your prayers, support and newsletter. It means a lot to us to know that you care and are so willing to help us. It gives us inspiration to aspire to do the same.

I just want to thank everyone for their prayers and support this last year. Thank you! It was just the Tibetan New Year - Losar. This year it was on the 5th of March. Last year it was on February 14. In Tibet, everyone celebrates their birthdays on Losar. That way you never forget someone's birthday!

Last year, our sponsor for the Buddhist Group here ... relayed to us some guidance that she said was a seed from her teacher. It comes from the guidance of the Five Relative Slogans of Machig Labdrön, a Buddhist teacher of Chöd, in around the 1600s to 1700s. Following are those guidances that she taught us last year and some of my musings on who, what, where and how I've learned about the dharma this year.

One. Confess your hidden faults. ... The more I purify through confession and regret, the lighter my thoughts become and the closer my heart moves towards confidence and the dharma. The result is an increase of strength to pray for honesty to myself and others. As I've continued on, my heart has grown to include all others, not just myself and the ones that I love. Through regret, confession and employment of the four remedial powers I have come to appreciate the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha more and more, day by day.

Two. Approach that which you find repulsive. To me this translates to those people that are unhappy, mean and unsavory, at least that is the way they appear to me. I try to remember that every living thing wants to be happy, safe and secure. No one is any different than myself. There are times I forget these things and I create negative karma. There are also times, thanks to the Buddha, dharma, sangha, Lama Inge, (*teachers*) J. and D. that I am reminded that repulsive things are empty of inherent existence. When I start to think in absolutes sometimes I remember that my teachers instruct me to employ antidotes to these poisonous thoughts. By thinking of the Four Reflections That Change The Mind, I remember to meditate and contemplate on "the Nature of the Three Realms of Cyclic Existence as an ocean of suffering; - remembering this, may my mind turn towards the dharma. And until I attain stable realizations, I reflect upon Lama Atisha's guidance; avoid friends who cause you to increase delusions and rely upon those who increase your virtue; this you should take to heart. All things are pure. Everything is the dharma.

Three. Help those that you cannot or do not want to help. I am plagued with a fear of crowds and new situations. I have to force myself every day to walk the main line. At any moment in here someone could go off their meds, or mistake you for a demon or just snap or target me to move up in the gang hierarchy. I could die as I'm writing this letter. Well, anyway I am so fortunate that I have encountered the dharma here. When I first got here, my fists were always doubled up, mostly out of fear. I felt threatened in the presence of gang bangers, and skinheads. Lama Inge teaches that as you grow in the dharma, our environment becomes "softer". This certainly has come true in the case of my confidence and the dharma. The more I contemplate emptiness and develop compassion the softer my environment has become. As my practice has become more consistent, I have sincerely prayed for understanding and to be able to practice generosity with wisdom. Everything I have and everyone I know will pass away. I know this but I still have strong attachments to everything I have - even the virtue that I generate with my practice! I'm hard pressed to dedicate merit to others. I am so stingy and sticky with dukkha.

Gradually though I have had exhilaration and joyous moments of appreciation for the dharma and have connected the dots. What goes around comes around. Whenever merit I create and dedicate always returns tenfold. With this realization, I have become more free with my prayers, dedication and my "stuff". If anyone needs anything on the unit I will do anything I can to get it for them and I'd try to improve my patience on a daily basis. I've got a lot of work to do on that account. There are times when an inmate burns me. I always try to keep an open mind. I always do my best to believe that they are honest and I try to let them know that. I have been so surprised at the honesty, respect and appreciation for help that I have encountered in here. One guy burned me for \$20.00, but in those days I was really practicing idiot compassion, and I know that I had a 70/30% chance that he would take advantage of me. To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction - what goes around comes around - the law of karma is what ties the universe together. I love the dharma.

Four. Anything that you are attached to, give it up. This practice is probably the hardest for me. I like my stuff. I got it and it's mine and I'm going to take it with me when I die. I'm hopeless when it comes to this one, but the more I grow in the dharma the deeper my realizations as it unfolds I am able to give up my attachments.

My favorite quotes sent in by Rick Best: ***To love is to admire with the heart; to admire is to love with the Mind.*** Theophile Gautier

Here is a letter that reminds us that we all have tough times. Even if we aren't able to send you a letter at just the right time, we are always there for you and sending you love and blessings....

From J. to CWFA - I'm glad you wrote. It came at a time when I needed it. I was praying for, or praying that this seed of revenge would be washed away. I kept dwelling on plotting revenge on people who have assaulted and hurt me physically in the past. People who have stabbed me in the back. I've been praying and meditating on getting that out of me. And then your card was kind of a sign. Thanking me for something positive I did in the past, while I was asking for something positive to better myself. Karma. ☺ I don't know.. Maybe I'm just rambling on. But thanks.



Book of Knowledge - Omar's dream - our friend Omar dreamed of educating ourselves as much as we can so that we all can become all that we can be.. (Remember we are not able to offer these books)

I want to remind you of a book that we have featured before. It is our friend. Linda Bessette's, book, **MINDFUL MONEY**. Linda is our CWFA financial director and she is meticulous about money. This book is a 'must' if you are getting out of prison and starting a new life. It will educate you and ground you in good financial practices to insure a stable financial future. Many people never learn about finances growing up. Then when they are in financial distress, they haven't a clue about what to do. **STUDY** and then follow the guidelines of **THIS BOOK** and you can build financial security for yourself and your family. Now – we sent **Mindful Money** to many prison libraries so you might have one on your library shelves. If not, you might ask your library if they can purchase it for your unit. As you know, we are re-developing our books program so that we can again offer books without becoming 'books for the world'! When we do, **Mindful Money** will be something we include as a foundational, educational book to put many on the right path to success.



Leave the mind in its natural, undisturbed state. Don't follow thoughts of "This is a problem, that is a problem!" Without labeling difficulties as problems, leave your mind in its natural state. In this way, you will stop seeing miserable conditions as problems."
- Lama Zopa Rinpoche, "Transforming Problems Into Happiness"

From Paul Zamora: Dear Anna and staff,

Hello, Just want to say thank you for all that you do and for the things that are sent me by *Dharma Friends*. Enclosed is something I read recently that I thought could be used somehow. Thanks again for the guidance and positive insight you all share with people like myself. I'm doing 6 to 10 in the Wyoming State pen. Take care.

On lies and lying or the absence of it

I think that for many of us, as we've had the opportunities and the many experiences that go along with the years of accumulated living, we have done one of two things in regards to false truths. One, we have become very proficient at the use of having a forked tongue; or we have grown to love ourselves and those that we share life with enough to realize the freedom and simplicity that go along with open speech and open communication.

It seems that by a certain age, we become what is known as grown up or mature. What that amounts to, or classifies us as, is being responsible and trustworthy; to be accountable. One becomes responsible through trial and error, through life's many opportunities, to experience the definition of consequences in the truest sense. Hence the phrase: no pain, no gain.

Through these experiences, one can gain insight and we are able to cause an effect at its deepest level. We see what it really means to have an impact on those around us. We have a ripple effect on those we know, those we trust, and on those we love.

This leaves absolutely no room to argue that honesty is the best policy. By Paul Zamora

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.



From H.: I got a question – how can I get past anger when I cannot tell that person what I feel about him when he is dead and in the ground he keeps coming back in my dreams? I just had an angry dream about him this morning. My step father has been dead for 16 years now. Now, I thought I had gotten over him but I guess not. Why is he still in my dreams? I don't see why I am so angry at him still? My father and step father were not a big help in my life as any real father's support. I felt lost somewhat because I have only myself to figure out things, and no one special in my life. My mom is forgetting more and more every day and the rest of my family won't write me or talk to me over the phone, so I am left to figure out things alone with my higher power who is one with everyone and everything that we see, hear, feel, smell and such and rely on to get through a hard time. I can humble myself and most of the time I am at peace with myself, but there are times I could sure some support myself? But I feel that I am wandering in the desert for 40 years when God was being tested for 40 days and nights in desert. My faith, my strength, my wisdom, my loyalty my courage, my understanding, my mind my body have been tested – beyond normal every day stressors. And I suffer more than most guys in here today. I am sorry that I write so much and I don't have an answer. I am in the hole at this time. I am waiting for a transfer to L. for the 4th time. And I was upset losing a family member almost a month ago.

Dear H – There is no easy method for letting go of anger and pain, but such challenging life issues and emotions can become the stones in the jeweler's tumbler that smoothes and polishes the gems. As you sit in meditation, let the pain arise and just watch it. See how it has a hold on you. See perhaps what you are longing for. Why hold on? And then just "LET GO". Each time, for maybe months of meditations, LET GO. See the pain, the anger, all that you hold on to, just dissipate into space. Along the way, you might learn a little about why you are holding on.

The purpose of studying Buddhism is not to study Buddhism, but to study ourselves. - Shunryu Suzuki, "Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind"

And next M.B. also offers some good thoughts on letting go of emotional struggles too.....

From M.B.: Dear Compassionate Friends, I just finished reading the # 176 issue of **Dharma Friends**, which was given to me by an inmate who found it discarded in another building. This is my first experience with it and I am happy to report that I thoroughly enjoyed it. I have been studying Buddhist teachings for about 12 years now but find it hard to acquire literature on a regular basis, and would very much like to be added to your mailing list to receive DF.

Just to let you know, I have found Buddhist teachings to be the only source of strength to supply what it takes for me to start my 13th year in prison for a crime I did not commit. It has taught me to exist as if I were not incarcerated, and to find happiness through compassion towards others, especially those who have not found happiness in themselves.

I felt it necessary to comment on the first article of the issue I've just read. I'm sure many who read these particular teachings may get the wrong idea, even turn away from them out of lack of understanding.

As to teachings 209-216 of the **Dhammapada**; it may be questionable to read that Buddha teaches to not be associated with one we feel at home with, and that we should not become fond of someone, and to show no endearment toward others lest we cause ourselves unnecessary grief. Likewise, affection, enjoyment and lust are surely no-no's because they will spread fear throughout us.

Without study of these notions we at first glance may believe that in order for Buddha to become enlightened he first had to shed all emotions and exist as an emotionless zombie. Not true.

The teachings really tell us that we will all experience each of these emotions throughout our mortal lives, but if we truly understand that they are just that, emotions, we will no longer need to allow them to linger when a situation arises where they appear.

Loving and losing that love is a part of the living, but we never really lose that love. We only lose what it was attached to. Our "self" carries on with that love forever. When we become aware of the emotions that affect us negatively, it becomes easier to shed them sooner rather than letting them linger and harm.

When we find ourselves in a situation where an emotion threatens, it will help to remember the teachings of the Dalai Lama so that we may focus on what is truly important instead of dwelling on our own pain. He said; "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion."

The true key to non suffering is altruism, the unselfish compassion toward others. No one will be required to discard all emotions to follow the paths to enlightenment. See emotions for what they really are then move on in a compassionate way. Thank you Friends and I look forward to hearing more from you soon. Sincerely,

Dangerous consequences will follow when politicians and rulers forget moral principles. Whether we believe in God or karma, ethics is the foundation of every religion.- His Holiness the Dalai Lama

From W.A.: Your card lifts me and my spiritual soul. If you would like, I find it very beneficial for me to write of my past and share it with others. Certainly I am not going to glorify my near death journey and re-birth that has been addiction, prison and a multitude of other negative attributes. Rather I will speak in this case, write, honestly how I have narrated the inception of my chaotic life down to a few basic things:

- a) My relationship with the light, peace, love, really in AA circles "higher power". HP it is also often known as a force greater than myself.
- b) My inability to be wrong, admit fault
- c) My lack of empathy for others and refusal to be humble cause by my "PRIDE" or Egoic self.

Yes, prison and time away from my beautiful wife of 21 years (Dec 22 was 21 years) cause an epiphany within me in which I was given prison as a blessing. Only after I began to know prison was my Ashram blessing did the light come into view. I think it was a Sunday and I called home for my weekly call to my family when my son (13 y/old) came on the line and told me a good friend, Andy Irons (yes the surfer) was dead.

The moment I began to see the benefits of suffering, pain and dilemma I changed the labels I applied to all events in life. Please don't ever think I have transcended being human and human emotions that is wrong. Being far from perfect I now look at problems = dilemmas and a growth opportunity, and a chance for my evolution as a result no matter how minor. Fear, anger, jealousy, lust and countless other afflictions of my flesh, raise their head but I recognize them and label them properly and DO NOT feed the negative and cherish the virtuous.

I am proof that prison does not discriminate and that the Spirit of God can and does transmute garbage to gold. Take time to build a loving relationship with yourself. Everything. Everything has a growth lesson within.

For some reason, I got this chance to re-surface and re-start my life by coming to prison. Andy Irons my best friend did not. His addiction to opiates took him to depths he never could have imagined. Then after leaving a surfing competition in Puerto Rico early and flying home, on a lay-over in Dallas he checked into the airport hotel after taken Ambian and other narcotics never to awaken.

When Andy left this world he left his pregnant wife who has since given birth to a boy named Axel.

Really I stand in awe at what it took to awaken me to my self destructive ways and I am a fortunate one. My friend Andy 3 time world surfing Champion did not get the chance to come to prison to figure his life out and meet his unborn son...

You can do what you would like with this short story of life but I wish I could help others see how this all began when I corrupted my spirit with a cigarette because I had lowered my guard smoking a joint to smoking to drinking alcohol to using cocaine to prison.

I am going to definitely mail you a photograph of me with hair and not in prison blues and my family which CWFA has touched so greatly by loving me. Gassho

And those who have no mental vigilance, Though they may hear the teachings, ponder them or meditate, With minds like water seeping from a leaking jug, Their learning will not settle in their memories.- Sntideva, "Bodhicaryavatra"

From Snake: I enjoy trying to send positive things for Jeff's Kids. I have had a lot of prison experience and I would like to save as many as possible from walking the same path. Over the years I have been forced to attend like a million different programs that were supposed to rehabilitate me. But it wasn't until last year when I received one of Lama Yeshe's booklets, **Be Your Own Therapist**, that everything I've been taught or learned on my own ((I've been studying psychology, philosophy and theosophy since my teens) finally clicked. His simple explanation of Buddhist philosophy along with the way he explained about basic psychology to work through your suffering, it just blew my mind wide open. I've been working on self-improvement for years (there were) are a few things about myself that I didn't like, especially inner issues, but I never really fully comprehended the cognitive tools I'd been learning all these years. Once it all kicked in, I've made such progress that it's mind-blowing. I'm not perfect, of course, but I'm not the same person I was a year ago. I've gone through two programs that I had to attend, plus one that I volunteered for. All of them have given me good tools for cognitive restructuring (what I call "getting my mind right"), which basically, bottom line, is the fact that your mind is the most powerful tool in the universe, and you can use it to fix yourself if you want it bad enough.

Between what I've learned of Buddhist philosophy (and continue to learn with your Dharma Friends newsletters, especially the words of wisdom – at least, your educated viewpoint that I get with your Dhammpada thoughts, what I get from those classes I took and what I already know and continue learning, I have a whole lot of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding that I'd like to put to use for helping people. I hate to see people suffer, especially young folks who shouldn't be suffering so much at that age as so many of them are. That's why I put so much effort into trying to help Jeff's kids – if I can help even just one from spending years in prison, it's all be worth it. Not only staying out of prison, but also healing the emotional wounds that have caused them to make the bad decisions that's led them down their paths so that they can be truly happy and lead happy, positive lives.

Wouldn't it be awesome if we all could heal our emotional wounds and be able to deal with each other on those levels! ☺

Again, thank you for the time and effort you put into the newsletters.

PS In case you're wondering "Snake" is a spiritual thing, not the negative. Like the Druids – who were called snakes – and Satan, and many other myths and religious beliefs (especially pertaining to dragons who are always chock full of ancient wisdom) the snake/serpent was /is the compiler and holder of knowledge, wisdom, and understand, and shares it with the world in one way or another. That's me. ☺ Snake

And from our long-time friend Cedar's newsletter: Right Use of Power . She share's some stories from Dharma Friends to illustrate her excellent teachings on power.

Put Them on the Chief's Desk -Cedar Barstow, M.Ed., C.H.T.

How is this a story of triumph and choice from an anonymous inmate in an anonymous prison in an anonymous year? First, the story (as written by the inmate): *"Martin Luther King said, 'The true mark of growth isn't how a man acts when or during times of comfort and happiness, rather how he acts during times of trials and controversy.' I put that to the test last week. On my way to chow the Asst. Chief of Security pulled me aside and searched me. My shoes had a hole in the heel from daily wear. He accused me of using it as a hiding spot for contraband. He told me to go to my room and don't leave it until he came to pick them up. I didn't protest or complain. I didn't say a word the whole time. I came to my room. I sat in there until the next day. I missed breakfast, supper and my shower. When the Sgt. came to pick them up I didn't say nothing. I just handed them to her. When she asked what I wanted done with them, I said, 'Put them on the Chief's desk cause he wants them so bad.' That was it. That was the best behavior I ever displayed in a situation such as this. Last year I would have been writing this letter from segregation. . . . My resolve is to pray for them everyday and show them compassion even when they are adverse to me, and want to power thrust on me. I am not the same person I was."*

This man's triumph is his choice to not to protest or complain--not to "make a poor choice from the thrall of anger," as he puts it. Even in the experience of significant abuse of power by the person in the up-power position, if the event happened as described, this inmate made a conscious choice to stay calm. As a result his self-esteem increased. He had an opportunity to feel proud of himself.

Prison is one of the environments in which the impact of the power differential is most extreme. The guards and other officials in up-power positions have immense control over the inmates' lives—both daily and long-term. Because the experience of prison is supposed to be about punishment as well as rehabilitation and the potential for violence is so high, the methods used for control can be cruel. This inmate's actions aren't likely to change the prison system, but they certainly are changing him. And maybe they had an effect on the chief that he may never know. Sometimes this is the best that can be done in an abusive situation: use your power to choose your responses and to cultivate your self-esteem. As Victor Frankl said, *"When all else is taken away, there remains what he called 'man's last freedom,' which is the freedom to choose how we will respond."* (Chapman, p. 62)

Recently, another inmate has come to my attention through his extraordinary book: *Stepping Up: Wholeness Ethics for Prisoners and Those Who Care About Them*, by Troy K. Chapman. He has used his so far twenty-plus years in prison to become educated and learn about himself, relationships, and the sacred. He describes the state he was in before being sentenced to prison in his early twenties. *"What was I searching for when I was chasing money, sex, drugs, pleasure and so on? I think, behind all other things, what I wanted more than anything else was just to be whole."* (p. 24) He has now spent a lot of time exploring what "wholeness" is. His definition: *"wholeness is soundness, well-being and ongoing realization."* (p. 26) His book talks more about these three aspects, especially in terms of how inmates can learn and practice them while in prison, both to make their time in prison more worthy and to prepare them for life after prison. He quotes Bruce Barton on page 89: *"Nothing splendid has ever been achieved except by those who dared believe that something inside them was superior to circumstance."* His recommendation for wholeness ethics as it could be applied by prison management officials is that the main organizing question in regard to each inmate

should be: "What does this person need to be whole?" Contrast this question with the more usual and unspoken one: "What does this person need to feel bad enough about himself and what he did and punished enough to make up for it?"

One system, and I'm sure there are many others, that works with Troy's question and with the goal of being in right relationship with power is Restorative Justice. In a restorative-justice process, the victim and the offender choose to meet with each other in person. The victim tells the offender exactly how their offense impacted him or her. They then talk about what a reasonable recompense would be. This process contributes to the soundness, well-being, and ongoing realization for both victim and offender. Right use of power in the pursuit of wholeness for all.

Now, what was it that has been supportive of the evolution toward more wholeness on the part of these two incarcerated men? Both have had loving and supportive contact with people outside prison. My long-time friend Anna Cox, a Buddhist, teaches Buddhism and Buddhist principles to prisoners. Out of her prison work she has created a program called Compassion Works for All (www.CompassionWorksForAll.org) which sends out a monthly newsletter, "Dharma Friends," to over 4000 prisoners in 800 prisons in the United States. CWFA "offers hope and healing for those in prison who often feel lost, abandoned and rejected." And, of course, both men have done a great deal of inner work on their own. They were given some needed support, but they did the challenging inner work required.

For those interested, Troy's book can be ordered by Googling *Troy Chapman, Stepping Up*.

I want to conclude this article by sharing an example of an individual's inner work to refine his personal power. These words come from the personal story of the anonymous inmate in the anonymous prison who gave us the story of his shoes. Here's how he describes his process of being able to be less reactive and angry. *"I refuse to [let] anyone get to me so bad that I have to step off my square and jeopardize my program because of a poor choice I might choose in the thrall of anger. I have fallen victim to it countless times. The first thing I must realize is nobody can make me angry but myself. . . . The reason we get angry is cause we see or perceive something that is in them, is also in us as well. . . . If we take the time to correct our own negative behavior, we would not get angry as much. The normal person take them [!] few precious moments to assess and evaluate the consequences of the choices he or she may have. That's why we are in prison, cause we did not take the time to think of our consequences. . . . I committed my murder in 1986 and I can tell you what I was thinking even after all this time. I was thinking, 'I will teach this person a lesson of stealing from me. I am going to set an example for anyone who thinks of stealing from me.' I wasn't thinking normal. So we must have a clear mind and a rational thought process before committing actions."*

Power-differential situations where there are abuses of power can be changed by a combination of ongoing inner work and self-empowerment by those in the down-power role coupled with the bringing of heart and wisdom to the use of power of those in the up-power role.



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

Permit NO. 160
Non-Profit Organization
US Postage PAID
Little Rock, AR

FREE RELIGIOUS MATERIAL

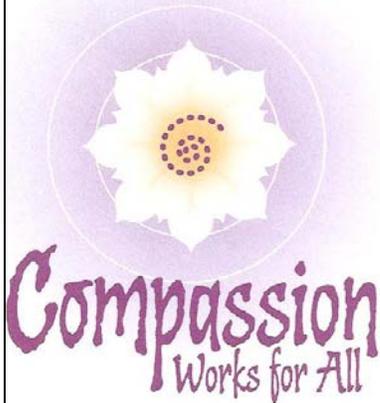


We must work together to stop the violence everywhere....

Prison mailroom: Please return issues if inmate is no longer in your institution

Dharma Friends

November 2012 issue # 189 copyright 2012,
Compassion Works for All



Additional Pages for EMAIL VERSION of *Dharma Friends*



COMPASSION WORKS

Join us for our monthly **Compassion Works** sessions if you are in Arkansas.

The sessions are the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 1 PM and the first Thursday at 6 PM at Fletcher Library. So the next sessions are Tuesday, October 16 at 1 PM and November 1 at 6 PM.

Sessions are free, non-denominational and open to everyone.

We will add you to our email reminder list if you want information on times, dates and place, or you can go to www.CompassionWorksForAll.org/ and print out the schedule.

Compassion Works sessions offer a quiet experience of compassion. With a few gentle and guiding prompts, we will let go of the struggle, renew, heal, and send compassion into the world.

Then we head out again to live our question - How can I live compassion for myself and for all beings today?

(We also offer portions on videos and have a Compassion Works printout so that you can have an individual practice or you could start Compassion Works sessions in your locality)

If this doctrine is not understood thoroughly, The conception of an I prevails, Hence come virtuous and non-virtuous actions Which give rise to good and bad rebirths. Therefore, as long as the doctrine removing the conception of I is not known, Take heed of the practices of giving, ethics, and patience. - Nagajuna, Precious Garland

A few other events coming up:

Along with our Compassion Works for All **Compassion Works meditations** at Fletcher Library, CALS, the Central Arkansas Library System, is sponsoring Introduction to Meditation classes at Fletcher Library. These classes last 1 hour and they are free and open to everyone. The date for November is the 16th at 6 pm and then in December we will meet on the 11th at 6. Please come and join us!

At Compassion Works for All - We have BOOKS FOR SALE:

We now have more of Linda Bessette's Mindful Money book – order here by emailing Linda. see address below...

Mara Leveritt's books!

The Boys on the Tracks: Death, Denial, and a Mother's Crusade to Bring Her Son's Killers to Justice

And

Devil's Knot: The True Story of the West Memphis Three

Email Linda (lbessette33@comcast.net) and she can give you more information about prices, mailing, etc. for all books.

And anna's books –

Just As the Breeze Blows Through Moonlight, and Dharma Friends and the Healthy Living pamphlet are on our old Compassion Works for All web site – www.dharmafriendsprisonoutreachproject.com for a free download – but donations are always appreciated! Or you can order a hardcopy book for \$15 plus shipping (\$5) at my email address: anna@aristotle.net

Join us at www.CompassionWorksForAll.com

Check us out and help spread the news by emailing the site to your friends!

Along with informative and inspirational articles –

there are many videos in our video archive to lend a little support in difficult life issues.

If you would like to host a Compassion Works for All fundraising coffee -

Please let us know and we will plan details with you!!

This is a friendly and informative way to raise money for our efforts.

You invite those who you think would appreciate the philanthropic opportunity.

We will supply the coffee and cookies and I will gladly give a talk to your guests.

You may forward 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 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 free but donations are always most welcome. If you would prefer a hard copy, the subscription fee is \$30, but unfortunately it is not tax deductible because you receive a paper publication for your donation.



The whole of humanity is one human family. This planet is our only home. - His Holiness the Dalai Lama