

A black silhouette of a person sitting in a meditative pose, facing right, positioned on the left side of the slide. The background is a soft-focus landscape with a lake and mountains under a light blue sky.

# Buddhist Psychology: From Trauma to Enlightenment

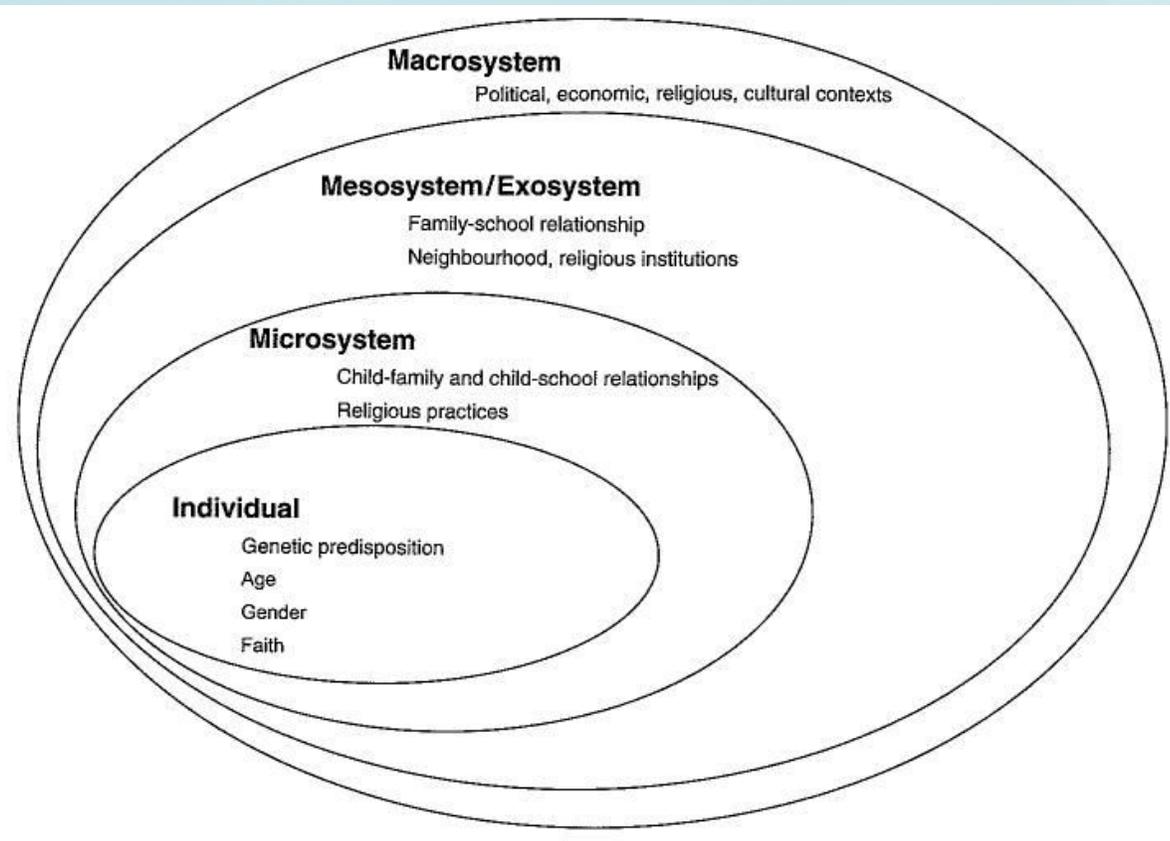
Session 4: Buddhist Structure for Overcoming Trauma

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# Covered in this session

- Stages of Trauma Recovery
- Dialectical Behavioural Therapy and Buddhism
- Three Gems
- Three Trainings

# Research on Trauma and Social Support



The social ecological model of risk and protection for children affected by armed conflict (adapted from [Bronfenbrenner, 1979](#))

Social support from family and community plays an important role in resiliency from Trauma.

Cultural and religious practices are factors in healing outcomes for children and adults.

Post-trauma support and acceptance from family and community improved outcomes of recovery.

Cultural practices demonstrated to help healing

# Stages of Trauma Recovery in Treatment

## 1. **Safety and Stabilization**

- Physical and emotional safety
- Learning skills to regulate emotions, grounding and coping
- Creating a sense of safety
- Skills: Mindfulness, sensory exercises, yoga, art, music etc.

## 2. **Processing and mourning the trauma**

- Processing emotions and losses
- Confronting trauma memories, working with grief and difficult feelings
- Making sense of experience

## 3. **Reconnecting and Integrating with Meaningful Narrative**

- Developing resilience, reconnecting with oneself and others
- Rebuilding relationships and community connections
- Maintaining healthy coping mechanism, building support system, pursuing personal/professional goals to facilitate integration.

# Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT)

- Developed by [Marsha Linehan](#) out of her Rinzai Zen experience.
- For people with suicidal conditions or Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) or C-PTSD.
- **4 Foundational Skills in Treatment:**
  - 1) Mindfulness,
  - 2) Emotion Regulation,
  - 3) Interpersonal Effectiveness,
  - 4) Distress Tolerance.
- **4 Core Components of Treatment Structure:**
  - 1) Individual Therapy,
  - 2) Skills-Training Group Therapy,
  - 3) Phone Coaching,
  - 4) Therapist Consultation Team

# Why are 3 Gems Practice Healing?

1. A place for safety and support
2. A place for grieving
3. A place to learn skills (to living harmonious with others and oneself)
4. A place to build meaningful connections and relationships

## 3 Refuges or 3 Gems



### Creating Safety from Learning Skills of Wisdom and Harmony

- Practiced with a guiding teacher, a community of 5+ people who also observe the same practice in supporting each other.
- Meditate together, observe ethical boundaries together, observe harmony principles together, learn the dharma together, share good/bad experiences, share meals and work for the common good together.

# Experience at a Typical Zen Retreat Center

- **Daily Rituals:**
  - Daily meditations
  - Chantings
  - Daily Dharma Classes
  - Exercise (Martial Arts or Qi Gong)
  - Physical work (garden or kitchen)
  - Communal meals
- **3 Refuges** (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha)
- **3 Trainings: Boundaries, Meditation, Wisdom** (Sila, Jhana, Panna)
- **6 Harmony Principles of the Sangha** (Harmony in having the same viewpoints, precepts, in living together, in speaking without conflict, in experiencing Dharma bliss from practice, in sharing benefits)

# 3 Refuges (Establishing Safety)

- Purpose
  - Protection from fear
  - Confidence in the path
  - Gateway / prerequisite to path
- Objects of Refuge

<b>Therapist</b>	<b>Buddha - teacher</b>
Trauma therapy	Dharma - teachings
Positive relationships	Community – social support

# Healing Modalities in Post-War Vietnam

- Ritualistic healing/ chanting to absolve past karmas (like a spiritual cleansing)
- Ritualistic grieving practices, such as chanting/bowing to help beloved ones heal or reincarnate to a good place.
- Group meditation
- Group Qigong exercises or Free Herbal Medicine Clinics
- Communal sharing and support for practicing together through volunteering and generosity.

# The Skills of 3 Trainings

## 1. Jhanas Benefits

- Slow breathing down
- Relaxation of mind/body
- Emotional regulations: establishing a lower baseline of relaxation and increase the window of tolerance
- Meditation also shortens the duration of neural activity in the default mode network (reduces mind wandering)
- Develops into deep mindfulness practice

## 2. Mindfulness Benefits

- Insights into one's patterns and behaviors
- Acceptance to change
- Continuous learning and changing

## 3. Boundaries (Sila) Benefits

- Keeps one out of trouble (guards mental/emotional environment from upsetting)
- Develops generosity and compassion
- Practice humility (sangha karma)
- Learning to live with others harmoniously

# Zen Experience of 3-Gems Outside of Vietnam

## Plum Village Sangha

- Taught and run by Monastics
- Supported and practiced by laity
- Harmonious environment where people can practice and live together
- Many report feeling renewed and peaceful after an experience at the retreat
- Supported by retreatant fees, book sale revenues, and donations



# Zen Mainstream Experience of In Vietnam



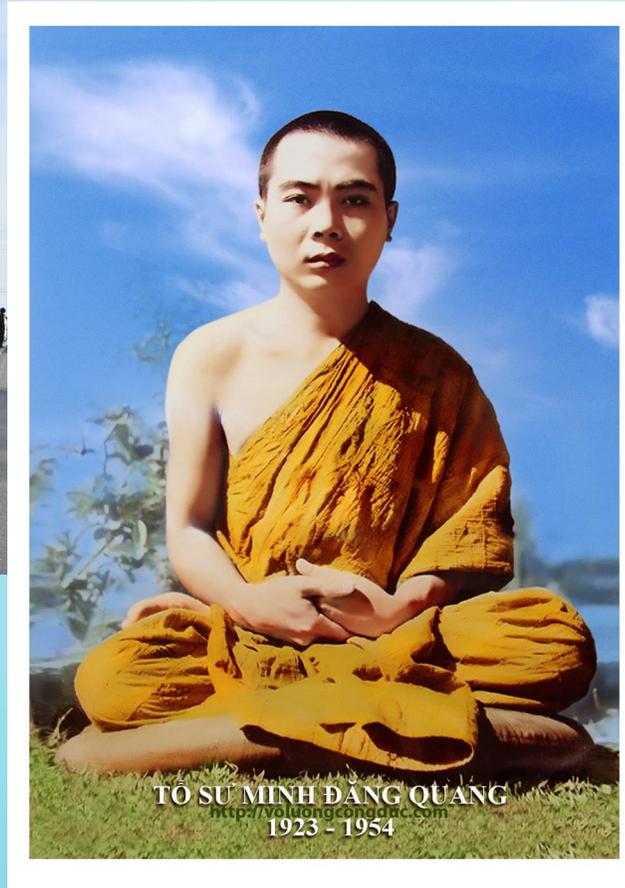
- **Bamboo Forest School & Linji School**
- Sangha is seen as representing only the monastic (not as the Buddha intended).
- Practice is mainly reserved for Monastics (no long-term stays for laity over 10 days group retreat)
- Daily practice can include monthly regular retreat stays for laity
- Solitary meditation retreats not offered for laity
- Active laity community activities alongside monastics: volunteering, studying dharma, chanting, festivities.

# Theravada Mainstream Experience in Vietnam



- Monastics are seen as sangha
- Limited ordination for women
- Temporary ordination for 10 days to 6 months stays
- Jhanas are not taught for laity, mainly Vipassana
- Growing movements pushing for women ordinations and laity practice

# Medicant Buddhism Experience in Vietnam



- Live and practice as in times of the Buddha
- Emphasis on equality of women and men, equality of practice (Theravada and Mahayana)
- Restricted by communist government. Medicant life converted to mainstream monastics. Many live a hermit lifestyle.

# 3 Gems Practice Hermit Communities



## Twin Mountain Hermitage

- Rural, secluded
- Small self-sufficient community (by donations from local farmers)
- Extended stays for monastics or laity for solitary or communal stay
- Strict meditation and daily schedule
- Regular support from senior teacher

# Arrow River Forest Hermitage



- Generosity and meditation tradition of support like in Asia
- Small but close-knit laity support community
- Supportive of short or long-term stays.
- Practices all principles outlined in this talk.



# Buddhism Healing Framework

## ❑ Community Responsibility

- ❑ Provide a safe, supportive, harmonious environment
- ❑ Practicing rituals/meditation and living together
- ❑ Foster connections among members

## ❑ Individual Responsibility

- ❑ Open to listening, reflecting and changing ( 聞思修 , Văn Tư Tu) behaviours
- ❑ Disciplined practice of 3 trainings
- ❑ Openness of one's personal story is necessary for healing

## ❑ Grief and loss are NORMAL. Sufferings are NORMAL

## ❑ Learning skills through the Dharma is necessary for healing and liberation.

# Next Week

- Deep dive into personal experiences of transformation through the three training practices in Zen.
- Spiritual emergence vs. spiritual emergency
- Mystical, esoteric or accessible?

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