

Week 1: Paramita - Generosity

Lesson Time: 1 hour

Facilitators Required: In-person: 2, Virtual: 1- 2

Supplies:

- Activity paper and writing utensils (crayons, colored pencils, markers, etc.)
- Book: *Stone Soup* by Jon Muth
- Metta sutra chant cards
- Rubber or foam ball
- Power Point slide of Buddhist altar
- YouTube link to video featuring *Stone Stoup*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1Avo5FJ250&t=386s>

Learning Objectives

- *Create safe, fun and participatory environment*
- *Introduce concept of Six Paramitas, or Perfections*
- *Connect basic Buddhist concepts with Paramita of Generosity*
- *Elicit examples of ways youth act generously in dayily live*
- *Introduce role of ritual in Buddhist practice*

Outline

I. Gather & Morning Message	20 mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Morning Message• Alter Practice/Gassho and Bow• Fun & Games	
II. Dharma Lesson - Six Paramitas & Generosity	15 mins
III. Movement & Meditation	5 mins
IV. Main Activity - Stone Stoup	15 mins
V. Closing Chant	5 mins

Gather & Morning Message

Begin day with informal questions to get participants talking.

- Ask name, age and what school they attend.
- Ask if any participants would like to share what excites them most about attending today.
- Ask participants if any have participated in MZMC's Youth Program before.
- Ask participants what excites them most about participating in the session today.
- Ask participants if they have heard the words Buddhism, meditation, or mindfulness.
- Ask if any participants would like to share what they may have heard or learned about Buddhism, meditation or mindfulness.

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Alter Practice/Gassho & Bow

Introduce Alter

Introduce the alter to participants. Inform participants the group will explore alters and alter practice throughout the coming weeks.

- Ask participants if any of them have an alter at home. If so, ask what is on it.
- Ask participants what they notice is on the alter.
- Ask participants if they know what the items on the alter are.
- Inform participants why items are located on alter and what they represent.
- Ask participants if they were to have an alter at home, what important mementos would they place on it.

Gassho & Bow to Each other & Alter

Inform participants that offering a gassho and bow is important when approaching an alter. Tell participants that to gassho and bow is an opportunity to show peace and lovingkindness to others. Demonstrate to participants a formal bow and gassho.

- Ask participants to follow along before trying on their own.
- Instruct participants to gassho and bow to the alter and then to the people next to them.

Fun and Games: Smile ball

Ask participants to sit in a circle. Once seated, let participants know you'd like them to think of a time they recently someone made them smile. Offer examples like 'my dog makes me smile each time we play fetch' or 'My friend made me smile after shared a cookie with me.' Go around the circle and allow each participants the opportunity to respond to the question.

Once each participant has responded, let them know you plan to play a game. Bring out a small rubber or foam ball. Let participants know they are to toss the ball to each other and each time someone catches it, they are to do something that will make the others smile (tell a joke, do a dance, make a funny face)

Once participants are through, ask participants to share how it felt to make others smile.

Virtual Accommodation

For virtual participants, call on participants rather than throwing a ball. Facilitators can call on youth randomly or find other ways creative ways to call names (*youth with birthdays in January go first, February second, March third, etc.*).

Dharma Lesson: Generosity

Facilitators are encouraged to develop the dharma lesson in a way that most resonates with them.

Suggested talking points

- The six Paramitas, or perfections, are six different ways we can bring Buddha's teaching to our daily life
- The paramitas are generosity, being of service patience, effort, mindfulness and wisdom. We will talk about one each week.
- This week we are talking about generosity. In many ways, generosity is the heart of the Buddha's teaching.
- Whenever we practice Buddhist teaching, we are giving compassion and wisdom to others.

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Movement & Meditation

Take participants through a series of mindful movement postures as a way to give participants an opportunity to move around, stretch, and explore mindfulness.

Suggested movements with instruction:

One: Begin with your feet slightly apart, arms at your sides. Breathing in, keep your elbows straight as you lift your arms in front of you until they're shoulder level, horizontal to the ground. Breathing out, bring your arms down again to your sides. Repeat the movement three more times.

Two: Begin with your arms at your sides. Breathing in, lift your arms in front of you. In one continuous movement, bring them all the way up, stretching them above your head. Touch the sky! This movement can be done with your palms either facing inward toward each other, or facing forward as you reach up. Breathing out, bring your arms slowly down again to your sides. Repeat three more times.

Three: Breathing in, lift your arms out to the side, palms up, until your arms are shoulder level, parallel to the ground. Breathing out, touch your shoulders with your fingertips, keeping your upper arms horizontal. Breathing in, open your arms, extending them until they're stretched out to a horizontal position again. Breathing out, bend your elbows, bringing your fingertips back to your shoulders.

Four: When you breathe in, you are like a flower opening to the warm sun. Breathing out, the flower closes. From this position with your fingertips on your shoulders, do the movement three more times. Then lower your arms back down to your sides.

Five: In this exercise, you make a large circle with your arms. Breathing in, bring your arms straight down in front of you, centered between your hips, palms together. Raise your arms up and separate your hands so your arms can stretch up over your head. Breathing out, continue the circle, arms circling back, until your fingers point toward the ground. Breathing in, lift your arms back and reverse the circle. Breathe out as you bring your palms together and your arms come down in front of you. Repeat three more times.

Six: Start by putting your hands on the sides of your waist. As you do this exercise, keep your legs straight but not locked, and your head centered over your body. Breathing in, bend forward at the waist and begin to make a circle with your upper body. When you're halfway through the circle, your upper body leaning back, breathe out and complete the circle, ending with your head in front of you while you're still bent at the waist. On your next in-breath, begin a circle in the opposite direction. On your out-breath, complete the circle. Repeat the series of movements three more times.

Seven: Begin with your hands on our waist, heels together, feet turned out to form a V, so that they make a 90 degree angle. Breathing in, rise up on your toes. Breathing out, stay on your toes, keep your back straight, and bend your knees. Keeping your upper body centered, go down as low as you comfortably can maintain your balance. Breathing in, straighten your knees and come all the way up, still standing on your toes. From this position, repeat the movement three more times, remembering to breathe slowly and deeply.

Note: *Introducing and exploring together zazen posture and breathing is entirely appropriate.*

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Activity: Stone Soup

Begin by informing participants you plan to read *Stone Soup* by John Muth. Let participants know the book is based on a folk tale telling of a group of villagers who each bring their own special ingredient to make soup and how the soup turns out for the better because of it. While you read, ask participants to think of ways small acts of generosity increase the happiness of others.

Once reading is complete, begin discussion with participants. Question might include:

- How might you have acted if you saw the three hungry strangers approach your home?
- If you were going to bring a special ingredient to help the travelers cook their stone soup, what would it be?
- At the beginning of the story, none of the townspeople would share. Yet, while the strangers made stone soup, many came up to offer ingredients. Why do you think the villagers were so willing to share at the end of the story compared to the beginning?

Once discussion is complete, pass out activity paper and writing utensils. Ask participants to think of an item that they can create to give to someone else as a gift. They are welcome to create the item with paper and writing utensil or draw a picture of the special item. Once complete, ask each participant to share their item with, and describe why it is special.

Virtual Accommodation

For virtual participants, facilitators can view a video of *Stone Soup* rather than reading directly to youth. Video can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1Avo5FJ250&t=386s>

Closing Chant

Pass out closing chant to participants. Show participants how to put hands together to chant. Invite participants to follow along.

May everyone be happy and safe, and may their hearts be filled with joy
Let love move through the whole universe; above, below and across
May we always treat others with kindness and generosity
Whether we are standing or walking, sitting or lying, awake or sleep,
Let us always have love in our hearts