

# **The Dewdrop Digest**

## **Connecting Children, Youth and Sangha**

### **Clouds in Water Zen Center**

#### **Sunday, February 3, 2008**

#### **The Bodhisattva Way for Young Children by Carrie Pomeroy**

*Carrie is the mom of Bridger and Cassidy Berg and a long-time CP teacher. She currently offers tender care to the Nursery Group.*

*The vignette she offers below is an example of our approach with young children (approximately K-1<sup>st</sup> and younger). Rather than moralizing and explaining with words (which tends to separate them from their experience), we “teach” them in the way they learn best – through imitation, gentle stories, songs and verses, creative expression and imaginative play.*

Last week, I got to observe a lovely moment of learning through play with the preschoolers. The teachers, Kurt Errickson and Heidi Farnham, were leading the children in pretending to be something – animal, vegetable, or mineral – that needed help. Each child got a turn acting out something in need, and their classmates tried to guess what they were pretending to be. When I came in, one of the class's newer students was crawling on the floor. "Are you a cat?" someone guessed, and she nodded with a pleased, sly smile. "Do you need some water and food?" teacher Kurt chimed in, and she nodded again. Two girls rushed forward to play-act giving her food and water. "Would you like someone to pet you?" Kurt asked. Another nod from the little cat, and the kids showered her with gentle pets, then mimed finding her a toy to bat at. She purred with pleasure, soaking up the attention. Giving and receiving together through play, the kids were truly getting a taste of the Bodhisattva path.

Later, I asked my five-year-old son what he'd pretended to be. He told me he was a monster truck crashing – no big surprise there. My son has adored cars and trucks since babyhood and thinks about them constantly, so he was really offering his classmates a glimpse of his true self in all its roaring, crash-and-burning glory. "How did they help you?" I asked him. "I think I had some broken springs they fixed," he replied. It got me thinking about what springs on monster trucks do – they absorb shocks. I think children's practice IS a real shock absorber for my kids and my family – a form of support and cushioning that helps us absorb the bumps and curves we hit in our daily lives. And for that, I'm deeply grateful.

#### **Today's teaching message**

All classes will continue to explore how The Six Paramitas, as a whole, are a guide to the Bodhisattva Way of “cherishing, loving, helping and protecting all beings, including myself, just for the sheer joy of doing so”. The older classes will explore the Paramita of Patience (or Relaxing or Including), as a way to experiment with ways to interrupt our habitual negative responses to challenging situations and return to peace. We will invite students to allow themselves some time to tenderly accept and include all of their feelings as a first step to relaxing with the entire situation. Youngers will focus on how the Bodhisattva helps plants, animals, minerals, people, and our own self.

## **Classroom filming for new AmiMaitri website**

This month, we will begin capturing some CP classroom activities on film. Selected videos will be posted to the new AmiMaitri website, which Clouds is sponsoring. So we would be very grateful if you would stop by the CP Registration Table or Greeter Table today to sign the permission form.

AmiMaitri (AH-me MY-tree) is about nurturing Big Sangha, a community of dharma friends, grounded in lovingkindness. Our emerging mission, which we invite you to co-create and sustain, is to help parents and educators – and kids themselves – grow awareness, compassion, wisdom and integrity in the lives of children, youth, families, and the whole world - and to build community amongst individuals and groups who aim to live consciously and compassionately. Mahayana Buddhism is the foundational approach; simpatico wisdom traditions will be represented as well. AmiMaitri is our way of sharing with a wider audience what we've learned in ten years of Children's and Youth Practice.

AmiMaitri will include:

- A set of tools to help like-minded groups organize themselves more effectively (which will first be applied to organizing volunteers, supplies and activities for Children's and Youth Practice)
- Social networking, blogging, and guided discussion forums to enable people to dialogue about practice issues
- Multiple resources for parents, educators, youth group leaders and other adults working with children and youth
- Multiple resources, in a safe environment, for kids and youth to explore mindfulness, meditation, and more

A beta version of AmiMaitri will be available for CP parents and teachers to use this spring. Guided discussion forums for CP teachers and parents will be launched soon – watch for your email invitation. .... Interested in this project? You are invited!

## **Home practice suggestions**

- Parents: Help your children, look for situations, stories, movies, where there is an opportunity to practice. Notice, without judgment, how things go when we remember to practice and when we do not. Celebrate when you “feel good doing good”!
- 2<sup>nd</sup> grade on up: Practice Patience by fully feeling and tenderly accepting difficult emotions. Discuss as a family. Especially for 4<sup>th</sup> grade on up: record your observations and experiences daily. Bring your journal to class next time.
- Pre - Kindergarten-1<sup>st</sup>: Notice when you or someone else helps or cares for plants, animals, minerals or people. We plan to ask the Kindergarten-1<sup>st</sup> graders to teach Heart Ball to their families. It is way to bring love, compassion, and tenderness into our life in a fun way – and also a great way to practice with the paramita of Patience following a difficult situation. A description of the game will be available to take home, or email [cp@cloudsinwater.org](mailto:cp@cloudsinwater.org) for a copy.

**Question, idea, concern?** Your feedback is appreciated and important! Contact Katharine Krueger at 651-222-6968 x5 or [cp@cloudsinwater.org](mailto:cp@cloudsinwater.org)