

## Guidelines for Bringing Children to the Center

Parents often ask about the expected behavior and guidelines for bringing children to the Zen Center. Here are a few suggestions that will help you introduce your children to the Center:

- **Zen Centers are Temples**—Talk to your child about sacred spaces. Explain that the Zen Center is a place where people come for quiet reflection. The reason they do this is to find answers to spiritual questions and to know what is best in themselves and the world and help them live in a compassionate, loving, and wise way.
- **Practice**—Help them understand that part of our practice is to keep calm bodies and quiet voices at the Center. We practice mindful attention when doing things like putting our shoes away, opening and closing doors, and walking through the Center. We do not run, wrestle, or roughhouse in the Center. The Buddha Building is a quiet space, so there is no talking when entering that part of the Center.
- **Expectations**—Children should stay with their parents at the Center as there are many breakable, valuable objects such as scrolls, figures, art work, and vases. The Center is not “child-proof,” so children should not be exploring the Center unattended. There is a children’s play area in the basement and many outdoor areas for running and hiking, although we do need to keep a mindful, attentive body in the gardens.
- **Water Hazards**—Please be aware that there is a large fire pond in the front yard which is dangerous and **not** for swimming. It is deep and the sides are steep and slick. There is a fence around it, but do warn your child not to enter the fenced area. Also, there is a tiny fish pond in the Jizo garden. Again, children should not go there unattended.
- **Activities for Children**—There are many fun activities at the Center such as storytelling, trick or treating, music, and art that are geared toward children. Members of the Zen Center **love** having children and families participate in Zen Center activities.
- **Ceremonies**—It is always okay to quietly leave a ceremony and go to the children’s play area if it is too hard for your child to remain quiet. Some families quietly come in and out of ceremonies according to the needs of their children. Parents can split ceremonies if that is easiest. Over the years families have figured out how best to support their children to attend the Center. Please know we are flexible and you are welcome to ask questions.