



offers you **Dharma Friends**

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

March 2011 issue # 170

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HAPPY LOSAR (the Tibetan New Year 2138) the Year of the Iron Hare

The Dhammapada

The teachings of the Buddha



from verses published by the Forest Sangha and free to readers

Verse 10 - PUNISHMENT or AGGRESSION

129 Having empathy for others one sees that all beings are afraid of punishment and death.
Knowing this, one does not attack or cause attack.

130 Having empathy for others one sees that all beings love life and fear death.
Knowing this, one does not attack or cause attack.

131 To harm living beings who, like us, seek contentment, is to bring harm to ourselves.

132 To avoid bringing harm to living beings who, like us, seek contentment, is to bring happiness to ourselves.

133 Avoid speaking harshly to others; harsh speech prompts retaliation.
Those hurt by your words may hurt you back.

134 If spoken to harshly, make yourself as silent as a cracked gong; non-retaliation is a sign of freedom.

135 Just as a herdsman drives cattle to pasture, old age and death direct living beings.

136 Though while they perform their evil acts they do not realize what they are doing, fools suffer the results
of their own actions accordingly, just as one is burnt when handling fire.

137 - 140 To cause harm to the defenseless soon brings suffering to those who attack. They will reap pain or poverty or loss,

illness, insanity or persecution, abuse, distress or devastation, and, alone, after death they must confront their misdeeds.

141 Neither outer asceticisms, nor self-humiliation nor physical deprivation of any kind, can purify the heart of one still obscured by doubt.

142 Flamboyant outer appearance does not in itself constitute an obstruction to freedom. Having a heart at peace, pure, contained, awake and blameless, distinguishes a renunciate, a Wayfarer, a noble being.

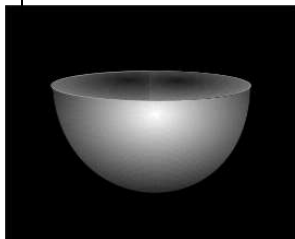
143 A well-trained horse gives no cause for restraint. Rare are those beings who, through modesty and discipline, give no cause for rebuke.

144 Let the dread of endless mediocrity spur you into great effort, like a well-trained horse encouraged by the mere touch of the whip.

Relinquish the burden of endless struggle with unapologetic confidence, with purity of action, effort, concentration, and by conscious and disciplined commitment to the path.

145 Those who build canals channel the flow of water. Arrow smiths make arrows. Woodworkers craft wood. The good tame themselves.

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A few thoughts from anna on this *Dhammapada* verse: PUNISHMENT

I want to start with some heartfelt thank you's.

This may seem off topic but you will see shortly how we are addressing this verse, *Punishment*.

This thank you is to all that have written and the many more who have sent caring energy to those children that we refer to as "*Jeff's Kids*". *Jeff's Kids*, as most of you know, are the children in a juvenile detention and rehabilitation facility that our friend Jeff counsels in individual and group therapy. Along with these kids, we all think about the myriad of children everywhere who are suffering and lost. Life has handed them more than they can handle and they need someone to help them on a path that will lead to a healthy life and away from prison. This is where so many of you stepped in.

Last fall we put a letter in *Dharma Friends* encouraging you to share with these children any words that might help them find that new path. Hundreds of you saw yourselves as these children living the lives that you lived long ago. You asked yourselves that question, 'What could someone have said to me that might have changed my path?' And that is what many, many of you wrote. This thank you is to all of you - far too many for us to keep up with in sending the individual thank you's that all of you deserve.

You wrote letters of guidance, letters as kind fathers, and letters that shared your own life story. Your letters reflected every part of our society. Some of you are highly educated, successful professional people that for some reason went to prison. Some of you have developed wisdom through your long years of meditation and self discovery. Some of you may not have had much formal education but your life stories reflect your profound ability to take on challenges and to share the clarity you learned from them. Some of your letters reflect a view of one who spent their whole life incarcerated in institutions where you lived a world of violence, struggle and hate. And yet in all of these letters are kind hearts touched by the plight of lost children. This is a powerful statement about the hope and compassion that has survived in you as you have lived behind prison bars.

I say again and again to audiences in all my talks and writings - our world misperceives who you are. I know you live with people who are every bit as dangerous as the TV shows might depict, but far more of you live lives of goodness and hope to benefit others than society knows. In fact, many in the world of "opportunity and freedom" exhibit less caring for these children than you do. It is those in the free world who voted NO when asked to fund programs for health and services that would have protected *Jeff's Kids* from some of the traumas that they have faced. So many of these lost kids are invisible in families and communities where abuse and deprivation and illness happened to them and no one cared. I thank you for caring so much that you want to help them.

Our Dhammapada verse: PUNISHMENT

This is where it gets hard....

There was a powerful theme in many of your letters: this theme of *Punishment*. I wish I could share all of your letters but the one thing I know is that you "get it". Many of you could have written an excellent commentary to this verse. When we read this verse on punishment, we are being reminded that for every one of our actions, good or bad, there is a consequence. If an action begins with a heart of kindness and a wish to benefit others, the result will be beneficial - even if we don't immediately see the benefit. If the act comes from a place of self interest or is meant to harm others while we benefit ourselves, the consequences are going to be negative.

It is painful to read many of your letters because you shared with *Jeff's Kids* the horrific life circumstances that you had to deal with. For far too many, the early life circumstances that happened to you were not at all your fault. Almost all of you told stories of trauma, abuse and violence that made up the world that you lived in. All of us here at *Compassion Works for All* and many of our free world readers know the difficulties of lives lived by children everywhere. And yet, the worlds that many of you came from are shut away from the view of most in our society. And, far too many others shut their eyes and don't want to know and don't want to help these kids that are *Jeff's Kids* -- and that used to be you. They would rather not see - and not help - than to know that such worlds exist. We all know and society *should* know this one truth – for most, the road to prison is paved with trauma!

But here is the miracle.

Even though circumstances beyond your control gave you challenges too big for any kid to handle, and those challenges understandably left you with feelings of rage and betrayal and helplessness in the face of a life that gave you little support, and many of the actions that led to your imprisonment came as a result of desperately trying to deal with such circumstances, you survived. You survived and developed a capacity to turn such challenges into wisdom and compassion.

Our verse, *Punishment*, talks about the consequences of actions. You wrote in your letters with extraordinary self awareness about the emotional responses that you felt during your traumas and that consumed your lives for years afterwards. You shared how you often handled these life situations with responses that led to crimes, violence, and incarceration. You asked the children of *Jeff's Kids* to consider their actions and the consequences of them. You took responsibility for your actions and then you delved deeply into your wounds to show how you found a different path. You would not have been able to write those letters urging them to consider more beneficial responses such as getting emotional help, getting an education, being kind to family members, and not acting out in violence had you not so honestly examined yourself. You would not have been able to urge these children to take those steps had you not found the value in them yourself. These were not angry letters. These were not the letters of victims. These were the letters of courageous people who have found healing.

Society does not see the big picture...

In part because of children's brain development, they don't have the capacity for self awareness or clarity in decision making at 6, or 10, or even at 17 years of age. Children just react with pain and anger when they do not receive support or

especially if they are being abused. They don't have the brain function to understand the consequences to their behavior, they don't have the capacity to process how their behavior appears to others, nor can they envision a long-term plan that will give them a secure future. Somebody has to guide them from the time they are tiny. They must hear the phrases over and over that build an inner road map of support and guidance through life's challenges. If a child is left on their own, floundering in trauma and abuse without a parent or mentor to lovingly tell them what to do, they are often lost. By the time they're 9 or 10, if they have lived feeling unsafe in the hands of the adults that are around them, it is often too hard for them to accept the guidance and support from adults who might step into their lives at that point and offer them a new way. The clarity you now have as adults only came with a mature brain and the capacity to develop an inner observer in mindfulness. We are talking miracles here whenever healing does happen after so many traumas. For lives to be salvaged, these kids need to be seen as kids at risk in utero, in infancy, in early childhood and in schools. By the time they become **Jeff's Kids**, it is too late for many. Society needs to see that our prisons were filled long ago by infants who were already on an invisible path at the time when they could have been helped.

But that's why these letters that you have written are so important. As Jeff and I talk about how hard it is to read some of your letters, especially those of you that lived unsupported in a world of unimaginable violence and trauma, it is almost too much to bear. Many of you tried to kill yourselves and, by all logic you should have been killed over and over, yet you survived. There is a purpose in your still being here. I know that even if you are touching one person or one child your life has meaning and purpose.

It is important to consider that there are consequences to our behavior.

The consequences and even the punishment of behaviors that happened when you were 8 or 10 or 15 years old are playing out in your lives, even though many of you barely had a clue that you had any other choices. Now, some 20 and 30 years later, you are looking at your behaviors with mindfulness. You are meditating and considering those consequences before you speak and before you act. You are looking at consequences to your behaviors with a fine tooth comb. I know that some of you meticulously practice kindness towards others. I see you agonize when you feel like you slipped up and you might have caused suffering to another. And you are generously giving incredible teachings to children who hear you because they see in your stories that they are not alone in the lives they have led. They need to know that someone who knows their life predicament has found hope and is guiding them. Hopefully, one day, they too can learn to look at their life, look at their emotions, and consider how to mindfully respond to difficult life situations. But today, they need to hear an adult voice that can guide them and that they trust. You are that voice.

This is a healing opportunity for each of us too. We can all look back at ourselves when we were kids with great appreciation and compassion. Appreciate that there were consequences and punishments to our behavior. Yet, for many, there were circumstances that precipitated this behavior that were far greater than our capacity or any kid's capacity to deal with at the time. Love that little boy or girl who was struggling to survive against enormous odds. Be grateful for all that we each have learned as we have revisited our life through writing letters or considering our life story. We all have amazing stories of resilience, tenacity, growth and awakening or we would not be on a path of self-discovery. I wish

everyone everywhere could read everyone else's stories and we will all learn from each other.



We are truly far more alike than different as human beings. And, you, our courageous readers and writers, know far more than most a big picture of ***punishment***.



A MEDITATION on PUNISHMENT

"Suffering chastens us and makes us remember. We are like the child who tries to pick up fire and is unlikely to do it again, once she has seen the consequences. With material things, seeing is easy; but when it comes to picking up the fires of greed, aversion, and delusion, most of us aren't even aware were holding fires at all. On the contrary, we

misguidedly believe them to be lovable and desirable, and so we are never chastened. We never learn our lesson." -
Buddhadhasa Bhikku, "Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree"

Our *Dharma Friend, J.F.*, goes off to Thailand every winter. She goes to a Buddhist monastery where she helps to teach many skills and practices her own self-awareness meditations. Those of you in prison have your own meditation retreat set up, a nice meditation cell with fewer worldly demands than most... and also an opportunity to teach and learn self-awareness skills too. (just a little tongue-in-cheek humor - ha ha) But unless you are in prison in Thailand, you are unfortunately not in a setting quite so lush with palm trees, swaying grasses, and beautiful flowers. But even though some may have more beautiful external scenery, we all share one radiant wisdom mind, all of us inseparable from each other. And, it may well be that we each do get the perfect environment for our own growing awareness as we journey towards our highest realization.

Wherever we may be, we bring along our own challenges....

J writes a blog from Thailand that is always filled with her wonderful stories and pictures. As she tackled the practice of mindfulness, one of her recent blogs catalogued all the mistakes that she had made that week in her typically open and honest way. We all know when we make a big blooper and the consequences are severe and immediate. Our verse, *Punishment*, tells us that it is harder to know that there will be consequences to some of our more subtle negative actions. As we grow, it is the subtle intentions that we must pay attention to. These were the kinds of bloopers that J was assessing in an uncritical way. What a great meditative exercise for all of us to do at the end of every day.

Here are J's thoughts from her blog: Tales From Thailand #4 , 2011



I've made it my meditation practice, for a few years now, to be as present as possible while I'm walking on the path here at SDS, suspending whatever babble is rambling through my mind regarding the past or future. I often fail, and yet, when I can remember, this practice yields little daily miracles wherein I see, smell, and hear something new and incredible.

Lately, my life beyond the Cave doesn't begin till lunch time (11:30) with the mae chees (nuns). I begin the day with meditation, yoga and then do editing work in my room. This is a luxurious trend for me, and quite relaxing. Lunch with the nuns in total silence is soothing as well. Eating silently, and only twice a day is a monastic precept. It was a common practice for traditional families as well, I'm told, until this generation. I was eating extra slowly, one day, until I noticed that everyone was waiting for me to finish, so they could bow and leave. Whoops. I try not to make the same mistake twice; there are so many to be made. ☺

After lunch, Mae Chee Kalong, (a Hmong tribeswoman who has monastic seniority here and is therefore the sergeant at arms), got on to me about not cleaning my spoon well enough and not laying my plate out in the sun, to de-germinate it, and not having a towel to properly dry it in the end.

She gave me a lesson in foot-washing as well, many years ago, saying: "I see that you have a very good heart, Pa Joy, but others will not understand why your feet are so dirty." I reassured her, "Yes, Mae Chee, I understand. My own mother thinks I'm a savage" The paths are all paved now, so foot-washing before entering a building is no longer an issue.

Falang Gaffe of the Week - there's a 3-way tie this week:

1. I made my own little "office" space by sitting on the wrapped-up bundles of Dhamma Sawasdee magazine... having asked several people, "Is this O.K.?"(Di, mai kha?) Then Mae chee Sansanee caught me doing it.... and immediately had Nawng Joy translate: "Pa Joy, it is not proper to sit on the Dhamma." There is a whole world of things that one doesn't defile with their feet or butt. Since I am quadrudextrous, (use my feet a lot), I get in trouble for that too, sometimes.

2. I was giving a baan din (mud-building) tour to a visiting Thai forest monk on a steamy-hot sunny afternoon, and started to put my Cambodian hat on, when I sensed some level of offense. I asked, hopefully.... "Is this O.K.?" The monk smiled and nodded yes, but his translator gave me an "OMIGOD, no" look.

3. Okay, I know that this is actually the worst offense, probably in any culture, but I have a hard time admitting it: My friend Saowannee brought her two friends to SDS for the first time. They were a bit tense, and when I asked the boy what he studied in college, the answer was bio-agricultural engineering. "Oh, like Monsanto?" I smiled cheerily. He didn't answer, and the rest slipped out of my mouth, "I think that Monsanto is evil." They probably didn't even know the word "evil," but our conversation was quite stilted and tense ever after. Any negative reference, not to mention a political one, is unforgivably rude, by Thai standards. And my prematurely proffered opinion probably didn't enlighten anyone, either.

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So, back to our meditation! I'm adopting J's GAFFE blog for a meditative exercise that we can all do before we go to bed at night. We all make gaffes every day, usually without awareness. So let's shine a spotlight of awareness on our daily gaffes.

Our exercise is first, to examine what our behavior was; secondly, what was our motivation and, third, examine those obstacles that blocked our clarity from seeing the dynamic that we were setting up. And, just as J. does, do it with compassion and appreciation. It is then an opportunity to erase any negativity that we might have created.

By understanding where that action came from, we can clarify our intention to be of benefit to others. When situations arise that tempt us to respond in a negative way, we might wait longer before we speak or act. We rest in meditative balance and clarity. Then, if we decide to act, we can do so with kindness.

At the end of the day, when we write out all the circumstances where we caused discomfort or harm, we can visualize sweeping these situations and all the harm that they caused away into space. We can also visualize sweeping through our own heart and mind and body, washing away all negativity that contributed to the incident and that caused us stress.

Later, with clarity and kindness, we may decide to go back to that person and apologize. If it helps, we can explain what we did so that we can clean up the residue in that relationship and undo any harm.

In the end we can visualize sending blessings and kindness out to others in hopes that they will be freed of suffering and full of happiness.





From Your Letters

#1 – The Mindful Money Book – If you would like a free copy of Linda's book, 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.

#3 - Jeff's Kids and your heartwarming letters: Jeff is our friend who counsels kids in a Juvenile Detention Center. He thought that sharing your thoughts or stories about your journey to prison might benefit kids that are in the same situation that you might have been in once upon a time. Know how much your letters are all appreciated for your stories, your advice, and for being such a wonderful vehicle to reach broken hearts! The healing that is coming from these letters is extraordinary.

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

#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!**

Haiku by B. W.

busy nectar thief
stealing from every bloom
the honey is sweet.

If I had supernatural power, I could take you up to the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha for a visit, or to the Kingdom of God if you are a Christian. I am sure that everything would be nice and clean there, with beautiful scenery. But once you were there, how would your footsteps be? Can you be sure that your footprints on the Pure Land would not show traces of worries and sorrows you carried from this samsaric, worldly life? If you take your worries and sorrows along with you and set them on the Pure Land, you would defile the Pure Land and make it much less pure! To deserve the Pure Land, you must be able to take peaceful and anxiety-free steps right here on this samsaric ground. - Thich Nhat Hanh, "Guide to Walking Meditation"

From L. R.: Dear Anna and Kristopher, I hope that you and all the others at CWFA are well. I would like to thank you for the newsletter which is greatly appreciated and also address R.F. whose commentary is featured in the July 2010, issue # 162 of Dharma Friends. First, let me say that everyone's experience and level of understanding is unique to each individual. I cannot truly know

what someone else is experiencing, especially in dealing with incarceration. I can only relate looking through the eyes of my own experiences and I try not to project my biased views onto others.

There is abuse within the justice system. I, myself, have a sentence of 145 yrs for misdemeanors. Obviously, this is a gross abuse of discretion on the part of the sentencing court which I'm currently trying to rectify through the Federal System.

As a Buddhist, I do not only have an obligation to myself, but more so toward others who may find themselves in the same situation. It is very important to "Go beyond limited concepts . . ." and be more engaged in our practice. In Zen, this is what it means to return to the market place after realization.

You state that "Habitual, negative thinking prevails" and I think that is safe to say not only in the prison environment, but in society as well. However, my friend, this is only a half-truth, since negativity can only be defined by its opposite, positivity. This is due to the conditioned nature of all phenomenal things. You've failed to mention the positive aspects of your prison experience. What? Prison positive? How's that for going beyond concepts?

You mention how prison officials routinely abuse their power, which does occur, due to humans being humans. Have you noticed how many inmates, who dislike their situation, are always expressing some kind of abuse? In more times than not, it's due to sour grapes than actual horrendous abuse. That's that habitual, negative thinking you're talking about; yes, these individuals need to transcend this way of criminal thinking.

As for the riots in Attica or any other prison, they did not stem from a pure motivation. To equate these actions which the non-violent protests of Martin Luther King and Gandhi misses the mark. There were a lot of deaths at Attica, both inmate and staff, and no matter what results were achieved, these actions were unskillful.

Maybe it's time to let go of the concept of being a "jail-house lawyer" along with the image and expectations that go along with it. The idea of self must be killed and when you meet the Buddha, He must be killed without blinking an eye as well. Then you can experience true intimacy with yourself and those around you. Accept all things that may come (and acceptance doesn't mean complacency.)

The people who'll be going home are responsible for the feelings that they experience. The choice is theirs to feel "wounded" or "orphaned" no matter what environment they've been living in. Hopefully, they'll seek out their own enlightened nature before re-entering society. It's in their hands. My head to your feet. Gassho,

If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are headed. - Lao Tsu

From J.H.: Dear Anna, Kristopher, Linda, Chelle and Mara, I want to thank you for sending me the welcome packet and offering genuine time and love. It is obvious to me that your compassion and love for others is real and genuine for the simple fact that I have nothing besides the same to offer back. The personal touch of being able to put names and faces with your organization has given me a little more inspiration to treat others with kindness and love. After all, love creates more love. Thank you for the article entitled Loving-kindness and Mindfulness. I know this is not a pen-pal organization, but I'd like to share a couple of spiritual experiences I have had, mainly because I really don't have anyone else to relate to on a spiritual plane.

One was when I first got locked up this time a few months ago. I started thinking about the doctrine of no-self and realized that I was nothing and with this realization, I felt a wonderful love for everyone and everything. Another time I was in solitary confinement after the Nashville flood because there was nowhere else to put me. I was contemplating causes and conditions and realized fully, for a while, that our whole lives are controlled by causes all the way back to when the universe was first set in motion. Even our freewill is an illusion because our decisions are based on information we receive from outside of ourselves. If freewill is an illusion, then our idea of being separate is illusion and the best we are is loving witnesses. Isn't this what mindfulness is?

I am trying to explain the thought processes that went on that led me to bliss which really doesn't work, because these thoughts are simply what led me to let go of everything, including the idea of myself. But it is the act of letting go of illusion that leads to enlightenment and doesn't really matter what leads us to it. I can say that while I was in this state, I felt a very strong, amazing love for everyone no matter who they were or what they had done. This experience has led me to believe that since I reached this love by giving up illusion, that this unconditional love is the truth and may be the only truth. I think mindfulness is just a tool for reaching this love, so it in no way is separate from love. I could go on with more spiritual insights, but I will not take up anymore of your time. I would like you all to know you are all beautiful people for the work you do and the love and kindness and compassion you show people in need of this spiritual care. I hope someday to be more involved in an active role helping others with their spiritual growth, in other words, I want to be just like you all when I grow up! HA HA Thanks for listening and I am very much looking forward to your newsletter and anything else you feel might help me in my journey, Buddhist or any other spiritual teaching that might help me grow into a more loving, caring human being. It is very good to feel somewhat connected to other seekers of truth. Thank you! Keep up the good work! Peace and love,

Look at children. Of course they may quarrel, but generally speaking they do not harbor ill feelings as much or as long as adults do. Most adults have the advantage of education over children, but what is the use of an education if they show a big smile while hiding negative feelings deep inside? Children don't usually act in such a manner. If they feel angry with someone, they express it, and then it is finished. They can still play with that person the following day. –

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, "Imagine All the People"

Don't be a Crabby Old Man by C.S.

You're going to meet an old man someday! Down the road ahead, ten, twenty, thirty years . . . he's waiting for you. You'll be catching up with him.

What kind of old man are you going to meet? That's a rather serious question.

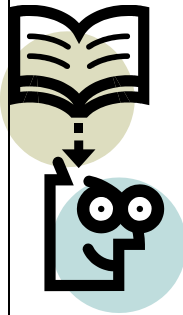
He may be a gentle, soft, happy fellow. A gentleman that has grown old slowly, surrounded by lots of friends. Friends who call him an angel because of how his life has affected them.

He may be a bitter, confused, wrinkled-up, cynical old geezer, without a good word for anybody – disagreeable, friendless and alone.

The kind of old man you will meet depends entirely on you, because that old man will be **YOU** ! He'll be the mixture of everything you do, say, think . . . today and tomorrow. His mind will be set by what you have made by your attitude and demeanor. His heart and how, the way, he thinks will be a reflection of what you've been putting into it.

Every little thought, everything goes into this old man. He will be exactly what you make him, nothing more, nothing less.

IT'S UP TO YOU. You will have no one else to blame or praise . . .



Book of Knowledge - Omar's dream

We CWFA folks have been listening to lectures these past two days by Dr. Howard Zehr who has written many books to shine awareness on prison issues. His important contribution is on restorative justice rather than punishment and he feels strongly that with a sense of connection to each other, there will be less violence inflicted on innocent people, and less need to severely punish the perpetrators of violence. He talks of the cycles of violence - victims become perpetrators when there is no healing and resolution. And where there is no respecting of each other, the disenfranchised and disrespected have a rage to right the wrongs done to them. Dr. Zehr's latest book is about the children of those in prison. It has fabulous photographs and compelling interviews with kids who are trying to grow beyond the trauma of losing their parents to prisons. READ: "[What Will Happen to Me?](#)" by Howard Zehr.

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 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.

a funny story offered by Chelle...

A woman was at work when she received a phone call that her small daughter was very sick with a fever. She left her work and stopped by the pharmacy to get some medication. She got back to her car and found that she had locked her keys in the car. She didn't know what to do, so she called home and told the baby sitter what had happened. The baby sitter told her that the fever was getting worse. She said, "You might find a coat hanger and use that to open the door."

The woman looked around and found an old rusty coat hanger that had been left on the ground, possibly by someone else who at some time had locked their keys in their car. She looked at the hanger and said, "I don't know how to use this." She bowed her head and asked God to send her help.

Within five minutes a beat up old motor cycle pulled up, with a dirty, greasy, bearded man who was wearing an old biker skull rag on his head.

The woman looked up and thought, "This is what you sent to help me?" But, she was desperate, so she was also very thankful.

The man got off of his cycle and asked if he could help.

She said, "Yes, my daughter is very sick. I stopped to get her some medication and I locked my keys in my car. I must get home to her. Please, can you use this hanger to unlock my car?"

He said, "Sure." He walked over to the car, and in less than a minute the car was opened.

She hugged the man and through her tears she said, "Thank You So Much! You are a very nice man."

The man replied, "Lady, I just got out of prison today. I was in prison for car theft and have only been out for about an hour."

The woman hugged the man again and with sobbing tears, she cried out loud, 'Oh, thank you God! You even sent me a Professional!'

Is God good - or WHAT?!!

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.

Haikus by G.G.

sitting quietly
bare white wall, bars of gun-blue
total freedom found

crisp autumn morning
pink clouds adorning the sky
stillness on the move

We must acknowledge that there can be no hope of gratifying the senses permanently. At best, the happiness we derive from eating a good meal can only last until the next time we are hungry. - His Holiness the Dalai Lama

From W.W.: Dear Kristopher, First and foremost, I hope everyone at CWFA is blessed and doing well. I have been studying Buddhism for a little over five years and it has been the greatest influence in changing my life. I spent the first couple of years doing meditation to try to settle my own mind and to fix the wrong perceptions in my own life. As has been said many times, "We can't help others until we have helped ourselves." I can not say I have it all figured out by any stretch of the imagination, but I am a lot more centered and much more peaceful than I was before I started this spiritual journey.

The biggest step that I have taken on my journey was when I understood Buddha's teachings on emptiness or realized emptiness. Once I comprehended the empty, non-existent nature of "reality" my anger, greed, desire, lust, etc. just disappeared. **BUT**

we have to remember to practice every day. We cannot think that just because our negative emotions are not controlling us that they are gone. The ego is very powerful and will try anything to regain strength.

The other great lesson I learned is that we must turn our practice outward. We must have love and compassion for ourselves, but once we accomplish this, it would be selfish to not share our love and compassion with others. My favorite meditation is the Compassion Buddha. I envision Chenrezig sending compassion to every single person in this prison, inmate and guard alike.

I repeat Chenrezig's mantra (Om Mani Padme Hum) 5,000 times every day because a few years ago I read that anyone who comes in contact with the mantra will be blessed. If I repeat it in the shower, everyone who uses the shower will be blessed. The shower water will go out to the water treatment facility and out to the surrounding communities and anyone who comes in contact with that water will be blessed. If I say the mantra in the chow hall, everyone who breathes the air in the chow hall will be blessed. There are countless ways that repeating this mantra can bless others.

And W.W. shares this verse: The Meaning of Life by His Holiness the Dali Lama

*We are visitors on this planet.
We are here for ninety
or one hundred years
at the very most.
During that period
we must try to do something*

*good, something useful,
with our lives.
If you contribute to other
people's happiness
you will find the true goal,
the true meaning of life.*

I read this a few years ago and I keep a copy of it on my altar. If we spend our life contributing to other being's happiness, then our own happiness will take care of itself. We all meet people who we personally feel are loved or obnoxious or someone we feel a natural aversion to. These feelings come directly from our individual egos. When I meet certain people and I have a negative feeling about that person, I recognize that this is just my ego saying, "I don't like him." Perhaps I think, "He's very obnoxious." or "I'm better than he is." I make it a point to speak to these people on a regular basis. I ask them how they are and I honestly listen to their reply. I offer them a cheery "Good morning" every day even if they continuously tell me to piss off. I realize that their egos are controlling them and I have compassion for them.

I am thankful for your newsletter because it not only gives *Dhammapada* verses, but then Anna explains them. I enjoy the meditations and I do them every day until the new issue comes in the mail. I enjoy the letters from the CWFA sangha and hearing how some are helping others. The letters that talk of suffering and other negative feelings and problems touch me deeply and I keep a list of those monthly letters and when I do my nightly practice, I send them extra compassion and blessings. I am glad to have a connection to the sangha through **Dharma Friends**. I don't know how other prisons in other states are, but around here, Buddhists are numbered as very few. Any way to have a connection to other Buddhists is truly a blessing. I send a great big thank you to each and every person at CWFA for everything you do to spread the Dharma. You provide a priceless service to those of us who are incarcerated and we could never thank you enough. Blessings to the spirit within you. Peace and love,

We should always live in the dark empty sky. The sky is always the sky. Even though clouds and lightning come, the sky is not disturbed. Even if the flashing of enlightenment comes, our practice forgets all about it. Then it is ready for another enlightenment. - Shunryu Suzuki, "**Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind**"

From W.W.: Dear Kristopher, I haven't written in quite a while but I wanted to take time to show my appreciation for the work you and the **Dharma Friends** do. It gets rough for us all when we fall off the horse. Always, always, get up and dust yourself off. There is not a moment where I regret the choices I've made. Though a lot were negative, they were building blocks. In life, we have so many choices; we are given so many chances. The only choice we need to make is the "right" one. Now, the "right" one totally depends on you. If, for instance, you are in the supermarket and only have enough money for one apple, but you have two in your hand. Do you put the other one back or, since the clerk is not looking, do you put it in your pocket? It's your choice, not mine!

Chance is not just a game made by Mattel or Parker Brothers. Chances are truly helpful. Even in here, so many people are given chance after chance to reform themselves, yet, they choose to go back into the free world and do the same thing that got them in here four of five times. And then there are those who are never given a second chance. Let's look to faith and goodness and not to some spooky god. Only our inner selves can truly reform, rehabilitate and resurface us. I wish you all well and send deep thanks to Anna, Kristopher, Linda, Louise and the others there at CWFA. Blessings through all times,

Compassion Works for All/ Dharma Friends
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ALIVE OR DEAD -a poem by R. D. (aka Spider)

Dedicated to my father, Virgil Davis, and to the men and women who fought in Vietnam and to those who continue to fight

I flew half way around the world,
To fight a losing war,
In the sweltering jungles of Vietnam,
That nobody cared about anymore.

We fought for the South Vietnamese,
They watched as we marched on,
The purpose for war no longer clear,
My friends dead and gone.

I stayed to serve my Country,
Despite what dangers might be,
No celebrations awaited my return,
Only contempt for me.

My psychiatrist sees me every day,
Tells me everything's quiet and calm,
In my head the war still rages,
I'm surrounded by death and napalm.

I pretend to be normal,
Tell myself it's all in my head,
I can't distinguish between the two,
Am I alive or am I dead?



Dharma Friends

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Additional Pages for EMAIL VERSION of *Dharma Friends*

3 events for those lucky ones who live in northwest Arkansas

On March 17 from 7-9 pm, Leslie and Geoff Oelsner will present a combined concert & workshop at the Fayetteville 2011 Goddess Festival, entitled "Sacred Exchanges with Nature"

Mother Earth continually showers & snows us with Her grace & beauty; this participatory event is intended to empower us to offer nurturing love & blessings back to Her. The Oelsners will perform original songs & singalongs to honor Gaia. Geoff will share miraculous true stories of Communion with Her. Together we will explore practices of group "Attunement" to natural aspects of the Ozarks, as taught by Findhorn Community co-founder Dorothy Maclean. Join us to celebrate our natural capacity to make "sacred exchanges with nature." [The 2011 Goddess Festival will be held March 10-27, at 637 East Joyce Blvd. in Fayetteville, next to CiCi's Pizza & in front of Home Depot. For the complete schedule of Festival events, go to www.goddessfestival.com]

Leslie & Geoff Oelsner have lived in the Fayetteville area since 1979. Both clinical social workers in private practice of psychotherapy, they are also into music & meditation. Music meets meditation in Deep Peace, the new contemplative CD by Harmonia, the women's vocal ensemble founded & led by Leslie since 1996.

Geoff has two CD's out, & all his songs can be heard for free at www.geoffoelsner.com. Geoff founded the Buddhist Meditation and Spiritual Support Group, which has met weekly since 1996. The Oelsners are excited to offer a highly participatory event at the third annual Goddess Festival this year.



PLAN AHEAD

Anna will be doing another meditation retreat at Joy Fox's retreat center, Wattle Hollow, near Fayetteville, Arkansas, on April 15, 16, and 17, 2011.

We have always filled up quickly so now you can sign up early! For details and to register, go to www.wattlehollow.com.

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA IN ARKANSAS...



this drawing is by one of our Dharma Friends members, Don Wackerly

Dalai Lama Coming to University of Arkansas in Fayetteville on May 11, 2011

Where: Bud Walton Arena, University of Arkansas

The Dalai Lama will offer a public talk as part of the university's Distinguished Lecture Series. The Dalai Lama's visit is in response to invitations from professor Sidney Burris, director of the honors program in the J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, and Geshe Dorjee, a Tibetan monk and instructor in Fulbright College. The two met with the Dalai Lama during their most recent trip to India in summer 2009. Past distinguished lecturers have included Benazir Bhutto, Ehud Barak, Robert Redford and Martin Luther King III.

To get the most up-to-date information on His Holiness' visit, visit: <http://dalailama.uark.edu>.

Dr. Sidney Burris runs a blog and will have information on the visit as well as educational pieces all year long to prepare people before the Dalai Lama arrives. The blog is on TIBETSPACE (<http://readwrite.typepad.com/artibet>). Once on TIBETSPACE, readers can sign up for email notifications when a new posting appears. Simply, click on "Subscribe to this blog's feed" and then click on the reader of your choice on "Get TIBETSPACE delivered by email", if you prefer to get it that way.

Dalai Lama Visit to Feature Panel Discussion With Sister Helen Prejean and Vincent Harding

His Holiness the Dalai Lama will appear in two forums when he visits the University of Arkansas May 11.

1. He will take part in a morning panel discussion on "Turning Swords into Ploughshares: The Many Paths of Non-Violence", from 9:30 to 11 a.m.
2. He will deliver his keynote address, "Non-Violence in the New Century: The Way Forward" from 1:30 to 3 p.m.

Both events will be in Bud Walton Arena.

- Free student tickets will be available March 1 and can be reserved by going online to dalailama.uark.edu.
- Tickets for faculty and staff will go on sale March 7.
- For the general public, on March 15.
- Tickets for the morning panel discussion will be \$15 for regular seating or \$18 for floor and prime seating.
- Tickets for the afternoon lecture will be \$15 for regular seating and \$22 for floor and prime seating.
- Tickets for both events will be \$25 for regular seating or \$30 for floor and prime seating.

To order tickets, call the Walton Arts Center box office, (479) 443-5600, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and from noon to 4 p.m. Saturday, or order online at <http://waltonartscenter.org>.



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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.

If you would like to host a Compassion Works for All fundraising lunch or coffee,

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

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

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

We will supply the 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.

