

The Eightfold Path (Long Version)

The Buddha taught that by living ethically, practicing meditation, and developing wisdom and compassion, we can end the suffering that is created by resisting, running from, and misunderstanding reality. We have found that these practices and principles can end the suffering of addiction. The Eightfold Path helps us find our way in recovery and consists of the following:

- 1. Wise Understanding:** We begin to understand that the Four Noble Truths are more than concepts and are to be engaged in as an ongoing practice. In this practice, we gain insight into the dynamics of cause and effect and the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and impersonal nature of life. With this practice we continue to develop our understanding of the values of the community of Wise Friends.
- 2. Wise Intention:** With wise understanding we develop intentions that lead us towards renunciation, good will and harmlessness. We develop the intention of letting go of harmful and unwholesome behaviors that are based in grasping, ill-will and harm to self or others. We cultivate the intentions of wise restraint, generosity, kindness and compassion in an aspiration to let go of the causes of suffering.
- 3. Wise Speech:** We abstain from false, harsh and slanderous speech and idle chatter. We practice this as we speak outwardly to others as well as inwardly to ourselves. In this community of wise friends, we find a place to practice wise speech. Here we practice openness, honesty, non-judgement and sensitivity as we share the difficulties and successes we experience in our journey of recovery. Whenever we speak, we ask, "Is it true? Is it kind? Is it timely?"
- 4. Wise Action:** A primary foundation for a fruitful path of freedom and recovery is to develop a habit of ethical behavior. We have the Five Precepts to use as guidelines for wise action. We train in 1. Not harming any living being including ourselves, 2. Not taking what is not freely given, 3. Not using dishonest or harsh speech, 4. Not engaging in sexual misconduct and 5. Not engaging in intoxicating behaviors. We take Wise Action to grow in our following through with our Wise Intentions of renunciation, harmlessness, and good will.

5. **Wise Livelihood:** We work toward securing a source of income/livelihood that is legal, without coercion or violence, without trickery or deceit and causes no harm to self and others. We use our time, energy, and resources for the benefit of ourselves, our families and others.

6. **Wise Effort:** We must put forth effort to cultivate diligence, energy and perseverance to develop and safeguard beneficial and skillful activities of the mind and heart. With wise effort we learn to prevent and abandon unskillful mind states and arouse and maintain skillful mind states. Through wise effort we develop the wisdom for discerning the appropriate action for any given circumstance or mental state and the ability to apply the most skillful means in each situation.

7. **Wise Mindfulness:** We develop wisdom through practicing formal and informal mindfulness meditation and investigation with openness and curiosity. Mindfulness facilitates our seeing clearly and healing the root causes and conditions that lead to the suffering of addiction. We practice mindfulness in all aspects of our daily lives. We practice mindfulness by establishing ourselves with present moment awareness in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness: bodily sensations, feeling tones, mental formations and phenomena. When we clearly see the reality of our direct experience, we can understand what is drawing us toward using or other harmful behaviors, and we pause, taking this opportunity to skillfully and compassionately intervene and abstain from acting unwisely.

8. **Wise Concentration:** We develop the practice of focusing our attention; settling and centering the mind on our breath, our walking, a phrase, a sound, a sight or other wholesome object or activity. We become immersed in the reality of the present moment with a one-pointedness of mind that is undistracted, tranquil and unified. In Wise Concentration we connect with the life of freedom, solidity and peace.