

REFUGE RECOVERY

A Buddhist Path to Recovering from Addiction



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FIRST TRUTH INVENTORY

Write an in-depth and detailed inventory of the suffering you have experienced in association with your addictions. Share the inventory with a trusted friend, a mentor, or your Buddhist teacher to understand the nature of your addiction/suffering.

On the path of recovery, we must understand that addiction is suffering, and accept all the ways that it has caused suffering in our lives. Only then can we begin to find freedom from addiction. Without full acceptance and disclosure, recovery is not possible. We cannot skip this step; we must be thorough in our inventory process.

This inventory is designed to help the addict acknowledge and accept all the ways that he or she has caused and experienced suffering. It is through the process of understanding, acknowledging, and admitting suffering that we can begin to transform our relationship with suffering and begin to find liberation from it.

Answer each question in depth and detail. It is best to use a notebook dedicated solely for this process. This inventory is also available in worksheet format at www.refugerecovery.org.

Addiction Creates Suffering

Suffering is the stress created by craving for more. List the stress your addiction has created. How did it manifest day to day? Moment to moment?

Suffering is never having enough to feel satisfied. How did you suffer from dissatisfaction?

Suffering is stealing to support your addiction. Did you steal? From whom? Make a thorough inventory of your theft.

Suffering is lying to hide your addiction. When did you start lying about your addiction? Was it blatant? Did you minimize your addiction or omit any details. Whom have you lied to? And what is the extent of your dishonesty?

Suffering is feeling ashamed of one's actions. List all the ways you have felt ashamed or guilty about your actions.

Suffering is feeling unworthy. Has unworthiness affected you? In what ways?

Suffering is living in fear of the consequences of one's actions. Did fear of getting caught affect your life? How?

Suffering is the feelings of anger and resentment. Make a detailed list of everyone whom you have ever been angry or resentful toward and why.

Suffering is hurting other people. Make a list of all the people you have hurt and how you hurt them.

Suffering is hurting yourself. List all the ways you hurt yourself.

Suffering is the feeling of being isolated and alone. Did your addiction lead to a feeling of isolation? At the end, were you all

alone in your self-created disconnection? Write about how that felt.

Suffering is the feeling of hatred toward oneself. List all the things about yourself you have ever judged or hated.

Suffering is jealousy and envy. Make a list of everyone and everything you have ever envied.

Suffering is feeling less than, inferior to, or beneath others. List the ways you have felt less than.

Suffering is feeling superior, better than, or above others. List the ways you have felt superior.

Suffering is greedy, needy, and selfish. List how being greedy, needy, and selfish has affected your life and relationships.

Suffering is the thought that *I cannot be happy until I get . . .*
What are some of the things you think you need to be happy?

Suffering is the anguish and misery of being addicted. What other forms of misery did your addiction create? How did it affect your sexuality? Your finances? Your looks?

Suffering is greed, hatred, and delusion in all its many manifestations. How else have you suffered?

List the ways you put yourself or someone else in physical danger because of your addiction.

List any grief or trauma in your life that has fueled your addiction.

How have you suffered physically?

List any other emotional suffering you have experienced as a result of addiction.

Addiction Creates Suffering

List the things that have disappeared from your life due to your addiction.

List any misfortunes you have experienced because of your addiction.

List any missed opportunities or failures in your life that were due to your addiction.

List the ways in which your addiction has made your life different from the way you want it or intended it to be.

Look at your relationship history and consider how your addiction may have caused harm in your relationships. Name some of the people and ways that you hurt them.

How has your addiction affected your sex life?

Has your sexual conduct hurt others? Name the people and be specific about how you caused harm.

Are there any other ways that you have experienced or caused suffering in relation to your addiction? List them here. Don't leave anything out.

What would your life look like if you were free from the suffering that addiction has caused? Be specific. Allow yourself to be generous and hopeful.

Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten years? Twenty years?

THE SECOND TRUTH INVENTORY

Write an in-depth and detailed inventory about the difficulties that you have been trying to avoid. Investigate how craving for more pleasure and less pain led you into addiction. Share the inventory with a trusted friend, a mentor, or a teacher and come to understand the cause of your addiction/suffering.

Let's look at the source of our sufferings and addictions. Remember that there is a difference between craving and desire. Craving is the thought and feeling that says "I have to have it, I cannot be happy without it." Desire says, "I want it but will be fine with or without it."

Craving for sense pleasures seems to be the most prevalent cause of addiction. Most addicts have deep wells of pain in their past. Their addictions are manifested as ways to avoid or replace the suffering they have been through. Let's look deeply and carefully at our lives, to see what may have led to our addiction.

Answer each question in depth and detail. It is best to use a notebook that is dedicated solely for this process. This inventory is also available as a worksheet at www.refugerecovery.org.

What are your most painful memories? Write about what happened and how you have been carrying those memories with you. How did your addictions affect those memories, or how did those experiences affect your addiction?

Are there things that you have been keeping in, secrets or experiences that you swore you would never talk about? Now is the time to let them out; your recovery depends on it.

Was there violence or abuse in your home? What did it feel like to be there?

Were you neglected in any way? What do you remember about that?

Were there any inappropriate sexual experiences in your life? Abuse? Coercion? Rape? Molestation? Objectification? Exposure? What happened?

Is there a family history of addictions/alcoholism? What was it like growing up with that legacy? How did it affect you?

When did you first feel like escaping your reality?

When did you start drinking/using/acting upon what would become your addictions?

When did it become a problem?

What's the thing that you are most afraid of? How did your addiction affect that fear?

Have you contemplated or tried to take your own life in an attempt to be rid of pain? When? What happened? How do you feel about being alive now?

How have addictive behaviors or substances been an escape from the realities of your life?

Are there difficulties in your life you wish to avoid facing? What are they? Is that connected with addictive craving?

What are you attached to? Make a list.

Name some of specific sensory pleasure(s) you crave?

Do you use physical pleasure to avoid pain? How?

Do you intentionally create physical pain to control or avoid emotional pain? How? Cutting? Fighting? Extreme exercise?

The Cause of Addiction Is Repetitive Craving

How has pleasure seeking caused you suffering? Give some examples.

What could you have done differently when craving, rather than attempting to satisfy it?

What do you think you need to be happy?

What material things do you think would complete you?

How is your happiness tied to your expectations? Do you indulge your addictions when you do get what you want?

How has the craving for success caused you suffering?

Has failure led to relapse?

What would your life look like if you were free from all forms of craving? Take some time to reflect about what freedom would feel like. Remember the end of craving does not mean the end of healthy passions and desires.



Format for Refuge Recovery Meetings

Refuge Recovery is designed to be practiced in community. For this program to be successful, we will need people to start meetings, to create new communities. We offer here the meeting format that we have been using in the pilot meetings in Los Angeles since 2008. We hope that as the program develops and grows, new formats and styles of meetings will be created. Our website www.refugerecovery.org will serve as the centralized information hub, where new meetings and new formats will be listed and posted for download.

Those who want to start a new meeting are asked to do so only if they are willing to host the meeting weekly with a minimum commitment of six months. That means that even if no one shows up for the first few months, they continue to be there at the designated place and time each week. Since this is a new movement, we will need to be patient with the process of attracting and sustaining community. We would prefer that all meetings that are open to the public be held in nonresidential settings, but we also understand that at times meetings in someone's home will be the only option.

When each new meeting is started, we will post the informa-

tion on the website and list the local contact person for that meeting. We encourage a rotating leadership at the meetings, each secretary and other positions within the group taking six-month commitments. As leadership and contact people change, there will be an easy way to update the site.

All meetings are to collect a donation, and the proceeds from the donations are to be used to support the group paying rent and buying any supplies deemed necessary such as coffee or tea. After a prudent reserve is reached, we ask that excess donations be sent to the Refuge Recovery headquarters to support the infrastructure of the nonprofit. All financial records for Refuge Recovery will be public and posted on our site.

Start a meeting and create a refuge for your community. We will be by your side as the Buddhist Refuge Recovery movement grows and spreads.

WELCOME

Secretary reads:

Welcome to the Refuge Recovery weekly group. All are welcome here. Our primary purpose is to offer a Buddhist-inspired path to recovery from addiction of all kinds. Our group recognizes and respects that there are multiple perspectives and multiple approaches to recovery; we are gathered in the spirit of investigation of a Buddhist approach. We do not claim to be the only authority, but we know from direct experience that the path outlined in the Four Truths leads to the end of the suffering that addiction causes. We invite you to investigate and practice these truths and to find out for yourself if they are valuable to your process of recovery.

It is the intention of this group to explore Buddhist perspectives on recovery. This group is meant to be a support for recovery, not a

Appendixes

substitute for your dedicated practice; spiritual growth and recovery require individual effort.

Please turn off your electronic devices.

CLARIFICATION OF FACILITATOR ROLE

Secretary/Facilitator reads:

My name is _____, and I am one of the group's secretaries. My role is nonauthoritative. I am not an empowered Buddhist meditation teacher; I am here to facilitate the group and to lead our discussion.

PREAMBLE

Leader reads:

I have asked _____ to read the Refuge Recovery preamble.

Volunteer reads:

Refuge Recovery is a community of people who are using the practices of mindfulness, compassion, forgiveness, and generosity to heal the pain and suffering that addiction has caused in our lives and the lives of our loved ones. The path of practice that we follow is called the Four Truths of Refuge Recovery.

The Four Truths of Refuge Recovery is a Buddhist-oriented path to recovery from addictions. It has proven successful with addicts and alcoholics who have committed to the Buddhist path of meditation, generosity, kindness, and renunciation.

This is an approach to recovery that understands "All beings have the power and potential to free themselves from suffering."

Appendixes

We feel confident in the power of the Buddha's teachings, if applied, to relieve suffering of all kinds, including the suffering of addiction.

Leader reads:

In an effort to build community and to get to know each other, we start each week by introducing ourselves. There is no need to identify yourself by anything other than your name. My name is ____.

MEDITATION INSTRUCTION

Facilitator/Secretary/Speaker reads:

Please hold your comments and questions during guided meditation.

Tonight I have asked _____ to lead the meditation.

Meditation (20 min.)

These instructions are to be read slowly to the group, pausing between instruction to allow each participant to absorb and implement these practices. (Remind the meditation leader to read instructions slowly.)

WEEKLY READING

Volunteer(s) reads:

Four Truths and Eightfold Path of Refuge Recovery.

Or other chosen sections from the book *Refuge Recovery*.

Facilitator/Secretary/Speaker shares on Step/Truth/Fold:

Speaker chooses a Recovery-based topic and shares their experience with this topic, or tells their story of addiction and how Buddhist principles have helped them in the recovery process.

GROUP SHARING

Leader reads:

The meeting is now open for sharing; please limit your comments to between 3 and 5 minutes. Try to keep your sharing focused on tonight's topic, or on the relationship of recovery, addiction, and Buddhist principles. Sharing is tag-pass; please pick someone to share when you have finished. If you would like to pass, please tell us your name and pass to someone else.

(Leader picks first person to share.)

CLOSING READING

Facilitator/Secretary reads (if applicable):

Some leaders may choose a short passage from *Refuge Recovery* to end the meeting with.

IMPORTANCE OF ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Leader reads:

In order for this to be a group where we feel safe to share about our recovery and to create an atmosphere of openness, we ask that who you see here and what you hear here remain confidential.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Facilitator/Secretary speaks:

Dana (\$5 suggested donation), cleanup, thank set up person, phone/e-mail list. Upcoming retreats or new groups.

DEDICATION OF MERIT

Leader reads:

*We will close with a dedication of merit. Tonight I have asked
_____ to lead us in our offering.*

(Volunteer reads Dedication of Merit.)