

# recovery dharma

## Frequently Asked Questions



## What is Recovery Dharma?

Recovery Dharma is a peer-led, Buddhist-inspired program for those seeking freedom from addiction of all kinds. It offers a path based on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, using meditation, inquiry, community, and ethical living as tools for recovery. There are no requirements for membership and there are no teachers or authorities—only a supportive fellowship of individuals walking the path together. Recovery Dharma meetings provide a space to share experiences, support one another, and deepen meditation practice in a way that is inclusive and accessible.

## Who is Welcome?

Recovery Dharma welcomes anyone seeking freedom from addiction, whether it involves struggles with substances like alcohol and drugs, or process addictions—patterns of compulsive behavior that create suffering, such as overeating or food restriction, codependency, excessive worry, compulsive lying, video gaming, sex, love, pornography addiction, and shopping—just to name a few. For those recovering from substance addiction, the program is structured around a commitment to the intention of abstinence. For those with process addictions, the focus is on developing wise boundaries around our behaviors.

We welcome individuals from other recovery programs who are looking to build on their existing recovery work, as well as those who have not found a good fit in other fellowships or approaches. While Recovery Dharma is not based on the 12 Steps, it is compatible with them for those who find the 12-Step approach beneficial. Our program offers a supportive, non-hierarchical space for anyone seeking freedom from addiction.

## What is “the program” of recovery?

Recovery Dharma is based on a Buddhist-inspired path to recovery, using the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path as guiding principles:

**The Four Noble Truths** provide the foundation of the 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 a way of ending suffering.* We commit to understanding and experiencing that less craving leads to less suffering.

4. *There is a path that lead to ending suffering.* We commit to cultivating the path.

**The Eightfold Path** serves as the framework for recovery, providing ethical and practical tools for transformation:

- *Wise Understanding* – Seeing clearly how addiction and suffering are connected.
- *Wise Intention* – Committing to recovery with honesty, compassion, and non-harming.
- *Wise Speech* – Practicing truthfulness, kindness, and mindful communication.
- *Wise Action* – Living ethically by avoiding harm to oneself and others.
- *Wise Livelihood* – Engaging in work and activities that support recovery and do not contribute to harm.
- *Wise Effort* – Cultivating skillful thoughts, emotions, and actions that lead to freedom.
- *Wise Mindfulness* – Developing awareness of thoughts, feelings, and experiences without judgment.
- *Wise Concentration* – Strengthening focus and presence through meditation.

This program is not about adopting religious beliefs but about applying these timeless principles to our recovery and daily life. Through meditation, inquiry, and peer support, we learn to let go of the patterns that have caused suffering and build a life rooted in wisdom, compassion, and freedom.

### **What does it mean to “take refuge?”**

At the beginning of our meetings, we recite a reading about “taking refuge in the Three Jewels of Buddhism—the *Buddha*, the *Dharma*, and the *Sangha*.” Taking refuge is an act of both inspiration and desperation, a

way of seeking safety from suffering while also opening ourselves to the joy of a new way of living.

- *The Buddha* – Taking refuge in the Buddha does not mean worshiping him as a deity but following his example. The Buddha was an ordinary person who awakened to the truth of suffering and the path to liberation. By taking refuge in the Buddha, we affirm that we, too, have the capacity for awakening and freedom from addiction.
- *The Dharma* – The Dharma refers to the teachings and practices that lead to wisdom, clarity, and liberation. In recovery, this means using the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path as tools to break free from the suffering caused by addiction and unskillful habits.
- *The Sangha* – The Sangha is the community of people walking this path together. Taking refuge in the Sangha means recognizing that we are not alone in our struggles. We find strength and support in others who share our commitment to recovery and a life of integrity.

Taking refuge is not about blind faith or rigid doctrine—it is a conscious decision to turn toward a path of healing, growth, and freedom. It is a commitment to seeking safety not in substances or destructive behaviors, but in wisdom, ethical living, and the support of a compassionate community.

## **What's in the book?**

The Recovery Dharma book serves as a guide to understanding addiction and applying Buddhist principles to recovery. It explores the habitual patterns of craving and attachment that fuel addiction and presents the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path as a framework for breaking free.

It includes inquiry questions that help individuals engage more deeply with the program, reflect on their experiences, and gain insight into their addictive habits and the path to freedom. These questions encourage self-exploration and can be used individually, one-on-one with a friend, or in group discussions.

The book also features personal stories from members with diverse backgrounds, offering real-world perspectives on how these teachings can be applied in everyday life and how they have helped people find freedom from addiction.

## **What about meditation?**

Meditation is a practice, not a performance—no one starts out “good” at it. The mind will wander, and that’s okay. The key is to gently bring your attention back, again and again. Different people prefer different approaches.

While we often practice silent or guided meditation in meetings, some members find walking meditation, podcasts, meditation apps, sound healing, or chanting more helpful. Explore with an open mind and a gentle sense of curiosity—over time, meditation can go from feeling intimidating to being something that is genuinely enjoyable and a cornerstone in your recovery!

## **Mentorship in Recovery Dharma**

### **What is a Mentor in Recovery Dharma?**

A mentor in Recovery Dharma is a peer offering mutual support, not a teacher or authority figure. This relationship is similar to the 12-step concept of a sponsor in that it provides one-on-one guidance, particularly for those working through the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path as a means of recovery. However, unlike the sponsor model, Recovery Dharma mentorship is non-hierarchical—those working together meet as equals, supporting each other on the path without a sense of seniority or authority. Some people prefer the term “Dharma Buddy,” which may better reflect this collaborative and supportive dynamic.

### **What does mentoring involve?**

The primary purpose of working together one-on-one is to provide and receive mutual support in practicing the Dharma and sustaining recovery. This relationship does not extend to providing financial assistance, housing, or other material support. The focus is on walking the path of recovery together.

## **Do we have to use the Recovery Dharma book to go through the program?**

No. While the Recovery Dharma book is a commonly used resource, individuals are free to explore other literature and teachings that support their understanding of a Buddhist-inspired approach to recovery. The choice of materials is up to those working together.

## **What if the mentorship doesn't feel like a good fit?**

Not every pairing will work for everyone, and that's okay. If a mentorship relationship does not feel supportive, respectful, or beneficial, either person should feel comfortable ending it. The goal is progress and mutual support, not obligation.

## **Is there a sobriety requirement to be a mentor?**

No. There is no assumption that one person will have more sobriety than the other, and there is no set requirement for time in recovery. However, those who are new to recovery or Buddhism may find it helpful to connect with someone who has more experience. Each individual can decide what kind of support feels most beneficial.

## **How do I find a mentor or Dharma Buddy?**

Many people find mentors or Dharma Buddies through Recovery Dharma meetings, online forums, or local Sangha gatherings. If you're looking for one-on-one support, it may help to reach out to someone whose recovery or practice resonates with you and ask if they would be open to working together.

## **Can I have more than one mentor or Dharma Buddy?**

Yes! Many people find support from multiple peers. Different perspectives and experiences can be valuable in navigating recovery and practicing the Dharma.

## **Final Thoughts**

Mentorship in Recovery Dharma is a flexible, peer-based relationship meant to support your recovery and practice. There are no rigid rules—only the shared intention to support each other in walking the path with honesty, integrity, and compassion.

## Glossary of Key Terms

- *Buddha* – The historical figure, Siddhartha Gautama, who awakened to the nature of suffering and liberation.
- *Dharma* – The teachings and practices that lead to wisdom, clarity, and freedom from suffering, including the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.
- *Dukkha* – Often translated as suffering, dukkha refers to the dissatisfaction, stress, or discomfort that arises from craving, attachment, and aversion.
- *Mettā* – Loving-kindness; the intentional practice of cultivating goodwill and compassion for ourselves and others.
- *Sangha* – The community of people who support one another in practice; in Recovery Dharma, this refers to both local groups and the larger fellowship.
- *Sukha* – A sense of deep well-being or ease that arises from wisdom and inner balance, distinct from fleeting pleasure or temporary relief from craving.

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### Dedication 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.

*We take refuge  
in the Buddha.*

*We take refuge  
in the Dharma.*

*We take refuge  
in the Sangha.*

Online meetings and more  
information available at  
[recoverydharma.org](http://recoverydharma.org)

