



Circles: How Work Gets Done in Recovery Dharma

As an organization, we are committed to our promise of grassroots, democratic decision-making, and we decided early on to support Circles as a model to put these ideals into action. From the beginning, volunteers in Recovery Dharma have organized into self-managing work circles, rather than joining committees set up by a central authority.

The **Board of Directors**—though it has unique legal responsibilities and a more formal structure, is in a lot of ways one work circle among many, a small group of volunteers with a specific task: that of making sure that everything the Recovery Dharma global organization does is in compliance with its mission, with its agreements, and with its legal responsibilities as a registered nonprofit organization. The Board's focus in the transitional period has been on creating a stable organizational foundation for the democratically-elected Directors to build on.

The **Transition Team** is a work circle that includes the members of the Board alongside other community members. It is a distinct entity, entirely separate from the Board. Each circle includes at least one Transition Team member as a point of contact so that all circles are communicating with each other and with the Transition Team. Currently, some circles are being coordinated by Transition Team members, and some circles have other community members who have stepped up to fill these positions of service.

This is an experiment that is ongoing. There have been challenges with coordination and with maintaining an adequate pool of volunteers to continue the work of Recovery Dharma as people get busy or face challenges in their personal lives. One of the issues facing the Board will be determining how best to encourage and foster this volunteer energy.

Literature Circle

Purpose: Writing, editing and publishing Recovery Dharma literature

Liaison: Amy | amyreed@recoverydharma.org

We've spent some time brainstorming ideas for resources we think are needed by the community, both immediate and long-term projects. New meditations and a tri-fold pamphlet will be available soon, and we are in the early stages of production on other pamphlets. A much larger project that we've started discussing is a book specifically for newcomers, to make the Buddhist path of recovery accessible to those at the very beginning of their journey.

The role of the Literature Circle is to create quality resources for the global Recovery Dharma community, which will be vetted and reviewed to assure that they are of utmost service to the people who need them. As an organization committed to grassroots leadership, we are thrilled by the vibrant exchange of ideas and community-created resources in the Recovery Dharma community, and we see these local, DIY efforts as a beautiful compliment to the efforts of the Circles to create Recovery Dharma literature. We will soon have a page on the website just for community-created resources. If you have a resource you've created that you'd like to share with us to potentially make available to the larger community, or if you'd like to give any feedback, you can contact me at amyreed@recoverydharma.org. General literature-related correspondence can also go to literature@recoverydharma.org.

> Newsletter Sub-Circle

Coordinator: Dirk Wethington | dwethington@recoverydharma.org

Newsletter email address: newsletter@recoverydharma.org

The Literature Circle also includes the Recovery Dharma Newsletter, which is being organized by Dirk Wethington and Critter Spinneret. The newsletter will be focused on community, recovery, and practice, and will be a place to share personal stories, tools, and news from our global sangha. It is open to submissions from everyone (newsletter@recoverydharma.org). Guidelines for submissions and types of submissions will be posted to the recoverydharma.org website soon!

Inclusion Circle

Liaison: Critter Spinneret | they/them | rdinclusioncircle@gmail.com

The Inclusion Circle's mission statement:

To create spaces (environments, literature, leadership, representation) that encourage inclusivity, accessibility, and diversity, that reflect all of our experiences, and to do so as a group of diverse representative individuals; we are the voices.

Current projects include:

- Reviewing all published literature and RD content with the intent to provide feedback on how to make the language more inclusive and trauma-informed.
- Providing input at the organizational level with an eye towards peer-leadership rather than hierarchical, and how Recovery Dharma can support the sanghas with regards to inclusion, diversity, and accessibility.
- Creating a “best practices” guide and literature for all Sanghas that will include ways to create a more diverse leadership and more inclusive environments and safe environments.

Wise Friendship Circle

Purpose: Discussing and exploring best practices for peer support/“Dharma buddies”/wise friendship

Liaison: Paul

Our intention is to investigate what a Buddhist model for peer support in recovery might look like, and how it could differ from a “mentor” or “sponsor” relationship. We’re interested in this for a few reasons. One is that there is already a lot of information out there on how to be a sponsor or a mentor. Some in Recovery Dharma may choose to work with mentors, but we wanted to offer a guide for those who may be looking for a different approach. Another reason has to do with the fact that a mentor is someone who is typically considered “wiser” and who is expected to provide advice and guidance to someone with less experience or wisdom. There can be an implied hierarchy and power dynamic inherent in a mentor/mentee relationship, and so we want to explore a more peer-centered approach to recovery. One of the core values of Recovery Dharma, as we see it, is the recognition that we are all wise, we are all equal to each other, and we can all learn from each other.

We aspire towards being inclusive of, and accessible to, all the diverse communities within Recovery Dharma in the way we use our speech. We are humble about the fact that we may not yet know how to do this, and set the intention to avoid creating harm as we learn.

Core Intentions Circle

Discussing a set of guiding principles for the organization as a whole

Liaisons: Gary and Jean

The Core Intention Circle has been actively investigating the purpose and character of “guiding principles” for the movement as a whole. We have looked at other recovery programs, Buddhist precepts, foundations, and rules for conduct, and our own literature to try to determine, first, what the function of these principles were in a recovery community. We concluded that in general, what we wanted these guides to be useful for was to state clearly what about our program we most valued, and to provide some guidance for how those things might be clearly protected. For example, we concluded that, most importantly, we want our meetings and program to be a safe, inclusive, and responsive community that support the recovery of all forms of addictive behavior.

We also identified unity, non-hierarchical structure and decision making, generosity, and individual responsibility for our own recovery as core intentions.

Using these and other intentions as a foundation, we are currently drafting language to support these values. The community was engaged in discussion about the guiding principles in a series of open Zoom calls. Our longer-term goal is to create a booklet further exploring how each of the principles could be implemented and incorporated into decision making processes on every level of the organization, how each might be reflected in the conduct of our meetings and conferences, and why each is central to a program of recovery.

Outreach Circle

Liaison: Amy | amyreed@recoverydharma.org

The RD Outreach Circle has been working on a basic streamlined format for meetings, select meditations that are tailored to H&I (hospital and institutional) settings, and materials provided in an official notebook. Future projects will include: facilitator workshops, family support group creation, and pamphlets/newcomer info specifically for the H&I world of Recovery Dharma.

Community Wisdom Circle

Purpose: to create platforms for wisdom sharing among community members, and to develop and distribute resources that foster personal and community growth.

The Recovery Dharma Community Wisdom and the Literature Circles have joined forces and are hosting an online workshop open to the entire community on “Recovery Dharma: Where Do I Begin?” We invite both those with experience in Recovery Dharma and those seeking guidance on to join us and share their wisdom and questions about what Buddhist recovery tools people use. The meeting will be recorded and posted online as a community resource.

Administrative Circle

Purpose: Responsible for admin, infrastructure and financial management

Coordinator: Jean | jean@recoverydharma.org

> Website Sub-Circle

Responsible for managing www.recoverydharma.org

Liaison: Jean | jean@recoverydharma.org

The Administrative Circle consists of two areas – Financial and Website. Jean Tuller coordinates this Circle.

The Financial team ensures that we track our funds and spend our limited dollars wisely and in support of our global sangha. We collect donations through our website via PayPal and Facebook,

as well as checks sent to our mailing address in Portland, OR. We are committed to transparency in our financial dealings and publish our monthly and Year-To-Date financial statements on our Facebook RDC Business Sangha group and our website. We are fortunate to have a certified public accountant as a volunteer on this Team; we have set up QuickBooks and work according to established accounting practices.

The Website Team ensures that the website is current with all of your meeting listings and serves as a community resource for your local sanghas. We are continually improving the website and welcome your feedback. We will eventually do a redesign of the website and will involve the community in that process. Our primary web manager is a developer and was instrumental in designing our book cover as well.

Circles that have been dissolved or are on hiatus

Governance Circle (inactive)

The governance circle focused on amending the bylaws to reflect the results and input provided by our June 2019 Survey. They also developed a [strategy for the democratic, grassroots and representative election](#) of a new Board of Directors. [The bylaws were revised](#) to include a broader mission statement, incorporating the community's desire to develop literature, support the growth and expansion of a network of local meetings, provide training and conference opportunities, and develop a resource on social media. We also clarified that we are a truly member-led and grassroots organization.

Sangha Support Reps Circle (inactive)

Purpose: Envisioning and implementing regional sangha support representatives

Contact ssr@recoverydharma.org

Depending on who you ask, the RefCon5 event was either a traumatic event or a cathartic one. Or both. What really went down was a great example of the practice and an opportunity to truly embrace the reality of impermanence.

Following the conference the former Regional Representatives who were interested in transitioning to Recovery Dharma volunteered themselves to help support this transition. Most decided to stick around and see the transition through.

With that done, we were tasked with coming up with a new job description. We wanted the focus back on the local groups and their needs instead of on policies and structure. That was completed and agreed upon, and the next task began. That task? Start reaching out to local groups and offering whatever assistance might be needed, if any.

The Sangha Support Representatives are here to offer support to meetings and inter-sanghas with startup and growth, be a point of contact for our areas and liaise between local meetings and the transition team, and help workshop new ideas/resources/materials being developed by the circles. This role will continue to evolve and serve as a temporary body while a new, more long-term, group can be elected.

So, when you get an email or visit from one of the SSRs (Sangha Support Representatives) please feel free to let them know how they might offer your local group any assistance or reach out to us at ssr@recoverydharma.org. Thank you for allowing us to serve!

Trauma-Influenced Circle (inactive)

Our circle is working to produce a free-standing, practical informational pamphlet or booklet that addresses the centrality of trauma and attachment injury to both addiction and recovery. We are a diverse group of individuals who have worked with, experienced, and studied the ways in which trauma and attachment injury can change the way we react to conditions and circumstances in our lives, and the core relationship this has to addictive behaviors and to recovery.

Our work is centering around three core intentions:

1. to help us all better understand exactly how trauma and attachment injury are experienced in our daily lives, histories, and recoveries,
2. to present clear steps that have been successful in integrating self-care and awareness of trauma into our individual practices, and to provide some resources to support this, and
3. to suggest ways sanghas and Recovery Dharma can better reflect and support the recovery of those members within our community who identify with trauma and attachment injury experiences

While the book *Recovery Dharma* includes sections that take the important step of recognizing the important link between trauma and addiction, as it is revised and a 2nd edition is prepared, we intend to offer ways in which our literature and program can better be trauma-informed.