
Hungry Ghost Sangha : 'Sit-&-Share' Meeting

Leader Instructions
& Some Example Topics for Contemplation

www.5th-precept.org

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For clarity and the avoidance of doubt:

What's the difference between the Fifth Precept fellowship and Hungry Ghost retreats?

Fifth Precept Sangha (Fellowship): is a peer-led mutual-help organisation that uses Buddhist mindfulness teachings and practices to help people wake up to this life. For some, this manifests as a wholehearted recovery from the suffering caused by addictive behaviours. This approach encourages individual [commitment](#) to living life in harmony – as best we can - with the [Five Universal Precepts](#) which includes total-abstinence. – www.5th-precept.org

Hungry Ghost Retreats: are an opportunity to explore and cultivate some of the principles and practices of the Fifth Precept Sangha's approach to waking up to this life (i.e. recovering from life's difficulties) and embracing the possibilities and potentiality of a life without alcohol, drugs and other compulsions; making the dreams you didn't know you had, come true - all within a retreat setting – www.HungryGhostRetreats.org

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Fifth Precept Sangha Acknowledgements

The Sit-and-Share meeting formats have been inspired by and adapted from –

Wat Thamkrabok Tudong Sajja Practices & Contemplations :

Wat-Thamkrabok.org

Refuge Recovery Meeting format :

www.RefugeRecovery.org/meeting-formats/

Awakin Wednesday Gatherings :

www.Awakin.org

'How to start a 12-step Sangha Meeting' (Darren Littlejohn) :

The12stepBuddhist.com/how-to-start-a-12-step-sangha-meeting/

Buddhist Recovery Network (Kevin Griffin) :

www.BuddhistRecovery.org/doc_brn_group_guidance/chapter/Preamble.htm

Vince Cullen

06-July-2022

www.HungryGhostRetreats.org

www.5th-Precept.org

The latest version of this booklet can be freely downloaded from: www.5th-precept.org/fifth-precept-sangha-downloads/

The version that you are now reading is dated **July 2022 (v8)**

Should you have any comments or suggestions, please send them to vince.cullen@tara-detox.org

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Introduction by Vince Cullen

There are no miracle cures for addiction - recovery is a process - and it is different for everyone. It can take many years to completely overcome the craving for intoxication, the craving for pleasure; the craving to become someone/something, the aversion to pain; the craving for oblivion.

Seventeen years ago, I made a vow, a commitment, a promise to myself - never to drink again. Sometime later I heard about a Buddhist temple in Thailand, the world famous 'vomiting monastery' - [Wat Thamkrabok](#) - where addicts use a vow called '[Sajja](#)'¹ as a doorway to recovery. Sajja is a commitment to abandon intoxicants and intoxication.

I took my home-made Sajja vow in my kitchen in England. So, you do not need to fly half-way around the world to vomit in a gutter in Thailand to get clean... you can do that at home! Either way, what the Sajja vow provides is the foundation of a recovery. The rest is up to you. If you look after your Sajja vow - then your Sajja vow will look after you.

By way of some insight into the Buddhist path of recovery, here are two short quotes from the early Buddhist texts:

"Furthermore, abandoning the use of intoxicants, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking intoxicants. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression."

[Buddha: [Abhisanda Sutta: Rewards AN:8.39](#)]

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

[Buddha : [Dhammika Sutta: Dhammika SN:2.14](#)]

I can truly say that by keeping the [Sajja vow](#) (to abandon intoxicants) and by living in harmony - as best as I am able - with the [Five Universal Precepts](#) (including abstaining from intoxication), I experience an everyday Liberation; an everyday Nibbana. Every day I have freedom from cravings; freedom from conflict, freedom from blame, freedom from guilt; freedom from shame and freedom from regret... that is a lot of freedom.

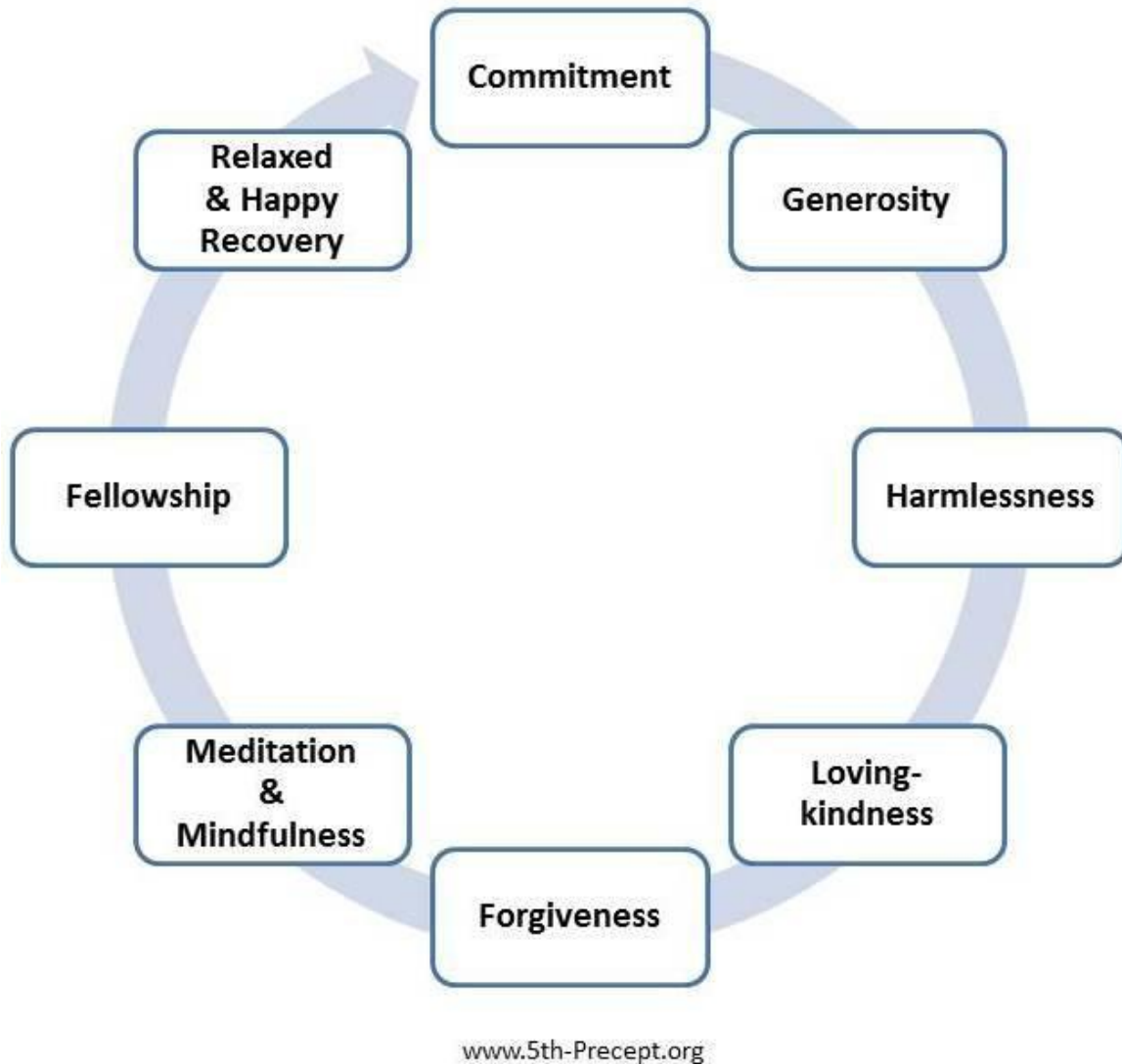
So there is much to smile about on any day of the week.

May all addicts find everyday Nibbana, every day!

¹ English spelling 'Sajja' from the Thai, or 'Sacca' from the Pali, or 'Satya' from the Sanskrit).

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Foundations of a Buddhist Recovery



There is life without alcohol and other drugs
- a life free from shame, free from blame and free from guilt
– a life free from craving, free from aversion and free from confusion.

Everyday Nibbana - every day.

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A Sajja Path... A Simple Path

There are many paths to and of recovery. Some are short term interventions, some are lifetime commitments. Here, is an approach to Buddhist recovery that is based on the following multidimensional practices.

Truth, Truthfulness and Commitment (*Sajja*) : pain is inevitable - suffering is optional. The truth of Karma; and the truth of the way things really are. Our own commitment to seek the freedom that we have set our Heart upon.

Generosity (*Dana*) : is the antidote to the selfishness of the 'addict self'. A generosity of heart and mind expressed in our thoughts, in our words and in our actions. This is a generosity that gives rise to ethical living (*Sila*), to kindness (*Metta*), to the ability to forgive (*Khama*) and to fellowship (*Kalyāna-mittatā*); and it supports our meditation practice (*Sati*).

Harmlessness (*Sila*) : the aspiration to live fearlessly and skilfully through the Five Universal Precepts using these great gifts to prevent relapse and to reduce the harm in our life.

Loving-kindness (*Metta*) : the regular practice of loving-kindness meditation to lift our self-esteem and promote our well-being, and the well-being of all those around us. We can in time expand our practice to include Compassion, Joy-Gladness and Equanimity.

Forgiveness (*Khama*) : the regular practice of forgiveness meditation to skilfully examine and let go of the past; healing our present and embracing our future - whatever it may hold.

Mindfulness (*Sati*) : the practice of meditation of body, feelings and mind; and the cultivation of an ethically focussed mindfulness that supports and protects our recovery.

Admirable Friends & Fellowship (*Kalyāna-mittatā*) : we may join a support group or start our own. "Admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie is actually the whole of the spiritual life."

It is important to note that we do not have to be 'a Buddhist' to cultivate any of these qualities or to adopt or adapt any of these meditation practices.

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Sit-and-Share Meeting Formats

Each meeting generally last 90 minutes (1.5 hours). The meeting format is decided by consensus amongst the group (Sangha) members.

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Welcome & Preamble	Welcome & Preamble	Welcome & Preamble
Serenity Meditation Sit (10 minutes)	Serenity Meditation Sit (10 minutes)	Serenity Meditation Sit (10 minutes)
Mindful Qigong Movement (10 minutes)	Mindful Walking Meditation (10-minutes)	
Topic Contemplation (5 minutes)	Topic Contemplation (5 minutes)	Topic Contemplation (10 minutes)
Sharing (up to 45 minutes)	Sharing (up to 45 minutes)	Sharing (up to 45 minutes)
Final Sitting Meditation (at least 15 minutes)	Final Sitting Meditation (at least 15 minutes)	Final Sitting Meditation (30 minutes)
Closing Dedication	Closing Dedication	Closing Dedication

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Example Sit-and-Share Meeting Format

Day & Time: Every week @ 7:30pm

Location:

Hungry Ghost Sangha

'Sit & Share' Meditation Meeting

Presenter, please follow this format closely.
Everything that you need to say is in *italics*.

7:30 – Read the opening aloud.

Welcome to this Sit-and-Share meditation meeting of the Fifth Precept Buddhist Group.

This is a Peer-Led group - or Sangha - that is open to people of all backgrounds. The group is founded on the principles and practices of Truth and Truthfulness, of Generosity, of Harmlessness, of Wise Heartedness, of Forgiveness, of Mindfulness & Meditation; and of Fellowship. This Sangha is grounded in the principles of compassion and interdependence.

This 'Sit-and-Share' meeting is open to any individuals aspiring to live their lives in harmony with the Five Universal Precepts; that is –

- To refrain from harming ourselves or harming others by our thoughts, by our words, or by our actions.*
- To refrain from taking anything that has not been freely given;*
- To refrain from sexual and sensual misconduct;*
- To refrain from false speech, harsh speech, gossip and slander.*
- To refrain from taking alcohol and other drugs that lead to suffering.*

As part of our shared practice together - we abandon any attachments to negative self-views by announcing ourselves by our first name only. In the spirit of this intention, I will start by introducing myself as _____ ... and I wish you all a very good evening! Now would you like to introduce yourselves...

Other participants introduce themselves by name.

If you have any questions, there will be an informal opportunity after the closing dedication.

Statement of Anonymity and Confidentiality

In order for this group to be a place where we can feel safe to share about our practice, to share about our spiritual aspirations or to share our personal stories; and to create an atmosphere of openness, we ask that -

- who you see here remain anonymous,*
- and what you hear here remain confidential.*

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Tonight's meeting will begin with 10-minutes of serenity breathing meditation followed by some mindful movement exercises. After that, I will then read tonight's topic for reflection and we will settle into 5-minutes of silent but active contemplation. You will then be invited to 'share' your thoughts on the topic.

Please join me now for 10-minutes of serenity breathing meditation to calm the breath, relax the body and quiet the mind.

Serenity Breathe Meditation

Ring the bell (x1) to begin the 10-minute 'serenity' meditation and try not to forget to read the following guidelines...

For those who are new to meditation, here are some guidelines:

- *For the next 10-minutes, using mindfulness of breathing, you are invited to cultivate serenity of body and serenity of mind. You are invited to practice 'calm and pleasant abiding' in the here and now.*
- *For the next 10-minutes, there is nowhere to go - there is nothing to be done - there is no one 'special' to be or to become.*
- *Take an upright, dignified posture... a posture that represents your Heart's desire to awaken.*
- *If it is comfortable for you, let your eyes gently close.*
- *We might start to settle into our meditation by taking a very full, very deep breath in... [pause]
...and a very long slow breath out... [pause]
...and another very full, deep breath in... [pause]
...and a very long slow breath out; feeling the breath in the whole body.*
- *Now allow your breath to settle down naturally.*
- *Let your face be soft and allow your jaw to relax.*
- *Let your shoulders drop back naturally to open up the heart area.*
- *Let your arms and your hands rest easily... in your lap or on your thighs.*
- *We might remember-to-remember the Buddha's² instructions for the full awareness of breathing say we should breathe in with mindfulness and breathe out with mindfulness, so we might silently note to ourselves -
 - o "Breathing in, I am fully aware that I am breathing in."
 - o "Breathing out, I am fully aware that I am breathing out."
 - o ...or we might simply notice with full awareness... 'in'... [pause] ...'out'*
- *We are invited to bring a friendly, affectionate interest to each and every breath.*
- *When you notice that your mind has wandered away from your breath, just smile...
... make a friendly, gentle, silent, non-judgmental note of "not-breath"...
... and then return your full awareness to your breathing.*
- *Our whole practice is grounded on **wise-heartedness**;
so, you are encouraged to smile inwardly...
and you are encouraged to smile outwardly;*

² Anapanasati Sutta: Mindfulness of Breathing <https://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.118.than.html>

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*you are encouraged to take delight in this moment...
to take delight in this only moment.*

7:45 – Ring the bell (x3 long gaps) to end the 10-minute 'Serenity' meditation.

7:45 – Mindful Movement ([Qigong](#) or [Walking Meditation](#)) about 10-minutes.

7:55 – Topic Contemplation

Read the selected topic (for examples see
<https://5th-precept.org/topics-for-contemplation/>)

[OPTIONAL: You may at this point briefly introduce or explain why you chose this topic]

and then read this aloud:

We will now contemplate and reflect silently on this topic for about 5 minutes. You will then be invited to 'share' on the topic, as it relates to your aspirations, or as it relates to your practice or to your experience on this path of awakening. If you wish to share at that time, please make me aware.

Ring the bell (x1) to begin the 5-minute topic contemplation, and try not to forget to read the following guidelines...

Here are some guidelines for our contemplation meditation:

- *Take an upright, dignified posture... a posture that represents your Heart's desire to awaken.*
- *Once again, if it is comfortable for you, let your eyes gently close.*
- *Breathe naturally.*
- *From a place of non-judgmental calmness, reflect on the topic -
>>> Read the topic again<<<*
- *Remember to be gentle with yourself.*
- *If you get lost, just practice Serenity breathing meditation again to become calm and focused.*
- *You invited to befriend your practice – to befriend yourself.*

[OPTIONAL: After a minute or two, it may be appropriate and helpful to 'drop' one line from tonight's topic into the mediation].

8:00 – Ring the bell (x3 short gaps) to end the 5-minute contemplation meditation.

Read the topic again, without commenting. Then read the following aloud:

As tonight's Host, I will share last.

Here are some guidelines³ for individual 'Sharing'

³ To put these guidelines into effect requires buy-in from all participants – from the whole Group. We do this using the guidelines for [Bohmian Dialogue](#). These are based on principles laid down by David Bohm, a theoretical physicist (b. 1917), associate of J. Krishnamurti and A. Einstein, and advisor to the Dalai Lama.

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- ❖ *Everyone is equally invited to contribute; but 'sharing' is optional and voluntary.*
- ❖ *You do not have to agree with the topic.*
- ❖ *There should be no interruptions during individual sharing.*
- ❖ *There should be no criticism, or personal comments – although a considered response may be ok if its particularly relevant.*
- ❖ *Please pause before you share – to provide a space for ideas to become embodied.*
- ❖ *Please try to suspend assumptions and judgement; and try not to to convince others.*
- ❖ *'Sharing' should not driven by fear of censure or judgement, or by any desire for "success".*
- ❖ *You are encouraged to be open to the whole experience – the whole is greater than the sum of the individual contributions.*

As the Host, I may remind you of these Guidelines, if necessary.

Would anyone like to start?

8:45 or before – The presenter shares.

8:50 or before - Close topic discussion > Announce the closing meditation:

There will now be a 5-minute (or longer if time allows) 'Wise-Heartedness' meditation.

8:50 or before – >> Wise-Heartedness Cultivation <<

Ring the bell (x1) to begin the 5-minutes 'Wise-Heartedness' meditation and try not to forget to read the following guidelines...

Here are some guidelines for our Wise-Heartedness Meditation:

- *Take an upright, dignified posture... a posture that represents your Heart's desire to awaken.*
- *Once again, if it is comfortable for you, let your eyes gently close.*
- *For this mediation, we might imagine that we are breathing in and out through our Heart.*
- *Take a very deep breath in through the Heart and a long slow breath out through the Heart.*
- *You are now invited to recite some or all of the following aspirations like a silent whisper at the back of your mind...*

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- o **May I have stillness...** in the midst of chaos.
- o **May I be at ease...** in the midst of discomfort.
- o **May I be safe & well...** in the midst of uncertainty.
- o **May I live with kindness...** in the midst of all that is difficult.
- o **May I find joy...** in the midst of the ordinary and the mundane.

- o [pause and repeat above phrases if time allows and/or close with the following phrases]

- o **May I have stillness.**
- o **May I be at ease.**
- o **May I be safe & well.**
- o **May I live with kindness.**
- o **May I find Joy.**

8:55 or before – Ring the bell (x3 short gaps) to end the closing meditation.

8:55 or before – Announcements and Dedication of Merit

Dedication of Merit

(Presenter or Volunteer reads dedication of merit)

Please join me in the dedication of merit by repeating after me, the following aspirations:

*We dedicate the merits of this practice
to all suffering beings.*

*May everyone be free of suffering,
and the causes of suffering.*

*May everyone enjoy happiness,
and the causes of happiness.*



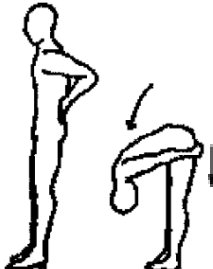
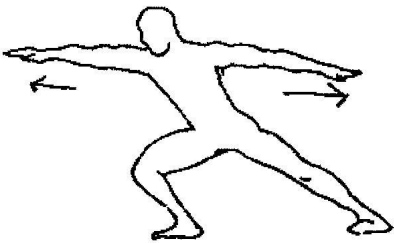
Keep sitting; and keep smiling.

[9:00 – Tea, Q&A and discussion, if requested.]

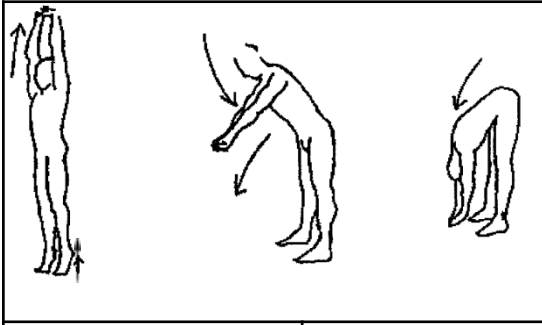
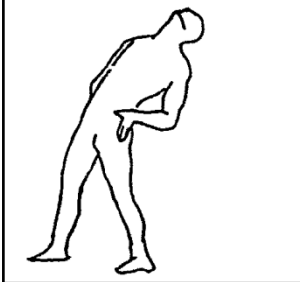
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Mindful Movement Guidelines – Qigong

- Join the palms (Gassho) before and after each full movement. Repeat each 5 times.
- Anyone with back problems should only do these very gently and within their own limits and when bending forwards should bend the knees slightly.
- Perform smoothly, slowly and mindfully.

	HANDS HOLDING A BALL Hold an imaginary ball above the head and look directly into the centre of it. Turn the upper body to the left then to the right.
	ARCHING BACK POSE Step forward with the left leg, keeping feet shoulder width apart, and reach up with the arms, hands palms up. As you do so, arch the back gently. Eyes open, mouth closed. Come back to centre then repeat with the right leg forward.
	BACK-SLIDING POSE Feet together, interlace the fingers behind the back. Bend upper body forward whilst sliding the hands down to the backs of the legs to the ankles. Come back up with the palms joined.
	REACHING POSE Step forward with left leg keeping the feet shoulder width apart, and stretching the left arm forward and the right arm back – arms parallel to the floor and palms down. Lean the body forward and focus on the front middle finger. Come back to the centre and repeat with the right leg forward.

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	PALMS TO THE SKY POSE Interlace the fingers and stretching the hands above the head, palms up, rise up on the balls of the feet – hold. Lower the heels slowly, bend the body forwards and lower the arms, the fingers still interlaced. Go down as far as is comfortable. Come back up, palms joined.
	BACKWARD POSE Stand with feet slightly wider than shoulder width, hands on hips. Gently lean the upper body backwards, eyes open, mouth closed.

Mindful Movement Guidelines – Zen Walking

Practitioners walk clockwise around a room while holding their hands in 'shashu'; one hand closed in a fist while the other hand grasps or covers the fist.

During walking meditation each step is taken after each full breath.

The pace of walking meditation may be slow (several steady steps per each breath) or brisk, almost to the point of jogging.

This style of walking meditation is suitable for large or small rooms.

Mindful Movement Guidelines – Walking Meditation

This traditional walking meditation is probably only an option for larger rooms or open spaces.

Practitioners choose a walking path of between 12 and 20 paces. The meditation consists of walking up and down the chosen path. Hands may be held in front or behind; or whatever is comfortable.

During walking meditation awareness is brought to each step.

If we get lost in thoughts we simply notice this and then return our attention to walking.

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Topic Guidelines

As part of the '[Sit & Share](#)' recovery meeting, the leader reads a single topic, no more than a short paragraph or two; which is then investigated and contemplated during a 10-minute silent sit.

There are no set books specifically relating to the Fifth Precept '[Foundations of Recovery](#)' approach but the following books are highly recommended:

- [Let Go - A Buddhist Guide to Breaking Free of Habits](#) by Martine Batchelor (particularly the chapter on vows and resolutions).
- [Against the Stream - A Buddhist Manual for Spiritual Revolutionaries](#) by Noah Levine (particularly the chapter about Truth i.e. Sajja/Sacca).
- [Buddha's Little Instruction Book](#) by Jack Kornfield.
- [One Breath at a Time](#) by Kevin Griffin (helpful 12-Step - Buddhist references).
- [Hardcore Zen : Punk Rock, Monster Movies and the Truth about Reality](#) by Brad Warner (particularly the chapter "Pass me the Ecstasy, Rainbow, I'm going to Nirvana on a Stretcher").
- **Dhammapada** - any translation that works for you. There are a couple of versions available on the [Access-to-Insight](#) website; and one from Ajahn Munindo available for download [here](#).
- [From Hungry Ghost to Being Human](#) - by Vince Cullen
- [Noble Eightfold Path - Way to the End of Suffering](#) by Bhikkhu Bodhi (available for free download [here](#)).

People are invited can bring their own books, articles and quotes to donate to our 'topic basket' which can be a stack of books or topics written on slips of paper. We would prefer to stick to established Buddhist themes so that, over time, the group develops a common language relating to our practice.

Possible sources of topics might be any simple, short paragraphs covering [Foundations of Recovery](#); and Buddhist core principles or themes.

- [Sajja, Truth, Karma and Commitment to Recovery](#)
- [Generosity in thought, words and deeds](#)
- [Ethics \(All or individual Universal Precepts or Harmlessness-Blamelessness\)](#)
- [Loving-kindness, Compassion, Joy-gladness and Equanimity](#)
- [Forgiveness](#)
- [Mindfulness and Meditation](#)
- [Admirable Friends & Fellowship](#)
- [Buddhist Core Principles & Themes](#)

As well as considering the dark side – if any - of these topics and how they may have brought suffering into our lives; it is essential to also reflect on the bright aspects that have directly affected our recovery and our well-being.

We might also consider what is it that leads to further suffering and what is it that leads to the end of suffering... what is the wise choice, the kind choice; the choice of the heart?

Please send suitable suggestions for contemplation to topics@5th-precept.org

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**Example topics for contemplation and reflection,
for sharing and discussion.**

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Sajja/Sacca, Truth, Karma and Commitment

To Make a Vow

To make a vow is to set an aspiration. It is to ground our life in certain values. A vow states our intention and creates a current which we can flow towards and feed. We can renew and extend our vow. It is helpful if the vow is not too extraordinary but at the same time helps us to stretch ourselves.

Source: Adapted and used with the kind permission of Martine Batchelor from the book ['Let Go: A Buddhist Guide to Breaking Free of Habits'](#).

Suffering is optional

The truth is that our suffering is optional. In life, pain and pleasure are given, but we create suffering for ourselves through our clinging to pleasure and aversion to pain.

*Source: "[Against the Stream - A Buddhist Manual for Spiritual Revolutionaries](#)" by Noah Levine (P122)
Harper Collins © 2007*

Refuge

"Ultimately, whether taken in a public or private setting, taking refuge is a commitment we make to ourselves. If we are not committed in our own hearts and minds, the words we speak in taking refuge will be meaningless."

Chuan Zhi Shakya

I Yearn to be Free of Pain

"I yearn to be free of pain, but rush straight into it;
I long for happiness, but foolishly crush it like an enemy."

Source : Shantideva (8th Century Indian Buddhist) as quoted in 'Living with the Devil – A meditation on Good and Evil' (p16) by Stephen Batchelor.

We Make a Commitment

We make a **commitment** to each of the five universal precepts - *as we understand them to be* - and we commit to continually pay attention; to our motivations, to our reactions, and to our evolving understanding of a life of Loving-kindness.

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[If we lose the power of attention, we lose the intensity and richness of true connectedness with the moment.]

Source: Loving-kindness : The Revolutionary Art of Happiness by Sharon Salzberg - p241

When we Suffer

When we suffer it is important to take care of ourselves,
to listen to our needs,
to take a break,
and to rest,
but sometimes being mindfully aware of our suffering can
become a pattern of self-obsession or self-victimisation.

*Source: "Let Go : A Buddhist Guide to Breaking Free of Habits" : Martine Batchelor (p141)
Somerville MA: Wisdom Publications © 2007*

We must Dedicate Ourselves

We must dedicate ourselves to finding the deepest
compassion and highest wisdom,
and from that place we can live in accordance with
the truth of reality.

*Source: "Against the Stream - A Buddhist Manual for Spiritual Revolutionaries" by
Noah Levine (P121)
Harper Collins © 2007*

A Deep Commitment

A deep commitment to honesty and integrity
is necessary for all who wish to make positive
changes in the world.

We don't have to be perfect or holy, but we do need
to be honest with ourselves and one another.

*Source: "Against the Stream - A Buddhist Manual for Spiritual Revolutionaries" by
Noah Levine (P121)
Harper Collins © 2007*

Strength is Essential

Strength is essential to fulfil our vow. Everyone has strengths that they can use. We need to flex our mental, emotional and physical muscles. It is in the exercising that strength can be developed. We try to push ourselves in a skilful way. When we are strong, we also have to remember to be stable and open. When we are recovering from addiction, we rediscover the strength and thus the freedom to act in a different way.

Source: Adapted and used with the kind permission of Martine Batchelor from the book 'Let Go: A Buddhist Guide to Breaking Free of Habits' (p112).

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The Commitment to Compassion

The commitment to compassion is an inner and outer journey.

You are learning to radically alter the course of your heart and mind, moment to moment.

Fear, judgement, and anger still arise, but you can refrain from wallowing in them.

*Christina Feldman "Compassion : Listening to the Cries of the World" (p49)
Rodmell Press © 2005*

We Seek Numbness

We will go to almost any length to try to distance ourselves from sorrow and, in truth, from life.

We seek numbness in drugs, food, distraction, and addictions, as if they were the only available refuge.

*Christina Feldman "Compassion : Listening to the Cries of the World" (p20)
Rodmell Press © 2005*

It is Not easy to Find Happiness

It is not easy to find happiness in ourselves,
and it is not possible to find it elsewhere.

*Source : Agnes Repplier (The Treasure Chest)
as quoted the in book 'Co-dependent No More : How to stop Controlling Others and
Start Caring for Yourself' by Melody Beattie.*

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This is the Truth of the Situation

If we find ourselves in a happy situation, we know it and are grateful that in this moment in time things are going well for us. If on contrary the situation is difficult, if we have troubles with addiction for example, we accept and recognise that it is so. This is the truth of the situation.

This acceptance does not lead to resignation or despair but enables us to engage creatively with the situation at hand. By knowing that actions have results and that causes have effects, we see that specific conditions and actions will lead to certain results. Then it is for us to act upon this knowledge and to cultivate skilful actions, which will lead to more positive and creative results instead of destructive ones.

Source: Used with the kind permission of Martine Batchelor from the book 'Let Go: A Buddhist Guide to Breaking Free of Habits' (p110).

The Truth of our Self Made Suffering

Trying to push away physical or emotional pain is like creating a dam for the impermanent experience: it doesn't get rid of the pain; it just keeps it around for a longer period of time. Eventually the floodgates burst, however, and we are faced with the truth of our self made suffering.

*Source: "Against the Stream - A Buddhist Manual for Spiritual Revolutionaries" by Noah Levine (P61)
Harper Collins © 2007*

Only the Truth will Really Make us Happy

What we come to realise eventually is that only something as vast and deep as the truth will really make us happy.

And that truth is in this very moment,
as we see things as they actually are,
as we let go of each state as it arises and passes away,
seeing it as it actually is,
being able to let go continually as all these different states arise,
and allowing them to pass away.

*Source: Sharon Salzberg – Lovingkindness : The Revolutionary Art of Happiness
[Chapter – The Power of Generosity – page 209]*

Simplicity of Life

Simplicity of life comes with inner richness, with inward freedom from craving, with freedom from acquisitiveness, from addiction, from distraction. From this simple life

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there comes that necessary one-pointedness which is not the outcome of self-enclosing concentration but of extensional awareness and meditative understanding. Simple life is not the result of outward circumstances; contentment with little comes with the riches of inward understanding.

If you depend on circumstances to make you satisfied with life then you will create misery and chaos, for then you are a plaything of environment, and it is only when circumstances are transcended through understanding that there is order and clarity.

To be constantly aware of the process of acquisitiveness, of addiction, of distraction, brings freedom from them and so there is a true and simple life.

Source: Jiddu Krishnamurti - The Collected Works Volume III Ojai 8th Public Talk 2nd July, 1944

<http://www.jkrishnamurti.org/krishnamurti-teachings/view-daily-quote/20101216.php>
D

Four Transforming Contemplations : The Ineluctable Law of Karma

The law of karma follows us like a shadow follows the body, virtue and non-virtuous words, thoughts, and deeds procreate in kind.

The lawful workings of cause and effect, virtue and vice, are unavoidable.

When we die we leave everything behind, except our karma and our spiritual realization.

This karmic conditioning propels us forward according to what we have set in motion through our actions, words, and deeds.

Karmic cause and effect (interdependent origination) creates everything, and by thorough understanding of karmic causation and skillful means we can become free. The Buddha said:

'If a king or householder shall die,
His wealth, family, friends, and retinue cannot follow him.
Wherever we go, wherever we remain,
The results of our actions follow us.'

*Source: "Awakening the Buddha Within" by [Lama Surya Das](#) (p150)
London: Bantam Books © 1997*

Four Transforming Contemplations : The Defects and Shortcomings of Samsara

Samsara and all its contents, pleasure as well as pain, are like a public feast we are passing through on our way to the grave.

- Birth is difficult, growing up is difficult, illness is difficult aging and death are painful.

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- Losing what we care for hurts; not getting what we want is frustrating.
- We feel lost and powerless, anxious and insecure by a sense of being out of control, blown about by circumstances and conditions we don't understand.
- Being unaware and half-asleep in our own lives is wasteful and meaningless.
- We are continually tormented by our fears of the unknown and ignorance and doubt about where we will go and why.

These are Just a few of the myriad waves in the ocean of suffering called samsara or cyclic existence. Cross beyond this raging tide of confusion and misery to the other shore and you'll find the joyous waters of nirvana - peace, freedom, and the everlasting happiness of perfect enlightenment

Source: "Awakening the Buddha Within" by [Lama Surya Das](#) (p150)

London: Bantam Books © 1997

The Five Universal Precepts : Truthfulness

The fourth precept, not to tell lies or resort to falsehood, is an important factor in social life and dealings. It concerns respect for truth. A respect for truth is a strong deterrent to inclinations or temptation to commit wrongful actions, while disregard for the same will only serve to encourage evil deeds. The Buddha has said: "There are few evil deeds that a liar is incapable of committing." The practice of the fourth precept, therefore, helps to preserve one's credibility, trustworthiness, and honour.

*Source: "Getting to Know Buddhism" by Dr. Sunthorn Plamintr (pp. 133-154)
Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation © 1994*

This extract is derived from www.urbandharma.org/udharma2/5precepts.html

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Truthfulness in Relationships

Reflect on your truthfulness in your relationships. Are you truly honest or are there ways in which you skirt the truth for your own benefit or out of fear?

*Source: Kevin Griffin - "Recovering Joy: A Mindful Life After Addiction"
Sounds True. Kindle Edition.*

Truthfulness in Work

Reflect on your truthfulness in your work. Are you truly honest or are there ways in which you skirt the truth for your own benefit or out of fear?

*Source: Kevin Griffin - "Recovering Joy: A Mindful Life After Addiction"
Sounds True. Kindle Edition.*

Truthfulness Inside

- How truthful are you with yourself?
- Are there any issues or areas of your life where you avoid facing an uncomfortable truth?
- What about your beliefs— do you consider their truth or question them?

*Source: Kevin Griffin - "Recovering Joy: A Mindful Life After Addiction"
Sounds True. Kindle Edition.*

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Generosity in thought, words and deeds

As If There is Nothing to Lose

Gratitude, the simple and profound feeling of being thankful, is the foundation of all generosity. I am generous when I believe that right now, right here, in this form and this place, I am myself being given what I need. Generosity requires that we relinquish something, and this is impossible if we are not glad for what we have. Otherwise the giving hand closes into a fist and won't let go.

Source: Sallie Jiko Tisdale, "[As If There is Nothing to Lose](#)"

The torment of withholding and fear

Speaking of generosity, one Lama describes the torment of withholding and fear - having some possessions a person holds tight to them with a dying person's grip, no matter how much they have, they still think they have nothing and moan as if they were on the point of starvation. Such behaviour can create right now the experience like those of the Hungry Ghost.

Source : Christina Feldman (original source not identified).

No one has ever become poor by giving

No one has ever become poor by giving.

Source : Anne Frank, *The Diary of Anne Frank*

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Ethics (All or individual Universal Precepts or Harmlessness-Blamelessness)

The Healing Power of the Universal Precepts – part I

The Buddha was like a doctor, treating the spiritual ills of the human race. The path of practice he taught was like a course of therapy for suffering hearts and minds. This way of understanding the Buddha and his teachings dates back to the earliest texts, and yet is also very current. Buddhist meditation practice is often advertised as a form of healing, and quite a few psychotherapists now recommend that their patients try meditation as part of their treatment.

The Buddha's path consisted not only of mindfulness, concentration, and insight practices, but also of virtue, beginning with the five precepts. In fact, the precepts constitute the first step in the path. There is a tendency in the West to dismiss the five precepts as Sunday-school rules bound to old cultural norms that no longer apply to our modern society, but this misses the role that the Buddha intended for them: They are part of a course of therapy for wounded minds. In particular, they are aimed at curing two ailments that underlie low self-esteem: regret and denial.

"The Healing Power of the Precepts ", by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight, June 5, 2010, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/precepts.html>.

The Healing Power of the Universal Precepts – part II

When our actions don't measure up to certain standards of behaviour, we either (1) regret the actions or (2) engage in one of two kinds of denial, either (a) denying that our actions did in fact happen or (b) denying that the standards of measurement are really valid. These reactions are like wounds in the mind. Regret is an open wound, tender to the touch, while denial is like hardened, twisted scar tissue around a tender spot. When the mind is wounded in these ways, it can't settle down comfortably in the present, for it finds itself resting on raw, exposed flesh or calcified knots. Even when it's forced to stay in the present, it's there only in a tensed, contorted and partial way, and so the insights it gains tend to be contorted and partial as well. Only if the mind is free of wounds and scars can it be expected to settle down comfortably and freely in the present, and to give rise to undistorted discernment.

"The Healing Power of the Precepts ", by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight, June 5, 2010, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/precepts.html>.

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The Healing Power of the Universal Precepts – part III

This is where the five precepts come in: They are designed to heal these wounds and scars. Healthy self-esteem comes from living up to a set of standards that are practical, clear-cut, humane, and worthy of respect; the five precepts are formulated in such a way that they provide just such a set of standards.

*"The Healing Power of the Precepts ", by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight, June 5, 2010,
<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/precepts.html>.*

The Five Universal Precepts : # Introduction

The practice of Buddhist moral precepts deeply affects one's personal and social life. The fact that they represent a course of training which one willingly undertakes rather than a set of commandments wilfully imposed by a God or supreme being is likely to have a positive bearing upon one's conscience and awareness. On the personal level, the precepts help one to lead a moral life and to advance further on the spiritual path.

On the social level, observing the five precepts helps to promote peaceful coexistence, mutual trust, a cooperative spirit, and general peace and harmony in society. It also helps to maintain an atmosphere which is conducive to social progress and development, as we can see from the practical implications of each precept.

*Source: "Getting to Know Buddhism" by Dr. Sunthorn Plamintr (pp. 133-154)
Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation © 1994*

This extract is derived from www.urbandharma.org/udharma2/5precepts.html

The Five Universal Precepts : (1) Non-harming

The first precept admonishes against the destruction of life. This is based on the principle of goodwill and respect for the right to life of all living beings. By observing this precept, one learns to cultivate loving kindness and compassion. One sees others' suffering as one's own and endeavours to do what one can to help alleviate their problems. Personally, one cultivates love and compassion; socially, one develops an altruistic spirit for the welfare of others.

*Source: "Getting to Know Buddhism" by Dr. Sunthorn Plamintr (pp. 133-154)
Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation © 1994*

This extract is derived from www.urbandharma.org/udharma2/5precepts.html

The Five Universal Precepts : (2) Contentment and Generosity

The second precept, not to take things which are not given, signifies respect for others' rights to possess wealth and property. Observing the second precept, one refrains from earning one's livelihood through wrongful means, such as by stealing or cheating. This precept also implies the cultivation of generosity, which on a personal

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level helps to free one from attachment and selfishness, and on a social level contributes to friendly cooperation in the community.

*Source: "Getting to Know Buddhism" by Dr. Sunthorn Plamintr (pp. 133-154)
Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation © 1994*

This extract is derived from www.urbandharma.org/udharma2/5precepts.html

The Five Universal Precepts : (3) Respect and Self-restraint

The third precept, not to indulge in sexual misconduct, includes rape, adultery, sexual promiscuity, paraphilia, and all forms of sexual aberration. This precept teaches one to respect one's own spouse as well as those of others, and encourages the practice of self-restraint, which is of utmost importance in spiritual training. It is also interpreted by some scholars to mean the abstention from misuse of senses and includes, by extension, non-transgression on things that are dear to others, or abstention from intentionally hurting other's feelings. For example, a young boy may practice this particular precept by refraining from intentionally damaging his sister's dolls. If he does, he may be said to have committed a breach of morality. This precept is intended to instill in us a degree of self-restraint and a sense of social propriety, with particular emphasis on sexuality and sexual behaviour.

*Source: "Getting to Know Buddhism" by Dr. Sunthorn Plamintr (pp. 133-154)
Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation © 1994*

This extract is derived from www.urbandharma.org/udharma2/5precepts.html

The Five Universal Precepts : (4) Truthfulness

The fourth precept, not to tell lies or resort to falsehood, is an important factor in social life and dealings. It concerns respect for truth. A respect for truth is a strong deterrent to inclinations or temptation to commit wrongful actions, while disregard for the same will only serve to encourage evil deeds. The Buddha has said: "There are few evil deeds that a liar is incapable of committing." The practice of the fourth precept, therefore, helps to preserve one's credibility, trustworthiness, and honour.

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Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation © 1994*

This extract is derived from www.urbandharma.org/udharma2/5precepts.html

The Five Universal Precepts : (5) Clarity of Mind

The last of the five Buddhist moral precepts enjoins against the use of intoxicants. On the personal level, abstention from intoxicants helps to maintain sobriety and a sense of responsibility. Socially, it helps to prevent accidents, such as car accidents, that can easily take place under the influence of intoxicating drink or drugs. Many crimes in society are committed under the influence of these harmful substances. The negative effects they have on spiritual practice are too obvious to require any explanation.

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Source: "Getting to Know Buddhism" by Dr. Sunthorn Plamintr (pp. 133-154) Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation © 1994

This extract is derived from www.urbandharma.org/udharma2/5precepts.html

The Five Mindfulness Trainings by Thich Nhat Hanh : Introduction:

The Five Mindfulness Trainings represent the Buddhist vision for a global spirituality and ethic. They are a concrete expression of the Buddha's teachings on the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, the path of right understanding and true love, leading to healing, transformation, and happiness for ourselves and for the world. To practice the Five Mindfulness Trainings is to cultivate the insight of interbeing, or Right View, which can remove all discrimination, intolerance, anger, fear, and despair. If we live according to the Five Mindfulness Trainings, we are already on the path of a bodhisattva. Knowing we are on that path, we are not lost in confusion about our life in the present or in fears about the future.

Source: "The Five Mindfulness Trainings (revised)" : Thich Nhat Hanh
www.plumvillage.org/mindfulness-trainings/3-the-five-mindfulness-trainings.html

The Five Mindfulness Trainings by Thich Nhat Hanh : (1) Reverence For Life

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, or in my way of life. Seeing that harmful actions arise from anger, fear, greed, and intolerance, which in turn come from dualistic and discriminative thinking, I will cultivate openness, non-discrimination, and non-attachment to views in order to transform violence, fanaticism, and dogmatism in myself and in the world.

Source: "The Five Mindfulness Trainings (revised)" : Thich Nhat Hanh
www.plumvillage.org/mindfulness-trainings/3-the-five-mindfulness-trainings.html

The Five Mindfulness Trainings by Thich Nhat Hanh : (2) True Happiness

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to practicing generosity in my thinking, speaking, and acting. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others; and I will share my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need. I will practice looking deeply to see that the happiness and suffering of others are not separate from my own happiness and suffering; that true happiness is not possible without understanding and compassion; and that running after wealth, fame, power and sensual pleasures can bring much suffering and despair. I am aware that happiness depends on my mental attitude and not on external conditions, and that I can live happily in the present moment simply by remembering that I already have more than enough conditions to be happy. I am committed to practicing Right

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Livelihood so that I can help reduce the suffering of living beings on Earth and reverse the process of global warming.

Source: *"The Five Mindfulness Trainings (revised)" : Thich Nhat Hanh*
www.plumvillage.org/mindfulness-trainings/3-the-five-mindfulness-trainings.html

The Five Mindfulness Trainings by Thich Nhat Hanh : (3) True Love

Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. Knowing that sexual desire is not love, and that sexual activity motivated by craving always harms myself as well as others, I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without true love and a deep, long-term commitment made known to my family and friends. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct. Seeing that body and mind are one, I am committed to learning appropriate ways to take care of my sexual energy and cultivating loving kindness, compassion, joy and inclusiveness – which are the four basic elements of true love – for my greater happiness and the greater happiness of others. Practicing true love, we know that we will continue beautifully into the future.

Source: *"The Five Mindfulness Trainings (revised)" : Thich Nhat Hanh*
www.plumvillage.org/mindfulness-trainings/3-the-five-mindfulness-trainings.html

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The Five Mindfulness Trainings by Thich Nhat Hanh : (4) Loving Speech and Deep Listening

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and compassionate listening in order to relieve suffering and to promote reconciliation and peace in myself and among other people, ethnic and religious groups, and nations. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am committed to speaking truthfully using words that inspire confidence, joy, and hope. When anger is manifesting in me, I am determined not to speak. I will practice mindful breathing and walking in order to recognize and to look deeply into my anger. I know that the roots of anger can be found in my wrong perceptions and lack of understanding of the suffering in myself and in the other person. I will speak and listen in a way that can help myself and the other person to transform suffering and see the way out of difficult situations. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to utter words that can cause division or discord. I will practice Right Diligence to nourish my capacity for understanding, love, joy, and inclusiveness, and gradually transform anger, violence, and fear that lie deep in my consciousness.

Source: "The Five Mindfulness Trainings (revised)" : Thich Nhat Hanh
www.plumvillage.org/mindfulness-trainings/3-the-five-mindfulness-trainings.html

The Five Mindfulness Trainings by Thich Nhat Hanh : (5) Nourishment and Healing

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will practice looking deeply into how I consume the Four Kinds of Nutriment, namely edible foods, sense impressions, volition, and consciousness. I am determined not to gamble, or to use alcohol, drugs, or any other products which contain toxins, such as certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books, and conversations. I will practice coming back to the present moment to be in touch with the refreshing, healing and nourishing elements in me and around me, not letting regrets and sorrow drag me back into the past nor letting anxieties, fear, or craving pull me out of the present moment. I am determined not to try to cover up loneliness, anxiety, or other suffering by losing myself in consumption. I will contemplate interbeing and consume in a way that preserves peace, joy, and well-being in my body and consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family, my society and the Earth.

Source: "The Five Mindfulness Trainings (revised)" : Thich Nhat Hanh
www.plumvillage.org/mindfulness-trainings/3-the-five-mindfulness-trainings.htm

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Loving-kindness, Compassion, Joy-gladness and Equanimity

Loving, being Loved and Loneliness...

"It is not that we go out into the world with a capacity to love others greatly. This too we know in ourselves, that our capacity to love is limited. And it has to be completed with the capacity to be loved, to accept love from others, to want to be loved by others, to admit our loneliness and to live with our loneliness because everyone is lonely."

*Source: "Choosing to Love the World" by Thomas Merton (p163)
Boulder: Sounds True Inc. © 2008*

Loving-kindness

Typically, we tend to judge ourselves and be quite critical and harsh in our self-assessments, identifying with the negative thoughts and feelings that arise in our minds.

Loving-kindness is the experience of having friendly and loving relationship towards ourselves as well as others.

The experience of loving-kindness towards ourselves is perhaps as simple as bringing a friendly attitude to our minds and bodies.

Adapted from: "Against The Stream - A Buddhist Manual for Spiritual Revolutionaries": [Noah Levine](#) (p61) New York: Harper Collins © 2007

Embrace the difficult and painful...

It is always easier to hate and blame than to understand and embrace the difficult and painful.

*Source: "Compassion : listening to the cries of the world" by Christina Feldman (p49)
Rodmell Press © 2005*

Compassion

In modern Western societies, happiness is often equated with the maximization of pleasure, and some people imagine that real happiness would consist of an interrupted succession of pleasurable experiences. This is far from what the Buddhist

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notion of sukha means. Sukha refers to an optimal way of being, an exceptionally healthy state of mind that underlies and suffuses all emotional states, that embraces all the joys and sorrows that come our way. It is also a state of wisdom purged of mental poisons, an insight free from blindness to the true nature of reality.

Authentic happiness can only come from the long-term cultivation of wisdom, altruism, and compassion, and from the complete eradication of mental toxins such as hatred, grasping, and ignorance.

Source: "Why Meditate" by Matthieu Ricard in a feature in Fall 2010 edition of Tricycle: The Buddhist Review

Joy-Gladness

How wonderful you are in your being
I delight that you are here,
I take joy in your good fortune.
May your happiness continue.

Source: From an 18th century Srilankan text translated by © John Peacocke

A place every day for a little rejoicing

So there is a place every day for a little rejoicing, a rejoicing in one's own good fortune and good work. And when we practice this - even in ordinary daily life - it comes so naturally to rejoice in the good fortune and good qualities of others.

Source: "Encouragement Towards Awakening" : Bhante Bodhidhamma (p107)

If you feel anxious or unhappy

If you feel anxious or unhappy, you know you can wait for this to pass - you do not need to fix the anxiety or the unhappiness immediately by taking drugs or alcohol. When some situation does not go the way you want it to go, you do not feel powerless or aggressive and turn to intoxicants, but you look at what you can learn from this or how you could understand it in a different way.

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Source: "Let Go : A Buddhist Guide to Breaking Free of Habits" : [Martine Batchelor](#)
(p111) Somerville MA: Wisdom Publications © 2007

Peace requires us to surrender

Peace requires us to surrender
our illusions of control.
We can love and care for others
but we cannot possess
our children, lovers, family, or friends.
We can assist them, pray for them, and wish
them well,
yet in the end
their happiness and suffering
depend on their thoughts and actions,
not on our wishes.

Source: "The Art of Forgiveness, Lovingkindness, and Peace" : Jack Kornfield (p162)
Bantam Books, New York © 2002

Patience and Equanimity

"Even a happy life cannot be without a measure of darkness, and the word happy would lose its meaning if it were not balanced by sadness. It is far better take things as they come along with patience and equanimity."

Source: Carl Jung

Equanimity's strength

Equanimity's strength derives from a combination of understanding and trust. It is based on understanding that the conflict and frustration you feel when you can't control the world does not come from your inability to do so, but rather from the fact that you are trying to control the uncontrollable.

Source: Sharon Salzberg

We make a Commitment

We make a commitment to each of the five precepts - *as we understand them to be* - and we commit to continually pay attention; to our motivations, to our reactions, and to our evolving understanding of a life of Loving-kindness.

[If we lose the power of attention, we lose the intensity and richness of true connectedness with the moment.]

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Source: *Loving-kindness : The Revolutionary Art of Happiness* by Sharon Salzberg -
p241

The Commitment to Compassion

The commitment to compassion is an inner and outer journey.

You are learning to radically alter the course of your heart and mind, moment to moment.

Fear, judgement, and anger still arise, but you can refrain from wallowing in them.

*Christina Feldman "Compassion : Listening to the Cries of the World" (p49)
Rodmell Press © 2005*

Why Me?

Despair is a landscape we visit many times in our lives.

Why me?

What did I do to deserve this?

When you are able to stop saying,

Why have these terrible things happened to me?

And can say,

Why not me?,

you have taken the first steps on the path of healing and compassion.

*Christina Feldman "Compassion : Listening to the Cries of the World" (p20)
Rodmell Press © 2005*

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Bitterness & Hatred

To live a life pervaded by bitterness and hatred is like being locked in a burning house...

...and then to remember that you hold the key to the door in your own hand.

*Christina Feldman "Compassion : Listening to the Cries of the World" (p64)
Rodmell Press © 2005*

Thamkrabok Equanimity

"Your hand is not long enough to reach out to everybody"

Luangpor Charoen Parnchand - 2nd Abbot of Wat Thamkrabok

Joy and Sorrow

This life is but a play of joy and sorrow
may we remain undisturbed by life's rise and fall.
I care deeply about you,
but you are the owner of your actions and their fruit,
and sadly I can not keep you from distress.

Source: From an 18th century Srilankan text translated by © John Peacock

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Forgiveness

The gift of Forgiveness

We should forgive one another and wash away that stain from our hearts. Why? Because otherwise it turns into animosity and enmity. The act of forgiving is called the gift of forgiveness.

Source: Ajahn Lee - www.accesstoinight.org/lib/thai/lee/everyone.html

Abandon such thoughts

"Look how he abused me and beat me,
How he threw me down and robbed me."
Live with such thoughts and you live in hate.

"Look how he abused me and beat me,
How he threw me down and robbed me."
Abandon such thoughts, and live in love.

Source: Buddha - Dhammapada verses 3 & 4 translated by Thomas Byrom

Bitterness & Hatred

To live a life pervaded by bitterness and hatred is like being locked in a burning house...

...and then to remember that you hold the key to the door in your own hand.

*Christina Feldman "Compassion : Listening to the Cries of the World" (p64)
Rodmell Press © 2005*

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Mindfulness and Meditation

The Commitment to Compassion

The commitment to compassion is an inner and outer journey.

You are learning to radically alter the course of your heart and mind, moment to moment.

Fear, judgement, and anger still arise, but you can refrain from wallowing in them.

*Christina Feldman "Compassion : Listening to the Cries of the World" (p49)
Rodmell Press © 2005*

Know that You are Safe

Know that you are safe; nothing else is happening; you are breathing and alive.

Source: Adapted and used with the kind permission of Martine Batchelor from the book 'Let Go: A Buddhist Guide to Breaking Free of Habits'.

The Power of Awareness

The regular practice of meditation is a good way to develop the power of awareness, a power that can eventually become stronger than the power of your negative habits. The power of awareness gives you the strength to do things differently and the courage to go beyond your habitual limitations.

Source: Adapted and used with the kind permission of Martine Batchelor from the book 'Let Go: A Buddhist Guide to Breaking Free of Habits'.

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What is Awakening?

The short-term aim of meditation is to bring calm and stability to the mind/heart, and through that provide a basis for insight into the issues that govern our lives. Such fundamental life-topics as pain and pleasure, wanting and resisting, identity and relationship – are all food for insight when we have the skills to contemplate and handle them wisely.

Source: "Meditation - A way of Awakening" by Ajahn Sucitto

Serenity & Insight

"..for direct knowledge, for the full understanding, for the utter destruction, for the vanishing, for the fading away, for the cessation, for the giving up, for the relinquishment of intoxication, these two things are to be developed.

Which two? Serenity and insight.

For the relinquishment of intoxication these two things are to be developed."

Source - Buddha (A.N. : Book of Twos)

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Good Friends

Admirable Friends

Don't associate with bad friends.

Don't associate with the low.

Associate with admirable friends.

Associate with the best.

Source: Buddha - Dhammapada verses 78 translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

Good Companion

If you find a good companion,

of integrity and wisdom,

you will overcome all dangers

in joyous and caring company.

Source: Buddha - Dhammapada verses 328 translated by Ajahn Munindo

The value of good friendship

Particularly critical to our spiritual progress is our selection of friends and companions, who can have the most decisive impact upon our personal destiny. It is because he perceived how susceptible our minds can be to the influence of our companions that the Buddha repeatedly stressed the value of good friendship (kalyanamittata) in the spiritual life.

Source: "Association with the Wise", by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Access to Insight, 5 June 2010, http://www.accesstinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_26.html.

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Good friendship in Buddhism

Good friendship, in Buddhism, means considerably more than associating with people that one finds amenable and who share one's interests. It means in effect seeking out wise companions to whom one can look for guidance and instruction.

Source: "Association with the Wise", by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Access to Insight, 5 June 2010, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_26.html.

The task of the Noble Friend

The task of the noble friend is not only to provide companionship in the treading of the way. The truly wise and compassionate friend is one who, with understanding and sympathy of heart, is ready to criticize and admonish, to point out one's faults, to exhort and encourage, perceiving that the final end of such friendship is growth in the Dhamma.

Source: "Association with the Wise", by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Access to Insight, 5 June 2010, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_26.html.

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Core Buddhist Principles

What do I do now?

If death is certain and its time uncertain, what do I do now?

*Source: "The lamrim meditation on impermanence and death"
adapted by Stephen Batchelor
(Notes from Italian Retreat, November 2012)*

Liberation

In Buddhism there is a notion of liberation from suffering, but not in the sense of an escape from normal life. Nirvāna (Nibbāna) as a state of being free of suffering is not, as some consider it to be, a dimension of Heaven that is other than normal life. Liberation comes through an insight into the nature of life, not through avoiding its reality. It is a fundamental change in how we see life, not an escape from it. In this respect, there is little room for avoidance of what is present in our physical and emotional experience.

*Source: "The Wisdom of Imperfection
: The challenge of Individuation in Buddhist Life." Rob Preece (p30)
Snow Lion Publications – New York © 2006*

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Four Transforming Contemplations : (1) Precious Human Existence

This precious human existence, this lifetime, well-endowed with leisure, qualities, and opportunities, is difficult to attain, tenuous, and easily lost, so this is the time to practice spirituality with diligence.

Shantideva, the eighth-century Mahayana Indian saint (his name translates as 'The Peaceful Angel') and author of *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, wrote:

'These human pleasures, opportunities, and faculties are very rare to obtain and easily lost;

If one squanders the chance to fulfill the aim of human life, How will such an opportunity arise again?'

*Source: "Awakening the Buddha Within" by Lama Surya Das (p150)
London: Bantam Books © 1997*

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Four Transforming Contemplations : (2) Death, Mortality, and Impermanence

All things are impermanent; our life breath especially is just like a bubble on a swift-moving stream. The time of our death is uncertain, and we depart alone from this world.

All that is born, dies, even the enlightened masters, saints, sages, and powerful leaders;

Our longevity and hour of death are uncertain, and then we sally forth alone and unaccompanied;

All constructions eventually fall to ruin;
All those who are gathered together, eventually separate.
Everything passes and dissolves;
Even the mountains and the seas;

So resolve now to realize the deathless reality and undying peace of freedom and nirvana.

In the Lalitavistara Sutra, the Buddha says:

'The universe and its inhabitants are as ephemeral as the clouds in the sky;
Beings being born and dying are like a spectacular dance or drama show.
The duration of our lives is like a flash of lightning or a firefly's brief twinkle
Everything passes like the flowing waters of a steep waterfall.

*Source: "Awakening the Buddha Within" by Lama Surya Das (p150)
London: Bantam Books © 1997*

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Four Transforming Contemplations : (3) The Ineluctable Law of Karma

The law of karma follows us like a shadow follows the body, virtue and non-virtuous words, thoughts, and deeds procreate in kind.

The lawful workings of cause and effect, virtue and vice, are unavoidable.

When we die we leave everything behind, except our karma and our spiritual realization.

This karmic conditioning propels us forward according to what we have set in motion through our actions, words, and deeds.

Karmic cause and effect (interdependent origination) creates everything, and by thorough understanding of karmic causation and skillful means we can become free. The Buddha said:

'If a king or householder shall die,
His wealth, family, friends, and retinue cannot follow him.
Wherever we go, wherever we remain,
The results of our actions follow us.'

*Source: "Awakening the Buddha Within" by Lama Surya Das (p150)
London: Bantam Books © 1997*

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Four Transforming Contemplations : (4) The Defects and Shortcomings of Samsara

Samsara and all its contents, pleasure as well as pain, are like a public feast we are passing through on our way to the grave.

Birth is difficult, growing up is difficult, illness is difficult aging and death are painful.

Losing what we care for hurts; not getting what we want is frustrating.

We feel lost and powerless, anxious and insecure by a sense of being out of control, blown about by circumstances and conditions we don't understand.

Being unaware and half-asleep in our own lives is wasteful and meaningless.

We are continually tormented by our fears of the unknown and ignorance and doubt about where we will go and why.

These are Just a few of the myriad waves in the ocean of suffering called samsara or cyclic existence. Cross beyond this raging tide of confusion and misery to the other shore and you'll find the joyous waters of nirvana - peace, freedom, and the everlasting happiness of perfect enlightenment.

*Source: "Awakening the Buddha Within" by Lama Surya Das (p150)
London: Bantam Books © 1997*

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The Way to Reach the Attainable Measure of Peace of Mind

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us "Universe", a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest — a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. The striving to free oneself from this delusion is the one issue of true religion. Not to nourish the delusion but to try to overcome it is the way to reach the attainable measure of peace of mind.

February 12, 1950 - Albert Einstein

Freedom from Fear

Our common human goal is happiness and our common human condition is fear. Fear is the obstacle in every moment to our happiness and our complete illumination. It is fear that holds us in a job or a relationship or a situation that we don't like or enjoy, and it is this fear that society continually caresses.

From 'Buttons in the Dana Box' by Michael Kewley

Uncertainty

"If Everything is temporary, transient and impermanent is there anything that is certain or reliable?"

Sit-and-Share Topic from *Vince Cullen*

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The Dhammapada : Teachings of the Buddha : CRAVING

*From 'A Dhammapada for Contemplation © 2006 Aruna Publications
Translated Ajahn Munindo unless otherwise stated.
(www.aruna.org)*

334

Uncontained craving
grows like a creeper in the forest.
Being lost in it
one leaps around
like a tree-dwelling ape looking for fruit.

335

Fostering habits
such as craving and clinging
is like fertilising noxious weeds.

336

As water falls from a lotus leaf
so sorrow drops from those
who are free of toxic craving.

337

Torrential rains can destroy crops.
Mara can destroy you.
Thus I implore you –
dig up the roots of all craving.
I give you my blessing
for this work.

338

If the roots are not removed
weeds grow again and again;
suffering returns to us

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so long as craving remains.

339

When the streams
of sensual pleasure run strong
they can generate
a torrent of longing.

340

The streams of craving flow everywhere.
The wild creeper of craving
spreads and entangles.
Discerning this creeper with insight,
dig it out.

341

Beings naturally experience pleasure;
but when pleasure is contaminated
with craving,
not releasing it creates frustration
and tedious suffering follows.

342

Trapped in habits of craving
people panic
like rabbits caught in the snare.
Their reactions reinforce the pain
of their entrapment.

343

Trapped in habits of craving
people panic
like rabbits caught in the snare.
If you wish to be free from entrapment,
craving itself must be removed.

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344

There are those who have begun
on the path to freedom
yet return, out of desire, to bondage.

345 - 346

Wisdom sees
that being held behind bars
or bound by chains
is less limiting
than infatuation with possessions
and obsession with relationships.
These bonds, though not so obvious,
are strong and hold us down.
To renounce attachment
to the world of the senses
is to be free from the prison of craving.

347

Like a spider caught in its own web,
a being enwrapped in sensual craving
must be released from its own longings
before it can walk free.

348

Let go of the past.
Let go of the future.
Let go of the present.
With a heart that is free
cross over to that shore
which is beyond suffering.

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349

The bonds
of deluded habits and craving
are strengthened
by one who lets the mind heedlessly dwell
on objects of desire.

349 Alternative translation (*Gil Frondsal*)

For people who
Have agitated thoughts
And intense passion,
And who are focused on what's pleasant,
Craving grows more and more.
Indeed, they strengthen their bonds.

350

But one who delights
in calming sensual thoughts,
who is alert
and cultivates awareness

of the loathsome
aspects of the body
breaks through craving
and unbinds deluded habits.

350 Alternative translation (*Gil Frondsal*)

But those who
Delight in calming their thoughts,
Are always mindful,
And cultivate a focus on what's unpleasant,
Will bring an end [to craving].
They will cut Mara's bonds.

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350 Alternative translation (*Thomas Byrom*)

Quieten your mind.
Reflect.
Watch.
Nothing binds you.
You are free.

351

No more need is there to re-form
for those who have reached the goal;
they are free from fear and longing.
The thorns of existence have been removed.

352

A master is one who has let go
of all craving and clinging to the world;
who has seen
the truth beyond forms,
yet is possessed of
a profound knowledge of words.
Such a great being can be said
to have finished the task.

353

I do not declare
another as my teacher
since by myself have I arrived
at the wisdom that overcomes all,
realises all, renounces all.
Wholly liberated am I
from all craving.

354

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The gift of truth excels all gifts.
The flavour of reality
surpasses all flavours.
The delight of truth
transcends all delights.
Freedom from craving
is the end of all suffering.

354 Alternative translations (*Gil Frondsal*)

The gift of Dharma surpasses all gifts.
The taste of Dharma surpasses all tastes.
The delight in Dharma surpasses all delights.
The destruction of craving conquers all suffering.

354 Alternative translation (*Thomas Byrom*)

The gift of truth is beyond giving.
The taste beyond sweetness,
The joy beyond joy.
The end of desire is the end of sorrow.

354 Alternative version (*Vince Cullen*)

The gift of **Sajja** is beyond giving.
The taste of **Sajja** beyond sweetness,
The joy of **Sajja** beyond joy.
The end of craving is the end of sorrow.

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355

Riches mostly ruin the foolish
but not those who seek the beyond.
Just as they dismiss
the well-being of others and cause harm,
fools also ruin themselves.

356

Weeds cause damage in fields.
Lust causes damage to all beings.
Support those who are free from lust;
the gift will yield great benefit.

357

Weeds cause damage in fields.
Hatred causes damage to all beings.
Support those who are free from hatred;
the gift will yield great benefit.

358

Weeds cause damage in fields.
Confusion causes damage to all beings.
Support those who are free from confusion;
the gift will yield great benefit.

359

Weeds cause damage in fields.
Envy causes damage to all beings.
Encourage those who are free from envy
and there will be great benefit.

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Resources to Inspire and Support Recovery

If you are struggling with abstinence or recovery then the following resources are offered to inspire and support your personal Journey of the Hero :

- **Short Video** : [Setting the wheel of recovery in motion](#) by Vince Cullen [4-minutes].
- **Short Video** : [Making Friends with Your Demons and Hungry Ghosts: Buddhist Tools for Recovery](#) by Josh Korda (NYC) [17-minutes].
- **Short Booklet** : [From Hungry Ghost to Being Human - Taking Sajja Beyond Thamkrabok \(latest version\)](#).
- **Book** : [Against the Stream : A Buddhist Manual for Spiritual Revolutionaries](#) by Noah Levine (*particularly the chapter about Truth i.e. Sajja*).
- **Book** : [Let Go : A Buddhist Guide to Breaking Free of Habits](#) by Martine Batchelor (*particularly the chapter on vows and resolutions*).
- **Book** : [Hardcore Zen : Punk Rock, Monster Movies and the Truth about Reality](#) by Brad Warner (*particularly the chapter "Pass me the Ecstasy, Rainbow, I'm going to Nirvana on a Stretcher"*).
- **Short Documentary** : [Withdrawal in the Triangle](#) - an interview with Julien who now runs [New Life Foundation](#) [12-minutes].
- **Documentary** : [Facing the Dragon](#) - Observational documentary of Sarah & Cassie - two heroin and crack addicts who attempted to detox in radical treatment programme at Thamkrabok Monastery in Thailand [58-minutes].
- **Documentary** : An interview with the respected teacher Thich Nhat Hanh and (at about 43 minutes in) the inspiring documentary '[The Dhamma Brothers](#)' [124-minutes]. No one is beyond redemption!
- **Guided Meditations** : [The Practice of Mindfulness](#) a free download of six guided meditations by various teachers.
- **Many more resources on the Buddhist Recovery Network website** : www.buddhistrecovery.org

May all beings enjoy everyday Nibbana, every day.

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Links

Fifth Precept Fellowship

www.5th-precept.org

International Buddhist Recovery Network

www.buddhistrecovery.org

UK Buddhist Recovery Network

www.buddhistrecovery.org.uk

Hungry Ghost Buddhist Recovery Retreats

www.HungryGhostRetreats.org

Thamkrabok Monastery Detox and Rehabilitation Centre

- Monastery Website: www.Wat-Thamkrabok.org
- Friends of Thamkrabok Monastery: Friends-of-Thamkrabok-Monastery

Associated websites

- New Life Foundation (Thailand): www.NewLifeFoundation.com
- World Wide Insight: www.Sangha.Live

Articles and information about Universal Precepts

Avoiding pamāda: An analysis of the Fifth Universal Precept as Social Protection in Contemporary Contexts with reference to the early Buddhist teachings:

www.chezpaul.org.uk/buddhism/MSt_dissertation.htm

The Five Universal Precepts : The purpose of Buddhist moral precepts:

www.urbandharma.org/udharma2/5precepts.html

The Five Mindfulness Trainings - Revised:

www.plumvillage.org/mindfulness-trainings/3-the-five-mindfulness-trainings.html

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