

Chapter 16

Dharma Therapy A Therapeutic Intervention That Builds On The Buddhist Dharma With Mindfulness Practice As One Of Its Key Components

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Abstract

Mindfulness practice, as a therapeutic intervention, is becoming increasingly popular. However, respected scholars point out that mindfulness would be more powerful if it could be integrated with the other components of the Buddhist path of ending suffering from where it was derived. Dharma Therapy is a therapeutic intervention modelled after the Buddha's path to awakening. Its theoretic foundation is built on the Buddhist Dharma, the core Buddhist teachings, together with mindfulness as one of its key components. This chapter discusses how these Buddhist steps to ending suffering can be applied in the modern day psychotherapeutic environment, and how the Buddhist Dharma can help enable a person to better understand his/her problems in a more realistic and constructive manner.

Background

In recent years, the relevancy of Buddhist teachings to psychology and psychotherapy has been of increased interest to academia and many respected scholars. The breadth of research and studies related to these topics vary from studies of Buddhist Psychology, as presented in canonical texts (Kalupahana 1987) to research in Tibetan Lama's degree of happiness by Harvard-trained neuroscientist (Davidson 2003). From these studies, many interesting and encouraging results have emerged. These include the use of mindfulness meditation training in the management of stress and chronic pain, pioneered by Kabat-Zinn (Kabat-Zinn 1982; Kabat-Zinn 1990), and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for depression as developed by Segal, Teasdale and Williams (Teasdale 2003).

In a review summarizing the literature on mindfulness training as a clinical intervention, Baer (Baer 2003) noted that the use of mindfulness training as a clinical intervention is described with increasing frequency, and its popularity appears to be growing rapidly. As of 1997, over 240 hospitals and clinics in the United States and abroad were offering stress reduction programs based on "mindfulness training" (Salmon 1998). Kabat-Zinn (2003) suggests that this increasing interest in studies of mindfulness and its clinical application is being driven primarily by the realization that new dimensions of therapeutic benefit and novel insight into mind/body interactions might accrue through its exploration. However, in the same article, he warned that:

...it becomes critically important that those persons coming to the field with professional interest and enthusiasm recognize the unique qualities and characteristics of mindfulness as a meditative practice, with all that implies, so that mindfulness is not simply seized upon as the next promising cognitive behavioral technique or exercise, decontextualized, and "plugged" into a behaviorist paradigm with the aim of driving desirable change, or of fixing what is broken (p.145).

Furthermore, Kabat-Zinn (2003) recapitulating from his intention in developing Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) back in 1979 that, although

MBSR as an intervention needed to be free of the cultural, religious, and ideological factors associated with the Buddhist origins of mindfulness... the

program needed to remain faithful in both spirit and substance to the universal dharma dimension alluded to, which, as noted, lies at the very core of the gesture of mindfulness. (Kabat-Zinn 2003, p.149)

In the same issue of *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, Teasdale and associates (2003) also raised the point that

...mindfulness has always been used as only one of a number of components of a much wider intervention, or path, itself grounded in a clear formulation of the origins and cessation of suffering, rather than as an end in itself (p.159).

These separate components of this path to ending suffering, integrate and interact in ways that allow the impact of the whole path to become more powerful than the sum of its parts. Based on this reasoning, Teasdale and associates suggest,

...contemporary clinical applications of mindfulness training would similarly benefit from theory driven integration within a wider intervention. (Teasdale 2003)

Building on the suggestions of both Kabat-Zinn and Teasdale and associates, this essay will formulate and present a therapy, the Dharma Therapy, that applies the universal Dharma as its theoretical foundation and that puts mindfulness back in its original place, where it is one among several key components. Hopefully, by presenting the theoretical foundation of Dharma Therapy in a manner that is familiar to the psychosocial discipline, the suffering elimination model discovered by the Buddha can be more easily understood by western researchers. Furthermore, by putting mindfulness meditation back into the context from which it was taken, and allowing all of the components of the path to interact coherently, Dharma Therapy promises to be a much more effective intervention than the use of mindfulness alone.

Theoretical Foundation Of Dharma Therapy

Dharma is a Sanskrit word that has many meanings including the following two: (1) The Teachings of the Buddha, and (2) The universal law of all things. Hence, Dharma Therapy implies a therapeutic model build on the Teachings of the Buddha; and, it can also mean a therapeutic model base on the universal law of all things, which, in the Buddhist teachings, is the Law of Dependent Origination. According to the Buddha, his teachings are a "suffering elimination model" built on the Law of Dependent Origination, which he discovered while meditating under the Bodhi tree. It was his discovery of the Law of Dependent Origination that enabled the Buddha to propose a comprehensive teaching that could eradicate suffering.

Before going further into the working of Dharma Therapy, it will be necessary to recapitulate the Buddha's awakening experience under the Bodhi tree and explain in detail the concepts of the Law of Dependent Origination, which is the theoretical foundation of Dharma Therapy.

The Buddha's Awakening Experience And The Law Of Dependent Origination

The Buddha's awakening experience is the crucial factor that separates the Buddha from an ordinary human being, and it is from this experience that the Buddha discovered the Law of Dependent Origination and the path to end suffering. The following is a brief description of the steps that the Buddha took to awaken:

Steps 1 & 2: Become aware of the suffering and unsatisfactory condition of the current situation and develop a desire to be liberated from the suffering. While sitting

under the Bodhi tree just before attaining awakening, the following questions came to the Buddha's mind:

This world has fallen into trouble, in that it is born, ages, and dies, it passes away and is reborn, yet it does not understand the escape for this suffering. When now will an escape be discerned from this suffering? (Bodhi 2000, p601)

Just as any successful psychotherapeutic counselling, the path of recovery and healing begins with the candidate seeing the unsatisfactory condition of the situation and developing a desire to be free from the suffering. Because of his sensitivity and mindful observation, the Buddha's understanding of suffering was much deeper than that of ordinary people. He saw that existence and the endless process of rebirth is one whole mass of suffering that is unacceptable to him. Therefore, for the Buddha, true liberation comes only when the bondage of the endless process of rebirth ceases.

Step 3: Questioning and investigating the cause of suffering. With this desire to be free from suffering in mind, the Buddha questioned: "When what exists does aging-and-death come to be? By what is aging-and-death conditioned?" With this investigative frame of mind, the Buddha wanted to know: what are the conditions that lead to the suffering of aging-and-death. While investigating, he noticed,

...through careful attention, there took place in me a breakthrough by wisdom: "When there is birth, aging-and-death comes to be; aging-and-death has birth as the condition." (Bodhi 2000, p.601)

What the Buddha noticed was that phenomena come to be conditionally, that is, the coming to be of one phenomenon will bring about the arising of the next phenomenon. As long as there is birth, aging and death are inevitable. This awareness of the dependent origination nature of phenomena is the theoretical foundation of all Buddhist teachings. Furthermore, the Buddha also pointed out that it was "a breakthrough by wisdom" that enabled him to realize the dependent origination nature of phenomena.

Step 4: Observing and learning by paying careful attention to suffering and the cause of suffering, As the Buddha proceeded further into the investigative search of how birth and suffering come to be, he saw clearly that life is a process of cyclic existence supported by twelve links where one leads to the arising of the next and are ultimately interdependent on each other. The twelve links of this cyclic existence of life and death are: aging and death, birth, existence, grasping, attachment, feeling, contact, the sense spheres, mind-and-matter, consciousness, volitional action and ignorance.

Step 5: Developing insight and wisdom on suffering and the causes of suffering The Buddha saw clearly that among these twelve links: birth leads to the arising of aging and death; existence leads to the arising of birth; grasping leads to the arising of existence ... and ignorance leads to the arising of volitional action. With this observation of the causal chain of the twelve links, the Buddha realized that the impulse of craving, clinging and Karma, working under the influence of ignorance is the fuel of this mass of bondage and suffering.

Step 6: With insight and wisdom, taking the necessary steps to bring an end to suffering. On the other hand, the Buddha also noticed that with the cessation of ignorance, all the factors dependent on ignorance likewise would draw to a close, and this whole chain of bondage and suffering would cease to be. This is the inverse order of the interdependent causal chain of life and death. Hence, the key to ending suffering is to eliminate ignorance by the development of Buddhist knowledge and wisdom. When there is "true" knowledge and wisdom, suffering will cease to be. This short description of the Buddha's investigation into the cause of suffering, lists out the Buddhist pathological

explanation of the cause of suffering and the remedy to deal with it. The Buddha observed that ignorance is the root of suffering and that eliminating ignorance through the development of knowledge and wisdom is the remedy to eliminate suffering.

A Deeper Understanding Of The Law Of Dependent Origination: The Interdependent Triangle Of “Mind-and-Matter” And “Consciousness”

To deepen the understanding of the process of cyclic existence supported by the twelve links, the Buddha noticed that among the twelve links, the interdependent triangle of “mind-and-matter”¹ and “consciousness” is most peculiar and important in understanding the arising and coming to be of existence and suffering. In order to explain the working of this interdependent triangle, it is necessary to first explain the Buddhist understanding of a person. The Dharma sees a person as being composed of five aggregates, namely: form, feeling, thoughts, volitional action and consciousness. Form is matter, the physical body. Feeling, thought, volitional action and consciousness are the psychological functions of a person. Apart from representing the physical and psychological aspects of a person, the five aggregates can also be divided and understood from another perspective, the interdependent phenomena of the consciousness and the objects of consciousness, namely the other four aggregates – matter, feeling, thought and volitional action. In the interdependent triangle of mind and matter and consciousness, mind represents the aggregates of feeling, thought and volitional action. Therefore, together with matter and consciousness, the interdependent triangle of mind-and-matter and consciousness comprises the five aggregates that form a person.

In the Samyutta Nikaya, the Buddha explained his observation of the interdependent nature of the triangle (Bodhi 2000, p.601):

When there is consciousness, mind-and-matter comes to be; mind-and-matter has consciousness as its condition.

On the other hand,

When there is mind-and-matter, consciousness comes to be; consciousness has mind-and-matter as its conditions.

From this observation, the Buddha concluded that:

This consciousness turns back; it does not go further than mind-and-matter. It is to this extent that one may be born and age and die, pass away and be reborn.

It is quite easy to see that without consciousness, there is no way for a person to conceptualize any aspect of any thing. On the other hand, without the arising of the concept(s) of matter and/or mind, consciousness cannot arise due to the absence of something to be conscious of. In order for consciousness to arise, there needs to be at least a concept of something to be conscious of. This is what the Buddha meant by,

This consciousness turns back; it does not go further than mind-and-matter.

It is because of this observation that the Buddha ruled out the possibility of an independent consciousness or the existence of a universal consciousness that transcend all phenomena.

¹ Mind-and-matter: is sometimes translated as name-and-form.

Furthermore, because of the Buddha's practical and empirical approach to finding a solution to remedy the problem of suffering, one could argue that the Buddha's teachings are based on empirical observation; and hence, do not entertain metaphysical discussion. In many Buddhist teachings, this interdependent triangle of mind-and-matter and consciousness is often compared to three sheaves of reeds leaning against each other to form a standing pyramid to illustrate their interdependence.² Only with consciousness there can be mind-and-matter, and only with mind-and-matter there can be consciousness. When the triangle of mind-and-matter and consciousness comes to be, suffering and the whole endless process of cyclic existence, supported by the twelve links of Dependent Origination, will also come to be.

With this knowledge, the Buddha proclaimed:

“Origination, Origination” – thus, in regard to things unheard before there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light. (Bodhi 2000, p.601)

It is at this point that the Buddha became enlightened to the Law of Dependent Origination, which he later on summarized as:

When there is this, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises.
When there is not this, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases. (Nanamoli 1995,p.655)

Armed with this new insight and wisdom, the Buddha realized that he found the way to bring an end to suffering, that is: from the understanding of the interdependent nature of mind-and-matter and consciousness, a person's attachment to there being an independent and permanent self in the form of either mind-and-matter or consciousness end. Furthermore, with the cessation of mind-and-matter comes the cessation of consciousness; with the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of mind-and-matter; with the cessation of mind-and-matter, the whole mass of suffering ceases to be. And, from the observation of the twelve links of cyclic existence, the Buddha realized that consciousness ceases when ignorance and volitional action ceases. Therefore, with the wisdom and knowledge developed from apprehending the Law of Dependent Origination, and the working of the twelve links of cyclic existence, the Buddha eliminated ignorance, and as a result, all factors that depend on ignorance ceased to be. Hence, for the Buddha, the cessation of all suffering was attained.

From the above description of the Buddha's experience of awakening, we can identify six steps that the Buddha took to attain the eventual liberation from suffering:

- (1) Becoming aware of the suffering and unsatisfactory conditions of the current situation
- (2) Developing a desire to be liberated from the suffering
- (3) Questioning and investigating the cause of suffering
- (4) Observing and learning by paying careful attention to suffering and the cause of suffering
- (5) Developing insight and wisdom of suffering and the causes of suffering
- (6) With insight and wisdom, taking the necessary steps to bring an end to suffering

² In the Chinese translation of the Samyutta Agama, Sutra 288, three sheaves of reeds were used as an illustration. However, in the equivalent version of the Pali text, Samyutta Nikaya, II 112, two sheaves were used as an illustration.

These six steps to liberation that the Buddha took are basically consistent with the framework of the teachings that he taught his students. Although, in Dharma Therapy we are not trying to help clients to eliminate their ultimate bondage of life and death, these six steps that the Buddha took to eliminate suffering can still be an efficient model to help clients to remedy their problems and suffering in today's world. Therefore, they will be adopted as the basic guideline of the therapeutic model of Dharma Therapy. Their content and application in a psychotherapeutic environment will be further discussed later on in this essay.

The Significance Of The Law Of The Dependent Origination And Its Derivative Implications: No-Self, The Law Of Karma And The Middle Path

To understand the significance of the Law of Dependent Origination and its therapeutic implication, we need to study and analyze separately both the Law itself and the nature and characteristics of the phenomena that arise according to the conditions set by the Law. The relationship between the Law and the phenomena is that: the Law is the generalized formula or principle of how phenomena arise and cease to be. Therefore, from studying the Law, one can see and understand the nature and characteristics of the phenomena. However, to understand the Law truly, one needs to observe empirically and pay careful attention to the working of the phenomena in order to gain insight and comprehension of the Law. In fact, the Buddha's discovery of the Law came from paying careful attention to the actual phenomena of the arising and cessation of suffering – the twelve links of cyclic existence.

The Law Prevails Regardless And Governs All

From the above description of the Buddha's experience of awakening, it is obvious that the Law of Dependent Origination is not a creation of the Buddha. He simply discovered it by observing and paying careful attention to the arising and cessation of suffering. In fact, the Buddha pointed out that with or without the Buddha, before and/or after his appearance, this Law of Dependent Origination persists and is applicable at all times. Furthermore, it prevails and is applicable to all things in every circumstance. The Buddha had only directly awakened to it, declared it, taught it and set it forth. He revealed it, explained it, made it plain and said,

See! With birth as condition, aging-and-death. (Bodhi 2000, p.551)

The Law of Dependent Origination is a natural law of the universe that exists and prevails with or without the Buddha. Because of this universality of the Law of Dependent Origination, it governs and influences all aspects of the world, including how a person comes to be and the functioning of the psyche of a person. And, that is why the Law of Dependent Origination is the foundation of Dharma Therapy. Although at first appearance, the Law of Dependent Origination seems easy to understand, its meanings and implications are deep and profound. The Buddha himself had said that the Law of Dependent Origination is deep and difficult to see (Walshe 1987). Furthermore, the Buddha declared that those who see the Law of Dependent Origination see the Dharma, which, together with Buddha and Sangha forms the Triple Gems, in which all Buddhists take refuge.

The Phenomena: Impermanent And "No-self"

As already pointed out, the Law of Dependent Origination governs the arising and cessation of all phenomena in the world; hence, all phenomena share common natures and characteristics due to the influence of the Law. Therefore, understanding the Law of

Dependent Origination will help us to see the nature and characteristics that are common to all phenomena. According to the first part of the Law of Dependent Origination,

When there is this, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises.

When a cause and the necessary conditions are there, a phenomenon will come to be. It is because of this observation that the Buddha did not accept that there was an ultimate creator of all things. In fact, there is no place for a creator, because a phenomenon cannot be “created”. One can only work on coming up with causes and the necessary conditions to facilitate the arising of phenomena. When the causes and conditions are ripe, phenomena will come to be. For example, we cannot create a flower, but we can plant the seed, facilitate its growth with necessary conditions, like water, soil, sunlight and so on. When the seed and the necessary conditions are there, a flower will bloom naturally, according to the Law of Dependent Origination. Just as it is we cannot create happiness, but we can learn to develop gratitude, better emotional intelligence, interpersonal relationships and etc. When we have the causes and conditions, happiness will come naturally.

It is also worthwhile to point out that when a phenomenon comes to be, nothing new or substantial has been created because a phenomenon is only the coalescence of cause and conditions. Apart from the cause and conditions, there is no such thing as “the thing itself”. For example, one can say that his legs, eyes, memory, feelings, thinking etc. belong to him. However, he can never pinpoint something as being this is “the thing” that is the ultimate and real “me”. This reality of never being able to identify the existence of something substantial and independent that we can pinpoint as “I” or “me”, other than through emotional and sentimental attachment developed from delusion, is the main reason why the Buddha pointed out that all phenomena are inherently empty in nature and have no self – “no-self”. Although the concept of “no-self” may sound daunting to some people; from another angle, when phenomena and events in life have “no-self”, there is always hope because they can always be changed for the better. Even pain and suffering in life come to be from causes and conditions. When the conditions are gone, suffering and pain will also be gone.

The Law Of Karma And The Middle Path

Like all phenomena, the cause of a phenomenon is also empty in nature. However, it is still an important factor because it has the power to determine the outcome of the phenomenon. A sunflower seed will only lead to the blooming of sunflowers. The “conditions”, on the other hand, are only there to facilitate the growth of the seed, influence and determine when it will bloom, and how healthy the flowers will be. This relationship between the seed and the fruit or the cause and the effect is the basic concept of the Law of Karma, which, in a way, is only a derivative of the Law of Interdependent Origination. Very often we come up with an idea to create something. But, the relationship between an idea and its creation is only similar to that between a seed and its fruit. For example, with an idea to draw a particular painting, we collect the necessary colour paints, paintbrushes and paper to nurture the ideas into reality. The painting is nothing more than the colour paints painted according to the idea and imagination of our minds. Nothing extra has been created nor has something been destroyed. What has changed is that the colour paints have now been rearranged in a certain way to reflect the influence of the thoughts and ideas. But, we like to call the painting our creation and become attached to it. The idea is not the same as the painting and the painting is not identical to the idea that created it. However, apart from the idea (the seed), there would not be the possibility of the coming to be of a new painting (the fruit). The seed is not the same as the fruit, nor is it independent of the seed.

This “neither the same, nor different” relationship of the seed and the fruit is the deeper meaning of the Middle Path, which is one of the most important derivative implications of the Law of Dependent Origination. With a correct understanding of the Middle Path, we can avoid falling into extremes; more importantly, avoid developing a rigid attachment to the notions of “there definitely is” or “there definitely is not” – the notion of duality. Under the Law of Dependent Origination, all phenomena exist only relatively and interdependently, as illustrated above.

The Implication And Application Of Buddhist Teachings In Therapy

With the above explanation of the theoretical foundation of Dharma Therapy, we can now go into examining its implication and its application in a psychotherapeutic environment. As has been explained in the introduction, apart from trying to present the suffering elimination model discovered by the Buddha in a manner that is familiar and applicable in the psychosocial discipline, this essay is also an attempt to present in a more holistic way the use of mindfulness by putting the practice back in the context and theoretic foundation from which it was taken. Therefore, the specific details of “how to” and “why” of the practice of mindfulness will not be discussed in detail here, rather, a more general framework of the major steps of Dharma Therapy will be presented to give an integrated picture. Furthermore, both Kabat-Zinn (Kabat-Zinn 1990) as well as Teasdale and associates (Teasdale 2003) and many other meditation masters have written clearly and extensively on the usage and application of mindfulness in clinical therapeutic situations. Readers are recommended to study these two pioneering works to supplement their knowledge on mindfulness. Just as those therapists in Kabat-Zinn’s Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program and Teasdale and associates’ Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, those who intend to become Dharma Therapist needs to be a practitioner of mindfulness themselves. Without practicing mindfulness personally, a therapist will lack the skill and experience to guide the clients through the process of mindfulness practice, a major component of Dharma Therapy.

As stated earlier, the basic outline of Dharma Therapy is based on the six steps that the Buddha took to attain liberation from suffering and can therefore be divided into the six steps as outlined earlier. However, in addition to these steps, an introduction and a preparation session are needed to build communication and trust between the therapist and the clients, to introduce the psychology of Dharma Therapy and to let the clients know what will be expected from them if they wish to participate in a course of Dharma Therapy. Furthermore, during these introduction and preparation sessions, introductory practice of mindfulness should also be introduced to the clients. In the following, the introduction and preparation sessions and the six steps of Dharma Therapy will be discussed in more detail.

I. The Introduction And Preparation Sessions

Introductory and preparatory sessions should be held with each prospective client. These sessions can be held either individually or in small classes in a group setting. There are three main purposes in having these sessions:

(1) *To clarify the clients and therapist’s relationship.* In Dharma Therapy, the therapist should take both the role of a teacher and a compassionate friend. A teacher can guide the clients through the process of therapy and enlighten the clients to be aware of his or her possibility and potential. A compassionate friend is there to encourage and accompany the client in their time of difficulty during therapy. However, clients should be made aware that under the Law of Karma, we are all responsible for our own thoughts and actions. Therefore, the ultimate motivation and responsibility to heal and transform must come from our own self.

It should be emphasized here that, just like any other type of therapy, Dharma Therapy has its limitations and may not be applicable to some clients, especially those who have difficulty concentrating and can not think in a logical and coherent manner.

(2) *To help clients to develop faith and motivation by explaining the theoretic foundation of Dharma Therapy and reassure them that they too have the possibility to transform and heal.* To help clients to develop faith and motivation, the therapist should explain to the clients that, as pointed out by the Buddha in the teachings known as the “Four Noble Truths”, suffering is a part of our life. Even though the suffering that the clients are facing maybe very real and painful, it is normal and common for people to have difficulty in life. Furthermore, like all phenomena in the world, suffering comes to be because of cause and conditions. When those causes and conditions change, suffering will cease to be. Suffering is also impermanent and empty in nature, just as it is for all phenomena in the universe. Nobody can be condemned to eternal suffering, although sometimes it may feel that way. There is always hope for a better future. It is a goal in Dharma Therapy to help clients to first develop an understanding and a peaceful relationship with their suffering instead of generating additional anguish from fighting and/or denying it. From this understanding and from a peaceful relationship, the clients can then use their newly learned skill of mindfulness to examine and comprehend the cause and conditions of their suffering. However, at this point in the therapy, it is not advisable to lead the clients to explore immediately the cause and conditions of their suffering. Clients may not be ready for this at this point in the therapy.

(3) *To help clients to build a “spiritual oasis”, which they can use as a base to understand and deal with their emotions through the practice of mindfulness.* Emotions always have a feeling of urgency and importance associated with them. The more intense the emotions, the more urgent and important the person feels s/he needs to do something in accordance with the direction set by the emotions. Added to generating motivational drives, emotions also influence and distort our perception of the world and ourselves. When a person is overwhelmed by an emotion, it seems to have planted bugs in the neurons in the brain that would influence the person to perceive everything prejudicially in accordance with the direction set by the emotion. For example, when a person falls deeply in love, his/her self-esteem would most likely be enhanced, and the world in general would seem to be a better place. However, with a broken heart, the opposite effect would take place.

Because emotions influence us in so many ways, if they are not dealt with properly, a lot of damaging side effects could develop. Furthermore, the damage of these side effects would be significantly magnified if they became a habit of our minds. A series of broken hearts can lower a person’s self-esteem in such a way that would induce his/her mind to think in a habitually pessimistic manner that would eventually lead to depression. As pointed out above, the Buddha observed that ignorance is the root of suffering and that eliminating ignorance through the development of knowledge and wisdom is the remedy to eliminate suffering. Therefore, to handle emotions intelligently, one needs to pay careful attention to them in order to develop the necessary knowledge and wisdom. In his book *Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman (Goleman 1997) also pointed out that awareness is the most important factor in enhancing our emotional intelligence. The more we are aware of the reality of something, our ability to deal with them appropriately increase proportionally. For example, if we can develop a keen awareness of the illusory nature of our thoughts and emotions, and understand that their manifestations are conditional and subject to change, their importance and urgency to drive us to “listen” to them would decrease significantly. It is for this reason that mindfulness practice, as a means to develop awareness, insight and wisdom on the working of our mind, is the crucial factor in the practice of Dharma Therapy.

Therefore, mindfulness training should be introduced to clients as a tool to develop awareness and insight of their mental habits, and also to manage and transform emotions.

Clients should learn to practice mindfulness so that they can develop a “spiritual oasis” where there is concentration, awareness and clarity. Using this “spiritual oasis” as a platform, the clients’ ability to develop insight and deal with his/her problems would be greatly enhanced. The exact method and know-how of mindfulness practice taught to the clients will depend on the therapist’s own training. However, during these introductory sessions, clients should only be instructed to breathe peacefully and learn to enjoy and be mindful of their own breathing. Being able to breathe peacefully and enjoy one’s breathing is very important because without peacefulness and enjoyment, it is not possible to build one’s spiritual oasis.³

II. Become Aware Of The Suffering And Unsatisfactory Condition Of The Current Situation

Realizing the unsatisfactory condition of the situation is a step where the therapist and the client explore together the current situation of the client’s problems. It is also a chance for the therapist to gather data and background information on the problems that the client is facing. The objective of the exploration is not to cure or deal with the problems, but to assess the situation with the objective to let the client reflect on the current situation so that s/he will be motivated to strive for a way out. For those clients who are already facing a lot of stress or suffering, the reflection process need not be too deep because the main objective of this step is to help the clients to see and use suffering as a means to develop a sincere motivation. However, for those clients who are not aware of the suffering or the problems that they themselves have, or the suffering and problems that they are inflicting on other people, then a deeper reflection process would be needed to develop a strong determination to deal with the problems.

The therapist should always start every session with five minutes of mindfulness breathing together with the client in order to set the stage for a therapeutic session conducted in an atmosphere of mindfulness. At this time, the therapist may want to explain to the clients the Buddhist teaching of the two darts of suffering (Bodhi 2000, p.1263) so that the client can have a clearer picture of the type of suffering that he is experiencing. In the teaching of the two darts of suffering, the Buddha explained that when the “well-taught noble disciples” and “untaught worldling” encounter a stimulus through their senses, both will experience pleasant, painful or neutral feelings in their primary states. However, if the untaught worldlings experience a painful feeling, he “worries and grieves, he laments, beats his chest, weeps and is distraught”. He thus experiences two kinds of feelings, bodily and mental feelings. It is as if a man was pierced by a dart, and following the first piercing, he was hit by a second dart. But in the case of a well-taught student, when he is touched by a painful feeling, he will “not worry nor grieve and lament, he will not beat his chest and weep, nor will he be distraught.” He experiences one kind of feeling, a bodily one, but not a mental feeling. It is as if a man were pierced by only one dart, but was not hit by a second. From this teaching of the two darts, the therapist can guide the clients to see what kind of suffering they are experiencing.

There are painful events in life that we have no choice but just have to live with. Events like sickness, old age, death and painful experiences that have already happened; we just have to learn to live with them so that we do not breed additional mental suffering (the second dart). However, there is other suffering, suffering of the nature of the second dart, which we can avoid by learning to reinterpret the painful situation (the first dart) in a more constructive way or develop a deeper understanding of it. This simple two tier classification would allow the clients to have a better idea, which is the suffering that s/he

³ Just as those therapists in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, Dharma [therapists need](#) to be seasoned practitioner of mindfulness themselves.

can eliminate by developing a better understanding and insight of the situation and which part of the suffering s/he will have no alternative and need to learn to live with.

III. Developing A Desire To Be Liberated From The Suffering

For a person to develop a sincere desire to be free from suffering, s/he should cultivate the following insights:

(1) Seeing that eliminating suffering is a condition with which one would really be better off. On the surface, having this insight seems easy enough. However, very often people hide behind their suffering and/or find a safe haven in the suffering that s/he is experiencing for some complicated and/or deep down reasons. For the purpose of developing a sincere desire to be free from suffering, it is not necessary to go immediately into exploring these reasons here, but clients should be helped to generate a more general and global determination to learn to be more understanding and mindful of the suffering that they are experiencing.

(2) Developing a compassionate attitude toward oneself and understand that suffering need not continue. Compassion is the desire to liberate someone from pain and suffering, and it is an important practice in Buddhist teachings. In the situation of psychotherapy, very often the clients need to develop an understanding and compassionate feeling towards themselves in order to have a sincere desire to work diligently for their salvation. Again, on the surface, this would seem like a simple task, but for some clients who have developed a very critical and judgmental attitude towards themselves, cultivating understanding and compassion toward themselves is very important. In order to develop compassion, a person has to learn to be mindful of one's own suffering. The awareness of suffering can induce compassion and empathy. Clients should be introduced to the Buddhist value that we are all equal, in the sense that we all have the potential to be happy and excel, and ultimately become a Buddha. There is no reason why we should treat ourselves harshly and inflict pain and suffering on ourselves. Furthermore, practicing mindfulness and learning to become detached from emotions will help a person to see that s/he is more than just the intense emotions that he/she is experiencing. This detachment and awareness will nourish the person's confidence and self-efficacy to deal with the emotions intelligently.

(3) Eliminating suffering is a worthwhile objective that is achievable. Suffering too is dependently originated and is subject to the conditions that facilitate its coming to be. It too has that quality of emptiness. Therefore, suffering can come to be, and more importantly, it certainly can go away. Although, as pointed out in the teaching of the two darts of suffering, there are sufferings that we will have to live with, but a major portion of our suffering can be eliminated. If our practice of mindfulness becomes stronger, even the suffering that we have no choice and need to learn to live with can become our teacher and motivation to excel. As it is often said in Buddhist teachings, lotus flowers do not grow in the highland and on solid ground, but only bloom in humble and muddy soil. Today's garbage cans become the compost and fertilizer of the flowers of tomorrow.

IV. Questioning And Investigating The Cause Of Suffering

Once we have developed a desire to do something about our suffering, the next question arising automatically is: What can we do? How should the problem be tackled? At this point, fate and destiny may come to the minds of some the clients. Questions and beliefs like, "Is this suffering my fate?" or "I am condemned, there is no way out!" may arise. However, if someone truly understands Buddhist teachings, these questions will not arise because the concepts of fate and destiny denote that events in life have already been predetermined by an ultimate creator or other means. As explained above, under the Law of Dependent Origination, the Buddha ruled out the possibility of an ultimate creator and all events come to be from the coalescence of causes and conditions.

More importantly, as pointed out in the *Discourse of The Salt Crystal* (Thanissaro 1998), the course of one's life is *not totally* controlled by past Karma. The Buddha explained that if two people did a similar evil deed, one may end up in hell, but the other may barely feel the punishing effect of the deed. The sort of person ending up in hell are those who are

...undeveloped in (contemplating) the body, undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in discernment: restricted, small-hearted, dwelling with suffering (Thanissaro 1998, A.N. III 99).

However, for those people who are

...developed in (contemplating) the body, developed in virtue, developed in mind, developed in discernment: unrestricted, large-hearted, dwelling with the immeasurable (Thanissaro 1998, A.N. III 99)

the effect of the deed could be very small. The Buddha used the simile of putting salt crystals in a small cup and putting the same amount of salt crystals in the Ganges river to illustrate the difference between the two people. The water in the cup would be too salty to drink. On the other hand, the salt crystals would not make much difference to the Ganges river. It must be pointed out here that the above explanation is not ruling out the relationship between cause and effect. What the Buddha was telling us was that between cause and effect, there is also the influence of the conditions. The formula should be "cause + conditions = effect". An insignificant cause nourished by favourable conditions can bring about a large result. On the other hand, a significant cause with unfavourable conditions may only have a minimal effect. This discourse gives us a clear message that no matter what we did in the past, we can still work diligently to improve the conditions for good seeds to flourish and make the conditions harder for bad seeds to develop.

In the introductory sessions, clients should be educated to see that under the Law of Karma, we are all responsible for our own thoughts and actions. Therefore, we cannot pass on our responsibility of looking after our own suffering because they are of our own making. In the famous *Dhammapada*, the Buddha explained that a person's thoughts and actions are the cause and conditions that will shape his/her future.

Mind is the forerunner to all things. It directs and makes them. If someone speaks and acts with a deluded mind, suffering will follow him, as the wheels follow the footsteps of the animal that draw the cart. Mind is the forerunner to all things. It directs and makes them. If someone speaks and acts with a pure mind, happiness will follow him, as the shadow follows the body.

In these few verses, the Buddha spelled out clearly the relationship between our mind and our well-being. If someone speaks and acts with a deluded mind, a mind that is deluded by greed, hatred and ignorance, suffering will follow. On the other hand, if someone speaks and acts with a pure mind, happiness will also follow. Our minds and actions will influence and determine our well-being. This is the basic teaching of the Law of Karma, that is: volitional action will generate karmic energy that will manifest in the future when the necessary conditions are there to nurture it into fruition.

Now that we know our mind and actions are responsible for our suffering, the next problem would be to find out what exactly did we do wrong and what is the root of the problem. In most situations, we were not mindful as to what happened in our mind and what kind of Karmic seeds were planted in our consciousness. Therefore, we need to investigate, pay careful attention to and become aware of what is happening in our mind:

its habits, its attachment, its reaction to stimuli, its thoughts and emotions, the relationship between thoughts, emotions, actions, etc, in order to develop the insight and wisdom that are necessary to bring about the transformation of suffering.

V. Observing And Learning By Paying Careful Attention To Suffering And The Cause Of Suffering

All living beings have some kind of consciousness. What differentiate them are their awareness, insight and wisdom. These attributes make all the difference in the world. For example, a cat can sit in front of the TV and watch the images of a horror movie on the screen without developing too much feeling. However, if a young child watches the same horror movie, one would be horrified because s/he would take the images on the TV screen to be real. If a TV technician watches the same horrifying programme, because of his insight and awareness of the illusory nature of the images on the screen, he would not be as deluded by the horrifying images. As a result, he would have a lot more freedom as to how to deal with the images. He could watch the whole programme, turn off the TV or admire the wonders of the electrons on the screen. What is different among the three examples is not what was on the TV screen, but the awareness, insight and wisdom of each of the viewers.

Awareness, insight and wisdom can be developed from the practice of right mindfulness, which sometimes has been translated as “careful attention”. However, in order to develop awareness, insight and wisdom, the term “mindfulness” is more appropriate to describe the mindset that is needed. For example, the child who watched the horror movie on TV was paying careful attention to the screen, but one lacked the reflective and regulatory power that would come with being mindful. It is for this reason that in Dharma Therapy, the practice of mindfulness is an important key component, that is, to observe and learn by paying careful attention correctly. According to Kabat-Zinn (1994), the definition of mindfulness is “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally” (Kabat-Zinn 1994, p.4).

In the important *MahaSatipathanna sutta* (the Greater *Discourse on The Foundations of Mindfulness*), the Buddha explained the essentials of practicing mindfulness. The Buddha said,

A monk abides contemplating the body as body, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world.(Walshe 1987, p.335)

In this short sentence, the Buddha illustrated the necessary mindset and conditions to practice mindfulness. To elaborate further on the topic, the following five terms from the sentence will be discussed in more detail: abides contemplating, body as body, ardent, clearly aware and mindful.

“Abides contemplating” implies that the person should be at ease and comfortable with the objects of mindfulness. The mind should not wander and one should be concentrating. Without concentration, it is difficult to develop understanding and insight. “body as body” means that when contemplating on the body (or feelings and mind), the person should not differentiate and add on any subjective connotation or interpretation to what has been observed and comprehended. Although this may seem easy on the surface, in reality, not too many people can do it without the practice of mindfulness. Too often we are absentminded as to what we are doing and what is happening in our minds. Even if we can become aware of a feeling through our senses, we usually mix it together with old habitual thinking patterns, drives, past experiences, etc. and turn the feeling into a muddle phase of either “I am very happy” or “I am very upset”. That is why during the practice of mindfulness, the Buddha emphasized that we should

observe without tagging on the notions of “my body” , “your body” and the feelings of good, bad, desirous or repulsive, etc. To observe the body just as the body, or observe the object just as the object is what Kabat-Zinn meant by: “...in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.” “Ardent” is the attitude that one should have when practicing mindfulness. That is, one should practice mindfulness with diligence and enthusiasm so that the mind does not wander. Furthermore, we should actively monitor our thoughts so that unwholesome and distracting thoughts cannot disturb our mindfulness. Very often, a feeling of joy and ecstasy that arise while practicing can help the practitioners to remain ardent in his/her practice of mindfulness. “Clearly aware” is related to the development of knowledge, insight and wisdom. When practicing mindfulness, apart from the developing of concentration, there is also the development of awareness and comprehension of the nature and characteristics of the object of mindfulness. This development of awareness and comprehension facilitates the development of knowledge, wisdom and insight.

In order to comprehend clearly a phenomenon, we need to see clearly the phenomenon and also all its aspects, including the relationship between the object and the observer of the object. In the *Connected Discourses of the Buddha* there is the following passage on Knowledge (Bodhi 2000, p.1281):

“These are feelings”: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

“This is the origin of feeling”: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision... and light.

“This the way leading to the origination of feeling”: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there ‘arose in me vision... and light.

“This is the cessation of feeling”: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision... and light.

“This the way leading to the cessation of feeling”: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there ‘arose in me vision... and light.”

“This is the gratification in feeling” ... “This is the danger in feeling” ... “This is the escape from feeling”: thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision... and light.

From this passage, we can see that when being mindful of feelings, the Buddha saw feelings as feelings and also the different aspects of feelings: the origin of feelings, the way leading to the origination of feelings, the cessation of feelings, the way leading to the cessation of feelings and the gratification, danger and the escape from feelings. Without understanding these characteristics of feeling, a person would be a slave to the feelings experienced. However, when a person is aware of these characteristics of feelings, s/he will be in a much better position to handle them. “Being mindful”, apart from all the qualities that have been discussed above, or mindfulness, *sati* in Pali, literally means “remembering”. When something passes through our consciousness, very often we let it slip through our mind without making an impression. However, when we are mindful of something, what went pass our consciousness makes an impact and gets registered. This quality of mindfulness enables the mind to learn and remember from the experiences of our awareness, and, as a result, enables us to differentiate and discern what is truly beneficial and skilful and what is ultimately harmful and unskilful.

VI. Developing Insight And Wisdom On Suffering And The Cause Of Suffering

For ordinary people, we first learn of an object through awareness. From awareness, we develop feelings and concepts. With feelings and concepts working together, supporting each other, numerous other subjective thoughts and feelings will arise. Because of the

influences of these subjective thoughts and feelings, we will lose our ability to comprehend an object objectively. If the person holds on to these feelings and thoughts as real, and lives in a world of one's own creation, and then generate more thoughts and feelings from this illusory world, one will certainly suffer when the reality of the real world catches up with him/her. If the wake-up call from suffering can not wake one up, and s/he continues to dwell in the world of his/her own creation, then the stress from suffering and the conflict between the two worlds will soon lead the person to develop psychological problems.

Thus, the objective of Dharma Therapy is to help clients develop knowledge, insight and wisdom, which would enhance their ability to accept and face up to reality, sort out complications, deal with difficult situations in life and increase their ability to weather stress. In the above quotation from the *Connected Discourses of the Buddha* on Knowledge, we know that when the Buddha was contemplating on feelings and the difference aspects of feelings, in every instant, he developed vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge and light. These five qualities of perception and insight are the contents of wisdom and the foundations of mental health. In the following, these five qualities of perception and insight will be discussed in more detail.

Vision

Vision is the function of being able to be aware of and recognize an object. It also has the meaning of illuminating; that is, to become aware of and gain recognition of objects that were out of sight before. Being an ordinary person, we are accustomed to focusing our attention onto objects in the outside world. That is why we are easily influenced and swayed by what we see, hear, smell, touch, etc. However, the Buddha taught us that, if we are to develop true knowledge, insight and wisdom, we should be mindful of objects closer to home. In the *Satipathanna sutta*, the Buddha pinpointed four foundations or objects of mindfulness that we need to focus on in order to overcoming sorrow and suffering; they are: body, feelings, consciousness and Dharma.

In Dharma Therapy, clients should always be taught to start their mindfulness practice on the body because when we focus our attention on the body, either by being mindful of our breathing or practicing walking meditation, we ground our focus and awareness onto something solid and tangible. This is especially important and beneficial for clients who have been living in their own illusory world for too long. Furthermore, as it has been pointed out during the discussion of the theoretic foundation of Dharma Therapy, body-mind and consciousness come to be interdependently. Therefore, if stress and suffering exist in the mind and consciousness, they would somehow be reflected as tension and stiffness in the body. When we get in touch with the body through mindfulness, we would also influence the psychological side of the person. If we can relax the tension and stiffness of the body by being mindful of it, mental stress and suffering would also decrease. Another advantage of beginning our practice of mindfulness on the body is that the body is an easier and more stable object to focus on compared to feelings and consciousness. By practicing mindfulness on the body, feelings and thoughts automatically become more apparent as they distract us from our practice of mindfulness on the body. When they become apparent, we can then learn to be mindful of them.

Knowledge

With the awareness and recognition from vision, forms and concepts will manifest in the mind. With forms and concepts, words and phrases can be coined and assigned. With all these tools, the mind will have what it needs to think, differentiate, reflect and learn. What has been learned will become knowledge. That is why we can say that the information gathered from vision is the foundation of knowledge. However, if delusion and subjectivity have distorted the process of vision, the subsequent knowledge gained will

also be erred. This is why the Buddha emphasized that when practicing mindfulness on the body, we should observe the body as just body, feelings as just feelings, etc, as explained above.

To help clients to accumulate knowledge and develop insight and wisdom to overcome psychological problems, clients should be taught to be mindful of his/her feelings and emotions from two different angles: (1) the relationship between one's own mental attitude (i.e., greed, hatred and delusion), emotions (the second dart) and the events that have happened (the first dart). From seeing the relationship, clients should be guided to be aware of the interdependent nature of the emotions and the mental attitude that he/she held in regard to the events that took place. With such and such an attitude, such and such emotions will arise automatically as predicted by the Law of Dependent Origination. (2) The emptiness and illusory nature of feelings and emotion. As explained in the theoretical foundation session, even pain and suffering come to be from the coming together of causes and conditions. When the causes and conditions change, like all phenomena in the world, pain and suffering will also wither away. There is always hope for change and a better tomorrow. The clients should concentrate on changing and improving the causes and conditions that is affecting him or her.

Wisdom

Wisdom is the ability to differentiate, sort out confusion and make decisions. Generally speaking, in Buddhist teachings, there are three types of wisdom: wisdom from education, wisdom from reflecting, and wisdom from practicing. "Wisdom from education" is the wisdom that we gain from learning from the wisdom and experience of others through conversation, books and other media of communication. In a way, it is a second hand learning experience, but it is still necessary because it shortens the learning process tremendously. The guidance and instruction that the therapist gives to the clients is a form of wisdom from education for the clients.

"Wisdom from reflection": is the wisdom that arises from reflection based on the wisdom and knowledge acquired from education and/or awareness and recognition. For example, from seeing and reflecting on the relationship between the interdependent nature of emotions and mental attitude, a client can develop a new insight and choose to change his/her attitude towards a past event.

"Wisdom from practice": is the wisdom gained from firsthand experience, like observing the object directly. This firsthand experience and/or observation of the object should be guided by the wisdom acquired from the previous two types of wisdom, but without the use of diction and cognitive reasoning. Like playing tennis, as long as the player keeps his eyes on the ball, without thinking and reasoning, he can still hit the ball skilfully and appropriately. The reason that he can do so is because of the interaction between what he has learned and the additional information he is gathering while paying attention to the ball. Similarly, if a person has gained enough knowledge and wisdom on the illusory nature of feelings and thought, he/she can be aware of the arising and fading away of one's feelings and thought without developing any attachment to them.

True Knowledge

As above, the functioning of vision, knowledge and wisdom rely on the information acquired during awareness and recognition. True knowledge is illuminating and leads to developing insight from information gathered during the process of vision, knowledge and wisdom. For example, if a person is being mindful of the arising and fading away of feelings, s/he sees that when there is a pleasant sensation, there arises a happy feeling; when there is an unpleasant sensation, there arises an unhappy feeling. If the pleasant sensation fades away, the happy feeling also fades away; and when the unpleasant sensation fades away, the unhappy feeling also fades away. From the observation of the

interdependent relationship between sensations and feelings, one develops the insight and knowledge of “When there is this, that comes to be. When this fades away, that also fades away.” This knowledge of the Law of Dependent Origination comes from the insight gained from the awareness and recognition of the arising and fading away of sensations and feelings. It should be noted that, although all feelings and sensations are impermanent and empty in nature, the Law is applicable regardless of time and space. Hence, true knowledge arises when we can comprehend and develop insight from being mindful of the working of phenomena in the world.

When we can comprehend and have insight on the working and functioning of things and events in the world, our ability to manage and deal with them will be greatly increased. For this reason, if a client can comprehend and develop insight on the working and functioning of feelings and emotions, the ability to deal with and manage them would be greatly improved.

Light

Light is the function of wisdom. When there is light, we can see the rocks and puddles on the ground. If we can see the rocks and puddles, the mind does not need to deliberately make an effort to avoid them, but we can still walk safely. Similarly for the light of wisdom, when we can truly comprehend and have insight into the working of our feelings and emotions, we will automatically sail through all the rocks and puddles of greed, hatred and ignorance without any deliberate effort. It should be emphasized here that the purpose of being mindful of feelings and emotions is not to ignore or eliminate them, but to understand and comprehend them better. With this understanding and comprehension, we can handle them better, and eventually, transform the unwholesome emotions (i.e., fear, hatred, greed, etc.) into wholesome emotions like compassion, empathy and love. Without feelings and emotions, it would be difficult to make decisions and find meaning in life. The root and foundation of Buddha’s teachings are built on the ground of compassion, not on a mind of blank nothingness.

VII. With Insight And Wisdom, Taking The Necessary Steps To Bring An End To Suffering

With the insight and wisdom acquired from being mindful, it is necessary to put this newfound insight and wisdom into action, and solidify the learning. For example, from understanding the relationship between mental attitude, emotions and the events, it is necessary to transform those mental attitudes that bring about the unwholesome emotions. This transformation may come automatically, as explained, if there is the development of light of wisdom. When this happens, behavioural changes in the client would come automatically as a result of the change in attitude. However, sometimes the depth of awareness may not be enough to bring about the development of the light of wisdom, then deliberate behavioural and environmental changes may be needed to solidify the transformation. At this point, the therapist should work with the client to come up with necessary changes.

Conclusion

Although in recent years, research in psychological science has made considerable progress, with the ever-increasing number of mental health related problems, new angles and perspectives as to how we can manage psychological issues will continue to develop. This chapter has attempted to present the Buddhist way of dealing with suffering in a manner that could be applicable in a psychotherapeutic environment. The Buddhist way of dealing with suffering is based on the principles that our minds and actions dictate our well-being. Deluded minds and dysfunctional behaviours fuelled by ignorance are the major cause of pain and suffering. Therefore, the success of Dharma Therapy is based on

helping the client to develop comprehension, insight and wisdom of the cause and conditions that lead to the arising of suffering. When there is insight and wisdom, there is no ignorance. When there is no more ignorance, the cause of suffering ceases to be. The practice of mindfulness is the sword that can break the tyranny of ignorance. By integrating the practice of mindfulness back into the theoretic foundation from where it was derived, Dharma Therapy could be a promising intervention for clients, who are suitable and comfortable to this relatively more demanding approach to therapy. Although, the practice of mindfulness and the process of developing insight and wisdom were originally prescribed by the Buddha to serious practitioners who strove for the ultimate liberation from life and death, laymen who practice accordingly to develop insight and wisdom to handle day-to-day psychological problems can also derive considerable benefits. By being aware of feelings and emotions, and/or the relationship between mental attitude, emotions and the events that occur, even if done retrospectively, clients will soon be able to identify them separately and see the dynamic relationships between them. From this comprehension, the mind will be able to manage feelings and emotions more skilfully and then gradually reach a higher level of peacefulness and clarity, and improve the overall mental health.

In this chapter, I have presented the theoretical foundation of Dharma Therapy and drawn up a framework of how to apply the theory in a clinical environment. Although Dharma was taught by the Buddha and practiced by many accomplished masters for centuries, we still need to put the therapy into clinical trials and document our findings to substantiate its effective. Finally, this chapter has been an attempt to repackage Buddhist teachings so that it can become readily accessible and an effective psychotherapeutic intervention for those in need.

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