

YOUTH PRACTICE INTERCONNECTIONS

NOVEMBER 17, 2019: "COURAGE AND ENERGY AT STONEWALL"

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

This week in Grades 1-6 we will continue to explore **Virya Paramita**: Energy or Joyful Effort. Courage is one form of Virya. We will read the book [Stonewall: A Building, An Uprising, A Revolution](#), an illustrated account of the Stonewall Uprising, an event that launched the LGBT movement for equal rights. Respect, fairness and inclusivity are important parts of Youth Practice.

Game: Night at the Museum

We haven't played this game for a while, and it's just fun. [See this link](#). (Ooh - we should do dinosaurs next time. We can be different things in the museum.)

Introducing the Teachers with Pronouns

We'll take this opportunity to go around and have the teachers introduce themselves by name and [preferred gender pronouns](#). Probably a lot of the students don't remember all our names. Example: "I'm Kikan and I use he, him, his pronouns."

Song: Respect Polka

From "Dharma Moon" by Nat Needle.

All beings have Buddha Nature, so everyone's life is very precious. We can show respect by paying attention to people as they are. "Re-spect" literally comes from the ancient words for "to look again"!

Song: Under That Bodhi Tree

From the album [Dharma Moon](#) by Nat Needle.

In this ever-popular song we get a chance to let our worries "just float on by". Students get to suggest things that wouldn't bother ol' Buddha during his quest for enlightenment.

Song: The Paramita Song

From the album [Dharma Moon](#) by Nat Needle. As today's class is about Virya Paramita (Energy), we'll focus on the Energy and Wisdom verses.

Now the fourth paramita is Virya (energy)
The exertion of a falling leaf can steer ya'
Every breath, every step that's taken
Is an opportunity to awaken
That's Virya paramita for sure.

Why don't you try a little paramita?
There's nothing sweeter than a little paramita
I know ya wanna get to that other shore
But don't think about it, just paddle your oar.

"*The exertion of a falling leaf can steer you*": joyful effort can be natural and flowing, without difficulty. On the other hand, don't we need to apply ourselves a bit more, sometimes? In the "Paramita Toolbox," we made the hammer the tool for Virya.

"*Every breath, every step that's taken, is an opportunity to awaken*": It's true, and that's why [Bodhisattvas](#) do the best they can in everything they do.

Open the Altar

Offering blessings and concerns.

Guided Meditation: Belonging

Think of something about yourself or something you enjoy doing that other people might think is weird or different. Keep it to yourself.

Is there any place where you can feel safe being that way? Or are there people you can be that way with? What's it like? If you don't know of such a place, can you imagine a place like that?

Part 2 - Age Group Activities

Check-in: How are you?

Are you feeling brave?

Discuss: Guided Meditation

Discuss anything that came up from the guided meditation on the previous page.

Discuss: What is Courage?

One answer might be: Speaking out, or doing what you think is right, even when you are scared to do so, or when people you know think differently.

Another answer might be: Facing the unknown. Like going to the first day of school, for example.

Three Kinds of Courage

Courage is an important part of Virya Paramita. Here are three kinds of courage to think about:

- Courage to face danger (like, saving someone from a fire)
- Courage in response to discouragement or despair (like, "I'm failing the class, what do I do?")
- Courage to face the anxieties of daily life (like, "I don't want to get up and go to school this morning")

Have you experienced these kinds of courage?



We need challenges to help us grow. But, if we are facing more challenge than we can deal with on our own, it's important to get help from friends or family. We're not in this alone.

Story Time: "Stonewall: A Building. An Uprising. A Revolution."

This book is a bit long and needs to be summarized a bit for the younger kids (grades 1-2). (It worked well as-is for grades 3 and up.)

Story Discussion

These questions can be used as a starting point for discussion. These can be difficult questions, so no one should be pressured to answer anything they don't want to.

- What was important about the Stonewall Inn to the people who went there?
- Is there a place or group of people where you feel you can be yourself? Why is it important to you?
- How do you think the people felt when they were standing up to the police?
- When have you stood up for what is right even if you were scared?
- Can you think of a time when you did something different from what your friends were doing, because you thought it was right? How did that make you feel?
- What do you believe is worth standing up for?
- Were the police right or wrong to arrest people because they were different? Why did they do what they did?
- What do you do when someone picks on you because you're different?
- How do you be yourself without being afraid of being picked on?
- Are there parts of yourself that you keep hidden because you think other people might judge you? What would it be like to risk showing that side of yourself? What might the consequences be?
- What is a revolution?
- When is it okay to break the rules?

Craft: Design Your Own Flag

What do you stand for? Make a design and put it on a flag. We'll have 2.75x4.25" pieces of paper, colored pens, popsicle sticks and glue to put it all together.

If you don't have an idea of your own, you can make a rainbow flag to support LGBT rights.



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