

What are the 16 Guidelines?

Where did they come from?

- ⇒ A compilation of what contemporary Tibetan teacher Lama Zopa Rinpoche called “human dharmas”. They use familiar western terms to make the ancient teachings accessible to people everywhere.
- ⇒ Lama Zopa and his teacher, the late Lama Thubten Yeshe, believed that this “Universal Education” could reach beyond Buddhism to acknowledge the universal realities of all human beings.
- ⇒ However, the Guidelines are not new, and they did not originate in the West. Their origins are rooted deep in the earliest days of Buddhism in Tibet, introduced by King Songtsen Gampo in the 7th Century. He used these principles to transform the then warlike nation of Tibet into a culture known for its traditions of compassion and wisdom.
- ⇒ The Guidelines we will work with are a recent (2004) incarnation of these ancient traditions. Arlene introduced them to the Wednesday group in 2006.

How are they put together?

How We Think:	<i>HUMILITY, PATIENCE, CONTENTMENT, DELIGHT</i>
How We Act:	<i>KINDNESS, HONESTY, GENEROSITY, RIGHT SPEECH</i>
How We Relate to Others:	<i>RESPECT, FORGIVENESS, GRATITUDE, LOYALTY</i>
How We Find Meaning:	<i>ASPIRATION, PRINCIPLES, SERVICE, COURAGE</i>

*‘Watch your thoughts, for they become words.
 Watch your words, for they become actions.
 Watch your actions, for they become habits.
 Watch your habits, for they become character.
 Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.’
 Johann Wolfgang Goethe (Germany)*

Why are they important? Part I

They can help us hold our differences in a “bigger container”

- ⇒ "Successful civic engagement is all about capturing and harnessing empathy."
Kristen Campbell, National Council on Citizenship
- ⇒ "Politics is making Americans dumb and mean." Gregory Rodriguez, LA Times
- ⇒ When we are polarized, no happiness is possible – because the “other” is not in mind. Our happiness depends on recognizing that we are interconnected, no matter what our differences. (Arlene Dorius)
- ⇒ It is essential that we develop the inner values that are part of our core ethic – whether it is on the Buddhist path, other faith’s paths or a secular path. The important thing is to develop them. (Arlene Dorius)

The Dalai Lama himself is embracing this challenge in his new book, “Beyond Religion – Ethics for a Whole World”.

"To my mind, although humans can manage without religion, they cannot manage without inner values.

. . .

The difference . . . is something like the difference between water and tea. Ethics and inner values are like water, something we need every day for health and survival. Ethics and inner values based in a religious context are more like tea. The tea we drink is mostly composed of water, but it also contains some other ingredients - tea leaves, spices, perhaps some sugar or, at least in Tibet, salt . . . But however the tea is prepared, the primary ingredient is always water."

Why are they important? Part II

They offer practical tools and ordinary language that bring Buddhist concepts into everyday life.

Attributes of American culture that surround us and shape our practice:

Individual self-identity

- ⇒ "I-me-my"
- ⇒ Turning practice into another self-improvement project
- ⇒ Enhancing: independent thinkers, tend not to accept things as "given"

Moralism

- ⇒ Absolutist notions of right and wrong
- ⇒ Delusion of a fixed self
- ⇒ Inner critical voice - that we are flawed or deficient
- ⇒ Enhancing: caring, generous, belief in fairness and equality

Impatience

- ⇒ Looking for the quick fix, craving novelty
- ⇒ Enhancing: energetic, driven, aware of fleeting time

Happiness as Entitlement

- ⇒ The right to pursue happiness has become the right to have it all the time.
- ⇒ Looking for causes, blame – to gain control and manage outcomes.
- ⇒ As consumers, we constantly sort through our options in order to maximize pleasure and minimize displeasure. This traps us into grasping & rejecting.
- ⇒ Enhancing: Our character keeps us reaching for happiness "until we realize it couldn't be anywhere but right here."

(Adapted from "Buddhism and the American Character", by Bodhin Kjolhede)

Why are they important? Part III

Their “bias toward action” will deepen our connections to each other and strengthen our Sangha.

- ⇒ **From Susan:** The 16 guidelines boil down to common sense values that many of us hold. But things that are "common sense" often get taken for granted and even overlooked. Sharing a conversation and exploring these guidelines will help us to focus on what is important and to be truly present with that.
- ⇒ **From Aaron:** My goal as a scientist is to reveal our moral thinking for what it is: a complex hodgepodge of emotional responses and rational (re)constructions . . . that do some things well and other things extremely poorly. My hope is that by understanding how we think, we can teach ourselves to think better, i.e. in ways that better serve the needs of humanity as a whole.
- ⇒ **From Betsy:** When I put myself in a position to teach something that has touched me or inspired me . . . I am working an edge of fear. Deep down I realize that I probably need to understand and embody the teaching more than anyone; and the best way to do that is to share what has transformed me.
- ⇒ **From Linda:** It has been my experience that every time I step-up to take some responsibility for sharing within our groups, I always get back so much more than I give. I have found that working to feel comfortable enough about an aspect of the dharma to be able to express it to others is the most effective way I know to finally "get it." In this way, stepping-up is a "wisely selfish" opportunity - it benefits others just as it benefits me.
- ⇒ **From Carolyn:** Since I signed up for the topic of Courage, I have already been challenged to work with my issue of fear, risk taking, "letting go of the shore and moving into the middle of the river," as the Hopi Elders Prophecy puts it. Further, it says to look around you, "see who is there with you [in the middle of the river] and celebrate." The companionship out there/here in the middle - is uplifting, a "virtual" raft on the river, a joyful support.

Lama Zopa in interview on the Guidelines:

- . . . wherever you start, this should be the practice
- . . . look for the authority of experience rather than the experience of authority