

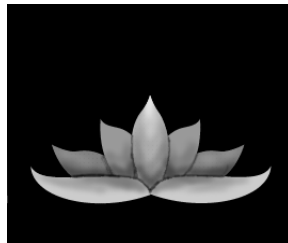
Dharma Friends

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

August 2010 issue # 163

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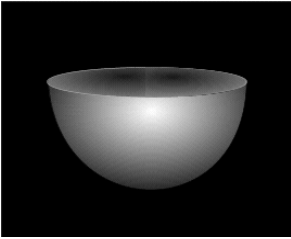
The Dhammapada The teachings of the Buddha



Verse 3– The MIND

- 33- Just as a fletcher shapes an arrow, so the wise develop the mind, so excitable, uncertain and difficult to control.
- 34 - Like a fish which on being dragged from its home in the water and tossed on dry land will thrash about, so will the heart tremble when withdrawing from the current of Mara.
- 35 - The active mind is difficult to tame, flighty and wandering wherever it wills: taming it is essential, leading to the joy of well-being.
- 36 - The protected and guarded mind leads to ease of being. Though subtle, elusive and hard to see, one who is alert should tend and watch over this mind.
- 37 - Wandering far and wide on its own, without form, the mind lies in the heart-cavern within. To bring it under control is to be freed from the bonds of ignorance.
- 38 - In one whose mind is unsteady, whose heart is not prepared with true teachings, whose faith is not matured, the fullness of wisdom is not yet manifest.
- 39 - There is no fear if the heart is uncontaminated by the passions and the mind is free from ill-will. Seeing beyond good and evil one is awake.
- 40 - Seeing this body to be as fragile as a clay vessel, and fortifying the heart like a city wall, one can confront Mara with the weapon of insight. Having the advantage of non-attachment, one protects what has already been gained.
- 41 - Certainly this body will soon lie lifeless: cast aside on the ground, devoid of consciousness and as useless as a burnt-out log.
- 42 - More than a thief, more than an enemy, a misdirected heart brings one to harm.
- 43 - Neither mother, father nor any member of a family can give you the blessings generated by your own well-directed heart.

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Some thoughts about this *Dhammapada* Verse: The Mind

These *Dhammapada* verses expect a lot of us! We are asked to keep a concentrated, mindful focus on all the thoughts that arise and dissolve away in that busy mind of ours all day, every day. That is a pretty phenomenal feat. And that is why so very few people ever have been able to achieve the very accomplished states of highest awareness and sacred realization that we are learning about. I can't do it. If you are like me, this verse might as well be titled: *The Very, Very Busy Mind*. But, even while we are clumsy beginners on the path, it is well worth the effort. We can change the unfolding of our life with this one skill of watching the mind.

We learned in our first *Dhammapada* verse, **Twin Verses**, that it is those thoughts that populate our mind which unfold to create our reality. That verse compares our thoughts to oxen leading a cart (us). If we don't watch those oxen and keep them on the path, they will take us wherever they choose! Falling asleep and not watching where the oxen are going may mean taking many tumbles over the cliff. If we take the time to follow any life event backwards through time to its originating thoughts, will allow us to see that there was indeed an internal, unfolding agenda. Our thoughts first stirred and laid down a pathway, that then caused an inner emotional response, that then manifested in our words and actions. Out of those words and actions, our life events unfolded, our world was continually formed and reformed, and on and on. So, constantly and continuously our life unfolds from the thoughts in our mind, just like those oxen tugging us along behind them in our cart. Knowing that we are the ones who set us on this course, we must ask ourselves often: Is this the path that I actually want to travel? We have created our lives to be exactly as they are. No one else did it to us. Do we like where we have ended up?

GAINING INSIGHT INTO THE THOUGHTS THAT RULE US

Our verse tells us to meditate in equanimity and balance as we watch our thoughts arise from mind and let them dissolve away. It cites all the wonderful benefits of taming the mind in this way. But, in a way, it is asking us to jump off the high-dive and saying, *Now, just swim to shore*. It tells us that we will be happier and safer if we swim rather than drown. And yet, it does not really address the "*just swim*" part of the process. HOW do we let those thoughts arise and HOW do we let them go? If the thoughts are light-weight thoughts, like - *I wonder what time it is?*, we can more easily just watch and in a moment, they will naturally dissolve as another arises. We learn the impermanence of thoughts and time will usually liberate them one after another. Eventually, with long days and long years spent in meditation, we will find that all thoughts are 'just thoughts' and we let them go as soon as they arise. In Buddhist terminology, we learn to recognize that the thoughts are truly empty of any real existence and are just sacred space. But... until we can do that, we might find that even though some thoughts come and go easily, others are anchored into our mind with a ball and chain. They need a jackhammer to get out because they are so deeply woven into our psyche. It might help to understand the power of these thoughts so that we can disempower them as much as possible. They too are 'just thoughts' but, because they hold a place in our innermost beliefs of safety and survival, they reappear again and again and powerfully program our unconscious and our life's story. Sometimes it helps to understand the origin of these thoughts in order to dig them up by the roots.

So we quickly recognize some of our thoughts as 'garbage thoughts', and others as 'social thoughts', but those more entrenched thoughts that fill our mind and run the show are more often rising out of a very primitive part of our brain. The first stirring in response to more charged internal and external stimuli comes from the hypothalamus, which is as primitive for us as it is for most other creatures. That means, it is very primitive. It is a part of the brain that insured survival by avoiding pain and suffering, and reaching out for what will give us pleasure. This part of our brain and its immediate, knee-jerk and emotional response to stimuli comes from hundreds of thousands of years where animal brains and then those of early man were programmed by successfully surviving the traumas of life and by achieving goals that brought the greatest rewards. As infants, we all still live our early lives on automatic pilot guided by the hypothalamus.

Gradually we develop higher skills that come with maturity and from applying our intellect to life situations. Along the way, we learn to observe our behavior in order to avoid getting into trouble. Very importantly, we also develop the capacity to anticipate consequences. We learn to notice those primitive signals that instantaneously arise and then we apply more highly involved processes before we react. In this way, we hopefully grow beyond a primitive response and we *think* about consequences and effectiveness and figure out a plan.

Unfortunately though, as we see in the news every day, people are not always mindful. They still respond primitively to life situations. We read of famous people carried away by lust or love or anger or greed that have gotten into a great deal of trouble. They make the news because everyone is curious about how they messed up - and we identify with them. Most all of us have said or done things that we greatly regret after the fact. If we had been paying attention to those thoughts running around in our mind, we very likely would have been aware of the behaviors that were about to unfold and we could have stopped with just the thought. Mindfulness would have really saved us a lot of grief.

Then there are those thoughts that are more deeply unconscious and almost hypnotically taking us down the pathways of a life over which we have little control, until we develop mindful awareness. Because we are all deeply programmed by early thoughts, sometimes for the good and sometimes for the bad, we may not be seeing the red flags that could give us a sign of trouble. When our early environment planted fears of survival because we lived in a traumatic world, or taught us to grasp at destructive rewards, our primitive brain, the hypothalamus, had us reacting to threats in extreme ways that have made it hard to ever function effectively in the world. If trauma programmed our early brain and psyche, many of our thoughts arise out of those more primitive physiological and emotional patterns laid down when we lived in a state of chronic fear. Those thoughts then are a superslide that take us from a highly charged stimuli to a physiological response to an emotional flood to a thought that sets off behavior designed to get life-saving help that we needed *-back then when we were infants* - in an emergency. And today, we perceive these emergencies recurring again and again and again - because that was our early life. In truth though, in adult life, the emergency is long past and their re-occurrence is only in our perception.

If we are mindful and recognize that our primitive thoughts will manifest an old behavior that served us well as a 10 month old infant, but they do not result in what we want today, we realize that we must let go of that view and those compelling thoughts. Just by becoming aware of this link of causation, we can then be more skillful. We can develop mindfulness through meditation and apply our mindfulness of thoughts to the healing of these old, very swift but disabling responses. With mindfulness *of mind*, we go from stimuli, to noticing our reaction, to noting our emotions, to recognizing our thoughts, and then to anticipating the consequences of our reactions, and then to a decision to speak or act or to NOT speak and act. Only after watching this unfolding flow, do we choose to respond overtly.

With mindfulness of our *Mind*, we can also let our thoughts be the gateway to our emotions and to our wounds. This is how we can access those more deeply buried processes that might program us to follow that script that we were given as a young child, but which we might realize is not serving us well now. When we see emotions and thoughts arise, we can consider what the stimuli was that stirred them into a reaction. We can look at those stimuli that brought out that knee-jerk primitive response. Then, we can go back and heal those early life stories that became the foundational underpinnings of our view of our self, others, and who we are in the world.

In times of tension or stress, the times when the hypothalamus sends an emergency fight or flight response because our life appears to be threatened, are not the times when we think clearly. Sometimes those thoughts fly by so swiftly that we are only aware after our actions have been completed.

Go back and visit your life story and traumas as completely as you can so that you can re-write it with different and healing messages. In knowing our old story, we can realize: a loud voice does not mean that we are about to get thrown to the floor, as it might have meant to us once when we did get thrown down violently far too often. It is time to heal those fearful traumas.

We can write the script for our new directions by being mindful of our mind...

Another benefit of being very mindful of our thoughts is that we can then stop frequently during the day and plant the seeds of the qualities that we want to strengthen. We can decide to reinforce positive and guiding thoughts for our lives.

Many of you apply such thoughts of higher intention during times of prayer and meditation. You may be repeating a prayer to remember your highest goals, or it may be a prayer to connect you with your highest source. It may be that you repeat a mantra over and over in your meditation that opens your heart. All of these thoughts and words affect your body's subtle energies and open up energetic pathways. They also affect your body's metabolism, blood pressure, biochemistry, adrenal system, and inner harmony. Calm messages quiet down the hyperactive amygdala and activate a healthy hippocampus. We can more easily develop the parts of the brain that offer higher cortical functioning allowing us to more clearly discern the possible benefits or ramifications of our actions. In these ways, we are able to build new neural pathways that are more functional. In times of crisis or stress, we are more likely to travel the new path rather than those primitive paths of our Neanderthal ancestors.

So, perhaps our playful analogy here is like typing in the address in our GPS or in our web browser of our mind. When we click **GO**, those thoughts take us directly to where we have programmed ourselves to go. Often, when we are following our old habitual programming, we type in our old views of self and the world. We might type in JEALOUSY. And, unsurprisingly, we feel overwhelmed with *jealousy* in a split second, complete with words, actions, and most likely, a lot of drama. But, if instead, we frequently program in: ***May I be of benefit to all beings***, we still come up with lots of options but they are all going to have something to do with being of benefit to others. Then we can mindfully choose which is the best path for that moment.

Developing the calm mind, focus, and clarity to stop frequently and notice our thoughts, and to choose to strengthen new and more beneficial thoughts, allows us to frequently assess if we are on the right path. We can contemplate if this path will allow us to accomplish our highest goals in life and reach our highest spiritual realization.

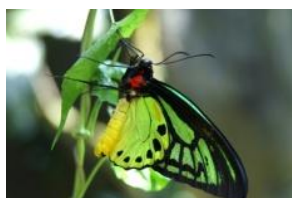
If we have the capacity, we can merely follow the teachings. We can know that when thoughts arise, they are empty of true existence, and we can then just let them go. We can rest in that space of effortlessly watching thoughts arise and dissolve away in our mind. We can go through life just watching as stimuli stirs up old memories, fears or longings and then, with equanimity, we recognize ALL as empty of existence. We let all thoughts arise and we let them go. For those of you who now do that easily, keep up the wonderful work.

For the rest of us, there are two very compelling thoughts in this verse that might help to motivate us to stay mindful. The first helpful thought is **42. *More than a thief, more than an enemy, a misdirected heart brings one to harm.*** Here we remember that we **must** do this work because if we do not, we harm our self more than any enemy could ever harm us.

And the other compelling thought is line **41. *Certainly this body will soon lie lifeless: cast aside on the ground, devoid of consciousness and as useless as a burnt-out log.***

This will be each of us someday. When we arrive at the time of our death, we will want to be well prepared. Death is a time that we will want to go through resting in great clarity and balance. But, we will each die with the same level of awareness that we have as we live our everyday life. Those who have done no preparation and have no mindfulness are washed along through the process of death by their karma and the consequences of past actions. Those who have developed an awareness of mind will maintain their mindfulness practice as a skillful vehicle during death as well. We will pass through the time of death in exactly the same way as we live our life.

Our mindfulness meditation practice allows us to watch the arising of the mind - in all ways. We watch when we are on the meditation cushion, and in every minute of everyday life. It will bring us the highest results on our spiritual life journey, serve us well during our death, and simply help us to get through the day without so much trouble.





A MEDITATION --

No matter what your life was like when you were a child, it is highly likely that you had some suffering and pain. Nobody escapes it. Even if you had the most loving and kind parents, they may not have known what to do to help you through a trauma that might have occurred with others or in an accident or illness. Think of a baby that you know, maybe your own child, and consider their extraordinary vulnerability. If you knew that they were going through something fearful, perhaps even fearing for their life, what would you say and what would you do to help them through a difficult time?

There is a Buddhist teaching that asks us to experience the suffering of every being with the same reaction that we would have if we saw our only child being swept away in a great flood. This is a dramatic image. Anybody who has ever loved a child can imagine the helplessness and the horror of watching that child being swept away by raging waters.

What if that child is you? And what if the parent that was watching that child being swept away is also you? And in truth, that is the way it is. Even at the time of our deaths, there will be no one there to support us when we may well have some fear at being swept into a great unknown. The only support and compassionate guide during this great transition is our own self awareness. We must be that loving, inner wisdom guide and that compassionate parent to our self always.

Here is the meditation

Mindfulness meditation allows us to watch all that arises and to then let it go. Eventually, there will be a time when we will sit effortlessly and just watch all that arises and all that falls away with effortless equanimity, recognizing the true nature of emptiness. This is a good goal. But, until we can do that, there are likely to be difficult life events that will occur. Instead of equanimity, we will experience great surges of brain chemicals setting off fire, fury and fear throughout our body in response. For those events that have more emotional energy, it is tougher to 'let go'. So, we add this component. We want to train ourselves to watch the unfolding of all life events and all that arises in our mind with great kindness and compassion.

Those events that carry huge emotional responses have a powerful story line that accompany them. Deep down, that story line is accepted as true. That story line might be that someone challenging us is the enemy. We believe that they are trying to hurt us. We feel our life is in danger. Thoughts flash by: I'm a victim; I don't have a chance; I can't do it; No one loves me; I'm abandoned and alone. Whatever the storyline is, it is probably a very familiar one and we find ourselves feeling it often in many life situations. Recognize what is your most common storyline. There may be a couple but look at the one where you are most vulnerable. Get clear about the roots of that belief system. How did you accept that story as true? How was it true once upon a time in your life?

Now sit quietly in meditation.

Sit with a straight back and spend a little time resting in balance and equanimity. If you do a meditation practice or a traditional prayer, chant, sing songs or hymns, take some time first to find peace and healing.

Now, introduce a picture of yourself as that infant or tiny child who was feeling fear. Look clearly at who you were then and what the world was like for you. Imagine how it was to be loved or not loved; frightened or safe.

Introduce that scary message that underlies so many of your intense emotional reactions today, especially that most familiar storyline. Let situations flow by in your memory that reinforced that child's beliefs that he or she was in danger in some way. Take some time to look at the face of that little child in distress, or maybe in panic or fear. Recognize the validity of that child's fear. No wonder those memories got locked within as a belief system and you felt that you needed to fight for your life - even if you were only a few months old and helpless.

Next, you must simultaneously be the loving parent to this child --- while you are also the frightened child.

You are the parent holding the child, rocking and soothing him or her. Talk to this frightened child about these difficult and challenging circumstances in their life. They may be too little to understand what you say but they can feel that quality of love and support in your voice. Share with them how this view that they learned about the world and maybe about themselves is not valid. It is not a true reflection of who they are, their worth, and their lovability. It may be true that they lived in an unsafe world but now, as you strengthen the now **adult** you, they will have someone with the power and capacity to make their world safer. You, **as an adult**, will be able to create circumstances where they can get their needs met and they will be better protected. Tell them a story where they can get what they need in a safe and loving world. They will no longer need to set up these painful and defeating dramas. They don't need to set other people up to continue to play the role of those who abused them. They no longer need to be the victim. They no longer need to feel like a little kid fighting for their life.

Every day, spend a little time revisiting the past and writing a new story for the future. Instill in yourself a deep sense of obligation and responsibility to love this child and bring them what they need to heal those old wounds and their life.

After you finish this meditation, feel that all that old pain and trauma is washing out of your body. A shower of healing rain is washing through you and leaving you cleansed of all that old fear.

Rest in kindness and compassion. Say something to yourself that brings forth your inner peace and faith in your healing. That deep healing, and those feelings of equanimity and balance never leave you, even if they get buried. Find the words that bring them up into your awareness and rest there.

To make these changes in your life takes dedication. I strongly encourage you to do this meditation every day so that a new voice of gentle caring becomes the thought that immediately arises in your mind when you are under stress rather than those old negative thoughts.

Repeat to yourself: May I be happy. May I be peaceful. May All Beings Be Happy. May All Beings be peaceful.

From Your Letters



Remember - 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, the participants' names if you wish, and we will send you 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.



My Mind, My Names by Tojin

Inspired by Thich Nhat Hanh's poem, "**Please Call Me By My True Names**," I thought of all the names, titles, job positions, etc. that I've held in my life. Just creating the list was quite a meditation in itself, something I recommend everyone try. Son, grandson, brother, cousin, nephew, friend, student, paperboy, thief, baseball player, football player, graduate, boyfriend, lover, cook, coach, driver, dishwasher, mover, soldier, carpenter, writer, failure, defendant, convict, murderer, Buddhist, cabinetmaker, painter, bodhisattva...

This led me to think of all the education, training, skills, inter-personal relationships, time and effort it took to become each one of these titles. As the list contained both positive and negative titles, I thought about all of the ignorance, hatred, fear, and anger that enabled me to be known by some of these names. After compiling this list, and looking back on my short life, I had an eye-opening experience. I saw that the mind, with all its phenomena - positive and negative, relative and absolute, has a limitless and boundless capacity.

In chapter 20 of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* we learn that everything is made from mind alone. This is an incredibly powerful statement. Powerful because it gives us control. In the *Dhammapada* we learn that our life is shaped by our mind, we become what we think. Suffering follows an evil thought just as joy follows a pure thought.

Knowing this, we have the power to “change our minds.” We have the power to be called by the names we choose and not to allow outside circumstances to pick our names for us.

Just as a cow with a young calf keeps an eye on it even when it is eating the grass, so it's proper for a person to keep an eye on all that can be done for others who are following the path. - Majjhima Nikaya

Poem by Raymond Sanders

There's a block of ice sitting on the ground
Hours later.. it melts.

While some of it evaporates
The rest of it “seeps into the ground.”

Where's the block of ice?
Is it still there,

When it was only water
That evaporated and seeped into the ground?
And not the block of ice
That's still within the mind.

Sometimes I wonder
What there is to wonder about
Wondering if I should be quiet
Or just yell and shout.
Wondering if anyone would hear me
Concerning all my joys and pains
While waiting on my day for justice
Fighting to keep my sanity --- insane

True love is experienced
When everything in one's life
Seems perfect.

When a hungry person's food is messed with
The amount of anger they'll display

Will be based on their amount of hunger
But the wise man displays none.

A glimpse of heaven
Is to have a glorious dream,
Then dream within that dream.

The wise man once said
To a very angry student,
“Someday all of your frowns
Will be placed appropriately
Once you learn the source.”

The brain is not always working
When the mouth is on the run.
Sometimes the brain needs the mouth to slow down,
Or come to a complete stop,
So it can catch up to it.

Buddhism is to know that all life is life
And to deny any life its right to life
Is to deny yourself your own right.
Because all life derived from the very same source.
In saying this...
Life is just what it is ... it's life.

*“Kind hearts are the gardens,
Kind thoughts are the roots,
Kind words are the flowers,
Kind deeds are the fruits,
Take care of your garden,
And keep out the weeds,
Fill it with sunshine, kind words and kind deeds.”
--Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

collage by Daniel Moses



From Robert Williford –from the Opinions Column in Arkansas Democrat/Gazette

Others in Danger, too

Re: Arkansas' shocking domestic violence statistics. Ladies, the next time you tell someone that it's none of his business why you allow your mate to physically abuse you, consider the following: Your accidental or intentional death by an abusive partner could fatally affect others.

Research reveals that there is a stress trigger involved in starting a serial killer or mass murderer's crime spree; maybe losing a house, wife, job. If you're accidentally killed while your mate beats you, your death could be the stressor that causes your abuser to also kill your children, neighbors or responding police.

The abuser may believe it no longer matters who else he kills, including himself. Once the stress trigger is reached, life loses all meaning for the abuser who can then become delusional, suicidal and/or homicidal.

Staying with a partner who is physically violent and overly possessive does not just put you at risk. You're also risking the lives of loved ones, friends and law enforcement. So it's not just your business what type of relationship you stay in. If you are in such a relationship, you must immediately start planning a safe escape. Contact your local domestic violence organization. Lives may depend upon it.

Robert Williford, Grady, Arkansas



Book of Knowledge - Omar's dream

A book to recommend: *Dharma Punx* by Noah Levine.

Noah Levine is the son of a long-time and most wonderful Buddhist meditation teacher, Stephen Levine. And like lots of children of well-known people, Noah took a different path - for a while. After an early life of self-destructive substance abuse, activities that took him to prison, and close calls with death, he found his own way back to the message he had heard as a child. But he heard it all in his way and with his language. Now, he is a teacher in his own right, but one that is perhaps more easily heard by those that have traveled a similar road.

and... Don't forget - you can ASK TIM - your questions about tough and not-so-tough issues in the world. You can write and ask any question about any life issues and **TIM** will answer them in upcoming issues. Ask just about anything. We probably can't tackle your legal questions though. Write to **ASK TIM, Dharma Friends**, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, AR. 72217-7708

Linda has offered her book, Mindful Money, to you for free. Just write to us for your copy.

If we have...presence of mind then whatever work we do will be the very tool which enables us to know right and wrong continually. There's plenty of time to meditate, we just don't fully understand the practice, that's all. While sleeping we breathe, eating we breathe, don't we? Why don't we have time to meditate? Wherever we are we breathe. If we think like this then our life has as much value as our breath, wherever we are we have time. - Ajahn Chah, "Taste of Freedom"

This may be true for some of you, perhaps not all, but you can check it out with your chaplain -

From Larry Boulanger: Dear Anna and Kristopher, It would help a lot of fellow prisoners if you could get this announcement into print as soon as possible: After a long struggle, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, through their Western Regional Director in his 03-31-10 response to my Administrative Remedy Appeal (# 569081-R3), has finally relented by conceding to purchase "zafus and zabutons . . . for communal Buddhist services" in the Chapel area, and he "has determined the institution will permit (inmates) to

purchase a zafu and zabuton for (their) personal religious use. These items may be used only for religious purposes, and the institution is not responsible for them. We also find that the zafu and zabuton are not transferable items. You may contact the Chaplain for assistance in ordering these items.” Thanks for all your work -

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, tell them that you receive support from **Dharma Friends** and we would be very grateful for any donations that they might make. I know that most of you have very little money but we are enormously appreciative when some of you have made donations as well, and for the stamps many of you have sent.

If you 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.

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



"A mind committed to compassion is like an overflowing reservoir - a constant source of energy, determination and kindness. This is like a seed, that when cultivated, gives rise to many other good qualities, such as forgiveness, tolerance, inner strength and the confidence to overcome fear and insecurity. The compassionate mind is like an elixir; it is capable of transforming bad situations into beneficial ones. Therefore, we should not limit our expressions of love and compassion to our family and friends. Nor is the compassion only the responsibility of clergy, health care and social workers. It is the necessary business of every part of the human community." The Dalai Lama

From L.F.: Dear Kristopher and Dharma Friends, Thank you so much for the cards, the newsletters and, most of all, your letters. I did something I've never done before, I wrote a poem.

I Am "Awake" by L.F.



(photo by L.O)

Some mornings, I am free.
Some mornings, I am in prison.
Some mornings, I am in love.
Some mornings, I am not.
Some mornings, I see the tiny lilac and yellow flowers surging through the damp grass,
that shimmer like diamonds in the morning sun.
Some mornings, I only see gray.
Some mornings, I am inspired.
Some mornings, I am discouraged.
Today, I am "Awake."

Some mornings, I stand in line waiting to go into chow, the sun rises where I know the ocean lies, it's golden rays screaming through the razor wire, reminding me of the beauty and impermanence of birth.
Some mornings, standing in line for chow, there's no sun, I see no beauty, there is no birth and the permanence of impermanence persists, wanting to hold on to the sunrise and annihilate the gloom.
Knowing this is suffering, I see the beauty in the coming and going. I am "Awake."

"The quieting of our mind is a political act. The world does not need more oil or energy or food. It needs less greed, less hatred, less ignorance. Even if we have inwardly taken on the political bitterness or cynicism that exists externally, we can stop and begin to heal our own suffering, our own fear, with compassion. Through meditation and inner transformation, we can learn to make our own hearts a place of peace and integrity. Each of us knows how to do this. As Gandhi acknowledged, "I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills." Is is our inner nobility and steadiness that we must call on in our personal and collective difficulties." - Jack Kornfield *The Wise Heart*

From C.G.: Dear Kristopher, I'm one who never gave much thought to the subject of death. As I began to to read the Buddhist perspective, I immediately noticed how ignorant I actually am to the dying aspect of life – and of the same token – this teaching has opened a new door of Buddhist study, and so I do.

... As I believe I have the basic concepts understood, I find myself, at times, withdrawing from the other offenders due to their irrational thinking and at other times, I bite my tongue to prevent lashing out in anger while I try to keep myself on the "middle path," trying my very best to respect all and condemn no one.

Sometimes I feel like I've jumped into the middle of the ocean with no life jacket, simply because I'm the only one that I know of who is studying the Buddhist perspective while surrounded with multicultural religions and I tend to grasp at straws, from time to time, hoping that the way I'm trying to coordinate my way of thinking with the Buddhist way will eventually wash me to shore without drowning.

I guess what I'm really trying to say is, I do not want to fail in my Buddhist journey and as I continue to go forward, offenders around me actually think I'm "thrown off," a slang term for being crazy. One example is, my Buddhist journey has led me to quit eating meat in which I'm fortunate that the Texas Prison System actually provides a "meat-free" diet, and since these offenders actually see that I will not eat meat, they occasionally try to stir up illogical arguments to rub me the wrong way, and as I counter their illogical arguments with educational perspectives that include the Buddhist perspective, it's like a can of worms have been opened.

As a result of it being a favorite past-time of theirs, to have nothing better to do other than to create illogical arguments, I have found myself, as a part of my meditation, to include a session of metta for those who wish to offend me personally and to offend the Buddhist perspective when they have no idea of what they're saying.

My one question to you, based on the above, do you feel I am headed in the right way? I'll close for now and I will humbly say: May you be well, happy and peaceful. May no harm come to you. May no difficulties come to you. May no problems come to you. May you have patience, courage, understanding and determination to meet and overcome inevitable difficulties, problems, and failures in life. Cordially,

Kristopher's response: Dear C.G., I do know what you are experiencing as I, too, had to deal with the general population and their narrow views. Including metta for those who taunt us is a positive step. However, the focus of our energy would be much better served if it was aimed inward and pinpointed at not causing the harm to them that we experience from their taunting. It is most difficult to let go of the ego that says we are right and they don't know what they're talking about. Join them at laughing at yourself, you'll be happier. Blessings to you my brother,

"Let yourself be silently drawn by the strange pull of what you really love. It will not lead you astray."- Rumi

From A.M.: Dear Anna, Kristopher and everyone else, Yes, it's been a while since I've written, but, I'm still here. And, yes, I still read the *Dharma Friends* newsletter cover to cover each month. So, thank you very much for your generous offering. When I'm done, I always pass them around, that is, after I copy some of the good info I find within, for future reference. Even though I am a Christian, I love the guidance and informative information I find in each issue, especially the meditation exercises. I've just received the May issue so I have not had a chance to read it yet.

You mentioned in the April, 2010 issue that you want to hear what is helpful to me. Well, as I mentioned earlier, the various meditative practices as well as the "Thoughts on the Dhammapada Verse." I do enjoy the insightfulness and informative information I find there. The least helpful? The letters that put others down. Thank you very much for all that you do.

"I have no doubt whatever that most people live whether physically, intellectually, or morally, in a very restricted circle of their potential being. They make use of a very small portion of their possible consciousness. . . Much like a man who, out of his whole bodily organism should get into a habit of using and moving only his little finger. . . We all have reservoirs of life to draw upon, of which we do not dream!" --William James

From D.Q.: Precious *Dharma Friends*, I bow to you, a Buddha to be. Buddha bless you ALL! And thank you for all that you do. I realized today that . . . I'm guilty of "clinging" . . . I guess . . . because I definitely look forward to receiving the *Dharma Friends* newsletter. When I'm able to let go into sunyata, emptiness, then perhaps then I won't need *Dharma Friends*. Until then, I'm grateful for the wisdom, compassion, loving-kindness and the encompassing of wholesome virtues of you all at Compassion Works For All.

There is a wealth of insight in the newsletter and I struggle not to voice my opinion . . . I have my hands full, the struggle in self. *Dharma Friends* is a forum of so many I can call my precious teachers. I read some where . . . the quote "I don't feel like being Buddhist today" . . . That is such a true realization . . . and is true in my case . . . sometimes at least . . . It's not any easy path . . . though the path is free of sharp rocks, weeds and bramble. It's the burden of the things we cling to . . . what we can cram into our pockets, fit on our shoulders, around our necks, under our arms, in our hands, on the tops of our heads and even in our minds . . . I' such a long way from enlightenment . . . Sharing my burdens with those who have no problem with casting things aside . . . because . . . "emulating you I will perfect myself" . . . most people say experience is the best teacher . . . I agree to a degree, only. But I most certainly believe that those that are not successful, are those that learn from others mistakes. I mimic those that practice Buddhism because I see and feel the power of peace, equanimity, wisdom and selflessness they possess and I need that in my life. In turn, I see that my transformation is natural and karmic . . . crazy as it may seem . . . I must've been a Buddhist in a previous life . . . I feel relieved . . . like I finally made it home after a long hard trek! A 15 year wander.

The philosophy, meditative practices and practices themselves are so heart felt . . . let's say . . . I've found my self in Buddhism. By embracing the infamous ego . . . will it cease to exist? I'm walking amidst innumerable travelers . . . some neonates like myself . . . some walking to and from somewhere up ahead . . . some crossing my path . . . I can feel the energy from the path tingling in my feet and on up to and through the top of my head! I'm grateful for all those surrounding me, for all their willingness . . . that if they actually could . . . I'd be weighted with no burdens at all . . . so some instruct . . . and some ever tug at the burdens while instructing, guiding . . . THANK YOU! And Buddha bless you all! I most certainly believe that everything happen for a reason . . . It's not coincidence . . . the Noble 8 Fold Path . . . I guess, I'm searching for a school . . . I enjoy the meditative practices of Vajrayana Buddhism, but a bit shamanistic for me . . . I was introduced to Zen, Vietnamese Tieng first and find the power of Zazen phenomenal and awakening . . . but don't have a constant contact for guidance, study and proper instruction, outside of you . . . my precious *Dharma Friends*. The late great Shifu Sheng Yen and the Chung Hua Institute is knowledgeable and idyll but so are many of the other Chinese Schools. All that comes to mind is . . . without confusing what is to be adopted and what is to be abandoned, may I persevere in the path! Well at the time . . . I'm too confused to make a choice . . . all in due time huh? Karma . . . oh, I'm sorry, sometimes I ramble, as you can tell. Thank you for the cards, they are REMARKABLE!! Buddha bless your golden hearts!

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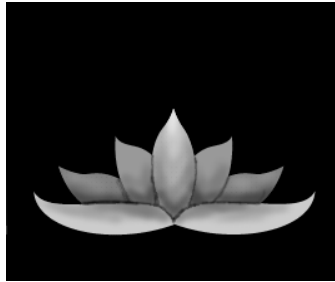


and lastly, from D.Q.: May all beings be free from enmity and danger, ...May all beings be free from physical suffering, ...May all beings be free from mental suffering, ...May all beings take care of themselves happily, ...May all beings be free from suffering, ...May all beings be happy, ...May it be so.

Dharma Friends

August 2010 issue # 163

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Additional Pages for EMAIL VERSION of [Dharma Friends](#)

The Compassion
Works for All
Worldwide
Olympics



Where All Things
Unfathomable Are
Made Possible

The CWFA Home
Runs - EVERYONE
COMES HOME

SHEDRA STUDY

For those in Little Rock and attend our **Shedra class** - we missed the July class because Lama Yeshe Wangmo was here offering wonderful teachings on class night. There was no contest in choosing the best place to spend our time!!

But we will have class this month on August 31 at 6 PM. I'll send out an email about the place but if you are not on my Shedra class email list, let me know so you will not miss out. See you then. anna

AND - Good News and Bad News

GOOD NEWS - We will be having what is now our semi-annual meditation retreat at Wattle Hollow with Joy Fox adding the healthy yoga stretches to keep us balanced in every way.

“The Next Step on Your Spiritual Path” October 22 – 24

The retreat will begin Friday evening and end on Sunday after lunch. Cost: \$125, includes meals and lodging. You may also offer dana (Pali word for “donation”) for the teachings which will go to *Compassion Works for All*.

But - BAD NEWS for those not yet registered. The retreat is already full.

And - GOOD NEWS - you can get your name on the waiting list and hopefully we will be able to get YOU in. Go to Joy Fox's web site: <http://www.WattleHollow.com> to sign up on the waiting list if you wish.

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

MINDFUL MONEY by LINDA BESSETTE

Mindful Money allows us to be fully present and aware of our money issues. Mindful Money teaches us to be conscious and responsible stewards of our resources so that money is a healthy vehicle to reach life's goals rather than our captor. **ENJOY! --as Linda says to us each month as we receive our current Dharma Friends issue!** Linda has graciously offered to donate a portion of the proceeds of all books sold through Dharma Friends back to Compassion Works for All.

Email Linda (lbessette33@comcast.net) if you want a copy of MINDFUL MONEY. *Or send your check \$15 – plus \$5 handling fees, to: Compassion Works for All, Mindful Money, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, Arkansas 72217-7708*

Also Remember 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 (above) and she can give you more information about prices, mailing, etc. for all books.

***WATCH MARA's VIDEOS OF HER TALK AT LAMAN LIBRARY
on THE DEVIL's KNOT***

Go to <http://www.YouTube.com> and put Mara Leveritt in the SEARCH box

And anna's books –

Just As the Breeze Blows Through Moonlight, and Dharma Friends and the Healthy Living pamphlet are on our Compassion Works for All web site – www.dharmafriendsprisonoutreachproject.com 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.



"There is an important link between deep change at the personal level and deep change at the organizational level. To make deep personal change is to develop a new paradigm, a new self, one that is more effectively aligned with today's realities. This can occur only if we are willing to journey into unknown territory and confront the wicked problems we encounter. This journey does not follow the assumptions of rational planning. The objective may not be clear and the path is not paved with familiar procedures. This tortuous journey requires that we leave our comfort zone and step outside our normal roles. In doing so, we learn the paradoxical lesson that we can change the world only by changing ourselves. This is not just a cute abstraction; it is an elusive key to effective performance in all aspects of life."

-- Robert Quinn in Deep Change



***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.

