THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

THE FIRST NOBLE TRUTH = “There is suffering.” (Pali: dukkha)
This must be understood (intellectually, then directly experienced, then integrated into our lives).

A. Definition of suffering = unease, unsatisfactoriness, stress
   Three kinds of suffering
   1. ordinary suffering
      including birth, death, sickness, old age, physical discomfort, separation from
      loved ones or pleasant conditions, disappointment, aversion, anxiety, etc.
   2. suffering resulting from impermanence
      the fact that everything changes
   3. suffering resulting from unreliability
      nothing has a permanent ‘self,’ ‘core,’ or essence that we can depend on.
      every so called “being” a combination of “causes and conditions”
      an essential characteristic of existence is anatta, or no-self.
      Example: There is no “car” other than its components ( motor, fenders, etc)

B. How to understand suffering
   Directly experience causes and conditions as they arise and pass away
   Go into the pain – physical or emotional – experience it, especially in the body
   Deconstruct pain, observe it as types of energies, arising and passing

THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH = “There is a cause of suffering.” (Clinging)
This must be abandoned.

A. Definition of cause = craving, clinging, attachment
   suffering not separate from its cause
   abandoning attachment is abandoning suffering.
   note: Craving/Clinging is not the same as desire
   craving is loss of freedom
   problem is clinging to desire
   Craving often experienced as affective emotions (anger, greed, envy, etc.)
   Other forms of attachment
   1. the craving that things be other than they are.
   2. attachment to the idea (delusion) of a permanent self
      leads to need to defend and gratify it
      causes us to identify and cling to things as “me” or “mine”

B. How to abandon clinging
   1. Look for signs of clinging in the body, emotions, and mind
   2. Ask yourself whether this clinging is suffering or not suffering
   3. Notice that the awareness of clinging is separate from the actual clinging
   4. Invite the mind to let loose of clinging.
      observe without judging – don’t cling to abandonment of clinging
imagining letting go as a physical act
imagining ease after letting go

THE THIRD NOBLE TRUTH = “There is a cessation of suffering.”
This must be realized.

A. Definition of cessation = liberation, nibbana, the end of suffering, undefinable
   Peace, contentment not dependent on external circumstances.
   No clinging arises
   Nibbana (nirvana) – can’t be adequately expressed in words
      “extinction of thirst,” “uncompounded,” “unconditioned,”
      “unbinding” – refers to ancient belief that fire was its fuel
      “unbinding” – happens when you run out of fuel.
      fuel refers to craving and clinging
      not a “state” that you “enter”
      extinguished fire refers to causes and conditions of “me”
      “I” am extinguished
   differing opinions in Buddhist community as to the nature of nirvana
      1. a mind no longer subject to any kind of reactivity, clinging
      2. a complete cessation of mental activity, briefly or for several days
      3. any experience of cessation of clinging, no matter how short

B. How to realize (directly experience) cessation
   1. let go of painful feelings – see “how to abandon clinging,” above
   2. notice moments of awaking from our own story
      see how story creates and supports an “I”
      see how story is just thoughts and not some ultimate reality
   3. focus awareness on moments of release and reflect on them

THE FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH = “There is a path to the cessation of suffering “
This must be developed (cultivated, brought into being).

A. Definition of the way = the Eightfold Path
   Practices of Wisdom, Morality, and Concentration
   Steps of Path = Wise View, Wise Intention, Wise Speech, Wise Action, Wise Livelihood,
   Wise Mindfulness, Wise Concentration

B. How to develop the Path – to be continued...