



Guidelines for Being a Good Person

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Translation by the
Pure Land Translation Team

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In deep appreciation
and with the utmost respect
this book is dedicated to our teacher

Venerable Master Chin Kung

Contents

Introduction	6
Preface	7
Respecting and Loving Our Parents at Home	8
Interacting with Others Away from Home	12
Being Mindful in Daily Life	15
Being Trustworthy	19
Loving All Beings	23
Being Close to Kind and Virtuous People	26
After Doing the Above, the Arts Come Next	28

Introduction

This book is a translation of *Di Zi Gui*, a book of maxims that was written by ancient Chinese sages. Memorized by children when they were young, the book provided guidelines that would enable them to learn how to become a good child and student and, later, a good adult, parent, friend, and citizen.

To the casual reader, the maxims can appear to be straightforward and easy to carry out. But when trying to put them into practice, one discovers that they are anything but easy, or simple. Nor are they just for children.

These principles for behavior can guide us the rest of our lives.

Preface

Guidelines for Being a Good Person was written by ancient Chinese sages. It teaches us the guidelines for being a good human being.

First, it teaches us to respect and love our parents, and to be kind to our siblings.

Second, it teaches us how to interact with people and engage in daily tasks.

It also teaches us to be a trustworthy person.

Furthermore, it teaches us to love all beings and to be close to kind, virtuous people.

Having learned how to do all these, we can then expand our horizons by studying the arts.

~ 1 ~

Respecting and Loving our Parents at Home



When our parents call us, we should answer them right away. When they tell us to do something, we should do it promptly.

When our parents instruct us, we should listen respectfully. When they scold us, we should sincerely accept what they say.

We should make sure that our parents are warm in the winter and cool in the summer. In the morning,

we should greet them and show them that we care. At night, we should make sure that they are resting comfortably.

Before going out, we should let our parents know. When we return, we should tell them that we are back. We should lead a routine life, and we should not be constantly changing our mind in whatever we do.

Even when a matter is trivial, we should not act without permission or just do as we please. If we do so, then we are no longer a dutiful child.

We should not hide any possession, no matter how small, from our parents. If we do, they will feel hurt.

When something pleases our parents [and is proper], we should try our best to provide it for them. When something displeases them, we should remove it.

If we injure ourselves, we will make our parents worry. If we do something unvirtuous, they will feel ashamed.

When our parents love us, it is easy to be respectful and loving. When they do not love us, respecting and loving them means we have a noble heart.

If our parents do something wrong, we should urge them to change. Do so with a kind expression and caring voice.

Should our parents not accept our advice, try again when they are in a better mood. If they still do not listen, our sincere tears will show them how deeply we care. Should they get angry with us, do not hold it against them.

When our parents are ill, we should make sure that they take the right medicine. Care for them night and day, and do not leave them alone.

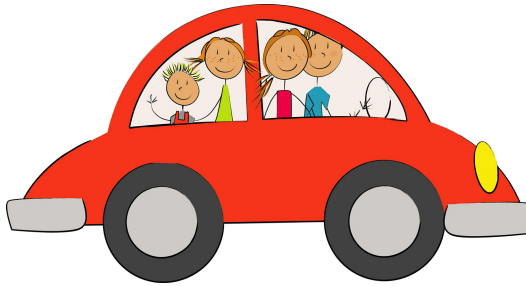
For three years after our parent's passing, we should remember them in sadness. We should live simply and not adorn our home. Avoid merry-making, meat, and alcohol.

We should arrange our parent's funeral in a proper manner. We should always honor them as if they were still alive and, especially on the anniversary of their death, remember them with a sincere heart.



~ 2 ~

Interacting with Others Away from Home



Older siblings should love and care for the younger ones; younger siblings should love and respect the older ones. Getting along well with one's siblings is a sign of respecting one's parents and caring that they are happy.

When siblings value family ties more than possessions, resentment will not arise. When siblings are careful with their words, feelings of anger naturally dissolve.

When drinking, eating, walking, or sitting, let elders do so first; younger ones follow.

When an elder is asking for someone, find that person right away. If we cannot find that person, we should immediately report back and ask if we can help instead.

When addressing elders, do not call them by their first name. When in the presence of elders, do not show off.

When meeting elders whom we know, greet them promptly and respectfully. If they do not greet us in return, respectfully stand aside.

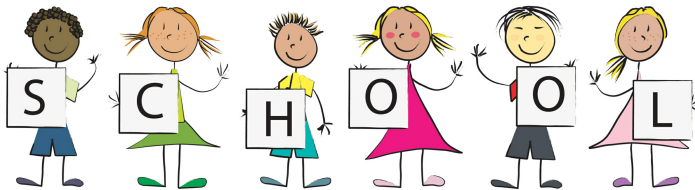
If we are in a vehicle and see an elder whom we know passing by, we should get out and greet the person [if the situation safely allows]. We continue on our way only after the elder has left us.

When an elder is standing, do not sit. After an elder sits down, sit only when invited to do so.

Before an elder, speak softly. But if our voice is too low and hard to hear, we are being improper.

When meeting elders, walk briskly towards them; when leaving, do not do so in haste. When answering a question, look attentively at the person.

We should regard our aunts and uncles as if they were our parents, and our cousins as if they were our siblings.



~ 3 ~

Being Mindful in Daily Life



Get up early and go to bed at a reasonable time.
Knowing how time flies, we should treasure every day.

When we get up, we should wash our face and brush our teeth. After using the toilet, we should always wash our hands.

Our hat should be properly put on, clothing correctly buttoned, and socks and shoes neatly worn.

We should put our clothes away in their proper places. We should not leave them lying around for they will get dirty that way.

It is more important that our clothes be neat and clean than fashionable and expensive. We should wear what is suitable and appropriate for our age, and within our family's means.

When eating and drinking, do not be fussy. Eat only the right amount; do not overeat.

When we are young, we should not drink alcohol. The behavior of those who are drunk is unsightly.

Walk in an unhurried manner and always stand up straight. Whether greeting friends or elders, do so properly and with respect.

Do not step on doorsills or stand leaning on one leg. When sitting, do not sprawl or fidget.

When entering a room, we should open the door quietly. When walking, we should be aware of our surroundings so as not to bump into anything.

Hold empty containers just as carefully as if they were full. Enter empty rooms as if they were occupied.

Avoid doing things in a hurry, since acting in haste will lead to many mistakes. Do not be afraid of a task that is difficult or become careless when a job is easy.

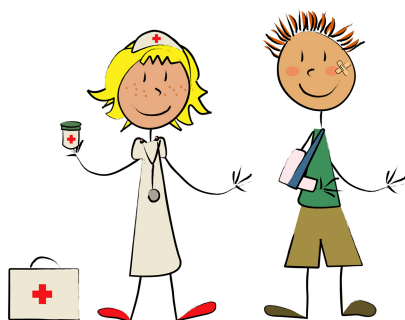
Keep away from rowdy places. Do not be curious about things that are bad or unusual.

When we are about to enter a house, we should ask if anyone is inside. As we enter, we should make ourselves heard.

If someone asks who it is, we should say our name, not “me” because such a reply is not clear.

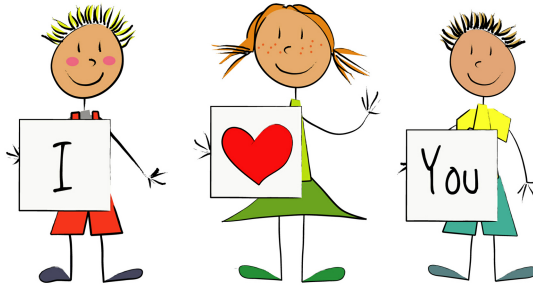
Before using something that belongs to another, we should ask for permission. If we do not ask, it is stealing.

After we borrow from others, we should return the items on time. Later, if we have an urgent need, we will be able to easily borrow from them again.



~ 4 ~

Being Trustworthy



When we speak, honesty counts the most. Deceit and lies are unacceptable.

It is better to talk a little than chat too much. Tell the truth; do not speak insincerely.

Cunning, deceptive speech and foul language should never be used. We should never conduct ourselves in an unruly manner.

We should not readily talk about something we have not seen for it may not be the whole truth. We should not readily pass on to others what we do not know for sure.

If someone asks us to do something and we are not sure whether it is appropriate, we should not carelessly promise. If we do promise to do something [and it is inappropriate], we will be wrong whether we keep or break our promise.

When speaking, say each word unhurriedly, clearly, and correctly. Do not mumble or talk too fast.

Some people like to gossip and comment about the faults or good points of others. But if something does not concern us, we should not get involved.

When we see the goodness of others, we should encourage ourselves to learn from them. Even if we are far behind them, gradually we will achieve as they have.

When we see the faults of others, we should reflect on our own behavior. If we have the same fault, correct it. If we do not have this fault, we should always be alert and not make the same mistake.

When our morals, knowledge, and skills are not as good as those of others, we should encourage ourselves to try harder.

If the clothes we wear and the food we eat are not as good as what others have, do not feel sad.

If criticism makes us angry and compliments make us happy, we will attract bad company, while good friends will leave us.

If we are appreciative of criticism and uneasy with compliments, people who are virtuous, sincere, and trustworthy will gradually become our friends.

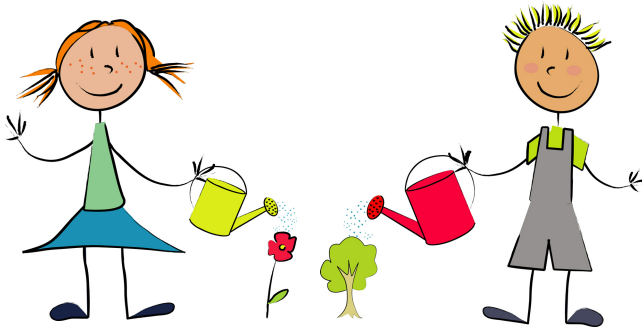
If we accidentally make a mistake, it is only an error. But if we do it on purpose, it is definitely wrong.

If we correct our faults and mistakes and do not repeat them, then they will cease. But if we try to cover them up, we will be doubly wrong.



~ 5 ~

Loving All Beings



Love all beings, for we all live under the same sky and are supported by the same earth.

A person of good character is highly respected.
Respect is not based on external appearances.

A capable person will naturally have a good reputation. People are not won over by boasting or self-praise.

If we are good at something, we should be willing to use that ability to benefit others. When we feel others are more competent than us, we should not criticize or slander them for being so.

Neither flatter the rich nor despise the poor. Neither ignore old friends nor take delight in only new ones.

When others are busy, do not bother them. When they are troubled, do not make things worse by talking unnecessarily.

We should neither expose the shortcomings of others nor disclose their private matters.

It is good to praise the virtuous actions of others. Knowing that they are being praised, people will be encouraged to do better.

Gossiping about the wrongdoings of others is in itself wrong. When we slander another excessively, we too will suffer harm and great misfortune.

By mutually encouraging one another to do good, both of us will improve our characters. By not advising one another to correct our respective faults, our characters will diminish.

When giving and receiving, we should be clear in what we are doing. It is better to give more and receive less.

Before we ask others to do something, we should first ask ourselves if we would do it. If not, then we should not ask others to do it.

We should repay the kindness of others; we should let go of our anger. Spend less time holding grudges and more time repaying kindness.

When we interact with people who serve us, we should act in ways that inspire respect. And while being dignified and proper is important, it is also important to be kind and generous.

If we force others to do as we wish, they will silently rebel. But if we convince them with sound reasoning, they will happily agree without complaining.

~ 6 ~

Being Close to Kind and Virtuous People

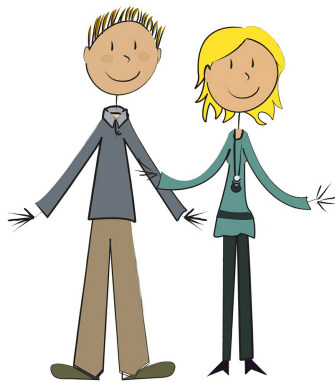


We are all human beings, but we are not the same. Most of us are ordinary; only a few of us are kind and virtuous.

Truly virtuous people are held in awe by others. They are not afraid to speak the truth, and they do not fawn on others.

If we associate with and learn from people of great virtue, we will benefit greatly. Day by day our own virtues will grow and our faults will lessen.

If we do not associate with and learn from these people, we will suffer a great loss. We will attract people without virtue, and nothing we do will succeed.



~ 7 ~

After Doing the Above, the Arts Come Next



If we acquire knowledge but do not sincerely apply what we have learned, we will have only increased our conceit. What then will we become?

If we are sincere in what we are doing but not acquiring knowledge, we will only be stubbornly following our viewpoints. We will never see the truth.

When studying, our mind, eyes, and mouth must be focused on our learning. All three must be wholeheartedly dedicated to learning.

When reading a book, do not contemplate another. If we have not completed one, do not start another.

In our studies, we should set a reasonable timetable and then study hard. With enough time and effort, we will thoroughly understand the text.

If we have a question, we should make a note of it. Then ask someone who knows the answer.

We should keep our room clean, our desk tidy, and our pens and pencils in their proper places.

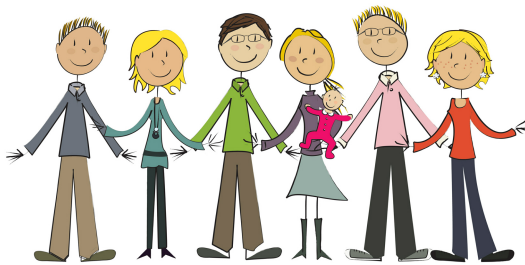
If we do not properly care for our writing tools, it shows carelessness. If our words are written sloppily, it shows disrespect.

Books should be organized and placed on the bookshelves in their proper places. After reading a book, we should put it back where it belongs.

Even when in a hurry, we should carefully put our book away. If it is damaged, we should repair it.

Do not read books that are untruthful or immoral, for these will block our wisdom and undermine our aspirations.

We should not, because of our arrogance, harm ourselves by doing something improper. We should not, because of our lack of confidence, give up on ourselves. With effort, we will gradually become a noble person.



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May the goodness
accrued from this work
help to alleviate
the suffering of all beings
and enable them
to find lasting happiness.

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Please visit

www.howwillbehavetoday.org

For stories and teaching material
based on
Guidelines for Being a Good Person

and a list of
Amitabha Buddhist Societies and
Pure Land Learning Centers

