

THE ZEN CENTER OF SYRACUSE HOEN-JI

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Welcome to the Dharma Kids (DK) program at the Zen Center of Syracuse, Hoen-ji. This program is designed to teach children (ages 5 and up) about Buddhist practice and how to live life according to the teachings of the Buddha. The program is led by Myoko Jennifer Waters, a long-time practitioner of both Zen and Tibetan style practice.

What to expect and how to prepare before coming to a DK session:

Please **enter** the main house from the **back door** entrance. It is easier for us to manage one door than two. All doors need to be locked during our program, and will be locked by 10:10 am each session. You are welcome to arrive early, from 9:50-10am, but if you arrive late we will not be able to let you in. The program begins promptly at 10 am.

This is a **family style program** that allows parents/caregivers to participate or not. If you would like to be in the room with us but not be involved, please sit outside the circle. If you would like to be part of the program, please join us in the circle for doing prostrations, meditation and walking meditation (**kinhin*) with us. Also, feel free to participate in discussions, share personal stories and answer questions. The children learn from adults and LOVE to hear stories about our lives, mistakes we have made and lessons we have learned.

If you have a **skill or talent that you would like to share** with the group (i.e, music, poetry, art, yoga, ecology, etc.) please let me know and I will incorporate that into a class. We love guest teachers!!

Plan on helping your child write his or her first name legibly on the **name tag** so that we can all read it easily. Bring ***offerings to each session** if you would like. Offerings are a practice of generosity. They can be anything from rocks or special leaves found outdoors to home made cookies or crackers. They should be something special, either gastronomically or visually. Your child will have a chance to place them on the altar and then share them at the end. Any left at the end of the program may be given to Zen Center residents and members.

We rely on the classical teachings and practices of Shakyamuni Buddha and relate them

to our daily lives using art, music and poetry. The goal of the program is to experience basic Buddhist teachings of compassion, inner peace, mutual respect, and responsibility for one's environment. This provides tools they can rely on for the rest of their lives, fostering self-confidence and inner comfort.

The program is designed for children ages 5 and up. They will be introduced to meditative practices as handed down in an unbroken lineage from the Buddha some 2600 years ago. The teachings that we will focus on for the 2011-2012 year will be: the **Four Noble Truths, particularly the forth: the 8 Fold Path; and the Six Paramitas**. These classical teachings provide a strong foundation for our lives and help us make good choices for ourselves and others.

This guidebook will give you basic practices that you can do at home, as a family, and for special celebrations. Will also include creative exercises, chants and prayers.

This is how the DK program is structured:

We always talk about our *MOTIVATION first.

Then we make *OFFERINGS

Followed by doing *PROSTRATIONS

Moving into *CHANTING

Then comes the fun part: *MEDITATION

Finally, we begin *KINHIN or walking meditation

We may also spend some time doing special prayers for anyone or any being that we know who is in pain or sickness.

these words are explained below.

Chants that we do:

Namu Dai Bosa: to connect with the Great Compassionate Wisdom Energy of the universe, or oneness; one of the key chants practiced within Zen Center of Syracuse's tradition.

O Muni Muni Maha Muniye So Ha: Homage to the great teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha.

Om Tara Tu Tare Ture So Ha: this is the *Tara mantra, which calls upon the Compassionate Being Tara to protect us from any fears and dangers; mostly practiced within the Tibetan lineage.

On Ka Ka Kabi Sa Ma Ei Sowa Ka: Jizo Bodhisattva, protector of children's mantra, which calls upon Jizo, to guide and protect all children.

Things you can do at home for nourishing happiness:

Family Practice, this can be done daily or as often as possible:

Create a place within your home where you can all sit together;

You can have an altar, with a Buddha image or not, with flowers and a candle, or a beautiful stone or any other natural object. You will want to have a bell or a timer to begin and end your time together.

After you settle yourselves, you can say together:

“While entering into our inner light, we send to and receive love from each other. May we cultivate true wisdom and compassion.”

(You can ring the bell or gong here.)

Sit quietly and focus on your breath for a period of 3-5 minutes.

(You can ring the bell or gong at the end.)

“Thank you for our teachers, family and friends.

With our hearts and minds, we send out love to all beings.”

Meditative exercises from Thich Nhat Hanh

1. Calming the Mental Formations:

Breathing in, I feel calm	Calm
Breathing out, I smile	Smile
Breathing in, I dwell in the present moment.	Present moment
Breathing out, it is the most wonderful moment	Wonderful moment

2. Nourishing the Body:

Breathing in, I know I'm breathing in.	In
Breathing out, I know I'm breathing out.	Out
Breathing in, my breath grows deep.	Deep
Breathing out, my breath grows slow.	Slow
Breathing in, I calm my body.	Calm
Breathing out, I feel at ease.	Ease
Breathing in, I smile.	Smile
Breathing out, I release.	Release.

Special Prayers:

Before bedtime: “Now I lay down to sleep and I pray to _____ (you may say Tara or The Great Protector or The Being of Kindness), that she make keep us safe through the night. May we have only good dreams, and never any bad dreams. With these prayers, we send out love to all beings.”

Before meals: “Thank you for this food and for the animals and vegetables that offered their lives for us. With this food may we benefit all beings.”

After meals: “Having finished this meal, let us pray that all beings may accomplish whatever tasks they are engaged in and be fulfilled with all the Buddha Dharmas.” (From ZCS’s Daily Sutra book)

If some one or some being is sick:

“We send our loving energy to _____. May (he, she) have no more sickness or pain and feel all better.”

“When someone has died, people think that person is no longer there. But according to Buddha, that person is always there.” -Thich Nhat Hanh

If someone we know has died:

“We send our loving energy to _____. May (she/he) find their way and feel the love that we have to share with them.”

Great books for kids:

Jataka Tales:

-The Parrot and the Fig Tree

a story about selfless loyalty and devotion

-Pieces of Gold

a story about generosity and truth telling

-The Space Sage

a story about attachment, letting-go and true wisdom

-Monster Moments: Turning on soul lights to help children handle their fear and anger by Daniel J.Porter

-The Mountains of Tibet by Mordicai Gerstein

A great introduction to death and re-birth, inspired by the author’s reading of the Tibetan Book of the Dead.

-The Prince Who Ran Away: The story of Gautama Buddha by Anne Rockwell, a story about the life of Buddha

- Life of Buddha** by the DK program (ZCS library)
inspired by The Prince Who Ran Away
- Each Breath a Smile** based on the teachings by Thich Nhat Hanh
- The Golden Rule** by Ilene Cooper

Books for Parents and Teachers

- A Pebble for Your Pocket** by Thich Nhat Hanh
- Baby Buddhas: A guide for teaching meditation to children** by Lisa Desmond
- The Energy of Prayer: How to Deepen Your Spiritual Practice**
by Thich Nhat Hanh
- Endless Path: Awakening within the Buddhist Imagination: Jataka Tales, Zen Practice, and Daily Life** by Rafe Martin
- The Family Meditation Book: How ten minutes a day together can make life saner (and more pleasant) even for the busiest families** by Kerry Lee MacLean
- Buddha in Your Backpack: Everyday Buddhism for Teens** by Franz Metcalf
- Our Difficult Sunlight: A Guide to Poetry, Literacy, & Social Justice in Classroom & Community** by Georgia Popoff and Quraysh Ali Lansana
- Prosperous Teaching, Prosperous Learning: Inspirational Thoughts for an Educational Paradigm Shift** by Andrew S. Palumbo

Dictionary:

***Chanting:** similar to mantras but usually longer and done out loud as a group; used to focus one's mind

***Kinhin/Walking Meditation:** the practice of paying attention while walking, sometimes referred to as moving meditation; often done in between sitting meditation sessions.

***Mantra:** a sound or word that is used as a protection of the mind; gives focus to one's thoughts, can help build a relationship with a particular protective deity if used correctly.

***Meditation:** a practice of sitting still and watching one's breath; can result in complete mental liberation.

***Offerings:** something you give either with your body (ie, prostrations or cleaning), mind (mentally create an offering through one's imagination) or of substance (ie, apples, cookies, etc.). Giving offerings is an aspect of devotional practice that encourages one to think of others, moving away from self-centered thinking.

***Prostrations:** a physical and reverential practice that awakens the body and mind, is considered to be a form of offering, and helps one to move away from egotistical thinking

and acting; helps to transcend self-centeredness.

***Shakyamuni Buddha:** the founder of Buddhism as we know it. The Buddha was born as a prince in India and committed himself to the practice of meditation until he reached enlightenment

***Tara:** a female Buddha, the Tibetan version of the Chinese Kwan Yin (Japanese Kannon), known for fearless love and compassion

***Three Jewels:** Specific to Buddhism, the Three Jewels are the Buddha, Dharma (teachings) and Sangha (group of practitioners)