

# *A Letter to the Refuge Recovery Community*

Dear fellow members of the Refuge Recovery community,

Many of you know that as the founder of the Refuge Recovery movement, and author of the Refuge Recovery book published in 2014, I have spent ten years working to build this program. I am tremendously grateful that our Refuge Recovery movement continues to grow, to the point where there are nearly 700 weekly meetings now, across the United States and around the world. All of my efforts as a speaker, writer, organizer, leader, counselor, and meditation teacher have been, and continue to be, committed to our astoundingly successful Refuge Recovery program. With facilitators I trained, and to whom we are all immensely in debt, this program and movement really started in 2008, nine years before I founded the non-profit organization also known as Refuge Recovery in 2017.

I have felt, and continue to feel, a great responsibility to provide a focused program of recovery, based on Buddhist principles and organized around the Refuge Recovery book, with a consistent meeting format. I founded the Refuge Recovery non-profit group to support independent Refuge Recovery meetings and a democratic local and regional infrastructure. Finally, consistent with the original vision as stated in the book, I have worked to develop a professional RR treatment program and a Refuge Recovery retreat organization, with trained and empowered (i.e., qualified) Refuge Recovery teachers. This has been a major undertaking, and we have made a considerable progress since the book came out in 2014, when we had only a handful of Refuge Recovery meetings.

Before founding the non-profit group, I secured the trademark rights to the Refuge Recovery name, to protect against use of our name in any way that would be inconsistent with the original vision for our program.

To remove any possible misunderstanding about this, I now am officially granting, on behalf of the trademark owner, Refuge Recovery House, and through this statement, a license to all of you to continue to use the Refuge Recovery name and logo for the purposes of your local meetings, local websites, and local social media accounts, consistent with the vision and program articulated in the Refuge Recovery book. This is a "no-brainer," because obviously I have no dispute with any of you!

Now for the "bad" news. While I was on a voluntary and temporary leave of absence from the non-profit board of directors, after the false allegations against me last year, which I assume most of you know about, the board eliminated my position as President and began to take a series of actions that I see as contrary to the founding vision of our movement. As reflected in the official minutes of meetings, the board made efforts to "take ownership" of the Refuge Recovery trademarks. This culminated in a publicly announced statement on January 16 that "the Board has directed our organization's counsel to prepare and file the legal complaint necessary to commence a civil suit against Noah in court."

The RR board's actions also have included the following: -- Further disseminating the false allegations against me;

-- Silencing opposition to, and questioning of, the board's actions, including the deletion of comments asking why the board has chosen to use funds raised from community members to devote to a court battle;

-- Putting forward and promoting unqualified teachers and/or facilitators or leaders; and

-- Taking the Refuge Recovery movement in a direction that conceivably could threaten the recovery of addicts, including a departure from the original RR vision, as stated in the Refuge Recovery book, to organize professional Refuge Recovery treatment centers and meditation retreats led by qualified teachers.

Sadly, the board has placed me and all of us in a position where the board's disagreements with me now will be resolved by a judge in the court system.

I do agree that Refuge Recovery needs a long-term asset sharing agreement between myself and an RR Board for use of the trademarks. I understand this as well as anyone. I agreed to begin the process of creating such an agreement with the current RR board. But after I voluntarily withdrew from running the non-profit organization, the executive committee of the board moved from engaging in negotiations to simply making demands. If I were to sign an agreement such as the one they have insisted upon, it would put complete control over the direction of the RR organization and movement in the hands of people who have demonstrated over the last nine months that they do not respect or understand the original vision of Refuge Recovery. I cannot agree to allow the current board to have sole control over infrastructure creation, retreats, events, teachers, additional RR literature etc.; without input from myself, as the founder, and without a structure in place for real democratic input from the community, whom the board are freezing out from the decision-making process.

The current board's actions demonstrate a disregard for the long-term stability of Refuge Recovery and have put the continued existence and financial viability of our community at risk.

I ask for your understanding and your patience while we these differences are resolved. I believe the best solution to our current instability is to reorganize. I will be working with some of the original RR members as well as other members of RR with many years of experience in recovery service. Together, we will seek to reorganize the non-profit group and return our organization to the focused and democratic vision we have been working towards since 2013. That's the good news!

Love and metta to you all,  
Noah Levine

---