

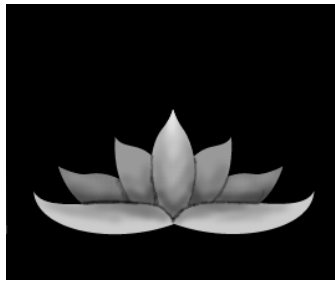
# Dharma Friends

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

June 2007 issue # 125

copyright 2007, Compassion Works for All

## The Dhammapada The teachings of the Buddha



### **Verse 17: Anger**

*Spoken to Rohini in the Nyagrodha Park:*

1. Abandon anger, abandon pride! Leave all obstacles far behind. Unattracted to what has name and form, you will not sink into sorrow.
2. Whoever holds his rising anger in check, as a driver controls his chariot, this is the one I call Charioteer – the others only grasp at the reins.

*Spoken to the Upasaka Uttara in the Bamboo Grove:*

3. Overcome anger with good nature; overcome evil with goodness; overcome greed with giving, and overcome lies with the truth.
4. Speak the truth; control your temper; give what you can when asked. By these three virtuous actions, you draw near to the gods.

*Spoken in Saketa concerning the brahmin couple:*

5. The powerful Munis harm no one; they control themselves always. They travel to the land of no rebirth where they are free from sorrow.

*Spoken on Vulture Peak:*

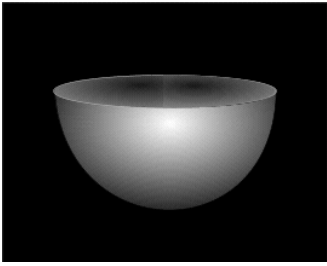
6. Awake and mindful day and night and always learning, those who strive to pass from sorrow gradually destroy their impurities.

*Spoken to the Upasaka Atula:*

7. Listen, Atula, here is a bit of ancient wisdom: They blame you for being silent; they blame you for talking too much. They blame you for watching what you say. No one in the world can go unblamed.
8. There never has been, nor will there ever be, nor does there now exist, a person who is always blamed or always praised.
9. But the one who is daily praised by the wise, the one who is blameless, is the one with ethics and integrity, the one with fine knowledge.
10. He is like a coin of the purest gold – who is fine enough to fault him? Even the gods sing his praises; even Brahma applauds him.

*Spoken in the Bamboo Grove:*

11. Gain mastery over your body; guard yourself from acting angrily. Keep yourself from sinful action; use your body well.
12. Gain mastery over your speech; guard yourself from speaking angrily. Keep yourself from speaking wrongly; use your speech well.
13. Gain mastery over your mind; guard yourself from angry thoughts. Keep your mind from mental baseness; use your mind well.
14. The steadfast are controlled in body and controlled in speech; the steadfast are controlled in mind. This is perfect mastery.



## Some thoughts about this Dhammapada Verse:

For each of us, this life will be over one day. For everyone reading these words, you are guaranteed to be dead within one hundred years. Or, it could be today whether you are nineteen or ninety. What does your dying have to do with anger? It is this. We will probably handle those moments of death in the same way that we handle our stressful times of life. Anger is one of many emotional habits that feel protective when we are under stress, but despite beliefs that it makes us look more powerful, anger usually makes any situation worse. It raises our adrenaline level. It creates imbalance in all systems of the body. It creates chaos in the brain and often leads to impulsive actions. When ego is fearful and under the heady powers of self-serving anger, we often don't think clearly at all. Do we want our time of death to be one of desperate fear, chaotic mind, physical distress, or raging against the inevitable? Teachings in Buddhism and in many other ancient religious traditions encourage that death be a time of serenity as we transition to another experience of subtle manifestation or to whatever comes next. Perhaps our most compelling reason to tame anger is to prepare for a death of peace and maybe even a death of awakening.

### **Anger brings suffering to ourselves and others.**

If anger arises as a life habit in dealing with stress, perhaps it was because it was modeled or taught to us and we did not learn to ameliorate distress in other ways. For some, brain injury, biochemical imbalance, great trauma, or emotional illness may make anger more likely to arise than for most when under stress. But all of us with maturity can see clearly that angry moments or angry rages do not serve us in reaching any life goals or spiritual goals. Anger always hurts others but most of all, it hurts our self the worst. No matter the reasons for or the strength of our anger, to grow at all we must take responsibility and stop the habit of anger from playing out inappropriately in our lives. Can we change this habit of anger if it has grown strong or if it has even become an addiction? We can start by recognizing that anger is just another habit that we reinforced into becoming an almost automatic response and now our growth requires that we go beyond relying on anger to handle life situations.

**Here is the key: We can observe the emotion of anger arising just as we learn to observe all emotion and all that arises moment to moment.**

Our view interprets the events of reality. To work with anger we must get clear about our view and decide if it is of benefit to us or not. If we perceive the world as fearful and ourselves as a victim, then we are more likely to trigger a deep brain biochemical response of fear and anger when faced with stress. It doesn't matter whether our view is a neurotic or even

psychotic one that grew from early life trauma, is the result of biochemistry, or learned from family dramas. If it is a fearful view, we must first re-frame this old view of our world into a more loving one at a physiological/psychological level. This change of view allows us to relax and that changes our biochemical and emotional responses. Even if anger is in part a matter of impaired response because of brain damage or imbalance, changing our view and calming our mind and body is still the most important skill in taming anger.

**When we perceive reality as safe,  
anger is less likely to arise automatically.**

Here are some words from Joel and Michelle Levey's book, **Living in Balance: A Dynamic Approach for Creating Harmony & Wholeness in a Chaotic World** "A reporter once asked Albert Einstein: 'Dr. Einstein, if you could ask the universe a single question and receive a direct reply, what would you ask?' His reply came swiftly, as though he had pondered the question for a long time: 'Is the Universe friendly?'" Joel and Michelle ask, "Pause for a moment to reflect upon Einstein's question. What do you think? Is your universe friendly? Or not? How would you live if the universe were truly friendly and supportive of you?"

"Moment to moment, the attitudinal lenses that you choose to wear color your world for better or for worse. Experience the difference between being appreciative or being critical, or between viewing yourself as a victim or holding a more empowered attitude. Adopting an optimistic attitude toward the universe at large and the immediate challenges you face allows you to tap into a greater reservoir of creative energy potential that increase your resilience in the midst of change. The first step is to recognize the attitude you are holding, and notice whether it diminishes or enhances your energy and effectiveness. Then, without sacrificing realism, experiment with embodying a more positive outlook that will keep you buoyant, balanced, and resilient on the sea of constant change."

### **A LENS OF FEAR PRODUCES ANGER**

Once we appreciate the lens through which we view the world, we can then appreciate why our physiology responds as it does to stress. With greater self-observation, strengthened by meditation, we can give to ourselves the calming and soothing and supportive words that perhaps were not taught to us as children. As our life is less controlled by anger, we naturally embrace a path of kindness and awakening to our deeper essence. We cannot walk this path of spiritual evolution if we are consumed by such intense emotion as anger.

This is where the teachings in this Dhammapada verse are helpful to us. Read the words again now. They logically

reinforce, even 2500 years after they were written, how important it is to transcend the ego's habit of anger. People haven't changed much, have we?

There is much in this verse that gives us pause and motivates us to see how hurtful anger can be on the spiritual path. Here though is where I will repeat the big wallop. Anger robs us of a death of clarity. If there is anything I could say or do to help you have a peaceful death, I want to offer you that. This is it. In Vajrayana Buddhist teachings, the time of death is seen as precious in that it offers us an opportunity to awaken to enlightenment. During the time of death, wisdom Mind is experienced for a short time. The Tibetans who have studied the science of consciousness for 1500+ years, have mapped the journey of dying and share recognizable experiences as one leaves their body. Shortly after breathing and heart beat stop, they say that a brilliant light appears that is too bright for most to tolerate. That light is the experience of enlightenment. If we do not notice the appearance of wisdom Mind or if we retreat in fear, then the opportunity to relax into one's essential pure nature and into enlightenment is lost. Whether a Buddhist or not, we can imagine that relaxing into whatever death brings seems far more beneficial than reacting in fear and railing against something unchangeable in anger. If you have the opportunity to be with a loved one as they die, sit gently with them and encourage them to relax. Let them know they are safe. They may have an experience that is sacred in the belief system that they embrace and you can give support with words or even with thoughts. Honor whatever they see or feel. Encourage them to go into that state of transcendent sacredness and to rest there in great peace.

I have been with many people as they have died and I myself

have had four experiences of coming close to death. It is very sad to watch those who die in fear. Everyone, it seems, has a short time of realizing that they are about to die and their ego mind and physical body may respond with some panic. Those who have developed the habit of mindful self-awareness to any degree can calm their body and psyche and reassure themselves of their safety.

Those who have developed a strong practice of day and night mindfulness meditation have also practiced flowing with whatever arises. At some moment for all of us, it will include our death. A million ordinary moments arise bearing events perceived by the senses – and we breathe – “Ah” – and those arisings fall away as we easily let them go. A moment arises and there is no more breathing in or breathing out. “Ah” – and that arising too falls away as we easily let it go into death.

Those *Dharma Friends* who live today on death row or with a terminal illness may read these words and all teachings with more motivation to learn every thing they can before that final moment comes so that they will be ready. Even though I might expect that you will die before me, I could well die before you so I want to be ready too. Every moment becomes a moment of practice and getting ready. Moments of going to sleep, each time of emotional distress, a loud noise, an experience of pain, the arising of anger – all are opportunities to transcend those habits that elicit emotional responses and distraction, and to develop the habit of simply letting go. Ahhh.....

Anger creates circumstances that carry us away from the clarity of mindful awareness and it will get in our way at death. Break the habit of anger now and it will benefit you and all those around you. Break the habit of anger now and, if you die tomorrow, you will more likely have a time of peaceful awakening into All That Is.

**"Sometimes more silence is useful." The Dalai Lama**



## **A MEDITATION**

Our highest meditative practice is resting in the pure sacred view of All That Is. In this state of consciousness there is no discriminating intellectual awareness or thought. There is no good or bad, right or wrong, beautiful or ugly, sacred or profane. Until we live in Awareness all-ways with no thought, we travel a path of gaining an ever more subtle experience of sacredness. We must honor where we are and practice at the edge of our meditative awareness, gently, with faith and diligence. There is no need to push or to set goals because our clarity is only impeded by egoic motivation. All we need is to do our practice as much as is possible, and to develop focus, clarity, insight and kindness in our meditation and in our life.

On this path, we first start with learning to focus. This is a very challenging task for most folks – this very first step on a consciousness path. We can eliminate stimuli as much as possible in order to make focus a little easier. Then sit for 5 or 10 minutes in a comfortable position with a straight back. As much as we can, start by placing focus on breath, a short series of numbers, or our belly. Keep the focus on *in – out – in – out*, or *1-2-3*, or belly's *rise-fall-rise-fall*, for as long as possible. If a thought jumps into the mind, notice it and let it go. As we are able to maintain longer times of focus and as there is more space between thoughts, sit in longer time periods of meditation.

Depending on other spiritual practices that are attractive to you, integrate them with these meditations of developing focus, clarity, insight and kindness. It may be that your spiritual life path encourages mantra or prayer, doing service, doing visualization, working with energy, doing prostrations, circumambulating, walking a labyrinth, singing, dancing, chanting, or other rituals. It may be that you do not think of yourself as engaged in a spiritual life at all but just want to do meditation to calm your mind and balance your body. For all meditators, we grow into experiencing awareness of all that stimulates any body sense or catches the attention of mind. We merely notice the thought or feeling and then we let it go. At this level of meditation, our senses and our mind are our vehicles to noting what arises. That is their only value. The insight, clarity and focus comes slowly through gently noticing arisings and noticing the falling away.

Sensations include emotions, too. At first, emotions might be strong and deeply cloaked in psychological dramas before they come to our attention. These dramas are fabulous times to stop everything and sit in meditation. If the drama is compelling, we may need to go back to Meditation 101 and sit, watching our breath. It may be helpful to first breathe out the emotional intensity for a little while. If the emotion is anger, we may have to gently regulate our body and psyche with kind words

and relaxation techniques. Breathe love into our hearts until the emotion dissipates and then focus on breath alone until mind is calm.

Over time, emotion is seen by an "inner observer" and is less identified with "our self". It is merely another arising and falling away. Mind learns to perceive a more subtle reality and there is less grasping to form in the old ways that ego attached to it. The true nature of form is perceived with ever-greater insight and wisdom. At this point of meditative experience, there are many teachings from many traditions that support us in our growth to higher stages of meditative realization. It is helpful to have an individual teacher to guide us because there are many ways that ego can still get attached to knowing, controlling and deluding itself. A teacher who has grown through such stages themselves knows the pitfalls and the signs of accomplishment.

Don't worry what state you are at in your growth because it is only ego that measures such things. Be gentle and kind to yourself and others. Meditate as much as you can while doing those practices that bring you a deepening focus, deepening clarity, and develop wisdom into the true nature of All That Is. Learn to meditate day and night until your life *is* meditation. That is the habit that will serve you well when you leave this body.



From Your Letters

### Abstract:

#### *Accelerated telomere shortening in response to life stress*

Numerous studies demonstrate links between chronic stress and indices of poor health, including risk factors for cardiovascular disease and poorer immune function. Nevertheless, the exact mechanisms of how stress gets "under the skin" remain elusive. We investigated the hypothesis that stress impacts health by modulating the rate of cellular aging. Here we provide evidence that psychological stress—both perceived stress and chronicity of stress—is significantly associated with higher oxidative stress, lower telomerase activity, and shorter telomere length, which are known determinants of cell senescence and longevity, in peripheral blood mononuclear cells from healthy premenopausal women. **Women with the highest levels of perceived stress have telomeres shorter on average by the equivalent of at least one decade of additional aging compared to low stress women. These findings have implications for understanding how, at the cellular level, stress may promote earlier onset of age-related diseases.**

- Abstract from Proceedings of the National Academy of Science. December 7, 2004 | vol. 101 | no. 49 | 17312-17315

**From S.J.:** I know it's been awhile since I wrote you. I just have been dealing with things on my own. Nothing much been happening my way. I got turned down in direct appeal in November 06. I'm in Post conviction now. I have been doing a lot of studying Buddha's teaching and meditation. The last 5 months I been rereading all my *Dharma Friends* and it's been a long continuous journey and I really enjoy it (*Dharma Friends*) and looking forward towards future issues.

Anna, it is always an enjoyment to write you and to hear from you. If not personally, your insights and comments in *Dharma Friends* are just as profound and on point.

I have a few reasons for writing you and hopefully I can understand your motives better. I'm not wanting just to give my fallible opinions but to seek understanding.

In *Dharma Friends* issue Aug. 2006 #115, you gave your reasons for not writing us back. I wanted to write you then but kept my opinions and pen silence until another time. This time. Now let me say up front. You don't have to respond to me personally nor in *Dharma Friends*. I'm just saying I'm confused and seek understanding. If you don't respond, I'm going to still write you when I can and enjoy *Dharma Friends*.

I just feel that others are asking the same questions I am on these issues.

Now to the point. In my study of past and present “**DF**” I notice patterns of certain individuals who share their lives and thoughts more so than the others. I notice certain tendencies and interests of certain “**Dharma Friends**” more so than others. Each **Dharma Friend** has offer positive things and some has offer negative things also. Today, Friday 5-25-07 I got the new issue of “**Dharma Friends**” and I read it all. There was a few articles that get my attention. One of those was K. W. comments and your explanation for it. Let me say first, I don’t believe in censorship. I don’t. But I felt his comments did more harm than good. Anna, you are dealing with prisoners. Most of the people who write you “Prisoners only” are most likely giving you 50% of the truth about themselves. A lot of things we don’t write about are so painful or too shameful to share with another until trust is there. You get half the story. Meaning there are certain delusions, ways of viewing others life and self that is full of ill will and negativity. The words I read often K.W. was full of venom and mean spirited. I feel it betrays the spirit of “**Dharma Friends**” newsletters and the actual word (**Dharma Friend**.) Reading his words I feel he was wrong but it’s **your fault**.

Anna when it comes to **Dharma Friends** newsletter you are the chief. You decide what goes in and what doesn’t. That’s your decision, not K.W. Not mine. Yours. If I’m wrong on this, correct me. You can put this in the “**Dharma Friends**” or not, but I feel this is something that everyone should weigh in on. Anna, on the top of the front of **Dharma Friends**, the second verse is “*Dedicated to sharing the Dharma, Healing Each other, all Sentient Beings and Ourselves*”. That is the Spirit of “**Dharma Friends**.” When people wrote you to join and tell you about themselves, lives, experiences, practices, views, and etc., there is an unspoken agreement that agreement is you are one of us now. Meaning if your religious or not, you will be treated with respect. Second agreement is once someone write to **Dharma Friends** and give their opinions or views, they must know that they have given you permission to give your insight on their view/opinions or stands of it conflict with the spirit of “**Dharma Friends**.” In your Aug. 2006, you gave great reasons why you can’t write everyone back personally. The newsletter is the best way to respond to people problems, conflicts, things, habits and views – which bring conflict with the spirit of **Dharma Friends** and to give insights into themselves. Everyone who has read a whole “**Dharma Friends**” know you give insights, advice, and comments on views and behavior of others. As a member this is understood. I feel you drop the ball on K.W. a few times before. You had a choice. Put this (K.W.) comments in or not. You did but you seem to justify your reason instead of challenging K.W. views. I don’t mind the Zen stick but don’t tell me it was out of loving kindness. Let me explain. I joined “**Dharma Friends**” in Sept. 1999. K. W. was in that issue of “**Dharma Friends**.” For almost 8 years, I know K.W. been a part of this. And if he has read every issue of “**Dharma Friends**” from front to back, I know in those 7 ½ years, he knows there is a better way of talking or writing to people. If he was trying to get his point across, calling K.G. a RAT didn’t help. That is the worst thing you can call someone in prison. In someone who reads this newsletter, knows that spiritual development and encouragement is it’s purpose wouldn’t use that word to describe a fellow “**Dharma Friend**”. Plus he would not tell K.G. he’s better off dead. He wouldn’t tell K.B. “Mother” is half of a word. He would not criticize those who are trying to make the best out of a mostly negative situation. His comment to Earnest La’Dase Buckner saying he is arrogant, smug and conceited because he said I am steadfast in my work of bringing individuals from their lower selves to their higher selves. Anna, are you doing the same? Trying to help us overcome our lower selves and develop our higher selves. When you are not feeling good but you still get up to do the newsletter are you being steadfast in your purpose. He said to Brian Byrd and Hafiz (*who is actually a 13<sup>th</sup> c. poet and one of the greatest in all history that is quoted frequently in D.F.*) – their poetry sucks and they are idiots. Do you feel that way? Do you feel that H.L. cutting his finger and became a helper in the kitchen is useless info? Do you agree with K.W. views? If not, then you have to know he is also talking about you. You are the Chief. Everything K.W. spoke on, you put it in the newsletter. You felt it was worth it. You allow K.W. to step on these people. To spread his venom under the disguise of loving kindness with the “Big Stick”. You have allowed him free range. Deluded eyes and minds are reading this and are being influenced. There will be venom returned – Watch! You have a right to challenge him. To see what’s really there.

Everything I wrote in the spirit of **Dharma Friends**. You can see it in **Dharma Friends** or not. I do seek understanding. I don’t mind misunderstanding but not in a mean spirited way. I do want others to see my views but you’re the chief. You stay positive and get better. Take care, S. J.

P.S.: This does not change anything. I still see you as one of my main spiritual teachers.

### **Note to S.: Thank you! You are wonderful and**

**kind.** It’s hard being chief. Ours is a multi-dimensional reality and the limitations of communication and thought mean that we must all work together to become a net to hold everything. Your words are all absolutely correct. Your response shows compassion and love for all and I have known for some time what an excellent student you are of dharma. I’m a bit more fumbly and I don’t have it perfect, but I’m trying. So to explain better, let me say again what I shared in the **Meditation** section a few pages back. It is to try to hold that meditative view of which I wrote, “In this state of consciousness there is no discriminating intellectual awareness or thought. There is no good or bad, right or wrong, beautiful or ugly, sacred or profane. Until we live in A wareness all-ways with no thought, we travel a path of gaining ever more

subtle experience of sacredness. We must honor where we are and practice at the edge of our meditative awareness, gently, with faith and diligence.” Well, I do try, and I try to live the teachings as best I can but ... I know it all gets very confusing. For me too. I’m trying to do better on the cushion and *off* of it during the day, but when faced with how tough life is, I definitely get fumbly. In my fumbling last month I shared the thoughts below in the extra **Dharma Friends** pages that went out to the email version readers. I did not include them in our hard copy version because they were a preface for an additional section about relationships. So let’s add this to the picture now and you will see that these thoughts are closer to your own. **But – because it is impossible to describe or put into words the subtle view of meditation, remember that both views are true at the same time.**

**A Few Thoughts on the suffering caused by Criticism**  
(from the May issue of *Dharma Friends*)

I thought long and hard about including K.W.'s letter in this issue of *Dharma Friends* because it is pretty brutal. There is something to be said about concretizing such thoughts by publishing them. At the same time, if they can help others deal with the violence that is in the world and use it as a teaching tool, then that might actually transform its energy into something beneficial. I know that a part of him thinks that the shock of his criticism will compel people to open their minds beyond their ego-delusion of who they think they are. But just as I said in the short preface before his letter, there is an assumption in his harsh words and his criticisms that there is validity in his view, just as he negates others' views. He assumes that he is right and that others will benefit from his criticism by recognizing their wrong views.

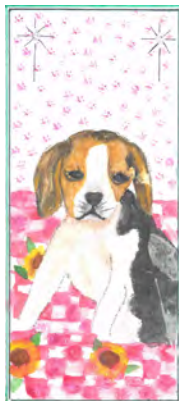
So, how does he get to be the one who is right and to tell others how to be? Well, before you agree and cheer me on in scolding him, let's consider that probably we all make this very same assumption all the time too. In a way, if I was making this comment without this additional caveat, I would also be making this very same assumption. We may not be so blatant and insensitive about it as KW, but how often does a critical thought flit through our heads assuming a right or wrong, good or bad position, or assigning villain or victim roles, as almost every life event arises. We can watch this everywhere around us with individuals, media, TV shows and movies, relationships, and sadly, parents to children. All the time, we see someone who is declaring nicely or quite brutally that they hold the truth and others should be told they are wrong, should be fixed or corrected. One says that he or she

And here is the essence of healing all these questions:

*"We have got to understand that they dream our dreams and we dream theirs.  
We have got to understand that they are us.  
We are them."*

- Rachel Corrie at age 10

*Around the globe, people paused to remember the life and the third anniversary of the death of Rachel Corrie of Olympia, Washington. On March 16, 2003 an Israeli military bulldozer crushed her to death as she was attempting to stop the demolition of the home of a Palestinian doctor in the Gaza town of Rafah. Eyewitnesses said at the time of her death Rachel was sitting directly in the path of the bulldozer holding a megaphone and wearing a fluorescent jacket. She was 23 years old. May her commitment, courage, and compassion inspired generations to come.*



Drawn by B.K.

KNOWs and that the other or others do not. Of course, such a perspective of "I" as so important is egocentric. Everything said or done from such a perspective (even when the all-important "I" stoops to help the poor and pitiful) causes suffering. I would be joining in this contribution of diminishing all who are reading this if I did not raise my hand and say – "I'm in this mess too!" We all have egos that say – Me! I am the best – the smartest – the one who knows – the "decider" of all that is right!!! This is the nature of ego.

K.W. may be a bit more out-there with his pronouncements but the greater horror is when I see parents speaking to children or partners speaking to each other from this perspective. One who "knows" feels that they have the right to tell the other how wrong they are, how bad they are, or even, what a villain they are. Such words are wounding whether said to the person directly or if we are talking about them to others. The process is diminishing and causes great suffering. In truth though, there is often a layer of fear behind the ego self-righteousness of the one who says these critical words, and so they are causing suffering for them as well by reinforcing their beliefs in fear. These same critical pronouncements are often said even more ferociously to oneself. All of our poor egos live in a reality of fear and judgement of not being ok.

Criticism and cruel words are much too often a part of relationships. Self-cherishing and ego's need to be top dog is one of the major weapons of mass destruction that is unleashed on the world's population. We all could grow in self-awareness when it comes to being more kind in how we interact with others. Most often, interactions become problematic when we enter into decision making and then conflict resolution with others. Few of us do these processes very well.

*"Never give up  
 no matter what is going on.  
 Never give up.  
 Develop the heart.  
 Too much energy in your country is spent developing the mind instead of the heart. Develop the heart.  
 Be compassionate.  
 Not just to your friends, but to everyone.  
 Be compassionate.  
 Work for peace in your heart and in the world.  
 Work for peace, and I say again,  
 Never give up, no matter what is happening.  
 No matter what is going on around you.  
 Never give up!"*

-- An inspiring reminder from Nobel Laureate and leader, the Dalai Lama, who for 50 years now has ceaselessly and compassionately worked to support his people and preserve his culture amidst the on-going holocaust of the Chinese invasion and domination of his homeland of Tibet. For further inspiration, see his many books, and the movies "Kundun," and "Seven Years in Tibet".

**From A.A.:** Dear One Ani Anna Cox,

Firstly, I hope this finds you safe, well and enjoying a happy mind. Kudos for the *Dharma Friends*. I think you're doing a splendid job! FYI "Ani" is Tibetan. It literally means "aunt," yet is commonly used to address a female in whom you have utmost respect. Hope all is well in Little Rock. Please accept the following mantra from the Great Liberation Sutra. It's taught saying it just once everyday will cause rebirth in the Purelands. See you there!

*"NAMO Buddhaya NAMO Dharmaya NAMO Sanghaya Atendi Dharanwi Tadyatha Akashani Barbini Sarva Oharma  
 Ni Bani Isharmada Pipashana Bimala Supari Dharmani Kana Barunitsaya Damale Tsale Hulu Hulu Shibite Mantra  
 Mantra Mantra Suaha"*

In closing, I thank you for your time, loving kindness, compassion, patience, wisdom and generosity. May your merits remain as vast as the sands of the Ganges. May all Buddha, Pratyeka Buddhas, Dieties, Devas, Dakas, Dakinis, and Dharma Protectors forever keep you safe, well and enjoying Dharma. And soon may you achieve Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. Sarva Mangalam,

PS Looking for a cool retreat spot? Check out [www.milarepacenter.org](http://www.milarepacenter.org)

**From B.A.:** Dear Anna, I just got my first issue of *Dharma Friends* in the mail and thought I'd write with a little story I read about attachment.

In India, there once lived a great King who possessed many things, many castles, many wives, and much riches. Everywhere the King went, he brought a teacher with him, a Yogi whose only possession was a drinking gourd.

One day, the King and the Yogi were sitting down by the river when one of the royal servants ran up. "Your Highness, the castle is on fire and all your possessions are being destroyed!"

"Let them burn," the King replied. "Material things do not matter."

The King turned back to his teacher only to see him running towards the castle. "Where are you going?" the King yelled.

"My gourd is in there!" the Yogi replied.

*Attachment is just as painful when our possessions are meager... maybe even more so. In the Dharma,*

*Every minute you perform hundreds of karmic actions, yet you are hardly conscious of any of them. In the stillness of meditation, however, you can listen to your mind, the source of all this activity. You learn to be aware of your actions to a far greater extent than ever before. This self-awareness leads to self-control, enabling you to master your karma rather than be mastered by it. -*

Lama Thubten Yeshe, "In Wisdom Energy"

Wake Up Call

By Joe D. Thomasson

I never knew that I could really see it  
 I never realized that I could be it  
 I never knew that it is what it is  
 And all that was needed was to awaken

The sincerest offering is what changes you  
 The purest heart is what sees what's true  
 When we feel the highest love that always is  
 The foundations of our thinking becomes so shaken

We have no choice but when we choose  
 To see the life that cannot loose  
 We reveal the eternal bliss that is  
 And the nurturing path that is to be taken

With rising power that purifies the soul  
 Through grace and will we find the goal  
 We recall the knowledge that always is  
 And that all that's really needed is to awaken

**From L.C.:** Dear valued friends, I received your wonderful postcard. It is attached to my locker with a magnet and has become quite a conversation piece. It is an actual 1968 "post-print." I have no other way to say this; Dharma is my life. I do my best to follow the path. When I'm not at work, I am reading, gaining knowledge from the teachings. Thank you so much for the books. I will cherish each word, each discovery.

I've been in prison for 22 years now. Dharma has been my life for the last seven. I meditate daily and pray for all sentient beings. Unfortunately, I have no money coming from the streets and depend strictly on my pay, which, as you probably know, is a joke. I think after so many years away from family and friends, they tend to go on with their lives. I receive no mail and can't make calls. Not that I can't – they just cost too much. My lifestyle here is respected by others.

I wanted to take this time and thank you, Kristopher and Anna, for your blessings and your time. I send you blessings and pray that things are well with you and Compassion Works For All. Your friend, Metta, L.

**A wonderful thing from Charles Ureling:** - If you can, you may download the free audio version of The Dhammapada or have someone do it for you at this site:

[www.learnoutloud.com/Free-Audio-Video/Self-Development/Spirituality/The-Dhammapada/22584](http://www.learnoutloud.com/Free-Audio-Video/Self-Development/Spirituality/The-Dhammapada/22584)

*The one who wanders independent in the world, free from opinions and viewpoints, does not grasp them and enter into disputations and arguments. As the lotus rises on its stalk unsoiled by the mud and the water, so the wise one speaks of peace and is unstained by the opinions of the world. -Sutta Nipata From "The Pocket Buddha Reader,"*

**From Losang Tarpra:** Dear Anna and all our Dharma Friends, I pray this letter finds you all in good health and spirits. As for myself, I am good. I wanted to touch base with you all as I have just finished a retreat from afar with the Bhiksbuni Tuhubten Chodron of the Sravast Abbey of Washington State. The retreat was on Chenresig and was from December 21<sup>st</sup> until March 21<sup>st</sup>. It was great! If people are interested, write to:

The Treasure Valley Dharma Friends

ATTN: Jack

PO Box 9126

Boise ID 83707-9126

He will answer questions and if he can't, will ask Venerable Chodron. He has helped me greatly. So, just keep at it and when you least expect it, your perseverance will pay off. We are having trouble getting a teacher to come up to the prison. We're way out in the boonies, but I did get a hold of the first teacher that I had, Venerable Losang Monlam. He's keeping in touch with me now. I have a lot of confessions to the thirty-five Buddhas to do. I was truly out of control at the other prison that I was at. He has told me to do them until I learn all 35 names by heart. Well, at least I'm doing them for now. Okay, I will close for now. Thank you for your Dharma Friends as it has been very handy. Thanks again,

*Clearly, buddha-dharma is not practiced for one's own sake, and even less for the sake of fame and profit. Just for the sake of buddha-dharma you should practice it. All buddhas' compassion and sympathy for sentient beings are neither for their own sake nor for the sake of others. It is just the nature of buddha-dharma. -Dogen, "Moon in a Dewdrop"*

**From Joe Foy:** Dear Anna and Dharma Friends,

Thank you for sending Dharma Friends newsletter to me all these years and for your compassion for people in prison, not many people on the outside show that they have any. After being sent here from the other unit for my attempts at starting a Buddhist program there, I have had to start my practice all over again.

When I got here and found out why I was transferred, I was angry and that became my motivation in seeking religious rights for Buddhists in this State's prisons. I have had time to stop and think and meditate on this and have had some very good advice from an outside Volunteer Chaplain that has helped change my motivation back to what it was, compassion for others.

My practice routine is back in place and anger and revenge are no longer my reason to obtain religious rights in prisons. My goal is still the same but the reason is back to what it was originally, to help all Buddhists in prisons. The Head Chaplain of the prison system for the State tells me the only way he can allow Buddhist prisoners to transfer to one of the six units in the system that already have a Buddhist program is to win a lawsuit like the Muslim people have. He said that the state only recognizes court mandates, that I would have to have a court tell them to "designate" Buddhist units for prisoners to be allowed to transfer there to engage their religion with others of the same faith. I have been trying to transfer to the unit where the Volunteer Chaplain I mentioned is over their Buddhist program, but the State Chaplain Director will not allow it until the unit is "designated" Buddhist.

I have been working on a lawsuit and saving money for the filing fee, by not going to commissary for a while and now have everything I need to file. But, isn't it funny how karma works? I read the January 2007 issue #120 of Dharma Friends and on the second to last page, pg. 15, I see that lawsuits are violence. So, my letter is to ask for advice on if I should proceed with a lawsuit or is there another way to have the state "designate" Buddhist units.

Thanks again Anna and Dharma Friends for all you have done for us prisoners. Love,

*Although wishing to be rid of misery,  
They run toward misery itself.  
Although wishing to have happiness,  
Like an enemy they ignorantly destroy it.  
-Santideva, "Bodhicaryavatara"*

## A Call to Mindfulness By Paul Veach

I have just received a letter from Kristopher at *Dharma Friends* and would like to quote a part of that letter to all persons who read or hear of this letter! "Please pray that Anna finds the funds to keep *Dharma Friends* afloat as often as you can. It would be very sad to see it sink." So, what you are now about to read comes from the ABHAYGIRI CHANT BOOK and is a chant for the reflections on sharing blessings, which is over 2,500 years old.

Through the goodness that arises from my practice, may my spiritual teachers and guides of great virtue, my mother, my father, and my relatives, the Sun and the Moon, and all virtuous leaders of the world – may the highest gods and evil forces; Celestial Beings, guardian spirits of the Earth and the Lord of Death; may those who are friendly, indifferent or hostile; may all beings receive the blessings of my life. May they soon attain the threefold bliss and realize the Deathless. Through the goodness that arises from my practice, and through this act of sharing, may all desires and attachments quickly cease and all harmful states of mind. Until I realize Nirvana, in every kind of birth, may I have an upright mind with mindfulness and wisdom, austerity and vigor. May the forces of delusion not take hold nor weaken my resolve. The Buddha is my excellent refuge unsurpassed is the protection of the Dharma, the Solitary Buddha is my noble Lord, and the Sangha is my supreme support. Through the supreme power of all these, may darkness and delusion be dispelled. (And here we might as well add "may the *Dharma Friends* newsletter be abundantly blessed with long life by this sharing of blessings and aspiration")

If everyone chanted or prayed at the same time after first blessing or praying for ones self, so that their chant or prayer was pure, and with the blessings of their teacher (i.e. the armor of God), *Dharma Friends* would also be blessed. In the Dharma Ending Age, nothing is easy, but it is separating the wheat from the chafe that will make us try harder. So, even if we can only get one newsletter a year, let's not let it go under!

*And Paul continues in another letter - Venerable Anna and inmates, greetings from P.V.*

All right guys and gals, we had all better stop and THINK. It only took one letter to start receiving the healing help of *Dharma Friends*. If you have any money on your books at all and you are not showing gratitude for the mental, physical, and spiritual help of our Venerable Teacher, Anna, DO SO NOW. Or if you only have indigent supplies, one letter is all it took to get help! So, take two of those five indigent mailings and use them to help our *Dharma Friends* and Venerable Teacher.

Here's how. Send a letter to someone you know in the free world and tell them what *Dharma Friends* means to you, not only you, but all of us who receive it and even those who don't yet. Remember, the Dharma is like any other spiritual teaching and is a very strong marvel medicine, but an empty bottle is no good! Give out the *Dharma Friends* address and a copy of page 6 from issue 121, February, 2007. Or just hand-write the important parts of the notice, and ask them to contact *Dharma Friends*, PLEASE.

*Dharma Friends* is more important than those stupid piles of dung we call SELF. If you get another newsletter, write them and let them know our Venerable Teacher's problem, send the address, and send page 6. Write to Buddhist magazines, write to the addresses of the publishers and authors of the books that you have. Remember Thich Nhat Hanh in the book "*On Fire Buddhism*"? Remember that the pen is mightier than the sword? Without the mighty pen, the Dharma of the Buddha, the Gospel of Christ, or the works of Vishnu or any other Teacher would have died a long time ago.

And don't tell me that nothing ever gets fixed! If that were true, nothing would ever change and we know that everything does change. It either gets worse or it gets better, and that is determined by what we do. Right now, what happens to *Dharma Friends* is up to those who receive the blessings of this precious newsletter. DO WHAT YOU CAN, RIGHT NOW !! Remember, this is the Dharma Ending Age and if ALL OF US don't start thinking and start taking action in ways to keep our raft afloat, we will have sat by and done nothing but talk the talk and not walk the walk. Done nothing for the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, the Teacher, our sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, VICTIMS, or ourselves. This fuzzy, feel good, crap has got to stop! To be a Buddhist, we must learn to represent our Teacher and the Buddha.

So, let us ask ourselves one question. If we are not using any legal and moral means available to us to help our Venerable Teacher, Anna, and the staff of *Dharma Friends* to keep the presses rolling, are we then not guilty of stealing the food of the faithful?!?!? So now you don't like me. So what! I don't care. That doesn't hurt me one bit, nor does it hurt the Venerable Anna or the staff of *Dharma Friends*. It only eats you up, so get over it and GET BUSY!!! I would rather you hate my guts and be victorious over Mara, than I would to see a friend (*Dharma Friends*) on the battlefield defeated. So, go ahead, hate me, but figure a way to fix the bloody raft and keep the presses rolling. Nothing you have is worth anything until you give it away.

*And Anna adds this thought: "The charity which unstores wealth leads to returns of well-stored fruit. Giving away our food we get more strength, giving away our clothes we get more beauty". -Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King*

An update on funds – When sending out our letter to encourage free-world subscribers to switch to email copies of their Dharma Friends newsletter, we received many responses and enough donations to keep us going for a while without so much nail-biting. Thank you to everyone. Each donor gets a thank you note and a tax-receipt, but a special thank you goes to an anonymous donor who helped us enormously. Also a thank you by newsletter to the anonymous donor who sent a \$10 money order with no address or name. A sneaky merit obtainer. Thank you to all of you for your prayers, kind wishes, appreciations, and donations. *This is your forum, your sangha, your support group, and your healing community. I love all of you and am so happy to be a part of your family. Together we can keep ourselves thriving in order to benefit all beings.* And – of course – we still need donations!

### From Phillip T. Taylor:

I have great news. In June 2003, Buddhism, in the Missouri Dept. of Corrections, was raised from a solitary practitioner religion to a provisional Level 2 faith group. Now its given full level 1 accommodation. I challenge every prison Sangha in America to be a guiding example of Buddhist teachings and advocate for more intensive and in depth study practice whether its Hinayana, Mahayana or Vajrayana traditions and realize elements such as Reiki, Hatha yoga, Medical Chi Kung, or other mental – physical – spiritual disciplines and healing arts that can deepen and enrich your personal and group practice. But don't stop there. Encourage other non-recognized religions to advocate for themselves as well. Imagine if Buddhist, Wicca, Native American and other groups in prisons could co-host and co-sponsor retreats, workshops, classes, seminars and study groups in prisons all across America.

I believe it's possible for all aspects of mental – physical – spiritual disciplines and healing arts to be taught, studied, researched, practiced, experienced, applied in prisons yet 1<sup>st</sup> inmates have to seek teachers and encourage family and friends on the outside to support local and national prison projects. How hard is it for each inmate to have their family and friends to donate \$5 - \$10 a piece to assist and expand prison projects. Dharma Friends is a very good example. Are we going to stand by and not gain the monetary support that is needed to keep it afloat? We've heard the warning, now what are we going to do to help?

On another note, who are we to judge Saddam Hussein? Maybe if we cleaned up our own backyard we wouldn't individually and collectively reap what we sow (karma). I also take exception to G.K.'s response to R.G. because inmates being inmates while incarcerated sounds as ignorant as saying "honor among thieves" or "convicts respect each other" and as long as we (inmates) live by "the Convict Code" instead of living as humans, then there will always be US vs THEM and I hate to say it, but attitudes like that keep perpetuating the system we supposedly speak out about.

In general, why do so many inmates live in a state of denial and victimhood? We blame the drugs and alcohol, our parents, our government, and each other instead of accepting responsibility for our actions (we had a choice and we made it). Sadly, a lot of inmates act like newsletters from prison projects are "Cry Journals" whereas the good news and encouragement seem underscored. Why not mention the positive instead of always concentrating and blaming others. Is it any wonder why a lot of people are unwilling to help us when we behave like that, a big bunch of crybabies? Let's make 2007 a year of progress instead of status quo. In the Dharma,

*Monks, how does a practitioner remain established in the observation of the feelings in the feelings?*

*Whenever the practitioner has a pleasant feeling, one is aware, 'I am experiencing a pleasant feeling.' Whenever one has a painful feeling, one is aware, 'I am experiencing a painful feeling.' Whenever one experiences a feeling which is neither pleasant nor painful, one is aware, 'I am experiencing a neutral feeling.' When one experiences a feeling based in the body, one is aware, 'I am experiencing a feeling based in the body.' When one experiences a feeling based in the mind, one is aware, 'I am experiencing a feeling based in the mind.'*

-Adapted from Satipatthana-sutta, translated by Thich Nhat Hanh and Annabel Laity from "Teachings of the Buddha"

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

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOUR ADDRESS CHANGES.

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

Here are some ways that you can help us.

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

If you know of anyone who funds philanthropic programs that are rehabilitative or supportive of those in prisons, send a copy of Dharma Friends to them and ask if they would consider reading a funding proposal from us. If so, connect us to them!

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

And a bonus comes with the email subscriptions – extra pages!! These pages will focus on issues and problems that those in the ‘free world’ might be more likely to experience, and we will explore life in ways that also draws from the connection to our *Dharma Friends* community.

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

*Defiled by passion, the mind is not released. Defiled by ignorance, discernment does not develop. Thus from the fading of passion is there release of awareness. From the fading of ignorance is there release of discernment. -Anguttara Nikaya*



Handkerchief art – “Avaloketeshvara” - by J.B.

**From N.C.:** Let me begin by saying thank you for all the wonderful work you are doing through the ministry. I think you are doing an awesome job providing information for thousands of inmates around the country and worldwide. You are truly a blessing.

The main objective of writing this letter is to inform you that I just received your most beautiful and encouraging newsletter and I am so happy to hear from you. Thank you so very much! But in these past few years, since I first began reading Dharma Friends, I’ve been becoming more aware of myself and of other people in my daily life. I’ve also been experiencing a feeling that I’ve almost forgotten about, one from way back when I first was presented with the newsletter.

I want to share a wonderful story with you about when I first received the blessing of your newsletter. When I first started reading Dharma Friends, way back on that day when I picked up a half-torn copy and begin to read it, something happened to me that I never would have dreamed possible. I felt that at last I had found what it was I had been looking for all my life and something told me to write and find out more of what this had to offer me in my search for a spiritual awakening. At first, I was pretty skeptical because I had been through so many other trips and had been let down so many times. I noticed that my hands were shaking as I began reading it. Then, as I started to read further, I felt a great warmth come over me as I have never felt before, and a voice within stilled my fear and seemed to say that at last you’re coming home and you have no need to fear again. As I read on, I noticed that I kept having trouble seeing and my face felt like it was on fire. As I reached up and started to rub my eyes, it was only then that I realized that I had tears in my eyes and that they were running down my face. They came freely as I knelt to thank God for that newsletter and for you and all the others that are trying to bring the world and prisoners together.

But something kept telling me not to just read this to help pass the hours away, but to read it and keep it in my heart and mind. So, each day, I’ve been applying some of the things that I’ve read to my daily life. I try to live in harmony with other people and with God. It has been a long time but I’m finally able to feel again. What can I say except I thank you and you have my undying gratitude and friendship, not only because you have come into my life and touched me, but because you’ve been able to do the same for so many others that I know you have touched and helped to find that wonderful road to new and better lives, the only life. Thank you for sharing part of your life with me. May God give me the strength, faith and courage to continue on this journey that I have been fortunate enough to find. Now I’m happy again and it’s been a long time but it sure feels good. I’m not ashamed to tell the whole world that I have found a new life. I see a lot of changes in my life already from my meditation practice, it’s working wonders and I seem to be getting close to people already. I am doing fine

and I am most appreciative for all your words of caring, cards and prayers. Many thanks. In closing, I wish you a wonderful holiday season and a new year filled with health and happiness. Very truly yours,

*Although you may understand the explanations, if you are still suffering because of problems, you clearly do not understand the true nature of your mind, your body, and your senses.*

-Lama Zopa Rinpoche, "*Transforming Problems Into Happiness*"

## TREAT DEPRESSION IN MOTHERS

(From USA Today)

Successfully treating a mother's depression can alleviate or even prevent psychiatric problems in her children, a study reports today. But a mother's continued depression increases her child's risk of such problems, the study shows. Researchers said it is the first published study to show that a child will benefit if the mother's depression is treated effectively.

Researchers studied 151 mother-child pairs. The mothers were taking medication as part of a larger study about treating depression in the general population. The children's ages were 7 to 17, and the average age was 12. At the beginning of the study, about a third of the children had a psychiatric disorder, including depression, anxiety and disruptive behavior. By the end of three months, about a third of the mothers saw their depression go into remission. Among their children, there was an 11% drop in rates of psychiatric diagnoses. Among children of mothers who were still depressed, there was an 8% rise in diagnoses.

The relationship between mothers' depression and children's diagnoses at the end of three months was similar whether or not the children had a diagnosis at the beginning of the study, the researchers write in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*.

"We know that depression and other disorders are brought on by strong environmental stresses," says lead author Myrna Weissman, a psychologist at Columbia University and the New York State Psychiatric Institute. "Having a parent with an illness is a big environmental stress."

Weissman and her colleagues speculate that the mothers' remission initiated a "virtuous cycle" in which the mothers and children positively influenced each other. Researchers are continuing to assess the mothers' depression and children's diagnoses every three months for a total of two years. William Beardslee, academic chair of psychiatry at Children's Hospital Boston, called Weissman's data "very encouraging."

"In our view, depression in parents is a family calamity, but it is one that can be overcome."

To Your Brain Health, Daniel G. Amen, MD

Compassion Works for All  
Dharma Friends  
PO Box 7708  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72217-7708

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

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



*Anger or hatred is like a fisherman's hook. It is very important for us to ensure that we are not caught by it.* -His Holiness the Dalai Lama

# Dharma Friends

June 2007 issue # 125  
copyright 2007, Compassion Works for All



## Additional Pages for EMAIL VERSION of *Dharma Friends*

*"Learning how to be kind to ourselves,  
learning how to respect ourselves, is important.  
The reason it's important is that, fundamentally,  
when we look into our own hearts  
and begin to discover what is confused and what is brilliant,  
what is bitter and what is sweet,  
it isn't just ourselves that we're discovering.  
We're discovering the universe."*

Pema Chodron

## Horror Stories from the Hell Realms of Anger

Unfortunately, we have all heard them. We've all watched the results of angry individuals venting their anger on others throughout the centuries in all societies and, sadly, even in our own homes. We have all heard the theories and read the multitude of approaches to deal with anger in ourselves, others, and society. Anger and its expression reeks havoc internally and externally and it lives within each being who has ever been born. The worst that has ever been done by others is something that we are each capable of doing given the coming together of negative circumstances. We can have some control over the confluence of circumstances by developing healthy habits of self-awareness which ameliorates the chances that we are not one of those who hits the newspapers. But there are no guarantees. Perhaps karma is the only real explanation that makes any sense at all as to whether or not we are the recipients of another's anger and senseless acting out or if we are the perpetrators.

Anger is our humanness at its most primitive. Perhaps it allowed our species to survive and evolve, but now what do we do with our primal instincts to perceive and attack enemies? And what do we do when others direct their rage towards us?

How to deal with one's own anger and the angry abusiveness of mean children to bullies of all ages is perhaps the issue most brought up in therapy sessions over the years of my practice by children and adults. Frequently, even today, when I am with a young person and they have a chance to talk quietly, they immediately bring up a dilemma of dealing with another child who is mean or even an adult who treats them abusively. Many children live in a state of quiet distress and feel helpless to escape an abusive person. They often share their fantasies of what they want to do to the other to win their personal little war but are fearful to act. I hear often from adults too who are in angry relationships with their partners – even partners that they love – and even they don't know what to do.

Many years ago I sent out a list of questions about what had influenced their lives to the prisoners who received *Dharma Friends* newsletter. I still want to compile their answers into an article, but what they shared was most revealing. A large percentage had been physically, verbally and sexually abused as children by family members, family friends, teachers and bigger children. Many had felt that other children in school and the neighborhood had victimized them because of social status, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, intellect, or physical disabilities or differences. Of course, being “victimized” does not necessarily result in becoming an abuser but 100% of those who answered the questionnaire said that they felt that they had problems handling their anger. The other amazing result of this survey was how many (almost 100%) said that they felt that they had no one to talk to about their problems. I also have heard this from almost all of the hundreds that I have worked with individually within the prisons. I expect that if we put these factors together – feelings of being hurt by the anger and angry acts of others and the inability to talk about it with people who care and who can guide them in a healthy release of pain -, we have simmering self destructive and/or other destructive processes brewing. Remember that there are many physical and emotional illnesses that have at least a component of anger turned inward that can kill people just as dead as the angry villain who might explode one day and point a gun at someone.

I look back at the therapeutic views and theories of handling anger through the years and am appalled. In the 60’s when I was taking psychology courses in college and later in graduate school, about the most sensitive approach we learned in dealing with anger were the theories of reflective listening. There was also the Gestalt approach where one explored their various selves and gave them expression, allowing one to see more clearly what their anger and pain was about. As students and as practicing therapists, we were to encourage people to express their anger even when that expression included blasting it out at their partner. There were workshops where people were encouraged to pour out their rage at each other, sometimes with soft bats, screams, and acting, but often with verbal criticisms that were meant to take people down to a vulnerable core in therapeutic ways. I think that all of that was reinforcing anger, misusing permission to express it, and that it actually caused great pain. I still hear social theories today as to ways to express anger that are distressing to me. “Boys will be boys so let them fight it out.” Paddling. “They have to learn to fight.” Sending a child back out to fight a bully so that he will teach him a lesson. One father of a man now in prison for life dressed his boys in a girl’s dress if he heard that they had backed down in a fight. Then he would send them out to fight their challenger. “Kids have to learn who’s boss.” But these stories of misapplied anger pale against the horrors that I’ve heard of abuse. There are countless children who have suffered, unnoticed or unconfro nted, emotional, physical and sexual abuse at the hands of “beloved” mothers, dads, youth leaders, teachers, parents of friends, ministers and priests, grandparents, family members, older siblings, baby sitters, and more rarely, strangers. Those abusers, I expect, all have horror stories of their own, and that generation of abusers too has horror stories, following a trail of the ravages of anger back through time. The abuse of women as well has gone back thousands of years and has been justified by many societies. I expect that there is no family that is immune to the misuse of anger no matter the economic or social status, educational levels, religion, race, or politics.

## **Distress can lead to the automatic habit of anger Or Distress can lead to the habit of self-regulation**

I do believe that talking to people who are kind and sympathetic but wise enough to help us to self-regulate our intense emotions is the key to handling anger. This talking of the situation gently brings balance to our distress. Ideally, we begin this process with newborns, and it affects their physiological and brain development by building a template that makes intense emotion more manageable for the rest of their lives. If a child misses out on this step because, primarily, they do not have a mother or care-giver who can give it to them, they have a greater challenge with anger from then on. Also, if one has inherited a biochemistry that is hyper-reactive to stress, has had an illness that influenced the brain and/or biochemistry, or very significantly, has had any head trauma, especially at an early age, that injured the brain, anger may be a greater challenge. (If this focus on brain development and self-regulation interests you, read Alan N. Schore’s many expert volumes on brains or Daniel Amen’s less complicated books that are more accessible to general readers.)

If we continue with the theme of gentle support and encouragement, modeling healthy responses, teaching and facilitating self-regulation with children from birth on, we can see clearly how there will be benefit to all ages in development. A child of one or two years old, for example, can already be learning some meditation skills that will become a habitual and automatic response when faced with stresses later in life. I recommend that when a child is having a *melt-down*, we consider that something is going on physiologically as well as emotionally and they are truly feeling distress. Holding a young child in distress, soothing them, rocking them, and encouraging them to share what is wrong takes a lot of time for busy parents. But, is there anything more important than teaching them a skill that will make their brain, body, sense of self, all relationships and their life as a whole healthier? If we develop the mind set that such times are VERY IMPORTANT, it automatically becomes top priority. It is also true that such times of gently soothing a child are exactly what the care-giving adult can use too. Sitting and quietly meditating with a child in our lap can be the best time in a busy day. What a good habit for the adult to reinforce for their own well-being. Is calming ourselves when in the middle of a melt-down crucial for our own self-care too? Of course!! It is far better than suppressing emotion and letting it build to an explosion.

My experience is that gently exploring with a child how to breathe, to notice what is happening, and then, as they are ready, talking about their distress is something that even tiny babies take to easily. Start by simply breathing with them, synchronizing your breath with theirs. Then gently comment about it. We can even comment about their screams and then gently help them to switch gears. When we are in a more meditative state, we can actually merge with the child a bit energetically and then work our way through their body to see where the distress is. We can say, "Do you hurt here?" gently touching each body part. We can model for the child, "I'm going to breathe into that old tummy ache and pull that pain right out of you..." Sometimes just by helping them to relax causes their pain to dissipate. But, with relaxation, we can start to ask them what they need. If their melt-down is expressed as anger, that anger is a secondary emotion. Under the anger is always a fear, and sometimes a fear that arose because of a need not being met. We can help them work their way down to that fear and to that need. Not intellectually with too many questions though; gently and with empathy and respect. Of course, never tell them that they don't need something that they think they need. Help them touch the need and then explore it, expand their view of it, and grow beyond it if it is not possible to meet at that point.

When an older child has anger arise or is dealing with the anger of others, they must draw more independently on the skills and habits that they have internalized. An older child is also learning new psychological lessons and strengths that have to be considered. If they have a good base laid down as little children, they will automatically have the habits of self-regulation in place and permission to share their distress. Very important, they will have built a collection of loving internal dialogues in their brain from all you have said to them. When they have stress, the voices of reassuring and kind adults will play in their heads. These guiding words will soothe them and give them steps to take to handle their emotions and those of others. Because their growth requires that they gain progressively more separation from caretakers, we can watch how they handle situations from afar and applaud them when they do something well. By encouraging their independence and letting them know when they are doing something skillfully, we are guiding them towards greater success. They are less likely to seek out someone to talk to when they are having trouble because they want to do it on their own, but of course, watch from the sidelines and give them cues that you are there if they need you. As they grow, the adults can monitor the child's dependence and independence and step back as we see them grow in successful decision making and in handling emotional distress. If we infantilize them, we diminish them and encourage too much dependence. If we push too hard for them to handle what they aren't ready for, their internal stress increases and they do not want to disappoint adults by "failing" and having to ask for help. I think that it is incredibly important to keep talking to children even as they enter ages where they are pulling away to gain self-mastery, but to talk in ways that allow them to explore what is important to them. Then, if we are on the ball, we can weave in lots of praise, support, and reinforcement for all that they are doing well. In the midst of that, we can also say with respect what they may want to focus on to develop new skills. Together we can explore a road map to develop that skill and even suggest how we can do parts of it together. If they express anger and the desire to be left alone, honor their anger and, just like with a little child, explore the anger according to their capacity. Don't just go away when pushed away. In fact, my cardinal rules of child raising are – NEVER GO AWAY (maybe a little bit until they relax but not too far) and NEVER GIVE UP NO MATTER WHAT.

Many wonder if a child or even adults can learn to be powerful if they don't express their anger. In fact, one can be more powerful by being clear, aware of their emotions, and able to choose their words and actions wisely. Out of this clarity comes greater courage, less fear of what others think, and then a willingness to say what is true. The wimps are the ones who yell and swear. The true warrior wants to change circumstances, chooses the most effective path of action, and moves with ferocity.

#### ANGRY PARTNER and ANGRY OTHERS

If someone we love and maybe live with did not get this kind of parenting or this ability to deal with negative emotions, there is a wounded ego self in there who is maybe hiding in pain and fear. When stress occurs or the lid is lifted, you might see a most inappropriate expression of anger that is more typical of a one-year-old than a 52 year old. Who should we talk to in that situation - the one year old or the 52 year old? Probably the one year old, but not too blatantly or too dismissively. If we know well that the one before us is only one year old, we can actually use all those same skills that we were just talking about in emotionally regulating our little children. In addition, if you are a good meditator, you might even remember that that over-reactive 52 year old that is having a one year old's melt down, is actually a sacred being. Our practice is to see their inner essence no matter what they are saying or doing. By holding this view of great kindness, regulating our own response, and remembering their true self, we invite them to relax and go beyond their fears. The situation is deescalated pretty quickly. If instead, our own fearful one year old is abandoned by our internal self-observer, and we have forgotten to bring calm to our brain and physiology, then we too crash into internal chaos. Our anger might burst forth. Then of course, two frightened one year olds in rages makes for a dangerous mix. Because we can never change or fix another, but we can issue an energetic invitation for another to feel safe, our focus in a situation of angry escalation is always to calm our own fears first in order to do that.

Of course, there are those whose anger is so out of control that they are periodically dangerous to themselves or others. I maintain that those who do any kind of addictive self abuse or abuse of others have a storehouse of anger and fear, even when there is biochemical or physiological components to the addiction or the aggressive behaviors. There is a willingness to let anger blunt the horror of what is being done to self and others and there is an attachment to rage and destructive

behaviors. Diagnostically there is always at least some sociopathy in such behaviors which means a lack of concern as to the pain and suffering caused by one's actions. (This is not necessarily true for someone under 21 because their brain is not yet fully developed, their hormones are still raging, and their personality development is still too immature. But any self-destructive and other-destructive behaviors are still indicators of great underlying pain and not just "kids being kids".) At some point, anger has won out as the habit with which to handle fear, stress and distress. Those actions resulting from anger or that attempt to ease the pain of anger and other uncomfortable emotions all perpetuate a cycle of behaviors that lead to destruction. This pattern is *chosen*, rather than one of healthy growth and happiness. Perhaps the battle was lost in infancy, but I say again here NEVER GO AWAY and NEVER GIVE UP if this person is your child. If that person is a partner, then use wisdom and common sense to decide whether to stay with them or not. If it is an abusive friend or family member where you can set boundaries, put your own well-being first as you can't fix this person – even if you are their therapist. But – you can love them, be a role model for them, and give them healthier invitations. Most of all, make your choice to not get hooked into escalating behaviors with them. I see people all the time who are so used to abuse that they choose relationships where subtle to major abuse is happening all the time and, in their denial, people think that such relationships are normal. Learn to recognize when abuse is happening and recognize how anger is manifesting at many levels.

#### Here's A Plan

Here is a great program that steps in to support families' efforts to grow healthy children and to help when family influences need to be overcome. It is available in our Little Rock community at Woodruff Elementary School. WAND, an organization dedicated to bringing peace to the world, honored Woodruff's program of non-violence among students in their spring 2007 Mother's Day Brunch. Anncha Briggs organized the program and shares about it in this letter to the editor of the Arkansas Democrat - Gazette after the event.

#### Instruct in Nonviolence

WAND, Women's Action for New Directions, hosted its fourth annual empowering Mother's Day luncheon and gave people the opportunity to listen and learn about peace and the nonviolence program at Woodruff Elementary School that was started in 1988 by then-Principal Pat Higginbotham and school counselor Shirley Davis. This program has continued to thrive under former Principal Janice Wilson and current Principal Katina Ray.

Many a tear was evident as children from the Woodruff choir performed the school song, "Five Steps to Self-Control," and recited the school pledge, "I pledge to be kind and support all the members of the Woodruff family. I will not hurt anyone physically, verbally or emotionally. I will attack the problem, not the person."

This nonviolence character education program provides the children with encouragement and positive role models as well as schoolwide celebrations as they make use of nonviolent conflict resolution strategies. The current record is 448 days without a fight.

Children are taught that it is easier to leave angry words unspoken than to mend the heart those words have broken, something they will always remember as they encounter life's ups and downs. When you pay a visit to this school, you will immediately ask yourself, "Why isn't this program in all our schools?"

**ANNCHA BRIGGS**  
Little Rock

And Anncha also shared with us an email from Janice Wilson, the former principal.

Ms. Briggs -

Thank you all for such a wonderful honor and luncheon! I am very grateful that the children who had the opportunity to perform also had the opportunity to experience such beauty and graciousness.

I read the editorial in the paper. Kudos to you! We appreciate whenever good news is spread regarding the children. I know the teachers at Woodruff will use your editorial as a teaching tool. They have already let the students who attended the luncheon share with other classrooms the experience of the luncheon. This not only gives "Great Expectations" to the other children, the sharing of experiences helps the esteem of the students who are sharing and the children in the audience; they have another example from the community as to why the non-violence program and the Woodruff family is special. Many of them will not have any idea of such a beautiful place, flowers, china, etc. What a wonderful side of life they may have never known about but may now wish to attain!

To assist the member who wanted information on the program: as we said, it is not a type of "program" that is a 1-2-3 step, but formed through need by Pat Higginbotham and Shirley Davis. We discussed after the luncheon, putting in writing this

experience in order to help other school families. I remember Diane V. through her work in the LRSD VIPS program. I am sure this list of books that we used in study circles, trainings, etc., might be beneficial.

- Discipline with Dignity
- the writings of Linda Lintier
- trainings: Great Expectations of Arkansas
- the book: Through the Cracks
- the book: Silver Boxes
- Fred Jones

I cannot think of any others at this time, but this is a great list to start with.  
Again thank you so much,  
Janice Wilson

And one important part of the Woodruff program – a labyrinth.

When a child or anyone is feeling distress, no matter where or when, they can go walk the labyrinth in loving silence until they relax and find balance. How nice it would be if each home or school or workplace had a labyrinth or a quiet meditation place where one can walk and meditate when feeling stressed out. A beautiful place of peace, rather than a punishment corner, could be a potent way to dissipate anger and prevent actions that would cause irrevocable pain.

I think such a wonderful program as Woodruff's could be in every public school. Think of all the young Ghandis we could turn out! If we supported, publicized, encouraged, and implemented them every where, maybe there could be an enormous impact on future generations. Anyone know anyone at CNN?

*If you have a reason, you don't need to shout. -Zen proverb*

To shift gears after something so heavy, here is something more fun. G.S. sent it out with her Christmas cards last year and I love it.

**The Very Short Sutra on the Meeting of the Buddha and the Goddess  
By Rick Fields**

Thus I have made up:

Once the Buddha was walking along the  
forest path in the Oak Grove at Ojai, walking  
without arriving or having any thoughts  
of arriving or not arriving

and lotuses shining with the morning dew  
miraculously appeared under every step  
soft as silk beneath the toes of the Buddha

When suddenly, out of the turquoise sky  
dancing in front of his half-shut inward-looking  
eyes, shimmering like a rainbow  
or a spiders web  
transparent in the dew on a lotus flower,

the Goddess appeared quivering like a  
hummingbird in the air before him

She, for she was surely a she  
as the Buddha could clearly see  
with his eye of discriminating awareness wisdom,

Was mostly red in color though when the light  
shifted she flashed like a rainbow

She was naked except for the usual flower  
ornaments Goddesses wear

Her long hair was deep blue, her two eyes  
fathomless pits of space and her third eye a  
bloodhot ring of fire

The Buddha folded his hands together  
And greeted the Goddess thus.

“O Goddess, why are you blocking my path.  
Before I saw you I was happily going nowhere  
Now I am not sure where to go.”

“You can go around me, “ said the Goddess,  
twirling on her heels like a bird darting away, but  
just a little way away, “or you can come after me.  
this is my forest, too, you can't pretend I'm not  
here.”

With that the Buddha sat supple as a snake solid  
as a rock beneath a Bo tree that sprang full-leaved  
to shade him.

"Perhaps we should have a chat," he said.

"After years of arduous practice at the time of the Morning star I penetrated reality and now..."

"Not so fast, Buddha.  
I am reality."

The earth stood still, the oceans paused.

The wind itself listened – a thousand arhats, bodhisattvas, and dakinis magically appeared to hear what would happen in the conversation.

"I know I take my life in my hands," said the Buddha. "But I am known as the Fearless One --- so here goes."

And he and the Goddess without further words exchanged glances.

Light rays like sunbeams shot forth so bright that even Sariputtra, the All-Seeing One, had to turn away.

And then they exchanged thoughts and the illumination was as bright as a diamond candle.

And then they exchanged mind

And there was a great silence as vast as the universe that contains everything

And then they exchanged bodies

And clothes

And the Buddha arose as the Goddess  
and the Goddess arose as the Buddha

and so on back and forth for a hundred thousand hundred thousand kalpas.

If you meet the Buddha you meet the Goddess. If you meet the Goddess you meet the Buddha

Not only that. This: The Buddha is the Goddess, the Goddess is the Buddha.

And not only that. This: The Buddha is emptiness the goddess is bliss, the Goddess is emptiness the Buddha is bliss

And that is what and what-not you are. It's true.

So here come the mantra of the Goddess and the Buddha, the unsurpassed non-dual mantra. Just to say this mantra, just to hear this mantra once, just to hear one word of this mantra once makes everything the way it truly is: OK.

So here it is:

Earth-walker/Sky-walker  
Hey, silent one, Hey, great talker  
Not two/Not one  
Not separate/Not apart  
This is the heart  
Bliss is emptiness  
Emptiness is bliss

Be your breath, Ah  
Smile, Hey  
And relax, Ho  
And remember this: You can't miss.

*Everywhere is the treasury of endless capacities of followers of the way. Everywhere is not everywhere; it is called everywhere. - Hui-k'ung*

#### NEW STUDY: CELL PHONES EXCITE YOUR BRAIN

Talking on a cell phone excites the brain, Italian researchers find - but they don't yet know whether that's good or bad. When in use, cell phones emit an electromagnetic field. Different parts of the brain communicate via electrical signals. And, people tend to press cell phones to their heads when making calls.

Could this affect your brain? Yes, according to neurologist Paolo Maria Rossini, MD, PhD, research director at Fatebenefratelli Hospital in Rome and his colleagues. Their findings from a small study appear in the August issue of the journal Annals of Neurology. The researchers say they have "shown definitively" that talking on a cell phone increases electrical activity on the side of the head where the cell phone is held. The effect mostly wears off within an hour, they say.

"We still do not know whether this effect is neutral, or potentially dangerous, or beneficial," Rossini and colleagues report. "But we firmly believe that, starting from this observation; more research is needed both in healthy people and in specific groups of subjects suffering from neurological diseases in which [brain] excitability is affected."

Rossini's team studied 15 healthy young men for the impact of cell phone use. Each man wore a helmet that held a commercially available cell phone about a half inch from his left ear. Two test sessions were held one week apart. In one session the phone was turned on for 45 minutes, in the other it was off. Before, during, immediately after, and one hour after cell-phone exposure, the researchers used transcranial magnetic stimulation, or TMS, to measure the subjects' brain "excitability."

Rossini's team found that electrical activity was enhanced in the side of the brain near the "on" cell phone, but not on the other side of the brain. And, there was no change in brain activity when the cell phone was in the "off" position. "It could be argued that long-lasting and repeated exposure to electro magnetic fields, linked with intense use of cellular phones in daily life, might be harmful or beneficial in brain-diseased subjects," Rossini and colleagues concluded. "Further studies are needed ... to provide safe rules for the use of this increasingly more widespread device."

So, are you safe when using your cell phone? The World Health Organization (WHO) says there have been reports of cell phones affecting brain activity, but they concluded these effects "are small and have no apparent health significance." The FDA says, "A available scientific evidence does not show that any health problems are associated with using wireless phones," but it also notes "there is no proof that wireless phones are absolutely safe." The American Cancer Society says it's "unlikely" that phones cause cancer.

We'll keep a close eye on any new developments concerning cell phone use. Certainly it's an issue that affects us all (yes, I use a cell phone too!)

To Your Brain Health, Daniel G. Amen, MD, CEO, Amen Clinics, Inc.



*"Our will, our volition, our karm a, constitutes the essential core of the active part of mental experience. It is the most important, if not the only important, active part of consciousness. We generally think of will as being expressed in the behaviors we exhibit: whether we choose this path or that one, whether we make this decision or that. Even when will is viewed introspectively, we often conceptualize it in terms of an externally pursued goal. But I think the truly important manifestation of will, the one from which our decisions and behaviors flow, is the choice we make about the quality and direction of attentional focus. Mindful or unmindful, wise or unwise-no choice we make is more basic, or important than this one."*

-- Jeffrey M. Schwartz in The Mind and The Brain ( a brilliant book!)

## The Importance of Practice in Prison

As we say in our monthly *Dharma Friends* newsletter, some of us may be in a steel and cement prison with bars on the doors, but most all of us are in prisons created by our own minds. An inmate wrote wondering if I would write a short piece on the importance of practice in prison so that he could use it in his unit's newsletter. Of course I am happy to do anything I can to support what I think is the healthiest thing that anyone can do with a part of their day until they can do it with all of their day!! Once that is true – then they are out of prison forever, no matter their physical circumstances. One need not be a Buddhist, or even a spiritual person of any tradition to receive benefit from meditation

### Why? Here are some reasons.

- A time of simple meditation relaxes the body.
- A time of meditation is healing.
- The focus of breath harmonizes rhythms of breath, heart rate, pulsing of cerebral spinal fluid and deep body rhythms.
- Meditation helps regulate the biochemistry of the brain and body including all hormonal systems.
- Quiet focus of meditation rests and reinvigorates neurons, improves brain function, and heals injured brains.
- As the body harmonizes and heals, the immune system is strengthened.
- Meditation enhances the chances of healing disease or injury.
- Meditation brings clarity and equanimity to intense emotional responses so improves decision making.
- Meditation teaches us of the pause between thoughts and actions, so allows us to not act impulsively in times of stress.
- We can rest in meditation when stress occurs and we are no longer reactive.

*And – as one grows in Meditation Skills we ----*

- Grow in the perception of a more subtle reality.
- We learn to recognize whatever arises with more balance.
- We gain the capacity to access a deep inner wisdom voice that guides us more truthfully on our life path.
- As anger and internal distress are calmed, we respond to others with more kindness and compassion.
- Ego and its demands are less compelling and we live in compassion.
- We live to benefit all beings.

- As we grow to experience more subtle levels of reality, ego gradually falls away completely. We live in a subtle and sacred reality where Self is All That Is and we are one with all beings.
- We are able to perceive with ever-greater clarity a universe of Joy and Bliss.

*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*

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



Dear Dharma Friends: This (*April*) issue generated another question for your consideration for *DF*. I have long struggled with the idea that (daughter) C. will be leaving one day to go out on her own. With each passing season and new milestone, I celebrate and grieve and a wave of anxiety sometimes grips me. I seem to move from being stuck, to fluid on this issue. Fear of loss, waxes and wanes, ebbs and flows with serenity rooted in the curiosity and joy of discovering C. and watching her path unfold. I try to stay with the flow... To stay away from the clinging...the desire to keep things as they are. But the old shadows loom so large at times... The abandonment and the not deserving.... Not feeling good enough, worrying that I have not been a good mother, creep in. I sometimes allow myself to get trapped in planning how it will be later.... I will follow her, live wherever she is, adapt my life to be near her. I try to play the role of the confident mom, but I know she must pick up on my insecurity and fear.

Do you have suggestions of how to work with this?... In a meditative way, I sit with it.. Watch and examine it.. Move with it and go deeper... This all helps and I get "comfortable" for a while... And then the rhythm of the inevitable changes... Made more acute by her naturally pulling away into more autonomy, and more toward her peers right now in adolescence (she's going to be 14 in July!). What a gift she has been in my life... How much I have stretched and grown looking into her mirror, and how I admire and cherish her dear nature. Being her mom has been purely transformative! I do not want to make her transitions in any way uncomfortable by my reactions. I would be so appreciative of any wisdom on this subject!

Dear wonderful, skillful and self-aware mother: What a spiritual practice and life practice these always changing important life relationships are. Whoever would have thought that when we had children we were taking on an assignment for our journey to total awakening. How could we possibly have a better practice in which to learn letting go? Of course, this practice starts from the moment our child is birthed into a world with all of its challenges. I know many mothers, especially, who have horrific anxiety attacks at the thought of their child's vulnerability in the world and they fear all of the dangers that might befall them. But little by little, it is an exercise of leaving them with a sitter or caretaker, then taking them to school, seeing them go off to friends' houses, going to camp, and maybe off on an adventure like a trip to another country. Little by little, we are both practicing letting go. We can feel better if we see them meet challenges successfully. But then there is always the Big Fear of all the unknown dangers out there and if they will strike our child. The little dangers are scary enough – a flat tire, not getting chosen for the school team, a reading disability, an illness. We want to protect them from the painful parts of life. But, of course, part of life is learning to face such pain on their own.

What can we do? Practice, practice, practice.

Be aware that each time we practice letting go with a little thing by holding our tongue, or being positive, meditating a lot so we can be more mindful of our words and actions, we are getting ourselves ready to handle the big 'letting go times'. Going off to college. Moving across country. Getting married. And, horrifically, sometimes that includes dying. We all know the tragedy of those who have had their children or grandchildren die – a seemingly impossible life lesson in letting go. How can we have a more horrific challenge on our life path than dealing with a child's or a loved young person's death? There is not a parent anywhere who does not fear this event and feels challenged knowing that they are helpless to prevent such an occurrence. Of course, the fears we might each have in letting go of our children as they grow into a happy adulthood are just a little hint of the fear that each of us has of having a child, or anyone we love, die. Letting go is such a hard task.

**Here are a few exercises that can apply to all *letting go*.**

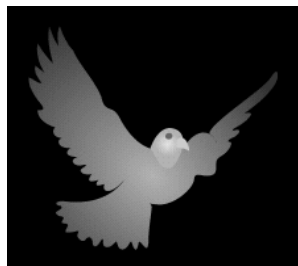
- See every opportunity to "let go" with awareness as practice in the art of letting go of every arising.
- Meditation is the most effective opportunity to rest in equanimity as we first find physical and emotional balance, and then practice letting go with awareness of each moment, whether it carries a thought, a physical sensation, a fear or other emotion, or an attachment.
- When we find ourselves fearfully clutching someone, re-frame that fantasy of control over losing them. Say the unspoken: *This person will leave me some day or I will leave them.* They will go off to school. They will move away. They will die. And then breathe that knowing in and out as we relax into it as much as we can.

- If there is a particularly strong fantasy that strikes horror in our hearts, don't run away from it. In a safe place with a quiet hour or so set aside, let the fantasy play out in your mind. It may be scary but see what is there that is so frightening for you. Then go further into it. And further. Keep going until the scary fantasy has no more energy and actually seems to come to some resolution. If this is too much, you can do it in a number of separate sessions, going as far as you can each time. Then give yourself gentle reassurance that you will handle whatever comes. Simply by doing the exercise, we will be more prepared and balanced.
- Try to recognize our escape routes and how we slip away with them. When fear of letting go arises, notice if we escape into busy-ness, a cookie, alcohol, talking about *anything else*, and other favorite obfuscations. Instead of running down the escape route, take a moment to sit with the fear.
- If there is another who shares this fear of letting go or who can identify with our struggle, talk to them. I would be careful about talking to the person that we are afraid of losing since that might invite them to feel guilty for "abandoning" us, especially if that person is a child or someone who is dying. If on the other hand, if it is a partner who is leaving us, of course we should talk to them about it. But talk to someone who is kind and who appreciates our growth task.
- All the old stand-by's in working out emotional growth tasks are good too – drawing, painting, writing, poetry, journaling, song writing. Later, curiously look at or listen to our creation to learn of the deeper meanings of our conflict by examining it symbolically.
- Of course, exercise and staying physically active and eating a healthy diet with no brain altering substances is important as we go through any challenging life change. We must move energy out, stay healthy and remain clear in our problem solving. To do otherwise, creates more obstacles to resolution.
- Remain open to the one who is leaving us as they too are going through an important process. Amazingly, many people unconsciously shut down to and push away another who is leaving. Keep as much if not more focus on their emotional state of being so that we don't miss the cues that let us know when they need support or need to talk.
- Keeping the focus off of our dilemma reminds us that life is constant unfolding, going on always with every person who loves another person. The more we realize deeply that coming and going, living and dying, letting go and clinging are just the breathing in and breathing out of life, the more we enter the wisdom that all is meditation and we are one with every being every where.
- We only have this moment. And now, this moment. And now, this moment. No past/no future. Enjoy. Ahhh....

*"Rabbi Zalman Schachter, once helped us to understand the relationship between the active and receptive dynamics of questioning, prayer, and intuition. He reminded us that our lives are filled with prayers, albeit mostly unconscious ones. When we are hungry, our prayer for food organizes our attention to look for restaurants, or fruit trees, or whiffs of dinner on the wind. When we are lonesome, our prayer for companionship organizes our attention to notice people who have partners and those who are potentially available.*

*Our questions, conscious or unconscious, spoken or unspoken, individual or collective, are prayers, aspirations, and yearnings that infallibly organize our attention and, in the most subtle ways, make us more intuitively receptive to inspiration in whatever forms it may take. As our understanding of this process deepens, we discover that we live in a responsive universe. If you drop a little stone in the pool it sends out and draws back a little wave. If you drop a big stone in the pool, it sends out and draws back a big wave. The moment there is a yearning in our hearts or a question in our minds -- consciously or unconsciously -- there are echoes of information intuitively available to us. The answer or clues might be revealed in the patterns of a cloud, in a bird's song, or by what a person three seats away is saying. As we learn to listen more deeply, we discover that the answers to our question are always here, though generally speaking our circuits are usually too jammed to hear them."*

By Joel & Michelle Levey excerpted from chapter in the Intuition at Work anthology, titled, Mind Treasure: Intuitive Wisdom & the Dynamics of Mystery & Mastery at Work



**ADVERTISEMENT:** Anna Cox and Dr. Sandra Pope will offer a free talk **HEALTHY LIVING** about healing, meditation, living life, and listening to one's inner voice on Wednesday, July 11<sup>th</sup> at Fletcher Library in Little Rock at 12:15 P.M. Please join us!!

Of course, donations are welcome and support *Compassion Works for All* and Dr. Pope's *The Mindfulness Center for Healthy Living*

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