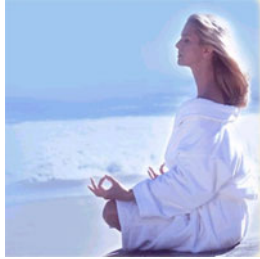


## Buddhist Meditation Helps People Stop Drinking

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A combination of cognitive behavioural therapy and Buddhist meditation can help people with drink problems turn their backs on alcohol. Dr Paramabandhu Groves, a consultant psychiatrist at the Alcohol Advisory Service in London, who has successfully run workshops with people with depression, has now turned his attention to using the techniques to help people with addictions. Dr Groves has been ordained into the Western Buddhist Order based at the London Buddhist Center in Bethnal Green, east London.

Dr Groves unveiled results at the annual conference of a pilot study in which 15 people with alcohol problems undertook mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT). Most found it helped them in their battle against alcohol and reported that it gave them the tools to challenge the negative thoughts that drove them to drink.

The technique comprises "mindfulness" which, through meditation, develops an awareness of emotions and physical feelings and then guides people to make creative choices about how to respond to them.

"It emphasises critical awareness, rather than concentration," said Dr Groves. "In meditation the mind keeps wandering off, so you note where the mind has gone and then you come back to the body sensation. When you do this, you begin to notice where the habitual patterns are and this gives you the ability to stay with negative thoughts. Once you stay with these negative thoughts, you can diffuse them and take the power out of them." By doing this, said Dr Groves, the vicious cycle of alcoholism can be broken. Negative thoughts, particularly linked to an external trigger, such a row with a partner, can trigger a relapse and lead to substance use. Mindfulness can break this link, Dr Groves told delegates. Clients are taught how to recognise and resist negative thoughts by observing themselves non-judgmentally and learning to accept their emotions.

Each member was given a CD and asked to practice at home One reported that it gave him a spiritual practice he found lacking in other recovery methods; others said it had given them a more immediate and conscious awareness of how they felt at a given moment.

The success of the program has not been a surprise to Dr Groves: "I've have been doing the MBCT for depression since 2004 and that had been very popular," he said.

<http://www.stopdrinkingadvice.org/guide/>

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