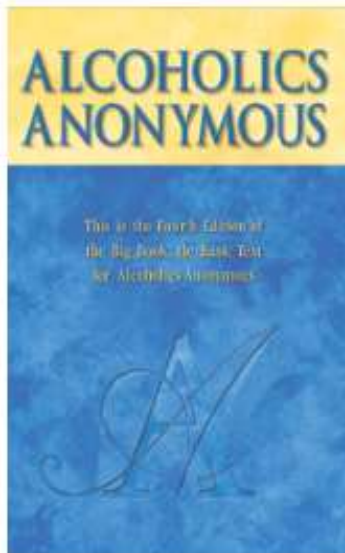


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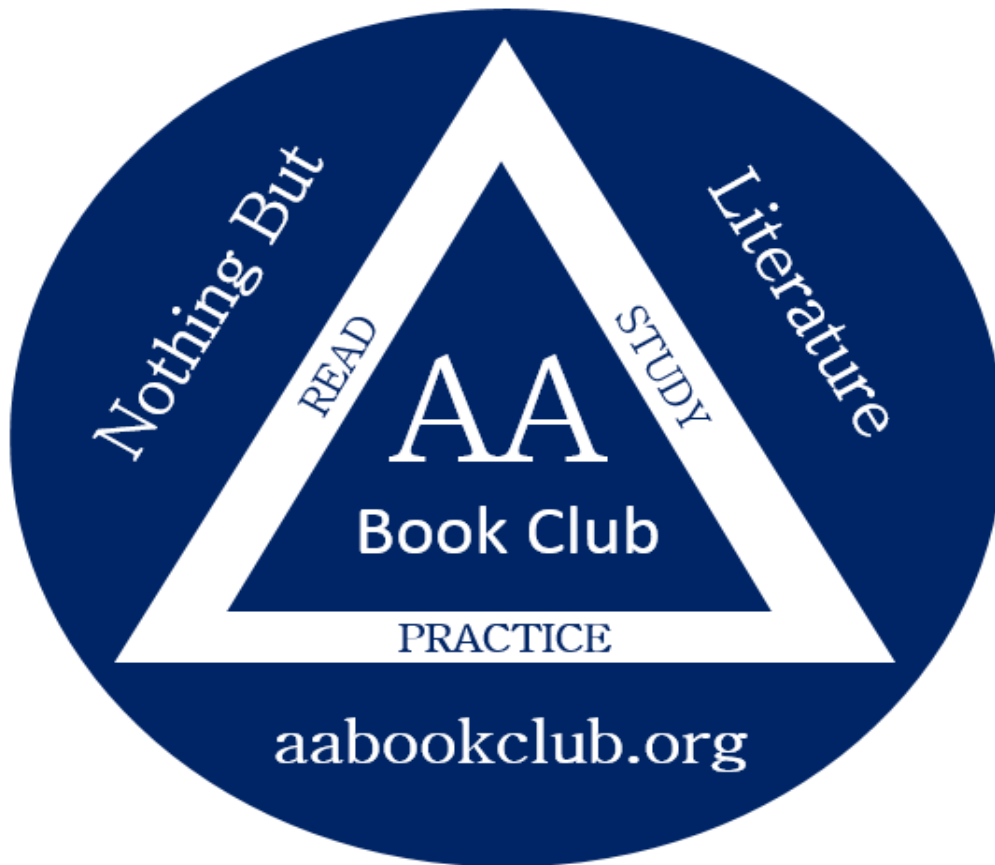


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Big Book

Buddhism and the Big Book



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Buddhism and the Big Book

"Examination of the meaning is most helpful for a reflective acceptance of the teachings... If one does not examine their meaning, one will not gain a reflective acceptance of the teachings; but because one examines their meaning, one gains a reflective acceptance of the teachings."

The Buddha MN 95:22

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| I Jim's Story | 2 |
| How one man found a Higher Power | |
| II There is a Connection | 11 |
| The Synchronicity of the Twelve Steps and the Buddhist Path | |
| III How They Work | 14 |
| A detailed, side-by-side Analysis of the Twelve Steps and the Four Noble Truths/Eightfold Path | |
| The 12 Steps and 12 Buddhist Principles | 16 |
| The 4 Noble Truths and Eightfold Path | 17 |
| The 12 Steps | 32 |
| IV Spiritual Experience | 47 |
| Buddhist expressions of the Spiritual Life | |
| Original Buddhist Quotes | 48 |
| 20 th Century Buddhist Quotes | 58 |
| Buddhist Quotes Reflecting the 12 Steps | 63 |
| Bibliography | 71 |

I **Jim's Story**

I first came into A.A. over three decades ago under the lash of alcohol and unmanageability, and was told early on the importance of finding a Higher Power. This is the story of how I eventually found one.

In the first flush of early sobriety, in which everything seemed new and exciting, so did the idea of religious belief. Though I was not actually pressured, I am sure now that I was engaging in "sponsor pleasing" - saying what he wanted to hear, and what the Program said I needed to believe. I had been raised in a nominal Christian home, and had briefly been involved in such groups as a teen, so it seemed natural to think in those terms when it came to a Higher Power. In reality, I was practicing 'Fake it until you make it.' Now, I wonder if truth can come from a false premise, however well-intentioned. I wanted what everyone else had, and went through the motions of doing what they did, fooling myself all the while.

I soon found my life was becoming manageable once again and I didn't want to drink any more. I became satisfied and complacent - dangerous states of mind for a not-fully-sober person. I was out of danger, or so it seemed. I was no longer running away from alcohol and the havoc it caused in my life. On the other hand, I now know, I didn't have any positive goal to keep me interested and involved in the spiritual way of life our Program offers. A.A. no longer seemed necessary or desirable.

After losing contact with that sponsor, and going to meetings sporadically, I began to silently question some of what I heard from others, just as I was questioning the newfound faith I thought I had acquired. Not being quite as new and enthusiastic as before, my spiritual interest was running low. I began to be put off by too much talk of spirituality too much of the time. Some spoke as if they heard directly from God, or felt His presence very strongly much of the time. In the Twelve & Twelve, Bill talks about a "particularly disconcerting individual" who asks for and thinks he receives direction from God on every minor aspect of life. Perhaps I was jealous that they had something I didn't, but some people struck me that way at the time. (To this day, the more certain and specific people are about such things, the less I tend to listen.) The point is, instead of being encouraged by their example, I became a bit jaded. Identifying out on spiritual matters, particularly the God issue, was the first stage of my relapse.

I gradually reduced my meetings, then stopped altogether. This was the second stage. No longer having any A.A. contact, I actually did relapse after about a year of physical sobriety. There had been no major resentment or fear, I had simply failed to smash the lurking notion that I could someday drink like other men. I acted on that insane idea, thinking it would be "OK this time." Daily drinking at former levels resumed in short order and continued for over 13 years.

Something special happened to me about five years back in the drinking life, while visiting my parents at their new home near the ocean. I left their house one day and

went to a beach side bar, got a beer then stood near the dunes looking at the waves. A serene feeling fell over me as I watched the waves advancing and receding, then perceived these small events as part of the larger movement of the tide ebbing and flowing. The sun caught my attention over my shoulder as it began to set. The Earth rotating to cause the sunset takes place as it revolves around the Sun, as the other planets do, and our galaxy itself is revolving, rotating and expanding within the Universe. I had a sense of there being an order and perhaps even a design in all these patterns and movements. Like Bill with his experience in Winchester Cathedral, I wouldn't understand the real significance of this moment for some years to come.

During all the time spent on further 'research', I never thought about that year without drinking, or that I might try to quit again, in A.A. or in any other way. When I went out, I was *all the way out*. After cruising along with few consequences for about twelve years, I suddenly scored two DWIs in other states exactly two weeks apart. In fact, I got my second one on the long drive to see a lawyer where I racked up the first charge! I know I'm a real alcoholic from this story alone, for you've *really* got to have alcoholic insanity to do something like that. Any heavy drinker and even most real alcoholics would stop drinking in the car at least for a little while after getting arrested once. Well, I did stop drinking in the car after the second one - for a couple of weeks at any rate. Again, I never thought once after these charges that I could, should or would quit drinking again. Instead of agonizing over needing to quit drinking and not wanting to or being able to, I kept on trying to manage my drinking. I basically got off on both charges, and far from learning a lesson, I actually thought I was clever to escape those predicaments unscathed.

But soon this complacency faded and I began to worry about the course my life was taking. Never a stranger to minor bouts of depression, I began to feel it more often and more strongly. I had a few minor health issues by now, and my pessimistic state of mind magnified them. I had the idea that I'd die before my time from some alcohol-related health problem. Yes, I would probably die about 20 years early, yet still had not even the slightest inclination to try giving up drinking again. This was fate I was meant to suffer, nothing to be done about it. In a way, I knew already that I was powerless over alcohol. Alcoholic insanity, in addition to causing me to drink absurd amounts and in the wrong situations, prevented me from remembering being in A.A. and having a year of sobriety. It wouldn't let me consider trying A.A. again or some other treatment. Having no hope, I really had a Step Two problem: I knew I had the alcoholic disease but couldn't see a way out.

I mention the incidents in the last two paragraphs merely to show how much of a grip alcohol had on my mind, and how much of a true revelation it was for me to quit drinking. After speaking with a lawyer for my third DWI (half a mile from home and on the way to the liquor store, no less), I was prepared to follow the rules and not drink during the probation would surely be coming soon. But of course, I would start back up again after that was over. In my alcoholic mind, it would be easy to abstain for that long, and I would be able to show better judgment during that time than I did right after my first arrest.

But something happened only a day or two afterward. A thought came to me out of nowhere, not produced by my normal thought processes but from some hidden part of me: "It's time." Time to give up drinking entirely and forever. Not just to get out of legal trouble or to keep the courts happy, but because it was now meant to be. It was not a message from a Higher Power or any outside source, rather the thought was in my own voice and came from somewhere deep within myself. I tried to fight this inspiration for half a day, but gave in to it and soon felt a new sense of elation and hope. None of us in AA can claim full credit for our continued sobriety, but I can't even claim credit for deciding to quit in the first place; although the decision happened within me, it was not made by me.

My very first meeting was on the Eleventh Step of all things, and I survived all that spiritual talk. However, I knew that the next meeting would be on Step Twelve, and I thought everyone would try to spread the message and try to 'save me' from alcoholism! But the good people of that group let me get my bearings and develop at my own pace. It would take a little while for that to happen.

My real emotional bottom, my greatest desperation, came a few months into sobriety. It was my great fortune to have no money, legal, social, romantic or family issues facing me as I began recovery. When the emotional crash hit me, there was simply no way to avoid the 'spiritual angle', for all my material needs were being met, but my emotions became increasingly unmanageable despite my physical sobriety. I had no delusion that I could wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if only I managed well, for I was already managing quite nicely in all outward aspects. It was at this point that I considered suicide for the first and only time. Thanks to this emotional crisis I came to believe that I needed to get a sponsor and take the Program seriously. Believe me, it took a pretty fair amount of humility to admit that another person knew more than I did.

I met two men talking outside that first meeting. One gave me my first service position when I was ready, and the other man soon became my sponsor. I was attracted to him because he went to all three of the meetings I did, and his story of finding a Higher Power showed it was possible for me to do so. He was practically an atheist before A.A., to hear him talk about it, yet he found it possible to pray and meditate meaningfully. I identify fairly strongly, then and now, with Bill's attitude toward the "God" idea before he met with Ebby. I have never been an atheist, and find a strictly material explanation of the Universe unsatisfactory, though I have no belief in a personal God. (I still don't.) Knowing that I had to do what my sponsor and others did to get what they had, I was willing to listen.

Despite the phrase 'God as we understood him' in two of the Steps, and several passages in *We Agnostics* telling us to consider our own conception, the language in both the Big Book and *Twelve and Twelve* is heavily biased toward a theistic conception of a Higher Power, a Supreme Being, God as envisioned in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Bill also writes disparagingly in the *Twelve and Twelve* of the 'one-time agnostics who still cling to the A.A. group as their higher power', and predicts they

will come to 'love God and call Him by name.' Let us not forget that nearly every meeting ends with the Lord's Prayer and Serenity Prayer, and both are obviously Christian. Given all this and A.A.'s origins in the evangelical Oxford Group, a skeptic may be forgiven for suspecting that 'God as we understood him' mainly serves to show tolerance of different Christian denominations, rather than those with no particular faith at all.

Sensing this apparent bias, I also had my own past experience with trying and failing to find a Higher Power. Faking it did not lead to making it my first time around: this time I had to do it "right", and really mean it. My sponsor was aware of my skepticism, and no doubt sympathized. What he had done in early recovery, on the advice of an old-timer, was to talk to an imaginary friend every morning and evening rather than pray to a Higher Power he didn't yet believe in. He was able in this way to follow the Big Book's Eleventh Step suggestions to begin and end his day, without violating his principles, and grow from there.

Being still in the shadow of the icy intellectual mountain, this seemed to me somewhat helpful, but not entirely logical. I was willing to believe, but not to pretend. I soon thought of a mantra I could silently recite and be both sincere and logical. "There is a power greater than myself" reminded me in various ways of the first three Steps. Using this mantra was enough to open the door.

I have read that people who are struck by lightning sometimes feel an electric charge before the bolt comes down. This is what happened to me before I was struck by spiritual lightning one night soon after this. There was an especially moving Step Two meeting at one of my regular groups. I was struck by two of the people sharing about 'just letting go' and relinquishing control. At the end of the meeting, a senior member talked about this Step coming to him spontaneously, and not doing anything in particular to make it happen. Looking back, as one with a desire to 'do something' and to understand everything before acting or believing, these words were important for me to hear. I found myself leaving there very agitated, but a positive agitation and excitement over what had been said. Walking around to burn off the nervous energy after getting home, I wondered what had gotten into me. At one point, about an mile and a half from home I turned around and headed back. for some reason, the thought occurred to me that some people talked about being in the Program for years without doing any Steps. How foolish, I thought, I would never do that. Of course I was going to go through with all the Steps.

I know within a few square feet the exact spot where I was when the conscious realization hit me that I fully intended to follow the Program to the end. This was my Third Step, Twelve and Twelve style, and like the Big Book says, a very great effect was felt at once. At that moment I almost did feel like being struck by lightning, so strong and sudden was the experience. Not exactly a white light, but suddenly a sort of white haze enveloped my field of vision and the world around me was partly there and partly not there. Objects there before were now barely perceptible, and seemed very far away and irrelevant. I heard nothing and had no bodily sensations whatever. Mentally

and emotionally, I felt an extreme excitement and ecstasy of a kind and degree I've never felt before. It was very much like the experience described in the Big Book story Flooded With Feeling. Other moments of extreme excitement or ecstasy I've felt have always been a reaction to an event, but this one came about entirely from within, as pieces of some kind of spiritual puzzle fell into place. It was a strictly solitary experience, with no hint of any presence or Being of any kind.

My senses returned to normal, but a strong elation remained. On the way home it began to rain, but I was unconcerned and hid under some tree branches for cover until it passed. Upon returning I immediately sat on the edge of my bed and spoke silently with my mind and heart to a new imaginary friend, to the Universe, to nothing and no one. The restrictions of intellect and logic had been overcome, and the floodgates were now open. I probably babbled more than made sense, but I remember expressing gratitude for what had just happened, for sobriety and likely for being able to begin a primitive type of prayer without feeling foolish.

A few nights later, my home group read *There Is A Solution*, which has not one, but two footnotes referring to the appendix on spiritual Experience. Only then did I fully understand what had happened. It really was a new beginning for me. Just as that first quiet experience took away my desire to drink, the second and more profound experience began to take away that nameless, faceless fear that had gripped me before. I never thought I would drink again after coming back into A.A., but after my pink cloud was over, happiness seemed out of my reach. I knew now that everything was going to be alright.

With a calmer and more peaceful outlook, I was able to make progress on the Steps. Just as fear and resentment hold us back, I believe that the kind of spiritual excitement I had experienced is also not a sound basis for life and growth. It *is* foolish to think we can be inspired at all times. Like Bill when he first saw the sober Ebby, I tend to be aghast at those who are 'on fire' with spiritual fervor. My sponsor and I agreed that "Evolution, not Revolution" was a better way to make progress. I began immediately working on my Fourth Step, though it took longer than it should - true to form, I was overthinking things. I completed the Steps with that sponsor several months after beginning to work together.

Several years passed as I continued my program. Then and now, I concentrate on the 'Maintenance Steps', Ten through Twelve, the way the Big Book appears to indicate. I have never felt that my thoughts and prayers were being heard by anyone, for I still do not believe in a Supreme Being. Nevertheless, it is a meaningful activity, for it has always seemed to focus my thoughts in the morning before going out to meet the world, and at night when trying to make sense of what has happened during the day and learn from both the good and the bad. Prayer for the agnostically inclined, talking to an imaginary friend, does help bring one's will in line with the way things are meant to be, and to promote Acceptance. I almost never pray during the day, but when out in the world conducting my affairs, I have always tried to practice Ten and Twelve through such principles as the spot-check inventory and pause, service and working with others.

I did, however, get into the habit of walking almost daily, in silence for the most part, away from phones and other distractions - worldly clamors, mostly those within myself. It must have been from listening to others in meetings as well as A.A.'s recommended AM and PM quiet time that gave me the idea to try this in the middle of the day. It was at first a stress reliever, but I found that this simple form of quasi-meditation can also be a stress preventer.

One aspect of the Eleventh Step that people rarely talk about in meetings is outside spiritual reading, even though it is clearly encouraged in both of our major books. I can trace the precise path of reading that led me to my Higher Power, a set of principles to live by together with the Steps. Probably most people are inspired by talking with others who have faith; I do too, but also from books written by inspired people. Even if one never meets the authors, at least their works are better edited than most speakers' casual remarks! My new A.A. friend and spiritual advisor recommended *Addiction and Grace* by Gerald May, who was a Christian and psychiatrist. I am not terribly inspired by the Bible, and have never been to therapy, yet I was able to learn from his book. This led me presently to the work of an anonymous 14th century monk called *The Cloud of Unknowing*, which May cited a few times. This was even more esoteric and on the surface more Christian-oriented, yet the book gripped me. Obviously, by this time I had become more open-minded in spiritual matters than before. He wrote of transcending doctrine, even of the Mother Church, and seeking union with God. But he seemed to conceive more of an ultimate Reality which could be directly experienced than the common conception of a Father Figure. Now we're talking! Reading between the lines (the 'white parts'), I almost got the impression that for him Church rituals and rules were merely things to be endured while pursuing a personal and direct experience.

The mystical outlook of that ancient monk reminded me of a book already on my shelf, one I had partially read in college some thirty years before. Aside from skimming a few chapters two or three years into sobriety, I had largely forgotten about *The Three Pillars of Zen*. I now delved into it, inspired by the ancient Christian mystic, and read it cover to cover for the first time. I was reminded of the one idea about Buddhism I'd retained from my school days: that the idea of an individuals are really part of one large spirit, and separate identities are a delusion. Reading this idea again brought it to the forefront, and I realized that I had unconsciously begun comparing the notion of discarding the belief in a separate self with AA's goal of getting rid of self-will. The two ideas are entirely compatible, though the Buddhist goal is perhaps more radical.

One section of *Three Pillars of Zen* deals with the Enlightenment experience, which is said to come suddenly, though years of training and study normally precede it. One classic personal description of how it felt at the moment of Enlightenment stood out, and reading it again made me realize I had actually half-consciously remembered this passage and had compared it to my own sudden personal experience. (I am far from Enlightened, but I did transcend self for those few seconds and can testify as to how it feels). In fact, the book has a collection of contemporary personal accounts of Enlightenment experiences not unlike the personal stories in the back of our own *Big Book*. One of them is actually by a woman in A.A. who studied Zen in recovery and

realized her true self.

I soon came across *Zen For Americans*, a book of writings and talks by Soyen Shaku, one of the first Zen masters to visit America in the early 20th Century. The first sentence of this passage neatly summarizes my attitude toward the idea of a Supreme Being. In the others, he uses 'God' to refer to the true self or Buddha nature that is inherent in all of us and in the world, reflecting the A.A. notion of finding 'the Great Reality deep down within us':

A God who, keeping aloof from his creations, sends down his words of command through specially favored personages, is rejected by Buddhists as against the constitution of human reason. God must be in us, who are made in his likeness. We cannot presume the duality of God and the world. Religion is not to go to God by forsaking the world, but to find him in it.

(Page 28-29)

Realizing that Buddhism had already influenced my thinking about A.A. and partially explained my intense emotional episode years earlier, I consciously steered my reading in that direction. I soon came across a copy of *The World of Zen*, edited by Nancy Wilson Ross in a used book store. Finding it seemingly at random and selecting it based on the title alone, this book, like my old school book, was a fortuitous circumstance. This was the book that cemented my belief in Buddhism.

I wonder if we really choose some of the things that are fundamental in life, such as our spiritual beliefs. We make consumer choices and other daily decisions based on fashion, personal taste, and other subjective factors. We are perfectly free in these matters, as they are seldom very important. But when certain spiritual ideas really move us, it is because they appeal to an inner need and suit our fundamental nature in ways we can neither choose nor fully understand. When our minds and hearts are open and we are properly exposed to the right ideas, we are drawn to them regardless of the conscious will which directs so much of our everyday lives. In other words, though there may be no external compulsion, we are not as free to choose our spiritual beliefs as we are the clothes we wear, nor are they as easily changed. Perhaps I should only speak for myself, but I no more chose to follow Buddhism than I did to stop drinking several years before. After my sudden experience in early sobriety, followed by reading and reflecting, there was not much conscious choice involved, rather I followed where I was led. The Buddhist spiritual life is not a theory, and I found that I was already living it in part. It was up to me to pick up the rest of the tools in the spiritual kit offered by this ancient way of life.

Perhaps the greatest single passage in the *World of Zen*, the one that 'sold' me on Buddhism, was this one from Zen scholar D.T. Suzuki. It is a rallying point for us all. Whether agnostic, atheist, or former believer, we can all stand together on this sentiment:

We now know the significance of life, we know that it is not blind chance nor is it a mere display of brute forces, but that while we know not definitely what the ultimate purport of life is, there is something in it that makes us feel infinitely blessed in the living of it and remain quite contented with it in all its evolution, without raising questions or entertaining pessimistic doubts.

(Page 39-40)

I have been back a number of times to the spot where my experience occurred, sometimes alone and sometimes with A.A. friends to share an important part of my story. What they say about lightning never striking the same place twice is true in my case. There was nothing magic about that spot, it was just the spot where something magic happened to me. Thus far, it has not been repeated. However, I have had several other special moments in the years since then. None of those subsequent moments has been as intense, though they did last longer. On these occasions, always while alone, I have had a strong eerie feeling that there was more to my surroundings than our everyday senses reveal. There was a feeling that perhaps a curtain was about to be drawn back to reveal something hidden from view, but so far it has only been drawn back enough to give a little hint, slightly affect my perception and remind me of the mysterious Fourth Dimension I once felt. In times of solitude and serenity, the words of D.T. Suzuki above have deep meaning for me.

Today I can hear the spiritual testimony of others in meetings and elsewhere without getting caught up in things I don't understand or agree with. While I do not believe in God as such, I can still learn from the experience, strength and hope of those who do. It is not necessary for me to reach the same spiritual conclusions as others in order to learn from them: I need only respect the honesty and sincerity of their quest. And I have ceased fighting anything or anyone - even Big Book thumpers and disconcerting individuals. Who knows, I may come to believe in some things I now question, for it is certain that more will be revealed.

I have now been sober for more than a decade, and I am of the age at which I once thought I would die from alcohol. When I contemplate my own death now, I hope it is as far in the future as possible, and rather than morbidly welcome it, I wonder what I might leave behind me to benefit others. I get enough casual thoughts of drinking to let me know that I am not cured of alcoholism, just as occasional periods of doubt and disturbance remind me that neither am I cured of the spiritual malady. But I have recovered physically, mentally and spiritually through the Twelve Steps, and from contemplation and practice of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path I have a logical idea of what life is all about.

Buddhist ideals chose me to follow them in the course of recovery from alcoholism, and now compliment and reinforce that recovery, for there are many similarities between the Steps and the Path. I do not have a God of my understanding, nor even a Higher Power so much as a Higher Principle by which to live in a sane, sober and relatively serene way:

Therefore one desiring his own good,
Aspiring for spiritual greatness,
Should deeply revere the true Dhamma,
Recollecting the Buddha's Teaching.

**(SN 6:2 Brahma Sahampati
speaking to the Buddha)**

For a very interesting account of someone who was Buddhist before entering A.A. and who worked the Steps in accordance with Buddhist principles, please see One Breath at a Time – Buddhism and the Twelve Steps by Kevin Griffin.

Jim B.
(A pseudonym)

II There is a Connection

Despite striking similarities, there is nothing to indicate that A.A. was directly influenced by Buddhism. We of the AA Book Club do not wish to create any misunderstanding on this point. The Buddha and A.A.'s Founders faced personal crises of different sorts and resolved them through personal transformation, discovering complementary sets of spiritual practices to in the process. It may be that the very nature of spiritual development requires certain elements for its consummation, and successful spiritual explorers all discover these necessary truths in their own fashion. In any event, the connection between Buddhism and A.A. is a matter of Synchronicity, not cause and effect. We do know, however, that both of A.A.'s Founders were very fond of William James' Varieties of Religious Experience, citing it twice by name in the Big Book. As Buddhism features prominently in James, it is certain that they knew something about this ancient way of life. As we shall later see, at least one of the Founders had some detailed knowledge of the Buddhist Path and saw an affinity with AA's Steps.

We also do not wish to force the square peg of the Twelve Steps into the round hole of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path, or do a disservice to either path, as they have different goals and assumptions. For example, Buddhism does not envision treating disease of any kind, and AA avoids religious doctrine (while encouraging spiritual reading is encouraged for individual members). But there are similarities between them far beyond the like number of principles. We believe that a close comparison of these two sets of spiritual principles will be of great benefit to practitioners of either path, and so long as we are equally diligent in pointing out any contrasts we should avoid creating any misunderstanding or confusion.

The Buddhist philosophy consisting of an ordered set of principles for spiritual/religious transformation was the first of its kind, and appears to have been unique until the advent of Alcoholics Anonymous. The ancient tradition of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path, like the Twelve Steps, is comprehensive in that it names a undesirable condition as well as a means to effect a personality change by which it can be overcome. No similar set of principles is elsewhere apparent in the history of spiritual movements.

The Oxford Group had its practice of the "5 C's" - Conviction, Confession, Contrition, Conversion, and Continuance, and Four Absolutes - Honesty, Unselfishness, Purity and Love. The former does contain the idea of personal transformation, but is not comprehensive in that it does not include the condition being overcome; the latter is not ordered and does not include a notion of change.

The Judeo-Christian tradition has the Ten Commandments. Though they are numbered, they are not ordered - the latter ones do not presuppose practice of the earlier ones - and the notion of personal transformation is entirely absent.

Both Buddhism and AA describe the issue they address in great detail in order to demonstrate its existence and its true nature before elaborating a spiritual program to

escape it. The Buddha described, by means of explanations and similes, that suffering and dissatisfaction are inherent in life due to the nature of the world. This is an existential condition common to all living beings, and permanent happiness cannot be achieved, despite one's efforts to do so. AA's Big Book describes the pathological condition of chronic alcoholism, affecting a limited class of people, with explanations and personal anecdotes. This condition likewise cannot be overcome by the unaided human will alone.

The effects are evident to those still suffering, yet it is not uncommon to see people deny the implacable nature of these two types of situations and continue to struggle to get out from under them. This denial is called delusion in both Buddhism and in A.A. This Big Book passage - "Is he not a victim of the delusion that he can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if he only manages well?" - applies not only to the alcoholic trying to manage his life or his uncontrolled drinking, but to anyone trying to obtain lasting results in an impermanent and unstable world.

Neither contentment through the Buddhism nor recovery from alcoholism in AA can be achieved without a major change in personality. There are several terms for this transformation, and though they differ in both scope and scale, one term is common to both traditions: Awakening.

Though these terms are understood differently, the journey from delusion to awakening in each tradition includes several common principles. For example:

- * Realization of the need for a spiritual solution
- * Commitment to pursue that solution
- * Assessments of one's personal faults
- * Willingness and effort to be rid of these faults
- * Continuous monitoring of one's mental and emotional state
- * Practice and improvement in awareness of a Reality greater than the physical

These and other principles are practiced in different ways, often in a different order and some are given more emphasis in one spiritual path than in the other.

The greatest difference between the Buddhist path and that of Alcoholics Anonymous is that the former has no conception whatever of a Creator God or Supreme Being. For this reason, there is no mention of prayer in the Pali Canon, Buddhism's oldest writings. Progress in this path is a sort of spiritual momentum achieved from practicing principles which build upon one another and eventually result in Awakening. Though A.A. is officially neutral on the nature of God or a Higher Power, the Big Book generally speaks

of a Judeo-Christian type of God, and emphasizes Western-style prayer much more than meditation. Progress after several of the Steps is described as being granted by God or resulting in a greater awareness of Him. However, some of the Promises after individual Steps describe secular or psychological improvement similar to that noted in Buddhist writings.

In the next section, we present a highly detailed analysis of the two journeys of transformation with the hope that this side-by-side comparison will inform practitioners of the Steps, the Path, or both. The description of a spiritual path containing nearly all the principles of A.A., but entirely stripped of theological language, may be especially informative or even encouraging to those in A.A. who are agnostic, atheist or who have no definite concept of a Higher Power. This analysis is followed by a chapter devoted to Buddhist expressions with direct relevance to some of the individual Steps and another with a larger selection of ancient and modern Buddhist thoughts that may be of interest to anyone desiring a spiritual way of life. We offer these features not to proselytize, but to inform and possibly inspire.

III **How They Work: The Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path of Buddhism and the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous**

The Big Book advises us to write down our thoughts when taking our Fourth Step inventory. There are three advantages to this. What three? One, writing forces our ever-churning mind to slow down and focus. Second, we can record our momentary insights before they disappear. Lastly, when everything is down on paper in front of us, we can examine them in depth. This project is a sort of inventory of what we've learned and hope to express to others about the Steps that have gotten us sober, and the synchronistic Buddhist Path. It is for the reader to decide if these advantages are realized here.

We rely as much as possible on original sources. The Pali Canon is the oldest written record of the teachings of the Buddha and some of his top disciples. All quotes are from the Buddha, unless attributed to others. Since then there have been noted figures with authoritative teachings on the Path. Our bibliography can be found at the end of this work. The Four Noble Truths and Noble Eightfold Path constitute a way out of Delusion upon which all Buddhist schools can agree and unite in brotherly and harmonious action. We are leaving out consideration of other elements of doctrine on which they differ and which may divert us from our primary purpose of comparing the paths of development described in Buddhism and A.A.

For the latter, we shall consider primarily the Big Book, with a few ideas from the Twelve and Twelve (A.A.'s 'New Testament'). Unlike Buddhism, our anonymous and democratic Fellowship has no authoritative later commentary to expand our understanding of the Steps - not circuit speakers, CD's of two men talking about the Big Book and not even the editors at AA Book Club! However, we cite 'A.A. grassroots wisdom' in some places: practices and ideas not found in the literature, but which have gained wide acceptance in the Fellowship. For example, sobriety chips and celebrations, 'Ninety in ninety,' 'Keep coming back,' 'No major changes in the first year,' and others have emerged over generations of A.A. existence. This type of authority is thoroughly democratic and has the added advantage of honoring the Twelfth Tradition idea of principles before personalities.

Lest one imagine a side-by-side comparison of the Noble Eightfold Path and the Twelve Steps to be fanciful or forced, please take note of this passage in *Spiritual Milestones* in A.A., an early 1940's Akron pamphlet commissioned and approved (but not written) by Dr. Bob himself:

Consider the eight-part laid down in Buddhism: Right view, right aim, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindedness and right contemplation. The Buddhist philosophy, as exemplified by these eight points, could be literally adopted by AA as a substitute for or an addition to the Twelve Steps. Generosity, universal love and welfare of others rather

than consideration of self are basic to Buddhism. **(Page 9-10)**

As a matter of historical note, the pamphlet concludes with a version of the St. Francis Prayer a decade before it appeared in the Twelve and Twelve. This pamphlet and other contemporaneous writings are still available from the Akron Intergroup.

The twelve principles of both spiritual paths are laid out side by side for reference on the following page. However, the correspondence between the two programs is not one-to-one: the similarities between AA's Steps and Buddhist principles (and vice versa) are described in essays which follow on each spiritual concept.

The Twelve Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol-- that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we *understood him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as *we understood him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Four Noble Truths/Eightfold Path

1. There is Suffering
 2. The origin of Suffering
 3. The cessation of Suffering
 4. The way leading to cessation of Suffering
1. Right View
 2. Right Intention
 3. Right Speech
 4. Right Action
 5. Right Livelihood
 6. Right Effort
 7. Right Mindfulness
 8. Right Concentration

The Noble Eightfold Path:

(All quotes are from the Buddha, unless noted otherwise)

At Savatthi. "Bhikkhus; just as the river Ganges slants, slopes, and inclines towards the east, so too a bhikkhu who develops and cultivates the Noble Eightfold Path slants, slopes, and inclines towards Nibbana.

And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path so that he slants, slopes, and inclines towards Nibbana? Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu develops right view, which is based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in release. ... He develops right concentration, which is based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in release. It is in this way, bhikkhus, that a bhikkhu develops and cultivates the Noble Eightfold Path so that he slants, slopes, and inclines towards Nibbana.

(SN 45:91)

"Right speech, right action, and right livelihood - these states are included in the aggregate of virtue. Right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration - these states are included in the aggregate of concentration. Right view and right intention - these states are included in the aggregate of wisdom."

MN 44:11 (Female monk Dhamadinna)

Wisdom portion of the Noble Eightfold Path

1 Right view

Knowledge of suffering, knowledge of the origin of suffering, knowledge of the cessation of suffering, and knowledge of the way leading to the cessation of suffering - this is called right view.

MN 141 (Sariputta, the Buddha's top disciple)

In other words, Right view consists of knowledge of the Four Noble Truths. Just as the final Truth encompasses the Noble Eightfold Path, the Path contains the Noble Truths as its first point. Thus, the twelve principles of Buddhism can be condensed into either four or eight items, depending on whether one is looking at the Buddhist program in brief outline or in detail.

Therein, bhikkhus, right view comes first. And how does right view come first? In one of right view, right intention

comes into being; in one of right intention, right speech comes into being; in one of right speech, right action comes into being; in one of right action, right livelihood comes into being; in one of right livelihood, right effort comes into being; in one of right effort, right mindfulness comes into being; in one of right mindfulness, right concentration comes into being; in one of right concentration, right knowledge comes into being; in one of right knowledge, right deliverance comes into being. Thus, bhikkhus, the path of the disciple in higher training possesses eight factors, the arahant [Enlightened person] possesses ten factors...

MN 117:34

1a First Noble Truth - Knowledge of Suffering

Birth is suffering; ageing is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are suffering; not to obtain what one wants is suffering.

MN 141 (Sariputta)

Buddhism holds that happiness, as conventionally defined, is fleeting or illusory. Everything that can be experienced by the mind, senses and emotions is impermanent or inconstant, and therefore inherently unsatisfactory (leading to suffering) and is not a stable basis for establishing one's identity or self-image (not-self). These three qualities of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self are inherent in every single phenomena known to Man, and are called the Three characteristics of Reality. Therefore suffering in life is inevitable if one lives on a basis of seeking worldly pleasure. Even when it can be achieved, and suffering relieved, that satisfaction is only temporary. When such happiness fades away, disappointment, dissatisfaction, unhappiness are again the result, forcing one to fight the same battle to end them once more. Those who do not realize this Truth are said to be suffering from delusion or ignorance.

The fact of suffering in life is universal and is not considered a disease or pathological condition, as alcoholism is. Universal human suffering and the special problems of the alcoholic do share important qualities in that neither can be resolved by a straightforward application of the human will, and people affected will avoid facing these truths. The First Noble Truth is analogous to Step One. In fact, denying or simply not knowing of the inevitability of suffering, like denial or ignorance of powerlessness over alcohol, is known as delusion.

1b Second Noble Truth - Knowledge of the cause of suffering

It is craving, which brings renewal of being, is accompanied by delight and lust, and delights in this and that; that is,

craving for sensual pleasures.

MN 141 (Sariputta)

People suffering from delusion are motivated in their actions by craving for sensual pleasures and other material comforts. Driven by such desires, they enter the cycle described above, with small victories inevitably followed by defeat in the battle to achieve lasting happiness in this way. Worldly desire, a self-centered motivation, is therefore said in Buddhism to be a universal source of human unhappiness. In other words, the problem lies not in the inherently unsatisfactory world, but in one's desire for its superficially pleasant aspects

"Bhikkhus, I do not see even a single thing that so causes unarisen wholesome qualities to arise and arisen unwholesome qualities to decline as fewness of desires. For one with few desires, unarisen wholesome qualities arise and arisen unwholesome qualities decline."

AN 1:63

The A.A. idea corresponding to this Truth can be found in the beginning of Step Three, which proclaims self-will as the root of the alcoholic's trouble. Craving individuals are like self-willed ones, arranging people, places and things to their liking. "Is he not a victim of the delusion that he can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if he only manages well?" - the question can be asked of someone suffering from delusion as well as the alcoholic with self-will running riot. Both problems can be addressed by human effort along prescribed lines, with acknowledgement of its cause being an important part of the process.

1c Third Noble Truth - Knowledge of the cessation of suffering

It is the remainderless fading away and ceasing, the giving up, relinquishing, letting go, and rejecting of that same craving.

MN 141 (Sariputta)

Both Buddhism and Alcoholics Anonymous teach that there is a solution to one's troubles. In each case, this news comes as welcome news after realizing the extent of the problem at hand. The Buddha himself is an example to inspire belief: in the first part of the Refuge Vows, one professes confidence in the Buddha's Enlightenment, his complete overcoming of craving and other unwholesome states.

The Third Noble Truth is analogous to Step Two.

1d Fourth Noble Truth - Knowledge of the way leading to the cessation of

suffering

It is just this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

MN 141 (Sariputta)

After detailing the problem, the source of the problem and the possibility of escaping the problem in the first three Noble Truths, Buddhism proposes the Noble Eightfold Path as the fourth Truth and the means by which this escape is achieved. Knowledge of all four Truths comprises the first point of that Path. Similarly, the Big Book devotes its first four chapters almost entirely to describing the alcoholic's problem and outlining a solution, before revealing its Twelve Step program of recovery in chapter five. In both spiritual paths, the cause of the problem is addressed (Craving, ill will, greed and delusion in Buddhism; self-will in A.A.). Both Buddhism and A.A. seek to change the individual, not the world.

2 Right Intention

And what, friends, is right intention? Intention of renunciation, intention of non-ill will, and intention of non-cruelty - this is called right intention.

MN 141 (Sariputta)

This point of the Eightfold path, in which we hope to substitute unwholesome states of greed, aversion and delusion inherent in the human condition for wholesome states of mind, is equivalent to Step Six, in which one is willing to have defects of character removed.

When one makes a personal commitment to follow the Noble Eightfold Path for the elimination of unwholesome states, and therefore the end of suffering, it is common Buddhist practice to take refuge in the Three Jewels or the Triple Gem by uttering the following lines, which are equivalent to the Third Step Prayer :

I go to the Buddha for refuge.
I go to the Dhamma for refuge.
I go to the Sangha for refuge.

By doing so, one declares his confidence in, and reliance on, the reality of the Buddha's complete Enlightenment, his Teachings and the community of Buddhist monks and lay followers.

Ethics portion of the Noble Eightfold Path

Bhikkhus, whatever living beings there are which assume the four postures-sometimes walking, sometimes standing, sometimes

sitting, sometimes lying down-all assume the four postures based upon the earth, established upon the earth. So too, based upon virtue, established upon virtue, a bhikkhu develops and cultivates the seven factors of enlightenment.

SN 46:11

The three middle points of the Path are concerned with conduct in everyday life. This portion of the path corresponds to the Five Precepts that Buddhists attempt to practice in everyday life:

Bhikkhus, possessing five qualities, a lay follower is deposited in heaven as if brought there. What five? He abstains from the destruction of life, abstains from taking what is not given, abstains from sexual misconduct, abstains from false speech, abstains from liquor, wine, and intoxicants, the basis for heedlessness. Possessing these five qualities, a lay follower is deposited in heaven as if brought there."

AN 5:173

In the Buddhist tradition, these 'training rules' precede spiritual efforts to rid oneself of greed, ill will and delusion (Right Effort), the underlying tendencies which produce unwholesome all unwholesome thoughts, words and deeds:

And what is the root of the unwholesome? Greed is a root of the unwholesome; hate is a root of the unwholesome; delusion is a root of the unwholesome. This is called the root of the unwholesome.

MN 9:5

In other words, one develops wholesome habits in all forms of conduct. This is in keeping with the grass roots A.A. wisdom that, "You can't think your way into a new way of living, but you can live your way into a new way of thinking." Avoiding harm to all other beings is an underlying idea in this portion of the Path.

By practicing non-greed, non-ill-will and non-delusion, one eliminates bad karma (negative spiritual energy) created by past unwholesome thoughts, words and deeds. As the Buddha said in the Dhammapada:

Whoever replaces an evil deed
With what is wholesome
Illuminates the world
Like the moon set free from a cloud.

Dhp 173

The following three points of the Path are equivalent to the third portion of Step Twelve: 'practice these principles in all our affairs'. In addition, by practicing non-greed, non-ill-will and non-delusion in everyday affairs, one

is also putting into action the grassroots A.A. idea of 'living amends', in which one does not directly approach individuals harmed, but changes one's actions going forward as a way of atoning for the past.

3 Right Speech

And what, friends, is right speech? Abstaining from false speech, abstaining from malicious speech, abstaining from harsh speech, and abstaining from idle chatter - this is called right speech.

MN 141 (Sariputta)

Right Speech, one of the Five Precepts, is considered so important that it is mentioned separately in the Noble Eightfold Path. Including written communication as well, Right Speech not only involves refraining from dishonesty, but also requires that it be useful to others, and be neither harmful, harsh nor idle chatter.

The A.A. analogue can be found in the Twelve and Twelve's Step Ten recommendation to practice restraint of tongue and pen. (The development of self-restraint 'carries a top priority rating.')

4 Right Action

And what, friends, is right action? Abstaining from killing living beings, abstaining from taking what is not given, and abstaining from misconduct in sensual pleasures - this is called right action.

MN 141 (Sariputta)

Right action consists of three of the other Precepts followed by lay Buddhists. Interestingly, the Fifth Precept, to abstain from intoxicants (which does *not* mean to use them moderately!) is omitted from this list. The full implications of Right Action go beyond conventional notions of right and wrong. For example, killing animals, even for food, is excluded under this point of the Path.

5 Right Livelihood

And what, friends, is right livelihood? Here a noble disciple, having abandoned wrong livelihood, earns his living by right livelihood - this is called right livelihood.

MN 141 (Sariputta)

Wrong livelihood includes any occupation which causes harm to other beings. Some primary examples of wrong livelihood are butcher (or fisherman), dealing in poison, weapons or slaves (a common practice in ancient times). An occupation which

inherently involves breaking any of the Precepts or fostering greed, aversion and delusion in oneself or others would also be considered Wrong Livelihood.

Words of encouragement on this middle stage of the Eightfold Path from the Buddha:

Beings are owners of their actions, student, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior.

MN 135:20

Concentration portion of the Noble Eightfold Path

Having developed healthy habits of body and speech in the last portion of the Eightfold path, the emphasis now is on developing wholesome states of mind (Right Effort and Right Mindfulness), allowing one to devote attention to attaining higher spiritual states (Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration).

And how does a bhikkhu, based upon virtue, established upon virtue, develop the seven factors of enlightenment? Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu develops the enlightenment factor of mindfulness, which is based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in release. He develops the enlightenment factor of discrimination of states... the enlightenment factor of energy [Right Effort]... the enlightenment factor of rapture... the enlightenment factor of tranquillity... the enlightenment factor of concentration... the enlightenment factor of equanimity, which is based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in release. It is in this way, bhikkhus, that a bhikkhu, based upon virtue, established upon Virtue, develops the seven factors of enlightenment, and thereby achieves greatness and expansiveness in [wholesome] states.

SN 46:1

This portion of the Path, in its emphasis on ethical and spiritual development, contains elements of Steps Four, Six, Seven, Ten and Eleven.

6 Right Effort

And what, friends, is right effort?

[1] Here a bhikkhu awakens zeal for the non-arising of unarisen evil unwholesome states...

[2] He awakens zeal for the abandoning of arisen evil unwholesome states...

[3] He awakens zeal for the arising of unarisen wholesome states...

[4] He awakens zeal for the continuance, non-disappearance, strengthening, increase, and fulfillment by development of arisen wholesome states, and he makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives. This is called right effort.

MN 141 (Sariputta)

Right Effort, consisting of these Four Right Strivings or Right Exertions, calls for preventing all manifestations of greed, aversion and delusion in oneself before they occur, and ending these qualities when they are already present; promoting the healthy qualities of non-greed, non-ill will and non-delusion where they do not yet exist, and increasing these qualities where they do exist. Right Effort is analogous to steps Six and Seven. We see that in Buddhism, as in A.A., our thinking is indeed on a higher plane when cleared of wrong motives:

What, bhikkhus, are the imperfections that defile the mind? Covetousness and unrighteous greed is an imperfection that defiles the mind. Ill will...anger...revenge...contempt...a domineering attitude.. .envy.. .avarice.. .deceit...fraud...obstinacy .. .presumption.. .conceit.. .arrogance.. .vanity...negligence is an imperfection that defiles the mind...

When he has given up, expelled, released, abandoned, and relinquished [the imperfections of the mind] in part, he considers thus: 'I am possessed of perfect confidence in the Buddha,' and he gains inspiration in the meaning, gains inspiration in the Dhamma, gains gladness connected with the Dhamma. When he is glad, rapture is born in him; in one who is rapturous, the body becomes tranquil; one whose body is tranquil feels pleasure; in one who feels pleasure, the mind becomes concentrated.

MN 7:3, 8

7 Right Mindfulness

And what, friends, is right mindfulness?

[1] Here a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.

[2] He abides contemplating feelings [pleasant, unpleasant and neutral sensations] as feelings, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.

[3] He abides contemplating mind [thoughts and emotions] as mind, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world.

[4] He abides contemplating mind-objects [perceptions of phenomena] as mind-objects, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away

covetousness and grief for the world. This is called right mindfulness.

MN 141 (Sariputta)

These areas of awareness are known collectively as the Four Foundations or Four Establishments of Mindfulness.

Then the Tathagata [Buddha] disciplines him further: 'Come, bhikkhu, abide contemplating the body as a body but do not think thoughts connected with the body; abide contemplating feelings as feelings but do not think thoughts connected with feelings; abide contemplating mind as mind but do not think thoughts connected with the mind; abide contemplating mind-objects [phenomena] as mind-objects but do not think thoughts connected with mind-objects.'

MN 125:24

Mindfulness of the body, largely focusing on the breath, is the primary form of meditation practiced in Buddhism. It is also widely practiced in the West among non-Buddhists as a stand-alone method for increasing awareness and concentration, as well as stress reduction.

Bhikkhus, one thing, when developed and cultivated, is of great fruit and benefit. What one thing? Mindfulness of breathing. And how, bhikkhus, is mindfulness of breathing developed and cultivated so that it is of great fruit and benefit?

Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu, having gone to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty hut, sits down. Having folded his legs crosswise, straightened his body, and set up mindfulness in front of him, just mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out.

Breathing in long, he knows: 'I breathe in long'; or breathing out long, he knows: 'I breathe out long.' Breathing in short, he knows: 'I breathe in short'; or breathing out short, he knows: 'I breathe out short.' He trains thus: 'Experiencing the whole body, I will breathe in'; he trains thus: 'Experiencing the whole body, I will breathe out.' He trains thus: 'Tranquillizing the bodily formation, I will breathe in'; he trains thus: 'Tranquillizing the bodily formation, I will breathe out.'

SN 54:1

Mindfulness of the breath can be seen as a catalyst for the other foundations of mindfulness, and together all four lead to still other wholesome factors, which lead to Enlightenment:

Concentration by mindfulness of breathing, Ananda, is the one thing which, when developed and cultivated, fulfills the four establishments of mindfulness. The four establishments of mindfulness, when developed and cultivated, fulfill the seven factors of enlightenment. The seven factors of enlightenment, when developed and cultivated, fulfill true knowledge and liberation.

SN 54:13

Mindfulness of feelings, the Second Foundation of mindfulness, does not involve emotions, for those are part the next establishment or foundation of mindfulness. This area of mindfulness pertains simply to the pleasant, unpleasant or neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant (neutral) sensations experienced while meditating. Awareness of the arising and passing away of these sensations helps reduce craving for pleasant feelings, aversion to unpleasant ones, and ignorance or delusion associated with neutral feelings (as the latter are often ignored in everyday life, thus we are largely unmindful of them).

Mindfulness of mind, the Third Foundation of Mindfulness, involves awareness of one's thoughts and emotions. A.A.'s Twelve Steps use a similar idea in Steps Four, Ten and Eleven

"And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind as mind? Here a bhikkhu understands mind affected by lust as mind affected by lust, and mind unaffected by lust as mind unaffected by lust. He understands mind affected by hate as mind affected by hate, and mind unaffected by hate as mind unaffected by hate. He understands mind affected by delusion as mind affected by delusion, and mind unaffected by delusion as mind unaffected by delusion. He understands contracted mind as contracted mind, and distracted mind as distracted mind. He understands exalted mind as exalted mind, and unexalted mind as unexalted mind. He understands surpassed mind as surpassed mind, and unsurpassed mind as unsurpassed mind. He understands concentrated mind as concentrated mind, and unconcentrated mind as unconcentrated mind. He understands liberated mind as liberated mind, and unliberated mind as unliberated mind.

MN 10:34

We see in the following passages a practical application of mindfulness of unwholesome thoughts leading to their elimination:

As I abided thus, diligent, ardent, and resolute, a thought of sensual desire arose in me... a thought of ill will arose in me... a thought of cruelty arose in me. I understood thus: 'This thought of sensual desire has arisen in me. This leads to my own

affliction, to others' affliction, and to the affliction of both; it obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, and leads away from Nibbana.' When I considered: 'This leads to my own affliction,' it subsided in me; when I considered: 'This leads to others' affliction,' it subsided in me; when I considered: 'This leads to the affliction of both,' it subsided in me; when I considered: 'This obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, and leads away from Nibbana,' it subsided in me. Whenever a thought of sensual desire arose in me, I abandoned it, removed it, did away with it.

Later in the same sutta, we see that a pattern of wholesome thoughts brought about in this way brings about a wholesome underlying state of mind. Thus we see that Right Mindfulness reinforces Right Effort:

"Bhikkhus, whatever a bhikkhu frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of his mind. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of sensual desire, he has abandoned the thought of renunciation to cultivate the thought of sensual desire, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of sensual desire. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of ill will...upon thoughts of cruelty, he has abandoned the thought of non-cruelty to cultivate the thought of cruelty, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of cruelty."

MN 19:3-6

Bhikkhus, this is the one-way path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the passing away of pain and displeasure, for the achievement of the method, for the realization of Nibbana [Nirvana], that is, the four establishments of mindfulness.

SN 47:1

Mindfulness of mind-objects (mental qualities), the fourth Foundation of Mindfulness, is concerned with awareness of one's mental liabilities and assets which serve to inhibit or promote spiritual growth. Looking at both positive and negative attributes is not unlike the Twelve and Twelve's recommendation in Step Four to look at character assets along with defects to promote balance and discourage morbidity. Step Ten also encourages a look at both 'credits and debits' in one's nightly inventory. The Fourth Foundation is traditionally framed in terms of the Five Hindrances and the Seven Factors of Awakening, and these conveniently add up to twelve qualities:

The Five Hindrances:

- 1) Greed (or any desire, similar to Self-will)
- 2) Ill will (Resentment, bitterness)
- 3) Sloth and torpor (Laziness, 'half measures')

- 4) Restlessness and worry ('Restless, irritable and discontented')
- 5) Doubt (Lack of conviction, faith or confidence in one's abilities)

The Seven Factors of Awakening:

- 1) Mindfulness (Awareness of reality and spiritual Teachings)
- 2) Investigation (of Reality)
- 3) Energy (Determination, 'fearless and thorough from the very start')
- 4) Joy ('Happy, joyous and free')
- 5) Tranquility (Relaxation of body and mind)
- 6) Concentration (No distractions, silencing the 'voices inside')
- 7) Equanimity (Acceptance of Reality as it is, 'We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace')

A.A. members will undoubtedly be familiar with the defects named in the Hindrances. The investigation or inventory of one's mind in terms of broad categories of thought is not unlike Step Four: The Big Book suggests three categories for inventory - Resentment, Fear and Selfish Sex acts, and the Twelve and Twelve at one point mentions the Seven Deadly Sins as a useful list of character defects for exploration.

Those who have made significant progress will experience many of the Factors. Self-examination along these lines is not unlike The Twelve and Twelve's Step Ten suggestion for an occasional 'review of our progress since last time', and Step Eleven idea to 'envision our spiritual objective [and] try to move toward it.'

The Buddha concludes:

"Bhikkhus, if anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven years.. Let alone seven years, bhikkhus. If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for six years...for five years...for four years...for three years...for two years.. .for one year, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge [Nibbana] here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return [to the human realm].

"Let alone one year, bhikkhus. If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven months...for six months...for five months...for four months...for three months...for two months...for one month...for half a month, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.

"Let alone half a month, bhikkhus. If anyone should develop these four foundations of mindfulness in such a way for seven days, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left,

non-return.

"So it was with reference to this that it was said: 'Bhikkhus, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realization of Nibbana - namely, the four foundations of mindfulness.'"

MN 10:46-47

8 Right Concentration

"And what, friends, is right concentration? Here, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the first jhana, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. With the stilling of applied and sustained thought, he enters upon and abides in the second jhana, which has self-confidence and singleness of mind without applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of concentration. With the fading away as well of rapture, he abides in equanimity, and mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure with the body, he enters upon and abides in the third jhana, on account of which noble ones announce: 'He has a pleasant abiding who has equanimity and is mindful.' With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters upon and abides in the fourth jhana, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity. This is called right concentration."

MN 141 (Sariputta)

Unification of mind... is concentration; the four foundations of mindfulness are the basis of concentration; the four right kinds of striving [Right Effort] are the equipment of concentration; the repetition, development, and cultivation of these same states is the development of concentration therein.

MN 44:12 (Female monk Dhammadina)

The topics covered under Right Concentration are outside the purview of A.A., though of course they may form part of the experience, strength and hope of some individual members.

Understanding the full import of the potential for spiritual development based on the practice of Right Effort, Mindfulness and Concentration is most difficult, and in much detail is outside the scope of this site. A detailed treatment would be as

incomprehensible to those not in Higher Training as A.A.'s spiritual awakening is to a practicing alcoholic. It is very rare even for lay Buddhist practitioners to realize these, some of the greatest fruits of the Noble Eightfold Path. We realize too, that as editors of this site we cannot transmit what we haven't got. Therefore, we shall let the words of the Buddha himself give a brief overview of the road to Nibbana (Nirvana), with some modern commentary from translator Bhikkhu Bodi.

Under conditions of extreme concentration, an accomplished meditator can become aware of, and experience directly what we might call another dimension:

Beyond the form realm lies an even more exalted sphere of existence called the formless realm... The four planes that make up this realm, successively more subtle, are... the base of the infinity of space, the base of the infinity of consciousness, the base of nothingness, and the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

SN P72 (Bhikkhu Bodhi)

The Buddha instructs one of his disciples on these four planes of the formless realm:

Here, Udayin, with the complete surmounting of perceptions of form, with the disappearance of perceptions of sensory impact, with non-attention to perceptions of diversity, aware that 'space is infinite,' a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the base of infinite space...

Here, Udayin, by completely surmounting the base of infinite space, aware that 'consciousness is infinite,' a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the base of infinite consciousness...

Here, Udayin, by completely surmounting the base of infinite consciousness, aware that 'there is nothing,' a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the base of nothingness...

Here, Udayin, by completely surmounting the base of nothingness, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception...

Here, Udayin, by completely surmounting the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the cessation of perception and feeling. That surmounts it. Thus I speak of the abandoning even of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

MN 66:30-34

There is yet another level of attainment higher than direct knowledge of these planes of

the formless realm. "This is the contemplation of 'things as they actually are,' which results in increasingly deeper insights into the nature of existence and culminates in the final goal, the attainment of arahantship [Nibbana or Nirvana]." **(MN Page 37 Bhikkhu Bodhi)** Such a person is said, in a stock phrase of the Buddha, to have "abandoned the taints that defile, bring renewal of being, give trouble, ripen in suffering, and lead to future birth, ageing, and death; he has cut them off at the root, made them like a palm stump, done away with them so that they are no longer subject to future arising." There are no traces of Greed, Aversion or Delusion in an arahant, and he is no longer subject to rebirth into another life, with its attendant suffering. In addition to knowledge of how things really are and other forms of Wisdom, he now possesses a radically different sense of self. When describing a number of such attainments in the Suttas, the Buddha habitually said this of the new arahant:

He understands: 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.'

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous:

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

Powerlessness over alcohol, the source of the alcohol addiction, is understood in the Big Book to have both physical and mental aspects. The physical factor is discussed in early portion of the book entitled The Doctor's Opinion.

Powerlessness is also discussed in Chapter Two, where it is said "...the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind." The mental element is discussed at great length in Chapter Three. The alcoholic's inability to think logically and realistically about the consequences of drinking is known as 'insanity', as demonstrated by the number of times this word or an equivalent is used in this chapter and elsewhere.

The phenomenon we now call denial is described in stark terms: "The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death." If the inability to keep from taking the first drink is insanity, then this failure to comprehend and acknowledge it prevents us from seeking a solution. Overcoming this failure is the core of A.A.'s First Step. The closest we come to explicit directions in the Big Book are in this passage:

We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed.

BB 30

This delusion about the alcoholic's fatal disease is analogous to that of one who does not understand the First Noble Truth about suffering in life. Fortuitously, the Pioneers of A.A chose the same word to describe this issue as the translators of ancient Buddhist texts, a happy coincidence which underscores a similarity in the personal dilemma faced by members of both traditions.

It should be noted, however, that though one overcomes the alcoholic delusion, the insanity, or susceptibility to the first drink, remains. As we see in Bill's Story and Chapter Three, self-knowledge is not sufficient to overcome alcoholism, though it does make recovery possible. Something other and greater than the Human will is needed for a solution.

Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Whether from personal talks with recovered people, or reading Bill's Story and those in the back of the Big Book, belief in a solution to alcoholism seems always to come as a

result of others' testimony. Step Two is not explicitly discussed in the Big Book, though this principle is discussed twice in Chapter Two, aptly entitled There Is A Solution:

[W]e saw that it really worked in others, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it. When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet.

And

Our hope is that many alcoholic men and women, desperately in need, will see these pages, and we believe that it is only by fully disclosing ourselves and our problems that they will be persuaded to say, "Yes, I am one of them too; I must have this thing."

BB 25, 29

Having identified with the formerly active alcoholics as co-sufferers and having been swayed by testimony of their recoveries, the still-suffering alcoholic is naturally enthusiastic to follow the path described to them. A similar dynamic is at play in the Buddhist tradition regarding the Third Noble Truth.

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

This decision, which culminates in a prayer, comes only after the Big Book's focus shifts from the external factor of alcohol to the internal factor of the alcoholic's attitude toward life and his fellows. How do we turn our will and lives over, he might ask?

The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though our motives are good... Selfishness--self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate...

So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so.

BB 60, 62

At the end of Step Three, transitioning to Step Four, the link between internal factors of character and alcoholism becomes clear: "Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions." (**BB 64**) (The Twelve and Twelve later makes the point more explicitly in Step Four, **Page 44** when, using a synonym for self-will, it states that, "Alcoholics especially should be able to see that instinct run wild in themselves is the underlying cause of their destructive drinking.") Buddhism has a corresponding shift in focus in the Second Noble Truth, in which we see that the unsatisfactory nature of the outer world is created by the human habit of craving for pleasant sensations, possessions, self-image and the like.

After this discussion of self-will, we find this direction on the actual taking of Step Three:

We were now at *Step Three*. Many of us said to our Maker, as we understood him: "God, I offer myself to Thee--to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!" We thought well before taking this step making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him.

BB 63

While Buddhism does not countenance any sort of Creator or Supreme Being, the second factor of the Noble Eightfold Path, Right Intention, includes renunciation of ill-will and craving for material pleasures, two major sources of self-centered thought and behavior. And, despite the decidedly non-theistic nature of this spiritual path, there is indeed a vow similar in nature to A.A.'s Third Step Prayer called the Refuge Vows.

A personal attitude of willingness is central to this Step, and indeed to the process of recovery generally. The Third Step Prayer itself expresses an implicit willingness to do or become anything in accordance with God's will. The authors write in *Spiritual Experience* that "*Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery.*" One is said in *How It Works* to be ready to take certain steps if one is "willing to go to any length", a phrase repeated and paraphrased several times in the Big Book, and the authors say that they who have recovered are "willing to grow along spiritual lines". Willingness is explicitly mentioned as an antidote for self-will in the Twelve and Twelve's Step Three discussion: "Though self-will may slam it [the door to a faith that works] shut again, as it frequently does, it will always respond the moment we again pick up the key of willingness." (**Page 35**)

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

The Fourth Step seeks to investigate and become aware of negative thoughts and emotions, an awareness often lacking in the active alcoholic. It begins by reiterating the first principle of Step Three: "Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations." Thus, the defects of character to be inventoried are explicitly identified with self-will. The authors write that "Resentment is the 'number one' offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else." **(Page 64)** They also heavily emphasize the spiritual danger of fear: "This short word somehow touches about every aspect of our lives. It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it." **(Page 67)** Resentment and fear, the two major topics to be inventoried, are important types of aversion or negative reaction to people, places, things and situations. Buddhism holds aversion to be one of three roots of all unwholesome thoughts, words and deeds. **(MN 9:5, as noted above)**

After listing in one column the people, ideas or institutions which caused resentment or fear in us, we also list what situation was involved, and thirdly, how it affected us. The third column of the Fourth Step resentment and fear inventory,, in which we investigate how we are affected by the names in the column, shows the cause of these negative emotions:

We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry. In most cases it was found that our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships (including sex) were hurt or threatened. So we were sore. We were "burned up."

BB 64-65

In other words, fear and resentment arise when our emotional, financial, social and sexual desires are put at risk or are not satisfied. This Step Seven passage from the Twelve and Twelve makes the point a bit more succinctly: "The chief activator of our defects has been self-centered fear-primarily fear that we would lose something we already possessed or would fail to get something we demanded." **(Page 76)**

A fourth column, consisting of assessing our faults in these situations, is implied later in the discussion of the Fourth Step inventory. We are to ask ourselves, "Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened? ... Where were we to blame? The inventory was ours, not the other man's. When we saw our faults we listed them." **(BB 67)**

The Big Book notes the danger of Aversion when it states that, "It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness." When we also note that it also sees them rooted in desire (Craving or Greed, another of the three roots of the unwholesome in Buddhism), we see a convergence of A.A. and Buddhist thought. The Fourth Step notion that desires are associated with negative emotions conforms quite nicely with the Second Noble Truth, that the source of suffering is

Craving.

Sex, a prominent example of desire (Craving), is seen as important enough for its own separate inventory in the Fourth Step. The following passage explicitly concerns harmful acts motivated by sexual desire, but the last sentence justifies extending these principles to all areas of questionable conduct. We therefore have the basis for a list of all harms done needed for the Eighth Step:

We reviewed our own conduct over the years past.
Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate?
Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse
jealousy, suspicion or bitterness? Where were we at
fault, what should we have done instead? We got this
all down on paper and looked at it...

We must be willing to make amends where we have
done harm, provided that we do not bring about still
more harm in so doing. In other words, we treat sex
as we would any other problem.

BB 69

Buddhism, in its training practices, takes little or no notice of individuals affected by our behavior, nor the particular acts themselves. However, the intentions behind the acts (known as Karma) and the unwholesome qualities of mind explored in AA's Fourth Step Inventory are of great interest to those following the Noble Eightfold Path. Such a self-examination of unwholesome mental states such as greed, aversion and delusion and others*, is an integral part of Right Mindfulness, namely mindfulness of mind (thoughts and emotions).

Step 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Like Step Three, Step Five takes a great deal more space explaining the rationale and preparation than the actual execution. Finding a "solitary self-appraisal insufficient," the authors declare that "We must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world." Those who skipped this vital Step often drank again, for "they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it necessary, until they told someone else all their life story." The alcoholic is said to be a lonely figure, presenting his "stage character" to the world, while hiding shame and remorse over his drinking and past deeds from others. How appropriate that this Step, in which he discusses these intimate details of his life, is the first to absolutely require the presence and participation of another person.

The next point is choosing someone to hear one's Fifth Step. For those who are members of a religious body, a likely candidate is a "properly appointed authority." If

this is not suitable, one must find another person, referred to in the Big Book as "a close-mouthed, understanding friend," or "partner." Notice that the latter two do not imply that either person in this process is superior to the other. Such a person should "be able to keep a confidence; that he fully understand and approve what we are driving at; that he will not try to change our plan." And he must understand the gravity of the situation, realizing "that we are engaged upon a life-and-death errand."

There appears to be only a single sentence describing the actual Fifth Step discussion of the nature of one's wrongs: "We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past." Following this, there should be a period of silent contemplation, followed by a prayer of thanks, and a review of one's thoroughness so far. If this is satisfactory, one looks at the next Step.

There is no counterpart in either the Four Noble Truths or the Noble Eightfold Path to this act of discussing one's past wrongdoings and shortcomings. However, one sees in the Suttas references to "spiritual friendship" as being indispensable as an aid to Buddhist training. Such a spiritual friend will on occasion hear one's confession of current shortcomings (called "transgressions") in following certain training practices.

Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Comprising only a single paragraph in the Big Book, this Step concerns one's attitude of readiness and willingness or being willing to remove character defects, which are manifestations of self-will. Such willingness, as we have seen, reinforces the commitment made in the Third Step decision to turn over our will and lives.

This Step is analogous to Right Intention, the second point of the Noble Eightfold Path, which emphasizes renunciation of the three roots of all that is unwholesome: Greed, Aversion and Delusion*.

Step 7: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

This Step is also contained in one paragraph, and consists only of the Seventh Step Prayer, which is recited immediately after Step Six. It is perhaps worth noting that the Prayer first expresses willingness to have defects of character removed before actually making that request.

Humility and this prayer are necessary, for, despite being both ready and willing to have defects of character removed, we are not able to do this ourselves. We see in Step Three that, "Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God's help." And in Step Four, "We saw that these resentments must be mastered, but how? We could not wish them away any more than alcohol."

In Buddhism, ridding oneself of unwholesome traits is very much within the power of the individual, and is prescribed in the sixth point of the Noble Eightfold Path, Right Effort.

Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Another Step contained in a single paragraph, like the previous two, Step Eight again emphasizes the spiritual quality of willingness. Being possessed of willingness and the list of persons harmed from the Fourth Step inventory, "We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will."

Though Buddhism places little or no emphasis on cataloging individual acts of the past or those harmed by them, it does contemplate repairing the overall effects of past unwholesome acts. The middle of the Noble Eightfold Path, the ethics portion, is focused on replacing the bad karma (negative spiritual energy) produced acts toward others based on the unwholesome traits of greed, aversion and delusion with wholesome future acts toward everyone based on better motives. A commitment to follow the Eightfold Path by renouncing unwholesome traits and replacing them with wholesome ones, i.e. Right Intention, could be seen as equivalent to willingness to make amends for the past, though without focus on individuals.

Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

This is a very much an action-oriented Step, so it is perhaps not surprising that the bulk of the discussion concerns practical advice on approaching individuals harmed by one's past conduct. Like the Fifth Step, the Ninth requires the presence of another person, though this time as a recipient, not necessarily as an active participant. The spiritual motivation behind it is put on the back burner unless it might be helpful, as the one approached "is going to be more interested in a demonstration of good will than in our talk of spiritual discoveries." Specific scenarios include dealing with angry ex-wives, business associates and creditors. As in the Fourth Step inventory, sex conduct is given separate emphasis when considering amends to one's current spouse. Amends for other harms to the spouse and family are discussed in greater detail in a later Big Book chapter, The Family Afterward. Expectations of a recovering alcoholic employee can be found in the chapter To Employers.

There are two major spiritual principles involved informing this Step. The first is forgiving, or at least forgetting, the other person's part in any situation: "It may be he has done us more harm than we have done him and, though we may have acquired a better attitude toward him, we are still not too keen about admitting our faults... His faults are not discussed. We stick to our own." This principle is, of course, the fruit of Step Eight.

The second spiritual principle can be found in the second half of the Step itself: the

avoidance of injuring others. The authors give potential scenarios in which harm could possibly come to the alcoholic's family or to third parties if careful consideration is not given when considering and making amends.

The Twelve and Twelve sums up Step Nine in a way which can also describe Step Eight: "[T]he readiness to take the full consequences of our past acts, and to take responsibility for the well-being of others at the same time, is the very spirit of Step Nine."

The principle of non-harming is important in Buddhism, and is a central consideration in the ethics portion of the Noble Eightfold Path. Additionally, the Buddhist idea of correcting negative karma (spiritual energy) created by past actions with good karma from acts based on wholesome motives corresponds roughly to the grassroots A.A. idea of "living amends", which consist of a positive change in behavior without a personal approach to individuals harmed. Thus, Right Action, Right Speech and Right Livelihood may be seen as the Buddhist equivalent of making living amends to the entire world.

Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

This Step "suggests we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along." As such, it appears to be the first Step concerned with current thoughts and actions. The introduction further states that "We have entered the world of the Spirit," indicating that the authors believe that there has been an important change in one's spiritual status by this point in the A.A. program. "Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our lifetime." Thus, we see that Step Ten is also the first to explicitly suggest ongoing practice rather than a onetime or occasional activity.

The specific directions for Step Ten are expressed in only a few sentences in the main paragraph of this section of the Into Action chapter, but several types of action are proposed here. The first is unique to this Step: "Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear." The continuous awareness of the presence of undesirable thoughts and emotions is identical to the seventh point of the Noble Eightfold Path, Right Mindfulness, specifically the third foundation of mindfulness (mindfulness of mind (thoughts and emotions)). The Twelve and Twelve expands on this suggestion, calling it a 'spot check inventory'.

Next, after finding the negative states of mind, we are told, "When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them." This is the principle behind Step Seven, applied to a current thought or emotion. Like Step Seven itself, this portion of Step Ten is analogous to the sixth point of the Path, Right Effort.

After this effort, "We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends

quickly if we have harmed anyone." These actions duplicate Steps Five and Nine, again with an emphasis on current rather than past events. Interaction with people, is of course, required here, as in the Steps on which they are modeled, and helps to further end the isolation felt during active alcoholism. Ongoing consultation with others ("discuss them with someone") is, like Step Five, an example of spiritual friendship, an aid to Buddhist practice and indeed, any other type of spiritual growth. Immediate amends for current harms done is consistent with the purpose of Ethics portion of the Eightfold Path, in which current action based on wholesome motives replaces and makes up for unwholesome actions based on that kind of motive. Thus, we see that Step Ten certainly is and action Step.

The Step Ten instructions end with a fourth and final suggestion, and a summary of its spirit: "Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code." This third type of approach to others, one with an attitude of generosity, is also in line with Ethics portion of the Eightfold Path.

The Twelve and Twelve adds one entirely new idea in its treatment of this step when it suggests an annual or semiannual "housecleaning". Some A.A.'s even take a retreat from the outside world "for an undisturbed day or so of self-overhaul and meditation." The latter practice is now quite common among Buddhist lay followers in the West.

Step Ten transitions to the Eleventh with this sentiment: "'How can I best serve Thee-Thy will (not mine) be done.' These are thoughts which must go with us constantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will." One is reminded of the Third Step Prayer in which one asks to be relived of the "bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will." One has entered the world of the spirit by this Step, and is now constantly mindful of self-will in the form of unwholesome thoughts and acts when they occur. Therefore, one now acts in accordance with God's will ("Doing the next right thing" in grassroots A.A. parlance), rather than asking for that ability.

Step 11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Like Step Ten, the Eleventh begins with a promise of new spiritual status: "If we have carefully followed directions ["...as the result of these steps"], we have begun to sense the flow of His Spirit into us. To some extent we have become God-conscious. We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense." Despite this lofty beginning, the subject matter of the Big Book's treatment of this Step remains strictly earthbound. The remainder of this step discusses only correcting and directing thoughts and action in everyday life. The Twelve and Twelve expands the field of discussion of this Step greatly, perhaps more so than on any other. We will presently be examining that discussion in some detail.

The Big Book has "definite and valuable suggestions" for the evening, morning and

daily life. The evening prayer and meditation practice, packed into one dense paragraph, reviews the day just passed. There is a short series of questions to guide this exercise, not unlike those posed in Step Four, in the fourth column of the resentment/fear inventories and later in the sex inventory. The first of these is a specific question involving awareness of the unwholesome traits of resentment, self-centeredness, dishonesty and fear that appeared during the day. This personal inventory at the end of the day corresponds precisely with the first instruction in Step Ten, though the latter takes place shortly after the fact. This, as before, is analogous to part of the Buddhist practice of mindfulness of mind, that is, awareness of thoughts and emotions.

Two more specific questions pertain to owing an apology or neglecting to speak with someone about a troubling issue. These also correspond to elements of Step Ten. Once again, the A.A. emphasis amends and discussion of faults correspond to the Buddhist principles of Ethics portion of the Eightfold Path and spiritual friendship, respectively. Perhaps because of this overlap with Tenth Step principles, the Twelve and Twelve treats this evening practice as part of that Step.

Finally, "[a]fter making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken." Contemplating the possible answer to this inquiry may be implied as a form of meditation, though the Big Book does not say so.

Morning practice ("upon awakening"), is perhaps more proactive than the evening ritual, and is certainly more lengthy and detailed. Here one seeks direction for the coming day rather than correcting previous mistakes. "We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives." This can be seen as something of a daily version of Step Seven. The Buddhist equivalent is Right Effort, specifically the first and second types.

"Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives," it is predicted. After practicing for some time "[w]hat used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind." It should be kept mind that these thoughts apply strictly to pragmatic and practical concerns about actions in daily life, and conforming these to what is presumably God's will. "We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no request for ourselves only." Incidentally, this quiet time in the morning, during which one awaits intuitive ideas on how to proceed, appears to be the only form of meditation explicitly mentioned in the Big Book.

The definite and valuable suggestion offered for use during the day is expressed in a mere two sentences: "As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day 'Thy will be

done." This advice to pause, though brief, is important enough to be repeated in the Wives chapter and in Steps Three, Ten and Eleven in the Twelve and Twelve. Once again, the period of this pause, when waiting for the right intuitive thought, might be viewed implicitly as meditation. Like Step Ten's first instruction, Step Eleven contains an element of continuous awareness of certain thoughts or feelings, which again corresponds to Buddhism's mindfulness of mind and mental objects or mental qualities (The Third and Fourth Foundations of Mindfulness).

The Twelve and Twelve at certain points aims higher than the Big Book's emphasis on correction and direction of daily thoughts and actions. In these passages we see, not instructions for prayer and meditation, rather a vision of the transcendent possibilities made possible by these practices:

There is a direct linkage among self-examination, meditation, and prayer. Taken separately, these practices can bring much relief and benefit. But when they are logically related and interwoven, the result is an unshakable foundation for life. Now and then we may be granted a glimpse of that ultimate reality which is God's kingdom. And we will be comforted and assured that our own destiny in that realm will be secure for so long as we try, however falteringly, to find and do the will of our own Creator.

And

Meditation is something which can always be further developed. It has no boundaries, either of width or height. Aided by such instruction and example as we can find, it is essentially an individual adventure, something which each one of us works out in his own way. But its object is always the same: to improve our conscious contact with God, with His grace, wisdom, and love. **(Page 98,101)**

If we only modify the references to a deity, one might imagine an Enlightened person saying this of the higher meditative states attained in Right Concentration. One wonders if the author is inspired here by memories his spiritual experience in the hospital, by from subsequent practice and growth or perhaps his hope for the future.

In keeping with the suggestion of finding instruction and example, and the Eleventh Step suggestion of outside spiritual reading in both of A.A.'s major books, the Twelve and Twelve introduces the St. Francis Prayer to the A.A. Canon:

Lord, make me a channel of Thy peace-that where there is hatred, I may bring love-that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness-that where there is discord, I may bring harmony-that where there

is error, I may bring truth-that where there is doubt, I may bring faith-that where there is despair, I may bring hope-that where there are shadows, I may bring light-that where there is sadness, I may bring joy. Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted-to understand, than to be understood-to love, than to be loved. For it is by self-forgetting that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life. Amen.

One can "reread this prayer several times very slowly, savoring every word and trying to take in the deep meaning of each phrase and idea... try to see what its inner essence is." This suggestion is not unlike that of the Buddha at top of this website. Using constructive imagination in meditation, we may "envision our spiritual objective before we try to move toward it." This is a different and more active practice than the Big Book's idea of waiting for the right thought or intuition during morning meditation. "It ought to be followed by a good look at where we stand now, and a further look at what might happen in our lives were we able to move closer to the ideal we have been trying to glimpse."

The chapter ends with another hint of the Transcendent:

Perhaps one of the greatest rewards of meditation and prayer is the sense of belonging that comes to us. We no longer live in a completely hostile world. We are no longer lost and frightened and purposeless. The moment we catch even a glimpse of God's will, the moment we begin to see truth, justice, and love as the real and eternal things in life, we are no longer deeply disturbed by all the seeming evidence to the contrary that surrounds us in purely human affairs. We know that God lovingly watches over us. We know that when we turn to Him, all will be well with us, here and hereafter. **(Page 105)**

Further than this, the Twelve and Twelve cannot go, for to give a more specific vision of the fruits of meditation and prayer and the truths discovered by these means in official A.A. literature runs the risk of either imposing one man's experience on every member's "individual adventure", or venturing into the realm of religious doctrine. The Big Book firmly rejects such a course, saying: "We are not allied with any particular faith, sect or denomination, nor do we oppose anyone." And: "Those having religious affiliations will find here nothing disturbing to their beliefs or ceremonies." There is also the more recent expression from the A.A. grassroots that "This is a spiritual program, not a religious program."

For this reason, we must conclude that nothing in A.A. literature corresponds to the final point in Buddhism's Noble Eightfold Path, Right Concentration, though of course the latter may be reflected in some member's personal experience, and it is quite possible to begin Buddhist practice (or any other) as a result of A.A.'s Twelve Steps.

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Though Step Twelve contains three distinct parts as written, the chapter discussing it is entitled Working With Others, and deals only with this aspect. The fruits of a spiritual awakening are described in the latter half of the chapter Into Action, and its gradual unfolding can be seen in the Promises after Steps Three, Four and Five, culminating in the Ninth Step Promises. (The Twelve and Twelve also describes the fruits of each Step along the way.) Guidance on daily activities comes in Step Eleven, corrective measures for shortcomings in Step Ten, and expectations of the recovering and recovered alcoholic can be found in the three chapters following Working With Others.

Buddhist guidance on daily activities can be found in the Ethics Portion of the Noble Eightfold Path. A Buddhist awakening is based on ethical behavior and practice of the principles of the Concentration Portion of the Eightfold Path, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and culminating in Right Concentration. Carrying the message is not included in either the Noble Truths or the Noble Eightfold Path, but is an understood part of Buddhism, as evidenced in the Bodhisattva Vows and certain utterances of the Buddha.

"Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics," begins the chapter giving directions for this important mission. However, the first few newly-sober alcoholics in Akron discovered another motivation, as related in A Vision For You: "Though they knew they must help other alcoholics if they would remain sober, that motive became secondary. It was transcended by the happiness they found in giving themselves for others." Dr. Bob, A.A.'s second co-founder, and the greatest practitioner of the Twelfth Step, writes in his personal story:

I spend a great deal of time passing on what I learned to others who want and need it badly. I do it for four reasons:

1. Sense of duty.
2. It is a pleasure.
3. Because in so doing I am paying my debt to the man who took time to pass it on to me.
4. Because every time I do it I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip.

Here we see three selfless reasons for carrying the message to others, with only the last (and least) referring to self-interest. The sense of compassion and responsibility for

others as well as gratitude are not common in practicing alcoholics. It seems reasonable to say that not only is working with other alcoholics necessary to maintain sobriety, the desire to do so is also a part of the spiritual awakening that brings about sobriety in the first place.

Although the Twelfth Step is by far the longest in terms of explicit directions, and has an entire chapter solely devoted to it, the Big Book takes up more space discussing elements of each of the first two Steps. For example, Chapter Three, the Doctor's Opinion and the middle section of There Is A Solution all deal with the powerlessness aspect of Step One. Bill's Story also gives a firsthand account of his increasing alcoholism and powerlessness. Chapter Four and the final part of There Is A Solution discuss spirituality and its role in recovery from alcoholism - the heart of Step Two. In contrast, Steps Three through Eleven, the other nine Steps of the program of action, are contained in a mere two chapters - How It Works and Into Action.

Such is the persistence of the alcoholic's delusion and possible resistance to spirituality that this heavy emphasis on the first two Steps is also reflected in the text of Working With Others: Fully half the chapter is devoted to them. The newly-recovered alcoholic, now seeking to maintain his sobriety and help others, is to share his experience, strength and hope in the matters covered in the Doctor's opinion and Chapters Two through Four with prospective A.A. members. Working With Others explicitly suggests using the methods in More About Alcoholism, and in Bill's Story we see an implicit example of how to tie all these ideas together in one's personal testimony to the new man. Bill himself spends the entire first half of his personal story discussing the arc of his drinking history, ending with utter powerlessness, and then approximately the third quarter relating his first talk with Ebby and spiritual issues. Only about the last fourth of Bill's story concerns working on a program of recovery and a brief description of the newly-formed fellowship that grew up around him.

Remarkably, there appears to be only a single line in Working With Others on helping with the later Steps. Much more time is spent advising the recovered man on when and how to give material help to the prospect and counseling his family. Having lent one's copy of the Big Book to the new man after a lengthy talk about the disease of alcoholism and the spiritual solution proposed, he may decide to pursue it. "Having had the experience yourself, you can give him much practical advice." It is not suggested outright that the recovered alcoholic and the new man study the book together. After actively seeking out the troubled alcoholic and speaking of his own personal story, the experienced man's role appears to become more passive as emphasis seems to shift to the Big Book as a guide to the Steps. But there is this later statement: "Both you and the new man must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress." This seems to imply a future friendship and perhaps even partnership in spirituality between the two people involved. In A Vision For You, the authors describe the growth of such a partnership into the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Such spiritual friendship, while not mentioned in the Four Noble Truths or Eightfold Path, is praised in Buddhist literature as a great aid to one's practice.

The Twelve and Twelve spends a mere two pages (out of twenty) on working with other alcoholics, adding little to what has already been said on the subject. Interestingly, the sponsor is barely mentioned after Step Five, and not at all in steps Six, Seven and Eight. In addition to expressing more thoughts on how to 'practice these principles in all our affairs', the author expands greatly on several aspects of the spiritual awakening brought about by A.A.'s program of recovery. He concludes this topic with a grand rhetorical flourish:

Service, gladly rendered, obligations squarely met,
troubles well accepted or solved with God's help,
the knowledge that at home or in the world outside
we are partners in a common effort, the well-
understood fact that in God's sight all human beings
are important, the proof that love freely given surely
brings a full return, the certainty that we are no
longer isolated and alone in self-constructed prisons,
the surety that we need no longer be square pegs in
round holes but can't and belong in God's scheme of
things- these are the permanent and legitimate satis-
factions of right living for which no amount of pomp
and circumstance, no heap of material possessions,
could possibly be substitutes. True ambition is not
what we thought it was. True ambition is the deep desire
to walk humbly under the grace of God.

The chapter ends with the Serenity Prayer. As if the emphasize the Fellowship, the end of isolation and that this is a 'we' program, the Prayer is now pluralized:

God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change,
Courage to change the things we can,
And wisdom to know the difference.

IV Spiritual Experience

If not members of religious bodies, we sometimes select and memorize a few set prayers which emphasize the principles we have been discussing. There are many helpful books also. Suggestions about these may be obtained from one's priest, minister or rabbi. Be quick to see where religious people are right. Make use of what they have to offer.

Big Book, Page 87

The actual experience of meditation and prayer across the centuries is, of course, immense. The world's libraries and places of worship are a treasure trove for all seekers.

Twelve and Twelve, Page 98

This website is oriented toward, and written by recovered alcoholics. However, in view of these passages from the Big Book and Twelve and Twelve encouraging outside spiritual reading, we feel justified in presenting some of the spiritual experience of the Buddha and a few others. These are not intended to entangle one in Buddhist doctrine, and deal only with general principles common to most denominations. We hope the reader will partake of them in the spirit of the quote attributed to Herbert Spencer in the Spiritual Experience appendix from the Big Book.

Original Buddhist Quotes:

(All quotes are from the Buddha, unless specified)

The Connected Discourses of the Buddha:

18 "They [wise ones] do not sorrow over the past,
Nor do they hanker for the future.
They maintain themselves with what is present
Hence their complexion is so serene.

19 "Through hankering for the future,
Through sorrowing over the past,
Fools dry up and wither away
Like a green reed cut down."

54 "If one wrongs an innocent man,
A pure person without blemish,
The evil falls back on the fool himself
Like fine dust thrown against the wind."

206 "The world is led around by mind;
By mind it's dragged here and there.
Mind is the one thing that has
All under its control."

208 "The world is led around by craving;
By craving it is dragged here and there.
Craving is the one thing that has
All under its control."

[Subrahma:]

303 "Always frightened is this mind,
The mind is always agitated
About unarisen problems
And about arisen ones.
If there exists release from fear,
Being asked, please declare it to me."

[Buddha:]

304 "Not apart from enlightenment and austerity,
Not apart from restraint of the sense faculties,
Not apart from relinquishing all,
Do I see any safety for living beings.

383 "Greed, hatred, and delusion,
Arisen from within oneself,
Injure the person of evil mind
As its own fruit destroys the reed."

385 "If one regards oneself as dear
One should not yoke oneself to evil,
For happiness is not easily gained
By one who does a wrongful deed."

387 "Both the merits and the evil
That a mortal does right here:
This is what is truly one's own,
This one takes when one goes;
This is what follows one along
Like a shadow that never departs."

616 "One who repays an angry man with anger
Thereby makes things worse for himself.
Not repaying an angry man with anger,
One wins a battle hard to win.

617 "He practises for the welfare of both-
His own and the other's-
When, knowing that his foe is angry,
He mindfully keeps his peace."

619 "The fool thinks victory is won
When by speech, he bellows harshly;
But for one who understands,
Patient endurance is the true victory."

693 "Well-spoken counsel is hard to understand
By one who relishes contradiction,
By one with a corrupt mind
Who is engrossed in aggression.

694 "But if one has removed aggression
And the distrust of one's heart,
If one has cast away aversion,
One can understand well-spoken counsel."

[Sakka:]

941 "I am not one afflicted in mind,
Nor easily drawn by anger's whirl.
I never become angry for long,
Nor does anger persist in me.

942 "When I'm angry I don't speak harshly
And I don't praise my virtues
I keep myself well restrained
Out of regard for my own good."

[Sakka:]

945 "Do not let anger overpower you;
Do not become angry at those who are angry.
Non-anger and harmlessness always dwell
Within [the hearts of] the noble ones.
Like a mountain avalanche
Anger crushes evil people."

"Bhikkhus, just as all the rafters of a peaked house lead to the roof peak and converge upon the roof peak, and all are removed when the roof peak is removed, so too all unwholesome states are rooted in ignorance and converge upon ignorance, and all are uprooted when ignorance is uprooted. Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train yourselves thus: 'We will dwell diligently.' Thus should you train yourselves."

SN 20:1

"Bhikkhus, when the uninstructed worldling is being contacted by a painful feeling, he sorrows, grieves, and laments; he weeps beating his breast and becomes distraught. He feels two feelings—a bodily one and a mental one. Suppose they were to strike a man with a dart, and then they would strike him immediately afterwards with a second dart, so that the man would feel a feeling caused by two darts. So too, when the uninstructed worldling is being contacted by a painful feeling... he feels two feelings—a bodily one and a mental one."

SN 36:6

"Bhikkhus, ignorance is the forerunner in the entry upon unwholesome states, with shamelessness and fearlessness of wrongdoing following along. For an unwise person immersed in ignorance, wrong view springs up. For one of wrong view, Wrong intention springs up. For one of wrong intention, wrong Speech springs up. For one of wrong speech, wrong action Springs up. For one of wrong action, wrong livelihood springs

up- For one of wrong livelihood, wrong effort springs up. For one of wrong effort, wrong mindfulness springs up. For one of wrong mindfulness, wrong concentration springs up."

SN 45:1

"Bhikkhus, I do not see even one other thing by means of which the unarisen Noble Eightfold Path arises and the arisen Noble Eightfold Path goes to fulfillment by development so effectively as by this: good friendship. When a bhikkhu has a good friend, it is to be expected that he will develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path."

SN 45:77

"Bhikkhus, there are these three kinds of suffering. What three? Suffering due to pain, suffering due to formations [thoughts and emotions], suffering due to change. These are the three kinds of suffering. The Noble Eightfold Path is to be developed for direct knowledge of these three kinds of suffering, for the full understanding of them, for their utter destruction, for their abandoning."

SN 45:165

"Bhikkhus, there are these four knots. What four? The bodily knot of covetousness, the bodily knot of ill will, the bodily knot of distorted grasp of rules and vows, the bodily knot of adherence to dogmatic assertion of truth. These are the four knots. This Noble Eightfold Path is to be developed for direct knowledge of these four knots, for the full understanding of them, for their utter destruction, for their abandoning."

SN 45:174

"Bhikkhus, there are these five hindrances. What five? The hindrance of sensual desire, the hindrance of ill will, the hindrance of sloth and torpor, the hindrance of restlessness and remorse, the hindrance of doubt. These are the five hindrances. This Noble Eightfold Path is to be developed for direct knowledge of these five hindrances, for the full understanding of them, for their utter destruction, for their abandoning."

SN 45:177

"What is displeasing and disagreeable to me is displeasing and disagreeable to the other too. How can I inflict upon

another what is displeasing and disagreeable to me?"

SN 55:7

"Bhikkhus, these four things, when developed and cultivated, lead to greatness of wisdom. What four? Association with superior persons, hearing the true Dhamma [Teachings], careful attention, practice in accordance with the Dhamma. These four things, when developed and cultivated, lead to greatness of wisdom."

SN 55:62

The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha:

"And what is the root of the unwholesome? Greed is a root of the unwholesome; hate is a root of the unwholesome; delusion is a root of the unwholesome. This is called the root of the unwholesome."

MN 9

"Now, friends, a bhikkhu should review himself thus:
'Do I have evil wishes, and am I dominated by evil wishes?'
If, when he reviews himself, he knows: 'I have evil wishes, I am dominated by evil wishes,' then he should make an effort to abandon those evil unwholesome states. But if, when he reviews himself, he knows: 'I have no evil wishes, I am not dominated by evil wishes, then he can abide happy and glad, training day and night in wholesome states."

MN 15

"Again, bhikkhus, a noble disciple considers thus: 'I am not anything belonging to anyone anywhere, nor is there anything belonging to me in anyone anywhere.'"

MN 106

"Bhikkhus, whatever fears arise, all arise because of the fool, not because of the wise man; whatever troubles arise, all arise because of the fool, not because of the wise man; whatever calamities arise, all arise because of the fool, not because of the wise man... Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train thus:
'We shall be wise men, we shall be inquirers.'"

MN 115

The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha:

"Bhikkhus, I do not see even one other thing on account of which unarisen restlessness and remorse arise and arisen restlessness and remorse increase and expand so much as an unsettled mind. For one with an unsettled mind, unarisen restlessness and remorse arise and arisen restlessness and remorse increase and expand."

AN 1:14

"Bhikkhus, I do not see even one other thing on account of which unarisen restlessness and remorse do not arise and arisen restlessness and remorse are abandoned so-much as pacification of the mind. For one with a pacified mind, unarisen restlessness and remorse do not arise and arisen restlessness and are abandoned."

AN 1:19

"Bhikkhus, I do not see even one other thing that when restrained leads to such great good as the mind. A restrained mind leads to great good."

AN 1:38

"Bhikkhus, I do not see a single thing that so causes unarisen unwholesome qualities to arise and arisen wholesome qualities to decline as heedlessness. For one who is heedless, unarisen unwholesome qualities arise and arisen wholesome qualities decline."

AN 1:58

"Bhikkhus, I do not see even a single thing that so causes unarisen wholesome qualities to arise and arisen unwholesome qualities to decline as fewness of desires. For one with few desires, unarisen wholesome qualities arise and arisen unwholesome qualities decline."

AN 1:63

"Bhikkhus, I do not see even a single thing that so causes

un arisen wholesome qualities to arise and arisen unwholesome qualities to decline as contentment. For one who is content, un arisen wholesome qualities arise and arisen unwholesome qualities decline."

AN 1:65

"Bhikkhus, I do not see even a single thing that so causes un arisen wholesome qualities to arise and arisen unwholesome qualities to decline as good friendship. For one with good friends, un arisen wholesome qualities arise and arisen unwholesome qualities decline."

AN 1:71

"Bhikkhus, I do not see even a single thing that so causes un arisen wholesome qualities to arise and arisen unwholesome qualities to decline as the pursuit of wholesome qualities and the non-pursuit of unwholesome qualities. Through the pursuit of wholesome qualities and the non-pursuit of unwholesome qualities, un arisen wholesome qualities arise and arisen unwholesome qualities decline."

AN 1:75

"And what is the power of reflection? Here, someone reflects thus: 'Bodily misconduct has a bad result in the present life and in the future life; verbal misconduct has a bad result in the present life and in the future life; mental misconduct has a bad result in the present life and in the future life.' Having reflected thus, he abandons bodily misconduct and develops bodily good conduct; he abandons verbal misconduct and develops verbal good conduct; he abandons mental misconduct and develops mental good conduct; he maintains himself in purity. This is called the power of reflection."

AN 2:12

"Bhikkhus, there are these two kinds of happiness. What two? Worldly happiness and spiritual happiness. These are the two kinds of happiness. Of these two kinds of happiness, spiritual happiness is foremost."

AN 2:68

"Bhikkhus, there are these two kinds of happiness. What two?"

Bodily happiness and mental happiness.. These are the two kinds of happiness. Of these two kinds of happiness, mental happiness is foremost."

AN 2:70

"Bhikkhus, these two kinds of persons are rare in the world. What two? One who takes the initiative in helping others and one who is grateful and thankful. These two kinds of persons are rare in the world."

AN 2:119

"Bhikkhus, these two kinds of persons are rare in the world. What two? One who is satisfied and one who provides satisfaction. These two kinds of persons are rare in the world."

AN 2:120

"Bhikkhus, these two kinds of persons are hard to satisfy. What two? One who amasses what he gains and one who squanders what he gains. These two kinds of persons are hard to satisfy."

AN 2:121

"Bhikkhus, the fool is characterized by his actions; the wise person is characterized by his actions. Wisdom shines in its manifestation."

AN 3:2

"One who possesses three qualities should be known as a wise person. What three? (1) He sees a transgression as a transgression. (2) When he sees a transgression as a transgression, he makes amends for it in accordance with the Dhamma. (3) When another person confesses a transgression to him, he accepts it in accordance with the Dhamma. One who possesses these three qualities should be known as a wise person."

AN 3:4

"Bhikkhus, there are these three kinds of persons found existing in the world. What three? The one without expectation, the one full of expectation, and the one who has overcome expectation."

AN 3:13

"Bhikkhus, these three qualities lead to one's own affliction, the affliction of others, and the affliction of both. What three? Bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, and mental misconduct. These three qualities lead to one's own affliction, the affliction of others, and the affliction of both."

AN 3:17

"One who associates with an inferior person declines; one who associates with an equal does not decline; attending on a superior person one develops quickly; therefore you should follow one superior to yourself."

AN 3:26

"Bhikkhus, in three cases one may be understood to have faith and confidence. What three? When one desires to see those of virtuous behavior; when one desires to hear the good Dhamma [Teachings]; and when one dwells at home with a mind devoid of the stain of miserliness, freely generous, openhanded, delighting in relinquishment, devoted to charity, delighting in giving and sharing. In these three cases, one may be understood to have faith and confidence."

AN 3:42

Bhikkhus, when one sees three advantages, it is enough to teach others the Dhamma [Buddha's teachings]. What three? (1) The one who teaches the Dhamma experiences the meaning and the Dhamma. (2) The one who hears the Dhamma experiences the meaning and the Dhamma. (3) Both the one who teaches the Dhamma and the one who hears the Dhamma experience the meaning and the Dhamma. Seeing these three advantages, it is enough to teach others the Dhamma."

AN 3:43

"Bhikkhus, one should associate with a friend who possesses three factors. What three? (1) Here, a bhikkhu gives what is hard to give. (2) He does what is hard to do. (3) He patiently endures what is hard to endure. One should associate with a friend who possesses these three factors."

AN 3:135

The Dhammapada:

- 3-5** 'She abused me, attacked me,
Defeated me, robbed me!'
For those not carrying on like this,
Hatred ends.
Hatred never ends through hatred
By non-hate alone does it end.
This is an ancient truth."
- 50** Do not consider the faults of others
Or what they have or haven't done.
Consider rather
What you yourself have or haven't done.
- 83** Virtuous people always let go.
They don't prattle about pleasures and desires.
Touched by happiness and then by suffering,
The sage shows no sign of being elated or depressed.
- 168** Rouse yourself! Don't be negligent!
Live the Dhamma, a life of good conduct.
One who lives the Dhamma is happy
In this world and the next.
- 173** Whoever replaces an evil deed
With what is wholesome
Illuminates the world
Like the moon set free from a cloud.
- 252** It's easy to see the faults of others
But hard to see one's own.
One sifts out the faults of others like chaff
But conceals one's own,
As a cheat conceals a bad throw of the dice.

Twentieth Century Buddhist Quotes

Soyen Shaku, Zen for Americans

A God who, keeping aloof from his creations, sends down his words of command through specially favored personages, is rejected by Buddhists as against the constitution of human reason. God must be in us, who are made in his likeness. We cannot presume the duality of God and the world. Religion is not to go to God by forsaking the world, but to find him in it.

Page 28-29

The Buddha recited the gatha (verse),

"Passions grow from the will,
The will grows from thought and imagination:
When both are calmed,
There is neither sensualism nor transmigration."

The Buddha said: "From the passions arise worry, and from worry arises fear. Away with the passions, and no fear, no worry."

**The Sutta of the Forty-two chapters 32-22
(from Soyen Shaku Page 16)**

Let a man do what is good and avoid what is bad and have his heart as pure as he can of all egoistic impulses and desires, and he will be delivered from the clutches of ignorance and misery.

Page 70

[T]he most essential postulate of Buddhism is that in each of us there abideth the indwelling reason of the universe, which when released from the temporal bondage of ignorance and self-will, becomes the master of itself by reducing everything to subjection and restoring it to its right place.

Page 73

The distinction between the self-will and the divine will must be personally felt and experienced.

Page 130

[T]he spiritual region lies within, and each of us must strive, through our own

inner and individual efforts and not through some outside agency, to unfold ourselves and bring about enlightenment. We may have high ideals, but let us remember they can be realized only after long discipline and untiring exertion.

Page 131

The intellect in its very nature is relative and cannot transcend its own limitations... Religion wants to understand and preserve life as it is found, and not to 'dissect and murder' it as is done by the intellect. Religion wants to see and not to demonstrate; to grasp directly with her own hands and not to rely upon a medium; to see intuitively and not discursively.

Page 133-134

Philip Kapleau (Ed) The Three Pillars of Zen

Eventually zazen [meditation] leads to a transformation of personality and character. Dryness, rigidity and self-centeredness give way to a flowing warmth, resiliency, and compassion, while self-indulgence and fear are transmuted into self-mastery and courage.

Page 14

Zen Master Yasutani, as quoted in Three Pillars:

Insights about oneself are valuable, of course, but your aim is to go beyond them. If you stop to congratulate yourself on your insights, your advancement toward realization of your Buddha-nature will be slowed.

Page 100

It is not selfishness to forget about saving others and to concentrate only on developing your own spiritual strength, though it may seem to be. The solemn truth is that you can't begin to save anybody until you yourself have become whole through the experience of Self-realization.

Page 140

To be sure, abstract thinking is useful when wisely employed - which is to say, when its nature and limitations are properly understood - but so long as human beings remain slaves to their intellect, fettered and controlled by it, they can well be called sick.

Page 29

It is important in this connection to distinguish the role of transitory thoughts from that of fixed concepts. Random ideas are relatively innocuous, but ideologies, opinions, and points of view, not to mention the factual knowledge accumulated

since birth (to which we attach ourselves), are the shadows which obscure the light of truth.

Page 29-30

[Insights during meditation:] Relationships which previously were incomprehensible will suddenly be clarified and difficult problems will be abruptly solved.

Page 38

Nancy Wilson Ross (Ed) The World of Zen

The aim of Zen is first of all awakening, awakening to our true self. With this awakening to our true self comes emancipation from our small self or personal ego... [W]e carry on what appears to be an individual existence as an individual ego. But no longer is that ego in control with its likes and dislikes, its characteristics and its foibles. The True Self, which from the beginning we always have been, has at last become the master.

Ruth Fuller Sasaki Page 29

We now know the significance of life, we know that it is not blind chance nor is it a mere display of brute forces, but that while we know not definitely what the ultimate purport of life is, there is something in it that makes us feel infinitely blessed in the living of it and remain quite contented with it in all its evolution, without raising questions or entertaining pessimistic doubts.

D.T. Suzuki Page 39-40

However powerful and overwhelming our ignorant drives are, the Real Self is always working in and through us. But we do not have pure faith because our minds are too much preoccupied with other strong beliefs: in success, prestige, money, intellectual superiority. What we need is time and space so that, free from all interruptions and distractions, we can at least once a day collect our psychic energy and concentratedly bring it into direct contact with our inner, most powerful resources.

Akihisa Kondo Page 205

Christians and other theists seem to be unnecessarily busy in trying to prove God as objectively existing before they believe in him. But from the Zen point of view the objectivity of God is an idle question. I would say that those who are so engrossed in the question of this sort have really no God whatever, that is, subjectively as well as objectively. As soon as they have faith, they have God. Faith is God and God is faith. To wait for an objective proof is the proof - the

most decisive one - that they have no God yet.

D.T. Suzuki Page 231

[F]aith , as soon as it goes out to express itself, is liable to be conditioned by all the accidental things it finds all around it, such as history, individual temperaments, geographical formations, biological peculiarities, etc. As regards the fighting among them, this will grow less and less as we get better acquainted with all these conditioning accidents. And this is our aim in the study of religion in all its differentiations.

D.T. Suzuki Page 232 (Footnote)

To follow God's will in the sense of true surrender of egoism is best to be done if there is no concept of God. Paradoxically, I truly follow God's will if I forget about God. Zen's concept of emptiness implies the true meaning of giving up one's will, yet without the danger of regressing to the idolatrous concept of a helping father.

Erich Fromm, Page 252

Man does not gain simplicity by leading the life of unlettered shepherds or by relinquishing his command of rational knowledge. He gains humility by widening his awareness of the vastness of nature through ungrudging communion with her.

Taisen Deshimaru Questions to a Zen Master

If you feel like losing your temper, if you are carried away by your emotions, then breathe deeply as in zazen [meditation]: that will be more effective.

Page 58-59

Taisen Deshimaru The Ring of the Way

In most religions, God is an object of faith to which people are overly attached. This is a mistake; it sets up a duality in the mind between self and the object of faith. The unity is broken.

Page 21

All the events in life, good or bad, sad or joyful, should be viewed like a stage play, and one's inner mind should always remain at peace.

Page 25

It is impossible to cut off desires and illusions deliberately, it is not something we can will to happen. Little by little, however, in zazen, our desires cease to

bother us; they diminish of themselves, unconsciously, naturally. We do not repress or pursue them - not push away, not run after.

Page 75

It is a truism that suffering is nourished, maintained, increased by mental rumination. Suffering is always the thought that one is suffering. And then one suffers even more. By letting one's thoughts pass by in zazen, one can cut off the roots of suffering. Empty the mind.

Page 88

True freedom also means being satisfied with one's lot. One can always try to improve it, to go further, to carry it beyond, higher. But not to complain, because that is just another self-indulgence, the same as being self-satisfied. Both are attachments, both lead to stagnation. The true attitude is to go freely forward, treating obstacles and delights alike as playthings.

Page 91

Buddhist quotes reflecting the Twelve Steps

Step One

There is no precise Buddhist parallel to this Step. However, A.A. and Buddhism both involve overcoming delusion: in the former the delusion that we may presently drink like other men, and in the latter the delusion that contentment is possible in this impermanent and unsatisfactory world.

Steps Two and Three

(The speaker comes to have confidence in the truth of the Buddha's Teachings, then commits practicing to them):

""Magnificent, venerable sir! Magnificent, venerable sir! The Dhamma has been made clear in many ways by the Blessed One, as though he were turning upright what had been turned upside down, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, or holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see forms. I go for refuge to the Blessed One, and to the Dhamma, and to the Bhikkhu Sangha. From today let the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life."

SN Book I 3:1 (Occurs many times in the Canon)

Step Four

"What, bhikkhus, are the imperfections that defile the mind? Covetousness and unrighteous greed is an imperfection that defiles the mind. Ill will...anger...revenge...contempt...a domineering attitude.. .envy.. .avarice.. .deceit...fraud...obstinacy .. .presumption.. .conceit.. .arrogance.. .vanity...negligence is an imperfection that defiles the mind."

MN 7.3

("Resentment is the 'number one' offender"):

"He abused me, he struck me,
He defeated me, he robbed me' -
In those who harbour thoughts like these
Hatred will never be allayed..."

MN 128:6

"And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind as mind? Here a bhikkhu understands mind affected by lust as mind affected by lust, and mind unaffected by lust as mind unaffected by lust. He understands mind affected by hate as mind affected by hate, and mind unaffected by hate as mind unaffected by hate. He understands mind affected by delusion as mind affected by delusion, and mind unaffected by delusion as mind unaffected by delusion. He understands contracted mind as contracted mind, and distracted mind as distracted mind. He understands exalted mind as exalted mind, and unexalted mind as unexalted mind. He understands surpassed mind as surpassed mind, and unsurpassed mind as unsurpassed mind. He understands concentrated mind as concentrated mind, and unconcentrated mind as unconcentrated mind. He understands liberated mind as liberated mind, and unliberated mind as unliberated mind."

MN 10:34

Step Five

it is growth in the Noble One's discipline that one sees one's transgression as a transgression, makes amends for it in accordance with the Dhamma, and undertakes future restraint.

AN 3:91 (After a bhikkhu confesses to the Buddha)

"This is the character of a person who possesses right view: although he may commit some kind of offence for which a means of rehabilitation has been laid down, still he at once confesses, reveals, and discloses it to the Teacher or to wise companions in the holy life, and having done that, he enters upon restraint for the future."

MN 48:11

"One who possesses three qualities should be known as a wise person. What three? (1) He sees a transgression as a transgression. (2) When he sees a transgression as a transgression, he makes amends for it in accordance with the Dhamma. (3) When another person confesses a transgression to him, he accepts it in accordance with the Dhamma. One who possesses these three

qualities should be known as a wise person."

AN 3:4

Steps Six and Seven

"What taints, bhikkhus, should be abandoned by removing? Here a bhikkhu, reflecting wisely, does not tolerate an arisen thought of sensual desire; he abandons it, removes it, does away with it, and annihilates it. He does not tolerate an arisen thought of ill will...He does not tolerate an arisen thought of cruelty...He does not tolerate arisen evil unwholesome states; he abandons them, removes them, does away with them, and annihilates them."

MN 2:20

"Bhikkhus, when a bhikkhu is giving attention to some sign, and owing to that sign there arise in him evil unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, with hate, and with delusion, then when he gives attention to some other sign connected with what is wholesome, any such evil unwholesome thoughts are abandoned in him and subside, and with the abandoning of them his mind becomes steadied internally, quieted, brought to singleness, and concentrated."

MN 20:8

"Bhikkhus, I do not see even a single thing that so causes unarisen wholesome qualities to arise and arisen unwholesome qualities to decline as contentment. For one who is content, unarisen wholesome qualities arise and arisen unwholesome qualities decline."

AN 1:65

"Bhikkhus, I do not see even a single thing that so causes unarisen wholesome qualities to arise and arisen unwholesome qualities to decline as the pursuit of wholesome qualities and the non-pursuit of unwholesome qualities. Through the pursuit of wholesome qualities and the non-pursuit of unwholesome qualities, unarisen wholesome qualities arise and arisen unwholesome qualities decline."

"Bhikkhus, I do not see even a single thing that so causes unarisen factors of enlightenment to arise and arisen factors of

enlightenment to reach fulfillment by development as careful attention. For one who attends carefully, unarisen factors of enlightenment arise and arisen factors of enlightenment reach fulfillment by development."

AN 1:73, 75

"Bhikkhus, abandon the unwholesome! It is possible to abandon the unwholesome. If it were not possible to abandon the unwholesome, I would not say: "Bhikkhus, abandon the unwholesome!" But because it is possible to abandon the unwholesome, I say: 'Bhikkhus, abandon the unwholesome!' If this abandoning of the unwholesome led to harm and suffering, I would not tell you to abandon it. But because the abandoning of the unwholesome leads to welfare and happiness, I say: 'Bhikkhus, abandon the unwholesome!'"

AN 2:19

Steps Eight and Nine

"This is the character of a person who possesses right view: although he may commit some kind of offence for which a means of rehabilitation has been laid down, still he at once confesses, reveals, and discloses it to the Teacher or to wise companions in the holy life, and having done that, he enters upon restraint for the future."

"[S]ince you see your transgression as a transgression and make amends for it in accordance with the Dhamma, we pardon you for it. For it is growth in the Noble One's Discipline when one sees one's transgression as a transgression, makes amends for it in accordance with the Dhamma"

SN Book II 7:70

"One who possesses three qualities should be known as a wise person. What three? (1) He sees a transgression as a transgression. (2) When he sees a transgression as a transgression, he makes amends for it in accordance with the Dhamma. (3) When another person confesses a transgression to him, he accepts it in accordance with the Dhamma. One who possesses these three qualities should be known as a wise person."

AN 3:4

Step Ten

("We must avoid quick-tempered criticism and furious, power-driven argument"):

"Mind should be inclined thus: 'Others will adhere to their own views, hold on to them tenaciously, and relinquish them with difficulty; we shall not adhere to our own views or hold on to them tenaciously, but shall relinquish them easily.': effacement should be practised thus."

MN 8:44

"Now, friends, a bhikkhu should review himself thus: 'Do I have evil wishes, and am I dominated by evil wishes?' If, when he reviews himself, he knows: 'I have evil wishes, I am dominated by evil wishes,' then he should make an effort to abandon those evil unwholesome states. But if, when he reviews himself, he knows: 'I have no evil wishes, I am not dominated by evil wishes/ then he can abide happy and glad, training day and night in wholesome states."

MN 15:7

("Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear."):

"As I abided thus, diligent, ardent, and resolute, a thought of sensual desire arose in me...a thought of ill will arose in me...a thought of cruelty arose in me. I understood thus: 'This thought of sensual desire has arisen in me. This leads to my own affliction, to others' affliction, and to the affliction of both; it obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, and leads away from Nibbana.' When I considered: 'This leads to my own affliction,' it subsided in me; when I considered: 'This leads to others' affliction,' it subsided in me; when I considered: 'This leads to the affliction of both,' it subsided in me; when I considered: 'This obstructs wisdom, causes difficulties, and leads away from Nibbana,' it subsided in me. Whenever a thought of sensual desire arose in me, I abandoned it, removed it, did away with it."

MN 19:3-5

("We commence to put our A.A. way of living to practical use, day by day, fair weather or foul."):

"So too, bhikkhus, some bhikkhu is extremely kind, extremely gentle, extremely peaceful, so long as disagreeable courses of speech do not touch him. But it is when disagreeable courses of speech touch him that it can be understood whether that bhikkhu is really kind, gentle, and peaceful."

MN 21:10

("And we can often ask ourselves, 'Am I doing to others as I would have them do to me - today?"):

"Now, friends, a bhikkhu ought to infer about himself in the following way:

"A person with evil wishes and dominated by evil wishes is displeasing and disagreeable to me. If I were to have evil wishes and be dominated by evil wishes, I would be displeasing and disagreeable to others.' A bhikkhu who knows this should arouse his mind thus: 'I shall not have evil wishes and be dominated by evil wishes.'"

MN 15:6

Step Eleven

("As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action."):

"What do you think, Rahula? What is the purpose of a mirror?"

"For the purpose of reflection, venerable sir."

"So too, Rahula, an action with the body should be done after repeated reflection; an action by speech should be done after repeated reflection; an action by mind should be done after repeated reflection."

MN 61:8

Step Twelve

While not stated or implied in the Noble Eightfold Path, there is an underlying motivation in following it. The goal of complete attainment and to benefit others are embodied in the Four Great Bodhisattva Vows:

Sentient beings are numberless; I vow to save them all.

Desires are inexhaustible; I vow to end them all.

The Dharma Gates are infinite; I vow to enter them all.

The Buddha Way is unexcelled; I vow to attain it completely. These vows correspond precisely with the 'spiritual awakening' and 'carry the message' aspects of Step Twelve. There are also passages in the Canon encouraging one to 'spread the message':

I reveal the holy life that is perfectly complete and pure. For what reason? Because if they understand even a single sentence, that will lead to their welfare and happiness for a long time.

SN 42:1

Bhikkhus, those for whom you have compassion and who think you should be heeded-whether friends or colleagues, relatives or kinsmen- these you should exhort, settle, and establish for making the breakthrough to the Four Noble Truths as they really are.

What four? The noble truth of suffering, the noble truth of the origin of suffering, the noble truth of the cessation of suffering, the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering.

SN 56:26

"Bhikkhus, I am freed from all snares, both celestial and human. You too, bhikkhus, are freed from all snares, both celestial and human. Wander forth, O bhikkhus, for the welfare of the multitude, for the happiness of the multitude, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare, and happiness of devas and humans. Let not two go the same way. Teach, O bhikkhus, the Dhamma that is good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, with the right meaning and phrasing. Reveal the perfectly complete and purified holy life. There are beings with little dust in their eyes who are falling away because they do not hear the Dhamma. There will be those who will understand the Dhamma. I too, bhikkhus, will go to Senanigama in Uruvela in order to teach the Dhamma."

SN Book I 4:5

("But obviously you cannot transmit what you haven't got."):

"Cunda, that one who is himself sinking in the mud should pull out another who is sinking in the mud is impossible; that one who is not himself sinking in the mud should pull out another who is sinking in the mud is possible. That one who is himself untamed, undisciplined, [with defilements] unextinguished, should tame another, discipline him, and help extinguish [his defilements] is impossible; that one who is himself tamed, disciplined, [with defilements] extinguished, should tame another, discipline him, and help extinguish [his defilements] is possible."

MN 8:16

("Both you and the new man must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress"):

"If one can find a worthy friend,
A virtuous, steadfast companion,
Then overcome all threats of danger
And walk with him content and mindful..."

MN 128:6

"Bhikkhus, when one sees three advantages, it is enough to teach others the Dhamma. What three? (1) The one who teaches the Dhamma experiences the meaning and the Dhamma. (2) The one who hears the Dhamma experiences the meaning and the Dhamma. (3) Both the one who teaches the Dhamma and the one who hears the Dhamma experience the meaning and the Dhamma. Seeing these three advantages, it is enough to teach others the Dhamma."

AN 3:43

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