

Mindfulness in Addiction Treatment and Recovery



An Introduction to Recovery Dharma and other Buddhist-based
approaches

Buddhism and/or Alcoholics Anonymous

The spiritual life is by no means a Christian monopoly... Consider the eight-part program 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 in addition to the Twelve Steps. Generosity, universal love and welfare of others rather than considerations of self are basic to Buddhism.

Akron Pamphlet, “Spiritual Milestones in Alcoholics Anonymous”

Edited by Dr. Bob, 1940

What Is the Success Rate of Alcoholics Anonymous?

Success is a vague term to describe the prognosis of the program. Some people never relapse while others relapse and never relapse again after that initial bump in the road. There isn't an exact success rate available since many of the results are published by AA and vary based on several factors. Because AA is anonymous, some members of the group don't participate in studies since it could breach the anonymity of the group. Many want their participation in AA to remain unidentified, in line with the group's original intention. Additionally, participants might not want to admit to relapse.

Moreover, the people who attend meetings change constantly since people drop out. In fact, 40% of people drop out of AA during the first year, according to some studies.⁶ Dan Wagener is a Senior Web Content Editor at American Addiction Centers.

⁶ Lilienfeld, S. and Arkowitz, H. (2011). *Does Alcoholics Anonymous Work?* *Scientific American*.

Many Paths to Recovery

Recovery 2.0- Tommy Rosen/Peer Led

Recovery Dharma - Peer Led

Refuge Recovery - Noah Levine

Eight Step Recovery - Valerie Mason John (Buddhist Recovery Network)

Kevin Griffin Buddhism and the 12 Steps (No program)

Yoga 12-Step Recovery - Nikki Myers

Pros of Buddhist Based Recovery Groups

Non-Theistic

No requirement to label oneself

A strong focus on practice/meditation/retreats

Modern language: Inclusive, less patriarchal, trauma-informed, social-activism friendly

Focus on the addictive nature of the mind vs. specific substances and behaviors

More accepting of issues around harm-reduction

Cons of Buddhist Recovery Groups

Misconceptions in general

Lack of accessibility in smaller markets

Not as much stability for the newcomer/ participants in longer term recovery

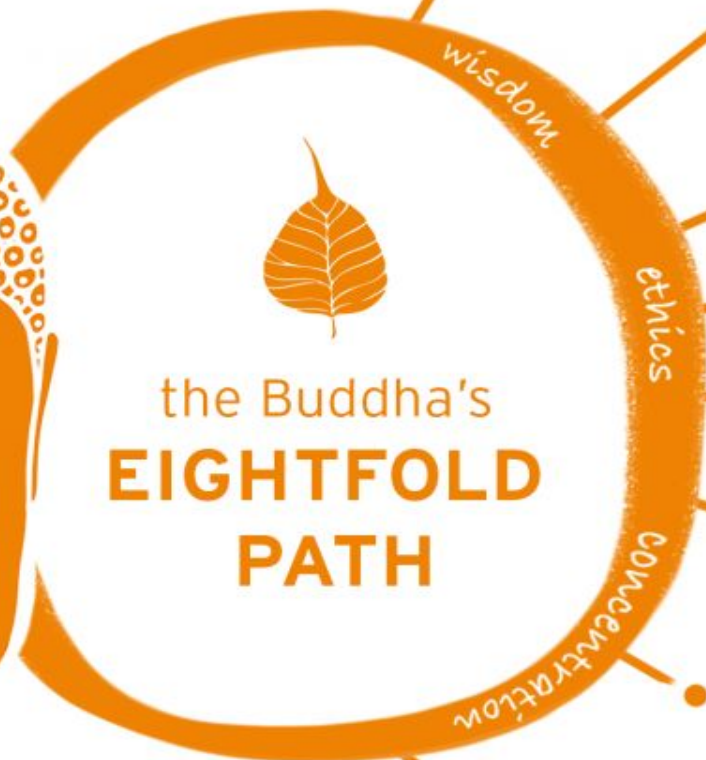
Continuing issues around “Bro Culture”

Lack of mentors

Four Noble Truths

- Life is full of suffering
- Suffering comes from desire/wanting
- Suffering stops when desire/wanting stops
- In order to stop those desires/wants, follow the Eightfold Path





- **RIGHT UNDERSTANDING**
samma ditthi
- **RIGHT THOUGHT**
samma sankappa
- **RIGHT SPEECH**
samma vaca
- **RIGHT ACTION**
samma kammanta
- **RIGHT LIVELIHOOD**
samma ajiva
- **RIGHT EFFORT**
samma vayama
- **RIGHT MINDFULNESS**
samma sati
- **RIGHT CONCENTRATION**
samma samadhi

Mindfulness is..

Paying Attention Cultivating a greater awareness of triggers and emotional/cognitive responses

To the Present Moment Staying with vs escaping through addictive choices and behaviors. Neither indulging or suppressing.

Non-Judgementally Detaching from the stories, attributions and automatic thoughts that often lead to use.

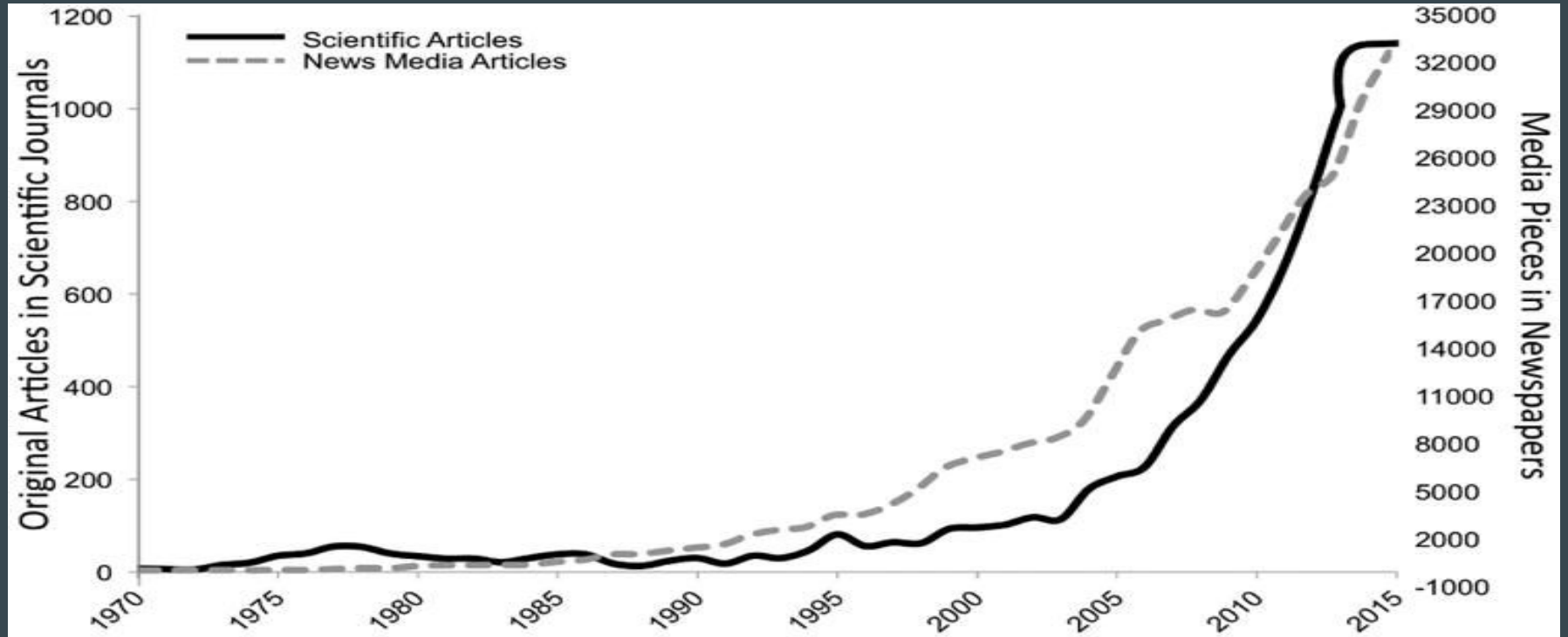
Why Mindfulness?

“When something unethical arises and you don’t have a practice it’s like a hair falling on the palm of the hand. When you have a mindfulness practice and something unethical arises it’s like a hair falling in the eye.” Valerie Mason John

Mindfulness helps with..

- *Staying calm and centered
- *Making space for difficult emotions
- * Shifting attention away from painful stimuli/ Gaining insight into our habitual thought patterns
- *Increasing bodily awareness
- *Having self-compassion / “Befriending the mind”

Mind The Hype: A Critical Evaluation and Prescriptive Agenda for Research on Mindfulness and Meditation
Perspect Psychol Sci. 2018 Jan; 13(1): 36–61.



Limitations of Mindfulness

- *Not a “Pie in the Sky” panacea for all that ails us
- *Lack of research objectivity (Nicholas Van Dam Director of the Contemplative Studies Centre at the University of Melbourne.)
- *There can be unintended consequences in people with mental illness and trauma
- *It takes diligence to move from state to trait, to move from experience to installation
- *To tackle the negativity bias of addiction which consists of shame, worthlessness, self-loathing, we must learn to focus on what’s new, fresh, different, personally relevant. Savor, enrich and extend the positive! Rick Hanson

Life Cycle of Practice

In the beginning, nothing came.

In the middle, nothing stayed.

In the end, nothing left.

Milarepa



Four Foundations of Mindfulness Epstein clip

Mindfulness of the Body: Tension, Pain, Energy, Sensation, Breath

Mindfulness of Feeling Tone: Pleasant, Unpleasant or Neutral

Mindfulness of Mind: Attachment, Mental Chatter, busyness, calm, reflective, craving and aversion

Mindfulness of the Dhammas/Mental Objects: The inner and outer truths... Watching what is arising in the mind without judgement

Dharma Practices to help in Recovery

Surfing the Urge Alan Marlatt/Sarah Bowen MBRP

"The 8 Factors of Self Directed Neuroplasticity" Rick Hanson

RAIN - Recognize, Accept, Investigate, Nurture. Tara Brach

SOBER Breathing Exercise

TSM Trauma Sensitive Mindfulness - David Treleaven

Mindfulness Based Relapse Prevention

A program integrating mindfulness meditation practices with traditional relapse prevention (RP)

MBRP is an outpatient after care program to foster sustainable lifestyle for individuals in recovery

It is a quest for the middle way a balance between harmful indulgence and strict renunciation; between self-discipline and self-compassion

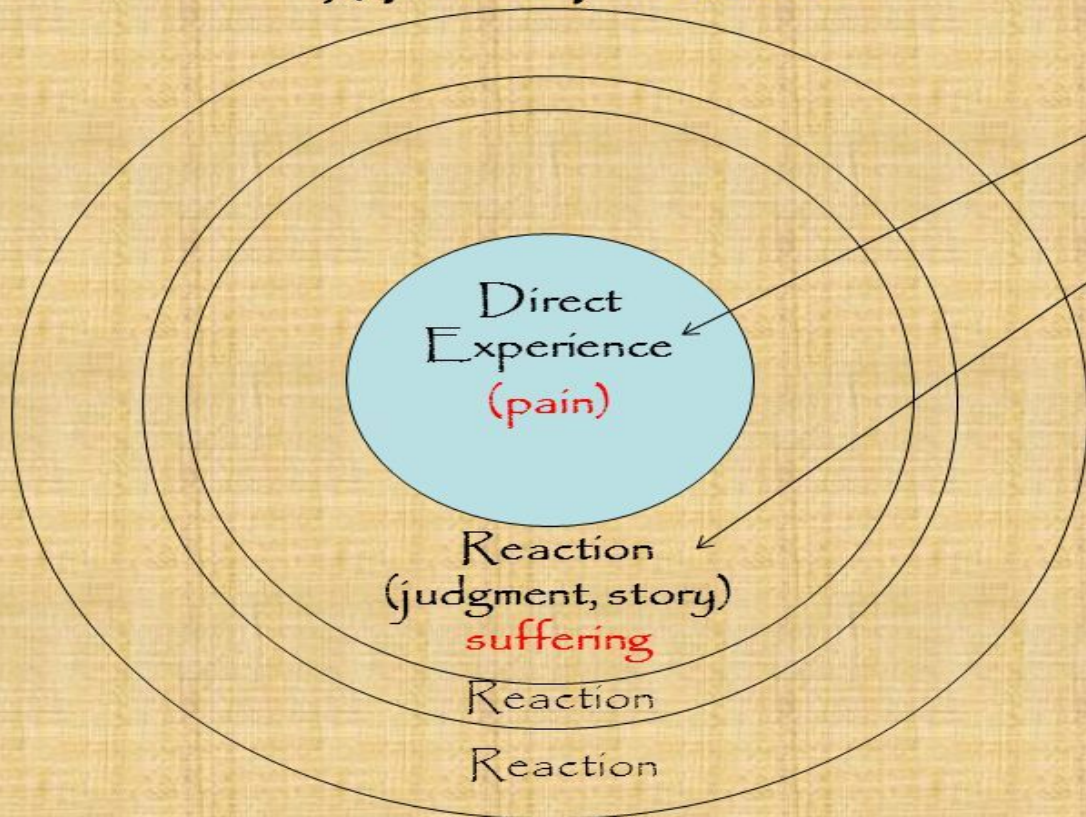
Effective and skillful means for diligent intentional behavior change while emphasizing kindness and flexibility



Inquiry

Mind's Process

Inquiry



What was the initial direct experience?

How did the mind and body react to that?

Is this process familiar? Is it related to craving, relapses, recovery, daily life experiences?

Not Personal:
This is what minds do. No need for judgment.

SOBER Space Exercise (Bowen et al., 2009)

- S = Stop
- O = Observe
- B = Breathe
- E = Expand awareness
- R = Respond mindfully

- Purpose= Break immediate stimulus-response patterns that seek to “fix” craving
- <http://depts.washington.edu/abrc/mbrp/recordings/SOBER%20space.mp3>

Surf the Urge Meditation



Mindfulness Practice

Urge Surfing