

BP3 Volunteer Training

LOOKING AT OURSELVES

- What is your experience with prison? Relatives? Incarceration?
- Have you ever had addiction problems?
- Why are you a prison volunteer?
- What are your expectations?
- What is the state of your own practice?
- What can you share from your own experience that would be of benefit to inmates?

OUR MISSION

- To bring the core teachings of mindfulness through meditation and daily life awareness as taught by the historical Buddha.

REMEMBER

- We are not here to “save” anyone. Only through individual effort can a person be released from his/her own suffering.
- We provide a place and a space for wisdom and compassion to arise, nothing else.

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITY

- To adhere to the service schedule as set up by the facility volunteer facilitator
- To arrive on time
- To provide spiritual friendship to the inmates who come to our service
- To learn the procedures at the facility in order to obtain a brown card
- To attend yearly prison training
- To attend BP3 annual community retreat and training.
- To continue our own Buddhist practice for the benefit of those with whom we come in contact.
- To attend a sangha regularly, study regularly and establish a relationship with a mentor or teacher.

WHO TEACHES, WHO FACILITATES (Refer to Volunteer categories)

FACILITATING A BUDDHIST SERVICE. *Following is a general outline of conducting a Buddhist service. It is prison! We have to be flexible with everything we do. After coming into prison for a*

while, use your experience to guide you on how to proceed. Sometimes sitting immediately after movement is best. Other times there is a buzz in the room, and addressing a particular topic is appropriate.

- Begin with Mindful Movement or Walking Meditation. 20 - 30 minutes. Simple stretching exercises are easy to learn and are of great benefit for creating ease. Experienced inmates can be invited to lead. (We offer simple qigong and yoga movements in the Resource section of the website. There are also videos available on YouTube.)
- Have the inmates sit in a circle if possible, so that they can see each other.
- Begin clockwise either with the facilitator beginning, or the person to the left of the facilitator beginning introductions.
- Each inmate looks at each face in the circle, introduces himself and bows. *(This is an important practice. Inmates do not normally look fully at other inmates who are not friends or part of their "group" except in*
- *Confrontational situations. This introduces a first step in trust.)*
- Service. Use the BP3 service booklet. It is not necessary to schedule a formal service each time you meet, unless the sangha is brand new. Otherwise recite the service every month or so. Have the inmates involved, either by taking turns in reading, or assigning portions of the service to various inmates
- Sitting Meditation. Offer guidance if there are people there for the first time. If there are many new people, keep the sitting to no more than 15 - 20 minutes. Add five minutes or so each service as practice develops working up to 40 minutes *(guidance in sitting is on the BP3 website under resources.)*
- Post-sitting. A question can be posed which might be, "How was the sit tonight? We don't care if it was blissful or you were filled with agitation. The only thing that is important is were you aware of what was taking place. Be completely honest." Or "What is the mental state you are bringing to sangha tonight?"
- You may want to pose a different question, depending on what appears to be happening in the sangha. Perhaps, "Did anyone practice with the First (or Second, Third, etc.) Precept this week?"
- Dharma Discussion. If you are not a Dharma Teacher, you will not be giving a Dharma talk, but will lead a discussion on aspects of the topic introduced previously by a Dharma Teacher. A teacher will suggest questions for discussion, although other questions may present themselves.
- Right Speech. Inmates should speak from the heart and from their own experience. Inmates do not cross talk. They do not criticize other points of view. You might remind them to notice their internal response as others speak, i.e. judgmental, "I have a better answer", etc.

RITUAL

- Ritual to many inmates is very important. On the street, many inmates have spoken about the ritual of using drugs, or the rituals of gang life. We need to substitute unskillful ritual with a skillful ritual.
- Rituals might include "bowing in" to each inmate, periodically (if allowed), letting inmates each light an incense stick while silently reflecting on a personal intention; a ritual for when an inmate leaves prison; a ritual when a loved one dies, etc. BP3 has many rituals on file, which can be accessed.

IF THERE IS A PROBLEMATIC INMATE

- Volunteers decide who comes to our services and who doesn't.
- We can eliminate problematic inmates from our ducat list. It is our program.
- Speak to the prison's CRM or sponsor, explaining why you wish to remove an inmate.

HOW TO SPEAK TO A PROBLEMATIC INMATE

- Do not reprimand a problematic inmate in front of the group if possible. Take him aside and tell him that his behavior is not appropriate.
- If inappropriate behavior continues, take him aside and tell him he is being taken off the ducat list for at least one month. If necessary, call security to have him removed.
- Report what took place to the CRM and/or sponsor.
- Remove problematic inmate permanently if you sense an insincere attitude and if he is not conforming to the group sanctity.

WORKING WITH PRISON STAFF

- Always call ahead to make sure that programming is on schedule. Introduce yourself and which program you represent.
- Be cordial and polite to all staff no matter if they courtesy are returned or not.
- Visit your CRM and/or sponsor and keep them updated on the program.