

Buddhist Recovery Network 2009 Inaugural Conference

Recovery from Addiction in a Buddhist Context



Conference Program

October 9-11, 2009



BUDDHIST RECOVERY

Against the Stream Buddhist Meditation Society

4300 Melrose Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90029 USA

www.buddhistrecovery.org



The best place to start
is at the beginning...

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BUDDHIST RECOVERY

Keynote Speakers

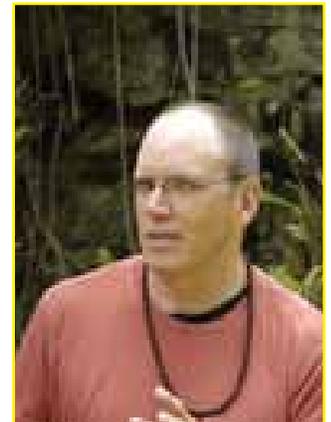


Trudy Goodman, EdM

Trudy is President and Founder of InsightLA, a non-profit organization for secular mindfulness education and Vipassana meditation training. She teaches extensively in the field of meditation and psychotherapy at conferences and retreats nationwide. In 1995, she co-founded the very first Institute for Meditation and Psychotherapy in Cambridge, MA, where she lived and taught at the Cambridge Buddhist Association from 1991-98. Trudy has studied Buddhist meditation for 35 years, with Asian and Western teachers, and is also an affiliate teacher at Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, California.

Kevin Griffin

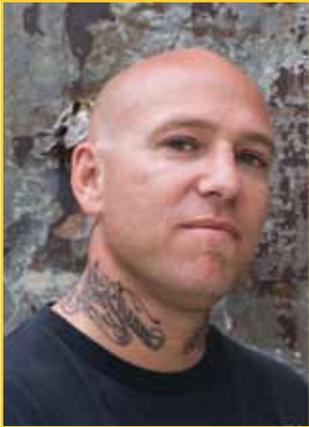
Kevin is the author of *One Breath at a Time: Buddhism and the Twelve Steps* (Rodale Press, 2004) and the forthcoming *A Burning Desire: Dharma God and the Path of Recovery* (Hay House, 2009). He is a leader in the mindful recovery movement and a co-founder of the Buddhist Recovery Network. He teaches at treatment centers, spiritual centers, professional conferences, and colleges across the US. Trained as a Community Dharma Leader at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, he takes a spontaneous and intimate approach to teaching mindfulness, drawing from a depth of experience in recovery, in meditation, and in group facilitation. His many years as a professional musician and writer inform his creative approach to healing.



Professor G. Alan Marlatt

Alan is Professor of Psychology and Director of the Addictive Behaviors Research Center at the University of Washington. In addition to over 200 journal articles and book chapters, he has published several books in the addictions field. He specializes in relapse prevention and has received several awards for his work, including the Jellinek Memorial Award for Alcohol Studies (1990), the Innovators Combating Substance Abuse Award from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2001), and the Distinguished Research Award from the Research Society on Alcoholism (2004). He is a Buddhist who practices in the Shambhala tradition.

Keynote Speakers

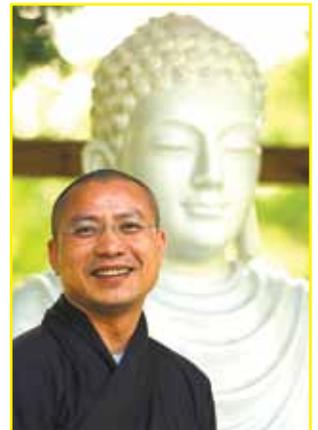


Noah Levine

Noah Levine, author of *Dharma Punx* and *Against The Stream*, is a Buddhist teacher, author and counselor. He was trained to teach by Jack Kornfield of Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, CA. He is the founding teacher of Against the Stream Buddhist Meditation Society, with a Center in Los Angeles and over 20 affiliated groups around North America. He teaches meditation classes, workshops and retreats internationally. Noah holds a Masters degree in counseling psychology. He lives in Los Angeles.

Thich Dao Quang

‘Thay’ was born and raised as a Buddhist in a small village in central Vietnam, and in 1991 he entered a monastery and received instruction from Thich Thanh Tu. Thay moved to America in 1994, and in 2005 became Abbot of the Tam Bao Vietnamese Temple in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He has a degree in Psychology and a Masters in Community Counseling. Thay works with mental health professionals regarding the use of meditation in addressing mental health disorders. He has also taught mindfulness techniques to prisoners in state facilities in Georgia and Texas.



Santikaro

Santikaro is a Dhamma student-practitioner, translator, and Buddhist meditation teacher who lives with his wife Jo Marie at Liberation Park in Norwalk, WI. Inspired by the suttas of early Buddhism and guided by the profound influence of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Santikaro seeks to translate the heart of the Buddha’s liberating message into a life free of suffering in the midst of the challenges of modern life. Through Liberation Park, he seeks to support Buddhist study and practice in the Midwest, along with other movements for true healing. In 2004-06, AA friends in the Chicago area initiated a dialogue concerning Buddhism and the 12 Steps. The talks Santikaro gave during that dialogue can be found at www.liberationpark.org. Subsequently, Santikaro has begun to meet with alcoholics and addiction counselors in Siam when he visits there annually and is consulting with a new culturally appropriate translation of the Big Book into Thai.

Facilitators, Speakers and Panel Members

Jeff Bell is the author of the forthcoming book *When in Doubt, Make Belief: Life Lessons from OCD*, offering a look at the many parallels between OCD doubt and everyday uncertainty, and the critical roles that applied belief and mindfulness can play in addressing both. A recovering OCD sufferer, himself, Bell speaks on behalf of a number of mental health organizations and makes his living as a radio news anchor in San Francisco.

Beverly Berg, PhD, has worked with adults and children, both individuals and couples, in a full psychotherapy practice for the last 30 years, and for over 25 years in the field of chemical dependency as a marriage, family and child therapist. She has worked in hospitals and institutions for drug and alcohol recovery as a consultant/trainer in the areas of alcoholism treatment, hypnosis and meditation. Beverly has studied Vipassana meditation with teacher Trudy Goodman, the founder of InsightLA. Presently she studies the neurobiology of the brain in couples therapy with Dr. Stan Tatkin.

Dr Ann Bolger is a Clinical Psychologist who maintains private psychotherapy practices in west San Jose and in Santa Cruz, specializing in the treatment of substance abuse and other addictions. She has trained extensively as a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction teacher with Drs. Jon Kabat-Zinn and Bob Stahl. At present, she is teaching Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention to people recovering from alcoholism and drug addiction in the Bay Area. Previously, she held Lecturer appointments at San Jose State University (SJSU) and has served as Vice President of the Board of the Silicon Valley chapter of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD).

Laura Burges, a lay teacher in the Soto Zen tradition, lectures and leads retreats in Northern California. Her column "Is That So?" appears monthly on the San Francisco Zen Center website. A practitioner since 1975, she recently received Lay Entrustment from her teacher, Eijun Linda Cutts."

Pablo Das is a mindfulness based nutrition, wellness and recovery counselor. He centralizes mindfulness practice as well as the principles of non-religious Buddhist Dharma in his client work. He is a graduate of the Institute for Integrative Nutrition and has trained in food therapy at the Natural Gourmet Institute. He is trained and empowered to teach Buddhism by Noah Levine. He is a strong advocate for empowering and non dogmatic approaches to diet and recovery. Pablo is a nationally distributed indie-folk punk musician. He volunteers at a suicide helpline for Gay Youth. He lives in Brooklyn, NY.

Damon Gay has lived in Tucson since 1991 and been a member of the Tucson Shambhala Meditation Group since 2000. He began the on-going Sarpashana meditation group for people in recovery in 2002, and has been active in Alcoholics Anonymous, SAA and other twelve-step programs since beginning his addiction recoveries in San Francisco in 1986.

Rev. Alex Holt is half time consulting minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Yakima, Washington. Alex has served churches in the Pacific Northwest and the Midwest for over a decade. He is also a long term Zen Buddhist student at Great Vow Zen Monastery in Oregon studying under the tutorage of his teachers Chozen and Hogen Bays. He is the chair of the UUA Addictions Ministry Team and has helped to develop the first regional addictions ministry for the UUA in the last several years. As a recovering alcoholic, Alex is well aware of the challenges and ministry of addiction and recovery. He is on the advisory council of the Buddhist Recovery Network and is being trained by Faith Partners, Inc. - an ecumenical foundation devoted to interfaith response to addiction and recovery.

M. Kathleen B. Lustyk, PhD is Professor of Psychology at Seattle Pacific University (SPU) and Affiliate Associate Professor at the University of Washington School of Nursing. She is the primary investigator of the Women's Health Lab at SPU where she investigates numerous issues affecting the lives of women. Dr. Lustyk and her research team have started to investigate the role mindfulness plays in the female stress response and its effects on premenstrual symptom reporting. In collaboration with Dr. G. Alan Marlatt, Dr. Lustyk is preparing to investigate changes in the psychophysiological stress response of persons with substance use disorders following treatment with Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention therapy. In 2002, Dr. Lustyk received the Outstanding Research Article Award from the Society of Gastroenterology Nurses and Associates for her work in women's health.

Performance

Raul Pacheco is a lead singer and guitarist for Ozomatli. Ozomatli is a grammy winning and global touring Los Angeles based band that has promoted the idea of a world where all worlds fit for the last 15 years. Raul has been active in recovery for the last 4 years and has come across the helpfulness of the Dharma through friends at Against The Stream. Raul is honored to play at this conference.

Conference Program

Thursday, October 8th The Center will be open between 7:00pm and 9:00pm for pre-registration

	Friday October 9th	Saturday October 10th	Sunday October 11th
7:30 am Registration 8am	Sitting Meditation (optional)	Sitting Meditation (optional)	Sitting Meditation (optional)
9:00 am- 10:00 Keynote	<i>Welcome:</i> Noah Levine <i>"What Is Buddhist Recovery?"</i> Kevin Griffin	<i>"Addiction To Self"</i> Santikaro	<i>"Where Does the Buddhist Recovery Network Go From Here?"</i> Open group discussion with Board members
10:00 am- 12:00 Morning Breakout Sessions	<i>Addiction and the Neuroscience of Mindfulness</i> Dr. Kathy Lustyk & Prof. G. Alan Marlatt	<i>Food, Substance & Recovery</i> Pablo Das	
	<i>The Buddhist Path of Recovery</i> Noah Levine	<i>Uncertainty and Mindfulness; Lessons from OCD</i> Jeff Bell	
12:00 to 2:00	Lunch	Lunch	
2:00 pm Keynote	<i>Mindfulness Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP):</i> Prof. G. Alan Marlatt with Dr Kathy Lustyk	<i>Mindfulness & Recovery</i> Thich Dao Quang (‘Thay’)	



Conference Program

	Friday October 9th	Saturday October 10th	Sunday October 11th
3:00-5:00 Afternoon Breakout Sessions	<i>Mindfulness Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP) Workshop:</i> Dr Ann Bolger	<i>Addictive Culture</i> Santikaro	
	<i>Facilitating Buddhist Recovery Groups – cross- tradition panel:</i> Laura Burges, Damon Gay, Rev. Alex Holt & Kevin Griffin	<i>Anatomy of Emotional Recovery for the Sober Buddhist Family</i> Workshop with Trudy Goodman & Beverly Berg	
5:00-7:00	<i>Break For Dinner</i>	<i>Break For Dinner</i>	
7:00-8:00	<i>Keynote: Recovery as Crucible</i> Trudy Goodman	<i>The God Dialogue:</i> Noah Levine, Kevin Griffin and others.	
8:00	<i>Music:</i> Raul Pacheco		



BUDDHIST RECOVERY

Friday, October 9

Keynote: What is Buddhist Recovery? – Kevin Griffin

Kevin will describe his personal experience of bringing Buddhism together with 12-step recovery. He'll talk about the evolving Buddhist recovery movement, its forms, its challenges and its potential.

Breakout: Addiction and the Neuroscience of Mindfulness - Kathy Lustyk & G. Alan Marlatt

Integrating the expertise of professionals trained in clinical psychology and behavioral neuroscience, this breakout session provides an overview of the overlapping neural systems implicated in addiction and mindfulness practices. Our presentation of functional neuro anatomy will be set in clinical contexts and geared towards non-neuroscientists. Our focus will be on the neural anatomical and chemical systems affected by mindfulness that are also altered by addiction. We will conclude our presentation with a dialogue addressing how mindfulness-based therapies may benefit addicts by acting on the brain systems discussed while incorporating questions and comments from breakout session attendees.

Breakout: The Buddhist Path of Recovery – Noah Levine

In this workshop Noah will explore the possibilities of a non-12-step model of recovery. Taking the core teachings of the Buddha, the 4-Noble Truths, and adopting them to a path that ends the suffering of addiction. Noah is very interested in feedback from the larger community on his initial thoughts along these lines. Please join him for this open dialogue about recovery from a Buddhist perspective.

Keynote: Mindfulness Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP) – G. Alan Marlatt

This talk will provide an overview of MBRP in the treatment of addictive behavior problems. By providing mindfulness skills, clients report that they are better equipped to cope with urges and cravings. MBRP consists of eight weekly group therapy sessions, and is patterned after similar mindfulness programs to reduce relapse in the treatment of depression, and to help clients cope with chronic pain and stress. Because the meditation practices utilized in the program are based on Buddhist teachings, MBRP may appeal to clients who are seeking an alternative spiritual approach to recovery.

Breakout: Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP) Workshop – Ann Bolger

The MBRP program is specifically created for clients in recovery from substance use disorders and is designed to help prevent future relapse. In this experiential workshop, participants will be introduced to several components of MBRP, such as mindfulness meditation practices, as well as relapse prevention coping strategies. By experimenting with the practices and strategies in this workshop, it is hoped the participant will experience the concept of moment-to-moment nonjudgmental awareness and its impact on cravings, triggers, physical sensations, thoughts, and feelings. It is the intention of the instructor that each participant begins to learn -- or enhance -- skills to manage the unique stresses encountered on the path of recovery with increased awareness and acceptance, with less reactivity.

Breakout: Facilitating Buddhist Recovery Groups - a cross tradition panel – Laura Burges, Damon Gay, Kevin Griffin, Alex Holt

This panel discussion explores the wide variety of programs being created to support people in recovery using a Buddhist framework. Issues such as confidentiality, anonymity, variations to the traditional 12-step models, and publicity will be discussed. What are ways to begin a group from scratch and what are the group guidelines? How can the use of dharma teachings be

translated into Western support settings and are people welcome who come from other than Buddhist traditions? These and other questions will be explored along with a question and answer period.

Keynote: Recovery as Crucible - Trudy Goodman

The challenge for the recovering individual to surrender to befriending their suffering is the crucible for emotional and spiritual growth. Even in sobriety, the recovering person can find themselves getting on the merry-go-round of one addiction or another rather than sit with the normal human suffering that comes with being alive. The disease is smart and insidious, but with commitment and rigorous honesty the recovering person can embrace the burn of spiritual growth. Buddhist practice teaches the Recovering person how to lean in to experience as a crucible. The reward is transforming suffering into insight, wisdom, relief and joy.

Saturday, October 10

Keynote: Addiction to Self - Santikaro

Of all the things we use and abuse to numb, escape, and buffer our fears, hurts, shame, and other sufferings, self is the most basic and central. Born from ignorance and craving, producing identity and further becoming, clinging to me and mine holds the tangles of suffering together. This talk will reflect on how these core Buddhist teachings are relevant to understanding other modes of addiction and how teaching on letting go may help us understand the path of recovery. Ironically, the self we grasp at is conceptual and illusory. From this perspective, recovery, ultimately, is the same as liberation.

Breakout: Food, substances and dependency: a non 12-step perspective on Buddhist recovery - Pablo Das

All behavior is a reaction or response to the conditions in one's body and mind. Dependency can be understood as a conditioned or habitual response to uncomfortable internal experience. Using objective observation of the conditions that inform behavior we can end identification with those conditions and come into a wiser relationship to them. We will talk about deconstructing cravings, cultivating non-reactivity and from this position of clarity and freedom how we can then begin to work with the variables in one's life which inform the uncomfortable experiences in the body/mind in the first place. We will also talk about how an understanding of fundamental Buddhist teachings can be useful in sobriety.

Breakout: Uncertainty and Mindfulness: Lessons from OCD – Jeff Bell

Author and mental health advocate Jeff Bell knows a thing or two about living with uncertainty. As someone who has battled with, and recovered from, the very worst of obsessive compulsive disorder (a.k.a. The Doubting Disease), Bell has learned firsthand how debilitating uncertainty can be and just what it takes to live effectively with it. In this seminar, Jeff shares the many parallels he has found between traditional OCD “exposure therapy” and Buddhist mindfulness practices. Drawing on the wisdom of such Buddhist writers as Pema Chödrön and Sylvia Boorstein, Jeff offers practical, “field-tested” strategies for facing, and thriving amidst, the uncertainties of day-to-day life.

Keynote: Mindfulness & Recovery – Thich Dao Quang

Thich Dao Quang (Thay) has spent the last nine years teaching the techniques of mindfulness to those suffering from addiction. Although there are many techniques that can be used to help people stay sober, Thay has had continued success counseling his substance abuse clients, as well as mental health patients and prisoners in state facilities. “I have seen many clients regain self-confidence, self-esteem and self-awareness using these techniques.”. He will share with us his experiences teaching mindfulness for recovery and his successes, both with clients and with the counselors and therapists who also benefit from their use.

Breakout: Addictive Culture - Santikaro

Recovery from consumerism, the dominant religion in this country and elsewhere, is crucial for our survival. Booze, drugs, gambling, and junk food are epidemic in the culture of the USA; vast industries profit from them with government collusion. That this situation is manifestly rotten to the core is obscured by our addiction to consumerism, in which our struggle for meaningful life has been derailed by the doodads and distraction peddled by immoral profiteering. Addiction to war is also part of the mix. All of the above serve the pursuit of money, a symbolic value run amok, highly addictive in itself. Looking deeper still, we find the fragility of our isolated, insecure selves. This panel will touch on as many aspects of our addictive culture as time allows.

Breakout: Anatomy of Emotional Recovery for the Sober Buddhist Family – Beverly Berg, Trudy Goodman

The Buddha’s Four Foundations of Mindfulness are a systemic path for attaining emotional sobriety for the recovering family. When a recovering couple moves into second stage recovery, they must face and resolve challenging emotional issues. We’ll use a family systems approach to define stepping-stones for integrating the four foundations of mindfulness with the recovering path to foster emotional maturity in sober couples. This, in turn, enhances stability and warmth in families and liberation of the suffering caused by self-involved ego states specific to the addict/alcoholic. This workshop includes discussion, an experiential exercise and shared anecdotes by both presenters.

Keynote: The God Dialogues – Kevin Griffin, Noah Levine, Liz Munoz

Buddhism is non-theistic, 12-Step Recovery is open-minded-theism. This presents a challenge for integrating Buddhism with 12-Step recovery philosophy. Kevin has given great thought to this dilemma and has come up with new ways to define God, that can work for the Buddhist minded recovering person. Noah opts for a more rejectionist stance, feeling that the whole concept of God is a waste of time for Buddhists. Liz will bring her deep commitment and faith in God to the table to share her insights and experiences with us. This panel should prove to be educational and entertaining (watching Kevin and Noah bicker about God).

Sunday Oct. 11

Where Does the Buddhist Recovery Network Go From Here?

This is your chance to have input into the BRN’s agenda. Where should we be focusing our energies? How might we improve what we’re doing? How might you get further involved? How can we tap into further support? It is recommended that you read ‘The Story So Far’ in this Conference Program prior to the session.

Thanks and Acknowledgements

The Board of the Buddhist Recovery Network would like to thank the following people for their support of the Conference to date:

- Mary Stancavage and the Against the Stream sangha
- Eleni Diamantopoulos-brochure designer
- Joseph Rogers- Go-To Guy
- Dridhamati-web guru
- Josie Ramirez-Herndon and www.recoveryview.com
- Kit and Ashley Marlatt-video recording the Conference
- Sarit Masha – Event Photography
- Celeste Sciolla – Floral Arrangements

Buddhist Recovery Network Organizational Information

The Buddhist Recovery Network is a not for profit organization incorporated in Oregon, USA. The BRN also qualifies to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under section 2055, 2106 or 2522 of the U.S. Federal Internal Revenue Service Code.

Further information is available online at www.buddhistrecovery.org.

The organization's official address is at: P. O. Box 4, Marylhurst, Oregon 97036, USA. The Network's Patron is Jack Kornfield.

Our Mission Statement:

The Buddhist Recovery Network supports the use of Buddhist teachings, traditions and practices to help people recover from the suffering caused by addictive behaviors. Open to people of all backgrounds, and respectful of all recovery paths, the organization promotes mindfulness and meditation, and is grounded in Buddhist principles of non-harming, compassion and interdependence. It seeks to serve an international audience through teaching, training, treatment, research, publication, advocacy and community-building initiatives.



Haystack Rock
Cannon Beach, Oregon

Photo: George Vetter
www.cannon-beach.net

The Buddhist Recovery Network: The Story So Far....



Paul Saintilan, Interim Chair,
Buddhist Recovery Network

Welcome to the inaugural Conference of the Buddhist Recovery Network (BRN). We pride ourselves on being a warm, open and inclusive forum, and want to do everything we can to ensure you have a wonderful time over the coming days. We would like to thank and welcome the presenters, most of whom are receiving only a small honorarium and the reimbursement of costs (Board members have waived all payment). We would like to thank and welcome sponsors and members of the media. We would like to thank and welcome all of you who have paid to support the inaugural Conference, some travelling internationally. We have been amazed at the credentials of some of our participants, and the extraordinary diversity of experience. Many would be perfectly capable of presenting a keynote address. All these ingredients, and the relatively intimate nature of the event, will hopefully make for a highly interactive and rewarding experience.

The idea of presenting a Conference was first raised by Kevin Griffin at our 'Cannon Beach meeting', where it was greeted with considerable enthusiasm. What could be a more natural project for a 'Network' devoted to community building and information sharing? It is great to see it become a reality here in Los Angeles where two and half thousand years of Buddhist tradition connects with twenty first century Western, urban society. The Board of the BRN is tremendously supportive of what Noah (Levine) and Mary (Stancavage) are doing here at Against the Stream, and we thank them for their generosity in hosting the Conference. I had the enormous good fortune to attend a New Year's Eve 'intention setting ceremony' at the Center last December. Nearly 200 people packed into the Center for a humorous, beautiful evening, presided over by Noah. At the end of the ceremony I had no doubt that this was a fitting place to host our first Conference.

Please forgive the photographic, video, and audio recording you will see in abundance over the coming days. I see it less a sign of youthful enthusiasm than a recognition that we are an international organisation keen to share aspects of the event with those who couldn't attend. We hope to make resources, video excerpts from keynote addresses, photos etc available from the BRN website and youtube after the event.

The Board of the BRN has invited me to pen a short retrospective of 'the story so far'. Fortunately, the organisation is far too young to be burdened by a great deal of history. Writing this has been useful. It has forced us to reflect on and come to a consensus on what we consider to be important, and what has actually happened to date. It will hopefully be useful for those looking to become more involved with the BRN, and may provide some useful background information for the Sunday morning 'Where do we go from here?' session. While the initial draft was written by me, it has incorporated amendments and changes recommended by other participants. This account is approved by the Board of the BRN.

By way of personal introduction, my Chairmanship of the Network at this juncture is something of an historical accident. I have no impressive academic credentials in the area of addiction recovery, my sobriety is comparatively recent (six and a half years), I am not a celebrated exponent of Buddhist practices, I live in Sydney, Australia, some distance from the West Coast of the USA. I came to Cannon Beach hoping to just be part of a team. In the absence of anyone who wanted to take on the responsibility, I agreed to take on the Chair role for the first 20 months or so until the Conference. I have insisted on the title 'Interim Chair' to emphasise the transient nature of this appointment, and because (frankly) there must be someone better out there. My experience has been primarily in business management. The one thing I did do in this area is co-found the website www.buddhistrecovery.com with Michael Poole, a fellow Australian in 2005. This site was subsequently donated to the Network.

There is a great deal of information about the Network on our website, which I don't need to repeat here (eg our Mission Statement, 'Notes from Cannon Beach', an FAQ etc). This hasn't prevented some confusion arising occasionally. "So you guys are in recovery from Buddhism?" is one we have heard a few times. If someone can think of three or four words that better describes our endeavour, we're always open to ideas, but we think that those who are in most need of our services will automatically know what we're about from our name. "So you run into bars with copies of the Dhammapada?" No, we're not Buddhist missionaries zealously promoting Buddhism to those with addiction issues. We have found Buddhist practices can strengthen and deepen initial recovery. We have found many people who intuitively sense that these practices have the potential to enhance their recovery (and may be an adjunct to other support they are receiving).

I would like to summarise the story so far by looking at three different aspects of the organisation: (i) Timeline and Tributes; (ii) Principles and Policies; and (iii) Achievements and Problems. I would like to end with 'An Invitation'. My instinct when writing this is that the whole essay is way too long, but when we have looked to delete sections, we have felt that they do serve as a useful introduction to those wishing to become involved.

Timeline and Tributes

The Buddhist Recovery Network is an organic, living, interdependent creation. It is the confluence of a number of tributaries and currents, all of which we hope will pour into an ocean of inspiration. I recognise that the timeline I have experienced is only one rivulet within what the BRN is and could become, but it does provide one sense of its history.

The rise of the BRN should be seen in the broader context of a number of supportive conditions and currents: the Dalai Lama's attempts to have Buddhism engage with Western science (such as The Mind and Life Institute and his book with Daniel Goleman *Destructive Emotions: And how we can overcome them*); the growing interest in Mindfulness among psychologists and psychotherapists; the worldwide growth of AA in the twentieth century encouraging the practice of meditation in its Eleventh Step; and the growing number of authors who were focusing on the intersection of Buddhism and recovery long before the BRN was thought about, such as William Alexander, Mel Ash, Thomas & Beverly Bien, and Christina Grof.

Thus, it seemed to me in 2005 that the flowering of a BRN style organisation was an historical inevitability, and there were people better placed than me to facilitate its development. In July 2005 I suggested a BRN idea to the Mind and Life Institute. Adam Engle, the Chairman and Co-founder wrote a very supportive reply, but felt that the Institute didn't have the "bandwidth" to get involved at that point.

In September 2006 I was having a meal in a Sydney café with my friend Ratnavyuha, who challenged me on what more I could do for the cause of Buddhism and Recovery. Shortly after that meal I wrote to Kevin Griffin, floating the idea of establishing a Buddhist Recovery Foundation to raise funds, commission research, support online and other resources etc. I envisaged an organisation where individuals from all sorts of backgrounds (eg practicing Buddhists, social workers, addiction specialists, doctors etc) could form a guiding inner circle. I believed that such a Foundation would be best established in the USA, and probably on the West Coast, as that appeared the most mature and active area for applying Buddhism to recovery. I sought only humble participation in a larger group.

Kevin replied straight away: "I've had passing thoughts similar to yours about a foundation. I lean more towards the practical. I hear from people that they'd like to find a treatment center that was Buddhist oriented. I'd also like to see a place where people could get trained people to teach or counsel people using the shared principles of Buddhism and the Steps. But, I think you've got the right idea, because what you're describing would give credibility and an infrastructure for a "movement." I do think that such a foundation would draw in a lot of people. There's a broad interest in this topic, and no central focus. I would certainly want to be involved. One person you should contact is Alan Marlatt. Do you know him? He is a researcher at the University of Washington who heads the Addictive Behaviors Research Center. He is also a practicing Buddhist. He's done research on mindfulness and relapse prevention in prisons. He's very well-respected in the addiction community."

We were off and running. I contact Alan and he wrote back full of his customary warmth and support: "I'm very interested in helping you on this exciting project". When we canvassed the idea of all meeting up to discuss it further, in January 2007 Alan wrote "I would recommend we get together at a resort on the Oregon coast (I would recommend staying in Cannon Beach, close to both Portland & Seattle)."

In October of 2007 Sheila Blackford contacted us, and as she lived in Portland it seemed natural to invite her to the Cannon Beach meeting scheduled for January 2008. I am sure she came to Cannon Beach thinking she would just sit in, but she emerged from the meeting the Treasurer and Company Secretary. Sheila was an early powerhouse for the Network. She legally established the organisation, incorporating it in Oregon, helped with the establishment of Bylaws, the bank account and a host of other administrative requirements, and also drove through the successful securing of our IRS 501 (c) tax deductibility status.

Shortly before the meeting Alan wrote to me "There are two additional people I would like us to invite, if this works out with you. The first is a psychologist from San Francisco, Dr. Ann Bolger. Dr. Bolger is conducting a mindfulness-based

relapse prevention program and is an experienced meditator. [Ann now practices in Santa Cruz] The second is Dr. Kitty Moore, a clinical psychologist from San Francisco who also served as an Editor for Guilford Press”.

Ann went on to become a Director of the BRN, providing advice on a range of matters. She is almost always the first to respond if I send out a request to the Board. Kitty has been a sharp, generous contributor to both the Cannon Beach meeting and the Los Angeles meeting held in January 2009. We were also joined by a number of other wonderful participants: Dr Chenchu Dorji, the first psychiatrist in Bhutan, who made an impressive presentation to us on the second day; Martin Salinsky, who introduced himself as “Chenchu’s driver” but turned out to be a Professor of Psychiatry; and Alan’s son Kit and his partner Ashley who created a video record of the meeting.

Cannon Beach did capture the imagination of those who attended. I am not at all superstitious, but the night before I headed to Cannon Beach I had dinner in a Chinese restaurant in Seattle with my partner Carolyn. My tea was served with a Chinese fortune cookie. I cracked it open to reveal the words “You are almost there”. Having flown from Australia and having waited over a year for the meeting it seemed very apt. The trip down was wild and wintery. There was rain and snow coming out in the bus from Portland. We made our way to the Tolovana Inn (an Alaskan word meaning driftwood) where the meeting was taking place. The surf was thundering in, throwing white foam to what seemed like the very foot of the Hotel. Dawn revealed Haystack Rock in the distance. This statuesque, brooding landmark sitting amidst the surf provided a powerful, elemental focus for the meeting participants, in contrast to the cosy, arts and crafts feel of the town. Vancouver Washington was hit by a tornado two nights before the meeting. I recall with amusement and fondness: magic tricks being performed by the waiter in Mo’s restaurant the night before the meeting; Chenchu collapsing through travel fatigue at the end of a beautiful dinner at the Stephanie Inn, and having to be carried back to his room by me and Kevin; and the relaxed, exuberant meal at the Warwick House Pub at the conclusion of the meeting.

After the meeting there was great energy and excitement. Kevin wrote: “What a remarkable weekend! I was amazed by what happened, really. I never thought we could accomplish so much in so short a time. That certainly seems to point to the timeliness of the project and the shared vision among us.” Ann wrote “Thank you all so much for being there this weekend - it was truly inspirational for me.”

Noah had been interested in attending the Cannon Beach meeting but due to a communication breakdown between myself and Kevin, didn’t receive the details until too late. However, straight after the Cannon Beach meeting Kevin wrote that Noah “has accepted our invitation to join the board. From the outset he expressed to me a particular interest in opening some sort of Buddhist recovery center in the LA area. This is one of the Network’s mid-long term goals, so having Noah focused on that will be a plus.”

Around this same time Kevin proposed changing the name from “Buddhist Recovery Foundation” to “Buddhist Recovery Network” to which everyone agreed. As we were an organisation that was more about community building than handing out

money to other organisations, 'Network' seemed a better choice.

Since the meeting there have been a number of individuals whose contribution has been vitally important and should be recognised. Jack Kornfield accepted our invitation to become the Network's Patron. We invited a great many people to serve on our Advisory Council who have subsequently provided enthusiastic support (their names are listed on the website). We have received some fabulous web support, first from Collins Flannery who served as our webmaster for an initial period, then Dridhamati, who has spent a considerable period of time upgrading and developing the website. His uncomplaining, tireless work ethic has been a source of ongoing encouragement and inspiration to me. In June 2008 Ellen Berryman wrote to me asking to help with the organization of the conference. She made an impressive contribution to our LA planning meeting in January 2009 and walked away as our Membership Manager. She has since been appointed to the Board and has taken on the additional responsibility of Company Secretary.

The latter became necessary when Sheila's commitments made it impossible for her to continue in her huge roll. In addition to Ellen, Timothy O'Brien (Amara) stepped into the breach. Amara is enormously experienced in not for profit and Buddhist organisations, and is Executive Director of the Northwest Dharma Association (NWDA). He too has made a critical contribution. He conceived of and drove through the Charter Membership program and worked with Dridhamati to make the website a transactional platform that can accept online payments and collate information rather than just being a brochure in cyberspace.

The Conference has brought us into contact with a new group of generous participants: the Against the Stream sangha. Mary has been a joy to work with, and has been the perfect Production Manager for the Conference. Eleni Diamantopoulos did a beautiful job designing our Conference brochure, and has extended that design work into this Conference Program. On the subject of design work, I should also thank Keith Kefford in Hawaii for creating the BRN's logo.

It is worth noting the wonderful mix of Buddhist traditions that have come together through the BRN: the Theravada tradition (through Kevin and Noah from their involvement with Jack Kornfield and Spirit Rock); the Shambhala tradition (Alan); Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (me, Amara and Dridhamati); the Against the Stream sangha (Noah, Mary, Eleni etc). This is of course being expanded and enriched on a daily basis.

Principles and Policies

It is reasonable to ask what principles do we consider to be fundamental to the BRN?

One principle I brought to Cannon Beach, and was hugely relieved that others shared, is that you shouldn't need to ID as a Buddhist to feel part of the organisation. The two criteria that do seem to be necessary to be part of the Network is a belief in the efficacy of Buddhist practice/s and the intention to help people

recover from the suffering caused by addictive behaviours. Therefore we are not creating or focusing on a “Buddhist Community”, as many who are involved would not consider themselves Buddhists. Naturally we consider it important to have monastic Buddhists and Buddhists from a range of traditions as part of the Network, but it shouldn't prohibit (for example) a psychotherapist being involved who has enormous respect for a Buddhist practice but doesn't consider themselves a Buddhist.

Another Cannon Beach discussion that was fascinating was the debate over whether we should be the Mindful Recovery Network or Buddhist Recovery Network. It was felt 'Mindful Recovery' might enable easier mainstream engagement, devoid of religious connotations. However, the conclusion was reached that 'Buddhist Recovery' was truer to the scope envisioned by many of the meeting participants. For many of us 'Buddhist Recovery' is much bigger, deeper and richer.

It is also important to understand that from the outset the BRN has not been conceived as focusing only on the intersection of AA and Buddhism (eg Buddhist Recovery meetings which integrate Buddhist inspired meditative practices with AA style sharing). While this is one very important and interesting area of focus, the intersection of Buddhism and Recovery is much broader, and encompasses approaches such as Naikan, Vipassana meditation in prisons, Mindfulness Based Relapse Prevention (etc).

In terms of our website editorial policy, we have resisted the temptation to lose our focus by promoting general resources on Buddhism or recovery. We have tried to be clear to people that we are a niche enterprise specifically devoted to the intersection of Buddhism and Recovery.

Anonymity is an interesting issue. We respect the tradition of Anonymity in the broader recovery movement and consider it a beautiful value. I used to say that the BRN has no policy on Anonymity, but realise that more accurately we do have a policy: that it is an individual decision. We have many professionals working with us with significant professional reputations in the fields of Buddhism or addiction (some of whom are not in recovery) who have not sought anonymity. We have others such as Laura S. on our Advisory Council who have sought anonymity.

There are two issues we have not really had to confront to this point, but I have no doubt we will. The first is the issue of control. A normal Buddhist organisation has a revered founder who provides an inspiring formulation of the Buddha's teachings which draws followers. A lineage provides continuity of vision and a controlling force. We have no gurus asking you for uncritical devotion. I am not a guru. I have yet to meet anyone involved who I would consider a guru (though there are many who I would consider further down the path than I am!). However, like the academic community, what we have is a system of peer review. We have a culture that is 'bracing and embracing' in that we reserve the right to challenge one another, but we should be mindful of Buddhist precepts and guidance (such as Right Speech) in doing so. Will we have colourful personalities involved with us that occasionally spout controversial things that get us into trouble? Almost certainly. But it is this system of peer review that I believe will exercise a controlling force on some of the more eccentric contributions we will inevitably receive.

We all recognise that it is vitally important that we don't become a clique, a "friends of Kevin" or "friends of Noah" outfit. We need to be broad and inclusive, and give all serious contributors to this area a platform to share their work. People who we have not been able to accommodate in this first Conference should not feel at all slighted. It only increases the legitimacy of their request to receive greater prioritisation in the future. I have had people write to me asking why authors such as Darren Littlejohn don't appear among our presenters. I have no doubt that he will be warmly invited to present at future events. This diversity of approach, inviting people from many different schools and backgrounds, holds the potential for more conflict than would face a more homogenous organisation, but we are confident that by upholding Buddhist values we can sit with and explore any conflict, rather than reactively showing people the door.

The second criticism I have yet to hear, but have no doubt I will hear, is that the 'supermarket of ideas' aspect of this forum, encourages people to flit over the surface of a range of practices without committing to anything. Let's focus on a mindfulness of breathing meditation for a month, then let's drop that and check out MBRP, then replace this with a new diet and some yoga etc etc. I agree very much with the position that real spiritual progress (and I guess real recovery) requires making a commitment to a practice over a considerable period of time and going deep within that practice. However, there is great potential value from a 'supermarket of ideas'. Firstly, many of these ideas are the same ideas dressed up in different clothes, because we are touching upon profound human truths from different angles. Secondly there are quite legitimate ways one of these practices can be an adjunct to another main practice. From an AA perspective I may be a member of the AA Fellowship and am simply interested in what Buddhism has to say about Eleventh Step practices. I may have walked out of AA as an atheist, but find through some of the Buddhist Recovery literature an angle on 'Higher Power' that provides a way back into AA. Thirdly, before committing to a practice it is useful to know what practices there are. Just as if I was interested in Buddhism it might be useful to know the difference between Soto Zen and the FWBO, it is useful to survey the whole landscape before choosing an area of focus and commitment. This is an interesting discussion topic, and I am sure I have only touched the surface of the debate in these few lines.

Achievements and Problems

There have been a number of achievements that are worth noting:

We have established a legal entity into which tax deductible donations can be channelled to support work in this area. The BRN is this legal entity and the tax deductibility at the moment is for US taxpayers.

We have established an archive for the historical preservation of research and writing on the topic of Buddhism and Recovery. This time capsule can serve as a future resource for writers, researchers and artists. It is held at the University of Washington in Seattle.

If you have something you would like to contribute to the archive please mail it to:

G. Alan Marlatt, Ph.D.

Professor and Director
Addictive Behaviors Research Center, University of Washington
Dept. of Psychology, Box 351525
Seattle, WA 98195-1525, USA

We have established a website www.buddhistrecovery.org with some great resources, such as an international register of meetings, and a comprehensive collection of book reviews, links, and downloadable resources. We hope this Conference will generate additional resources. There is also the possibility in the future to become a retail channel for e-books. Many BR titles will fall out of distribution, and so making them available in soft copy would be a useful service. We have undertaken advocacy work, promoting the potential benefits of Buddhist teachings and practices to those in recovery and professionals assisting those in recovery. To this end Alan presented on our behalf in 2008 at the 5th UK/European Symposium on Addictive Disorders. We will be represented in 2010 by Jeffrey McIntyre.

We have mounted this Conference, hopefully the first of many, to foster community building and information sharing. We have been a sounding board for authors. We have circulated articles such as a book chapter to our Advisory Council for comment. There are other aspirations we have not addressed yet: (i) To conduct training workshops. Even before the Cannon Beach meeting there was interest in the organisation being a catalyst for training and development. Kevin wrote: "One thing that keeps coming up for me is the idea of helping different dharma centers to establish Buddhism/12 Steps groups. I'd like to be able to train people to lead groups, because I get so many inquiries from people about different areas where there is no group. That's one of the ideas I'd like to put on the agenda." (ii) To undertake research and provide consultation on research proposals. The research related work of the organisation would be conducted under the supervision of Alan. (iii) To establish a Treatment Center on the West Coast of the USA. There was discussion at Cannon Beach over the degree to which the proposed organisation should involve itself in bricks and mortar style projects. It was agreed we should certainly aim to create one showpiece Center that could serve as an inspiration for this community. As stated before, Noah has expressed particular interest in this.

It is now time to turn to problems. The BRN in my opinion consists of a small number of thoughtful, caring, well intentioned people, with a variety of impressive skills, but it is still at a very rudimentary stage in terms of its organisational development. Its resources are meagre. It is likely that the organisation will only have a few hundred dollars in its bank account after the Conference. The Conference itself has been organised mainly through emails and phone Conferencing, neither of which are ideal replacements for face to face communication. This necessary but dysfunctional situation has generated some stress. The organisation needs an injection of more central administrative support, as well as people who are prepared to act as catalysts at a local level.

An Invitation

It is important to end this essay with an invitation for you to participate in the further development of the BRN. I would like to state emphatically that there is no 'Founder' of the BRN, there are only Co-Founders. All who have participated in its creation to this point, and all who have become Charter Members are Co-Founders. I will be stepping down as Chairman at the conclusion of the Conference, to 'get out of the way' of the organisation, and let it become what it will become. I will stay on as an enthusiastic Board member and Australian representative. So, at the time of writing, even the Chair role is vacant. The Sunday morning session of the Conference is an opportunity for us to touch base on the organisation itself, where it should be focusing its energies, how you might get involved, how we might tap into further support.

It has been an enormous privilege to have been involved with the organisation to this point, and the privilege comes principally from the people I have met, and the wonderful spirit they have brought to their work. I will close with an example from an email that I once received from our webmaster Dridhamati (who I should note isn't in recovery):

"It is I who is indebted to the BRN for providing me with this opportunity to put my abilities to 'good use'. An Australian Indigenous woman (Lisa Watson) once said: 'If you have come to help me, you're wasting your time. But if you have come because you believe your liberation is bound up with mine, then let's work together.'"

So let's work together, for our own benefit, and the benefit of others. And let's have a great Conference! The intersection of Buddhism and recovery is a fascinating place to be.

I look forward to catching up with you over the coming days.

Warmest wishes,

Paul

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How the 12 Steps Got to Santikaro



Santikaro's insights into this field have tremendously impressed Directors of the Network, and we have invited him to pen a few words of introduction to his Conference talks...

“My introduction to the 12 steps was a Fulbright scholar doing research in Thailand, who kept coming to retreats at Suan Mokkh and invited me for pizza lunches in Bangkok. As we became friends, this extremely open, unobtrusive, and lovable alcoholic – many years sober – began telling me about the 12 steps and the place of AA in salvaging a life that had much confusion and suffering, and much love and promise. He also sought the support of Buddhism and meditation both for working the steps and for his environmental work, which first challenged me to think about Buddhism in terms of addiction and recovery. I’m saddened by his recent death and dedicate my talk to him.

Then there was the Irishman who kicked heroin by having us quarantine him in a small room within a largely empty dormitory after he realized that going through withdrawal wasn’t the best time to learn meditation on his first ten day retreat. The other inhabitant of the building was a monk who checked in on him hourly; others, such as myself, helped out in various ways. I’ve heard from him a few times in the subsequent two decades: he’s stayed clean, has done well, and still practices Buddhism.

On returning to the USA in 2000, my education with the 12 steps really began. I kept running into friends of Bill who also became my friends, especially three who are now close and, except for one major relapse, sober and clean. These three visited me often in the Thai temple where I lived in 2003 and visited often the preceding years. Through regular conversations we discussed meditation in regard to step eleven and questions like “What is higher power in Buddhism?” and “How can the noble eightfold path relate to the 12 steps?”

Out of these conversations – which continued as I moved out of the temple, founded Liberation Park, and retired from the monkhood in 2004 – came a series of meetings at which I shared Buddhist reflections on the 12 steps and heard learned commentary on the value and practicality of my offerings. The practical experience of people with a couple hundred years of sobriety corrected, refined, and deepened the educated, empathetic guesses of my talks. NA, OA, and Al-Anon also came into the mix, as well as folks without current 12 step programs. This has been one of my most inspiring experiences of “interfaith dialogue.”

The flow of causes and conditions are coming full circle as 12 steppers in Bangkok have also become friends. Because of the 12 step talks on our website – I’m amazed by the appreciative response; after all, I don’t know the 12 steps intimately like so many do

– they contacted me and initiated informal conversations during my annual trip to Siam. Last year, they asked me to speak with recovery professionals and Thai alcoholics – some of them poor, upcountry, and just sober – to help sort through cultural and language barriers. That went so well that I’ll be doing more this November. The interest in a Buddhist friendly approach to the steps is strong. For me personally, this is a wonderful opportunity to repay a culture and society that has given me so much, including my primary education in Buddha-Dhamma. Now, one of the ways I’m allowed to repay some of my debt is in supporting 12 step and other recovery work there. This was completely unexpected. It’s gladdening, too, that something from the USA is doing good there.

One of the many things Buddhist practitioners – especially the upper-middle way types – can learn from 12 step programs involves the moral inventory. How many of us ever engage in a “searching and fearless” ethical self-inquiry? Isn’t it easy, sometimes, to mollify ones conscience with notions of being a meditator? Doesn’t our educated ethical relativism let us off the hook far too easily about how we treat others? I’ve learned that the 12 steps can help us face the demons that still haunt us all and that we too often become. Buddhism remains my primary path but I understand it more richly with the help of my 12 step friends.

Santikaro
Norwalk, WI
Sunday 30 August 2009

Santikaro ‘s Abstract for his Keynote address”Addiction to Self”

Of all the things we use and abuse to numb, escape, and buffer our fears, hurts, shame, and other sufferings, self is the most basic and central. Born from ignorance and craving, producing identity and further becoming, clinging to me and mine holds the tangles of suffering together. This talk will reflect on how these core Buddhist teachings are relevant to understanding other modes of addiction and how teaching on letting go may help us understand the path of recovery. Ironically, the self we grasp at is conceptual and illusory. From this perspective, recovery, ultimately, is the same as liberation.

Vince Cullen and the Thamkrabok Monastery in Thailand

Vince Cullen contacted us in June with a short email saying that he had been associated with the Thamkrabok Monastery of Thailand for over 10 years, and the Abbot had granted permission for him to present at the Conference, on the ‘Thamkrabok approach to detox and recovery’. ‘Thamkrabok monks take a number of extra vows following ordination including one not to use any form of transportation. This is part of the Sajja practice of setting and holding boundaries. Therefore, no one currently in robes can realistically travel beyond Thailand that is why I have been asked to represent Thamkrabok at the inaugural Conference’

Unfortunately by June we had already closed our Conference program, and there weren't any available places in the agenda. But we were fascinated about his experiences and invited him to pen a few words for this publication. Since then he has become a Charter Member of the Network, and is flying in for the Conference, and so you should be able to meet him. He has asked us to emphasise that Thamkrabok gives its services for free. Addicts must pay for their own food (approx. US\$6 per day) but otherwise there are no charges or fees. The monastery welcomes donations but these are entirely optional. Here are a few excerpts from his communications with us:

On the components of their treatment program

“The original treatment process was devised by the 1st Abbot, Luangpor Chamroon and his aunt Mian (reverently known as Luangpor Yaai). The program developed over many years since the first addict was treated in 1959 into a highly effective systematic regime. There are perhaps five main identifiable elements of the program that work on two complementary levels: the spiritual and the physical. These elements are, in no particular order -

Firstly, the location and relative isolation of the monastery, in conjunction with the isolation of the addict from their usual environment. Once accepted for treatment, addicts must hand over all of their belongings and exchange their clothes for a uniform of red T-shirt and loose trousers. Thamkrabok allows only one chance at detox and many addicts perceive this as being their last chance. Treatment at Thamkrabok Monastery is not only a unique experience, it's also an unrepeatable one. As Phra Hans once said “no second chances at detox are possible. Thamkrabok is not a clinic with a revolving door”.

Secondly, the vow and the mantra. Sajja is a Pali word found in Buddhist texts which has the broad meaning of embracing truth, loyalty, purity and honesty. As well as Sajja in this broader sense, the Thamkrabok community use individual Sajjas or vows, not only as a key component of the detox treatment but also in their day-to-day approach to Buddhist practice. It does not matter whether you take a Sajja not to use drugs for life, or a Sajja not to be angry for 7 hours. What is important is to see this commitment through to the end.

The Sajja that is taken not to use drugs is considered to be the most important part of the detox and recovery process. Luangpor Boonsong Thanacharo, the 3rd Abbot, sug

gests that this Sajja is 80 percent of the treatment. The ritual drug and alcohol Sajjas are presided over by senior monks who recite the words of the vow and the addict repeats the words, line by line, as best they can. Perhaps one of the most important reasons for taking this vow in the presence of a 'master', or senior monk in this case, is that it brings a greater sense of commitment. It should reinforce your own conscience and give a sense of personal obligation.

After 5-days of treatment, addicts may request a personal Sajja to help with their recovery. This may be as simple as "I will honour my parents" and even be time-limited. At the same time as taking this personal Sajja, the addict is given a unique mantra known only to themselves to use as an object of meditation, as a blessing for food and most importantly to use in times of high stress or temptation.

At one time, the monastery treated as many as 500 addicts at a time. Nowadays, it is more likely to be a couple of dozen Thai addicts and up to 10 or 12 foreign addicts at any one time. Even so, there is usually a lot of support from addicts who have already been through the detox. Everyone is treated the same regardless of their social status outside of Thamkrabok. When the British pop-singer Pete Doherty attended Thamkrabok the Monastery issued a statement: "Here all the patients wear red; each patient is a star in his struggle, and each star is just a patient... Some of them make it, some of them don't". So the third critical success factor is peer support.

The fourth factor of success is meditation: not necessarily in the traditional Buddhist sense, but in just allowing time and space for the addict to think with a clear head. Addicts in treatment sweep up leaves from around the monastery twice a day, and some, but not all, see and appreciate this as a type of work meditation. There is a loose program of sitting and walking meditation for the addicts but it is currently suffering due to a lack of English speaking monks following the recent death of the multilingual Phra Hans. Nonetheless, a lot of addicts are still leaving Thamkrabok with the rudimentary beginnings of meditation practice.

The 1st Abbot, Luangpor Chamroon developed his own 12 meditations that he thought would give focus to the addict on his personal situation and his way forward.

Lastly, that infamous aspect of the Thamkrabok program that most people know about; you know what they say, that monastery in Thailand – the one where they make you vomit. Well, that may be so but there is a lot more to this purging than just emptying the stomach. The herbal 'medicine' was developed over a number of years. It is said that the recipe of 109 natural ingredients is known only to the current Abbot and the Herbalist monk. The concoction is emetic, often producing "projectile vomiting". This specific part of the treatment has many important components; for example the ritual dispensing of the dark-brown liquid, the real and symbolic cleansing, the physical effect in purging

toxins from the body and the resulting physical weakness. In addition to the emetic detox mixture, the addicts are dispensed purgative herbal pills and encouraged to drink a herbal tea, particularly before and during the daily visits to one of the herbal steam saunas. Make no mistake; this is a very real and very rapid detox.

I can't stress enough the importance of being straight and honest with potential detoxees... Thamkrabok is not a miracle cure. It is better likened to cold-turkey in a hot-climate; it's uncomfortable and it's tough. It is certainly not "Junkies in Sunglasses and Deckchairs".

On treatment at Thamkrabok being sometimes described as a hero's journey

This comparison was first made by Thomas Schreiber at the end of the nineties, who wrote his degree thesis on the drug treatment program at Thamkrabok. Thomas took his research seriously to the point of ordaining as a Thamkrabok monk. In his thesis, Thomas likens the addicts 'whole' experience of Thamkrabok to the archetypal Hero or Initiatory Journey as described by Joseph Campbell. The Journey of the Hero commonly has three steps:

- (1) A Separation from home and family, and all that is familiar.
- (2) A sometimes frightening, difficult, but exhilarating journey, helped along by unexpected hospitality from strangers and help from mystical allies. So you face your vulnerability and break out of many youthful fears and neuroses.
- (3) Finally, a return home: the traveller apparently the same person, but forever changed.

Phra Hans once commented " Don't forget one thing: the hero is not made in those proud hours after victory, but in those long, desperate and hellish hours while he passes through darkness without giving up!"

On establishing retreats outside Thailand

"Looking to the future, if time and money were no problem, I would like to establish a Buddhist Rehabilitation Centre somewhere in Europe. Effectively a safe house based on the structured framework of The Barn Rural Buddhist Retreat in Devon, England, but with aspects and influences of Thamkrabok included. Combining working on the land (primarily growing food), meditation, Thamkrabok Sajja and the Five Precepts as the basis for a happy and healthy drug and alcohol free community.

On another front, I have often thought of how the critical success factors of the Thamkrabok treatment programme might be applied to drug and alcohol treatment programs on Native Indian Reservations in the United States. This might not be as crazy as it sounds as there are a lot of similarities between the Thamkrabok regime and Native American cultures; location and isolation (Sacred Places), ritual, herbal medicines, sweat lodges and chanting. I would like to explore this possibility if there were enough interest within the Native communities."

“This year, being mindful of the lack of support at home for recovering addicts, I arranged a week long retreat at The Barn in Devon, exclusively for ex-Thamkrabokers. The 3rd Abbot of Thamkrabok Monastery, Luangpor Boonsong, gave permission for me to distribute and use the Thamkrabok Laypeople’s Chanting Book during the retreat and one of the Thamkrabok nuns, Mae Chee Rambahi, kindly recorded the chants which I transferred to CD. Martine Batchelor, author of Let Go: A Buddhist Guide to Breaking Free of Habits joined the retreat from Tuesday until Friday. Although, Martine has a very busy teaching schedule she very generously travelled from her home in France to help with talks, group discussions, personal interviews and guided meditation. Disappointingly, not enough ex-Thamkrabokers signed up for the retreat to make it viable so it was opened up to the general public and was oversubscribed in a very short time. This has not put me off arranging future retreats for ex-Thamkrabokers so I’ll see what I can set up for next year.

I try to visit Thamkrabok at least once every year. I look forward to the steam baths, the evening chanting, maybe a Dhamma lesson and some formal meditation practice; even a dose or two of the herbal medicine to ‘renew’ my Sajja in one of the most exclusive health spa’s in the world. Not everyone gets the chance to go to Thamkrabok you know... and those of us that do, I’m sure, consider ourselves very fortunate.

International Expansion of the Buddhist Recovery Network

The United Kingdom

Do you have links to the UK? If you are interested in developing the ideas proposed at this conference by helping to create a regional Buddhist Recovery Network movement in the UK, we want to hear from you.

As a first step, an electronic mailing list has been set up to promote discussion and sharing of ideas. If you want to subscribe to this mailing list, please visit: <http://buddhistrecovery.org.uk> or email devin@zendesigns.org

Enjoy the conference! Angyu Devin Ashwood

Australia

Paul Saintilan (the Interim Chair of the Network) is based in Sydney, Australia, and is interested in establishing an Australian chapter of the Buddhist Recovery Network. Please contact him via paul@buddhistrecovery.org if you are interested in becoming involved.

Miya Ando

We are very privileged that Buddhist artist Miya Ando, who works on steel canvases has unveiled a new commission for *Against the Stream* timed to coincide with the Conference.

California/ New York based artist Miya Ando has been creating works on steel canvases for the past eleven years. Utilizing a technique honed over the past decade, Ando is able to tint, polish, refine and ultimately create layered depth into a flat metal plane. Representing physical, emotional and spiritual landscapes, the elements of Ando's compositions are akin to the Meditation Center's.

A practicing Buddhist herself, Ando's art is both meditative and a tribute to honoring, respecting and nourishing. Ando's commission for *Against the Stream* Buddhist Meditation Society consists of a grid of eight steel square canvases measuring four feet each. The configuration is a metaphor for the Dharma Wheel and the 8-fold path. The surface of the squares' metal material reflects this special organization's powerful, sincere and inspiring integrity. The art focuses on the pure intentions of its setting.

Ando writes: "For more than a decade, I have been working with steel canvas and metal finishing techniques to create quiet, abstract, meditative environments. Ultimately I am interested in the study of subtraction to the point of purity, simplicity and refinement.

I am Japanese and Russian, raised bilingually and in two distinct cultures—a Buddhist temple in Japan and a mountainous region of Northern California. I am a descendant of Bizen swordmaker Ando Yoshiro Masakatsu and was raised among swordsmiths-turned Buddhist priests. My spiritual, familial, and academic experiences deeply inform every aspect of my work.

My reasons for working with steel are multifold. It is dynamic, having the ability to simultaneously convey strength and permanence while remaining delicate, soft, fragile, luminous and ethereal. Metaphorically, steel's physicality can evoke steadfast truths, steel's reflective surface gives it an elusive quality that I utilize to invoke ideas about universality and evanescence —the transitory and ephemeral qualities of nature, quietude, and the underlying impermanence of all things.

Metal canvases provide me with an understated palate of luminous greys. I work with a number of metal finishing techniques including patinas, pigments, solvents, and other chemicals that affect the color of the steel. I etch with acid, heat with a torch, and oxidize the surface. I grind, polish, burnish, and hand-sand. I apply multiple coats of lacquer and utilize automotive finishes. I consider my work a meditative practice, a way to lose oneself in an activity through concentration via the total absorption of the mind and body on a singular task.

Recently my work has combined 2D and 3D pieces into installations of transcendent minimal spaces and environments. These contemplative, luminous voids are at once empty and serene, while also alive, filled with potential and possibility. In these new installations, I invite the viewer into a meditative space, and it is my hope that these spaces inspire introspection, reflection and solace. My intention is to put forth quiet environments which come from a place of sincerity and compassion."

Miya Ando's website is at www.miyaando.com

AGAINST THE STREAM BUDDHIST MEDITATION SOCIETY



The Venues:

Against the Stream Buddhist Meditation Society

4300 Melrose Avenue,
Los Angeles, CA 90029, USA
Phone: 323.665.4300
Email: service@againstthestream.org
Website: www.againstthestream.org

Against the Stream Buddhist Meditation Society was founded by Noah Levine, author of *Dharma Punx* and *Against the Stream*, to make the teachings of the Buddha available to all who are interested. Its mission is to create and sustain communities of healthy, accountable, wise and compassionate people from every walk of life. ATS welcomes people from all racial, economic, sexual, social, political and religious backgrounds and preferences and believes that the path of awakening is attainable by all and should be available to all. It provides a meditation and Buddhism Center for a largely under-served population. The Society received 501(c)(3) status from the IRS and is tax-exempt, non-profit corporation.

ATS opened the doors of its Center in February 2008 and has offered several weekly classes, day-long and year-long programs, class series and special events. And true to its mission, no one was ever turned away because of lack of funds. Another part of its core mission is a commitment to social action, and Sangha members have begun to feed the homeless, work with gang and prison populations and those in recovery centers. ATS is also laying the foundation for the future by instituting Teacher and Facilitator training programs. Against the Stream plans to remain at the forefront of American Buddhism, a tradition influenced and inspired by the wisdom and compassion teachings of all the Buddhist traditions.

Trinity Church

4274 Melrose Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90029, USA
trinityla.org

Some events, including lunch, will be held across from the ATS Center at Trinity Church, a diverse, inclusive, and lively parish of the Episcopal Church.



BUDDHIST RECOVERY

