



offers you

Dharma Friends

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

December 2011 issue # 178

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The Dhammapada The teachings of the Buddha



Chapter 18 – Pollution or Defilement

- 235 Resembling a withered leaf, you have the messenger of death at your side. Although a long journey lies ahead, you have still made no provision.
- 236 Hasten to cultivate wisdom. Make an island for yourself. Freed from stain and defilement, you will enter noble being.
- 237 It is time for you to come into the presence of the Lord of Death. There is no time for rest on this journey, yet what provision have you made?
- 238 Hasten to cultivate wisdom; make an island for yourself. Freed from stain and defilement you are released from birth and death.
- 239 Gradually, gradually, a moment at a time, the wise remove their own impurities as a goldsmith removes the dross.
- 240 As iron is destroyed by the rust it produces, so those who perform evil are corroded by their own action.
- 241 Lack of study leads to forgetting the teachings; neglect spoils the home; laziness leads to loss of beauty; heedlessness ruins attention.
- 242 Sexual misconduct diminishes those who perform it, stinginess diminishes those who could give. Acts that diminish their doer are stains indeed.

243 But the worst stain of all is ignorance. Be purified of this and you are free.

244 Life is apparently easy for one who lacks shame, who is as impudent as a crow, who is arrogant, aggressive, invasive and corrupt.

245 Life is not easy for those who have a sense of shame, who are modest, pure-minded and detached, morally upright and reflective.

246 -247 Whoever destroys life, disregards truth, is sexually irresponsible, takes what is not rightfully theirs, and heedlessly indulges in drugs, destroys the very roots of their own life.

248 Whoever is intent on goodness should know this: a lack of self-restraint is disastrous. Do not allow greed and misconduct to prolong your misery.

249 -250 People are inspired to be generous according to their faith and trust. If we become discontented with what we have been given, our meditation will be filled with endless mental affliction; but if we are free from this discontent, our meditation is full of peace.

251 There is no fire like lust, no obstruction like hatred, no trap like delusion, and no vortex like craving.

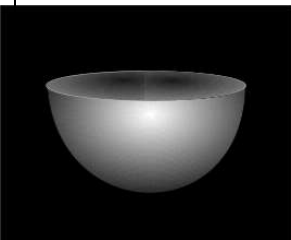
252 It is easy to see the faults of others, but it takes courage to look at one's own. As with chaff, one might winnow others' shortcomings while hiding one's own, as a stealthy hunter might conceal himself from his prey.

253 Those who always look for the faults of others – their corruptions increase and they are far from freedom.

254 No tracks are found in the air, there is no liberation apart from the Way. Most people tend to indulge in proliferation, from which Awakened Ones are free.

255 No tracks are found in the air, there is no liberation apart from the Way. There are no conditioned things that are permanent and yet the Buddhas remain unperturbed.

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Some thoughts about this Dhammapada verse: Defilement

Remember the story about Shakaymuni Buddha as he tried to find his right path? After many years of meditation practice and following many different methods, including very severe austerities which left him almost skeletal, he was watching a lute player tightening the strings to his instrument. The musician was trying to find the right tone; that perfect and beautiful note. He would tighten and loosen the strings until it was just right. Not too loose and not too tight. Once he had found the right balance, the lute player could play his music without impediment; without defilement.

As we each walk our path, we have to continuously keep retuning the strings of our life, finding what is good for us so that we grow and stay balanced. We make adjustments as we live in our body, watch our responses to life events, see our

emotions arise and dissipate, and offer our ever clarifying and deeper gifts that arise in importance in our life. Little by little, if we honor our path and tune the strings, the defilements that are our obstacles are worked with and they fall away.

We know through the teachings what an obstacle is. It is an act that will bring us negative karma. Anything that will harm ourselves and/or others is likely a defilement and we can read in this verse a long list of those things that will create suffering.

Yet, for many of us, we cannot easily go from living a life in the stressful world where we rely on many defense mechanisms, addictions, and cultural and familial habits that are full of defilements, to following the vows and lifestyle of the teachings. These teachings are hard to live!

One option, often taught in many traditions and in life, is to just *don't do* those bad things. Stop drinking. Stop wrong sex. Stop swearing. Stop eating bad stuff. Stop smoking. For some that approach works. Often though, we are just replacing one defilement with another because we may well be protecting our fragile self with that veil of self-protection.



But we can purify defilements little by little if we walk that middle way in our life. Our path reveals itself to us as we lift the veils that obscure our next step, and then our next and our next. Those veils **are** the defilements that keep us from seeing who we are and how to take that next step. The veils separate us from the truth of who and all that we are and we keep them there for as long as we need them. We keep them until we feel safe enough to live the truth of who we are. If we stay focused, we lift the veil and thus purify the defilement as we keep taking our next step.

If we stay present to the NOW of each mindful moment, we walk on our path that is always true and solid. When we lose our mindfulness and allow the veils to obscure our sense of our true self, we step off the path to one side or the other. We may find ourselves off in the swamp, or on the other side, we may be walking along high and perilous cliffs. It is as if we are walking at night with no flashlight to light our way and the path is tricky. Yet, finding ourselves in the brambles or swamp or clinging perilously to the cliff's edge gives us a clue that we are off the true path of our unfolding. We have lost touch with ourselves and our becoming. We wake up and try to be mindful again.

If we keep shining the light of awareness when we come to a defilement, we can learn a wisdom lesson.

What we call defilements were, at some phases of our life, something that saved us. Even the most horrific addictions can protect us from pain if we are not yet ready to face a reality in our challenging life. But we get stuck if we cling to a defilement too tightly, do not examine it truthfully, or begin the process of letting it go when we realize it causes us suffering. If we do not embody each aspect of life as a part of our path and use it for growth at each stage of our evolution, it can become a defilement. We integrate the life tasks and all that helps us at each point in our life and then move on to the next tasks of development.

The path of development that we all undergo:

First, as a small child, we discover life in our body and learn to utilize it as our life vehicle. We cling to the security of parents and grow from their nurturing to self-nurturing. Soon, we develop a sense of self, our psyche. Emotions and intellect are integrated into all that we are. We learn how to be skillful in surviving in relationships and society. We must be successful in the ordinary world or we won't survive and thrive. As teens or young adults, we may begin to have a sense of what our gifts are that we want to live out. In doing so, we grow beyond the focus on ego and self and we open our heart to serving and benefitting others. As offering our gift becomes our focus, we enter a world where lifting defilements transforms our view of self and we awaken into living in more subtle energetic realms. At the transformative levels of our path, we have the capacity to lift all boundaries and enter into All That Is.

At each of these stages of our walk on our unfolding path, we could get stuck by gripping too tightly to states and forms of security that hold us back from integrating our power and separate us from living our highest self. In this way, we create and embrace defilements of rigidity and hold veils that obscure us from developing our next step. An example is when we see a child that cannot let go of dependency on mother and developing their own inner self-nurturing skills. They expect that everyone should treat them like mother does and should make them number one and their total focus. By not integrating into their path the task of independence and self-nurturing, they have the obscuration of a personality dysfunction of always wanting a focus on an infantile ME! ME! ME! At some point, this trait will likely cause them harm and others will not tolerate them for very long. If they tuned into how this defilement was obscuring their growth on their true path, they would see how often they were ending up in the brambles or the cliff's edge. Things would not go well in their life.

We need to walk along the path while tuning the strings between too tight – too rigid- and too loose. We need to integrate all that arises into our life. As we pay attention to all that arises in the NOW, the stumbles and glitches become teachings and not defilements. To learn and grow with these wisdom teachings, we are far more likely to stay on our true path. Those defilements naturally fall away because we no longer need them to veil the truth of all that we are. And, the obstacles are seen as they truly are, an aspect of the path, a wisdom teaching, and not defilement at all.



A Meditation on Defilements

It is all in our point of view. We can focus on anything with a wish to rid ourselves of the negative, which we make a defilement, and try to cleanse ourselves. OR – we watch all that arises in our lives and hold it loosely without judgment. By giving it less energy and as we loosen our attachment, a ‘defilement’ can become a teaching about our stuck places.

One teaching that is present in Vajrayana Buddhism is about the beautiful peacock. Whereas eating poison can kill most of us puny ones, a peacock can eat poison and in some mysterious ways, it can be digested and assimilated and actually adds to the beautiful color in its feathers.

Our focus on defilements can be to attack them with diligence and ferocity so that we will refuse indulgence in all that will cause us contamination of our purity. Or - we notice our poisons and very gently and with great awareness, we watch ourselves play with our attachments and learn precious lessons while not succumbing to a self-destructive or other-destructive process.

The MEDITATION

We have done this meditation before but it sure is a powerful teaching, so let's do it again. Get a cookie or a candy bar or something that will be attractive to you but not over-the-edge destructive like a cigarette or a beer. Do your quiet and calming meditation to find your focus. Watch your breath or gently relax your body. If you do a special practice, you might do that first.

Now – place your cookie out before you as an offering. It is an offering to your inner wisdom. Present it nicely, like on a cloth or a napkin or on an altar if you have one.

Meditate on the cookie. Pay attention to everything that happens. Notice your physical reaction; your psychological reaction; your emotional reaction; and even any spiritual awareness that you have.

Do you have an urge just to pick it up and eat it?

Wait a second and contemplate: Can you appreciate that that cookie is before you because many, many beings helped to create it. Who grew the sugar? Who grew the flour? Who manufactured all the ingredients? Who mixed all those ingredients together? Who gave it to you? Did someone make it just for you – maybe your friend who works in the kitchen actually makes the cookies. That’s a great connection to the cookie. Or maybe someone sent you the money to buy the cookie. Or maybe it is factory made and someone opened up huge packages and put one on your tray, never having a clue that it was going to you. Or maybe they did? Meditate on the story of the cookie. How many people and places did it include until it arrived in front of you? Maybe even people all over the planet had something to do with your cookie. All that energy and positive intent from many who may not even have known they were making a cookie, has come to you. Look at this amazing cookie!

Now, take a nibble. Feel all that energy coming to you and flowing into you. Meditate as you eat your cookie. Anticipate your bite. Taste that first bite. Let it dissolve in your mouth. Feel the energy. Feel that you are taking in all that energy as well as the nutrition and benefit of the cookie that will fuel and nurture your body is flowing into you. Feel the magic sacred transference of something that was before you to the becoming of you in every cell of your body, boosting your energy and making all you do today more possible. How is your relationship with that cookie different as you allow it to be your sacred cookie, your sacred gift to your self, like the peacock taking in poisons and making beautiful feathers. The poison would be gobbling down a box of cookies mindlessly and making your self sick and fat. You are purifying your relationship to cookies into a sacred wisdom practice in a way that might benefit you more in your life than by banning cookies from your diet forevermore. **Enjoy the rest of your cookie. ☺**



From your Letters:

Holidays for Dharma Friends -November and December:

November 15, 2011 –Christian: Advent begins for Christmas

November 17 – Buddhism: Lhabab Duchen- Shakyamuni Buddha taught celestial beings in the god realm after his enlightenment when he was convinced to return to the human world to teach human beings. On this day, Lhabab Duchen, he descended three ladders to teach beings how to achieve enlightenment.

November 24 – Thanksgiving Day

November 26 – Islam: the first of Maharram celebrates the Hijra from Mecca to Medina

November 27 – Christian: the first Sunday of Advent

November 28 – Baha’I: it is the ascension of ‘Abdul-Baha when he died

December 5 – Islam: Ashura’, a time of great mourning at the martyrdom of Husain, Prophet Muhammad’s grandson.

December 6 – Jainism: Maunajiyaras is a day of meditating, silence and fasting

December 8 – Zen Buddhism: Rohatsu is the observance of the Buddha’s enlightenment in Japan. Zen monasteries usually hold week-long meditations that end on December 8 and one usually meditates all night on the 8th.

December 20 – Judaism: eve of Hanukkah and December 21 is the first day of Hanukkah

December 22 – Wicca: Yule, the New Year

Shinto: Tohji-taisai, the Grand Ceremony of the December Solstice

December 25 – Christian: Christmas

December 26 – Zoroastrianism: the death of Zarathustra ca. 6000 BCE

North Americans of West African heritage: Kwanzaa

December 28 – Judaism: last day of Hanukkah

December 31 – Zoroastrianism: the celebration of the creation of animals.

AND a few other reminders -

#1 - We are trying to become a well-oiled machine here and you can help us! Since we are growing so fast, I (Anna) have hardly any time to do more than keep up with writing the newsletters, our web site updates, and all of our other projects. As most of you know, Kristopher answers most of our letters with help from Chelle and Manal, even those addressed to me. He transcribes your letters that go into **Dharma Friends** and handles your book requests. Linda does the **Mindful Money** books and Chelle does the dictionaries. Linda gets the mail each day and sorts it out among everyone but can't read every letter **It would help Linda a lot if you would put on your envelopes if you are a subscriber who wants to change your address or if you are new and want to be put on the mailing list. Also write on the envelope if you want a book, a dictionary or a Mindful Money book, if you have an Ask Tim question, or if you are including a letter for Jeff's Kids.** Then she need not search through the letters for all that information and can send your letter on to the next person to take care of your request. Thank you so much.

#2 - And a request from Linda and Kristopher: For those inmates incarcerated in North Carolina prisons: we have been having some difficulty with requested books being returned to us because we are not sending them through Barnes and Noble or Amazon.com. If this happens to you, or if you suspect it might happen to you, please go through your chaplain. When requesting a book from us, please give us all the information we need to send it to you in care of your chaplain. Thanks.

#3 -ASK TIM got a bit lost in the shuffle. **If you have a burning question - ASK TIM!** Write us with your questions. Tim will tackle almost anything - except how to file your legal paperwork. Questions about life, getting a job, which fork to use at the dinner table, anything you have also wanted to know but did not know who to ask. Now try **ASK TIM!**

#4 -Become a DICTIONARY DROP TEAM PLAYER!

So many of you have asked for dictionaries through the years, we searched out a publisher who would help us in supplying dictionaries. But we have been so admiring of you for wanting dictionaries, we also wanted to support you with a fun program to encourage your interest in learning words, developing a larger vocabulary, and gaining skills that will serve you well when you are out and applying for jobs. Here are the game plays!!

If you want a dictionary, there are two plays.

#1-Drop a letter to us at CWFA/DF **DICTIONARY DROP** and tell us how you will be helped by having a dictionary. We have English and Spanish/English dictionaries. Specify which you want.

#2- AND - get a new teammate! Give us the name of someone you know who would **ALSO** benefit from having a dictionary. Give us their name, number, and address, and tell us why you want to make this gift. (You might check this out with them first so they won't take it as an insult to their English skills!) You might see if they would also like to receive **Dharma Friends** and mention that to us too. We will send them a dictionary and a note that you have given them this gift - and **Dharma Friends** too.

and then... If you want to play the game... (you can get a dictionary and choose not to play, or if you already have a dictionary, you can use your own...)

#3 - In each **Dharma Friends** issue we will have a word drop - and ask you to research it and send us a note that explains your understanding of it and maybe even what it means to you in your life.

#4 - For those who are on the team and play the game, we will send you a CWFA/Dharma Friends Dictionary Drop Certificate after we receive twelve months' of letters successfully explaining the words we include.

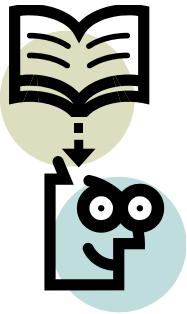
Hooray - Your Team Wins!

#5 - For the women...Kathleen Welton has graciously donated a handful of her latest book, "The Little Book of Gratitude Quotes", a beautiful book full of motivational and encouraging quotes. She requests that these books specifically go to women inmates. If you are a woman and are interested in a having a copy sent to you, please let us know. A limited quantity is available. Please put on the envelope "**Quote Book**".

#6- Jeff's Kids and your letters: Jeff is our friend who counsels kids in a Juvenile Detention Center. He thought that sharing your thoughts or stories about your journey to prison might benefit kids that are in the same situation that you might have been in once upon a time. Know how much your letters are all appreciated for your stories, your advice, and for being such a wonderful vehicle to reach broken hearts! The healing that is coming from these letters is extraordinary. **If you would like to write a letter to Jeff's Kids the address is: CWFA, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, Arkansas 72217-7708 and put JEFF'S KIDS on the envelope. Keep those letters coming. For those who have written to Jeff's Kids, thank you so much!**

#7- If you would like a free copy of Linda's **Mindful Money** book to learn a great understanding about money and your life - just send a letter to CWFA and put on the envelope - **MINDFUL MONEY BOOK** please We have a limited supply.





Book of Knowledge - Omar's dream - our friend Omar dreamed of educating ourselves as much as we can so that we all can become all that we can be..

The book – Stepping Up – Wholeness Ethics for Prisoners and Those Who Care About Them, and written by one of our Dharma Friends, Troy K. Chapman

Here is the back cover: Men and women in prison are seen by society as problems and burdens. This book begins with a different premise: that you can be a solution, not only in the world but in your own life as well. It's about a way of living called wholeness ethics and it's based on the simple truth that we find our own wholeness only in right relationship with the world.

From the perspective of his 30 years behind bars, author Troy Chapman offers a roadmap for living this truth and moving toward soundness, well-being and the realization of one's larger purpose. Distilling experience to four essential relationships – with yourself, with others, the transcendent and nature – Chapman shows how to consider each in the light of ethical thinking and restore wholeness to each one.

Available on Amazon or contact The Whole Way Press, PO Box 816, Narberth, PA. 19072

Due to having faith one relies on the practices. Due to having wisdom one truly knows. Of these two, wisdom is the chief. Faith is the prerequisite. - Nagarjuna, "Precious Garland 5"

A Mindfulness Practice by our Dharma Friend, Chokyi Lodro

"Everyone is the master of oneself, one is the oasis he can depend on, therefore, everyone should control himself above all." from: **The Teaching of Buddha**, pg 190

Nowadays, in this high-tech, fast-paced society, it's too easy to become preoccupied, or even off-track trying to do too many things at one time. Living like that, we often miss the beauty of our precious lives. Today, I experienced something I'd like to share with all of you that supports mindfulness as a practice. There I was, sitting on my bunk, eating vanilla wafers and peanut butter, when suddenly, out of nowhere, I recalled an incident of my past where a workout partner of mine explained to me how he only ate seven vanilla wafers when he got really hungry. I pondered on this discipline awhile as I sipped coffee and ate some wafers. Immediately, I vowed to eat less. While I was eating those wafers and peanut butter, I was present in the moment, chewing those slowly and enjoying the taste and smell. I went on to say a prayer of thanks to Buddha for the food which is a blessing. During those moments of mindfulness, I realized how easy it is to eat less, but still enjoy the wholeness of the experience.

In the past, I often ate food to get full and there was a degree of comfort in that. However, that eating habit caused me to gain weight. Besides, that conduct lacked discipline as I was going against Buddha's teachings about grasping and attachment to worldly things. Eating habitually goes against reasonable discipline. Mindful eating is as simple as eating less and drinking water of other fluids since those make you feel full. Sometimes you have to fool the mind. The wise one knows that the Right Effort means to try to do one's best diligently toward the Right direction. With obesity on the rise, maybe this practice will help someone out. Cut the calories and live a healthy life.

Those who have spent ten or twenty years brushing aside the weeds looking for the way and yet have not see the buddha nature often say they are trapped by oblivion and excitement. What they don't realize is that the substance of this very oblivion and excitement is itself buddha nature.- Kao-feng

From C.S.: Dear Kristopher, I have great respect for you and the work that you do. I do hope that when I get out, this time, that I will devote my time to charitable causes. This is my fourth time in prison and each time prior, I have had such good intentions for when I was released. Eventually, I fell back into the same routine. The last time I did well for about three and a half years. After my father's death and a failed relationship, I fell right back in with the same old crowd. Each time the sentences get longer though. I received six and a half for this new sentence. I'll only have to serve a little over three years and I've already served over two of that. I just know that I can't do this anymore. This has got to be the last trip. I now have a three year old daughter who doesn't even know me. Sure, I write and send her pictures, but she doesn't even know me. May all that you do be abundantly blessed. Your friend,

Response from Kristopher: I've said it before and I'm sure that I'll say it again; Had it not been for my developing relationships at the meditation center and my involvement in the twelve step programs, I do not think I would have made it. Please, when you get out, do the same and keep me posted

Subhuti asked: "Is it possible to find perfect wisdom through reflection or listening to statements or through signs or attributes, so that one can say 'This is it' or 'Here it is'?" The Buddha answered: "No, Subhuti. Perfect wisdom can't be learned or distinguished or thought about or found through the senses. This is because nothing in this world can be finally explained, it can only be experienced, and thus all things are just as they are. Perfect wisdom can never be experienced apart from all things. To see the Suchness of things, which is their empty calm being, is to see them just as they are. It is in this way that perfect wisdom and the material world are not two, they are not divided. As a result of Suchness, of calm and empty being, perfect wisdom cannot be known about intellectually. Nor can the things of the world, for they are understood only through names and ideas. Where there is no learning or finding out, no concepts or conventional words, it is in that place one can say there is perfect wisdom." - Ashtasahasrika

The Dictionary Drop word for this month is COMPLACENT

A Letter from K.P. who shared how his meditation sangha is doing – To Anna, Hello. It's been a while but I thought I would write and tell you how my meditation group AHAVATH-ACHIM, is doing, we are still working towards the awakening and the enlightenment of all God's creation, through prayer, meditation, and action. It's not an easy job to do, but nothing worthwhile is. Well, I must go, just wanted you to know that me and the group is doing okay. May you be blessed and happy in all that you do.

As We Walk Along the Path by Jeff Marrese

Take away the mirrors,
Take away the glass,
Strip off our misconceptions,
Bring us Truth at last.

Show us not blind faith,
As we all need to know,
There are no magic potions,
We don't need religious shows.

This, the crossing over,
The strength to overcome,
We don't need to bear the raft,
Once the journey's done.

This is truly knowing,
Obscurations stripped away,

This is the path we travel,
Living here and now, today.

Harming no live creature,
Sharing with the poor,
Loving on another,
Who could ask for more?

Life, is such a blessing,
Knowing, such a gift,
Reaching out to others,
We all need a lift.

So take away the mirror,
Please take away the glass,
So we can know the Truth,
As we walk along the Path.

Sent by DC:*I'll share what Osho has to say on the subject, in the book "The ABC of Enlightenment":*

"Always find something to be happy about. Life is short and happiness is very difficult, so don't miss an opportunity to be happy. Ordinarily we go on doing the opposite; we don't miss an opportunity to be unhappy.

"To be happy is a great talent. Great intelligence, great awareness, almost genius is needed to be happy. To be unhappy is nothing. Even stupid people are unhappy.

"It is very easy to be unhappy because the whole mind lives through unhappiness. If you remain happy for a long time, the mind starts disappearing, because there is no connection between happiness and the mind. Happiness is of the beyond."

Subscription information: We have gladly been offering this newsletter free of charge to those in prisons. We are 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. Sent us an email and you may have your monthly issue free. EMAIL dharmafriends@comcast.net. If you want a paper copy, 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.

Kristopher says that he is getting many requests for back issues. Some of these are because of mail room errors but some are because we are behind on current addresses. If you change your address, please send a note to LINDA to give us your new address and she can send your next issue to your new location. That saves us money and you from having to write for your back issues.

Thanks so much for your help!

SOME NEW OPTIONS: We are always trying to be mindful of \$\$\$ in order to keep publishing our newsletter, as we are always in search of additional funding. **Here are some ways that you can help us.**

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 who might like to receive **Dharma Friends** as well, they can just let us know and we will put them on the list. 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.

From B.H.: Hey Kristopher, I hope all at CWFA are well in health and spirits. First, I would like to relay my thanks and gratitude to you all. Each **Dharma Friends** newsletter issue that I get, I read and then reread it until I can practically recite them in my sleep. Thank you Kristopher for all your help, letters, and books that you have sent. It is through you that I have started putting my focal point on Buddhism and have put aside Taoism. One has to pick a single path to travel if one wishes to go anywhere. To go up one path only part way and then turn and run back to start another that is equally as far will only confuse the traveler. Anna, your wisdom and compassion are breathtaking. For lack of the appropriate word to convey my deeper feelings; that's all I have to say about that. The same with saying anything of the rest of the CWFA staff. Thank you all,

A hundred thousand worlds are flowers in the sky, a single mind and body is moonlight in the water; once the cunning ends and information stops, at that moment there is no place for thought.- Han-Shan Te-Ch'ing in The Clouds Should Know Me By Now

From our friend Leon Miller, Instructor of Comparative Religion, Ethics, and Intercultural Relations, Estonia - I am very glad for you to share my poetic interpretation of **Buddha's Flower Sermon**. I am (including) a personal statement about my background and a short biographical sketch that I usually use to accompany my publications. Peace and Blessings, Leon

"I think what is quite unique about my background is the combination of influences I received during my impressionable years. This mainly involved being heavily influenced by the Pennsylvania Peace Trilogy (USA). For me this mostly meant the influence of Quakers where worship meant silence and inner reflection.

This influence inspired me to study Holistic Approaches to Personal and Spiritual Growth at the University of Chicago Cluster of Theological Schools where a spent a prolonged period of time. Afterwards I came to the former Soviet Union (Estonia) where I have continued my interest in helping others experience a Holistic approach to personal and spiritual growth. This has mainly been through the disciplines of Yoga, Tai and Meditation but as well with my work in Religion and Ethics at a local State University."

And here is his 'official intro' - **Leon Miller is a lecturer at Tallinn University of Technology in Ethics, Comparative Religion, Intercultural Communications, and International Relations. He also teaches Tai Chi, Yoga, and Meditation in the community. He has a number of peer reviewed publications in the areas of The Philosophy of Religion, International Relations, and Business Ethics in a Globalized World.**

The Buddha, the Flower and the Awakening

Once the Buddha, sitting near a lake on Mount *Grdhakuta*, prepared to teach;

But realizing that with mere words the true inner nature he'd never reach,
He simply held up a flower for all to see;

For the "Jewel in the Lotus" truly expressed what it means to simply be.
Most on the mount pondered what Buddha was trying to say,

But the true meaning could not be revealed for their minds got in the way;
However this sparked the inner light of Mahākāśyapa and it was reflected in his smile,
For in that moment he realized that the message of the flower mirrored what Buddha was teaching all the while;
Then Buddha proclaimed, "What can be said is merely a clue,
And what can be said I've always shared with you;
What cannot be said is truly nothing less,
Than the awakening to suchness, oneness and emptiness;"
For the flower revealed what Buddha long hoped would be understood,
To perceive beyond form and realize the true essence awakens Buddhahood.

From P.M.: Dear Kristopher, I'm always glad to be the recipient of one of your save-the-Earth-style postcards. Please know that I derive a great deal of encouragement from those messages and that they serve as a reminder that, at any given moment, countless persons are striving for excellence of heart. I think you can understand that there is, admittedly, a preponderance of the negative hereabouts – so practice can become a lonely proposition. This is, naturally, speaking of what one may consider the gross, outward elements of living. I find, though, that there is no situation in which the Dharma cannot be made to fill the heart with the recognition of the value of being awake. This leads me to place my trust in the sense that says "I want for nothing" is, in fact, correct; that there is nothing I ought to have that would, by having it, do the work done by making the heart good. May this note find you in good health and spirits. Thank you for keeping in contact. With palms together,

A thank you from Anna - We have many, many groups that have let us know about their existence, their members, and little about their practice and their free world volunteers. Now, about 100! We are so proud of all of you. I love the wonderful names that you have given to yourselves and you committed meditators.

The ultimate way is without difficulty; those who seek it make their own hardship. The true mind is originally pure; those who exercise it make their own defilement. - Hui-k'ung

From J.C. and written on 09-11-11: Dear Dharma Friends, . . . I believe that I became awakened shortly after the attacks on September 11, 2001. It was then that I really began to pay attention to the suffering in this world. I could no longer sit and watch. I had to start doing something! I thought deeply about the suffering, just like the Buddha did, and decided that I would use my life to help others wherever I could. That being said, it means so much to me to have found others who are putting that into practice. I need to have other spiritual people in my life. So, thank you for allowing me to be a part of your community. It feels good and I'm eager to become more involved and to contribute in any way that I can. Please let me know what I can do that will be helpful to the sangha. I wish you many blessings, much love and enduring peace!

A Letter to send to your family or friends to invite them to share Dharma Friends with you... In our last meditation group at a maximum security prison, we were talking about the helpfulness of meditation in creating a calm space that arises when faced with chaos or stress so that one need not react to an event from primitive fear and anger. Instead, one can remember meditative equanimity and then make a peaceful decision about the best way to speak or act to

create benefit. When we were all talking together in our group, we discussed whether or not members had learned those skills of healing and facilitating communication as kids so that they would not make tense times more volatile. Most everyone agreed that no one in their family taught them such communication skills. When things were tough, everyone just reacted upon impulse - often violently! And - many said that it was this lack of skillful, calm communication and lifestyle that brought about the life crisis that sent them to prison. They want their boys and girls and those that they love to learn new and more effective tools than they had so that they will have a chance at a good life.

As Compassion Works for All offers meditation and healing in prisons in our meditation groups and through our Dharma Friends newsletters, one of our strong beliefs is in our 'drop and ripple' theory! For all of the inmates and others who find a path and tools for healing, there are hundreds of thousands who have been left behind in their families and communities who still face the enormous obstacles and challenges to a successful life. Many of those left behind to find their own way - children now alone without fathers and mothers - are the children of inmates who are left in even greater poverty. They are living in what are our own versions of war zones in America. They do not have a clue about how to survive or how to transcend the life challenges they face. Many are our next generation of prisoners.

In our prison groups and in our Dharma Friends issues, we emphasize and try to empower those who are growing to become the mentors, guides, teachers, and loving parents and family members that can be the drops in the ocean that can start the ripples flowing to healing and new options. Chelle, one of our board members and a gung-ho volunteer had the thought of enclosing a letter in our Welcome Packet that goes to new Dharma Friends prisoner subscribers and to run in these Dharma Friends newsletters. The hope was to facilitate our prisoner participants in reaching out to their families. If family members and children can access our JustUsFriends.org options and videos, and are reading Dharma Friends as well, they will all have a foundation upon which they can build the shared experiences of new ideas and healing tools. Plus, as they visit and write, these shared tools can become a basis of conversation and those in prisons and back home can better parent their children together.

So here is a letter that you can send to your loved ones if you wish. Hopefully, this invitation will benefit your important relationships and your families. It might be a drop starting off ripples and changing your family and maybe even dysfunctional communities. Be a drop....



Dear

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

Compassion Works for All encourages communication and healing of old family patterns and relationship issues with those I have left behind - like you. If we are both reading Dharma Friends issues, one way to support such discussions between us is to use the issues as a basis for our discussions. I welcome this opportunity to share such healing and growth talks and letters with you and would like to ask you to go to www.JustUsFriends.org and sign up for the twice monthly emails that will bring you Dharma Friends newsletter and also the JustUsFriends web site updates. There are lots of healing videos on the web site as well, some especially for those with family members and friends who are in prison. I greatly regret that we are spending this time apart and the challenges that it imposes on our relationship. I also look forward to being able to use all of these traumatic events as a way to grow beyond the issues of our past and find a stronger healing that will benefit not only me and you but all those that we love.

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

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

Webpage: JustUsFriends.org

FREE RELIGIOUS MATERIAL

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When you ride in a boat and watch the shore, you might assume that the shore is moving. But when you keep your eyes closely on the boat, you can see that the boat moves. Similarly, if you examine myriad things with a confused body and mind you might suppose that your mind and nature are permanent. When you practice intimately and return to where you are, it will be clear that nothing at all has unchanging self. - "Actualizing the Fundamental Point" by Zen Master Dogen

Photography: Leslie Oelsner





Dharma Friends

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Compassion Works for All

Additional Pages for EMAIL VERSION of *Dharma Friends*



COMPASSION WORKS

Join us in our monthly **Compassion Works** sessions if you are in Arkansas.
The next sessions are: Thursday, November 17, 6 PM, Fletcher Library, in Little Rock;
and Tuesday, December 6, at 1 PM, at St. Margaret's Church on Chenault Blvd.
Then, on December 15 at 6 PM, we are back at Fletcher Library.

- Compassion for You and Compassion for All.

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

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

Compassion Works sessions offer a quiet experience of compassion.

With a few gentle and guiding prompts, we will let go of the struggle, renew, heal, and send compassion into the world.

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

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

Our friend, the Rev. Susan Sims Smith is going to India and wants you to come along! Check this out.

http://www.justusfriends.org/contribution_view.asp?aid=246

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

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

Mara Leveritt's books!

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

And

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

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

And anna's books –

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

Join us at www.JustUsFriends.org.

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

Along with informative and inspirational articles –

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

And do you know we tweet?? Follow our tweets at 'garudatweets' on Twitter

And you can LIKE Compassion Works for All on FACEBOOK – Chelle is offering fabulous 'words of wisdom' with our almost daily FACEBOOK posts..

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

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

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

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

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

You may forward any past Dharma Friends newsletters, or this newsletter, on to anyone who you believe would benefit from them. If someone has sent this Dharma Friends issue to you as a gift and you would like to join us each month, please email anna@aristotle.net for more information about Compassion Works for All, our Dharma Friends newsletter, and our prison outreach program. You may receive Dharma Friends by email for 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.

