




# **Life Coaching: A View from Buddhist Psychotherapy and Counseling**

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## ***[Abstract]***

This article aims to understand the essence of life coaching through the perspective of Buddhism in psychotherapy and counseling. The term “psychotherapy and Buddhist counseling” is a combination between concepts of both Buddhism and the principles of psychotherapy and counseling in Western psychology. The goal is to adjust behaviors, thinking in order to move the realm of the patients. Psychotherapy and Buddhist counseling can be conducted in 5 ways:- 1) Performing 3-steps of TIR; 2) psychotherapy based on the Four Noble Truths; 3) giving supportive, not intrusive, based on the principles of the Four Brahmavihāras; 4) using the 3 Worlds and 31 existences principle as a map for traveling; 5) Ability to avoid certain types of questions. Even though life coaching is widely popular in Thai society, and is a phenomenon in a new form of psychological counseling that all Thai people are interested in. But still it may be something new for Thai people. Some of the cases that illustrate the blemish of transparency that triggered the public's fervor of doubt on the behaviors and ambiguity of the Live Coach itself are now common in Thai society. These

are valuable lessons for all professional life coaches including new comer life coaches that will continue to occur with quality in Thai society.

**Keywords:** Buddhist, Counseling, Life Coaching, Psychotherapy

## **Introduction**

Life coaching implies a kind of training for the development of life potential. Both in terms of self-development, health, and work, including good relationships within families, colleague as well as the development of one own mind, which need to use a principle of counseling to patients by experts who have been trained to have specific qualifications. This is to achieve the planned goals, such as happiness, success, and development in all dimensions as said.

Psychology has developed a theory of psychotherapy and counseling having a therapist as an important element in driving the process to achieve the objectives by relying on the trust and the bond between patients and the therapist. The treatment process focuses on the study and analysis of mental treatment and counseling by Buddhism to those who experience mental problems. This concept of psychotherapy is very popular as the integration of psychology with Buddhism in a multidisciplinary study. More than that, popular educational institutions are also focusing on such an integrative method. The examples of Buddhism-based courses focus on the processes, principles, and methods of psychotherapy including counseling the clients to achieve their goals concretely, such as the international course “Buddhist Psychotherapy & Counseling” run by the International Buddhist Studies College (IBSC), MCU and Thai program course by the Graduate School, MCU; or a course that focuses on practice such as “the Practice in Buddhist Counseling Psychology” of Faculty of Humanities, MCU. As well as a “Buddhist Psychology” subject run by MMU. These active courses focus on the analysis of psychotherapy and counseling in Western psychology that focuses on the nature and processes of the mind,

methods of development, healing, and counseling to people who experience mental problems, such as stress caused by social, economic, family pressure, education, health, and love. The courses emphasize the nature, types, and processes of the mind according to the teachings of Buddhism and comparative analysis with modern psychology as well. It can be seen that these subjects focus on learning the nature of the so-called “mind” as well as possible changing of human behaviors. Therefore, human beings inevitably need to have a genuine understanding of nature, both in terms of corporeality (*rūpa-dhamma*) and mentality (*nāma-dhamma*) including an understanding of the work processes of all those natural things especially the mind.

### **What is the Concept of Buddhist Psychotherapy & Counseling?**

For the reason that “psychotherapy and Buddhist counseling” has psychotherapy and counseling in Western psychology as a foundation, therefore, getting to know the West wisdom cannot be overlooked. When it comes to western psychology one of the often mentioned academic textbooks is the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), which is widely utilized and published by the American Psychological Association (APA). With its standardized language, it is a basic guide for classifying psychological disorders used in the United States of America, including countries around the world by treatment experts, researchers, psychologists, insurance companies, and pharmaceutical company, and various insurance policy planners. The current version of the DSM characterizes a mental disorder as “a clinically significant behavioral or psychological syndrome or pattern that occurs in an individual [which] is associated with present distress...or disability...or with a significantly increased risk of suffering. Most Western concepts are usually based on the concept of “human rights” which will only mislead to “self-centeredness”. In the end, when we consider the nature completely, we will find that humanity has no rights at all. Human beings are just residents. Therefore, the concept of human

rights is the opposite of human peace. Thus a desirable counseling should be based on this fact.

However, once psychotherapy and counseling in Western psychology have been integrated with Buddhist concepts, the resulting ingredients could be “Buddhist psychotherapy and counseling” means shifting psychological counseling from a western theory to a Buddhist base. Is a study and experiment that is very useful for psychological support personnel because this new psychological counseling model is very consistent with the content of Thai culture

The abovementioned concept begins with the view that the underlined problem is nothing but human sufferings. Humans are full of cravings reflecting deeply within one’s mind. For example, when one wants to own a car, it simply means that one still doesn’t have a car, or one just wants one more. This picture shows an insecure, an indispensable mental condition as a specific type of craving called “craving for sensual pleasure” (*kāma-taṇhā*) the Buddha thus spoke this verse:

*n’atthi rāgasamo aggi            n’atthi dosasamo gaho*  
*n’atthi mohasamaṃ jālaṃ        n’atthitaṇhāsamānadī.*

There is no fire like passion; there is no seizer like hatred; there is no net like delusion; there is no river like craving. The commentator further explains that even though the river still has many days of being dim or full, which can be seen. But craving never be filled and never run dry, it still appears deficient forever and hard to be filled up.

For this reason, knowing the craving as the cause of suffering and then slowly abandon it, is something that a counselor should be aware of to refine and elevate the mind to be ready to heal others. It is the aim of cleaning one’s mind first. Besides, it genuinely is a practice of perfection for oneself as the saying “restraining one’s passion is to add perfection to oneself.” One example that we may have experienced through our daily lives is to restrain ourselves from such wants. It is a capability of

knowing nature occurring in our mind is a phenomenon of consciousness rooted in greed (*lobhamūla-citta*). In this regard, one should be aware of one's mind by realizing the Buddha's verse "Here, a monk knows a lustful mind as lustful, a mind free from lust as free from lust"

Another example is when we feel annoyed by the bite from an ant climbing. Even though we are driven strongly by our defense mechanism to slap the ant to death, but we need to restrain our anger that occurred in our mind, in the same way as the said lustful mind, remembering that "Here, a monk knows a hating mind as hating, a mind free from hate as free from hate"

Which is consistent with the principle of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), contemplation of mind (*cittānupassanā-satipaṭṭhāna*) in Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta.

In other words To have a clear comprehension of one's mind affected by lust, hate, delusion, or contracted mind, distracted mind, exalted mind, unexalted mind, etc. as is going on at that time. It is the only way to get rid of devils contaminated in the mind. Another clever way is to use our long or short breaths to disastrously destroy that irritation (*paṭigha*), destructive emotions, and defilements. That is to say, if you feel sufferings in any form, such as sorrow (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*dukkha*), grief (*domanassa*), or despair (*upāyāsa*), etc. those sufferings will be most easily eradicated by just the method of breathing or *ānāpānasati*. When the sufferings are eliminated, our minds will automatically have enough space to contemplate and to look and see relaxingly all events as they are and be able to solve all problems more efficiently.

### **What is the Purpose of Buddhist Psychotherapy and Counseling?**

The process of Buddhist psychotherapy and counseling is like a classroom consisting of a therapist and patients in which a patient is as a

student while the therapist must be both teacher and student at the same time. That is to say, aside from being able to teach and give advice, one must also be open-minded enough to learn the science of life and be able to use that knowledge to develop the ability to understand life all the time as well. If viewed in terms of learning, a secular degree and a spiritual degree are different.

General education aims is to achieve success in graduation or knowing the subjects studied. Receiving for a diploma is a symbol to indicate that graduation is fully completed. But when referring to a degree in Dhamma, it means the ability to obtain the natural knowledge as a matter of suffering according to the principle that *dukkham ariyasaccam pariññeyyan* This noble truth of suffering is to be fully understood as duties in the Four Noble Truths, they are:-

1. *Pariññeyya-dhamma* (to be fully understood)
2. *Pahātabba-dhamma* (to be abandoned)
3. *Sacchikiriya-dhamma* (to be realized), and
4. *Bhāvetabba-dhamma* (to be developed)

For this reason, the goal of learning about Buddhist Psychotherapy & Counseling would thus be comparable to the success of taking a desperate person out of the dark to light; or taking a lost person back home. From the illusion to the truth or from the narrow to the wide, as a simile for glorifying the teachings of the Buddha “It is as if someone were to set up what had been knocked down, or to point out the way to one who had got lost, or to bring an oil-lamp into a dark place, so that those with eyes could see what was there”

In other words, the goal of Buddhist psychotherapy and counseling is a change in behaviors and thinking system to move becoming (*bhava*) and planes of existence (*bhūmi*) of those who consult us.

### **Buddhist Counseling Methods**

Here are the 5 methods of Buddhist counseling: (1) Performing 3-step

TIR, (2) Psychotherapy based on the Four Noble Truths, (3) **Supportive without Interfered with** the 4 Brahmavihāra, (4) Using the 3 *Bhava* and 31 *Bhūmi* as a Map for Traveling, and (5) Avoiding Certain Types of Questions. Details are as follows:

### **1) Performing 3-step TIR (Tuning in → Identifying split → Realization)**

The first step is “Tuning in” which means listening efficiently. It is the beginning of counseling. It should begin with mental stillness. That is, the healing of the mind so that the mind is in a state of stillness enough to share the love with others as the saying “An ability to love is an ability to keep silence” which means a mental state of calm. Even though a message can be usually delivered through mental communication but full process counseling cannot be silent because it is necessary to use verbal communication with the client. However, sometimes a counselor must know how to practice equanimity (*upekkhā*) which means knowing the heat and cold with endurance. Such practice is the opposite of the lack of emotionlessness or apathy.

The next step is “Identifying split” means the use of observing the split between what one wishes and the real one is facing. In this process, there may be many splits, which are “the primary split is taproots and secondary split is fibrous roots” A counselor must then find the issue that where are the said cracks?

The last important step is “Taking one back to the real world” (Realization) means to encourage one to understand the real world. This is for a sustainable understanding. Natural view based on truth is the extermination of the wrong view.

### **2) Psychotherapy based on the Four Noble Truths**

The Four Noble Truths is the largest image is the right view. It is the knowledge towards the truth in the world and life, a state that is withdrawn from ignorance causing perversion (*vipallāsa*). In order to integrate the Four

Noble Truths into the process of counseling in Buddhist psychotherapy and counseling, Buddhist therapists need to go through the training process in 3 areas:- 1) understanding the world and life, 2) having a quality of mind; and 3) having an ability to work in counseling under the concept of the Four Noble Truths.

The process of counseling in psychology and psychotherapy that is based on the Four Noble Truths can genuinely support the achievement of human potential. It can solve problems of one's mind and to live in harmony with reality with one's wisdom. Research has shown that the process of counseling in psychology and psychotherapy affects the variables both the eastern variable which is based on Buddhist principles such as morality (*sīla*), wisdom, peace (*santi-bhāva*), loving-kindness, contentment (*santosa*), etc. And Western variables such as hospitality, a harmonious feeling in life, the ability to recover energy, strengthening tolerance, and uplifting the level of mental health, etc.

In the healing process, a therapist needs to know the Four Noble Truths first and also know himself before he can solve the problem for others. That is to say, he must know the true suffering is a first step where he knows the problem. Then when he realized the problem he will know its cause. When knowing the root cause of the problem, he will be able to help others, which is to choose the right way that can solve the problem to be well accomplished.

### **3) Supportive without Interfered with the 4 *Brahmavihāra***

“True love is supportive, not intrusive.” This quote may be exemplified by the working systems of the internal organs of the human bodies. For instance, the heart and lungs work together and support each other in their systems without interfering in the duties of others. In the same way, love may be managed by using the four *Brahmavihāra* as follows: loving-kindness (*metta*), compassion (*karunā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). A good counselor must be equipped with these qualities.



Besides, one should always carry out only truthful speeches (*sacca-vācā*) because clear cut and truthful words are a constant stimulus that suitable for the Dependency of patients. The following is an example of inconsistency (father) stimuli.

**Son:** Father, I'm wondering if I can go out to see a movie today.

**Father:** Are you going to go? Well, as you please. Hey, that is not good, etc.

**Son:** !?!?!

From the above example, the Father's response back and forth causes his son to be confused and be in a state of dilemma inevitably. That is the state of embarrassed confusion where he could not sure about the feelings and reactions of his father. As a father, he should give a piece of advice to children straightforwardly with honesty. However, anything that should be prohibited should then be carried out with a good reason. For example, in the case that the father forbids children to visit nightclubs, bars, or other inappropriate places, etc. Being a counselor with full of *Brahmavihāra* will be much easier if one understands and knows how to manage the right proportion between love, compassion, joy, and equanimity to meet a perfect balance.

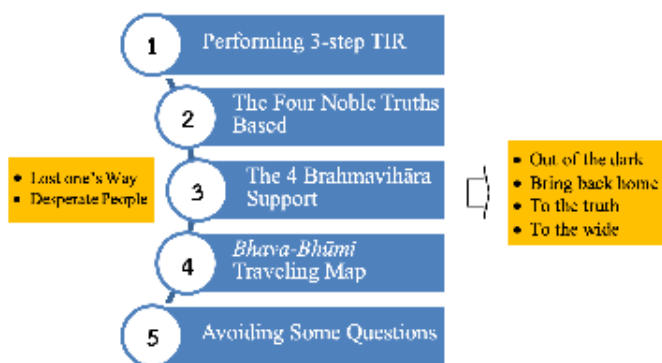
#### **4) Using the 3 *Bhava* and 31 *Bhūmi* as a Map for Traveling**

As we already know that the main goal of Buddhist psychotherapy and counseling is to guild people to walk out of the dark; to take the lost person home; to disillusion people; to take the person out from the narrow. It is the elevating of the becoming (*bhava*) and plane of existence (*bhūmi*) of those who come to us. Therefore, such knowledge is very important because it will make us know the exact ways and not lose the way or go wrong. Using the 3 *bhava* and 31 *bhūmi* as a guiding map for traveling, including being with people who come to us. These things must always be carried out.

## 5) Avoiding Certain Types of Questions

The conversation between the counselor and the patients, in some circumstances, some questions may arise. Metaphysical behavior decisions will cause critical thinking which makes it difficult to answer because it has to deep analyze at the mind and the lust of the questioner. Therefore, the best way to answer such questions is to avoid answering them. As shown in the Tipitaka scriptures regarding the certain types of question not to be answered by the Buddha (*abyākata-pañhā*) to Mālunḱayaputta are questions that shouldn't be asked that have irrelevant questions, including hypothetical and metaphysical questions. Knowing how to avoid certain types of questions requires intelligence as the basis for a thorough analysis of which questions should be answered. Which questions shouldn't be answered? A wise counselor in this area will be able to dodge the counseling trap very well. The following chart shows the five methods of Buddhist psychotherapy and counseling.

Chart 1: Five Methods of Buddhist Psychotherapy & Counseling



## Buddhist Psychotherapy and Counseling: A Case Study in Buddhism

There are many cases of psychotherapy and counseling in Buddhism. As in the Dhamma-attainment case of Aṅgulimāla<sup>1</sup> the story of a criminal

<sup>1</sup> See Aṅgulimāla Sutta - M.II.99-105; Bhikkhu Ñānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (trs.), *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, pp. 710-717.

who eventually attained arahantship or Paṭācārā Therī,<sup>2</sup> a desperate widow who finally realized the natural truth. Moreover another interesting case study is Kīsā Gotamī<sup>3</sup> in which, the researcher selected three interesting case studies here which are (1) The Story about Kīsā Gotamī, (2) The Story about Anitathi Gandha Kumāra, and (3) The Story about One Brahmin.

### 1) The Story about Kīsā Gotamī

The detailed story about Kīsā Gotamī appears in the Dhammapada commentary. The story tells once she became pregnant for 10 months. After giving birth, when the child began to walk, he suddenly died. She forbade the people to take her only son to burn because she never saw death. She then held the dead child up into her waist, hoping to ask a medicine for her son. When she heard that the Buddha knew about such medicine, so she went to see the Buddha. The Exalted One told her that he could bring the child back to life if she could find white mustard seeds from a family where no one had died before. After trying to search until late evening, she couldn't find one. She, therefore, thought that in truth, all families experience the same event is humans must die. When the mind relieved from sadness caused by the love of her son, she left her child in the forest and went to see the Buddha. The Buddha thus said:

*Taṃ puttapasusammattaṃ byāsattamanasaṃ naraṃ  
suttaṃ gāmaṃ mahogho va maccu ādāya gacchati.*

As a great flood carries off a sleeping village, death carries off that man who is intoxicated by sons and cattle, whose mind is distracted.<sup>4</sup>

At the end of the sermon, Kīsā Gotamī achieved *sotāpattiphala* and ordained in Buddhism as Kīsā Gotamī Therī. One day she was sitting

<sup>2</sup> She is honored by the Buddha as an *Etadagga Bhikkhunī* “*Vinayadharānaṃ yadidaṃ Paṭācārā*: Monks, chief among my women disciples, proficient in the rules of discipline, is Paṭācārā” - A.I.25; F. L. Woodward (tr.). *The Book of the Gradual Sayings (Anguttara-Nikāya)*. Vol. I (Ones, Twos, Threes). London: PTS, 1979), p. 21. See more of her story in Paṭācārā Therī-Apadāna - Ap.II.557-560.

<sup>3</sup> See Gotamī Therī-Apadāna Ap.II.529-543.

<sup>4</sup> Dh.287; K. R. Norman (tr.), *The Word of the Doctrine (Dhammapada)*, p. 42.

in the *uposatha* by a lantern and saw a flame rising and flattened. She then regarded as a mental object that “those beings are like that too, arose and extinguished like the flame, except one who attained to the Nibbāna” At that time, the Buddha sat in his *Gandhakuṭī*,<sup>5</sup> he radiated radiation as if sitting in front of her.<sup>6</sup> Then he said this verse “And if anyone were to live for one hundred years, not seeing the place which is death-free, living for one day would be better for him seeing the place which is death-free.”<sup>7</sup> At the end of the sermon, Kīsā Gotamī attained in the Arahantship together with all of penetrating insights (*paṭisambhidās*).<sup>8</sup> Relying on the Buddha as an ideal therapist, Kīsā Gotamī received excellent treatment from him.

The case study of Kīsā Gotamī is an example that reflects the ultimate goal of Buddhism, the highest attainment of the Dhamma. That is being the Arahanta who totally uprooted all defilements. It also shows the universality of the loss of loved ones, children, and death, causing depression and certainly caused all kinds of suffering.

## 2) The Story about Anitatha Gandha Kumāra

Anitatha Gandha Kumāra deceased from the Brahma world (*Brahmaloka*). He was born in a very wealthy family in Sāvatti. Since his birth, he wished not to be close to a woman and when being touch by a woman, he then cried. When he grew up his mother and father asked him to marry a woman but he refused. Only when he was begging often Anitatha Gandha Kumāra asked the 500 goldsmiths to sculpt a gold statue of woman, and said that if they were able to find a woman with this beautiful golden image, he will agree to marry. When his mother and father sent a Brahmin to search, finally such a woman was found. Anitatha Gandha Kumāra, when he heard about the girl that was even more beautiful than the golden one. He fell in love and patiently waiting for the day to meet that girl.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The Perfumed Chamber of the Buddha.

<sup>6</sup> See DhA.III.432-433.

<sup>7</sup> Dh.114; K. R. Norman (tr.), *The Word of the Doctrine (Dhammapada)*, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> DhA.III.432-433.

<sup>9</sup> See DhA.III.281-282.

While the girl was traveling to meet Anitatha Gandha Kumāra, with her being a very delicate person, she, therefore, died on the way. When Anitatha Gandha Kumāra heard the news, he suffered great sadness. He can neither eat nor sleep. The Buddha then spoke these words “*kāmato jāyatī soko kāmato jāyatī bhayaṃ, kāmato vippamuttassa natthi soko kuto bhayaṃ*”<sup>10</sup> which can be translated as “From sensual pleasure comes grief, from sensual pleasure, comes fear. For one who is freed from sensual pleasure there is no grief, much less fear.”<sup>11</sup> At the end of the sermon, Anitatha Gandha Kumāra has attained *sotāpattiphala*<sup>12</sup> and became the first group of Noble Individuals called stream enterer (*sotāpanna*) who entered the stream of Nibbāna. This is another case in which the Buddha, a great psychotherapist, purifies the patient’s mind free from all sufferings including sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair.

### 3) The Story about One Brahmin

Regarding the story about one Brahmin, the Buddha heals the mind of the Brahmin who had the wrong view. “It was heard that One day the Brahmin who had wrong view went to the banks of the river and then cleared the fields. The Buddha saw the readiness of his character. He thus went to his place. Even though the Brahmin saw the Buddha, he did not perform any welcome heartily at all.”<sup>13</sup>

After that day onwards the Buddha came to visit and asked the Brahmin at his fields about the rice every day, “What are you doing?” The Buddha asked him regularly, from paddy fields, sowing, watering, preserving rice, etc. until the final period was harvesting rice seedlings. In one day the Brahmin said to the Buddha, “Venerable, you had been visited here since the days of clearing my fields. If my rice seedlings yield fruits, I will share them with you. And if you still not get them, I would not eat either for from now on you are my friend.” When the rice seedlings were germinated but not

<sup>10</sup> Dh.215.

<sup>11</sup> K. R. Norman (tr.), *The Word of the Doctrine (Dhammapada)*, p. 32.

<sup>12</sup> DhA.III.284.

<sup>13</sup> DhA.III.284.

yet harvested, suddenly a heavy rain has clouded all night and blew away all the rice seedlings. The Brahmin went to the fields early in the morning. He expected that we would see the rice seedlings but only see the empty rice field causing the Brahmin to great sorrow as he pondered that “From now on you are my friend, the desire in my heart is no longer desirable” In this regard, the Buddha knew from the first day that the rice seedlings will not yield fruits. He thus went to teach the Brahmin<sup>14</sup> “*taṇhāya jāyatī soko taṇhāya jāyatī bhayaṃ, taṇhāya vippamuttassa natthi soko kuto bhayaṃ*”<sup>15</sup> From craving comes grief, from craving comes fear. For one who is freed from craving there is no grief, much less fear.<sup>16</sup>

At the end of the sermon, the Brahmin attained *sotāpatti*.<sup>17</sup> This case shows that, to the Brahmin, the Buddha simultaneously was a friend, therapist, counselor, and life coach at the same time. Buddhism calls this positive feature as “Good Friend” or in Pali “*kalyānamittatā*”.

From all of the abovementioned cases resulting in the following 4 crucial questions:

### **Firstly: How can one attain the Nibbāna?**

To the question of how one can attain the Dhamma, the answer stands at the right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*), a natural perspective towards things as they are. One who attained the Dhamma can be able to determinedly abandon fetters (*saṃyojanas*) that bind all sentient beings with the cycle of sufferings. After all, fetters have been abandoned, ones reached the Noble path (*ariyamagga*), entered the state of Ariyans. *Sotāpanna* is the first group of Noble individual who entered the stream of Nibbāna; *sakadāgāmi*; *anāgāmi*; and finally *arahanta* the highest group of Noble individual who has full ability to totally eradicate all sufferings including the ability to abandon all 10 life-bonded fetters ending infinite existences and rebirths. *Samyojana* and Nibbāna are therefore the Dhammas that are on the opposite sides like

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<sup>14</sup> See DhA.III.284-285.

<sup>15</sup> Dh.216.

<sup>16</sup> K. R. Norman (tr.), *The Word of the Doctrine (Dhammapada)*, p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> DhA.III.286.

darkness and light. When the darkness disappeared the light substituted. In the same manner, when all *samyojana* are abandoned the Nibbāna substituted. Nibbāna thus is the only way out from the whole mass of sufferings for sentient beings.<sup>18</sup>

### **Secondly: How should one properly practice?**

The simple answer to this question is the threefold training (*sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*) or a holistic development specifically to the mind. When the mind is focused based on such training, its quality will be gradually developed as clearer and clearer where wisdom arises at a certain level that can fully eradicate the defilements entering into the paths (*magga*), fruitions (*phala*) and Nibbāna respectively. Above all the practicing based on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness should be inevitably taken into the account. That is one abides contemplating body as body, feelings as feelings, mind as mind, and mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world.<sup>19</sup> This properly practice is what one should regard in one's life.

### **Thirdly: What knowledge is required then?**

To have a right view one must realize things as true as exactly in the Four Noble Truths. The Buddha spoke in *Sāmaññaphalasutta*:

And he with mind concentrated, purified and cleansed, unblemished, free from impurities, malleable, workable, established and having gained imperturbability, applies and directs his mind to the knowledge of the destruction of the corruptions. He knows as it really is: “This is suffering. .

<sup>18</sup> See Sanu Mahatthanadull, “The Analytical Study of Samyojana (Fetters) in Theravada Buddhist Scriptures”, *Master of Arts Thesis (Buddhist Studies)*, (Thai Version), (Graduate School Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2010), p 159.

<sup>19</sup> “*Katame cattāro? Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati. . . vedanāsu vedanānupassī viharati. . . cittaṅupassī viharati. . . dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā-domanassaṃ.*” See The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness - D.II.290; Maurice Walshe (tr.), *Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha (Dīgha Nikāya)*, p. 335.

. the origin of suffering. . . the cessation of suffering. . . the path leading to the cessation of suffering.” And he knows as it really is: “These are the corruptions. . . the origin of the corruptions. . . the cessation of the corruptions. . . the path leading to the cessation of the corruptions.” And through his knowing and seeing his mind is delivered from the corruption of sense-desire [*kāmāsava*]. . . becoming [*bhavāsava*]. . . ignorance [*avijjāsava*], and the knowledge arises in him: “This is deliverance!”, and he knows: “Birth is finished, the holy life has been led, done is what had to be done, there is nothing further here.”<sup>20</sup>

In conclusion, the particular knowledge that is extremely needed for a counselor as necessarily required in the process of Buddhist Psychotherapy is knowledge as wisdom in seeing the corruptions (*āsava*) as a key problem; knowledge as wisdom in knowing the cause of the corruptions; knowledge as wisdom in recognizing the cessation of the corruptions; and knowledge as wisdom in walking on the path that leads to the cessation of the corruptions. It is the level of knowledge that humans can see in the world and lives as a whole. Like a jigsaw puzzle, a small piece of the picture must be gradually placed accurately, carefully, and patiently so that the big final picture will be drawn in the end without distortion.

Therefore, the Buddhist counselor aside from being a wise person in the world and life, he must also have the ability to understand nature without corruptions either.

**Lastly:** Where does such knowledge come from?

In Buddhist epistemology, knowledge is the factor that causes the right view. Sāriputta Thera answered in Suttantapitaka, Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇāsaka “Friend, there are two conditions for the arising of right view: the voice of another and wise attention. These are the two condi-

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<sup>20</sup> Sāmaññaphalasutta - D.I.83-84; Maurice Walshe (tr.), *Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha (Dīgha Nikāya)*, pp. 107-108.



tions for the arising of right view.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore right view arises only from the two sources: (1) *Paratoghosa* means hearing or learning from others, and (2) *Yonisomanasikāra* means genetically reflection. The commentator explained *paratoghosa* further as comfortably listening to the Dhamma.<sup>22</sup> Such as the case of Venerable Sāriputta, who has listened to the Dhamma from Venerable Assaji Thera:

Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesam hētum tathāgato āha  
Tesañ ca yo nirōdhō evaṃvādī mahāsamaṇō ‘ti.”

Which can be rendered as “Those things which proceed from a cause, of these the Truth-finder has told the cause, And that which is their stopping-the great recluse has such a doctrine.”<sup>23</sup> Interestingly that *paratoghosa* can be explained as listening to either *saddhamma* or *asaddhamma* from others<sup>24</sup> too. In conclusion, *paratoghosa* denotes listening to external sounds which is the factor that causes both right and wrong views.

From the said case studied of psychotherapy and counseling in Buddhism, they demonstrate a paradigm shift that is being developed on a gradual basis with wise consideration. When all sufferings have been uprooted in order, a true understanding of nature will occur. (attaining to the Dhamma step by step from *sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmi*, *anāgāmi* to *arahanta*). Besides, the case studies also reflect the concept of consultation in sharing the area and then guide the way out of sufferings. As in the case of the Buddha who heals the Brahmin by him a safe space including trust from being a good friend who truly empowers wisdom to help attain the right mindset in the end. These examples serve as a role model of mental healing and Buddhist counseling to achieve the main purpose of valuable life.

## Life Coaching in Thailand

<sup>21</sup> M.I.294; Bhikkhu Ñānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (trs.), *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, p. 390.

<sup>22</sup> “*Parato ca ghoso ti sappāyadhammasavannañ.*” - MA.II.346.

<sup>23</sup> Vin.I.40; I. B. Horner (tr.), *The Book of The Discipline (Vinaya-Piṭaka)*, Vol. IV. (Mahāvagga), (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1971), p. 54.

<sup>24</sup> “*Aṭṭhame parato ca ghoso ti parassa santikā asaddhammassavanaṃ. Navame parato ca ghoso ti parassa santikā saddhammassavanaṃ.*” - AA.II.157.

Life coaching is a process of coaching to develop the potential of living, both in terms of self-development, health, work, including good relationships within families, colleagues, as well as the development of one's spirit. To achieve the goals set forth such as happiness, success, and personal development in various fields.

The therapist, psychotherapist, counselor that has mentioned so far may also be known as "Life Coach" or influencer an important component in the life coaching process. And it is another profession that is gaining widespread popularity in many countries, especially Thailand, whose philosophy of Buddhism is firmly rooted in the principles that are in the form of changing the perspective and attitude of the patients.

Thailand recently has three well-known life coaches, which were ranked by the cost of the training courses offered. The first person is Mrs. Thitinart Na Pattalung (Kru Oi or DDNard, The Life Compass). The second one is Master Pop, Mr. Tawara Siripipat (Dr. Pop). And the third is Mr. Sean Buranahiran. However, a life coach should certainly establish and maintain a level of trustworthiness for as long as he or she is still in this profession. Because of the trust of the patient towards the life coach is very important. Trust in the life coach can lead to a lasting relationship between the life coach and the patient. But on the other hand, only little hesitation in the ideal person can eventually lead to the decline of faith, and finally, resistance behaviors may occur. As a result, such trust and accumulated relationships may easily be destroyed.

An example of a political bias can be seen in Thai society as the drama issue of "Sean Buranahiran", a famous life coach who is an inspirational speaker among Thais. After he posted in social media a video clip while participating in a tree planting activity in Chiang Mai and complimented the Deputy Prime Minister Pravit Wongsuwan, the leader of the Palang Pracharath Party, has caused a lot of resistance and delving into a

private matter.<sup>25</sup> Many internet users criticized that it is inappropriate to be a life coach who gets involved in political issues. Some accused him of being ‘bias’ and pretended to be neutral.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, there is a case of plagiarism.<sup>27</sup> The error that leads to the turning point of a flourishing life is “Non-transparency” that triggered a fire of doubt among the people as reported in the Bangkok Business Newspaper:

In the event of the famous life coach ‘Sean Buranahiran’ who posted a message requesting a donation to help extinguish forest fires in Chiang Mai. He claimed more than 8 hundred thousand baht was received and later posted a list ambiguously showing the use of the said donation. But it appears that all donations received have not been directly donated to help forest fires according to the donor’s first intention. But instead, he donated wrongly to help the hospitals during the Covid-19 pandemic and use the money to buy media for the personal benefit of more than 2.5 hundred thousand baht and issued all receipts in the name of his own company. Besides, the donation income account has not been clearly announced. Such action May be considered an offense under the Criminal Act, such as Item 59, Item 341, and Item 343 of the public fraud.<sup>28</sup>

The fire of hesitation will continue to burn and destroy all credibility that has been created for a long time. And it is difficult to extinguish as long as the truth still not appear. It should be noted here that as soon as the fire begins to exist, the things that burn out with fire is “fame, honor, popularity rating and the credibility of the life coach himself.” And when this fire

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<sup>25</sup> Thairath Online (27 June 2020), “Summary of Drama ‘Sean Buranahiran’ was unfolded after watching the ‘Big Pom’ to the knot of extinguishing 8 hundred thousand forest fire donations”, [online], Source: <https://www.thairath.co.th/news/society/1877803> [3 July 2020].

<sup>26</sup> RuengLao (25 June 2020), “Shaking the Tree: Live Coaching: Drama Summary View the Big Fort Khon Dee Netizens gouge sick logic To the likes of millions!”, [online], Source: <https://ch3thailandnews.bectero.com/news/195140> [3 July 2020].

<sup>27</sup> Bright Today (published 29 June 2020), “Dig daily! Another popular page, Sean Buranahiran Hiriyok famous quotes “, [online], source: <https://www.brighttv.co.th/social-news/sean-buranahiran-csila-copy> [3 July 2020].

<sup>28</sup> Bangkokbiznews (3 July 2020), “Report to arrest ‘Sean Buranahiran’ 3 charges of fraud-misappropriation and Computer Act Violation”, [online], source: <https://www.bangkokbiznews.com/news/detail/887617> [3 July 2020].

eventually extinguished, the identity will be burnt down to nothing with any remains and it is so hard to recover again. A conclusion of transparency obtained from the judicial process can be the only proof of meritorious intention (*kusala-cetanā*) without greed (*lobha*) and covetousness (*abhijjhā*) of the accused one. This test is still going on in the legal process in the court.

Another example that represents “distance” or “gap” means treatment in a critical situation of the Covid-19 pandemic. That the world is currently facing may hinder the effectiveness of therapy. As the finding of Alistair Graham McBeath et al. “A majority of therapists felt challenged by remote working, with reduced interpersonal cues, feelings of isolation and fatigue, and technical issues frequently cited concerns.”<sup>29</sup> However, while maintaining social distancing is one of the protocols under the new normal of the world population to prevent the spread of new species of disease. In the age of utmost prosperity of information technologies and innovations of humankind, yet the life coach must always be aware of the mental closeness between him and the patient under the principle that “The further the distance is, the closer the mental intimacy is needed” (social distancing with mental intimacy). This is to reduce the gap between the two hearts of all parties. Would it be better? If a life coach promotes more self-awareness in the sense that he is not just a life coach only but the therapist, psychotherapist, counselor, and influencer in one person at the same time. And will it work? If the life coach will apply the 5 methods, e.g. performing 3-step TIR, and the use of the Four Noble Truths principles as a basis for psychotherapy, mentioned above to his or her life philosophy. This is to maintain the value of the life coach to stay forever.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>29</sup> Alistair Graham McBeath; Simon Du Plock and Sofie Bager-Charleson, “The Challenges and Experiences of Psychotherapists Working Remotely During the Coronavirus Pandemic”, *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (June 2020): 1-12.

Life coaching teaches us how to look at life as it is. It teaches how to change behaviors and thinking to be able to live with happiness both physically and mentally. With such knowledge, one can live in harmony with the surrounding society not alien in society. It is an integrated process of consultation with the foundations of psychology and Buddhism. Therapists, psychotherapists, counselors, influencer, or life coaches, etc., need to be trained beforehand to be qualified and experienced enough to be able to counsel others. In addition, the life coach needs to know not only the psychological nature of him but others including the nature of both wholesome and unwholesome volitional actions especially the unwholesome nature of the mind, such as defilement and craving, etc. In healing, the counselor must first focus on his or her mind. Under the aims “Take the people out of the dark into the light; take the lost person back home; from the illusion to the truth; or out of the narrow to the wide.” The counselor must be a luminous one, the one who knows the truth, and the one who is in a wide area.

Naturally, the existence of a counselor in the real world can be both desirable and undesirable. Only such the first type can be worth as a teacher, a trainer, and a good friend of the patient. He will be proficient in listening effectively and have observation skills to collect data and information around to bring the interlocutor back to the world of reality. The good counseling process should be based on the concept of the Four Noble Truths using the *Brahmavihāra* principle. In addition, the counselor should avoid certain types of questions that are not constructive and may lead to the counseling trap which is a dead-end of the counseling. And from the example of life coaching that happened in Thailand latest at a moment, it demonstrates the important factors that help the counseling or life coaching run smoothly throughout the process. They are trust and maintaining the intimacy between the two sides are things that maintain the good relations of both parties to be sustainable. On the contrary dishonest behavior could trigger distrust and destroy a close relationship, which is a fragile point of Buddhist psychotherapy and counseling.

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