

# REFUGE RECOVERY STARTING A MEETING

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**If there are no Refuge Recovery meetings currently in your area, we encourage you to start one. Few undertakings have more profound potential for supporting your own recovery, deepening your practice, and helping others than forming a community and providing a place to practice together. This is a big commitment that will demand more time and energy than you might expect, and we will do our best to support you. We encourage you to find a few like-minded friends to help you, if possible. It is also a good idea to seek out others in your area who will be willing to participate, even before your meeting is announced.**

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## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Before you begin, it will be helpful to tap into the combined experience of the millions who have formed similar peer-led recovery groups (and perhaps you yourself have some experience in other recovery communities). You can benefit greatly from researching and becoming familiar with how other peer-led recovery programs operate and conduct themselves. You can also find and connect with other Refuge Recovery groups online (via Facebook, etc.). The Refuge Recovery book contains a suggested meeting format and structure, and has all you need to start and maintain a meeting. Some groups have also developed their own formats to best suit the needs of their communities; you may choose to explore for yourself what meeting formats will be best for your area.

If there are other Refuge Recovery meetings within traveling distance, it is a good idea to attend some of those meetings and reach out to those groups for support in your efforts. If you are in a 12-step recovery program, you might consider posting on a clubhouse bulletin board that you are looking for others to help start a Refuge Recovery meeting. Our members have also found social media—Facebook in particular—to be extremely useful in spreading the word about new meetings.

## WHERE TO MEET

A nice, comfortable, safe, and easy-to-find location that is free of charge is ideal. There is a good chance you won't find a place that meets all of your criteria, so just find one that best serves your needs.

Buddhist meditation centers, members' offices (after hours), yoga studios, libraries, community centers, churches, hospitals, treatment centers, and even 12-step recovery clubhouses, are just some of the places where our members have successfully established Refuge Recovery meetings.



## ANNOUNCING YOUR MEETING

When it is time to announce your meeting, be sure to contact [refugerecovery.org](http://refugerecovery.org) and let them know your meeting time and location. Many groups also create flyers or leaflets and post them at 12-step clubhouses, treatment and counseling centers, Buddhist temples, monasteries, meditation centers, coffee houses, and the like. Some have found that Buddhist organizations are more than happy to distribute information about Refuge Recovery groups to those on their mailing lists.

## MEETING FORMAT

A sample meeting format is provided in an appendix to the Refuge Recovery book. We also encourage you to innovate and explore alternative formats for your group, and to include all members in this vital process.

## GOVERNING THE GROUP

Refuge Recovery is, like most peer-led groups, governed democratically. Minor decisions are usually made with a simple majority vote. For more important decisions, consensus is often sought. Thus, for decisions about finances or changes to the meeting format, groups may seek what they call "substantial unanimity"—that is, even when the decisions aren't unanimous, they are at least very close to it. This allows groups, to the greatest extent possible, to avoid controversy and division.

## THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

The role of those who facilitate Refuge Recovery meetings is non-authoritative. They do not act in the capacity of empowered Buddhist teachers. They simply facilitate and guide the running of the meeting. Group facilitators are peers in the community who generously offer their time and energy to enable meetings to take place. Facilitators should lead a group for no

longer than six months at a time, at which point the community should find others to take on those roles and responsibilities. This will prevent any one individual from becoming the de facto "leader" of the community, while also providing others the opportunity to be of service.

## DĀNA

Refuge Recovery observes the Buddhist tradition of dāna, or generosity, by collecting monetary offerings to help support the local Sangha, the larger Dharma community, and your own practice. Refuge Recovery is a nonprofit organization. It is our mission to build an extensive and comprehensive network of Refuge Recovery groups, meetings, and communities that will practice, educate, and provide Buddhist teachings and meditations for anyone seeking recovery from addiction. Our current goal is to raise the funds needed to produce specialized literature and resources for the greater community, and to support the infrastructure of the Refuge Recovery nonprofit organization, which supports our worldwide community. Individual and group contributions to the Refuge Recovery nonprofit organization can be made online at <http://www.refugerecovery.org/donate>.

## 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 Buddhism are the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, in which the practices of mindfulness and compassion play key roles.

## WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is defined as present-time, nonjudgmental, investigative, kind and responsive awareness. To be mindful of the present-time experience of our thoughts, intentions, and actions, we must continually train and redirect our attention to the here and now. Mindfulness teaches us to see clearly and respond wisely.

### The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness of body/breath
2. Mindfulness of feeling tone
3. Mindfulness of mind states
4. Mindfulness of mind objects/truth

## 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 gain the ability to choose how we respond to pain. We aspire to meet all experience with a kind and friendly attitude. We learn to meet our pain and suffering with compassion and forgiveness. We begin to meet happiness and pleasure with

non-attached appreciation. We come to hold all our experiences with equanimity, acknowledging that our happiness and freedom is dependent on our actions, not on our wishes.

## FOUR HEART PRACTICES

1. Kindness
2. Compassion/Forgiveness
3. Appreciation
4. Equanimity

Refuge Recovery follows the traditional Buddhist model of the Four Noble Truths:

### 1. Addiction creates suffering

"We take stock of all the suffering we have experienced and caused as addicts"

### 2. The cause of addiction is repetitive craving

"We investigate the causes and conditions that lead to addiction and begin the process of letting go"

### 3. Recovery is possible

"We come to understand that recovery is possible and take refuge in the path that leads to the end of addiction"

### 4. The path to recovery is available

"We engage in the process of the Eightfold Path that leads to recovery"

## The Eightfold Path

1. Wise Understanding
2. Wise Intention
3. Wise Communication / Community
4. Wise Action
5. Wise Livelihood / Service
6. Wise Effort
7. Wise Mindfulness
8. Wise Concentration

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