

# “STAYING HEALTHY IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING” ENGAGED BUDDHIST PRACTICES FOR PEOPLE IN THE HELPING PROFESSIONS

‘Most people enter the helping professions with optimism, enthusiasm, energy and a keen desire to help those dealing with disease, mental illness, abuse and neglect. Chronic exposure to human suffering can turn optimism into despair, kindness into resignation and enthusiastic effort into cynicism or indifference. Talented people overwhelmed with the pain and suffering of those they wish to help may leave their work prematurely carrying a burden of unprocessed sadness, anger or indifference. All types of work have occupational hazards and when we choose to work with human pain, trauma, grief and suffering we need to assume responsibility for educating ourselves about the hazards associated with our work, monitor our exposure, identify symptomatic behaviour and use appropriate tools to keep ourselves healthy.

There is a growing interest and appreciation of Buddhist Wisdom perspectives within many the helping professions with a recognition that Buddhist psychological principles and practices, can be of immense benefit to professionals and clients alike. However, sometimes these principles and practices are misunderstood, taken out of context and pursued in the hope of eradicating suffering, overcoming insuperable difficulties or finding magical answers to the desperation, emptiness and affliction that is part of the human condition. Life is both wonderful and difficult. Suffering and affliction are fundamental aspects of being alive.

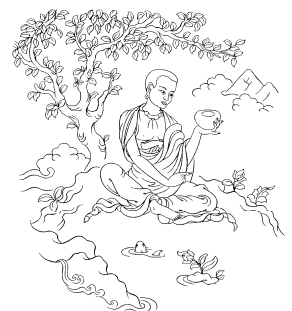
In this workshop participants will be introduced to the core ideas of engaged buddhist practice and the Buddhist concept of interconnectedness. Participants will be provided with some tools that, when practised regularly, can assist in keeping hope alive, maintaining health, wellbeing and inner peace even while working in the midst of great suffering. Broadly the workshop will cover:

- The Buddha’s first Teaching – Setting in Motion the Wheel of Dharma
- Defining Engaged Buddhism and Engaged Buddhist Practices
- Working with notions of self – counter transference, burnout, vicarious traumatization and compassion fatigue
- Befriending the Inner Critic
- Finding our path
- Engagement, Interconnectedness, Compassion: Mindfulness and skillful means

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