



# Sun Do News

---

## *Winter 2020 Edition*

Volume 36, Issue 1

---

### **The Role of SunDo in Addiction Recovery**

**By Greg Vorst and Michael Nolan**

Nearly [21 million Americans](#) struggle with addiction, and as of 2017, only a mere 10 percent of those affected receive any kind of treatment. Those who do have traditionally received cognitive-based or talk therapies that do not address the underlying effects of trauma's imprint on the body. The practice of body-centered therapy teaches clients that all emotions and thoughts have a physical connection. Grounding themselves through the experience of the body, clients are able to reclaim their bodies as safe places, which allows new insights to develop.

Recently, a unique rehabilitation center has been changing the script on addiction treatment using the ancient practice of SunDo — and they're producing real results. SunDo, a Taoist practice consisting of yoga-like posture sets, breathwork, and meditation, is helping people struggling with addiction in a wonderful and profound way.

At a distance many of the services offered by [Embodied Recovery](#) in Los Gatos, California seem fairly standard — patients have access to

Dear Members,

Season changes.  
These changes are the  
process of Alchemy  
Spring  
Summer  
Autumn  
&  
Winter

Turbulences connect one  
to the other  
So is aging the natural  
process of Alchemy.

How much have you  
changed  
Along the way of your life?

----Master Hyunmoon Kim

individual case management, psychotherapy, biofeedback, psychoeducational groups, emotional process groups, and community support, but for founders Greg Vorst and Michael Nolan, these are just the starting points. Embodied Recovery works with 12 proprietary teachings that set them apart from their peers.

Vorst says, “some of the teachings are probably new to the addiction field — they’re things that we were inspired to create that are maybe more contemplative or spiritually based.” One of these primary teachings at Embodied Recovery is the consistent practice of SunDo across their organization — for clients, staff, and its chief officers as well.



**Greg Vorst**

### **Inspired to be different**

In 2004, Vorst, a therapist of many passions including depth psychology, holistic health, and opera singing would meet one of the original SunDo masters and become deeply fascinated by the practice.

SunDo functioned as a missing piece in Vorst’s life. “My challenges earlier in life were really around stress and anxiety and feelings of low self-worth, so showing up day in and day out for myself and practicing like that really changed how I felt inside,” Vorst says.

Vorst’s enthusiasm for SunDo filtered into both his work in therapy and his friendships — specifically that with his future business partner, Michael Nolan. “Greg introduced me to SunDo in 2017, and I practiced with him sporadically until a little over a year ago when we started practicing more regularly together,” Nolan says.

Nolan’s experience in addiction therapy comes not only from a decade of his own professional work in the field, but also first-hand experience as a former addict himself. While traditional recovery programs played a crucial role in overcoming his addictions, the day-to-day anxieties and emotional ups and downs that followed proved challenging to manage.

“When I started practicing SunDo more regularly, after only about six months of consistent practice, I noticed the general anxiety that had still been present after 10 years of sobriety wasn’t there anymore,” Nolan says. “I felt a strength within myself that I hadn’t felt before.”

The importance of consistency is a common theme in both Vorst’s and Nolan’s personal experiences with SunDo. Yet despite having received promising feedback in their attempts to integrate SunDo into the centers they had previously worked for, they lacked the organizational authority to implement the practice on a wider and more consistent basis.

“Even in managerial roles it was difficult to hold staff accountable to different things we wanted to see when ultimately the final say didn’t rest with us,” Nolan says. “Starting our own company allowed us to create that space and a home for our teachings, but also an opportunity to create the culture and vision that we wanted.”

### **Individual and global successes with SunDo at Embodied Recovery**

While SunDo was always part of the blueprint for Embodied Recovery’s teachings, the center’s founders did not know upfront how its requirement would be received. “We weren’t really sure what to expect when we started the program; we didn’t know if people were going to throw furniture at us or if they were going to really enjoy it,” Nolan says with a chuckle. “We knew we were going to do it in the beginning, and initially we just had it for a couple of days, and people began to want it more, and they began to really like this sense of ‘I know I’m starting my day with this,’” Vorst adds.

In a short time, SunDo’s presence within the center’s culture blossomed into a near daily ritual, being both offered and required Monday through Saturday in what amounts to about nine hours of individual practice a week. By and large, the move was not only well received, but for many of their clients, it was positively transformative.

“I had one client who literally was convinced he would die without heroin or drugs — he hadn’t been sober since he was 13 and he was a man in his mid-30’s,” Vorst says. “He has two years now of sobriety. Since then, he’s started practicing SunDo four to five times a week and that was the thing that shifted for him — his capacity to feel ‘I’m not ruled by that’ and the obsession to use. It melted once he started practicing.”

The consistent SunDo regimen also proved very effective for clients grappling with abusive and traumatic pasts. Vorst describes a client whose experience was that of being “disembodied” — meaning she didn’t feel like she was in her own body. Bodily dissociation is a natural coping mechanism for dealing with severe physical abuse and often leads to serious long-term psychological problems. While initially uncomfortable for her, consistent SunDo practice helped this client to confront her past

trauma and reconnect with her whole self. This client is now nine months sober and attributes her progress to a regular practice routine.

Nolan describes another client who was emotionally crippled by years of physical and psychological abuse. This client would rock back and forth, crying and shaking. After about four weeks of SunDo practice, her breathing became more grounded and smoother, and she was able to stay still and not fidget -- clear indicators that her internal struggles had diminished. She was also able, through the communal practice regimen, to begin more openly trusting others again.

“With traditional recovery work, people have this fear of signing up for no more drug or alcohol use for the rest of my life — there’s no end in sight,” Nolan says. “With SunDo, being on a belt system, there’s a way in which it gives people goals to work toward that can feel really good when they achieve them,” he adds.



**Michael Nolan**

### **What science tells us**

While clinical studies are still in early stages, the research findings on both SunDo and [deep diaphragmatic breathing](#) tell an interesting story. The discipline appears to affect the physiology of its practitioners, and these

changes then play a very powerful role in addiction treatment.

The 2013 research project, [\*A Pilot Study Examining the Effects of Kouk Sun Do on University Students with Anxiety Symptoms\*](#) published in the Journal of the International Society for the Investigation of Stress found that consistent practice of SunDo over a four-week period significantly reduced anxiety and depressive symptoms in participants. These changes also seem to be linked to the increased production of the mood-stabilizing neurotransmitter [serotonin](#), which deep breathing practices like SunDo promote. “We think this is very important for addiction because the studies are showing that when you [deprive mice or rats of serotonin](#) they start making wildly irrational or risky decisions,” says Vorst.

Serotonin is known to produce well-being and a sense of calm. In terms of addiction work, Vorst notes that serotonin is related to the capacity to be reflective, rather than reactive and risky, in one’s decision making. This cognitive shift is critical for managing triggers and a key to maintaining self-control in the recovery process.

### **A difference everyone notices**

It isn’t just clients who notice a difference in their lives; Vorst and Nolan hear it about themselves from their professional peers as well. “What actually really impresses them is the feeling they get being with us, and they begin to ask what we’re doing and ‘can I do that?’ We really attribute that to the daily practice,” Vorst says.

Having recently hosted Master Kim at their center for a workshop offered to clients and staff, Vorst and Nolan see SunDo as a vital and growing part of their lives personally and professionally. They plan to attend upcoming retreats to refine their SunDo practice and receive additional instructor training.

“From what we’ve seen so far, we feel confident in the way in which people’s lives are improving from this work, so we can imagine that this will continue to grow in our recovery community, and our hope is that Embodied Recovery can find ways of sharing this precious teaching with a larger audience,” Vorst says.

Whether in typical day-to-day anxieties or the most urgent of addiction treatments, SunDo’s potential as a powerful embodied therapy is just beginning its journey. To learn more about Embodied Recovery, please visit [www.embodiedrecoverycenters.com](http://www.embodiedrecoverycenters.com).

*Greg and Michael practice in San Francisco.*



*Embodied Recovery*



**Forest path at the retreat center—Photo by Betsy Forrest**

---

## International Sun Do Association

---

### Grand Master

Hyunmoon Kim

### Masters

Ron Catabia  
Tora Strawderman

### Teachers

Lucie Lambert  
Virginia Platt  
Betsy Forrest  
Hyun Hee Kim  
Christine Ucich

### Senior Instructors

David Delbrook	Al Passacantando
Pauline White	Ginger Hobbs
Betsy Barstow	Hank Babcock
Brian Quirk	Stephen Holmes
Roy Bushman	Kim Hedegaard
Rich Kramer	

### Instructors

Diane Matta	Jerry Geier
Kwong Lip Pang	Don Zickefoose
Lucy Young	Teresa Lenzen
Barbara McCandless	Joel Dunning
Heidemarie Holmes	Theresa Dunning
Stanley Szczabrowsk	Florin Serbanescu

### Instructor Trainees

Patrick Studley	Mihaela Talpau
Rebecca Newhouse	Marciana Ranceanu

## Building Update and Time to Raise Some Funds!

By now you've probably received an email about our February peer-to-peer fundraising effort. Please ask a few family members or friends to consider donating toward the next steps in completing our new retreat center building.

This month we have a plumber working to complete the water and sewer connections inside the building, and our own John Mallery is framing the interior walls. In the spring we will have an electrician complete the interior electrical connections so we can insulate and finish the walls.

After that will be the kitchen! But we need your help in this first fundraising push in 2020. If we each ask just a few people for donations, we will meet our goal for February.

**Let's do it! And thank you!!**

Donations can be sent to the Sun Do Main Center at 45 So. Main Street, Suite 90, W. Hartford, CT 06107, or donate online at <http://www.sundointernational.com/generosity.html>.

## My Continuing Journey with Sun Do

By Elizabeth Culligan

Looking back on my journey with the Sun Do practice, I realized it will be five years since I started my path with One World Wellness Center in East Haven, Connecticut, with my teacher Christine Ucich. I was one of her early students after Christine opened her center in January 2015 and have worked diligently ever since, looking forward to moving to Level 4 Won Ki Dan Boup red belt. I do feel a sense of accomplishment. Since I became eligible for Medicare this year, I attribute my strength and health to my Sun Do practice. I am also proud that I have stayed with this practice and am eager to learn more about Sun Do, breathwork, and meditation. I have been at Level 3 yellow belt since around May 2017 and feel competent at this level and also stronger physically and mentally. I am pleased by the fact that I am able to assist Christine with classes at the Assistant Instructor Level and am hoping to reach Instructor Level at some point in the future.

When a new student comes to class and remarks about flexibility, I look back and remember that I, too, struggled with flexibility and have become more flexible over the years. I have many friends whose bodies are older than their years due to lack of activity. I encourage them to try the practice or any other form of activity they think they might be able to do, as I and they can see how it has changed me physically and mentally. I always had a calm personality, but I find myself much more centered, which I attribute to my practice.

Two years ago, I made a very big decision to move from my home to another, which meant cleaning out my home from many, many years of stuff. I look back on the strength that it took physically and mentally not only to work full

time running a business, but also to be able to clean, discard, lift, climb up and down stairs, carry boxes – really physical work, and all within a short period of time. And I was mentally able to get through the mountains of paperwork that it takes to buy and sell a home. My clarity was at its best, and I attribute that to my practice, especially the postures that have built my physical strength, and the breathwork and meditation for my mental clarity.



Liz at the East Haven center—*photo by Christine Ucich*

Last summer I suffered an injury to my left leg. I fractured my tibial plateau, and it was quite painful. I probably missed a few classes but was back at One World within a couple of weeks. Christine helped me with modifications, and my body knew what it could and could not do. I modified the practice but always did my breathwork. I worked hard through the summer to heal and noticed as I healed the modifications became fewer and fewer, so within a couple of months I was able to get back to my full practice. I think that had I not been practicing Sun Do for a few years it would have taken me longer to heal.

I am greatly looking forward to graduating to the next level. When people mention something that might be going on the first weekend of January, I say I cannot attend; I am going to my retreat. They may say, “can’t you go another time?”, and I reply that no, I am graduating to the next level, and it’s important to me. I guess unless you are involved in something you consider important to your physical and mental wellbeing it is difficult to understand how motivated you become to learn and to improve and yes, to continue to achieve your goals. I look forward to assisting Christine in 2020 with classes and to work toward my goal of becoming an Instructor in the future.

*Liz Culligan practices in New Haven.*



**Liz and Master Kim at her promotion in January—photo by Christine Ucich**



**Sunset at the retreat center—Photo by Betsy Forrest**

## Promotions

### **Jung Ki Dan Boup I (Red Belt)**

Liz Culligan, New Haven  
Lenka Ryšková, Czech Republic  
Paul Renall, Czech Republic

### **Keon Kon Dan Boup (Yellow Belt)**

Marcela Šrámková, Czech Republic  
Pavína Porazilová, Czech Republic

### **Jung Ki Dan Boup II (White/Yellow Belt)**

Lenka Semerádová, Czech Republic  
Vladimir Pilát, Czech Republic  
Aleš Vondřich, Czech Republic  
Olga Fleková, Czech Republic  
Veronika Urbánková, Czech Republic

### **Instructor Trainee (Apprenticeship)**

Jaroslava Wyhnalik, Czech Republic  
Rainer Kitza, Germany  
Paul Renall, Czech Republic  
Lenka Ryšková, Czech Republic  
Karl Wiesner, Germany

# Retreat Schedule

## One-day Retreat March 21st

SunDo Center, West Hartford, CT  
45 South Main St  
West Hartford CT  
9:15-5:00

Double practice followed by 150 Big Bows.  
Lunch 12-1: everyone responsible for their own lunch. Last time we went to Pokeworks as a group.

Workshops 1-3:30 and Practice 3:30-5:00  
Dinner: For those interested in dining together, we will go to Ichiban Korean and Japanese restaurant. Each person is responsible for his/her own dinner.

Fee: Donation recommended

Contact: Carol Gale at 860-502-5260  
for info or to register.

Depending on interest, we may practice Sunday morning as well.

## Spring Retreat 2020

May 22-25  
Barnet, VT

## Summer Retreat 2020

9-day retreat: July 31-August 9  
5-day retreat: August 4-9  
3-day retreat: August 6-9  
Barnet, VT

## Korea Trip 2021 (12 Days)

April 22-May 4  
Trip cost: \$1500.00 + international and domestic (to and from Jeju Island) airfare  
Promotion fee for black belt, associate master, and master to be announced



**The Sun Do News** welcomes stories, articles poems, photos, and announcements. Please send your contribution to Betsy Forrest as an email attachment, if possible, at [bforrest777@gmail.com](mailto:bforrest777@gmail.com).

### Website:

[www.sundo.org](http://www.sundo.org)

Visit the Sun Do website for information on Sun Do history, retreat dates and registration, and much more.

You may also e-mail questions to us through the website.

### Find us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/Sundo.Healing/>

### Editor and producer:

Betsy Forrest