

YOUTH PRACTICE INTERCONNECTIONS

JANUARY 12, 2020: "YOU ARE PERFECT AND COMPLETE"

This newsletter shares ideas and activities from [Youth Practice at Clouds in Water Zen Center](#) with the community. Class contents vary with the needs of the students. Subscribe at tinyletter.com/YouthPracticeInterconnections

Today we're going to talk about Prajna Paramita, or Wisdom. Do you know who Mr. Rogers is? He had a very popular children's television show. It was popular because Mr. Rogers was kind. He believed that every person is special, not for what they do, but for who they are. In Buddhism, we say "everyone has Buddha Nature." Mr. Rogers wasn't a Buddhist, he was a Presbyterian minister, but Mr. Rogers and Buddhism are saying the same things. Wisdom isn't some strange idea that's only in Buddhism. Wisdom is seeing that every life is important.

Game: Being One With Everything

We're going to talk about Wisdom and Interconnection this year, so this game is a good way to start things off! One person gets to wear a headband, and we put a card on it that shows some animal, planet or object. Everyone else tries to act out what is on the card, without speaking or making animal sounds that would make it too easy. The person wearing the card tries to guess what they are. This game helps build our ability to relate to other things. Or, maybe it's just fun; hard to say!

New: The Feelings Game

We're also going to talk about Feelings this year: why we have them, what we do with them. It's important to recognize feelings. So let's try a new game. It's just like Being One With Everything, except we use [Feelings Flashcards](#). Let's start with some basic feelings, like Anger.

Song: Respect Polka - [Lyrics](#)

From the album "Dharma Moon" by Nat Needle.

Like we say, all beings have Buddha Nature. One way we show respect for everyone's precious life is by singing this song and bowing to the Buddha Nature in all of us.

Song: Under That Bodhi Tree - [Lyrics](#)

From the album "Dharma Moon" by Nat Needle.

Let's let our worries "just float on by" so we can see our true nature. Students get to suggest things that wouldn't bother ol' Buddha during his quest for enlightenment.

Song: The Paramita Song - [Lyrics](#)

From the album "Dharma Moon" by Nat Needle.

... Now the sixth paramita is Prajna (*wisdom*)
If you think you're wise, you're full of bologna.
But when you experience "I DON'T KNOW",
Then natural wisdom is everywhere you go.
That's Prajna Paramita for sure.

Song: Small Doins' - [Lyrics](#)

From the album "Dharma Moon" by Nat Needle.

This song is about Wisdom! The refrain is "Maha Prajna Paramita"; that might sound like some strange Buddhist chant, but Maha just means Great, and Prajna is the sixth Paramita: Wisdom. A Paramita is a Heroic Practice that goes beyond our ideas about it. So all together, *Maha Prajna Paramita* means "Great Wisdom Beyond Wisdom."

Wet rag, push broom
Change bag, vacuum
Wipe feet, wipe seat
You are perfect and complete!

Small Doins', great bein'
Great Bein', tiny things
Small Doins', marvelous moment
Maha Prajna Paramita

The wisdom of this moment is in ourselves and all the little things we do; all we have to do is see it. Is there something that you do every day, where you could find wisdom? (Side note: At Zen Buddhist Centers, we bow even before going to the bathroom. Wisdom is *everywhere*.)

Open the Altar

Offering blessings and concerns.

Guided Meditation: Mistakes

Can you think of a time when you made a mistake? Perhaps something that got you into trouble, or made someone feel bad, or embarrassed you? Got one? What did that feel like? Was it a pleasant or unpleasant feeling? Do you feel anything about it now? Do you notice any feeling or tension in your body? Where is it? Can you just look at that feeling for a while? What happens?

Part 2 - Age Group Activities

Check-in: How are you?

We hope the craziness of the world isn't getting you down.

But Are We Perfect? Really?

Suzuki-roshi once said: "You are perfect just as you are... and you could use a little improvement." This is a funny line, but according to Buddhism, it is the plain truth. Both statements are true... from a certain point of view.

This is a really hard thing to understand. If you find it confusing, don't worry: people have been finding it confusing for thousands of years! It is the great mystery of life. The good news is: if you ever understand it, at that moment you will completely understand Buddhism. Some more good news: until then, we get to work on it together!

One way to look at it is: Each of us is an amazingly complex being, living in interconnection with each-other, the earth and the whole universe. It is truly amazing that we are alive and we are able to be here in this moment. **Can you think of some ways this is true?** This year in Youth Practice, we'll look at many ways this is true.

What About Mistakes?

Mistakes don't feel very perfect, do they? Mister Rogers says some great things about Mistakes, that even adults appreciate. Let's look at some video and talk about it!

The Story of Mr. Skunk

Watch [Mister Rogers' Neighborhood: Making Mistakes \(#1578\)](#) from time 08:26-13:50.

This is a great example of making a mistake!

1. How does Mr. Skunk feel about his mistake?
2. Is Mr. Skunk "perfect and complete"?
3. Was Ms. Duck compassionate in her response?
4. Was Lady Aberlin compassionate?
5. How does it feel to be compassionate?
6. How does it feel to receive compassion?
7. Why do mistakes feel bad? Do they need to?

Am I A Mistake?

Watch [Mister Rogers' Neighborhood: Making Mistakes \(#1578\)](#) from time 14:00-21:00.

Daniel Striped Tiger wonders if *he* is a mistake.

8. Was it brave of Daniel to say what he did?

Did you know that Fred Rogers did many of the puppets in the show? He was the voice of Daniel Tiger, King Friday, Lady Elaine and others.

9. Does Daniel accept Lady Aberlin's assurances that he's just fine exactly as he is?
10. Why does the song become a round?
11. Is it helpful to have a friend? Why?
12. Is Daniel "perfect and complete"?
13. Should Daniel do anything to change?

One Continuous Mistake

Zen Master Dogen once wrote that life is "one continuous mistake," or "mistake after mistake." **How can this be so?** Every mistake is an opportunity to change and grow. So continuous mistake means we can continually change and grow.

For adults: [Some words from Suzuki-roshi on this.](#)

What is a Neighborhood?

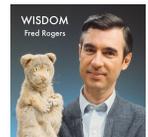
Optionally, watch ["Won't You Be My Neighbor"](#) from 11:50-15:43. This video is more suitable for grades 4+

Mr. Rogers was famous for his Neighborhood. "A Neighborhood is a place where at times when you felt worried, scared, unsafe, would take care of you, would provide understanding, safety..."

In Buddhism we call this the Sangha: "the community of excellent friends." One thing the Sangha does is support us in our mindfulness practice. Sometimes the Sangha supports us by not being perfect, by giving us challenges. **Can you think of any challenges coming your way? Do you also have support?**

Does a neighborhood exclude some people and include others? In Buddhism, we vow to help all beings. **Can our neighborhood include the whole world and beyond?**

(In Class) Hand out Magnets



Craft: Build A Neighborhood

What would a perfect neighborhood look like for you? Does it include challenges?

For the younger students, we'll have blocks available to build a neighborhood with. For older students, you can draw a neighborhood, or just talk about what your neighborhood would look like. Work together.

Credits Youth Practice Leader: Kikan Howard. Grades 1-6 Teachers: Leslie Stoy, Towa Kurt Errickson, Jishi Megan Henrichs, Dylan MacWilliams.