



offers you **Dharma Friends**

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

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HAPPY NOW!

The Dhammapada
The teachings of the Buddha



Verse 8– THOUSANDS

Spoken in the Bamboo Grove:

Better than a meaningless statement of a thousand words is a single word of deep meaning which, when heard, produces peace.

Better than a thousand verses that pile up meaningless remarks is a single verse of deep meaning which, when heard, produces peace.

Better than reciting a hundred verses that have no meaning is reciting one verse of the Dharma which, when heard, produces peace.

The one who has conquered himself is a far greater hero than the one who has defeated a thousand times a thousand men.

Beings who have mastered themselves move always with restraint. How much better to conquer oneself than to conquer a host of others!

Neither the gods nor the gandharvas, neither Mara nor Brahma, can defeat those of disciplined character who have mastered themselves.

Spoken in the Bamboo Grove to Sariputra:

Better than making hundreds of offerings for thousands of months in a row is a single moment of honor paid to the master of meditation. Such respect is better by far than a hundred years of making sacrifices.

Better than a hundred years in the forest tending the sacrificial fire is a single moment of honor paid to a master of meditation. Such respect is better by far than a hundred years of making sacrifices.

Spoken in the Bamboo Grove to the brahmins:

Making offerings and giving gifts for a whole year with an eye to gaining merit in this world, cannot begin to match the finer offering of reverence for the righteous.

Spoken in the Nada temple concerning Prince Dighavu:

For those who show courtesy and respect to elders, four things will increase: long life, beauty, happiness, and strength.

Spoken in the Jetavana Grove concerning a novice:

A life of only a single day spent in virtuous meditation is better than living a hundred years unbalanced and immoral.

A life of only a single day spent in meditation conjoined with wisdom is better than living a hundred years unbalanced and confused.

A life of only a single day spent in firm commitment and effort is better than living a hundred years lazy and confused.

A life of only a single day spent in awareness of birth and death is better than living a hundred years oblivious to birth and destruction.

A life of only a single day seeing the way of immortality is better than living a hundred years without a glimpse of immortality.

A life of only a single day seeing the excellent Dharma is better than living a hundred years without a glimpse of the Dharma.



A few thoughts from anna on this Dhammapada verse: Thousands

We all know that one moment can be all that it takes to plunge us forever into darkness or awaken us to an entirely new course of life. It was in one arising moment this past week that our country shared the horrors of a mass shooting in Tucson that changed many lives. We were each born and it will be in a newly arising moment resting somewhere in our future when we will each die. Some of you killed another in an arising moment and now live in prison or on death row. Some of you glanced across a room in a newly arising moment and saw someone for the first time that became the love of your life. Some of you made love and in one moment a child was conceived who has blessed your life in miraculous ways. Some of you have suffered through moment after seemingly endless moment in meditation retreat where you ached to hear the bell ring to end the meditation session. Some of you have mindfully rested in bliss as a stream of moments presented a reality of inseparable wholeness and you know forever the truth of who you are. And that is our question as we read THOUSANDS. In truth, each moment is unique and can bring life change. But, what startles you with awe? What breaks you out from the ordinary and reminds you that this is a sacred reality? Those are the moments we want to recognize!

This verse tells us that it may be one word, one teaching, or one being who takes us beyond the thousands of everyday moments where we just float along, hypnotized by the fog of ordinary life. Living in the fog, we make unconscious decisions and we are not really present in our own "becoming". Then there are those spectacular jolts that cause us to see truth and give us a peek at who we truly are. And then... we slowly slip back into the fog. What we knew during that sacred moment will never be totally forgotten but we lose that heightened presence. Even the spectacular is made ordinary.

How do we remember to notice that ONE word, that ONE sunset, that ONE profound teaching, that ONE flower - that can take us to awakening.... and then, how do we stay there in that recognition of sacred truth and not run away, back into the fog? Ultimately, how do we stay mindfully present so that each and every one of the thousands of words, people, teachers, objects, sunsets and sunrises, glorious songs, beautiful creations of art, deeply loving moments, the gazes into our baby's eyes, and so much more are all sacred. Each of the thousands of arisings have the capacity to transform our ordinary and limited view into the recognition of sacred presentation of All That Is. Each and every one is a sacred moment of great awe?

To remember to stay present to each moment is our practice, for as long as it takes us to remember ALL WAYS and ALWAYS. Practice is resting in meditation - on or off the meditation cushion - and letting ourselves experience the gloriousness of each arising moment. In noticing each moment, we allow each to flood us with awe. We know and open to the sacred and allow our whole body, our energies, our consciousness to become ONE with this sacred knowing.

No one else can tell us how to do this. It is only by being present and fully aware that we allow ourselves to notice those moments. And, only in not being present, by forgetting, do we go back into the fog where the thousands stream by, obsessively grabbing our attention with their intellectual and egoistic importance.



As we practice being mindful in each moment, we ...

*Notice the profound and sacred connection with another in ONE MOMENT instead of trying to obsessively concern ourselves with the thoughts and demands of thousands.

*Notice the one mantra or prayer or message that wants to play itself out in our life, instead of our long TO DO list of tasks.

*Notice and feel a wave of energy filling us with the sacred pulse of ALL CREATION - and we know we are those energies rather than another one of the thousands of beings who live in a fog and never know who they truly are.

* Notice and resting in a meditative state of wisdom mind for even a moment. In that state, we naturally hold the wish for others' healing and happiness.

*Notice that we rest in a timeless reality where all that we do and say is wisdom's expression bringing benefit to others.

*Notice as we continuously move forth in compassionate activity.

Rainbow photo by Don Nelms



A MEDITATION on Thousands

Basic Meditation Directions:

Sit comfortably with a straight spine.

Breathe slowly and deeply down into your belly. Be aware of your body tension, warm your hands merely by feeling them as you bring your whole body into relaxation and balance.

Keep your focus on your breath and your body. If you forget and find yourself lost in thought or that comfortable fog, bring your focus back to your breath. Breathe In and Out.

Remember your pure motivation, which is to benefit all beings equally.



We spend thousands of mindless minutes breathing. But each breath can be an opportunity to watch our awareness. Only through mindful attention to our awareness can we notice when, how, and where we jump from mindful awareness back into the foggy ocean of mindlessness. We can also discern 'why' we leap away from clarity as we open ever-more deeply into subtle awareness of our true self.

As our verse, *THOUSANDS*, says, those moments, even if just a few, spent in mindful awareness are worth more than years spent in confusion and unaware of true self. Many of us hold that motivation, but still postpone our meditation time each day -- and the day passes and it never happens. Or we sit for a few minutes watching each moment mindfully and then we get distracted. Thirty minutes later we find we left long ago to ponder what so-and-so said to us yesterday, what we want to say to him, and on and on. Why, when meditation time is so fruitful and we know so clearly that we are on a path to awakening our SELF, do we slip so easily into unconscious fog and mindless babble, or avoid our meditation time altogether?

Meditation teachers of all traditions and down through the ages challenge meditators on this issue. It appears that we all have such a strong unconscious agenda to stay in ego's realm, ordinary view, that we fight and flee from our subtle and sacred view. I understand how scary it can be and most of us have probably experienced those times when we slip a little too far into a more subtle state of awareness and ego jolts us back into control.

But those are our teaching moments. If we truly believe that those moments of awareness where we touch the sacred are the portals to ultimate awakening, we want to allow ourselves to fully know and experience them. For most of us, ego has a fear of knowing our true SELF and sacred reality. When we come close, ego might react with anxiety or even panic, grabs control over thought and perception, and takes us away from such life-altering peeks at enlightenment.

We do know from all the great traditional teachings, that for most of us it will take years and years of meditative mindfulness before we can gradually rest in deep and subtle states of awareness. We have a long way to go to accomplish these profound states of consciousness and may never achieve them in this lifetime. To meditate every day and touch some of these sacred moments is still an incredible accomplishment. Meditation is a wonderful thing to spend your precious minutes doing. The benefits in every way are enormous. From one who joins you in walking this most challenging path, I applaud you.

THE RUN AWAY MEDITATOR



So let's add this one meditation assignment to increase our accomplishment as we meditate. Let's heighten our awareness of when we RUN AWAY from our true SELF. The best way to do this assignment is to be mindfully aware of those moments when we flee from entering a deeper state of consciousness. When we recoup our clarity, we can take a brief moment to examine what arose, what our fear was, and why we made the decision to flee.

Here is a pretty typical scenario of a meditator's fleeing to escape enlightenment..

John is meditating just as he does most days. John had a teaching that he had been studying and today, before his meditation, he reread it. Today, more so than before, it made a much deeper impact and he KNEW more clearly what it was telling him. It was like a part of his path was made more clear. As John meditates today, he is not doing anything differently but something seems to have opened up for him. Little by little, he gains more balance, equanimity, and rests more deeply in watching his mind

The boundaries of space and his "beingness" seem to have gently expanded. He has far less a sense of his form and more sense of vastness. He feels a connection to everything in the universe. He touches vast space. He has a vague sense of "beginninglessness" and "endlessness". He seems to dissolve into sacredness and feels a very dynamic intensity. John is watching all of this gently -- and then has a little flood of anxiety.

All of a sudden John notices that he has shut down his focus on awareness. Thoughts pour in about lunch and what he might eat. What about that newspaper he wanted to read??? oops. He left his meditation.

But instead of allowing the mindlessness to take over and going into ego's fog, John notices that he fled that new and somewhat scary state of subtle awareness. He asks frightened ego what the fear was. Ego says: "I felt like I was going to dissolve and disappear. I felt like I was going to die." John says to his ego self, "That is normal and understandable." If ego feels that his safety and staying alive rests in being in control, feeling one's body, tracking life with thoughts, and being secure in a self-identity, dissolving all of that away can be scary for ego. That ego awareness truly does feel like this is a 'death'.

John reassures himself that he has taken a small step over the edge into more subtle conscious awareness. He will very likely return there in another meditation session. When that state of subtlety returns, he can remind himself that he has been there before and survived. This time, he can rest there a little longer, reassuring ego that all is well. Maybe in this next meditation, he can rest there safely for three or four minutes, going gently deeper, before ego might reach its capacity for feeling safe and then, once again, flee back to ego view.

This precious moment of subtle meditative awareness that John touched was clearly more profound than the thousands of ordinary moments of awareness. It was a great teaching for him. It was a stepping stone to his next deepening experience. That will be the prelude to the next and the next, each creating safety and comfort that will allow him to go a little bit more deeply into sacred vastness as he continues to do his practice.

Someday John will hopefully become enlightened and open to all that he is. While he is now on the path, each meditation in which he touches ever more sacred truth, even though he may again and again retreats from the enormity of each experience, will take him down this path with balance and a feeling of safety. He reminds himself always that he is guided by his wisdom self that will never abandon him. He is this highest SELF guiding him on the path to his Awakening.

All along the way are those One moments, those One words, those ONE experiences, those ONE talks with teachers, and those ONE awesome peeks at the sacred, where wisdom self says: WAKE UP!

Those of superior faculties and great wisdom get the point right off the bat--guidance doesn't mean gum-beating and lip-flapping. Truly awakened people with clear eyes would just laugh. The great masters of India and China only met

mind to mind--from the first, there was never any "mind" to attain. But if you make a rationale of mindlessness, that is the same as having a certain mentality. - Ying-an



From Your Letters

"As you dissolve into love, your ego fades. You're not thinking about loving; you're just being love, radiating like the sun."

- Ram Dass - in his new book - *Be Love Now*

REMEMBER ...

#1 – The Mindful Money Book –We have now printed some more of Linda's Mindful Money book. If you would like a free copy of **Mindful Money** to help you get an excellent education in finances in this concise course, write to us (address on the back page) and put on your envelope- ATTN: Linda. For the **Money Book**.

#2 - If you have a Meditation Group that would like to receive our love, prayers and support, write and give us your group name, the name of your institution, and the participants' names, if you wish. We will send your group a Compassion Works for All/Dharma Friends CERTIFICATE affirming that you are a part of our sangha too. We will be sending prayers out daily to all of you (of course we do that to all of you already...) Write for your group certificate and put *Attn. Linda - Meditation group* on the envelope. This drawing is by J.P. and R.F. of the Shared Breath sangha

#3 - Jeff's Kids and your heartwarming letters: Those who have written to Jeff's Kids, know that Jeff is reading every letter as they have group therapy in their facility. 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. We would also like to compile your letters into a book for teens and kids who are having troubles and for whom your guidance would be helpful. Some of you mentioned that we can use the letters in any way that might be helpful. If there is any question as to your intent, we will write back to you and ask specifically for your permission. We will keep your identity confidential in every way. At this point, we are thinking that we will begin by putting each letter, one by one, on our JustUsFriends.org web site so that families with kids can read them together. As soon as we can, we will put together a book that has some small commentary, with the goal of sharing the book with kids and families, juvenile detention facilities and other groups who serve at-risk kids.

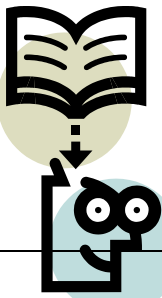
If you would like to write a letter to Jeff's Kids the address is CWFA, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, Arkansas 72217-7708 and put JEFF'S KIDS on the envelope. Keep those letters coming. For those who have written to Jeff's Kids, thank you so much!

#4 -Chelle and friends want to explore the development of a post-release support program for those of you who will be leaving prison. She believes that those of you who will benefit from such a program will have the best ideas of what should be offered. So write please and let us know what you will need upon release. How can a support person or group best help you? Do you have ideas about how such a program could work? Chelle says: Ideas need not just come from those to be released soon. I'm sure that there are guys and women that are a long way from being out, but still think of their release.... that have fears of what they will face and know what would help them the most."

So write us and put on the envelope: Ideas for Chelle's REACH project. Thanks – know that you will help many through helping to develop this program!

Skillful speech not only means that we pay attention to the words we speak and to their tone but also requires that our words reflect compassion and concern for others and that they help and heal, rather than wound and destroy. - Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, "Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness"

Book of Knowledge - Omar's dream –



Here are a number of suggestions from our Dharma Friends readers:

From T.B.: "The Tree of Enlightenment," by Peter Della Santina is a book that has truly opened my eyes to a lot of things in Buddhism and in life in general.

From T.W.: I'm almost finished with "Sitting Inside," by Kobai Scott Whitney. So far, I have found it to be one of the best 'spiritual' books I've read.

From J.M.: I just finished "Awakening to Zen," by Roshi Phillip Kapleau and am beginning it again because there's so much of value in it that I couldn't absorb it all!

And 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!**

Write to our **Compassion Works for All** address and put **ASK TIM** on the envelope.

"As your sense of living in balance grows, you'll find it easier to integrate the other side into your life and to discover the clarity in the midst of confusion, the stillness at the center of motion, peace in the midst of turbulence, openness when faced with uncertainty, and the love present behind fear and anger. What it requires is learning to dance with the innumerable paradoxes of your life while anchoring yourself in an extraordinary suppleness and flexibility that will provide the stability necessary to actually find balance in your life." - Joel & Michelle Levey, excerpt from Living in Balance

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.

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 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.

Pride and indifference shroud this heart, too, as the sun is obscured by the piled-up clouds; supercilious thoughts root out all modesty of mind, and sorrow saps the strongest will. - Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King



And now we have lots of short letters to try to get us caught up to date:

Letter to D. -Linda told me of the letter that you wrote to the **Dear Tim** column in *Dharma Friends* about losing your dear daughter four years ago. I know that she shared some thoughts that might help to dispel your grief, but I wanted to add a few words just to let you know that we all care about you and are sending you peace as you go through such a life tragedy. I know that you will feel this terrible loss for the rest of your life and that there is no real consolation. You are doing so many of the right things, good exercise for your brain biochemistry and good health, meditation for peace, balance and spiritual wisdom, and trying to live your life to the best of your ability. Perhaps you still feel a connection to her in your heart, but many folks say they feel nothing after a loved one's death. I think it is good to just let what we each experience in our own unique way be

accepted without any judgment as to what we *should* experience. Listen to your own unfolding path and trust that your own inner wisdom knows your best way to heal. For some that is in continuing to have a heart-felt dialogue with their loved one each day, and for others it may be to begin a project or offering in her memory that will benefit others. But don't think that anything will make the pain go away as it is likely that that will well up from the deepest parts of you whenever you think of her. You might say a thank you to her when it appears because had she never been in your life and had you never had her to love so deeply, that place would have forever been empty of so much to ache for. Know that you are in our hearts and in our prayers. Stay in touch and let us know how things go for you.

Thank you too for sharing your story with us because through this letter, I hope that many others who have also lost loved ones will feel that we are with them as well and all one family in our delicate humanity.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn's address when he accepted the Noble Prize for Literature in 1970. He writes on how truth is revealed through art and the moral responsibility of the artist to bring forth truth. This goes well with our verse, THOUSANDS.

One Word of Truth Outweighs the Whole World...

Just as that puzzled savage who has picked up - a strange cast-up from the ocean? - something unearthed from the sands? - or an obscure object fallen down from the sky? - intricate in curves, it gleams first dully and then with a bright thrust of light. Just as he turns it this way and that, turns it over, trying to discover what to do with it, trying to discover some mundane function within his own grasp, never dreaming of its higher function.

So also we, holding Art in our hands, confidently consider ourselves to be its masters; boldly we direct it, we renew, reform and manifest it; we sell it for money, use it to please those in power; turn to it at one moment for amusement - right down to popular songs and night-clubs, and at another - grabbing the nearest weapon, cork or cudgel - for the passing needs of politics and for narrow-minded social ends. But art is not defiled by our efforts, neither does it thereby depart from its true nature, but on each occasion and in each application it gives to us a part of its secret inner light.

From A.J.C.: Dear Kristopher, In life, there are high points and low points. In prison, the way ahead of us is long and difficult. I am at peace with myself and I accept adversity with a smile. I chant daily and feel good about myself. With peace and love, we have a better world,

Enlightenment is like the moon reflected on the water. The moon does not get wet, nor is the water broken. Although its light is wide and great, the moon is reflected even in a puddle an inch wide. The whole moon and the entire sky are reflected in dewdrops on the grass, or even in one drop of water. Enlightenment does not divide you, just as the moon does not break the water. You cannot hinder enlightenment, just as a drop of water does not hinder the moon in the sky. The depth of the drop is the height of the moon. Each reflection, however long or short its duration, manifests the vastness of the dewdrop, and realizes the limitlessness of the moonlight in the sky. - From Genjo Koan, translated by Robert Aitken Roshi

From K.S. To Dharma Friends: My name is K.S. My original workout partner was a Vietnamese Buddhist named M.D. He talked to me about being mindful, telling me not to complain and to learn to be content. I listened with apprehension initially. Then he got me a book from another inmate to read called **The Miracle of Mindfulness** by Thich Nhat Hahn. What he was saying started making startling sense. Once he saw I was adhering, he gave me your April 08 issue, #135 of the **Dhammapada**. He has since moved on to another camp. I would appreciate receiving the newsletter because I have begun to meditate daily. I read something before and after, and I find that I get a lot out of your newsletter. Plus, the camps are not too empathetic to practicing Buddha. I have not changed over my religion yet, but lack of information is the problem. Thank you, in advance. My time is flying by now that I started to actualize what life could be with patience through meditation. Everything is a work in progress. Yours Truly.

The key, during both life and death, is to recognize illusions as illusions, projections as projections, and fantasies as fantasies. In this way we become free. - Lama Thubten Yeshe, Introduction to Tantra

From D.Q.: Precious Dharma Friends, May all beings be happy, peaceful and light in body and spirit. May all beings be free from enmity and danger. May all beings be free from anger, afflictions, fear and anxiety. Bless you and thank you for continuing my subscription to Dharma Friends. I greatly appreciate it. Once again, I'm blessed by Anna's essay. Truthful and touching . . . I felt she was talking directly to me . . . being where my heart is today, that was a call to all of humanity . . . while I am beginning to understand the importance of this very moment . . . no clinging to the past or future . . . but one can never (I don't think) ignore either. The children are our future . . . society is definitely abandoning our children and that is a bad omen of things to come. I, myself, want to work with our children, however, for now I must focus on self . . . but not in a selfish manner.

No more than two or three days ago, I was talking with my cellmate about the new penal system is designed to drive inmates toward suicide. So to read the letter from G.H. only affirmed my thinking . . . if the outside community could only hear the hearts and intelligence of so many of the incarcerated! There is no mercy or understanding in today's society. I'm diabolical because of the life I chose . . . but what about those that exploit, mislead (lie) and use humanity as fodder for experiments, wars and pieces of paper mocking "GOD?"

May all beings throughout all realms of existence experience loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. May all beings be at ease !!!

Therefore the practice is like a key, the key of meditation. If we have the right key in our hand, no matter how tightly the lock is closed, when we take the key and turn it the lock falls open. If we have no key we can't open the lock. We will never know what is in the trunk. - Ajahn Chah, "Living Dharma"

From D.J.: Dear Dharma Friends, I would like to comment on the article that Chelle wrote that was included in the Welcome Packet in which she stated that her eyes were opened in 2006. She shared that before that time, she pretty much followed along with society's views of prison inmates. I want to share how happy it made me feel to read that she now knows that we are not animals and that we have thoughts, feelings, hopes and dreams. I have been in prison coming up on 15 yrs and have read a lot of newspapers and watched a lot of TV that doesn't put a very good light on prisoners. There are bad people in prison. But there are also a lot of inmates, like myself, who have matured in prison and can only dream of the chance to prove themselves to society and their family. So, what I want to say is I'm glad that she has been able to see a different side of inmates. May she have more enlightenment and I hope that it's catchy. Sincerely yours,



"From a hidden place, unite with your enemies from the inside, fill the inner void. That makes them swell outwardly and fall out of rhythm; instead of progressing, step by step, they stop and start harshly, out of time with you. Bring yourself back into rhythm within. Find the moment that mates with theirs--like two lovers creating life from the dust. Do this work in secret, so they don't know. This kind of love creates, it doesn't emote." --Neil Douglas-Klotz (translation from the Aramaic of Jesus' words "Love your Enemies")

From F.B.: “Physically in the house of no release, but when the mind is practicing the Dharma, the house for achieving ultimate real liberation from the real samsaric prison.”

Dear Kristopher, in your letter you mentioned using a part of my letter for the paper. Please feel free to use any part of my letters should you feel it will help anyone gain insight. I'm honored to help in anyway I can. Your having been down yourself, you know that staying positive in prison can set an excellent stage for Buddhist study and practice. As I read your letter, I became filled with happiness that you didn't leave your practice behind when you got out. I find that being true to your practice can change your life and it's plain to see that you have stayed constant. Always with metta,

A layman who has chosen to practice this Dhamma should not indulge in the drinking of intoxicants. He should not drink them nor encourage others to do so, realizing that it leads to madness. Through intoxication foolish people perform evil deeds and cause other heedless people to do likewise. He should avoid intoxication, this occasion for demerit, which stupefies the mind, and is the pleasure of foolish people. - Sutta Nipata

From J.K.: Dear Dharma Friends, First off, I really want to thank you all there at CWFA / Dharma Friends for all you do for us. The newsletter is both educational and inspirational. Before I request a subscription, I'm going to attempt to see about getting my family to download and print off issues and then send them to me. They always keep track of my address changes and so then you won't have to bother with them. I'm lucky to be at a prison where there are fellow Buddhists and we try to hold Sangha meetings regularly. We don't adhere to any particular lineage; we're an eclectic Sangha, if that's putting it nicely. We do try to support and encourage each other as we practice under these difficult circumstances. I also want to offer to write to others as a testament of how your material can be very helpful, especially when there's no guidance or assistance with our Sangha meetings. Thanks again. With sincere gratitude,

"Happiness and enjoyment of life are the highest expressions of individual intelligence, liberty and fulfillment of life. Happiness is likely to be the most important single objective of tomorrow's civilization, when mankind at long last will ask itself again these long-neglected questions: Why are we on earth? What do we expect from life? How can we maximize these precious years with which we are blessed? These are the basic questions. And the answers are: to live optimum physical, mental, moral, and spiritual lives, to open ourselves to others, to aggrandize ourselves through others, to listen to the great voices of nature and the universe, to perceive the unknown, to live in unison and love with all that is on the earth and in the heavens, to pray, to meditate, to know one's inner world, to extend one's heart and mind into the infinite heart and humankind, to live fully and passionately our life, to let the world and the people enter in great wondrous streams, to be thrilled at life, to be part of life, deeply, intensely, consciously, as we are indeed in flesh, in brain and in feeling. That is love....Happiness is triumph of life; pessimism is its defeat." -- Robert Muller in Most of All, They Taught Me Happiness

The Continuity of a Prisoner by Travis Wolfkill

I travel from penitentiary to dream-scape,
Where the night envelops my body,
A mental kind of karate,
If you ask me who I am, I cannot lie,
For I am the incarnation,
Of every “me” ever conceived,
We want to believe we are free,
In society the illusion permeates,
Figure eights tilted on their sides,
Expressing infinity for energy never dies.

And a letter from T.W.: Dear Dharma Friends, I received the newsletter (to be candid, I've never seen a non-profit organization pay so much attention to detail) and the warm welcoming packet. After reading most of the newsletter, I passed it on and didn't give it much thought. A lot of the material seemed to be stuff I have already discovered in my spiritual travels. My opinion was that I would probably continue to receive and enjoy it, as it does have the affect of fresh air on me, and that would be all. Impersonal and automatic . . .

The welcome packet had a deep impact. It made me realize there are people at *Compassion Works For All* who are actually trying to make real change happen and have a vision. My past experience has been that so many religious organizations are only content with flooding the mail with dry literature. The lack of personal effort ensures their teachings do not resonate within the hearts of people.

Your desire to "... weave those in prisons and out back into one supportive family," is a truly beautiful thing. This is the only legitimate way to reduce recidivism. Also, I've been a regular practitioner of meditation since February of 2003. Some of the techniques I use are from Native American traditions, others are Buddhist based or adapted from pagan or unknown origin. All religions are started by humans. I extract what works for me from several of them and prefer the term "Humanist," if one must be applied. My point is – I love how you advocate medication even if I don't call myself a Buddhist.

...I strive to become an intellectual and the observations of those who truly practice help me in my striving. Clarity, concentration and patience are the products of meditation and learning. I entered the penitentiary with a documented 'IQ' of 77. Years of meditation / visualizing and educating myself have essentially re-wired (or programmed) my brain. Eight years ago, most would see me as 'slow.' Now, most agree that I am intelligent. I'm a living miracle and some of that reason is because of people like you who are dedicated to prisoner awareness. Nobody else seems to care if we get our minds right. Here's to co-passion for compassion ! Keep moving forward. Most truly,

We can let the circumstances of our lives harden us so that we become increasingly resentful and afraid, or we can let them soften us and make us kinder and more open to what scares us. We always have this choice." - Pema Chodro -from The Excellence of Bodhichitta and excerpted from her book, The Places That Scare You.

From J.M.: Dear Anna and friends, I received your response to my inquiry along with the newsletter a couple of weeks ago. I enjoyed it and, being a 'beginner' and relatively new to the Way, found the explanations and definitions very helpful. I've been reading everything on the subject of Zen and the Buddhist faith I can get my hands on. I find it fascinating, calming and comforting. It, for me at least, fills the voids that the 'normal' religions leave and answers many of my questions about the universe around me.

Anyway, I applaud the work you're doing and hope that the human race will embrace spirituality, in whatever form, and make our world a better place for all! Please continue to reach out to people in need. I thank you and will be honored to help further your cause in any way I can (while I'm here and after) if it's within my power. Just ask . . . Thanks again with all my heart and love!
Yours eternally,



From D.S. Dear Friends. Howdy! Here is addresses to a couple of spiritual newsletters, free to prisoners. Thank you.

LOOPS
L.L. Research
P.O. Box 5195
Louisville, KY. 40205

Freedom Inside
B.P. 315
Lac Saguay, Que
Canada JOW 1LO
(writing to Canada costs .72)

"Thus shall ye look on all this fleeting world: A star at dawn, a bubble in the stream, A flash of lightning in a summer cloud, A flickering lamp, a phantom, and a dream." - Buddha

From S.M. Hello Dharma Friends.

I have been receiving your paper for over a year and have found many useful articles and letters. I very seldom write a publication, however, I must write this short note to you all. I consider myself (if I must be labeled) a Taoist. Not as a religion; but as a way of life. Explanation is beyond words, ok, that said. Truth is everywhere and can be found when you are looking. Many books that I have currently read on meditation and Buddhist thought, have been both insightful and confusing. I have found that in any endeavor, simplicity is the key to understanding. So, I wish to THANK YOU for your last article I read on Mind and Little Mind (Issue #137, June 2008). Those 3 ¼ pages opened my mind and understanding more than the past 20 books I've read on Buddhist thought. Thank you.

"To lead people, walk beside them ...As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best, the people honor and praise. The next, the people fear; and the next, the people hate ... When the best leader's work is done the people say, 'We did it ourselves!'" Lao-tsu

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"In seeking knowledge, the first step is silence - the second listening, the third remembering, the fourth practicing, and the fifth - teaching others." -- Ibn Gabirol



From J.R. Dear Anna & Dharma Friends,

The March issue of **Dharma Friends** (issue #134) should be an eye opener to a lot of people. But, the people who need to see and understand the personality disorders will not see this issue or simply chose to ignore the issue of personality disorders.

Myself being diagnosed at different times in adult life as bi-polar disorder, attention deficit disorder, depression, obsessive-compulsive personality, and narcissistic personality, being treated with drug therapy for all but narcissistic personality, understand that if I was correctly diagnosed and treated, could possibly have saved a marriage and prevented incarceration.

After a year of Dharma seeds being planted by our teachers every Sunday and now after reading the books provided by the same teachers, along with readings from **Dharma Friends** newsletter, I have been able to open my mind, see a little more clear and have cleansed some negative karma by building merit.

The legal system may be broken, but the Buddhist way of life works to gain enlightenment. Thank you.

"When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change"

Max Planc, Nobel physicist D.F., July 2007 issue #126

"Do not pursue the past. Do not lose yourself in the future. The past no longer is, and the future has not yet come. Look deeply at life, just as it is arising in the very here and now. Recognize it-- invincible, unshakable. Care for it with your heart and mind."

--The Buddha



offers you

Dharma Friends

January 2011 issue # 168

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Additional Pages for EMAIL VERSION of *Dharma Friends*

"Silence is the first casualty of the addiction of busyness." --Christina Felman

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. And, smart Linda, has uploaded Mindful Money to KINDLE so you can order it there as well.

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.

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

PLAN WAYYYY AHEAD

anna will be doing another meditation retreat at Joy Fox's retreat center, Wattle Hollow, in April 2011. We have always filled up quickly so now you can sign up early! Go to - www.wattlehollow.com



*If you would like to host a Compassion Works for All fundraising lunch,
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 food 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.

