

# Dharma Friends

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

September 2007 issue # 128

copyright 2007, Compassion Works for All

## The Dhammapada The teachings of the Buddha



### **Verse 20: The Path of Paths, the Eightfold is best.**

(This Dhammapada translation comes from a web site: [www.accesstoinsight.org](http://www.accesstoinsight.org) offered free)

Of truths, the four sayings.  
Of qualities, dispassion.  
Of two-footed beings, the one with the eyes to see.  
274-276

---

Just this is the path — there is no other — to purify vision.  
Follow it, and that will be Mara's bewilderment.  
Following it, you put an end to suffering & stress.  
I have taught you this path having known — for your knowing — the extraction of arrows.  
It's for you to strive ardently.  
Tathagatas simply point out the way.  
Those who practice, absorbed in jhana: from Mara's bonds they'll be freed.  
277-279

---

When you see with discernment, '*All fabrications are inconstant*' — you grow disenchanted with stress.  
This is the path to purity.  
When you see with discernment, '*All fabrications are stressful*' — you grow disenchanted with stress.  
This is the path to purity.  
When you see with discernment, '*All phenomena are not-self*' — you grow disenchanted with stress.  
This is the path to purity.  
280

---

At the time for initiative, he takes no initiative.  
Young, strong, but lethargic, the resolves of his heart exhausted, the lazy, lethargic one loses the path to discernment.  
281

---

Guarded in speech, well-restrained in mind, you should do nothing unskillful in body.  
Purify these three courses of action.  
Bring to fruition the path that seers have proclaimed.  
282

---

From striving comes wisdom; from not, wisdom's end.  
Knowing these two courses — to development, decline — conduct yourself so that wisdom will grow.  
283-285

---

Cut down the forest of desire, not the forest of trees.  
From the forest of desire come danger & fear.  
Having cut down this forest & its underbrush, monks, be deforested.  
For as long as the least bit of underbrush of a man for women is not cleared away, the heart is fixated like a suckling calf on its mother.  
Crush your sense of self-allure like an autumn lily in the hand.  
Nurture only the path to peace — Unbinding — as taught by the One Well Gone.  
286-287

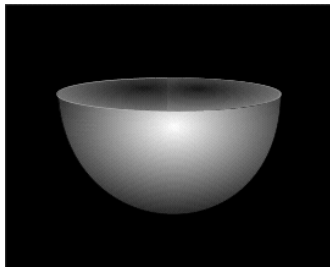
---

'Here I'll stay for the rains. Here, for the summer & winter.'  
So imagines the fool, unaware of obstructions.  
That drunk-on-his-sons-&-cattle man, all tangled up in the mind: death sweeps him away — as a great flood, a village asleep.  
288-289

---

There are no sons to give shelter, no father, no family for one seized by the Ender, no shelter among kin.  
Conscious of this compelling reason, the wise man, restrained by virtue, should make the path pure — right away — that goes all the way to Unbinding.

---



## Some thoughts about this Dhammapada Verse:

When one embraces life as a spiritual journey, all that unfolds is known as sacred. Each person's life is their spiritual path and all the unique day to day events are the teachings that it brings. This was true for Shakyamuni Buddha 2500 years ago, just as it is true for each of us today.

### Life Unfolding IS our Spiritual Path

In this Dhammapada verse, Shakyamuni Buddha (from whose various teachings all of these Dhammapada verses are taken) shared with his students the “guidelines” that helped him to realize the path to wisdom and to an end of suffering. He did not say that the “Buddhist” path was the path because there was, as yet, no body of teachings called “Buddhism.” He offered guidance about how to perceive our life events, who we are, and choices we can make to keep from wandering about lost in confusion. I will share the life story of Shakyamuni Buddha in a very abbreviated way and you will see that even he felt lost some of the time. He suffered enormously on his path, just as all us ordinary people do. No one escapes suffering. But, like you who are reading this, there must be some great inner motivation that pushes us all onward on a spiritual path of evolution. If you had no such push, you would not even be interested in picking up a newsletter on spiritual growth and healing. You might be more attracted to *Playboy* magazine – not that it is not a spiritual guide too. But, the Buddha left us all the gift of sharing what he learned from his experiences. No matter what tradition or religion, if any, that you feel is yours, his guidelines help us on the way to realization. These teachings are not a “belief system”. They are a methodology that can be applied by anyone in gaining a more profound experience of self and reality, and to gain in spiritual wisdom.

### Shakyamuni Buddha's Life Story

It is said that Sidhartha Gautama (Shakyamuni Buddha as he was called after achieving the state of enlightenment or Buddhahood), had lived many previous lives of spiritual quests. The good karma of these lifetimes contributed to a readiness to undertake such a deliberative journey to know Truth. Maybe this is true for you too.

In 563 BC, Sidhartha was born in Kapilavastu (now in Nepal) into the Gautama family of the Shakya clan. They were members of the priestly-warrior caste and Sidhartha's father was head of the tribe, or a king. Sidhartha was destined to rule after his father's death and there was a prophecy that he would either be a great king or a great spiritual leader. Well, of course, his father wanted him to be a great king so he shielded him from all things spiritual and from the ordinary world and all of its struggles. Sidhartha lived a life of luxury and had the best of everything, including the finest education. He married Yashodhara and had a son. I expect that under the circumstances, Sidhartha was a pretty happy guy.

*Then came a time when Sidhartha spent a good deal of time lost and confused, but his experiences were helpful in discerning a path that would become a gift to all future beings - us. For us too, even when we do not recognize the wisdom of our teachings that grow from struggle or how our life will be a gift to others, it is still true.*

***Here is more of the story:***

Sidhartha rarely left the palace but there was something that compelled him to know more about the world. Stories differ but one is that he saw a servant who was ordinarily hidden. He recognized that this man did not have a perfect life and he began to realize that perhaps life was not so great for everyone else. So he arranged with his primary servant to sneak out into the village on various occasions. There he saw that life was actually quite horrific for many. He saw the harshness and pain that existed for most of those in his kingdom and this opened up his heart. He saw an old man who was struggling with his infirmities. He saw a sick man suffering the ravages of disease. And, most shocking, he saw a dead man. He had never experienced any of these confrontations himself and he was desperate to find a Truth that would allow him to know the reason for such suffering. Then, on one trip out of the palace, he saw a holy man who was meditating with a look of great peace. At that point, he knew that he too must find that peace and the answers that perhaps that saddhu knew. At the age of 29, Sidhartha secretly left the royal compound, leaving behind his wife, son, father and mother. He gave up all claims to his princely titles and roles. He went into the forest and joined the Brahman ascetics and hermits and studied meditation with them. He achieved high levels of meditative awareness but could not find the ultimate answers he was searching for. For six years, he practiced severe asceticism including fasting and very intense breathing exercises. He had meditated, studied, and had had many very profound experiences of transcendent awareness but knew there was more to Know. These practices almost killed him but did not bring him to a realization of Truth. He finally abandoned these practices even though the other meditators harshly criticized him for that. He began to eat again and to live a more balanced life. He followed a path of his heart and listened to what seemed right to him. At some point his inner wisdom let him know that sitting in meditation would bring him the answers that he sought. In what is now Bodhi Gaya, India, he chose to sit under a large Bodhi tree, vowing not to rise until he had reached the clarity and awareness of ultimate Truth.. You have probably heard the stories of the Maras (obstacles and obscurations) that arose during his meditation to obscure his focus and discourage him. (Are you identifying with a lot of this story so far???) Then, at the age of 35, under the Bodhi tree while the moon was full, Sidhartha did reach enlightenment. He realized the Truth that he had sought. At first he told no one, except as one story goes, he ascended into Heaven to see his mother. It was she that convinced him to return to the realms of ordinary beings and to teach them the path that he had found. (Mothers are relentlessly demanding of their kids, aren't they?) After contemplating long and hard about whether anyone could ever understand and benefit from his experiences, he decided to share his awarenesses in hopes that others might also transcend the suffering of their lives. He was just an individual, of course, a bit out of the ordinary, but one who cared so much about others that he wanted to offer a methodology that could help them. He knew that any person could achieve enlightened awareness just as he had, although it requires extraordinary focus and discipline. His wish was for all beings to be free of suffering.

Others then called Sidhartha the Shakyamuni Buddha (sage of the Shakyas) because he had realized enlightenment and Buddhahood. The ascetics with whom he had practiced for so long met the Buddha in the forest and they immediately recognized that he had changed. They begged to know what he knew. So the five ascetics and all the nearby animals and birds, gathered around to hear his first teachings. This location is now called Deer Park and is near the city of Benares in India today. That first teaching was called, ***The Turning of the Wheel of Dharma***. From then on, the Buddha taught all who came to hear him. A small group of followers lived in the forests with him and followed his guidance. Such a community following a teacher is called a sangha. It wasn't until over one hundred years after Shakyamuni Buddha's death that these teachings were compiled into collections of teachings. There are many translations and versions left to us today and some are compiled into this collection called the **Dhammapada**. There are also teachings that are called the Sutras. Buddha taught for 45 years and died at the age of 80 in 483 BC.

What the Buddha left are "guidelines" in thinking about reality, meditation practices, and very important, teachings about thoughts, words and actions that bring stability and calm to our life. They make the achievement of more subtle states of meditative experience a possibility. The path that is "best", as our **Dhammapada** verse says, is not a belief system or dogmatic approach that asks one to believe a certain way. Anyone can apply these same guidelines of behavior and teachings of meditative views and can experience great benefit in their everyday life. More importantly, we can gain spiritual realization from these teachings.

Here in our **Meditation** for this month are some directions to help us all follow Shakyamuni Buddha's path to the end of suffering and the realization of transcendent awareness.



## A MEDITATION

### The Four Noble Truths and The Eight Fold Path

When these teachings were offered, there was no “Buddhism”. There was only a man who had put these guidelines into practice for himself and achieved a rare state of realization of sacred Mind. He wanted to share what he did with others so that they too could have that same experience. We read of enlightenment but few ever experience it. We are told though that each of us already is and always has been enlightened because that is our true, essential nature. We all have the capacity to realize our innate enlightened state, but we do need to find a path to make that realization possible. His motivation was to help others to go beyond the suffering that every ordinary person experiences and know that true nature. So here are the *Four Noble Truths* and the *Eight Fold Path* that will guarantee you a life of less suffering, if nothing else. Our prayer is that all beings will awaken to their True and Sacred Essence. Remember that this is a very abbreviated explanation and requires much more extensive reading and study than what is here. Hopefully though, this might be a start.

First, reread our **Dhammapada** verse and see how each teaching helps to clarify perspectives and guidelines about how to live a more stable life. The verses allow us to experience a subtle and pure view of **All that Is** just as Sidhartha did 2500 years ago.

### The Four Noble Truths

#### 1. The Truth of Misery

In essence, we can interpret this as saying that all beings will face difficulties ranging from a general unhappiness about one’s life, to the great sufferings of illness, loss, pain and death. There is no being ever born who does not experience suffering.

#### 2. The Truth of the Source of Misery

I will quote Lama Surya Das in his interpretation of the second **Noble Truth**. He says in **Awakening the Buddha Within**, “Life is difficult because of attachment, because we crave satisfaction in ways that are inherently dissatisfying.” I will add that this is the key to understanding our relationship to suffering. Whether it is just a longing for ice cream when one is on a diet, or the great pain experienced when one is dying of cancer, life is a continual process of reaching for something beyond our present moment and which we believe will make us happy. We are always “attached” – or grasping for – a fantasy that we believe will free us from pain. Of all of our myriad attachments, the most compelling is the attachment to a ‘self’, a physical/emotional/psychologically constructed **ME**. Without a conceptualized self, there would be no **ONE** that *wants*. There would be no **ONE** demanding to be the ruler of **OUR** world. No **ONE** who is demanding that we fulfill the wishes of this **ME**.

#### 3. The Truth of Cessation of Misery

It is possible to be liberated from this relationship to suffering.

#### 4. The Truth of the Path

Again, to quote from Lama Surya Das, “The way to realize this liberation and enlightenment is by leading a compassionate life of virtue, wisdom, and meditation. These three spiritual trainings comprise Shakyamuni Buddha’s teachings of the **Eight Fold Path** to Enlightenment.

### The Eight Fold Path

**The Eight Fold Path** is a map to bring stability to life. It also allows us to realize more subtle states of consciousness awareness. Each of these steps on the **Eight Fold Path** are actually quite complex and may be understood at ever greater levels of subtlety and wisdom. They are also meant to be understood and practiced as totally interactive and inseparable, one from another, so that as we make progress in one area we gain insight and a deeper understanding in all of the others. What I share with you here is very brief and not at all comprehensive. I encourage you to read all that you can find on these teachings, but remember, realization comes from meditative practice where the teachings are applied. It can never be achieved by intellectual understanding alone.

## **Right Vision**

This is the capacity to see All That Is as pure and empty of our deluded and ordinary conceptual view. Of course, right away you see the great challenge of these teachings. To take even this first step on the **Eight Fold Path** means that one must have achieved great steps in meditative awareness and to know the meditative experience of EMPTINESS. Meditate meditate meditate. Since this is our **Dharma Friends** meditation, we remember here to develop focus, stability, and insight during our many, many, many hours on the meditation cushion. We must first grow to realize the state of emptiness where we know that all that appears to our senses in our ordinary view of reality is, in actuality, compounded intellectually and has no true existence. Until we are able to rest in subtle states of awareness, we cannot have this experience of emptiness and pure awareness. So this is step one on the path.

## **Right Conception**

We must grow beyond the focus on a self and an attitude of achieving anything, even enlightenment, for our own sake. To focus on self and to concretize even further this very commanding delusion of a self is to strengthen our attachment to self. In Buddhism, we take a Bodhicitta vow to dedicate our lives to liberating all beings from pain. So the most beneficial way to view our life, to grow beyond a self focus, is to strengthen our motivation to benefit others.

## **Right Speech**

**Right Speech** is pretty self-explanatory but take these precepts beyond what one might think in general society. Do not even think lies, gossip, or harsh language, much less speak them out loud. The thing to remember here is that we are training our inner ME to not be so self-serving and to break the pattern of ME AS MOST IMPORTANT. Such beliefs keep turmoil in our life and with that focus, we cannot grow beyond ME to achieve any more subtle levels of experience. The rules of **Right Speech** are:

**Do Not Lie**

**Do Not Gossip or tell false tales**

**Avoid harsh and abusive language**

## **Right Conduct**

Again, **Right Conduct** lists some guidelines that are similar to the teachings of most spiritual traditions. The hard thing is to actually follow these guidelines. Again, do not even think the thoughts that break these vows. It is obvious that life would be more tranquil and we could be kinder beings if we follow the rules of **Right Conduct**, which are:

**Do not kill others beings**

**Do not take anything not freely given**

**Refrain from unwholesome Sexual Conduct**

**Refrain from Intoxicants that cause Heedlessness**

## **Right Livelihood**

Make your life's work a beneficial thing for all beings rather than making money by doing any activity that causes harm or suffering to others.

## **Right Effort**

These last three categories of the **Eight Fold Path** are to guide meditative practices and meditative awareness. To grow spiritually requires effort where we actually seek to follow a path with dedication. We can be guided by the Four Great Efforts:

**The Effort to avoid what is unwholesome**

**The Effort to overcome existing unwholesome thoughts or actions.**

**The Effort to develop good and wholesome thoughts and to lead an enlightened life.**

**The Effort to maintain the goodness that exists.**

## **Right Mindfulness**

Meditation is the way one trains in **Mindfulness** as a meditative awareness. Here is a quote from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche from **Journey to Enlightenment** that describes this 7<sup>th</sup> step of **Right Mindfulness**.

“The whole thrust of Buddha’s teaching is to master the mind. If you master the mind, you will have mastery over body and speech... Mastery of the mind is achieved through constant awareness of all your thoughts and actions.... Maintaining this constant mindfulness in the practice of tranquility and insight, you will eventually be able to sustain the recognition of wisdom even in the midst of ordinary activities and distractions. Mindfulness is thus the very basis, the cure for all samsaric afflictions.”

## Right One-pointed Contemplation

And for this last step of the **Eight Fold Path**, I will again quote a bit of Lama Surya Das who says, "Right Concentration involves more than the simple act of focusing. ... Right concentration implies a unification of spiritual intentionality, focus, mental discipline, energy, and attention. In Right concentration we skillfully collect and harness all of our energy so that every part of our being is integrated and focused, working together toward our goal of enlightenment. Once you have arrived at this point, concentration in this sense is not forced, restricted, or fixated, but instead rests naturally where it is placed. And, to clarify a little more, I'll add what one of my precious teachers, Lama Tharchin Rinpoche, always says – *Rest effortlessly.....*

## For our meditation this month –

- Practice contemplative meditation with each of the Four Noble Truths and each of the steps on the *Eight Fold Path*.
- Have a time of silent meditation on your cushion and then rest with each of these ideas.
- Think of it as though you are planting seeds in the earth. Reading the words puts the seeds in the ground of your consciousness. Your meditation time is offering them the nurturing rain to begin their journey as sprouts. Your life experiences lived with awareness will bring about their blossoms of wisdom and enlightenment.



## From Your Letters

*Like covering over with a false surface a hole full of fire, slipping thro' which the body is burnt, so is the fire of covetous desire. The wise man meddles not with it. -Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King*

## Execution Alert of our Dharma Friends family members –

It may be that when you receive this September issue, our *Dharma Friend* Terrick Nooner will be facing an execution the evening of September 18. Many of us are doing all we can to appeal to the governor and to persuade the courts to reconsider that he does indeed have a mental illness and should not be executed. Watch the news and if you hear that Arkansas will be having an execution on the 18<sup>th</sup>, spend that night in prayer with Terrick and send him support on his journey from suffering. *Terrick, we are all thinking of you, are with you, and we are sending you love.*

It could also be that before you receive your October *Dharma Friends*, our friend Jack Jones will also be facing an execution in Arkansas. Governor Mike Beebe has set an execution date for October 16. On September 7, the parole board will hear his clemency appeal. Again, please watch the news. Jack has shared poignant and excellent writing and fabulous drawings with us through the years. If he is killed, Jack has asked that his friends do the prayers of rescuing sentient beings. As much as you can, save beings from death and dedicate the benefit of your actions to all beings everywhere. For those in the free world, this might be to go to a bait shop and buy crickets and worms and release them where they can have a happy life. Or you can free wild animals back into their true environment – birds, fish or even animals that are sold as pets but would be happier on their own can be freed. If you do not have this option, a wonderful practice is to take all insects that you see inside your facility to a peaceful outdoor setting if you can. At least, take them to a safer place. As you do this, pray for Jack and send great blessings that he will achieve the highest state of enlightenment on this journey. *Jack, we will be with you all the way and sending you so much love.*



by Jack Jones

## *May the laws of the land become compassionate.*

*"I am breathing in and making my whole body calm and at peace. I am breathing out and making my whole body calm and at peace." This is how one practices." -The Sutra on Full Awareness of Breathing*

**From Jeff "Max" Maxwell** (he gave permission to use his name):

Dear Anna and *Dharma Friends*, Hey, how are you all doing? Me? I breathe. I've been getting **Dharma Friends** for about six months now and I really like it. It helps me remember that I'm not the only guy who's trying to find their way in this crazy, wonderful universe. Thank!!!

I just want to share some ideas that some of my neighbors in ADC and I have passed around amongst ourselves. I notice that a lot of the letters that make it into **D.F.** speak of God(s). I, myself, have never been a Christian or follower of any other organized religion, although, I would not consider myself an atheist. Agnostic, maybe, but I abhor spiritual labels. I never gave Gods much thought until recently because I get asked about it quite a lot being an open Buddhist. Some people are quite confrontational, even though I am not. I'm not against anyone's beliefs. The Buddha taught that there were an infinite number of paths to liberation. These are some of my thoughts on God(s).

Does anybody know who or what God is? If so, then who? Jesus? Mohammed? George W. Bush? God, by his/her very nature is beyond human comprehension. You can ask the most learned religious teacher to tell you what God is and the best you'll get is a list of human attributes and emotions. So you end up with angry Gods, vengeful Gods, loving Gods, Creators, Destroyers, and alien Gods that want you to poison yourself so he can cruise by in his space ship and pick you up for a ride to heaven (ex. Jim Jones). And is it just me or does a "merciful" God that wants you to take yourself out of the game with as many non-believers as you can seem like a contradiction to you? If God had the knowledge and power to set the whole universe in order and motion from the smallest sub-atomic particle to immense galaxies, how come he/she also invent a process as effective and beautiful as evolution? Intelligent Design vs. Evolution? Why bother? We're here right now, right? Besides, evolution seems pretty damn intelligent to me. How does Pat Robertson know what God wants me to do? Or Louis Farrakhan? Or the Pope? Do they have God's e-mail address or something? I'm not sure I like their Gods anyway, they seem so grumpy. I think God has a sense of humor. Want proof? How about the duck-billed platypus or midgits? Flatulence? I don't know who or what God is and neither do you. Nobody does. That's why it's called faith, people! If we really knew, it would be called fact.

Since I can not directly observe God and no one has God's phone number (I checked and it's unlisted) I guess I'll have to settle for the next best thing, ME! I remember reading somewhere that God made me in his/her image. If I can figure myself out, I think I might be pretty close to having an understanding of God. What else in the universe could we really know besides this pile of bones and guts held together by a few scattered thoughts? And that's harder than turning lead into gold (which has been done in a particle accelerator, by the way). I'm not saying not to seek for God. Quite the opposite, just look in the right place. You won't find him in some stuffy building with fancy stained glass windows or in some dirty old book. Remember, Right Effort, Right View, and Right Concentration. Know what you can know while you have the chance. This life is so short and there are so many distractions. It just doesn't seem to make much sense to bicker over something like what you should name your God or what day you should worship on or what language you should pray in. Aren't there enough problems without that crap? For God's sake people, give it a rest already!

How is it we can launch a missile from halfway around the world and drop it in someone's chimney, but we are using 30 year old technology to send our astronauts into space without being certain that we'll be able to get them up there and back alive. American citizens will condone spending trillions of their tax dollars to kill people so they can continue supporting an economy that is unsustainable in the long run and is poisoning the very Earth we depend on for life, and do it knowingly. What's wrong with this picture? Are we doomed? It doesn't look good for us. We will vow to save all sentient beings then sit around with our thumbs up our rears and ask, "Who's going to do something?" Me, that's who! And you! If not you, then who? If not now, when? Take the wheel and steer. If we crash at least we tried. If you don't, we will crash for sure. Do anything. Recycle. Instead of driving that 3 ton SUV a mile to lunch so you can buy a dead animal on a bun, pack a lunch, or walk – you probably need the exercise anyway. I swear, next time I see someone sitting behind the wheel of a gas guzzler, sucking on a double mocha latte' in a Styrofoam cup, crying about the war in Iraq or the environment, I'm going to give up on my vow of non-violence! Well, not really, but if I thought it would do any good, I might give it a shot. In all actuality, I have hope for my fellow humans. Things may have to get worse before they get better – a lot worse – but we'll make it. You and I just have to do what needs to be done now to make the world a better place to live. Even from behind bars, there's so much to be done. Especially behind bars. Where else will you find such a concentration of suffering and ignorance. Do the Bodhisattva thing! Lead by example, if you start acting like you've got some sense, people around you will too.

I guess you've read enough of my ranting for one sitting, so I'll let you go now. Take care and keep up the good work. We appreciate and love you Anna and everyone else that makes **Dharma Friends** possible. Gassho,

*"In this era, to become a spiritual inquirer without social consciousness is a luxury that we can ill afford, and to be a social activist without a scientific understanding of the inner workings of the mind is the worst folly. Neither approach in isolation has had any significant success. There is no question now that an inquirer will have to make an effort to be socially conscious or that an activist will have to be persuaded of the moral crisis in the human psyche, the significance of being attentive to the inner life. The challenge awaiting us is to go much deeper as human beings, to abandon superficial prejudices and preferences, to expand understanding to a global scale, integrating the totality of living, and to become aware of the wholeness of which we are a manifestation."*

■ Vimila Takar in her book, "**Spirituality & Social Action: A Holistic Approach**"

**From G.S.:** Dear Anna, Much love to you and yours, always. I received the beautiful letter on autumn paper. I also received the two last journals that were very educational, entertaining, and insightful. You are a blessing but what stood out the most for me was the fact that you were once a practicing psychotherapist. As I before mentioned, I have graduated a Career Course in Psychology/Social Work. I am about to take another in Alcohol/Drug Counseling. My goal is to eventually assist an actual counselor, offering my own insight to rehabilitation, but I have thus far been unable to contact any free world counselors or psychologists. They won't write me back, which is understandable in regard to my record, but I feel that once I get out and can present myself in person, it'll go better. No less, I am discouraged and could very much use some direction in this area. I was hoping to use the remainder of my time, three and ½ years, preparing to assist someone who could/would show me what they need, but like I said, they won't write back. If you can put me in touch with any practicing psychotherapist or counselors, I'd love to write them and introduce myself. See if I'm able to offer any help to their profession. With that, I appreciate your time, love, and support. Sincerely,

*If the perfection of generosity  
Were the alleviation of the world's poverty,  
Then since beings are still starving now  
In what manner did the previous Buddhas perfect it?*

*The perfection of generosity is said to be  
The thought to give all beings everything,  
Together with the fruit of such a thought.  
Hence it is simply a state of mind.  
-Santideva, "Bodhicaryavatara"*

**From D.M.:** Dear Anna, Hello again, how are you? I'm not bad here. I got your letter the other day, so I wanted to get back with you. As always, I'm glad you enjoyed my writings! I haven't written any more poetry lately, but guess what? I'm writing another book! I still haven't finished my other book (about prison) but I had this idea in my head that I had to write down. Since then, it's kept my interest, so I've been working on it. It's good! (I know all writers think their writing is good) I think you'll like this one. It's basically a comedy about this little kid who was always fascinated with writing. He got in trouble for writing on walls, on himself, etc. Later, he realizes that there is writing everywhere. He gets fascinated with graffiti, and ends up becoming a notorious graffiti artist. It's funny, though I make a lot of jokes and use sarcasm. Of course, I make a lot of things happen to him as well. .... I normally do a lot of reading, but lately I've been writing with my spare time. It's hard for me to get a lot done because I don't spend much time in my cell. I've even been doing some work in the dayroom!

There are a group of guys who sit on the same bench with me every day. They are already hooked on the main character in my book (I named him Danny Boy). As I get more of it written out each day, they have me read it out loud to them. I'm already getting rave reviews!

Anyway, Ms. Anna – let me get this in the mail. You take care and know that I'll be doing the same. I am also enclosing a poem I wrote a few months ago. Feel free to use it if you like it. I'd hate for too many issues of **Dharma Friends** to come out with no "D.M." contributions. As always,

## **Casualties**

By D.M.

As two tree-stumps  
Wither away,  
They ponder their fate.  
One of them is proud  
That he gave his life  
For a noble cause.

“Thirty people now have shelter.  
They can sleep at night  
While my arms protect them.  
Because of me  
They’re safe and secure.  
For what proud reason  
Did you surrender your limbs?”  
The other tree-stump  
Is too ashamed to answer.  
All his limbs  
Which were strong and proud  
Have been sacrificed  
To become bills, worthless paper,  
And eventually, trash.  
He gave his life  
For nothing.

**From Minister:** Hello **Dharma Friends**, in issue #120, our brother J.M. wrote to share with us some interesting thoughts. All thoughts are rooted in something. J.M., you have questions that are commonly asked by many millions the world over – I say “millions” so freely because, who isn’t, at some point in their lives, unceasingly searching for “sensible and realistic” answers to questions?

Religion, brother, is practice. Religiously, we do many things throughout our lives: brush our teeth, wash our faces, clothe our bodies, eat, drink, and look to what pleases the physical senses in order to have that religious intake of satisfactions – though temporary they are. And it’s all temporary; that’s why we repeat it all again and again. Satisfaction, if truly guaranteed, usually comes in the form of constant repetitions. Physical repetitions that should serve to train the mind and add fruit to the proverbial building blocks of our lives, of which we’ll certainly reap the karmic effects of.

You shouldn’t feel bothered that Christians or anyone else can’t understand you not accepting some of their teachings. That’s okay. You don’t have to accept anything that doesn’t suit what your heart tells you is best for you in any moment of your life. You’re living your path. You’re walking your walk. You’re making footprints in the sands of eternity that’ll be there to remind you that, “Hey! I remember having come this way!” Go your way, and while you go, seek peace with others who, to you, seem to be going the “wrong way.” The good thing is: they’re going somewhere. Somewhere that puts their minds at ease. Somewhere that pleases them. But they’re doing what you’re doing, my brother: searching, studying, living, and learning. Who knows, you could gain a few jewels of wisdom from them – including a deeper grasp of what about them you disagree with so much.

You say you realize Buddhism is a “better way.” GOOD! Rev. Baksa once wrote and shared with me about what Buddhism believes in, “If asked about Buddhism and what it believes in, one sage summarized it this way: “Purify the heart, Avoid evil, Do good,” he wrote.

You’ll find the very same teachings in the Bible, the Qur’an, and in Buddha’s many sayings. Even in the Gita, theosophical writings, Siddha Yoga, Srimad Bhagavatam, and especially in the eyes, precious smiles, innocent laughter, and the pure heart of the ones who truly have all the “answers” – children. As Jesus the Avatara said: “For of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Hopefully, J.M., something I’ve said here will inspire you to continue to question, improve your practice, and treasure that wonderful strength you have to say: “I don’t know. Help me.” WOW! You’ve taught me a great lesson. Thank you J.M. Peace, blessings, and love to all,

*If you are afraid of pain,  
if you don't like it,  
do nothing evil,  
either openly or in secret.  
For if you do,  
even if you get up and run away  
you won't escape its pain.  
If you are afraid of pain,  
if you don't like it,  
take refuge in the Buddha,  
the Dharma and the Sangha.  
Train in the precepts.  
This is good.  
-Theri-Gatha, 246-249*

**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.*

*"His (Jesus's) disciples said to him, 'When will the kingdom come?'*

*'It will not come by watching for it. It will not be said, 'Look, here!' or 'Look, there!' Rather, the Father's kingdom is spread out upon the earth, and people don't see it.'"*

-- From the Gospel of Thomas in the Nag Hammadi Library

<http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/gosthom.html>

**From Your Rob (Thubten Zopa):** Now, you know I'm dying to chime-in on the "K.W. files." First of all, let me say that I admire your balls [Anna's and Kristopher's] for printing K.W.'s letter. Hell of a decision to make, but it was absolutely the RIGHT decision. Anna's teachings aside, issue #124 was without a doubt, the most BUDDHIST issue I've seen.

K.W. is a sage and a Bodhisattva! I love it. I think K.W. should be a regular, featured contributor! Great, pure truth. GOOD STUFF guys and a brilliant move. (Just imagine if Dharma Friends fetched \$2.00 an issue – you would have made a shrewd move, financially. PROBABLY.)

I've read K.W.'s letter over and over and I can't find a thing wrong with it. I want to join K.W.'s club of "Right View."

The first time through, as soon as I perceived the direction K.W. was going in, my mind panicked and I scanned ahead to see if "R.N." was anywhere in there. And because I didn't see my name, it made the experience so much easier, of course. Kind of wish I had been roasted, so I could see my reaction then.

But if K.W.'s words cause suffering, it's not his words; it's the "self" and its reaction. Self-cherishing and pride are the causes of suffering; IGNORANCE. K.W.'s letter is a supreme teaching. WOW.

If we want to feel good, we can have someone lie to us – piss down our backs and tell us it's raining – and tell us what we want to hear.

But we don't need to hear what sounds good. That's a waste of time. If the doctor tells patients "You're fine! Go on home!" How has he helped them? K.W. didn't say anything that we haven't thought. Dharma Friends does have a bit of a reputation for being "warm, fuzzy and "Polly-Anna"ish... unrealistically ideal and nauseatingly positive. You know, no one's gonna "see" anyone later, in the Pureland... like we're all gonna hang out. Dharma Friends also tends to lean toward theism at times – the letters – and dangerously maintains the existence of a "self," ego, or "soul."

Some of the Dharma Friends letters are straying a bit far from the Buddha's own words and message. While K.W.'s method of delivery appears to be pretty unpopular in the Dharma Friends forum, it seems to be based upon pretty astute insight. For folks to call for Anna to execute her powers as "Chief" and censor K.W., is to call for discrimination. Anna has always had my respect because (among other things) she prints letters that she knows are wrong. She gives everyone an equal slice of the pie with no regard to... well, no picking through, lookin' for the "favorites." I look back at some of the crap I wrote that she printed and shake my head. It's like "Oh, wow – did I do that?" So Anna saw me say some pretty stupid crap.

But instead of censoring me, Anna allowed karma to run its course. Two years later, I can see what she knew all along, and she allowed me to see it... for myself. She knew no one could tell me. I had to realize, myself. And we realize by seeing and looking. Looking at ALL the letters... K.W.'s included.

So, I say Thank You for printing K.W.'s letter. We're supposed to laugh and benefit from what's beneficial; and simply observe and leave the rest. No big deal. Why would it be? There is no one to insult, and no one doing the insulting.

To feel insulted is to cling to the idea of "self." I get mad when my cellie insults Buddhism. But that's "Wrong View." There is no "Buddhism"... there is only Dharma. And Dharma doesn't FEEL, care, or receive insults. Anyone who felt insulted by K.W. has work to do. They need to keep looking... meditate more. Allow the passions to subside, and clarity to arise.

K.W.'s letter would probably do well to keep folks on point, on their toes; mindful of how they're presenting their "selves." I really would love to see K.W. around more often; it can only improve the quality of the submissions. Bring out the best in us, no?

So, again, I thank you Anna and Kristopher, for the compassionate lesson. Thanks for not pissin' down my back. I don't need fuzzy bunnies and fluff. I need to have it as it is; the way things are. Don't place my "feelings" before my liberation. Good looking out. And thanks for being fair to K.W. in giving him equal air-time. Thanks for "keepin' it real! May everyone benefit – be well.

*AND another on our ongoing dialogue -*

**From Daiji:** A note to K.W. Perhaps a slow, deliberate and contemplative reading of the "Scripture of the Brama's Net" would prove useful?



by Jack Jones

## **Your spiritual path is the unfolding of your life.**

Write your spiritual life journey. Notice the themes, the lessons, and what you have learned. Write about how you would never have grown to be the awakening being you are today without those experiences, no matter how painful they may have been. There were no mistakes. Study your story as though you are the wisdom teacher who is helping you gain insight and Truth from your life events. Keep up your writing every day as a way to bring clarity to each days' events. Remember that all that unfolds is sacred reality and you are, in truth, a sacred being – maybe with a little more self- (oops, make that *NO-SELF*)- discovery yet to go.

***Here is another person just like you on a spiritual life journey lived with awareness.....***

"I am convinced that the universe is under the control of a loving purpose, and that in the struggle for righteousness man has cosmic companionship. Behind the harsh appearances of the world there is a benign power. To say that this God is personal is not to make him a finite object beside other objects or attribute to him the limitations of human personality; it is to take what is finest and noblest in our consciousness and affirm its perfect existence in him. It is certainly true that human personality is limited, but personality as such involves no necessary limitations. It means simply self-consciousness and self-direction. So in the truest sense of the word, God is a living God. In him there is feeling and will, responsive to the deepest yearnings of the human heart; this God both evokes and answers prayer."  
-- Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Thank You!** Gary Hallford did a wonderful thing in the name of **Dharma Friends** . We received a beautiful card of a mountainside waterfall surrounded by towering pines. It said: ***In your name, a tree has been planted.***

**Dharma Friends has been honored with the gift of a tree, planted in a fire-devastated National Forest near Yellowstone. This gift comes to you from G.W. Hallford**

Your tree, a gift that gives forever,  
Will help replenish this magnificent forest and  
Preserve the habitat of the wildlife  
That call it their home.

**The National Arbor Day Foundation**

**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.**

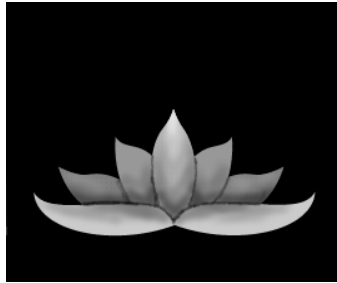


"A human being is part of the whole called by us 'universe', a part limited in time and space. We experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest. A kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from the prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty." - Albert Einstein

# Dharma Friends

September 2007 issue # 128

copyright 2007, Compassion Works for All

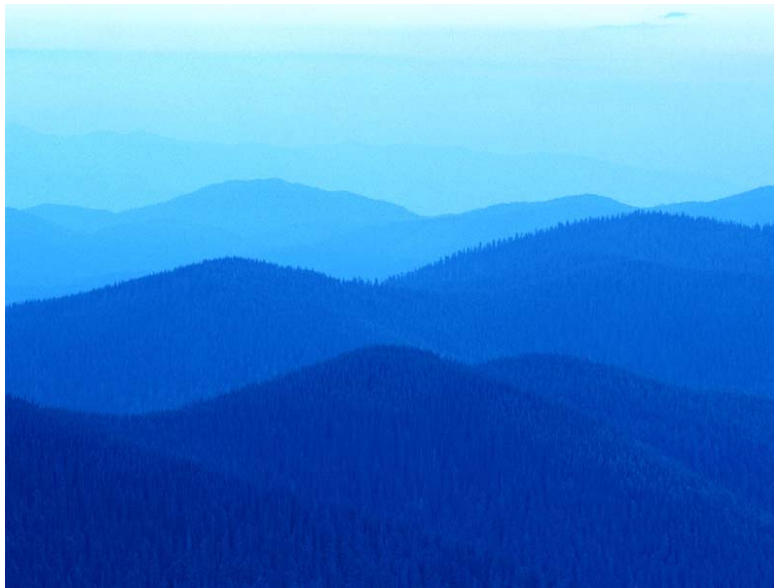


## Additional Pages for EMAIL VERSION of Dharma Friends

*I like to walk alone on country paths, rice plants and wild grasses on both sides, putting each foot down on the earth in mindfulness, knowing that I walk on the wondrous earth. In such moments, existence is a miraculous and mysterious reality.*

*People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child--our own two eyes. All is a miracle.*

**-Thich Nhat Hanh, "Miracle of Mindfulness"**



**A report card:** In last month's issue, we discussed the difficult issues of dealing with loved ones who become permanently or temporarily incapacitated in any way. I included a form on which to write our wishes and our loved ones' wishes, and encouraged chummy and bonding get-together to fill them out. We were each to write down the ways that we would like others to help us should the day come when we could no longer make decisions for ourselves.

Well, wanting to be 100% honest with you and to not ask you to do anything I wouldn't do, I felt that my husband (who many of you know) and I should practice what I preach. We sat down to discuss and fill out the two pages. But then, he just dove right in and started writing. He said he wanted to fill it out and did not need to discuss it. Then I realized he was writing those answers down a bit too easily and not seeming to contemplate such difficult issues for very long. I was suspicious.

"Are you writing, 'Just shoot me' for the answers?" I asked.

He looked surprised. "Did you read over my shoulder?" he asked.

Sure enough, for each of those questions requiring that he surrender control over life decisions, he had written, "Shoot me."

*Hmmm.* Oh, well. So much for another good plan to make the future easier. There is no fixing the suffering of samsara.

***And a report about our disappearance!*** As I write this, Jim and I leave tomorrow, the 4<sup>th</sup> of September, for Argentina for two weeks. We will start with a week in Buenos Aires, then go down to Patagonia to the penguin colonies, the sea lion colonies, and the Right Whale breeding grounds of Peninsula Valdez. Cooler still (after our hot August in Arkansas) we go down to the glaciers in El Calafate and hopefully do some mini-treks, as they call them, and some boat excursions to see the glaciers calving. This is our first vacation in a number of years, so we are excited. We will have email capacity periodically. So if you wonder where I have been and get this update on the 14<sup>th</sup>, know you can contact us that way if necessary. We'll be back on the 20<sup>th</sup>.



Our new friends on the beach....

***"People with a high level of personal mastery live in a continual learning mode. They never 'arrive.'" Sometimes, language, such as the term "personal mastery," creates a misleading sense of definiteness, of black and white. But personal mastery is not something you possess. It is a process. It is a lifelong discipline. People with a high level of personal mastery are acutely aware of their ignorance, their incompetence, their growth areas. Paradoxical? Only for those who do not see that "the journey is the reward."-- Peter Senge***

Taken from Thought for the Day... from <http://WisdomAtWork.com> offered by Joel & Michelle Levey



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

**A reader says: Anna - I don't believe that it is ALWAYS both people who cause the problems in a marriage. I keep reading what you say and I truly believe that I am not the problem and that my husband IS. I know that this sounds self-righteous (I'm not totally delusional) but I make efforts to be good to him and he is terribly cruel to me. I feel like I am a dedicated spiritual person but maybe this is too hard.**

**And I say to our reader -**

This is so hard, I know.

First of all, for our readers, we need to be clear about what “terribly cruel” is. Since I know her husband, I have a bigger picture. But – since this assessment is very important for anyone facing such issues, before moving forward, we need to determine what the behaviors are that we are referring to.

IS HE VIOLENT in ANY WAY? Does he hit you? Does he threaten you? Does he or could he hurt anyone else? Is his language abusive? Does he take any mind-altering substances that could lessen his impulse control when he is angry? At this point, if the answers are YES, I would say to seriously consider why you are there.

If he is not physically dangerous, then ask yourself what are the behaviors that *feel* cruel to you. Do you tell him clearly that his words and actions are hurtful and that he must stop at once? Is your request firm but not escalating? Overall, in your interactions, you also MUST be honest and ask yourself if you are escalating or provoking these behaviors in any way? Are you joining into the process in a way where you feel like the victim but then it becomes a fight with both of you participating willingly?

***Now, your question about how to proceed:***

Our first step in response to your question is to ask if you are looking for an answer to heal ego issues or do you want to consider this issue as one of spiritual growth? Only you can decide this. We all tumble back and forth between the struggles of ego's view of reality and the extra growth challenges that we take on as we commit to a path of consciousness growth. It is hard enough just to stay in balance with our physical/biochemical lens through which we grow up seeing the world, our learned emotional perspectives, and our ability to maintain an intellectual and relational assessment of life events. All of these together, along with all of our habitual ideas of self, are what we identify as ME. To begin to take the steps of spiritual growth requires that we have at least a reliable balance and awareness in our creation of an ego-self first. It is a lot to add the challenges of spiritual growth. If out of balance, ego is so compelling in its neediness and fear of survival, it is often too unstable to take those steps to a vaster and subtler view of reality. But, you and all who are reading this have a tug to grow beyond ego's view or you would have already set down *Dharma Friends* and other vehicles that encourage your growth on a spiritual path. Some part of you knows you are ready to grow beyond ego. And yet, when under stress, most of us forget. I know that I repeat virtually the same things again and again about getting lost in ego's realm, but hopefully the reminders will help. This repetition is yet another reminder and you can say, OH yes! I knew all this and I forgot. Or, maybe you will “get it” a little bit more each time that we repeat this

same information. We each grow in increments, getting a bit stronger in our spiritual view while ego's view falls away little by little.

### **Ego exploration first...**

Clearly, the task of working with a life issue for psychological healing and balance is different than how we would approach that same issue for spiritual growth. We should always check out our ego stability first because it can be very destabilizing psychologically to try to embrace a more subtle view of reality that ego cannot yet tolerate.

If we look at this difficult relationship relative to your psychological tasks, we might first look at why you chose this person. We would look at dysfunctional or even traumatic relationships in your history. Perhaps there was an abusive person in your childhood and in some unconscious search to heal this trauma, you have brought this person into your life as a reenactment. We could explore 101 scenarios but search for how your story fits together with his. Writing your life story can help to isolate the wound that you are searching to heal. Somewhere in your story though, you have a villain and you chose someone to take on that role for you today.

An example might be that someone with an abusive person in their past has a lengthy pattern of choosing abusive people because they are searching for a rescue. If such a person were involved in psychotherapy, it would be helpful for them to say – This person is a villain and I must rescue myself! In that case, perhaps the most healing thing might be to leave the relationship. Find the wound and then find what would have healed that injury initially if a loving adult had stepped in to help. Figure out how that healing can be applied today. You may or may not need to act it out.

When the awareness is clear as to the original wound, one can grow to be able to handle it differently today. One may be able to see that even though your partner is a fragile human being who doesn't do everything as you wish, he is not, in fact, a villain. But, until you are at least somewhat healed, it might be that you need a villain in your life to repeat your early trauma and you perceive him or her as far more villainous than they actually are. With your husband cooperatively playing the villain (he needs to play this out as much as you do), you can play the victim, just as you truly were in your childhood.

Can you see here why I say it takes TWO to create relationship dysfunction? Each drama is unique and there are no pat answers. We both play a role in unconsciously compatible dramas, and in this case, one person gets to play the "good guy" role, and the other may look like they are totally to blame.

### **The Answers are NEVER simple or easy**

To heal at the level of psychological dynamics, we must evaluate all aspects of the drama and the characters – all the created "selves" – who are involved in living out our inner unresolved trauma.

1. We must evaluate the physiological lens through which the players perceive their individual reality. If one person has the biochemistry of an untreated Bi-Polar Disorder, their reality is perceived differently than another who has had a frontal lobe brain injury.
2. Each player learned what "reality" is and who they are as a *ME* from family dramas and their culture. Someone growing up in poverty in skid row Los Angeles perceives reality through a different lens than one growing up in small town Cabot, Arkansas. They will never agree as to views of life without lots of introspection.
3. Because "reality" and "self" are our own creation, if we are overly reactive emotionally without the analytical capacity to dispassionately step back and view our self and life events, we will never learn a perspective broader than our limited, habitual, childhood self view.
4. At the psychological level, we need to develop awareness at all these levels and make decisions that will bring healing to old wounds and balance to our present life circumstances.

## **MINDFULNESS IS THE KEY**

**Ending an “abusive” or stressful relationship may heal an old wound**

**---or---**

**Staying in a relationship and learning how we invite the other to be abusive can heal us and the relationship.**

**Any option chosen will only bring healing if it is done with awareness.....**

**otherwise we will repeat the patterns again and again and again.....**

## **Taking Life Issues on our Spiritual Path ---- Seeing them as teachings on our Spiritual Life Journey**

If we feel truly that we have embraced a spiritual path, we then consciously take steps to lessen the importance of ego-self and to broaden our view to know the sacred unfolding of wisdom and truth. .

### ***On a spiritual path –***

- Only as we grow towards an experience of *no self* can we focus on others and grow in compassion.
- Only as we let go of our ego-created view of reality, can we be present to the ever arising NOW just as it is.
- This too is a path of evolution - from created self, to less self-identity, to *no-self*.
- We grow from ego-serving ideas of how reality should be to fill our needs to letting go of the need to control reality, of conceptualization, and of the experience of duality (the perception of self and other). Eventually, we learn to rest in the experience of boundaryless, sacred Vastness -- All That Is.

**“Villains” are no longer –**

**All beings are offered compassion when we follow a Spiritual Path**

On a spiritual path, a path of many evolutionary stages of development, we look again at the question of a difficult relationship. Depending where we are on our spiritual path, there might be different growth tasks and decisions to be made.

### ***An early step might be –***

I want to allow my partner to be a catalyst to remembering how I make *self* more important than other.

Or – I want to let this relationship teach me compassion for the pain that is ALWAYS behind the angry outbursts of my partner, just as it is for every one.

Or- I want to practice allowing whatever arises, even ferocious arisings, to be a meditative practice on NOW.

These “practices” are all very early lessons that we might take on as spiritual practice, but I’m sure all of us can see that even these steps are challenging stuff! We can see too that if we don’t have clarity and balance with our psychological issues, such challenges are recipes for emotional or even life disasters.

**Take Care of Yourself as you Journey on this Spiritual Life Path**

Some of you that are committed to a spiritual path know that these life issues are your growth work and you are basing the decisions you make in your life on that commitment. You are doing the work of dealing with life issues with awareness. But, all of us, no matter where we are on our path, may have

clarity one day and then slide backwards into confusion the next. If you start feeling lost and depressed, you may be taking on too much without enough support and guidance. Do not take on such a heavy-duty commitment without every-day vehicles to give yourself clarity and balance.

### **Here are some helpful things to do to stay in balance:**

Meditate – a lot!

Pray in whatever way it has meaning to you. Connect to your highest guidance while planting and nurturing the seeds of your evolution. Pray a Lot!

Develop access to your inner wisdom energy and your inner wisdom guide. Maybe you write, draw, paint, dance, see energy. Make sure every day gives you an opportunity to “tune in” and to assess that you are in balance as your life unfolds on this journey.

### **Now – back again to your plea.**

Only you can know if it feels like too much to take your relationship issues on as a spiritual growth issue. Take the time you need to finish the psychological issues that you need for your healing.

***Here is your present psychological view:*** You believe that it is true that one person can be “the problem” or “the villain”, which implies that the other (you) is their innocent victim. ☺ That is not a valid view but created out of some need of your self to have a villain. Consider why. **Here is a good clue:** **Whatever attitudes we habitually use toward ourselves, we will use on others, and whatever attitudes we habitually use toward others, we will use on ourselves. The situation is comparable to our serving food to ourselves and to other people from the same bowl. Everyone ends up eating the same thing--we must examine carefully what we are dishing out.** -Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, "Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness"

Are you ready to give up having a villain in your life? If not, who was the villain that wounded you originally? How? And what needs to happen in order to heal and to let go of that original trauma?

**If you want to take this relationship issue onto your spiritual path with the goal that it will be a source of growth, here are some reflections to meditate on.**

1. We want to grow beyond the judgement of declaring another a villain
2. We want to grow beyond the conceptual view of deciding that another person or thing is good or bad, right or wrong
3. We want to grow beyond all conceptual decisions and concretization of what is – all people, events, things..
4. We want to grow beyond a view that perceives unfolding reality as a good or bad drama of self and other
5. We want to embrace all beings with compassion and perceive their pure nature. We want to rest in a state of oneness with all beings
6. We want to view all unfolding beyond dualism and conceptualization, including growing beyond the experience of a self that perceives all unfolding
7. We want to see All That Is as empty of imputed reality and as pure and sacred expression

***Here is the perfect relationship practice for ALL of us:***

**See everyone as Buddha. This purifies the mind of ignorance and arrogance.**

-Master Baek, "Polishing The Diamond"

*No room for villains here.*

This is a lot to ponder. Don't be hard on yourself. But you can write **THERE ARE NO VILLAINS** in lipstick on the bathroom mirror. When you can say, “Yes, there are no VILLAINS”, then you can start to tackle this as a spiritual growth issue.

Just remember that you will forget – often – and whenever you forget, REMEMBER, and keep going. Our work is knowing that there are no villains anywhere. We are all One --pure and sacred-- inseparable .....



PLEASE 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](http://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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup>. 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 learning 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://www.dharmafriendsprisonoutreachproject.com) . You may forward any of those documents or any past **Dharma Friends** newsletters, or this newsletter, on to anyone who you believe would benefit from them.

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](mailto:anna@aristotle.net) to schedule your blessing.

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.

