



RECOVERY DHARMA MEETING FORMAT

This script is meant to serve as a suggested template. Individual meetings may choose to edit it or use other formats to meet the needs of their sangha.

Before the meeting, the facilitator may find volunteers to read the following:

- *The Practice*
- *The Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path*
- *The Dedication of Merit*

OPENING

Welcome to this meeting of _____. We are gathered to explore a Buddhist-inspired approach to recovery from addiction of all kinds. We are peer-led and do not follow any one leader or teacher, but trust in the wisdom of the Buddha (the potential for our own awakening), the Dharma (the truth, or the teachings), and the Sangha (our community of wise friends on this path). This is a program of empowerment and doesn't ask us to believe in anything other than our own potential to change and heal. We have found a guide for our recovery in the Buddhist teachings of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, and we invite you to investigate these practices and principles as tools for your own path of liberation from the suffering of addiction. We understand that this is not the only path to recovery and many may choose to combine these practices with other recovery programs.

My name is _____ and I am the facilitator of this meeting. I am not a Buddhist teacher, nor do I have any particular authority in this meeting. I am a member of this community and have volunteered to help lead our meeting and discussion today.

THE PRACTICE

I have asked _____ to read The Practice:

Renunciation: We understand *addiction* to describe the overwhelming craving and compulsive use of substances or behaviors in order to escape present-time reality, either by clinging to pleasure or running from pain. We commit to the intention of abstinence from alcohol and other addictive substances. For those of us recovering from process addictions, particularly those for which complete abstinence is not possible, we also identify and commit to wise boundaries around our harmful behaviors, preferably with the help of a mentor or therapeutic professional.

Meditation: We commit to the intention of developing a daily meditation practice. We use meditation as a tool to investigate our actions, intentions, and reactivity. Meditation is a personal practice, and we commit to finding a balanced effort toward this and other healthy practices that are appropriate to our own journey on the path.

Meetings: We attend recovery meetings whenever possible, in person and/or online. Some may wish to be part of other recovery fellowships and Buddhist communities. In early recovery, it is recommended to attend a recovery meeting as often as possible. For many that may mean every day. We also commit to becoming an active part of the community, offering our own experiences and service wherever possible.

The Path: We commit to deepening our understanding of the Four Noble Truths and to practicing the Eightfold Path in our daily lives.

Inquiry and Investigation: We explore the Four Noble Truths as they relate to our addictive behavior through writing and sharing in-depth, detailed Inquiries. These can be worked with the guidance of a mentor, in partnership with a trusted friend, or with a group. As we complete our written Inquiries, we undertake to hold ourselves accountable and take direct responsibility for our actions, which includes making amends for the harm we have caused in our past. .

Sangha, Wise Friends, Mentors: We cultivate relationships within a recovery community, to both support our own recovery and support the recovery of others. After we have completed significant work on our Inquiries, established a meditation practice, and achieved renunciation from our addictive behaviors, we can then become mentors to help others on their path to liberation from addiction. Anyone with any period of time of renunciation and practice can be of service to others in their sangha. When mentors are not available, a group of wise friends can act as partners in self-inquiry and support each other's practice.

Growth: We continue our study of these Buddhist practices through reading, listening to dharma talks, visiting and becoming members of recovery and spiritual sanghas, and attending meditation or dharma retreats when we believe these practices will contribute to our understanding and wisdom. We undertake a lifelong journey of growth and awakening.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS AND EIGHTFOLD PATH

I have asked _____ to read the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path:

As people who have struggled with addiction, we are already intimately familiar with the truth of suffering. Even if we have never heard of the Buddha, at some level we already know the foundation of his teachings, which we call the Dharma: that in this life, there is suffering.

The Buddha also taught the way to free ourselves from this suffering. The heart of these teachings is the Four Noble Truths and the corresponding commitments, which are the foundation of our program.

1. There is suffering. We commit to understanding the truth of suffering.
2. There is a cause of suffering. We commit to understanding that craving leads to suffering.
3. There is an end to suffering. We commit to understanding and experiencing that less craving leads to less suffering.
4. There is a path that leads to the end of suffering. We commit to cultivating the path.

The Buddha taught that by living ethically, practicing meditation, and developing wisdom and compassion, we can end the suffering that is created by resisting, running from, and misunderstanding reality. We have found that these practices and principles can end the suffering of addiction. The Eightfold Path helps us find our way in recovery and consists of the following:

1. Wise Understanding
2. Wise Intention
3. Wise Speech
4. Wise Action
5. Wise Livelihood
6. Wise Effort
7. Wise Mindfulness
8. Wise Concentration

INTRODUCTIONS

In an effort to build community and to get to know each other, we start each meeting by introducing ourselves. There is no need to identify yourself by anything other than your name, and if you choose you can also let us know your gender pronoun. My name is ____ (and I use the pronoun ____).

MEDITATION

(The facilitator leads a Buddhist meditation of their choice.)

We will now do a guided meditation on _____. Your eyes may be closed or gently open. Meditation is a personal practice, and we encourage you to explore with a spirit of openness and curiosity. Part of what we are doing is learning to sit with discomfort, but meditation can bring up powerful emotions for some of us, and if you find that you need to “tap the brakes” during practice, you can do so in the following ways: by opening the eyes; taking a few deep slow breaths; placing a hand over your heart or belly; focusing attention on a soothing object; imagining a positive place, activity, or memory; or quietly shifting your position. Remember to be kind and gentle with yourself. It’s always okay to take care of yourself during meditation. If you need to get up during the meditation, please do so as quietly as possible, and please hold your comments and questions until after meditation.

(Meetings may be either a Literature Discussion, Topic Discussion, or other format)

LITERATURE DISCUSSION MEETING

We will now take turns reading from the book *The Dharma of Recovery* (or another Buddhist book), and then open the meeting for discussion.

TOPIC/SPEAKER DISCUSSION MEETING

_____ (*speaker*) will now speak about _____ (*a topic related to recovery and Buddhism, or their experience in addiction and recovery*), and then we will open the meeting for discussion.

GROUP SHARING

(Meetings choose whether to do tag-pass, facilitator selected, or “popcorn” style sharing)

Please limit your share to 3 to 5 minutes to ensure that everyone who wants to has a chance to speak. We ask that there is no cross-talk, meaning we do not comment on another person’s share or offer opinions or advice. We commit to making this space as safe and welcoming as possible for all members of our community. Please be wise in your speech by trying to use “I” statements and focusing your share on your own experience of addiction, recovery, Buddhist principles and practice, or tonight’s topic.

CLOSING

That is all the time we have for sharing. Thank you for being with us tonight. In order to respect each others' privacy and to create a safe environment for all who attend, please keep everything that was said in this meeting and who was here confidential. We encourage you to continue your meditation practice, your study of Buddhist principles, and to reach out to others in order to build community. Would anyone who is willing to talk with newcomers after the meeting please raise their hand?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We now pass the basket for dana, which is a Buddhist term for the practice of generosity. Please give what you can to support the meeting.

(Announcements about clean up, phone/email list, books for sale, free handouts, upcoming retreats, or other news pertaining to the group.)

RECOVERY DHARMA DEDICATION OF MERIT

(Volunteer may read, or pass out copies to read as a group. Individual meetings and sanghas may choose to write their own dedications of merit.)

Refuge does not arise in a particular place, but in the space within the goodness of our hearts. When this space is imbued with wisdom, respect, and love, we call it sangha. We hope that the pain of addiction, trauma, and feeling “apart” actually leads us back toward the heart and that we might understand compassion, wisdom, and change ever more deeply. As we have learned from practice, great pain does not erase goodness, but in fact informs it.

May we make the best use of our practice, and whatever freedom arises from our efforts here today. May this be a cause and condition for less suffering and more safety in our world.