

## Puna Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

February 3, 2019

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Do not hurt your mouth or heart

“Each time you say something mean about someone, you also hurt yourself”

When a person is born, an axe is already in one’s mouth. But only a fool cuts oneself with the axe by speaking badly of others. (Suttanipata 657)

Buddha said that we have a sharp axe inside our mouths. Do you know what an axe is? An axe is a tool that looks like a big knife and is used to cut down trees. Each time you say something bad about someone, you cut your tongue on this invisible axe.

Some people say a lot of mean things. Though they may not realize it, their mouth is full of cuts and blood. Their heart is also full of wounds. When you say something mean about someone, you also hurt their hear even more than your own. It’s important not to say bad things about anyone else, or else you will both be hurt by your words.

Buddha’s metaphor about the “axe in one’s mouth” is a strong admonition against disparaging others. If you speak ill of others, you inflict self-harm by defiling your pure heart. In turn, your speech will grow increasingly foul. Among the ten essential rules of conduct contained in Buddhism’s Ten Precepts is a prohibition against equivocation. This precept bars duplicitous speech as well as the disparagement of others. The idiom “speaking with a forked tongue” is an apt descriptor that coincides with the notion of a “double-edge sword” in Buddha’s metaphor. Teach children that derision hurts not only the intended target, but also defiles the heart of the speaker.

Do you always keep promises made to your friends and teachers? Do you always remember to do what you've promised your parents?

Even if other people may break their promise sometimes, you should still do what's right and fulfil the promise you've made. These promises are not made for your teachers or parents. Rather, all of these promises are meant to help you. It's very important that you fulfill your promises. If you do, you'll grow up to be a responsible person who is liked by others and can make friends with everyone.

Buddha's teachings address the mindset required of practitioners. All Buddhist training must be "for oneself." Practitioners must not be distracted by the action (or inaction) of others, nor succumb to a host of temptations and desires. Put simply, we must honor our commitments, and always do what is right and required at the time. This is the key to attaining personal growth. Teach children that keeping promises and other commitments is vital in earning the goodwill and respect of others.

-Buddha is Our Teacher, page 6-7