

# REFUGE RECOVERY

# MENTORSHIP

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**The path of recovery leads us to an entirely new way of living, which can be challenging, even overwhelming at times. As we enter recovery and begin developing more intimacy with the full range of our own humanity, it is essential for us to connect with others in recovery who will guide us, inspire us, support us, and challenge us when we get stuck.**

**The Buddha felt that community was so important that he included it in the traditional practice of “taking refuge” and committing to the path of freedom. In his teachings, the Buddha repeatedly emphasized the importance of community (Sangha) and associating with wise friends. In Refuge Recovery, we feel strongly that connection and accountability are the cornerstones upon which we must build a healthy recovery practice. As we venture outside of our comfort zones and practice vulnerability and transparency with others in recovery, we begin the process of taking refuge in the Sangha.**

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## WHAT IS MENTORSHIP?

Mentorship is a personal, supportive, one-on-one relationship with another member actively engaged in the Refuge Recovery program. Most simply, mentors are other members of the Refuge Recovery community freely sharing their journey through the Four Truths and Eightfold Path as outlined in the Refuge Recovery text. For many, mentors serve as people with whom they can regularly connect, check-in, and share in life's many joys and sorrows. A mentor's role is not that of a parent or social worker, nor is a mentor meant to act as a therapist offering professional advice. Mentorship is best viewed as a collaboration between both parties, with the understanding that, ultimately, all members must do the work of recovery themselves.

## WHO CAN BE MY MENTOR?

Refuge Recovery members will have differing opinions on the qualifications for mentorship. While each of us ultimately must find a mentor that best suits our individual needs, some guidelines on who may be a good mentor may be useful.

Those who have maintained renunciation for over a year, established a regular meditation practice, and completed the inventories are ready to become mentors for newer members. Some communities may not have members with such experience. In that case, they may choose to turn to the most experienced members in their communities to act as mentors. If there are very few or no members in your community with sufficient experience, you may be able to find a mentor by connecting with others online, or with other Refuge Recovery communities in other cities/states.

All members should reflect on their own individual intentions and motivations for seeking a mentoring relationship. Mentorship is a non-authoritative, supportive relationship that serves as a helpful tool on the path toward freedom from the suffering of addiction. As Refuge Recovery grows and expands, we will find new ways to offer mentorship, and continue to develop this component of the program in meaningful ways.

## HOW DO I GET A MENTOR?

Refuge Recovery groups may choose to discuss mentorship at the end of each meeting, detailing their own process for supporting newer members in finding a mentor. Some groups may encourage newer members to speak to the group facilitator after the meeting, or may provide a phone list of willing mentors. Generally, we encourage newer members to begin by connecting with as many different members of the community as possible.

## WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME?

When selecting a mentor, it is important to remember that, ultimately, we are each responsible for our own recovery. No one else can do the hard work of developing a daily meditation practice, engaging in service, or maintaining recovery for us. As we begin working the Refuge Recovery program, we must stay open-minded and be honest with our mentors. We will also want to build ongoing relationships with many different members in the program. By connecting with our mentors, as well as others in the program, we broaden our base of support. As we broaden our base of support, we also broaden our perspective on recovery, and learn new, balanced, and creative ways to respond to the challenges we face both as individuals and as a community.

## DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

As we engage in mentorship, friendships, and casual relationships with other members, we will inevitably find ourselves coming into contact with difficult people. Those who are difficult can be our greatest teachers, challenging us in our ability to respond with understanding and friendliness to those who need us most or push our buttons. Difficult personalities can often serve as mirrors for the places we ourselves get stuck in judgment, fear, and confusion. We must learn to find a balance between setting appropriate boundaries and practicing compassion when faced with the challenging personalities of other members.

## 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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BUDDHA • DHARMA • SANGHA

