



Buddhist Psychology for Counsellors

A Six-Month Professional Development Program in Mind, Presence and Therapeutic Practice

Course Outline

Buddhist Psychology for Counsellors is a six-month experiential professional development program exploring how Buddhist understandings of mind, emotion, suffering, relationship and liberation can enrich contemporary counselling practice.

Rather than simply adding meditation techniques to an existing therapeutic toolkit, the course invites counsellors to investigate a more fundamental question:

What changes in counselling when we understand the mind differently?

Participants explore foundational Buddhist models of mind alongside contemporary counselling and psychotherapy, learning to translate Buddhist insights into ethically appropriate therapeutic principles and practices.

The program combines Buddhist psychology, contemplative practice, contemporary psychological theory, clinical case discussion, experiential exercises and reflective learning. It is designed for counsellors who want to cultivate not only additional therapeutic skills but also the qualities of **presence, awareness, compassion, equanimity, curiosity and insight** that shape the therapeutic encounter.

In this course psychotherapy training is treated as an integration of theory, skills, ethics, values and the practitioner's own internal experience rather than as the acquisition of techniques alone.

A certificate of completion is awarded to participants who successfully complete the assessment items.

Course aims

By the end of the program participants will have developed:

- a working understanding of major principles of Buddhist psychology and their relevance to counselling;
- an understanding of Buddhist perspectives on suffering, emotion, cognition, identity and psychological flourishing;
- the ability to relate Buddhist psychological concepts to contemporary counselling and psychotherapy;
- practical skills in mindfulness, contemplative awareness, compassion and therapeutic presence;
- greater awareness of their own cognitive, emotional and relational processes as counsellors;
- an ability to formulate client experiences through both Buddhist and contemporary counselling perspectives;
- an ethical framework for integrating Buddhist-derived approaches into secular and religiously diverse therapeutic settings;
- a personally grounded contemplative practice that supports therapeutic presence and practitioner wellbeing.

The course also places considerable emphasis on developing qualities such as non-judgmental observation, listening, flexibility, presence, insight, compassion and wisdom, rather than treating Buddhist psychology as purely intellectual content.

Educational philosophy

The course rests on an important principle:

Buddhist psychology is best understood experientially as well as intellectually.

Participants therefore study ideas about attention, suffering, impermanence, craving, compassion and the nature of self while simultaneously observing these processes within their own experience.

Three forms of learning run through the entire program:

- **Understanding** — studying Buddhist psychological teachings and contemporary psychological perspectives.
- **Experiencing** — investigating mind through meditation, contemplation, experiential exercises and interpersonal practice.
- **Integrating** — applying these understandings carefully and ethically within counselling practice.

The counsellor's own mind therefore becomes part of the field of study.

Who the course is for

The program is primarily be designed for:

- registered or practising counsellors;
- psychotherapists;
- psychologists;
- social workers;
- mental-health practitioners;
- pastoral and spiritual-care practitioners.

Teaching Periods

We have two intakes each year – October and April. The next courses start on:

- **October 5 2026**
- **April 5 2027**

Students need to be registered a week prior to course commencement.

Eligibility requirements

Applicants should hold, or be undertaking, a recognised qualification in counselling, psychotherapy, psychology, social work, pastoral care or a closely related helping profession.

OR: Applicants should have previous Buddhist study and practice experience of 3 years or more and intend to undertake a qualification in a helping profession in the near future.

Course structure

Duration: 6 months part-time

6 monthly modules

Two recorded lectures per module.
Available first week of each module.

Live tutorial per month. First Sunday of each month during teaching period: 10.00 am–12.00 pm. *Recorded for those unable to attend live.*

Monthly Clinical Integration Group:
Third Sunday of each month during teaching period: 10.00 am–12.00 pm.

Library of targeted readings, videos and podcasts for each module. Available first week of each module.

Clinical Integration Groups

Each month participants are invited to meet in moderated groups for two hours.

Sessions examine:

- current client work;
- Buddhist psychological formulation;
- therapist reactions;
- ethical questions;
- application of course concepts;
- difficulties integrating contemplative approaches.

Personal contemplative practice

Participants should undertake a modest personal practice during the six months.

15–20 minutes per day, five days per week

Practices introduced progressively could include:

1. mindfulness of breath/body;
2. awareness of feeling tone;
3. observing thoughts and emotions;
4. loving-kindness;
5. compassion;
6. joy;
7. equanimity;
8. open awareness.

Learning activities

Across the six months participants will engage in:

- lectures;
- guided meditation;
- experiential exercises;
- paired counselling exercises;
- breakout-group discussions;
- clinical case studies;
- reflective writing;
- set readings;
- recorded supplementary material;
- clinical integration groups;
- contemplative practice.

Assessment

This course includes three integrated requirements.

1. Reflective Practice Journal

Short reflections throughout the six months connecting:

Buddhist teaching → personal experience → counselling practice

2. Clinical Integration Presentation

Each participant presents a de-identified counselling case and explores how Buddhist psychology changes or enriches their understanding of it.

3. Final Integrative Case Study

Approximately **1,500–2,000 words**, or an equivalent recorded presentation.

Participants demonstrate how they would integrate Buddhist psychology ethically with their existing therapeutic orientation.

Assessment is not graded. It is **Complete / Resubmit** rather than graded.

Core learning journey

There is an important developmental sequence in these six modules:

Month 1 — Understand suffering

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Month 2 — Learn to observe experience

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Month 3 — Learn how to meet experience

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Month 4 — See through habitual thought and identity

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Month 5 — Learn to live with change, craving and difficulty

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Month 6 — Integrate wisdom into therapeutic practice

This learning focus gives course participants a coherent psychological journey.

At a glance

Month	Module	Central theme
1	Understanding Mind and Suffering	Four Noble Truths, conditioned experience and Buddhist models of mind
2	Meeting Experience with Awareness	Mindfulness, emotion, embodiment and therapeutic presence
3	The Boundless Heart	Compassion, joy, equanimity and therapeutic relationship
4	Thoughts Are Not the Mind	Cognition, identity, rumination and not-self
5	Living with What Cannot Be Controlled	Impermanence, grief, craving, aversion and acceptance
6	From Insight to Therapeutic Practice	Ethics, spirituality, case formulation and integration

About the Instructor

Associate Professor Pema Düddul (PhD) is a Buddhist chaplain and educator with extensive experience integrating contemplative practice, pastoral care and adult education. He was ordained as a Buddhist minister in 2006 and later granted the title *Lama*, which indicates he is a fully qualified teacher of all aspects of Buddhism. He studied Buddhist Psychology (Abhidharma) under a number of masters, completing a diploma by distance in 1997. A former Multi-Faith Chaplain at the University of Southern Queensland (2018 – 2022), he provided counselling and pastoral support and taught meditation and mindfulness. Since 2019, he has served as Principal Dharma Teacher and Programs Director at Pristine Awareness, designing and delivering online courses, workshops and seminars on Buddhist philosophy and practice. Pema is also an Associate Professor at an Australian university with substantial experience in learning design and online education. He has published widely on Buddhism, including the book [*Luminous Awareness: Natural Awakening in Life and in Death*](#) (2022), which includes a foreword by the Dalai Lama. Pema is currently building on previous diploma-level counselling qualifications by completing a Master of Counselling at the University of Canberra. Pema has a PhD in Written Communication, and completes a Graduate Certificate in Education (Learning and Leadership) in December 2026.

Fees

Fees for 2026 are **\$660** (incl. Goods & Services Tax). **We offer a payment plan for convenience.**