

Addiction in Buddhism and Psychotherapy

Saturday & Sunday 7th and 8th of October 2023

Seminar Leader: Melinda Lake
with Bhante Sujato and Sam Jerga

A. MODULE AIMS

"The Dominant Myth of our culture, is the Myth of Self as Real" Jim McLaine (2001)

A focus on addiction goes to the heart of the Buddhist teachings: the conditions giving rise to suffering and the conditions giving rise to release. While the existential conditions of life - illness, ageing and death, gain and loss, pleasure and pain – are inevitable and undeniable, the root cause of suffering is the uncontrollable and repetitive nature of craving (or wanting). Whether it is the wanting for more pleasant experiences, or a wanting to end or avoid unpleasant experiences. This, the Buddha taught, is the root cause of suffering.

Suffering lies in our relationship to the *way things are*. For people trapped in an addictive process *the way things are* is perpetually augmented, and reality becomes optional. Understanding this is of vital importance within the context of therapy.

So too, is the understanding that for each of us, how we experience ourselves is often different from the way we *actually* are. For an addicted person, the severity of the addiction is often proportional to this discrepancy. Reality testing and the cultivation of acceptance through the use of guided internal reflection is an essential tool in the facilitator's kit.

The framework of dependent origination provides an understanding of the cyclical processes of craving and becoming, leading to habituation and addiction. From this perspective we are all, to some degree, caught in patterns of addiction, some that are not so obvious and many that are taken for granted. The experiential understanding of dependent origination holds the key to release, letting go of wanting (suffering) and acceptance.

Recognising our common experience of becoming trapped in self-image and our habitual nature of augmenting reality, assists us as therapists to hold a connected and compassionate space for our courageous clients. The capacity to assist our clients to develop a 'Mindful Recovery Process' decreases their reliance on us as therapists and dilutes the attachment to an authority figure / paternal replacement.

The above aims have built upon the work of Lizzie Turnbull, Phd. A previous presenter of this model for AABCAP

B. LEARNING OUTCOMES

- An understanding of addiction diagnosis and treatment from a clinical perspective, using principles of neuro-science and acceptance commitment therapy.
- An invitation to explore the overlap with Buddhist principles

- A way of being with clients that enhances connection, decreases stigma, and thwarts an attachment style that can be hijacked by the addictive process.

C. CONTENT

- To briefly explore addiction through several theoretical lenses.
- To investigate the neuro-science of addiction, with an invitation to consider it's relationship with dependent origination
- An exploration of the illusory nature of self and its impact on the addictive process
- A practical experience of acceptance and letting go to use with clients.

D. TEACHING METHODS

Seminar, experiential exercises, small and large group discussions and an opportunity for Q&A.

E. ASSIGNMENTS

Students to complete a written essay at the end of the weekend entitled '**Personal Reflections on A Buddhist Approach to Addiction**', which should demonstrate an understanding of:

- Theoretical aspects of weekend presentations and discussions
- The experiential exercises and meditations explained, practiced and discussed
- How this module helped me personally and with my clinical practice

This essay consisting of approx. 1,000 to 1500 words (+/- 10%) is to be submitted to the seminar leaders, Melinda Lake: Melindalake@australianrecovery.com and Director of Training Deb Chisholm at dot@aabcap.org no later than four weeks following the weekend seminar. **Due Date - Monday November 6th 2023**

F. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA AND PROCEDURE

Contributions during seminar and group discussions and written essay demonstrating:

- General understanding of the nature of addiction from a psychological perspective
- General understanding of the Buddhist view of addiction and dependent origination
- Ability to engage with and give examples of conditions of craving (wanting) and release
- General understanding of the Illusory nature of self
- Willingness to reflect on the way of *being with* a client suffering from addiction.

Grading: Level of competency: Competent / Not-Yet-Competent.

G. REFERENCE READINGS

Essential Readings: (Provided in Class Space)

Brewer, J. A., Elwafi, H. M., & Davis, J. H. (2012, May 28). *Craving to Quit: Psychological Models and Neurobiological Mechanisms of Mindfulness Training as Treatment for Addictions*. Psychology of Addictive Behaviors.

[Craving to Quit: psychological models and neurobiological mechanisms of mindfulness training as treatment for addictions](#)

Prochaska, J. O., & DiClemente, C. C. (1982). Transtheoretical therapy: [Toward a more integrative model of change. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, 19\(3\), 276–288.](#)

Essential Watching:

[The Glen for Women](#) (clip time approx: 5 mins)

Essential Practice:

Attend any one of the following: (60 - 90 Minutes duration)

1. **Erskinville Meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous**
<https://meetings.aa.org.au/meetings/erskinville-thursday/>
<https://meetings.aa.org.au/meetings/erskinville-sunday/>
2. **11th Step Meditation & Recovery Workshop**
<https://sydneybuddhistcentre.org.au/classes/11th-step-meditation-and-recovery-workshop>
3. **Any online 12-step meeting**
<https://12step.org/social/online-meetings/>
4. **Any Recovery Dharma Meeting**
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/u/0/d/e/2PACX-1vQmuN3eHggYoR9maoLttce3MkZLTZ0UTByIv_IKK7MbXEEIHMBCwD_HX8aP3d1Tcp-J7TihbPgatLWL/pubhtml?gid=1833391122&pli=1

Recommended Reading

Books / articles which may be of further interest:

Maclaine, J. (1988). *When someone you love is addicted to Alcohol or Drugs*. Bantam books, Random House NSW, AUS.

S, Laura. (2006). *12 Steps on Buddha's Path: Bill, Buddha, and We*. Wisdom Publications, MA, USA.

Thurman, R.A.F. (1980). Philosophical Nonegocentrism in Wittgenstein and Candrakirti in Their Treatment of the Private Language Problem. *Philosophy East and West*, Vol.30(3), pp. 321-337

Lake, M. (2014). *InterACT Treatment Manual & Participant Workbook for addictive Disorders - based on the self-help theory of Jim Maclaine*. Balboa Press, IN, USA.

Thombs & Osborn (2013). *Introduction to addictive behaviors, Fourth Edition*. Guildford Press. NY, USA.

Recovery Dharma Global. (2023). Recovery Dharma (2nd ed.). Recovery Dharma Inc. <https://recoverydharma.org/>

Griffin, K. (2018). One Breath at a Time—Buddhism and the Twelve Steps. Rodale Books.

Maté, G. (2011). In The Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction. Central Recovery Press, LLC.

Films which may be of further interest:

Shame (2011) Directed by Steve McQueen

Don't Worry, He Won't Get Far On Foot (2018) Directed by Gus Van Sant

Shattered Spirits (1986) Directed by Robert Greenwald

Podcasts & Audio

Griffin, K., & Fisher, E. C. (n.d.). Beyond Mindfulness: Integrating Buddhism and Recovery (3). <https://www.carlerikfisher.com/flourishing/blog-post-title-three-dh856>

Recovery Dharma Global. (2019, September 6). Recovery Dharma Audiobook on Apple Podcasts. Apple Podcasts.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/recovery-dharma-audiobook/id1479884325>

PROFILE OF SEMINAR LEADER – MELINDA LAKE

Melinda Lake is a psychologist, author and board approved supervisor of provisionally registered psychologists in Australia. Mel's purpose is to nurture early career psych's and colleagues and share her passion for addiction and trauma treatment.

She began her career working on addictions units in private hospitals (St Edmund's, Northside and South Pacific Private) and founding Re-psyche, a psychology practice specializing in individual & group treatment for addictive disorders in 2000. She continued as a director until 2020.

She has been a consultant psychologist for the NSW Alcohol & Drug Foundation's rehabilitation service for mothers and babies and clinical staff supervisor at Guthrie House - a transition service for women with drug histories currently involved in the criminal justice system.

In 2014 she co-founded Australian Recovery Centres, a health promotion charity whose primary purpose is to show Australians how to step out of addictive mental patterns to re-join the natural environment and each other. www.australianrecovery.com

In 2016 she stepped up to the CEO position of the residential recovery centre in the Blue Mountains of NSW. In December 2019, the recovery centre was completely lost due to the bushfire that ravaged the mountain range so she gratefully accepted a position as Practice Lead with Marathon Health, overseeing 7 headspace centres. This role allowed her to train a new generation of mental health professionals in treating addiction in adolescents.

Last year she completed a stint as Clinical Director of Miracles Asia, an addiction treatment centre for a global community located in the beautiful Phuket Thailand. Most recently she has consulted at Byron Private and has just taken a role overseeing a new rehabilitation centre Hope in Health in Northern Rivers NSW

She has authored a treatment manual for addictive disorders in memory of her professional mentor psychologist Jim Maclaine.

PROFILE OF BHANTE SUJATO

Venerable Sujato was ordained in the forest tradition lineage of Ajahn Chah. Since 1994 he has been practising meditation in forest monasteries in Thailand, Malaysia and Australia. He specialises in historical research into the fundamental teachings found across the Buddhist traditions.

His books include Sects and Sectarianism, A History Of Mindfulness, A Swift Pair of Messengers, Beginnings, White Bones Red Rot Black Snakes, and Dreams of Bhadda. He was the founder of Santi Forest Monastery and was instrumental in supporting the establishment of the lineage of fully ordained bhikkhunis in the Forest Tradition.

Bhante Sujato founded SuttaCentral, a web-based resource of early Buddhist texts, translations, and parallels. In the past three years he has completed a new English translation of the four Pali Nikayas.

PROFILE OF SAM JERGA

Sam developed an interest in Buddhism and meditation in 2002. Since then, he has practiced mostly in Theravadin and Vipassana (Goenka) traditions. He has experience in twelve-step recovery fellowships and, most recently, Recovery Dharma, where he sees the value of integrating Buddhist practice through a recovery lens. Sam has also been a member of Mankind Project since 2018.

He has previously taught Buddhist Spiritual and Religious Education (SRE) in schools and has worked with children and families for over twenty years. The majority of Sam's professional work has been centered around vulnerable and at-risk families and children. He currently holds the position of director at a small middle-childhood care service in The Rocks.

Sam holds a degree in Child & Family Studies and a Diploma in Outside School Hours Care. Sam's interests include Wim Hof breathwork and cold exposure, cycling, death metal, sauna sessions, sensory-deprivation tanks, cycling, playing harmonicas, drawing and motorcycle racing.