
Buddhist Recovery : 'Sit-&-Share' Meeting

Peer led meetings -
'Leader Instructions'

www.5th-precept.org

Fifth Precept Sangha

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Acknowledgements

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

Wat Thamkrabok Tudong Sajja Practices & Contemplations :
Wat-Thamkrabok.org

Against-the-Stream Refuge Recovery Meeting format :
www.AgainstTheStream.org

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

Fifth Precept Sangha Preamble 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 [Buddhist Five 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.

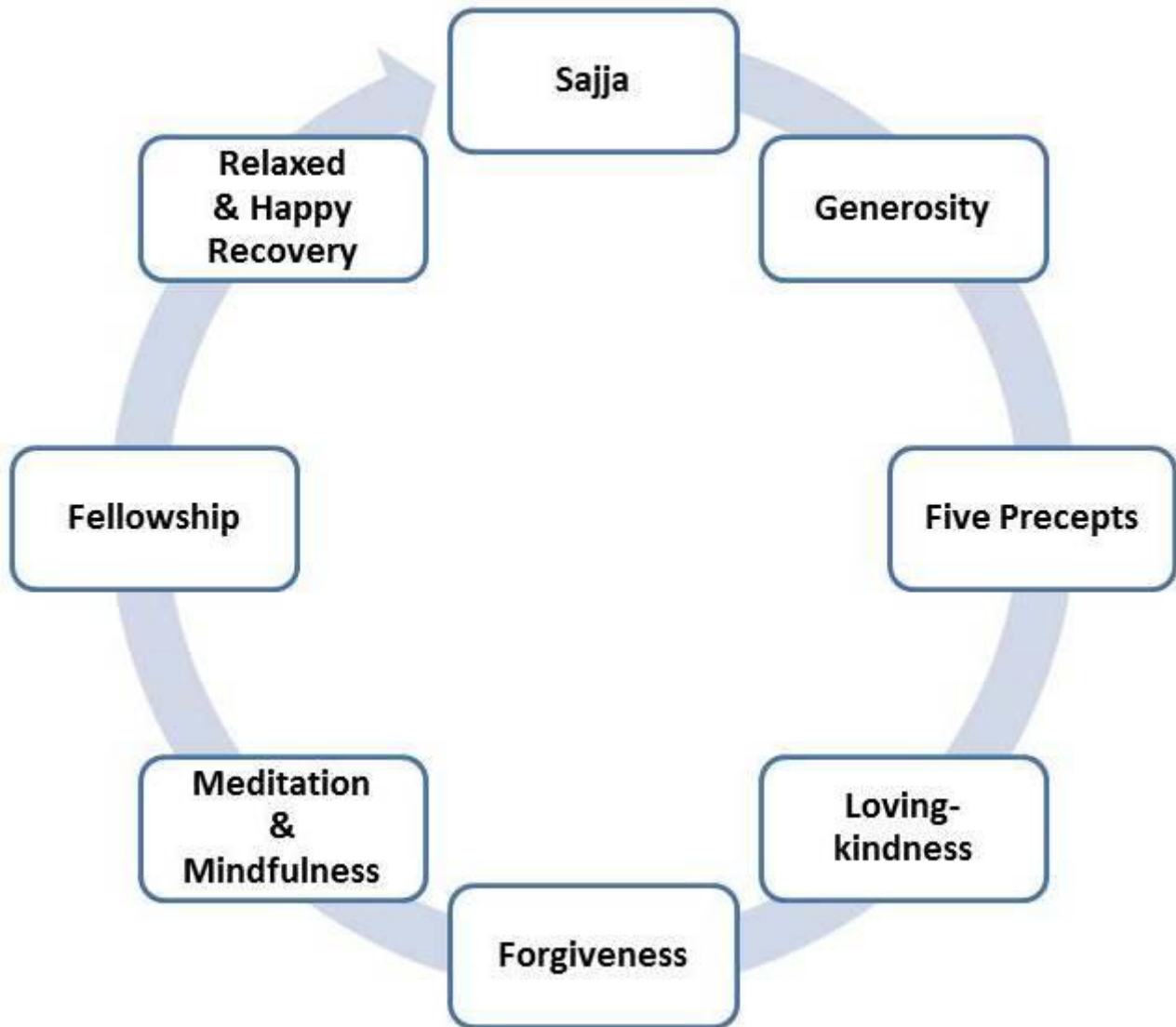
So there is much to smile about on any day of the week.

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 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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Example Sit-and-Share Meeting Format

Day & Time: Every Wednesday @ 7pm

Location: Friends Meeting House : NEWBURY

Fifth Precept Group

'Sit & Share' Meditation Meeting

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

7:00 – Read the opening aloud.

Welcome to this 'Sit & Share' meditation meeting of the Fifth Precept Buddhist Group.

This is a Peer Led group that is open to people of all backgrounds. The group is founded on the principles and practices of Truth and Truthfulness, Generosity, Harmlessness, Loving-kindness, Forgiveness, Mindfulness and Fellowship; and is grounded in the Buddhist principles of compassion and interdependence.

This meeting is open to people with any addiction and to any individuals choosing abstinence from intoxicants as their preferred lifestyle. Importantly, we abandon attachment to negative self-views by announcing ourselves by our first name only, without identifying ourselves with any addiction.

With the aspiration to build community and to get to know each other, we start each week by introducing ourselves. There is no need to identify yourself by anything other than your name. 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 need to leave the meeting, please feel free to silently leave at any time.

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 about our recovery; 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. I will then read tonight's topic for reflection and we will settle into 10-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.

Ring the bell (x1) to begin the 10-minute 'serenity' meditation.

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

- *For the next 10-minutes, you are invited to practice 'calm and pleasant abiding' in the here and now.*
- *There is nowhere to go - there is nothing to be done - there is no one to be or to become.*
- *Sit with your back straight, feet on the floor; let your eyes gently close.*
- *Take 2 or 3 deep breaths in... and long breaths out; feel the breath in the whole body.*
- *Let your face be soft and your jaw relax.*
- *Let your shoulders drop back to open up the heart area; let your arms and hands rest easily.*
- *If your mind wanders away from your breath, just make a gentle, silent, non-judgmental note of "not-breath" and return your awareness to your breathing.*
- *Our whole practice is grounded on Loving-kindness; so you are encouraged to smile inwardly and outwardly; you are encouraged to take delight in this moment – this only moment.*

7:10 – Ring the bell (x3) to end the 10-minute 'serenity' meditation.

7:10 – Read the prepared meeting topic -

(for examples see www.5th-precept.org/html/topic_basket.html)

“TOPIC.....”

[OPTIONAL : Introduce/explain why you choose this topic]

and then read this aloud:

Now we'll contemplate and reflect silently on this topic for about 10 minutes. You will then be invited to 'share' on the topic, as it relates to your aspirations, or as it relates to your resolve, or to your practice or to your experience on this path of harmlessness. If you wish to share at that time, please make me aware.

Ring the bell (x1) to begin the 10-minute topic contemplation.

Here are some guidelines:

- *Sit with your back straight, feet on the floor, eyes gently shut.*
- *Breathe naturally.*
- *From a place of non-judgmental calmness, reflect on the topic.*
- *Be gentle with yourself.*
- *If you get lost, just practice serenity breathing meditation again to become calm and focused.*
- *Befriend your practice – befriend yourself.*

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

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7:25 – Ring the bell (x3) to end the 10-minute topic meditation. Read the topic again, without commenting. Then read the following aloud:

As tonight's presenter I will share last. You are now invited to share for a few minutes your thoughts about tonight's topic. Text-book answers are not necessary for sharing, but your own experiences and understanding are most welcome. There are no wrong answers, only your personal wisdom. Would anyone like to start?

7:55 – The presenter shares.

8:00 - Close topic discussion and announce 30-minute silent [or guided] meditation:

There will now be a 30-minute silent [or guided] meditation.

8:00 – Ring the bell (x1) to begin the 30-minute [silent/guided] [serenity/insight] meditation.

8:30 – Ring the bell (x3) to end the 30-minute meditation.

8:30 – Announcements

- *Thank set up person*
- *Cleanup*
- *Telephone / email list*
- *Miscellaneous*
- *Dana for room hire*
- *Volunteer to read the Dedication of Merit*

Dedication of Merit

(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 addicts.*

*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.

[08:30 - 9:00 – Tea, Q&A and discussion, if requested.]

Fifth Precept Sangha 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 \(All or individual Precepts or Harmlessness-Blamelessness\)](#)
- [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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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** : [Making Friends with Your Demons and Hungry Ghosts: Buddhist Tools for Recovery](#) by Josh Korda (NYC) [17-minutes].
 - **Short Booklet** : [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.
- Sit-and-Share Starter Kit** : Resources for starting your own [Sit-and-Share](#) Buddhist Recovery Meeting
- **Just One More!** : Talks and guided meditations from the [Dependent Origination and Cycles of Addiction](#) retreat by Ajahn Amaro at Amaravati Monastery. [The diagrams on pages 5, 6 and 7 of the [Hungry Ghost Booklet](#) are useful when listening to these talks].
 - **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

Buddhist Recovery Network

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

- Independent Information Network: www.thamkrabok.net
- Alba-Thai Organisation (Scotland): www.alba-thai.org
- TARA Detox Organisation (England): www.tara-detox.org
- Thamkrabok Foundation (Western Australia): www.thamkrabok.org.au
- New Life Foundation (Thailand): www.newlifethaifoundation.com

Articles and information about Buddhist Precepts

Avoiding pamāda: An analysis of the Fifth Precept as Social Protection in Contemporary Contexts with reference to the early Buddhist teachings:
www.chezpaul.org.uk/buddhism/MSt_dissertation.htm

The Five 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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