**MENTORSHIP IN RECOVERY DHARMA**

**What is Mentorship in Recovery Dharma?**

**That is a great question. And asking questions puts us in a great place.**

It means we are open to developing something that is new, excellent and pertinent to our current situation as a developing community.

So, let’s inquire and investigate how we might begin to answer that question.

History of mentorship in RD. Many of us came into Recovery Dharma with a vision of Mentorship in Buddhist recovery that had lots of requirements. At first Recovery Dharma seemed to move almost entirely away from one-on-one mentorship and toward Inquiry Circles. Our focus was away from teacher led to peer led.

The document Mentorship Guidelines (Link) – first developed in Portland prior to the founding of Recovery Dharma and in the first year or two of RD a global committee revised it. Some great stuff in it but it still can seem intimidating and should only be used as a resource of possible ways of doing things as opposed to requirements for becoming a mentor. On the PDX website under Resources.

Mentorship is very different than 12 step sponsorship, but so many of us came from that and are used to that. Or we may know about official Peer Mentors in A&D treatment. But that’s not peer led. We are breaking ground on something new here. Developing something we don’t quite know how to define. Being in Recovery Dharma as a peer led group we are always moving into new stuff – trying to figure out how to do all this in a different way. So, sometimes we might feel like we are working in a vacuum – but it is a vacuum of OPPORTUNITY. This is the empowerment and beauty of “Don’t Know Mind”.

Mentorship with Recovery Dharma’s developing peer led sensitivities, and personality could probably best be done from a side-by-side approach as opposed to a top – down directive approach – instead of an expert/student relationship, a relationship of being/walking side by side. Listening and asking questions is an empowering approach. “This is what works for me. What works for you?” “What isn’t working for you.” Being a mirror, helping others see themselves, while also looking at yourself. How do we find the Middle Way in Mentorship relationships? The Wise Actions of a healthy mentor are listening, giving guidance and offering perspective.

*To listen is to lean in softly*  
*With a willingness to be changed*  
*By what we hear*   
        -Mark Nepo

A PROBLEM – ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY – “NO MUD – NO LOTUS”

Newcomers asking for Mentors. How do I find a mentor? And what do they find - Nobody there. Rarely do people offer to be mentors.

**So how do we encourage more people to explore offering and asking for mentorship relationships? Ideas:**

1. What about requirements for being a mentor? What would be less intimidating and more encouraging for people to be willing to serve in this way? Requirements should maybe be less specific but should have some recovery and maybe 6 months or so in RD – so you can help a newcomer navigate being with and in this community and program. Someone with 3 months can certainly reach out to someone that just came in the door.
2. Inquiry and Investigation is still crucial in the mentorship relationship. Doing an inquiry writing meeting one meeting per month in your regular meeting is a good way to help people see the value of inquiry and doing it with others. I would like to see questions focus more on what is happening for you now in the present as opposed to all the shit I did in the past. Yes, some of the things you did in the past are causing you suffering now and investigation needs to happen to transform and heal the suffering. But ruminating on the past and all my bad qualities may only bring more shame and trauma. (Renunciation) on PDX website
3. Encourage the development of inquiry circles as a way to deepen recovery – especially affinity inquiry circles. Encourage utilizing the inquiry questions in the book as a way of working together. Alternative questions and more specific questions for process addictions are also available and need to be put on resource pages in websites. (Finding Refuge on PDX website.)
4. Instead of asking people to raise their hands in meetings if they are willing to be mentors, we should add messages that say something like, “For those seeking a mentor or wise friends for connection and guidance, we recommend reaching out to the person who you think can help your recovery. Keep this in mind in any meeting.” This came from our Awakening Minds Meeting. Another way of saying this that I heard in 12 step is, “If you see someone that has something you want reach out to them.” In Zoom meetings help people to reach out to people in the chat, either to the whole group or privately to individuals. One person said that he never held up his hand in group, but if someone saw something in him enough to reach out that he would be more willing to respond. So, as one person put it, “We just need to get back to the simple basics of helping people get more comfortable reaching out to each other.” How can we figure out better ways to encourage people to offer and ask for the service of mentorship in the meeting scripts.
5. Have a designated connection time at the end of every meeting to connect in the chat, build inquiry circles, ask questions.
6. Speaker meeting once a month or so in the regular meeting or the leader sharing their story at the beginning of each meeting. This is a chance for newcomers to see who they might click with.
7. Simple structure for starting a mentorship relationship.

Revised From Mentorship Guidelines

**SUGGESTED** MENTORSHIP PATHWAY

● Hear their story, where they are in recovery and what attracted them to Recovery Dharma. ● Agree that you will meet in person, online, or by phone regularly. ● Explain the Three Jewels: Traditionally, Buddhists commit to the path of awakening by taking refuge in our own potential for awakening (Buddha), truth/teachings (Dharma), and community (Sangha). ● Read and discuss the Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path, and Five Precepts. ● Have a copy of the book Recovery Dharma. Here is a link to the free version if the printed copy is not available: https://recoverydharma.org/ book ● Attain these commitments from the mentee: ○ Establishment of a daily meditation practice. Mentees may wish to attend Buddhist meditation groups in their area. ○ Attendance at meetings on a regular basis. Newer members may be encouraged to attend other abstinence-based meetings/ programs. ○ The study of and processing through the Inquiries via writing and sharing. ● Establish an accountability system to review progress and questions regarding meditation, meetings, and Inquiries. ● Instead of “Work with them on making their amends.” *(Support the mentee in rebuilding relationships with self and others.) revised by Wise Friends Committee* ● When a mentee has an established practice, continuous sobriety, and completed significant work on their Inquiries they may begin mentoring others.

Other ideas:

Boundaries for mentorship relationships

Managing someone who is unsafe to be a mentor

Managing someone who needs more than we can give within our own limits

How do we work with co-dependency in a mentorship relationship?

A support meeting for mentors.

How do we learn to listen? Guidelines for compassionate Listening, Wise Speech from the RD book-awesome! Simple concepts of Motivational Interviewing.

HOW DO WE DECIDE TO BEGIN AND REACH OUT TO ANOTHER WISE FRIEND FOR A MENTORSHIP RELATIONSHIP?

1. Connection guidelines and time in meeting scripts
2. What are the warning signs for an unhealthy relationship?
3. From Covington Trauma series for recovery: “Supportive relationships: Energy, Empowerment, Knowledge, Self-worth, Connection. Unsupportive relationships: Energy draining, Disempowered, Confused, Feel Worthless, Isolation.”
4. How can a mentorship relationship be trauma informed – is it a process that you figure out together? What boundaries would you want in a mentorship relationship?

MENTORSHIP/WISE FRIENDS/CODEPENDENCY

For many of us who have struggled with codependency and relationship addictions, recovery presents a wonderful opportunity to practice creating healthy relationships within our recovery community. In the beginning, we might sense old patterns of relating emerge—reaching out to someone we think is more powerful than we are, thinking that they could fix us; or thinking we are better off than others and reaching out to fix them when our focus should be on ourselves. We must be careful in deciding who we want for our mentor and wise friends in recovery. We may find ourselves engaging with people in some old patterns. That’s OK. We recognize it and then choose to do it in a new way. Before recovery, some of us trusted people too freely and we have learned that trust is something earned, not freely given. We can learn how to trust those who are trustworthy by first becoming trustworthy ourselves. As I become a trustworthy person, I will begin to recognize those who are also trustworthy.

A mentor needs to be someone we feel safe with and embodies the Three Jewels of Buddhism—We take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. When it comes to choosing a safe mentor, some important questions to consider might be:

1. Is this person connected more to their Buddha Nature than their Ego?
2. Is this person someone who knows and practices the Dharma and principles of the program as they relate to others?
3. Is this person emotionally healthy in the way they relate with Sangha, Wise Friends and other people?

As I work at becoming a Wise Friend and Mentor in recovery, I can ask myself the same questions. I can be a trustworthy friend and mentor as I connect more and more to my Buddha Nature, apply the Dharma to my life and learn how to relate with people in healthy ways, abandoning the superiority complex, the inferiority complex and the equality complex. I can learn how to connect with others in a genuine way without pretenses.

My job as a mentor is not to fix people. My intention in asking someone to be my mentor should not be for them to fix me. A wise mentor knows how to help someone help themselves—to become in touch with their own power within to change and heal.

INQUIRY AND INVESTIGATION ABOUT MENTORSHIP

1. What has been your experience with having a sponsor or mentor? In what communities or settings?
2. What has been your experience with being a sponsor or mentor? In what communities or settings?
3. What has your experience been with mentorship or inquiry circles in Recovery Dharma? How has this benefited or been a struggle in your recovery?
4. Have you offered service as a mentor in Recovery Dharma? What has encouraged you or caused resistance to offer this service? What would be more helpful?
5. What would you like from a mentorship relationship?
6. What boundaries would you want in a mentorship relationship?

INQUIRY QUESTIONS TO USE IN MENTORSHIP (add links)

1. Finding Refuge <https://recoverydharmapdx.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/RENUCIATION-QUESTIONS3.pdf>
2. Renunciation – Questions and Inquiry <https://recoverydharmapdx.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Finding-Refuge-Inquiry-Questions-for-Newcomers.pdf>
3. Habits?
4. How is my practice going?
5. Inclination of the Mind
6. Where do we take refuge?
7. Confidence in recovery