

## A Curriculum on Buddhist Psychology and Therapy/Coaching

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### Abstract

To ensure that there will be enough teachers in the world conforms to target 3 of the UN Millennium Developmental Goal 2, an adequate teachers' training is indispensable. This applies to primary education in Buddhist countries as well as to academic training for highly educated teachers in Buddhism. This article focuses on the topics of psychology in Buddhism and Buddhist psychotherapy which are relatively missing in textbooks used in university curricula internationally. Acclaimed introductory books reviewing Buddhism like Gethin's (1998) and Harvey's (2013) touch the subject of psychology only sideways. Moreover, the term psychotherapy is conspicuously absent in such course books. Other works online and in book stores varying from Buddhist Encyclopaedias to Dictionaries (*e.g.* Keown, 2003) accrue the same result. Texts specially dedicated to the topic are the exception: *An Introduction to Buddhist Psychology*

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(De Silva, 1979/2005) and *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology* (Kalupahana, 1987). After these two pioneering books the term Buddhist psychology became accustomed, but this does not apply to Buddhist psychotherapy. Viewed as a religious belief, Buddhist psychotherapy is not (yet) accepted in academia as a mainstream treatment method. Somehow psychotherapy still sounds like a strange bedfellow in combination with Buddhism. For Buddhists, this might be due to the nature of the concept psyche which is anathema in a teaching contending the emptiness of self and ego. More importantly, what could be Buddhist psychotherapy? A clear-cut methodology is lacking. After the 1980s other authors from an experiential/Rogerian (e.g. Brazier, 1995) and psychoanalytical/Freudian (e.g. Epstein, 1995) perspective dealt with the cross fertilization between Buddhism and psychotherapy. To date the present author introduced the first integrative account of Buddhist psychotherapy and coaching through his book *Psychotherapy by Karma Transformation* ([www.taosinstitute.net/psychotherapy-kwee](http://www.taosinstitute.net/psychotherapy-kwee)). Kwee's proposition is a practice oriented mosaic of pan-Buddhist principles and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (Kwee & Ellis, 1998). The basis of Karma Transformation is a Buddhist psychology of a cognitive-behavioral signature which is elaborated in various edited books and backed by scholars and practitioners in the field (Kwee, 1990; 2010; Kwee & Holdstock, 1996; Kwee, Gergen & Koshikawa, 2006). Based on three decades of practice, theory, teaching and research, the present contribution launches the specifics of a university level curriculum to secure Karma Transformation for the next generation. The program consists of 16 days which could be offered during a semester if attended one day a week. It could also be presented as a one month intensive of 10 days of seminars and 6 days of practicum with on-hand supervision and intervision. Because of the curriculum's practical implication, the participants need to have access to clients for the practicum. Eligible for the course are therefore students in the helping professions as from the level of MA internship on. In effect, the curriculum is particularly apt for professional therapists and coaches. This includes MAs, MDs, PhDs: psychiatrists, physicians, psychologists, buddhologists, reverends, social workers and managerial/organizational counsellors. In effect, the proposed curriculum aims to train trainers and teachers.

## INTRODUCTION

The present curriculum on Buddhist psychology, psychotherapy and coaching is a learning program presenting a comprehensive Buddhist psychology which fits mainstream practice and includes cutting-edge methods of assessment, therapy and coaching. Time-wise it varies from a 1 day workshop to a 16-day course leading to certification. Each day lasts 7 working hours which comprise a combination of a (powerpoint) seminar and experiential learning. It is possible to go for a 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14-15-16-day program depending on one's preference. These experiential learning possibilities can be freely combined with any seminar subject of a particular day. In order to be able to sensibly pick and choose a seminar day or a combination of days, the seminar subjects are specified below. The 16 days of the complete course is divided into 4 parts of 4 days per part: PART 1: Introduction to Buddhist Psychology (day 1-4), PART 2: Karma Assessment and Transformation (day 5-8), PART 3: Relational Buddhism and Supervision (day 9-12), and PART 4: Practicum, Inter-vision and Supervision (day 13-16), life: face-to-face or via Skype. At this latter stage students shift from theory and exercising to real practice, and are required to have access to clients. The curriculum or any day(s) of it is eligible for everyone in the helping professions. It is particularly apt for students as from MA internship on. Thus, MAs, MDs, PhDs and professionals who are already working as a therapist or coach (psychiatrists, physicians, psychologists, buddhologists, reverends, social workers and managerial/organizational counsellors) are welcome to join in. Although portions can be selected, it is recommendable to partake in the total program.

**Table 1: Overview of 10 Seminar and 6 Practicum Days**

<b>SEMINAR SUBJECTS (PER DAY)</b>	<b>EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING</b>
1. The Buddha's Life: A Psychological Account	Relaxing/Breathing/ Concentrating (Based on Calming)

2. Psychology in Theravada (a.o. Ancient Greek Buddhism)	Pristine Mindfulness (Based on Insight)
3. Psychology in Mahayana (a.o. Borobudur Buddhism)	Death Meditation Loving-Kindness Meditation
4. Psychology of Meditation (a.o. 12 Buddhist Meditations)	Compassion Meditation Laughing/Smiling Meditation
5. Karma Assessment: (a.o. Not-self/ Dependent Origination)	Intake for Therapy/Coaching: Karma Life History Questionnaire
6. Coaching/Therapy by Karma Transformation	Karma Structural Analysis (ABC Centrepiece)
7. Psychotherapy by Karma Transformation: ABC	Karma Transformation (ABCDE Format)
8. Psychotherapy by Karma Transformation: ABCDE	Karma Transformation (ABCDE Format)
9. Relational Buddhism: Can There Be Buddhist Therapy?	Karma Functional Analysis (5 Vicious Cycles)
10. Relational Buddhism: Happy Leaders and Employees	Karma Transformation (ABCDE Format)
11. Group Supervision	PRACTICUM: ABCDE Form 1/self
12. Group Supervision	PRACTICUM: ABCDE Form 2/ other
13-16. Supervision/Intervision (Skype)	PRACTICUM: 4 Forms' Completion & 4 Page Article

**CONTENTS**

In order to know the contents of the course in more detail, here is an overview of each seminar subject and the literature the student needs to read (*Capita Selecta*) for background preparatory knowledge. In total the reading is ca. 50 pages per semester subject and because there are 10 seminar days, the total reading is ca. 500 pages. The 6 practicum days require completion of one ABCDE form of oneself, one of a fellow participant and four of clients. Next to this a four page article on a curriculum theme, *i.e.* any subject dealt with during the course, is required. This production will be examined. Its

quality determines the awarding of a certificate. The total amount of face-to-face contact hours (ex breaks) for these 10 seminar days is 70 (10x7). The amount of hours in practicum is 42 hours (6x7). The amount of hours for homework next to 16 days of face-to-face contacts (seminars, supervision and intervision) and reading is for about 30 hours. These 30 hours are divided in 18 hours (6x3) for completing 6 forms and 12 hours (4x3) for writing a 4-page paper. Thus, the total amount of investment in terms of hours is: 112 hours (16x7) plus ca. 100 hours of reading (ca. 500 pages) plus ca. 30 hours homework, makes ca. 242 hours. Listing the topics of each seminar day offers an overall menu of the curriculum:

### ***1. The Buddha's Life: A Psychological Account***

1. From Birth to Quest
2. Seeking and Awakening
3. First Three Talks
4. Teaching Life until Death
5. Spread of Buddhism

### ***2. Psychology in Theravada***

1. 3 Baskets of Scriptures (Tipitaka)
2. Selected Suttas and Psychology
3. More on Suttas and Psychology
4. Deeper Teachings (Abhidhamma)
5. Ancient Greek Buddhism

### ***3. Psychology in Mahayana***

1. Borobudur Buddhism
2. Mahayana Schools and Sutras
3. Madhyamaka: Nagarjuna
4. Yogacara: Asanga and Vasubandhu
5. Diamond Vehicle (Vajrayana)

### ***4. The Psychology of Meditation***

1. The Buddha's 12 Meditations
2. Pristine Mindfulness (incl. Non-Duality)
3. Death Contemplation
4. Loving Kindness and Compassion
5. Laughing and Smiling

**5. Karma Assessment: Not-self and Dependent Origination**

1. Karma: Here/Now Intentional Action
2. The Skandhas of Clinging (BASIC-I)
3. Candle Flames and Domino Pieces
4. Functional and Structural Analyses
5. The Onion Model: Emotional Restructuring

**6. Coaching/Therapy by Karma Transformation**

1. Contextualizing Karma Transformation
2. Karma Life History Questionnaire
3. Narrative Rebiographing
4. Relating to Others and Oneself
5. Stress and Meaning

**7. Psychotherapy by Karma Transformation: ABC**

1. The ABCDE-Format of the 4-Ennobling Realities
2. The Birth/Rebirth of Karmic Emotional Episodes
3. A: The Afflicting Event (Vedana)
4. B: Unwholesome Beliefs (Samjna)
5. C: Unwholesome Consequences (Samskara)

**8. Psychotherapy by Karma Transformation: ABCDE**

1. Criteria for Wholesome Karma
2. Tweaking Salubrious Self-Talk
3. D: Disputing Toward Wholesome A-B-C-D-E
4. E1: Wholesome Emotional Effect
5. E2: Wholesome Behavioural Effect

**9. Can There Be Buddhist Psychotherapy?**

1. Neither Theistic, Nor Atheistic
2. What is Psychotherapy?
3. The Purchase of Friendship
4. A Common Factors Approach
5. Remedy and Outcome

**10. Relational Buddhism: Leadership and Inter-mind**

1. The Psychology of Social Construction
2. Confluence with Buddhist Inter-Mind
3. Buddhist Coaching in the Workplace

4. Happy Leaders, Happy Employees
5. Appreciative Inquiry

The Buddhist venture is a practice of “liberation” and the theory is a guide or roadmap to the practice. Psychologically, liberation implies a freedom of emotional captivity. Therapy and coaching are meant to disentangle psychological knots. Because of the primacy of practice, the above guide is inextricably entwined with practicum, supervision and intervision. A minimum amount of hours for face-to-face or long-distance personal guidance (via Skype) is indicated in the program but this eventually depends on the student’s individual needs.

## **CAPITA SELECTA**

The literature to be read as homework comprises a selection of chapters/articles from the edited works below. Most of the texts are written by renowned authors or are transcripts of interviews with noted figures. A sample in alphabetical order: James Austin, Peter Bankart, Aaron Beck, Guy Claxton, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Michael DelMonte, Padmal De Silva, Padmasiri De Silva, Albert Ellis, Kenneth Gergen, Yutaka Haruki, Dian Hosking, Jon Kabat-Zinn, David Kalupahana, Belinda Khong, Fusako Koshikawa, Jean Kristeller, Michael Mahoney, Pahalawattage Premasiri, Lobsang Rapgay, Deane Shapiro, John Teasdale, Asanga Tilakaratne, Dennis Tirch, Paul van der Velde, Mark Williams, Han de Wit, Ven. Xing Guang, Zhihua Yao. Due to space constraints, the selected literature, also derived from other sources than from the below, will be specified in due course.

### ***Books***

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2. Kwee, M.G.T. (Ed.).(2010). *New horizons in Buddhist Psychology: Relational Buddhism for collaborative practitioners*. Taos Institute Publications, U.S.A.
3. Kwee, G.T.M. (2013). *Psychotherapy by Karma Transformation: Relational Buddhism and Rational Practice*. Taos Institute, USA: WorldShare Books (downloadable free-of charge: [www.taosinstitute.com](http://www.taosinstitute.com)).

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### **Articles/Chapters**

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## THE ABCDE CENTREPIECE

Working on Karma requires a transformational method which is the ABCDE centrepiece. Karma is defined as a dependently originated intentional action with positive or negative emotional impact. Because the bulk the Buddhist therapy/coaching work takes place through an ABCDE-form, shown below (Table 2), it is essential to the program. Applied in Karma Transformation, the use of this form is cardinal for assessment and therapy/coaching (Kwee, 2013). The fundamental Buddhist teaching, the 4-Ennobling Realities (4ER), comes to the fore each time a past or future karmic emotional problem is tackled. An emotional episode's appearing is referred to as the karmic birth or rebirth of an event of suffering.

Targeting an emotional episode, the form tracks the 4ER, as follows: ER1 (*Dukkha*), AFFLICTION: An activating event evokes/sparks existential and adversity/stress and karmic emotional suffering. ER2 (*Samudaya*), BELIEFS: This causes or is caused by concomitant karmic unwholesome intending (thinking, imaging, relational acting) which are self-sabotaging and unrealistic, thus change irrational cognitions into rational ones. ER3 (*Nirodha*), CONSEQUENCES: The way out of suffering is by *emotional restructuring* of greed and hatred, and by *cognitive restructuring* via enacting/embodying constructive intentions and behaviours through DISPUTING (D) ignorance toward

a wholesome EFFECT (E) on the emotional and relational level. ER4 (*Magga*), KARMA TRANSFORMATION: designing/creating/forming karmic wholesome (constructive/realistic/rational) intentional thoughts (cognitions/images) by walking the talk of an 8-Fold Balancing Practice.

Balancing aims: 1. VIEWS, on the causes and conditions of karma and on how to start transforming future karma; 2. INTENTIONS, discerning what is karmic un/wholesome, de/constructive, un/realistic and ir/rational; 3. SPEECH, changing karmic intentions takes place through the vehicle of dialogue and self-speech and self-dialogue; 4. ACTIVITY, intentional self-talk is the seed of behavioural and relational action, and regretful deeds; 5. LIVING, transforming thought and action, and changing ways of being toward generous attention and caring for relationships; 6. EFFORT, suffering motivates forbearance (commitment and resolve) toward changing action/cognition/emotion; 7, AWARENESS: mindful awareness/attention gives insight and understanding of the ABCDE of karma's vicissitudes; 8, ATTENTION: mindfulness is the very start of Karma Transformation.

**Table 2: Transforming a Karmic Emotional Episode**

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**An ABCDE-Model of the 4-Ennobling Realities (ER) and 8-Fold Balancing Practice (8FBP): Transforming Karma toward Wholesome Rebirth**

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1<sup>st</sup> ER (*Dukkha*) – AFFLICTION: There is an activating event evoking/sparking existential and adversity/stress leading to karmic emotional suffering

2<sup>nd</sup> ER (*Samudaya*) – BELIEFS: This causes and is caused by concomitant karmic unwholesome intending (thinking, imaging, relational acting) which are self-sabotaging and unrealistic (thus change irrational cognitions into rational ones)

3<sup>rd</sup> ER (*Nirodha*) – CONSEQUENCES: The way out of karmic agony is: *emotional restructuring* of greed/hatred and by *cognitive restructuring* of ignorance via enacting/embodying constructive cognitive intentions and behavioral action through DISPUTING (D) toward a wholesome emotional/relational EFFECT (E)

The 4<sup>th</sup> ER (*Magga*) – KARMA TRANSFORMATION, designing/creating/forming karmic wholesome (constructive/realistic/rational) intentional thoughts (cognitions/images) by walking the talk of an 8FBP:

1. balancing VIEWS on the causes and conditions of karma and on how to start transforming toward future wholesome karma
2. balancing INTENTIONS: discerning what is karmic un/wholesome, de/constructive, un/realistic, ir/rational, absolute or relativistic
3. balancing SPEECH: changing karmic intentions takes place through the vehicle of dialogue (speech) and self-speech/self-dialogue
4. balancing ACTIVITY: intentional self-talk is the seed of intentional behavioural and relational action, and regretful deeds
5. balancing LIVING: transforming thought and action, and ways of being toward generous attention and caring for relationships
6. balancing EFFORT: suffering motivates forbearance (commitment and resolve) toward changing action/cognition/emotion
7. balancing AWARENESS: mindful awareness/attention gives insight and understanding of the ABCDE of karma's vicissitudes
8. balancing ATTENTION: mindful attention/awareness is the very start of focusing on the ABCDE of Karma Transformation

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**ABCDE-Form: The Birth and Rebirth of a Karmic Emotional Episode**

Afflicting event/sense-based ( <i>Vedana/Touch</i> )	D-A: Dispute by sense control ("video/audio taping")
Beliefs: karmic unwholesome ( <i>Samjna/Intention</i> )	D-B: Dispute by questioning each thought (cognition/image)*
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
Consequence re emotion ( <i>Samskara</i> )	Effect – emotional: equanimity/ contentment of kindness, compassion and/or joy

*Consequence re behaviour (Samskara) Effect – behavioural: equanimity/  
contentment of kindness, compassion  
and/or joy*

\*(1) Is the karmic Belief wholesome/constructive/realistic: absolute or relative?

(2) Will this Belief lead to Interbeing: equanimous kindness, compassion, joy?

(3) Formulate: rational Beliefs leading to karmic wholesome emotion-action?

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## Discussion

Comparing this curriculum with programs introducing Buddhism accrued no referencing to psychology or psychotherapy (*e.g.* [www.uvm.edu](http://www.uvm.edu)). Studying other programs specifically geared to Buddhist psychology learned amongst others that under the name “science of mind” Tibetan adepts offer a Buddhist psychology based on a Nagarjunian position. This furnishes a case in point.

A Tibetan program expounds a “middle way theory (*Madhyamaka*) of logical consequence *ad infinitum* (*Prasangika*)” on things lacking inherent existence (*svabhava*); however their emptiness does not mean that they do not exist (*e.g.* [www.tibetcenter.at](http://www.tibetcenter.at)). It dwells on the “deeper teachings” (the *Abhidharma*) considered as a Buddhist psychology by Buddhists. From a second millennium point of view, I see this work as an archaic philosophical psychology trying to shed light on the nature of “the smallest unit of experience” (*dharma*s) but not leading to rescuing “the man shot with a poison arrow” (*Cula-Malunkyovada Sutta*). It leads to studying centuries long lasting hair splitting disputes of sectarians: the supramundanes (*mahasanghikas*) vs. the elders (*sthaviravadin*) (4<sup>th</sup> century BCE), the personalists (*puṅgalavadin*) vs. the realists (*sarvastavadin*) vs. the differentialists (*vibhajyavadin*) (3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE), and between adherents of these realists: the materialists (*vaibhashikas*) vs. the sutra-ists (*sautantrikas*) (2<sup>nd</sup> century). Out of eighteen schools and sub-schools only the Theravada (“heirs of the elder differentialists”), survived the ravages of time. The course is offered as a closed system by Tibetan Buddhist teachers seemingly excluding other views (*cf.* Batchelor, 1990). In

effect, it likely leaves the student full-headed but empty handed. A sequel of therapy and coaching remains a dire need.

Regarding literature, the internet and book stores provide quite a number of works and texts presenting Buddhist psychology. Noting that the subject of Buddhist psychology, therapy and coaching is neither fish nor flesh, there are not too many professional psychologists who are well-versed in non-denominational/non-sectarian Buddhism as well as in clinical psychology and psychotherapy. Most authors are theoretical/research psychologists (*e.g.* Claxton, 1990), practicing psychoanalysts (*e.g.* Safran, 2003), Buddhist philosophers (*e.g.* Hall, 1979), Buddhist adepts (*e.g.* Wallace, 2003), Nichiren psychologists (*e.g.* Dockett, Dudley-Grant & Bankart, 2003) or psychologists turned on to Buddhist teachers (*e.g.* Kornfield, 2009). A powerful current is headed by the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama who is boosting expensive research on psychology and neuropsychology in Buddhism (*e.g.* Goleman, 2003). Despite the gigantic effort, these writings do not seem to have a real impact on designing a professional psychotherapy in mainstream cure and care.

## IN CLOSING

There are exceptions to the rule (*e.g.* Watson, 1998 and De Silva, 2008) and a collaboration of a Buddhist adept/philosopher and a mainstream psychologist accrued a gem of an article in mainstream literature (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). The notable exception is Kabat-Zinn's (2003) Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction which has become a hype in health and mental health care, changed clinical practice all over the world. Helpful to achieve this was the smuggling away of the intervention's Buddhist roots. In its wake there is Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2002). Establishing a technique-oriented procedure is a quite different proposition than creating a Buddhist psychology and psychotherapy. Considering the thriving research on compassion, forgiveness and happiness, the next logical step is to originate Buddhist psychotherapy. Karma Transformation endeavours Buddhist psychotherapy on cognitive-behavioural lines, which I (Kwee, 1990) venture in concurrence with Mikulas (1978) and De Silva (1984). My overture differs from cognitive-behaviour approaches like Dialectical Behaviour Therapy

(Linehan, 1993) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Hayes, 2004) which, in spite of drawing some inspiration from (Zen) Buddhism, cannot be termed Buddhist psychotherapy.

A stream of thought which corresponds with the current non-theistic take (neither theistic, nor atheistic) is Batchelor's (1997) secular Buddhism. However his innovative thinking remains in the framework of philosophy and does not include psychology. My proposition bears resemblance with Zen Therapy (D. Brazier, 1995) and a similar program (C. Brazier, 2003). However, the differences with the current proposal in background (Amida Buddhism) and approach (experiential therapy) are significant. In fact, having teamed-up with David Brazier in distant learning the conclusion is that Karma Transformation complements Zen Therapy. The hope is that a cognitive-behavioural approach to Buddhist psychology, psychotherapy, counselling and coaching will make headway going forward via the curriculum here presented.

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### **WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

<http://relationalbuddhism.org> , Fb @ Relational Buddhism , Tw @ relationalbuddh

Positive psychology coaching, like life coaching, uses the science of well-being and research-based interventions to increase life satisfaction...“ Clients come to therapy or coaching wanting to change, and both professions assume that significant change will occur over time“ Hayden & Whitworth. Coaching and therapy are distinct in many ways and it’s important to draw a clear line between them. Therapy is, generally speaking, for people dealing with a psychological issue that undermines their ability to function in healthy and adaptive ways. The focus is retrospective and includes repairing damage from previous experiences. Identifying and treating disorders and pathologies and alleviating symptoms through behavioral, cognitive or Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology Courses. Community, Interdependence, and Multicultural Foundations. Lineages of Understanding: Buddhist and Western Perspectives on Well-Being and Disorder. The Art of Practicing Contemplative Psychotherapy. Program Learning Outcomes. Students demonstrate knowledge of core counseling curriculum. Students demonstrate proficiency in clinical counseling skills. Students demonstrate professional competence in counseling. Professor of Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology Core Faculty Long-time faculty member and former department director of Naropa University’s Contemplative Psychotherapy and Buddhist Psychology program. What Buddhist Psychology is Why Cognitive-Behavioral Therapists should be interested in Buddhist Psychology What aspects of Buddhism remain to be explored by Cognitive and Behavioral researchers/therapists And, much more! Dennis Tirch, PhD Biography. Dr. Tirch is the Founder and Director of The Center for Compassion Focused Therapy, the first clinical training center for Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT) in the USA. Dr. Tirch is also the President of The Compassionate Mind Foundation USA “ the North American wing of the training, research and development community for CFT. Dr. Tirch has been de