

AGAINST THE STREAM

BUDDHIST MEDITATION SOCIETY



*GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT  
IN AMERICAN BUDDHISM*

UNOFFICIAL GUIDE

DHARMA • MEDITATION • ORGANIZATIONS

## WHAT IS BUDDHISM?

Buddhism is a practical and applicable humanist psychology that teaches us that we all have the power to relieve suffering through our own efforts. The core teachings of the Buddha acknowledge that by living an ethical life and training the mind in concentration and mindfulness one can see more clearly the impermanent nature of all experience. As a result, we learn to let go of the habitual reactive patterns of craving and clinging that are the root causes of our suffering. This process allows us to learn to meet the unavoidable pains in our life with compassion. The core teachings of Buddhism are the four noble truths and the eightfold path.

## WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

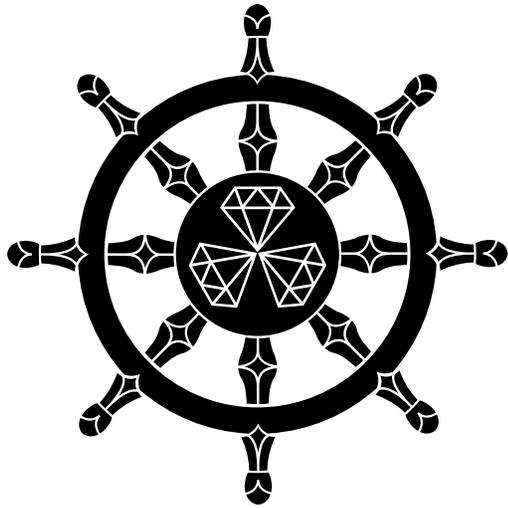
Mindfulness or present-time awareness is defined as nonjudgmental, investigative, kind and responsive awareness. This type of awareness calls for the intentional training of the mind. Our attention is naturally scattered, the mind swings from the past to the future, gets lost in our plans and memories. To be mindful of the present-time experience of thoughts, intentions, and actions we must continually train and redirect our attention back to the here and now. Training in mindfulness teaches us to redirect our attention to the body, breath, feelings, thoughts and emotions, pointing us to the truth of our own direct experience. It teaches us to see clearly and respond wisely.



## MINDFULNESS INSTRUCTIONS

Find a comfortable place to sit. Adjust your posture so that your spine is erect without being rigid or stiff. Allow your body to relax around the upright spine. Rest your hands in your lap or on your legs. Allow your eyes to gently close. Bring full attention to the physical experience of sitting still. Allow your breathing to be natural. Bringing your attention to your head and face, releasing tension as you begin to slowly scan down through the rest of the body. Feeling the rise and fall of your chest and abdomen, softening the belly as your breath in and out.

Bringing full attention to the present-time experience, acknowledging the full range of what is arising in your direct experience: thinking is happening, breathing is happening, hearing, seeing, tasting and smell are all happening, physical and emotional sensations are present within your direct experience. Allowing each experience to be as it is, allowing things to fall into the background. Take some time to allow your breathing to be at the foreground of your experience. As you become aware of your attention as it wanders off, continue to re-direct it back towards your breath. In the beginning we train the mind to come back to the breath over and over. As we improve in this skill we begin to expand the practice to include the pleasant and unpleasant feelings that arise, and the thoughts and emotions we experience; opening to the truth of our own direct experience. We start seeing clearly what is happening - learning to respond with wisdom and compassion to the circumstances we face.



## WHAT IS COMPASSION?

Compassion is a quality of the heart that enables us to care about pain and suffering. As we train in compassion practices we will gain the ability to choose how we respond to pain. Compassion is traditionally translated as “quivering of the heart” - the physical experience of being moved by pain, feeling it and caring about it. In classic Buddhist practice there are four sets of what are called “heart practices” or practices of loving-kindness. We train with the aspiration to meet all experience with a kind and friendly attitude. We train to meet our pain and suffering with compassion and forgiveness. We train to meet joy, happiness and pleasure with non-attached appreciation and to hold our lives in the experience of equanimity - acknowledging that our happiness and freedom depends on our actions, not our wishes.

## HEART PRACTICE MEDITATION INSTRUCTIONS

Find a comfortable place to sit. Adjust your posture so that your spine is erect without being rigid or stiff. Allow your body to relax around the upright spine. Rest your hands in your lap or on your legs. Allow your eyes to gently close. Bring full attention to the physical experience of sitting still. Allow your breathing to be natural. Bringing your attention to your head and face, releasing tension as you begin to slowly scan down through the body. Feeling the rise and fall of your chest and abdomen, softening the belly as your breath in and out.

After a short period of time begin to reflect on your deepest desire for happiness and freedom from suffering. Allow your heart’s truest longing for well being and truth to come into your mind. As you become aware of breathing in and out, acknowledge your wish to be free from harm, to be safe and protected, and free from danger and ill will. Slowly begin to offer yourself phrases with the intention to uncover the hearts sometimes hidden kind and caring response.

May I be happy  
May I be at ease  
May I be free from suffering  
May I be filled with kindness

## WHAT IS REFUGE RECOVERY CENTERS?

Refuge Recovery Centers is a mindfulness-based addiction treatment program that utilizes Buddhist philosophy as the cornerstone of the curriculum. Located in East Hollywood, California we provide detoxification, residential, partial hospitalization, and intensive outpatient levels of care as well as sober living. Our program guides those who struggle with addiction, trauma and co-occurring disorders to experience a practical perspective on the recovery process.

The program provides a practice-based framework grounded in Buddhist ethics and psychology. We combine Buddhist meditation practices with evidenced-based psychotherapy models by offering individuals a full range of therapeutic skills that empower and promote long-term recovery.

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IF YOU OR A LOVED ONE IS  
STRUGGLING WITH ADDICTION,  
PLEASE CONTACT US.

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For more information, please visit: [refugerecoverycenters.com](http://refugerecoverycenters.com)



## WHAT IS REFUGE RECOVERY NON-PROFIT?

Refuge Recovery is a nonprofit organization that supports the Buddhist inspired addiction treatment movement created by Noah Levine. Our mission is to build an extensive and comprehensive network of Refuge Recovery meetings, groups, programs and communities. We are committed to the ongoing support of communities that practice, educate, teach and provide Buddhist mindfulness and compassion meditation practices for anyone seeking recovery from addiction. Our current goal is to raise the funds needed to produce specialized literature, online podcasts, day-long workshops, residential retreats, regional conferences and to support building the infrastructure of the nonprofit organization.

Within its short history it has already made a noticeable impact on many individuals struggling with addiction. Both people with long-term recovery as well as those who are fresh off the streets are finding themselves turning towards the inner life as a way to understand and overcome the suffering of active addiction.

Released on June 10 2014, the book Refuge Recovery has exploded into the cultural as a verifiable and reliable program for addiction treatment. In less than two years' time we have seen the emergence of over 150 meetings in the US alone as well as international meetings over 10 countries around the globe.

For more information, please visit: [refugerecovery.org](http://refugerecovery.org)



## WHAT IS THE MIND BODY AWARENESS PROJECT (MBA)?

The mission of MBA-Project is to help youth transform harmful behavior and live meaningful lives through mindfulness meditation and emotional awareness. Founded in 2000, MBA designs, delivers and researches mindfulness and emotional literacy programs for at-risk youth. MBA also trains educators and youth service providers nationally and internationally.

The core purpose of MBA Project is to awaken the intrinsic value of youth. We accomplish this through groundbreaking mindfulness-based direct service work that empowers incarcerated and at-risk youth to overcome trauma, transform negative behaviors, and find real freedom from the inside. Our seasoned team of instructors provide concrete tools to reduce stress, impulsivity and violent behavior and increase self-esteem, self-regulation and overall well-being. Our youth learn powerful new methods of responding to the challenges they face in the present, so they can build a foundation for a healthy and fulfilling future.

MBA's services are based on the best practices in meditation, group-process modalities, and social and emotional learning models. MBA is at the cutting edge of developing evidence-based mental rehabilitation interventions in youth vernacular: training that is relevant to youth's lives. MBA also fulfills its mission through training youth service providers and conducting innovative research to advance the field. It is our experience that youth who possess more positive internal assets (including high self-esteem and self reliance, social and emotional competencies, and positive values) are more likely to lead successful lives as adults in their communities.

For more information, please visit: [mbaproject.org](http://mbaproject.org)



## WHAT IS AGAINST THE STREAM?

Against the Stream Buddhist Meditation Society is a grassroots movement within American Buddhism, rooted in the Theravadan and Insight tradition. We are inspired by the wisdom and compassion teachings found in all Buddhist traditions. Our movement and meditation centers were founded by Noah Levine with the intention to make the teachings of the Buddha available to all who are interested. We wish to create and sustain communities of healthy, accountable, wise and compassionate people from every walk of life. We welcome people from all racial, economic, sexual, social, political and religious backgrounds and believe that the path of awakening is attainable by all and should be available to all. We strive to create a safe environment for all who come to practice. We have meditation centers in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Nashville TN and affiliate groups located around the country.

*The Buddha said his path to awakening was one of rebellion - a subversive path that is against greed, against hatred, and against delusion. It is a path of radical, engaged transformation, a path of finding freedom and spending the rest of our lives giving it away. It is a path that goes Against the Stream.*

- Noah Levine

For more information, please visit: [againstthestream.org](http://againstthestream.org)



## WHO IS NOAH LEVINE?

Noah Levine, author of *Dharma Punx*, *Against The Stream*, *The Heart of the Revolution* and *Refuge Recovery*, is a Buddhist teacher, author and counselor. He has created a Buddhist approach to addiction recovery called *Refuge Recovery*, that includes peer lead meetings as well as a professional treatment center. He is also the founding teacher of *Against the Stream Buddhist Meditation Society*, with centers in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Nashville and over 20 affiliated groups around North America. He teaches meditation classes, workshops and retreats internationally. Noah holds a Masters degree in counseling psychology and lives in Los Angeles.

# • CORE BUDDHISM •

## THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

1. Suffering exists
2. The cause is repetitive craving
3. The end is possible
4. The path to the end is available

## THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

1. Wise understanding
2. Wise intention
3. Wise speech
4. Wise action
5. Wise livelihood
6. Wise effort
7. Wise mindfulness
8. Wise concentration

"I TEACH ONE THING AND ONE THING ONLY:  
SUFFERING AND THE END OF SUFFERING"

- BUDDHA

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AGAINST THE STREAM AND/OR REFUGE RECOVERY