

Dharma Friends

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

August 2007 issue # 127

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The Dhammapada The teachings of the Buddha



Verse 19: Endowed with Dharma

Translated from the Pali

by
Thanissaro Bhikkhu

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256-257

To pass judgment hurriedly doesn't mean you're a judge.

The wise one, weighing both the right judgment & wrong, judges others impartially — unhurriedly, in line with the Dhamma, guarding the Dhamma, guarded by Dhamma, intelligent: he's called a judge.

258-259

Simply talking a lot doesn't mean one is wise.

Whoever's secure — no hostility, fear — is said to be wise.

Simply talking a lot doesn't maintain the Dhamma.

Whoever — although he's heard next to nothing — sees Dhamma through his body, is not heedless of Dhamma: *he's* one who maintains the Dhamma.

260-261

A head of gray hairs doesn't mean one's an elder.

Advanced in years, one's called an old fool.

But one in whom there is truth, restraint, rectitude, gentleness, self-control — *he's* called an elder, his impurities disgorged, enlightened.

262-263

Not by suave conversation or lotus-like coloring does an envious, miserly cheat become an exemplary man.

But one in whom this is cut through up-rooted wiped out — he's called exemplary, his aversion disgorged, intelligent.

264-265

A shaven head doesn't mean a contemplative.

The liar observing no duties, filled with greed & desire: what kind of contemplative's he?
But whoever tunes out the dissonance of his evil qualities — large or small — in every way by bringing evil to consonance: he's called a contemplative.

266-267

Begging from others doesn't mean one's a monk.
As long as one follows householders' ways, one is no monk at all.
But whoever puts aside both merit & evil and, living the chaste life, judiciously goes through the world: *he's* called a monk.

268-269

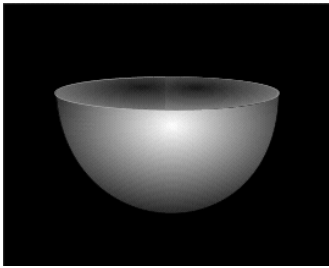
Not by silence does someone confused & unknowing turn into a sage.
But whoever — wise, as if holding the scales, taking the excellent — rejects evil deeds: he is a sage, that's how he's a sage.
Whoever can weigh both sides of the world: that's how he's called a sage.

270

Not by harming life does one become noble.
One is termed noble for being gentle to all living things.

271-272

Monk, don't on account of your precepts & practices, great erudition, concentration attainments, secluded dwelling, or the thought, 'I touch the renunciante ease that run-of-the-mill people don't know': ever let yourself get complacent when the ending of effluents is still unattained.



Some thoughts about this Dhammapada Verse:

One of my favorite things is to go to the post office and pick up your letters! We have quite an amazing family of *Dharma Friends* and I love to know how you are each doing. Thank goodness I don't get a letter from all of you every day, but throughout these past ten years, I know lots of you pretty well. I have known some of you from our group or individual meetings in your prisons, some from letters through the years, and some of you I see frequently out here in the "free-world". But even if I never met you in person or read more than your original request for *Dharma Friends*, I feel like I know you and you are family. I have a sense of your identity and each of you contributes to the whole of our community. I hope that you feel connected in some way to each other, just as I do to you. I do know that, like me, many of you follow each other's lives through our *Dharma Friends*' letters back and forth. We follow each others' life events with since interest even though some of those events are good and some are heartbreaking. I got a letter today from a young man saying he just was sentenced and was moving from his local jail to a federal prison. I feel sad that he is facing such a life-long change. I am thinking a lot about some of our friends who will have their executions soon. Some of you that are on death rows in Arkansas and other states are actually looking at the possibilities of new trials and to being exonerated of charges as you have long fought to prove your innocence. Some of our long-time and very loved family members in and out of prison are tackling some very serious illnesses. There are some in our family who are young college students looking forward to exciting futures, and there are some of you who are the same age and you have been given a life sentence in prison. But – some of you too are spending these years doing college studies in your prison! We have lawyers, medical people, successful professionals, and influential activists who have spent your lives – (many of you are now "seniors") – contributing to others. And there are many who are the same age who have had similar educational backgrounds but, due to various circumstances, you are using your skills to help the other prisoners that you share your world with. Most all you, in or out of prison, have had a hard life with trauma and suffering. You may be tempted to look at others in our family and wish to trade places. My hunch though is that if we each looked closely, we would realize that there is no one who has had it easy. The pain in any one life is daunting. When it comes down to it, I suspect that we would marvel at how others have survived their path just as they are astounded at how you have survived and grown from yours. We might never want to trade places but isn't it wonderful that we can appreciate and support each person in *Dharma Friends* as they try to heal and grow. And it is good to know that we are not alone.

Our individual qualities and our life stories often connect us, but they could also be what move us apart. We all tend to judge or categorize people by their qualities, characteristics, and stories, and we usually gravitate to those we most identify with. But we also know that this tendency to identify with some and not with others, leads to tragedy throughout the world today and has throughout all

time. Humans tend to cluster into identity groups and to create distance or even to create enemies of those felt to be different, and, therefore, fearsome. Warfare began thousands of years ago as “primitive” people were categorized as members of one tribe, race, or religion, and we are still living those same battles in more contemporary forms. We have paid a great price because of ego’s tendency to categorize and label others.

How does this relate to our **Dhammapada** verse this month, *Endowed with Dharma*? Despite the benefits of ego connecting us to each other through like-qualities, spiritual growth takes us beyond caring about some and not others. It takes us to loving all beings equally. As we read the lines of our verse again, we can see the same teaching in each stanza. Identifying qualities and characteristics are noted and then we are reminded that no matter what the implication of that characteristic, ego-labels and identifications are not truly what or who we are. We can focus on any identifying characteristic, even those that might imply that one is a kind, spiritual person or a great, wisdom leader, and that leads us into the intellectual and dualistic realm of ego’s judgements. To categorize or judge another is the first step for ego to separate into a self and others, which is a dualistic view. Any defining characteristic can then be a thread that leads to an entire story-line of assumed identity. Most of us live an assortment of ego identities that all-together comprise our “self”, or who we think that we are. The drama of our life story is all about our *self* and very often, how those others do or do not fill our needs. This leads, very often, to the battleground of good guys - all those like us - and the bad guys – all those others. Most people are born, live their life, and die never knowing that there is more to their life than their ego-drama. Once we step back and can see others and ourselves through these intellectual ego-concepts, identified in our mind by names and characteristics, we realize that that is actually not true. It is merely a perspective of reality. Those who transcend ego’s categorizations are those “*Endowed with Dharma.*” They, of course, are Buddhas or transcendent wisdom beings.

In our *Dharma Friends* community, we are making it a meditative goal to REMEMBER that who we truly are is far more than any identifiable, describable ego-self. Our goal on this path to transcendent wisdom is to know a more subtle but true Self as great sacred wisdom and great compassion. We are learning to know all Beings as pure inseparable wisdom essence. When we identify with being the expression of wisdom and compassion, we are One. We know that there are no categorizations or differentiation between self, other, and All That Is.

How do we make this transition from ego’s self-identity to knowing Oneness With All That Is?

First and foremost – **MEDITATE!** As we gradually quiet our mind, develop concentration and focus on what is NOW instead of getting carried away by the chattering ego-commentary judging our self and the world in our heads. Rest ever more comfortably in the spaciousness of sacred view and concepts will naturally dissolve on their own. A true and subtle experience of reality will reveal itself as the layers of obscurations created by thought fall away.

Practice Compassion. When intellect and ego are not busy judging and evaluating “My World According to Me!” and our focus is on a transcendent love that arises naturally, the idea and identification with an ego-self naturally falls away. If we focus on being kind, our heart grows in the capacity to love all beings with equanimity and balance. We love everyone with no one being special and we exclude no one. Ego becomes a facilitator to our spiritual growth because it is actually ego that enacts our personality in the world. Ego loses its role of being the big boss running our life and becomes our charismatic connector to others.

Practice a PATH - Study Sacred Wisdom Teachings That You Are Drawn To

- I recommend those teachers and traditions that aren’t sectarian or judgmental of others. Most who ask to receive our *Dharma Friends* newsletter know that our foundational teachings are of Buddhist origin. I hope they also see quickly that we strongly believe in and support each person on their unique path by offering a commentary along with other wisdom teachings that can be helpful to anyone. I’m sure you are not surprised to hear that there are those who get upset with us because we do not embrace their more sectarian beliefs and they cancel their subscription. But for those of us who can take what fits and let go of the rest, I hope that there will be words that help draw you close to your teachers and traditions and that offer the right steps for your growth.
- There are thousands of wisdom teachings out there in the world because beings are unique and have unique needs. Even if you move from one tradition to another, trust your inner guidance to lead you on your path and toward the right teachings for you.
- I also do believe that there is a dead end to spiritual growth if a path preaches hate, so I recommend teachings that stay open to the value of all other’s paths and to the sacredness of every being.
- For some, at some stages of their growth, at least for a while, need to feel that one’s path is the best path. We all have ego tasks to complete along the way, and this belief in being special may be one of them. Suspend judgement of others as they walk their path.
- I also recommend that you find a teacher who has transcended the need to feed their own ego to any great degree.
- I know some of you can’t ever meet your teachers in person but search for and study books and educate yourselves with excellence the best that you can.
- When you find your path, study, pray and meditate according to its teachings every day.

Third, all that arises becomes the Perfect Teacher on our wisdom journey.

"One should realize that one does not meditate in order to go deeply into oneself and withdraw from the world . . . There should be no feeling of striving to reach some exalted or higher state, since this simply produces something conditioned and artificial that will act as an obstruction to the free flow of the mind . . . When performing the meditation practice, one should develop the feeling of opening oneself out completely to the whole universe with absolute simplicity and nakedness of mind . . . Meditation is not to develop trance-like states; rather it is to sharpen perceptions, to see things as they are. Meditation at this level is relating with the conflicts of our life situations, like using a stone to sharpen a knife, the situation being the stone." Trungpa Rinpoche

This teaching says well how to live this meditation practice. It says that life events can be our wisdom and spiritual teacher. At one level, this teaching speaks of a 'self' and life events that are 'other than self', which is a dualistic view. To conceptualize that "life" or the "events of life" develop an awareness that awakens spiritual actualization proposes a dualistic view that there is a self to grow and 'other than self' to stimulate the teachings. This is a helpful view when we get caught up in believing that the dramatic events of life are all consuming. It helps to gain psychological insight and even a spiritual perspective into a deeper meaning of life when we reframe the event as our "teacher" in this way.

We can apply this teaching to our **Dhammapada** verse of growing beyond self and self's judgements. Remember that all wisdom teachings have many levels of meaning depending on where we are on our own path. They offer ever-deeper insight as we apply them to more subtle levels of experience. In our **Dharma Friends** studies, we have been doing some work in developing a non-dualistic view when we read the **From Your Letters** section these last few months. So let's look at this teaching again as a meditation practice where we welcome opportunities to notice when we "forget" and leave oneness and re-enter self's view of dualism. We want to grow beyond the belief in a solid and real self. Read our Trungpa Rinpoche teaching again. As life events stir, we have a meditation opportunity to grow beyond our idea of self to know *no-self*. All That Is, or Life Unfolding, appears in any and every form. Our meditation is to relax, rest in wisdom, and to recognize sacred reality. OR –we can watch as a self stirs as an event arises. Do we rest in meditative awareness as a moment catches 'focus' and brings forth the thought of 'self'? Or does self leap forth, assert its identity, and an entire ego-drama captures our awareness, and then, off we go into forgetting True Self and Wisdom and Sacred Reality and All That Is? OOPS.

(But just so we don't get confused - There is no *self* that ever separates from All That Is. Intellect creates a thought or concept that births the idea of self. It is an illusory *self* creating an illusory reality. In that process of judging or having any intellectual commentary on an arising appearance, self creates itself and its view of reality. But, it is compelling nevertheless. And, throughout this process, we have forgotten sacred, pure view.)

What to do??

Ahhh – we say as we become aware of self making itself known. We merely recognize that we have noticed self making an appearance.

Ahhh – breathe out and let self dissolve away back into All That Is.
Continue to rest in sacred, pure space. No self. No other. All is One.

So, this is how **Wisdom of Life Unfolding** is our teacher. At an early level, we are learning life lessons. We are also having an opportunity to see how self appears in its 1001 identities and we watch as self creates our life view of reality. In the quote from Trungpa Rinpoche, the rock that sharpens the knife is life events. We can highlight the *self*-revealing part of this experience in that a life event also gives us an opportunity to see *self*-manifest. The rock then is our experience of an ego created self conjuring up a deluded view of self-focused reality. The knife then is wisdom mind realized with growing clarity and equanimity. Whenever a *self* arises in awareness, we have an opportunity to recognize that we have forgotten wisdom mind and been seduced by a self.

Ah... we say, -- Forgetting Vastness to focus on self.

Ah... we say, -- Remembering and returning to All That Is.

The One Endowed with Dharma lives this All Ways.



A MEDITATION

first a preface.....

We must remember not to get confused and to think that having an ego is bad or that its' needs are bad. An ego-self is our creation that comes with our humanness. It allows human beings to survive in a world of ordinary reality. Our human form and all its gifts are our foundation for learning awareness and obtaining spiritual growth. There is no need to deny or repress those aspects of humanness that contribute to these processes. The difference that we are emphasizing is that many beings never reach their full

potential as human beings. We are more than intellect, ego, and physical form. We can grow beyond the experience of ordinary perception of self into knowing Self as wisdom mind and to living a life of great compassion.

Do not think that I know the one and only way that this can manifest itself. Trust in your own unfolding. It is absolutely not the conditions and circumstances of our birth and life that determine whether or how we evolve on our spiritual path. It is growing with wisdom awareness as we walk our own unique path, knowing that all that unfolds for us is our perfect teacher. We may have challenges that make our steps shaky so we must look for what brings us balance, awareness, support, and a healing of our wounds until we are clear and strong enough to glean wisdom from our life situations. We must learn to put our ideas of self into perspective and notice where ego leads us off track into its own dramas of 'specialness'. If we are walking off cliffs and into the briar patch, consider that we may not be honoring the direction our path might lead us on. No one can tell us how to follow our path or if we are on the right one. We each learn differently. Some take one big step and realize a new view of enlightened reality that is then true for them forevermore. Most of us go ½ step forward, grow a little awareness, go ¼ step back, and so on for years and years. Hopefully, each time we slide back, we don't forget for too long before we start out again. So be patient and just keep going. Self keeps us functioning in the world while we grow in solidity and stability of a gradually more subtle view of sacred reality. Along the way, the observing of self and its experiences allows us a vantagepoint from which we can notice our expanding and more subtle view. We can notice the arising of ego-self as it manifests to comment upon, criticize, label, or grasp at an unfolding drama. Most of all, learn to listen to your inner wisdom voice. Rest in stillness. Learn to see the manifestation of self and its attachments, all indicating to us our separation from wisdom mind – no matter how interesting or compelling the drama might be. *The One Endowed with Dharma* has no *self* experience, no *self*-arising, and rests in All That Is in pure equanimity. Each of us can learn this too.

Our project – to notice when *self* arises and to let it go into a meditative state of *no-self* ...

Here is a meditation that will help us to become *The One Endowed with Dharma*

First – spend lots of time on our meditation cushion practicing mindfulness meditation, developing focus and concentration, or resting in vast view – where ever you are in your practice. A meditation practice is essential to developing wisdom.

As we meditate, when self makes an appearance with a thought, experience, or even a full-blown drama, notice and see who that self believes it is at that moment. Notice how quickly that idea of self brings along its own favorite story-lines all entangled around it. All this is habit and has no real validity other than to perpetuate self's view of itself and the world.

Just notice self arising with all of its self-created world. Say, *Ahhhh* softly, --- breathe out and let self go.

Meditate, resting in All That Is. Self will rise again. Repeat this process for the rest of your life.

OFF THE CUSHION –

You can keep a level of meditative awareness at all times as you go through your daily life. Notice that there are times that you are focused on the present moment in such a way that you flow with life's unfoldings without commentary, concepts, judgements and thoughts. When self is not our focus, an arising moment is merely an arising and we flow from one to another without attachment. Then our meditation is to stay in mindful awareness, or if we are able to perceive pure wisdom view, to rest in that sacred perception of reality. Dramas do not even appear because there is no self to call them into existence. But, should an arising event catch the notice of self, self jumps up into awareness with a pronouncement about what is occurring. It wants to express its idea of who it is or how things *should* be – usually because it has some attachment or need that may not be being tended to. Life dramas rotate around self and usually spring forth intact with all of our history, our biases, our beliefs about self and the world, and self is ready to hit the ground running. Here our meditation is to notice self arising and our immediate loss of awareness of our resting state of meditation.

Ahhh – we breathe when observing awareness notices self arising.

Let go, we say gently Breathe out.....

Breathe in, breathe out and dissolve the drama, self, all of its thoughts, concepts, opinions, dialogues, etc, etc, etc, back into the vastness of All That Is and return to meditation.

So easy. Effortless ---- *Ahhhhh*.....

And a very helpful practice along the way...SERVICE TO OTHERS

Focusing on self strengthens self, keeps us attached to self's view of reality, and is so consuming and entertaining to self that evolving spiritual Self has little chance to get its foot in the door. So here is a wonderful practice to thwart that monopoly of self on self. *Focus on others!* Little by little, that focus will grow greater compassion and self will be humbled as it consistently steps with ever-growing empathy into the experience of others' lives and feels how hard it can be for them. There is no one anywhere that does not suffer, at times, enormously. Most beings suffer silently in ways that no one else ever knows. But - every being needs someone to love them and to support them in their journey.

Of course, I am suggesting that you do this project with a healthy balance for our own needs too. I do guarantee that if you will take on this challenge to love and support another or others, you will grow enormously on your path to wisdom and compassion.

Let us do this together

Imagine the changes that could come about if each of us in *Dharma Friends* took on one or more of these practices in our small world. Here are some suggestions to start with:

#1 – If you have children in your life that you love, make them a top priority. Find ways to reach out to them so that they know they are important to you and loved. Mentor, guide, and support them as they grow on **their** path. If you are in prison, a letter a day to them is a good project. If you are out of prison, some time to celebrate them as often as possible is very important. Never give up on them, hurt them, neglect them, or abandon them no matter what they may do or say!! Ever!

#2 – If there is someone in your world that is struggling alone, slowly explore how you can benefit him or her. It may be a new young person in your prison, a cellmate, an employee, or a family member. Pay attention to those around you and see if anyone needs some extra support. Go according to your capacity because some people are definitely a handful. We do need to develop skillfulness in helping so that we are not abused in the process. See how you can enter their world and guide or mentor them in healing.

#3 – For those who can, you may find that you are in a position to take on more than one person. Our wonderful friend Omar has spent years putting on programs in his various prisons that expose others to all religious traditions and healing processes that they can use in their lives. He is a role model and support person for others who come to him for guidance. He would never have wanted me to share this, but during his recent recovery from cancer surgery, he was visited by many of the personnel in his prison and by state prison administrators who have appreciated his contributions through the years. Amazing. There are many of you that used to be in our spirituality or meditation support groups who have become counselors in prison support and rehabilitation programs. You give so much to others who are lost. P.T. and so many others of you are trying to bring healing and support programs, meditation groups, study groups, and civil and humanitarian action programs to your institutions to benefit many. If everyone is doing something in their community to bring change and benefit, whether in a prison or in the world, imagine the healing that will go out to innumerable others from those efforts. Great healing and change in society has hardly ever come from legislation or administration, but has come from one person or a small group of caring people who began to work to benefit others.

Choose what fits for you and find what you can offer without feeling resentful or depriving yourself of your needs. Then add or change your practice as you try it for a while.

Go for It!!

It is in this way that we must train ourselves: by liberation of the self through love. We will develop love, we will practice it, we will make it both a way and a basis, take our stand upon it, store it up, and thoroughly set it going. -Samyutta Nikaya



From Your Letters

If you want to know the past, to know what has caused you, look at yourself in the present, for that is the past's effect. If you want to know your future, then look at yourself in the present, for that is the cause of the future.

From W.W.: Dear *Dharma Friends*, in this month's newsletter, July 2007, I noticed Omar Muhummad has been diagnosed with cancer. Because of him, I found **Dharma Friends**. Right to this day, I still have a "prayer rug" that he gave me before coming over to [this] unit. I pray sincerely for my Muslim Brother and true friend in the Dharma. Mr. Omar Muhummad has touched many and I will always remember him as a man of true wisdom. Please keep us updated from month to month if possible.

I have roughly 7 months left after 3 ½ years and look forward to lending a hand with the newsletter. I only have 3 months to put in my parole plan so I have to start making some life decisions. Don't really know where I want to go from here... guess getting out is the important thing. Before I lose any more hair, I decided to start my meditation again and increase prayer.

It seems instead of just going with the flow of life, which I am so used to doing, I must weigh options. I'll let you know how things come along in the near future. Take care,

"For me to be active in the cause of the people and of the earth and just to be - is to be alive. There is no compartmentalization. It's all one thing. It's not like I just exist to go into a little room and write. People have that image of writers, that that's how we live, but it's not really accurate, not the kind of writing that I do. I know that what I write has a purpose, even if it's just for me, if I'm just trying to lead myself out of a kind of darkness. So it broadens everything, being active in the world. You see the world. It's like, you know, I'm learning to paint now, and what I realize, learning to paint, is that I'm learning to see. And activism is like that. When you are active, and you must know this so well, that the more you are active, the more you see, the more you go to see. You know, you are curious. One thing leads to another thing, and it gets deeper and deeper, too. And there's no end to it." -- Alice Walker

From Mr. T.N.: Dear Anna and *Dharma Friends*, Hello! I know you have a lot to do, but I'm on level with Buddhism. Right now, I'm mastering the Doctrine of No Soul (Paticca-Samuppanna). I'm also working on remembering the Twelve Factors. Anna, I have reviewed the *Dharma Friends* newsletter and am so very thankful that your comments are so well adapted to and involved with the only prophetic message I have been able to relate to that mankind has to offer. Remember, I am thankful, but I believe the Zen concept is the most fruitful in allowing us to read between the lines. In sincere love,

*Dear Dharma Friends – T's execution date has been set by the governor of Arkansas for September 18. I pray that legal steps being taken cancel these plans, but he has asked for help should he face his death soon. The text's that he had wished to receive are obscure and would be hard to study and learn anyway, if he dies next month. I want T to know, as I have already written to him in a letter, that if he dies by execution, I will be meditating with him during the process. I truly believe that while we are in such a subtle state as near death, we can feel each other's presence. The most important thing is for you, T., to relax as much as possible and to open to all that unfolds to you. You have lived in a very tough life situation. We have talked openly about this and I know you will accept others love and support for you as they know your life trauma. You have dealt with a serious mental illness where you have literally felt tortured every day by the thoughts that never left your brain. It is likely that because you are a death row prisoner, getting a proper diagnosis was legally complicating and so you did not get the medicine that might have liberated you from your fear. When we visited, I know you were truthful when you told me how unbearable your life is. Now, when you meditate during these days prior to the execution (which I will continue to pray will not happen), you must practice telling yourself that this is important preparation for death. It is a time to learn not to believe in the validity of ANY thoughts. All thoughts are the creation of your intellect, and in your circumstances, they are also products of a bio-chemical imbalance that causes very scary thoughts to spew forth. Focus on your heart and rest in a vast, sacred and loving space. Think of a being that has helped you to feel safe and loved. Practice resting in love no matter what else arises. If distraction or thoughts of any kind arise, notice that distraction, let it go and rest in love. Just as in meditation, when you are dying, thoughts, fears, and distractions will arise. Notice them, let go, and rest in love. I'll be with you. I, and others who have trained in the meditation practice of liberation during death will be doing these prayers for you. Other *Dharma Friends* in Arkansas prisons or who are on the row and who know you, please meditate with T. that night and send him love on his journey.*

There are those with enlightened knowledge: this is not knowledge by birth, or knowledge by learning: it is beginningless in here, having transcended the bounds of self and other, it is being unbound by knowledge of self and other. -Dogen; Rational Zen

From Lian Hua Rob: Things are tolerable here. It helps to keep in mind that much of the world survives on so much less. In comparison, things are luxurious here in the palace. Today is Vesak Day, by state approved regs. Maybe it's not Vesak for the rest of the world, but I've tried to maintain heightened awareness of the meaning and the 'spirit' of the Sangha, (in case others 'round the world are celebrating today).

TDCJ has apparently lost my property. I left Roach on 03-08 and two months later, still no property. That's really bad because I had documentary evidence in there that can't be replaced, lots of it. That's really gonna hurt. But, also, in there were addresses to all my contacts: Buddhist organizations and fellow inmates. Is it possible for you to print my name and new address in *Dharma Friends* so that fellow Buddhist inmates can have it? It would be important to the case because I need to demonstrate that there were more than 20 Buddhists at Roach in 2005. Many of those guys have been transferred or even released. I don't have their contact info now; it was in my property. One key witness in particular, for example, is J. H.... and his contact info is gone now.

No work, by the way, on the case... it's in the 5th circuit in New Orleans. They originally dismissed it for my not having filed my brief on time (due to my transfer), but I showed where I couldn't file it on time and they reinstated it on April 9th. That was 30 days ago today and the State never filed a reply brief. So, I should hear soon their intentions as to when they'll hear the appeal (they had to wait 30 days in order to give the State an opportunity to file a reply). I'm sure the guys at Roach are interested in the status. Again, I appreciate you, Anna, and *Dharma Friends*. You're in my thoughts and prayers, May you be blessed,

Write to: Rob Newby #1238216, PO Box 9000, Woodville, TX. 75990

Also: There was a "reminder" I wanted to pass on: Once Anna sent the Chaplain here a detailed description of Buddhism and practice needs of inmates. He refused to accept it when I attempted to give it to him. I went on and sent it to the Federal Court as evidence in the case. The Federal Judge used it against us because Anna had said "Buddhism is not so much a 'Religion' as it is..."

The Judge applied that particular assertion (ignored the rest) and implied that we are not claiming religious rights protected by law. If our practices are not "required" by our religion, then they are secular and prison officials have the discretion to grant what they deem acceptable.

So, you just can't be 100% open with prison officials in that regard. You have to choose your words carefully, realizing that at some point those words 'can and will be used against you.'

A volunteer chaplain is apparently a self-appointed spokesman for one of the prison sanghas. He apparently works with the Chaplaincy Dept. and he says things that can harm some practitioners. For example, he reminded us in a recent newsletter that practice supports aren't "necessary." "Millions of meditators in the past have gone without anything but the clothes on their backs." Now you know that and I know that, but what do you think the Attorney General will do with that?

The volunteer chaplain goes on to say "Buddhist teachings and practices are esoteric or mystical in nature, in contrast to other religions that have become primarily exoteric." He also stated that he is against inmates meeting without a "direct spiritual guide." I agree with him up to a point – but if a guide is not available, meetings should not be banned. Contrary to his opinion, what the Buddha taught was not "esoteric." The Buddha said there was no esoteric doctrine in his teaching, nothing hidden in the "closed-fist of the teacher." (Acariya-mutthi) (Digha-Nakaya II, pg. 62)

I certainly understand the benefit of a master. But the Buddha himself did not rely on a guide. I have taken refuge in a Master, but that of course, is somewhat symbolic, since one works out one's own liberation. The guide does show the way, but to say "the teachings are esoteric" implies that the entire body is and that the guide is required.

It's important for outside help to be ever mindful of the inherent danger present in making bold assertions to or around prison officials. Some of those statements could harm Buddhist inmates. As you know, even small bits of progress in the "system" require tremendous efforts and time to accomplish. We don't want it undone by a stray comment taken out of context.

Anyway, just thought I'd remind you to be particularly mindful of what you write or say if it will be read/heard by prison administrators. As much as we try to avoid seeing "us" and "them" as a "duality," the realistic aspect of that is that "us" and "them" are working in opposite directions at this point and we shouldn't give "them" things they don't understand to use against us. Know what I mean? May you be blessed and well. With a deep bow,

I believe that to meet the challenges of our times, human beings will have to develop a greater sense of universal responsibility. Each of us must learn to work not just for oneself, one's own family or nation, but for the benefit of all humankind. Universal responsibility is the key to human survival. It is the best foundation for world peace. -His Holiness the Dalai Lama

From our dear friend and wonderful lama and teacher, Yeshe Wangmo: Dear Anna . . . I am forwarding this information for your prison work. Hope you are well!

A publisher dedicated to publishing books written by prisoners- **Over the Wall**. The CEO is Rodger Noe, roen@overthewall.net cell: 530-521-4848, or 1-888-267-1418. Address: 3964 Rivermark Plaza #135, Santa Clara, CA 95054 website: www.overthewall.net.

With love, yeshe

A Very "Usual" Person

By Willie E. Campbell III

You're a very "usual" person. Forgive my being silly. I once told that to a student of mine who enjoyed reaching out to others. Some people would misuse him, abuse his kindness. He came to share his thoughts with me and I told him, "You should smile, you're a very 'usual' person. It's those who struggle so hard against giving the best they've got to give, they are unusual."

We came into the world as we truly are. We learned to hide ourselves from ourselves. Now we let go of all the burdensome disguises and pseudo – cool attitudes, and learned behaviors of non-beneficial characteristics, to get back to our "usual" selves. . . That part of us that is truly who we are. . . The part of us that remembers the time we served in prison for years of our lives and we can never get back - - we remember, and we take time out of our schedule to sit down and communicate kindness to a stranger . . . just because it's the "usual" thing in the heart to do.

And more **From Minister: Dear Dharma Friends**, We are truly blessed to have such a wonderful publication through which our voices (often forgotten) can be heard, and our innermost thoughts, feelings, ideas, and understandings can be immortalized via the gift of the pen. Such a blessing is well worth cherishing. Well worth our sacrificing for as well.

Dharma Friends staff works hard to provide the outside world with a view of just how great we all are inside. Not just inside the prisons, but within ourselves. The very best that we have to offer to one another, and the world at large, is lovingly displayed on these beloved pages.

For those of us who have not the opportunity to congregate, **Dharma Friends** is our Sangha. All of us who submit our work, or just enjoy reading the articles, we're family on a much larger scale than what any prison authority says, or any man made rule states.

For those who do not know, we stand to face perhaps losing our Sangha, losing contact with one another. Losing the mighty blessing of being further comforted and enlightened through these pages. Surely, we all are well aware of the grace printed herein. For some life-changing realities have given them a brand new outlook on just how very special they are in the much larger cosmic make up of all things.

Please, if you have pen pals, family members, or if you know other prisoners who enjoy **Dharma Friends**, Dharma literature, and seeking refuge in Universal Brotherly Love and Kindness - - please petition in behalf of **Dharma Friends**. Ask for their support. Whatever they can give. Or ask them to write **Dharma Friends** - - Anna - - with a pledge... even prayers are more than welcomed donations.

We're all in this together. Loving-kindness costs love. And I do know you love **Dharma Friends**. Your love shines through in your abilities to write, draw, and even when you just read the publication. Let your love reach out to as many others as you can - - bound or free - - for any support they can give. With my all,
P.S. Have you recognized the best that you are in others?

Adverse circumstances test our courage, our strength of mind, and the depth of our conviction in the Dharma. There is nothing exceptional about practicing Dharma in a good environment and atmosphere. The true test is if we can maintain our practice in adverse conditions. -Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, "Advice From a Spiritual Friend"

From Daiji: Dear Anna and *Dharma Friends*, Gassho. I received your card, postmarked 14 April 2007, and a "get well" card, postmarked 19 April 2007, on Friday night and this evening – Thank you!

As of Friday, 20 April 2007, I am completely cancer-free! I had a procedure Friday afternoon called a "cystcopy" where a T.V. camera is threaded into your bladder and a thorough "look-see" is done. It's not the most comfortable of examinations, but considering the outcome – it was a fair trade! Please let Kristopher and the Board for Compassion Works For All that I am completely cancer-free at this time and that I am incredibly grateful for their kindness and concern. Gassho. With bows, love and respect,
Hooray!! From all of us. Sending you continual prayers that you remain healthy! ☺

Seeing ourselves plainly, we can change, and as we do so, it brings a feeling of great relief, as if we had dropped a heavy load. - Ayya Khema, "Who is My Self?"

These excerpts are from Jack Jones' writings and more to come in future issues –

Excerpt from the book "Parade of Horribles," by Something Head

- Sunday -

Who am I today? Magic or loss? Where am I now? Sooo many questions, sooo many words to find. There is no place for me. There is no real place for me. I hold no place in anyone's life anymore. Sort of like the meteorite that lands in the backyard, and what was once fascination, is now forgotten with equal measure. It's called, "the hair in the gate," as Keith Richards once said. Yeah... I'm that hair that gets caught up in the movie projector, abruptly drawing the audience's attention away from the film, the narrative that's unfolding before them. Suddenly, it's that tiny imperfection that holds more fascination than the film itself, but then, as quickly as it came, the hair vanishes. And, for a moment... just one moment... the audience misses it. I've come and gone. I can't help but wonder if anyone will notice that I'm not around...

- Monday –

I remember you in times past. I'd spout off about how if I never again heard or saw this or that it'd be too soon. I remember growing up and saying that a lot, it was one of my go – to comebacks when some one or some thing got on my nerves. "If I never see your face again, it'll be too soon!" But, recently, it hits me at times, to think that I'll likely never see another Christmas, or that this is probably my last season for NASCAR. Words. It's funny how they can go from meaning absolutely nothing to absolutely everything. Now and then. This and that. You think about words like last and final and never, and at the end of the day, there really aren't so many things it'll be too soon if you never hear or see of again.

Dear *Dharma Friends* – Jack, an incredibly gifted artist and writer and good friend, is likely to have his execution date set within the next few months, as is Don Davis, both living in Arkansas. Be aware of living the message that every life is sacred to help change the death penalty laws, and know that our friends are facing some incredible challenges. We are all sending out the great wish that the legal justification of the death penalty, which is definitely losing credibility, will change quickly in the courts before these friends are lost to us.

R.C.F. sends this passage from Gurumayi:

Self-inquiry and study are not just a matter of memorizing a book, after all, but of allowing your inner knowledge to flower. Sometimes performing self-inquiry, looking deeply into the nature of your Self, may feel like banging on the door to the soul. At other times, it may feel like a cry from the depths of your soul. However, depending on the strength of self-inquiry and its intensity, it's urgency, this practice alone may be enough to fling open the gates of liberation.

From Gary Hallford (asked that we use his full name)

On December 8th, 2006, I was attacked by a corrections officer, and have been in the "hole" ever since. It took 16 days to obtain critical legal materials; 18 days to receive a blanket; and have yet to receive necessary pain medications for chronic pain from

arthritis. This attack was instigated because I live and walk the Dharma path, I treat others as equals, and expect accountability from those in charge.

So, I was attacked, physically assaulted, and placed in isolation. . . but guess what feeds a Buddhist's spirit the most? **SECLUSION** and a valid opportunity to practice. The most basic Dharma can be defined by this simple question: What can I do for you?

If that means filing the largest civil rights lawsuit in American history, and obtaining help from as far away as India, then it's time to go to work: Preach peace; live within the valid rules; work for functional changes; and stay publicized to cover your a**. Sitting in a corner chanting a mantra may make you feel good, but practically, it's useless. Become **PROACTIVE** to bring positive change. Free people may write me at:

Gary Hallford #T-58516, CSP Solano 11-135L, PO Box 4000, Vacaville, CA. 95696-4000

Morning At Great Pond

*It starts like this:
forks of light
slicking up
out of the east,
flying over you,
and what's left of night-
it's black waterfalls,
it's craven doubt-
dissolves like gravel
as the sun appears
trailing clouds
of pink and green wool,
igniting the fields
turning the ponds
to plates of fire.
The creatures there
are dark flickerings
you make out
one by one
as the light lifts-
great blue herons,
wood ducks shaking
their shimmering crests-
and knee deep
in the purple shallows
a deer drinking:
as she turns
the silver water
crushes like silk,
shaking the sky,
and you're healed then
from the night, your heart
wants more, you're ready
to rise and look!
to hurry anywhere!
to believe in everything.*

By Mary Oliver

From D.R.: Dear *Dharma Friends*, Hello: how is everyone at *Compassion Works for All* and **Dharma Friends?** Greetings from the Northwest.

I am writing to update my mailing address as I have recently "moved." A few weeks ago, I was transferred to a minimum-security facility as I am now down to approximately 15 months remaining on my sentence. (However, I am subject to a "review board" scenario and not guaranteed to be released once my sentence is completed.) Anyway, it was a good move for me as it is a bit closer to my family.

Better yet, there is a very strong Buddhist group here. We meet about three times a month with a Buddhist volunteer from the outside. The fairly close-knit Sangha also meets on its own once a week to meditate and discuss Buddhist issues. We have an excellent meeting room where we are able to burn incense and there is also a chapel library with a wide selection of Buddhist books.

Last week, some representatives from the *Siddha Yoga Foundation* held a seminar for a couple of hours, which I attended. I enjoyed their message and presentation and we did some meditation and chanting. They have a correspondence course program for prisoners that I would recommend to anyone who wants to further explore the inner working of their mind. It is not a religion, per se, and can complement an existing Buddhist practice.

I would like to thank Anna Cox and *Dharma Friends* for continuing to generously provide their excellent newsletter to my fellow prisoners and myself. I enjoy and look forward to each and every issue. I genuinely appreciate your time and effort in making your outstanding publication available. Best wishes to all,

Even if you are a monk, if your practice of the Way is not intense, if your aspiration is not pure, how are you any different from a layman? Again, even if you are a layman, if your aspiration is intense and your conduct wise, why is this any different from being a monk? -Hakuin, "Zen Master Hakuin"

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

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOUR ADDRESS CHANGES.

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

Here are some ways that you can help us.

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

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

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

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

OUR WEB PAGE: www.dharmafriendsprisonoutreachproject.com – free download for all newsletters, and anna's books

KEEPING QUIET by Pablo Neruda

*Now we will count to twelve and we will all keep still.
For once on the face of the earth,
let's not speak in any language;
let's stop for a second,
and not move our arms so much.
It would be an exotic moment
without rush, without engines;
we would all be together in a sudden strangeness.
Fisherman in the cold sea would not harm whales
and the man gathering salt would not look at his hurt hands.
Those who prepare green wars,
wars with gas, wars with fire,
victories with no survivors,
would put on clean clothes and walk about with their brothers
in the shade, doing nothing.
What I want should not be confused with total inactivity.
Life is what it is about....
If we were not so single minded about keeping our lives moving,
and for once could do nothing,
perhaps a huge silence might interrupt this sadness
of never understanding ourselves
and of threatening ourselves with death.
Perhaps the earth can teach us,
as when everything seems dead in winter and later proves to be alive.
Now I'll count up to twelve
and you keep quiet and I will go*

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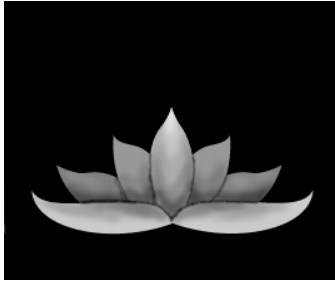


Let there be nothing behind you; leave the future to one side. Do not clutch at what is left in the middle; then you will become a wanderer and calm. -Sutta Nipata

Dharma Friends

August 2007 issue # 127

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Additional Pages for EMAIL VERSION of Dharma Friends

Don't strain. Don't force anything or make grand, exaggerated efforts. Meditation is not aggressive. There is no place or need for violent striving. Just let your effort be relaxed and steady.

-Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, "Mindfulness in Plain English"

Balance and Harmony

If only we could honor this one thing, I think that the majority of our life and all of life itself would fall into place much more easily. All would be much, much better. When we live gently, without ego's pressures to reach it's all-important goals, we take time to listen to our balance and harmony. We have quiet time to be creative, to meditate, to pray, to be with loved ones, and to listen to our own inner voice. Without so much pressure, we catch the signals earlier that we are ill, unhappy, lonely, or needing to say and do more of real significance. We take the time to learn the lessons that are being taught all around us by nature – trees sway gently in the wind and do not resist and break – flowers persistently poke their tiny stems out of cracks in the concrete, little by little by little – rivers change their channels by gently sweeping away obstacles over time – all subtle but true unfolding comes with flow, time, and patience. The miracles of the microcosm and the macrocosm surround us within and without, with hardly a blip of distinction for our beginnings and endings. Bubbles of light birthing and bursting with no way to stay attached to their forms. Breathe in and appearances arise. Breathe out and appearances dissolve. Life is a constant meditation. It is a constant prayer.

But, yes, we take life so seriously. We imbue all that happens in our life and our world with such great importance. Life and those ego-goals to fix its problems are so compelling. We even get lost in the little things like dirty dishes or a deadline. What about the noblest goals? We want to change the horrors of suffering for beings. Stopping War. Finding Peace. Ending Starvation. Halting Violence. Helping People swept up in disasters. We watch as those with power are appropriating so much for themselves and leaving others to suffer the consequences. Megacorporations and political leaders insidiously sliding the safety of life out from under those that are good and trusting. There are those willing to take what they want blatantly and ruthlessly with weapons, leaving innocents in their wake. Corruption, violence, cruelty is everywhere – even in the most developed country in the world. Even in our society's foundational structures. If we each worked constantly day and night for the rest of our lives on only one of these monumental horrors – we would not fix it, even in a tiny way.

And yet, things are changing and getting better in the world. Mostly, those changes have come out of a slow evolution in consciousness that believes in honoring others, rather than through laws or the powers of government. Laws have come about when certain actions once practiced by the population as a whole have become untenable because the majority has come to feel that harming others is wrong. There are often those who might still feel hatred in their shameful and secret hearts, but as others step up for compassionate treatment, it becomes embarrassing for them to admit to those

darker aspects of self. Laws often reflect the majority belief to stop barbaric practices against others. Women in America have more legal rights, as do blacks, and maybe there are fewer restrictions against all minorities. But overall, there are still many who are forgotten, abandoned and discarded. When monied interests or political agendas see the benefit in fueling people's darker side and encouraging hate, we see how quickly the barbarian surfaces again. *Compassion Works for All* is our one little piece to create a world of greater kindness and compassion. But, we know as you do that, as the Buddhist "joke" goes, you can never fix samsara. Yet, as those in training to become our true and highest self, we spend our lives doing the spiritual assignments handed to us in order to help beings. We can't fix samsara but change does come when one person is courageous enough to speak out against hate, abuse, inequity, and any violent disenfranchising of others. This does take courage, but the more one individual says something, the more permission that others have to join them. Each one of us who speaks for what draws our attention and who does our little piece in our little corner of the world changes an attitude of permission for hate and violence. Each one person speaking out against hatred in any form changes the consciousness of mankind.

Speaking out takes balance and harmony to do skillfully. If we are too stressed, too ill, too out-of-sorts, too angry, too overwhelmed with the horror, too dramatic, we are less effective. If we do not live in balance and we take on trying to right the world, we pay too big a price and we crash and burn. Our voice must come from our meditative center of balance where we can see the whole – all that is beautiful and all that is horrific. When we are in love with All That Is, we love ourselves enough to take care of ourselves first, and then address those that are suffering from a place of compassion rather than anger.

It is not helpful to see abuse and hatred as an enemy. Many times we rant and rave against injustice and suffering, at first mainly our own, by believing that the problem is an enemy that we need to conquer. Is the enemy the telephone company employee who happens to get our call about an error in the bill and is testy because she doesn't feel well? Probably not, but she may get our blast of years of rage against impersonal and greedy businesses who institute policies to get every penny they can from customers. Is the enemy the politicians catering to the military/industrial complex? Of course not, - especially if we voted for them, did not vote at all, or did not work hard to encourage their defeat. Is the enemy the 22 year old high on crack who stole a car and led a high-speed chase, ending in an innocent person's death? Is that the same villainous 22 year old whose mother was high on cocaine while pregnant with him, abused by her partner and beaten while a young mother, evicted from the state hospital when she sought treatment, and who lived in poverty all of his life? Was this the man who was in and out of juvenile centers from the age of 10 and an addict at 12 but was never diagnosed or given services? I know that all of you reading this know the incredible complexity of these issues and that there is no answer as to who is the enemy. We know that the enemy is actually all of us collectively, each perpetuating hate in our own little ways. But we don't act as if we know this truly. Ego wants to be the good guy. Ego wants an enemy to rage against and to build a case against – simply because it believes in good guys and villains. When we function from intellect and ego, we will not find the skillful answers. We will perpetuate the problems.

When we rest in balance and harmony, the answers that are right and truthful will come to us – from the trees, the breeze, the moon, the animals, the flowers, the water, our stillness and we can take our next little step as the time and place are right. And then we will wait for the next step in the silence..... Listening to our inner wisdom for guidance.

Arouse your will, supreme and great,
Practice love, give joy and protection;
Let your giving be like space,
Without discrimination or limitation.

Do good things, not for your own sake
But for all the beings in the universe;
Save and make free everyone you encounter,
Help them attain the wisdom of the way.

–Prajnaparamita

From Dr. Daniel Amen's *Brain in the News* web page updates -

A recent study in Journal of Neuroimaging suggests that cognitively normal adults exhibiting atrophy of their temporal lobe or damage to blood vessels in the brain are more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. Older adults showing signs of both conditions were seven-times more likely to develop Alzheimer's than their peers.

"Alzheimer's disease, a highly debilitating and ultimately fatal neurological disease, is already associated with other risk factors such as poor cognitive scores, education or health conditions," says study author Caterina Rosano. "This study, because it focused on healthy, cognitively normal adults, shows that there other risk factors we need to consider."

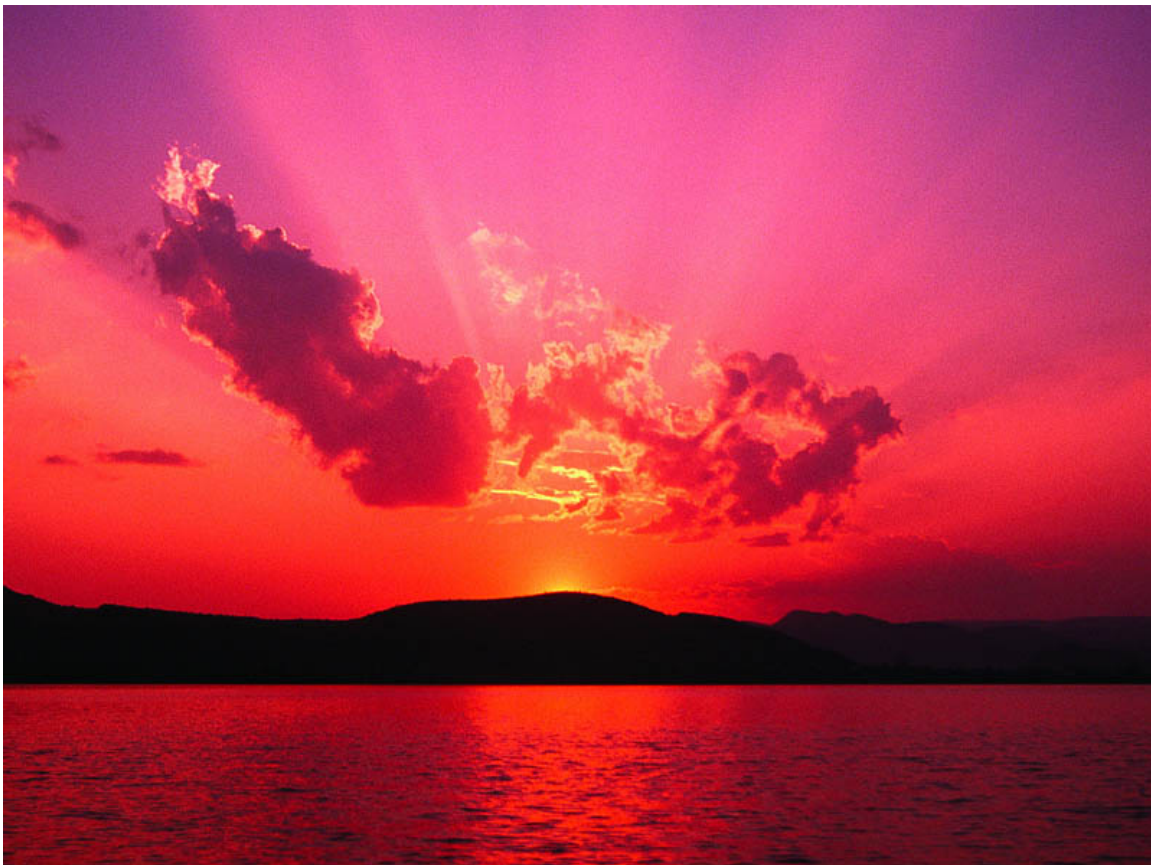
MRI images of participants' brains were examined to identify poor brain circulation, damaged blood vessels and/or atrophy of the medial temporal lobe. Subjects showing any one or a combination of these symptoms were more likely to develop Alzheimer's in the following years.

"Similarly to heart disease, brain blood vessel damage is more likely to occur in patients with high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes," says Rosano. "Since we know that prevention of these conditions can lower risk of heart attack and stroke, it is likely that it would also lower the risk of developing Alzheimer's."

So, here's a word to the wise for your brain and your heart. Get your blood pressure and cholesterol down and control your diabetes. Also, consider brain imaging in your 40s or 50s to check out your temporal lobes. With care and early detection, you really can have a sharp well functioning brain long into your senior years.

To Your Brain Health,
Daniel
Daniel Amen, M.D.
CEO, Amen Clinics, Inc.
Distinguished Fellow, American Psychiatric Association

○ let us live in joy, although having nothing! In joy let us live like spirits of light! -Buddha



SAVE THESE UPCOMING DATES ----

Anna Cox and Sandy Pope will do another Healthy Living talk in mid-October but the date is not yet set. We will send out an email when we know. We are having great fun at these programs and hope to offer a one-day workshop on Healing in the fall as well.

Anna is offering a silent meditation retreat with Joy Fox at Wattle Hollow Retreat Center (near Devil's Den State Park) on October 6 & 7, entitled We Are All One. Joy will lead yoga and breathing techniques and Anna will offer meditation teachings and dharma talks. We will begin Saturday at noon and end on Sunday at 3 PM. Suggested donations are on a self-determined sliding scale of \$60 - \$90, but no one will be turned away because of inability to pay. See Wattle Hollow web page for more information and sign up information – www.wattlehollow.com

Anna will be on the panel speaking from the Buddhist perspective for The Arkansas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty that is holding a conference along with Amnesty International's National Weekend of Faith in Action (NWFA). This will be an opportunity for individuals, interfaith groups, and others to examine the death penalty from a religious-based perspective. One event this year in Little Rock will take place on October 20th from 9:30 am until 2:30 pm. Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church is the host for this event which will include a featured speaker, statements on the death penalty from various religious communities, and time together to explore the issues surrounding the death penalty. At the conclusion of our day together, we will have tools to take death penalty issues back to our homes, religious communities, and even to our local political representatives.

The event in Little Rock is part of a larger nationwide effort to explore issues surrounding the death penalty. In 2006, events and activities took place in 46 states and the District of Columbia, in large urban/suburban areas, small rural communities, and everything in between.

No matter what you believe about the death penalty; no matter your religious beliefs, please join us on October 20th. This event is not only organized for those who oppose the death penalty and want to take action, but it will provide information to those who may be uncertain about their position but are willing to learn more about the issue. This forum will also allow an opportunity to engage in conversation with others. The NWFA recognizes the diversity of opinion that exists within individual religious communities. This weekend gives everyone a chance to examine the death penalty and to discuss personal views in a safe and comfortable space.

There is a registration fee of \$10 for those who would like to participate in this event in Little Rock. The registration includes refreshments, lunch and materials.

The NWFA has historically represented people of all faiths. In 2006, 549 faith communities, interfaith and human rights groups, coalitions, and individuals participated in the NWFA, representing at least 25 different faith traditions or spiritual practices. These traditions included Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, United Methodist, Unitarian Universalist, Buddhist, Reform Judaism, Baptist, and Quaker, among others. Interfaith groups further enriched the overall diversity of the NWFA.

Even if you don't belong to a religious community, you are welcome to join us during the NWFA. For more information contact Sam Loudenslager at director@servantschool.com.

Lama Yeshe Wangmo of the Big Island of Hawaii will be in Arkansas in October for over a week to offer a Buddhist teaching at the Ecumenical Buddhist Society, to offer Hakomi healing work, and private Dharma and Hakomi sessions. There will be a weekend teaching on Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 13-14 on Dakini Heart Essence Essential Practices: Severance (Chod) and Foundations (Ngondro). The schedule of events should be ready by early September. Contact Ellis Widner at ellis@jnanasukha.org for more details

Remember – both of Anna's books, Just As the Breeze Blows Through Moonlight, and Dharma Friends, and the Healthy Living pamphlet are on our Compassion Works for All web site – www.dharmafriendsprisonoutreachproject.com. You may forward any of those documents or any past Dharma Friends newsletters, or this newsletter, on to anyone who you believe would benefit from them.

Also – **HOUSE BLESSINGS** - a seriously playful little treat –

As another undying effort to generate support for Compassion Works for All and to hopefully bring great benefit to you, our supporters – anna (that’s me) has gone into the **House Blessing** business. What this means is that anna will come to your house, garden, or business and fill it to the brim with loving blessings to help bring healing and happiness to all inhabitants (she won’t exterminate insects, for example...) The blessing will be in silence but she will, as appropriate, give you any feedback that might make the environment a healthier space. Since there is no House Blessing certification program or board, there is also no guarantee of effectiveness. This is not feng shui, she will not clean your house, nor will she give decorating tips. She has no magic powers. But you will receive earnest efforts and hopefully, a much healthier space after the blessings. Suggested donation is a minimum of \$100 – and you will get a tax-deductible receipt, a year’s subscription to an email copy of Dharma Friends newsletter – if you are already on our email list, you can have us send the extra copy to anyone of your choosing - , and you will receive the wonderful good karma of helping over 1200 individuals who are working hard in prison to better their lives and our world. Email anna at anna@aristotle.net to schedule your blessing.



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

I have received a number of emails and calls saying that the *Healthy Living* article in last month’s issue was helpful. One wonderful friend said that it helps her to have patience with her own healing. That makes me happy because that is my true message. Be lovingly patient with your body’s process and give yourself support to find your own natural healing path and time frame. There is a path of allowing our unfolding than just trying to fix something that is broken.

Here is another response from a new *Dharma Friend* who ran into me in a parking lot (not our cars though!) I have summarized her story here with her permission, but to be more “engaging”, I’ve put it in her voice. It is also a little more concise than our 30-minute talk.

She says -

I loved the Healthy Living article and was actually feeling quite proud of myself for doing many of the things you suggest. Then I came to the part about caretakers. Well, perhaps it is that I’ve been living in denial but it hit me like a ton-of-bricks. I am destined to be my brother’s caretaker and that would be the end of life-as-I-know-it! It makes me scared to death. What do I do?

Here is why it is a horror story. Our parents are dead and I am divorced, children long grown, etc.. My brother is a (professional person) and lives in (out of town) but comes and spends four-day weekends with me a couple or three times a month. He is a basket case. He has gone through three unsuccessful marriages and his one son won’t have anything to do with him. He has done everything to bring about health problems – too much drinking, smoking, fatty foods, no exercise, overweight, high blood pressure, and a fast lifestyle. He is showing signs of early dementia (he’s in his 60’s) and I hate to think he is a practicing (professional) and people depend on him. Anything I have ever suggested about changing his lifestyle, he argues with. When he comes to stay with me he sits in front of the TV and drinks. At least, he goes outside to smoke but I find places on the deck where a cigarette was left burning. I find him washing dishes with Comet cleanser. I have had to hide all toxic and dangerous household substances because I don’t know how he will misuse things. He cleaned the bathroom with mouthwash. I find leftover food that should be refrigerated in the cupboard. When he drives, he is inattentive and forgets where he is going. This is making me crazy and yet I can’t tell him to not visit. I see a day – soon – where he will have a heart attack, stroke, or car accident and of course, it will be me that he will come to live with. I can’t even tell him to not wash the dishes with Comet without his getting furious and argumentative. I can’t imagine telling him he should not be driving or to quit his (professional) practice. What to do???



Anna offers –

Caring for those who can't care for themselves is a daunting task. We can't abandon them but when roles change dramatically, it is especially hard. I was just talking to a mother the other day who has a son now in his 20's that is still making decisions that are immature and quite scary. We joked about how easy it is to understand parents who lock children up in the closet. When people can't make wise decisions for themselves and we have no legitimate power to make those decisions for them, like we would if they were 5, it is imperative to work together to negotiate what happens in our shared lives. Unfortunately, the very same thing that creates the necessity to negotiate those decisions, perhaps dementia, immaturity, substance abuse, or other incapacitation, also makes it hard to negotiate. So here is a suggestion –

**Negotiate them now before an emergency or incapacitation occurs or they become worse.
It may be hard but it will be harder later!**

Unlike our mother with the 20+ year old son where the negotiation is still a matter of developing a healthy parent/adult child relationship, many of the people we must care for that have become incapacitated are a spouse, parent, or family member who was competent and then they suddenly or gradually lost function. We must then be the decision-maker and have power over their lives while they lose power and autonomy. Even those who have a stroke or heart attack and who recognize that they cannot do what they used to do are still often in denial. They may have feelings of resentment, loss and anger at another taking over their lives. They may insist on doing things that they are incapable of doing such as driving or working. Anyone who suggests that they should not do those things is the target of their anger. Emotional, psychological, and issues of intellectual impairment are all actively complicating decision making. Some of you are in the middle of all this right now and the hope of easily negotiating is past. But doing nothing will not help.

We are all at risk of needing care in the future

If you have family members that you share a life with, chances are that either you will become their caretaker or they will become yours at some point. If the other is more likely to need your decision-making and care, you can role model a flexibility for them and a realistic exploration of future decision-making tasks by filling the form out with them. But, even if it looks as though they are more at risk, life can throw us a curve and you may be the one hit by the stroke and home as the patient. For this reason, it is good to do this project together so that your wishes are known as well.

I suggest that you print out copies of this exercise and do it with those who may have to share such a difficult future scenario with you, no matter how you think that the future will play itself out. Perhaps you and your spouse, you and your children, or you and your parents could each fill out a copy of the form. If your family member is already compromised but due to get worse, it is still helpful to work out this plan and they might at least feel as though they can talk about their feelings of incapacity.

Make sure to keep copies with your important papers. When the dreaded decisions must be made, take out your loved-one's paper and read their answers back to them. Remind them that this is what they wanted while they were thinking clearly. Then, together you can decide what needs to be done based on decisions made when they had better judgement. It is often more palatable when they know that it is their words and not yours, and you are just helping to implement their own wise decisions.



Here is a form with which you and a family member (or members) can explore your wishes if anyone becomes incapacitated in their decision making in the future....

**As I Lose Some of My Decision Making Capacity ---
Here is How You Can Help and Support Me**

Signature and date: _____

1. If I cannot live in my present setting or my (our) home, I want to live at.....

2. If I have a terminal illness, I want

3. If I have a sudden organic brain impairment and can no longer make safe decisions, I want

4. If I have a gradual dementia and cannot discern that I am losing my ability to make safe decisions, I want

5. If I am unconscious or unable to make decisions, I want

6. If I cannot drive safely, I want..

7. If I am in positions of responsibility or trust that I am not able to fulfill impeccably, I want....

8. If I cannot responsibly handle my finances, I want

9. If I am a danger to myself or others because of dementia or poor judgement due to episodes caused by injury, substance abuse, or illness, I want

10. If I need others to manage my physical possessions and assets, I want....

11. If I need another to assess my capacity because I or someone else disagrees as to my competence, I want....

12. The things I (we) should do now to prepare for any of these eventualities are (enumerate as many as necessary)

13. If I should die unexpectedly, the things I want you to do as soon as possible are(enumerate as many as necessary)

14. I have a living will and it is.....

15. At the time of my death, I want....

16. For a final service, I want.....