



GROWING ZEN PROJECT

PLAYFUL MEDITATION FOR CHILDREN

IDEALIZING

Rachel Melo

I have an academic degree in Business Administration and Law. I worked for more than 20 years in private initiative and government programs until January 2017. For some years I developed a Pilot Project for Meditation for Children, which was applied on a voluntary and experimental basis during the years 2016 and 2017 at the Educare School Montessori in the city of Goiânia, Goiás, Brazil.

I study and practice meditation with several teachers of Eastern traditions for 15 years and have coordinated for more than 7 years a group of meditation for adults, in a work developed by the International Peace University - UNIPAZ. Today, in addition to this weekly meditation group, i have taken a bit of my experience to help adults, through two distinct meditation projects, being a Corporate Meditation Project that began with UNIPAZ GOIÁS and SEBRAE GOIÁS and another with a focus on self knowledge and quality of life.

On three diferent occasions I moved to Japan to immerse myself in this area, and in 2017/2018 for a longer period, in a 8 month immersion, and in 2019 for more 4 months, improving meditation techniques, accompanying and assisting the work developed by a Master of the Zen tradition which teaches children of all ages, mindfulness techniques and meditation. Returning to Brazil determined to continue the work on projects that have relevant social impacts, focusing on the development of human qualities, where children and adults can improve their relationships by cultivating a consistent, conscious and happy inner world through the right skillful means, the GROWING ZEN Project, which will also be the object of a book of meditation activities for children and the family.

In this return to Japan in the first half of 2019, i could do na immersion in meditative techniques and visits to Japanese schools that work with meditation with children, expanding the project´s work base.

EXPERIENCES IN THE MEDITATION AREA

I began my studies in meditation in 2004 at the Khadro Ling Temple in Três Coroas - RS, Brazil, which was led by Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche, Master of the Tibetan School. Later, i entered the Soto Zenshu School in 2011 to deepen the meditative techniques, having as first teacher one of the students of the forerunner of zazen (seated meditation) techniques in Brazil and Zen Buddhist Monk. Later, i began to be guided by other Masters, being that i remain in practice and teach the techniques of the Soto Zen School until the present day. Concurrently with the studies of meditation, from the year 2000 i was a student of Professor Nestor Mota, precursor of Yoga in the State of Goiás, for approximately 06 years.

I held the post of General Coordinator of a Zen Community from the year 2012 until July 2017, a position that i delivered in 2017, when i went to Japan, leading the assembly of programs and structuring of Meditation Groups in more than 18 Brazilian cities.

I lead a Study Group and Zen Meditation in Goiânia since 2012, work developed weekly at the International Peace University - UNIPAZ.

During the years 2016 and 2017, through a Pilot Project that had several and varied activities with specific focuses in developing human qualities, i taught meditation for children from 3 to 6 years of age at Educare Montessori School in Goiânia.

In June 2017 i moved to Japan to immerse myself in meditative techniques and followed up a work with Japanese school children developed by the Abbot of the Yokoji Zen Buddhist Temple in Hakui, Ishikawa, where i remained until January 2018. During this period, i finished writing the GROWING ZEN Project, amplifying its emotional dimension and developing new focuses on the activities and concrete skills proposed, in order to put it professionally in the year 2018. During these 15 years in meditative experiences, i participated in more than 30 retreats of immersion in meditative techniques and full attention, as well as activities within this context, with masters from different perspectives.

THE PROJECT

How to make meditation fun?

How to add essential content to a life, without the rigid connotation of classical classroom teaching?

How to treat children's emotional education in a serious, yet playful and lucid manner?

How to teach children to develop compassion that can be brought to life?

How to effectively collaborate with the change of world that we want, helping in the development of better human beings, collaborating in the formation of subjects that can transform whole societies?

How to help children grow and live with less suffering?

These were some of the initial questions that arose when the GROWING ZEN Project was born a few years ago and came to fruition after a trip to Japan in 2016 where, during a visit to some Temples and Schools, i realized that meditation has been used in a routine and routine way in the life of Japanese children, from an early age, having a series of extremely beneficial effects not only in their lives and relationships, but also maintaining and changing mentally healthy behavioral patterns that impact on a whole society.

On my return from this trip i started the Project Pilot, which was applied in the years 2016 and 2017 at the Montessori Educare School, with children between 02 and 06 years of age, and had surprising results not only for me as an observer and a Project Applicant Pilot, but mainly for children, school and parents. The results went far beyond what we imagined.

The children were extremely interested, curious, intrigued to what was proposed and sensitive to the contents that at various times were intrinsic to the students inner personality and world, as if they only needed to be "remembered" of the emotional abilities that are inherent in all us, enabling a return to the home in peace and quiet, in a fun way.

The Project is in line with scientific research that already recognizes, today and increasingly, the practice of meditation as an essential tool in education and in the development of skills not only school but also emotional and social.

The playful meditation proposed by GROWING ZEN has basic steps in its activities that do not take away from children their priorities as human beings in training, who are firstly playing and having fun; secondly meditate; and thirdly the sharing of the teachings not only with the classmates during the lessons but also with their families, subtly impacting on the relationships and a long-term social movement, causing the children, in a light way, to put themselves in the position of protagonists of changes of personal mental perspectives and for a better world.

Children are taught and encouraged to deal with universal themes through simple activities with complex impacts, broadening their worldview with compassion and wisdom, and looking at how they can objectively apply what they learn in their daily and everyday lives.

In the model proposed by GROWING ZEN through previous practical experiences, with lucid and ludic meditation we can have a sustained practice of emotion regulation, where primordial aspects such as mindfulness, emotional comprehension, body awareness, self regulation capacity, collective consciousness , tolerance, lovemaking, motor coordination and perhaps the most important aspect for a happy life: awareness and skills in interpersonal relationships in order to suffer less and cause less suffering.

While schools work extensively in building the formal academic skills that children will need for the job market in the future, GROWING ZEN adds to what is already addressed by the school, other forms of collaboration in human development through meditation, helping children to develop emotional stability for life, social tolerance and engagement in a comprehensive context.

Meditation has proved to be a powerful tool for developing in children skills that promote inner peace, genuine happiness, and mechanisms for transferring that peace to the world around them.

While the meditation techniques originate in the Eastern religions, the GROWING ZEN Project is a secular project, without religious character, that only emphasizes and uses millenarian techniques of meditation already widely tested, through elements existing in the context of interconnection, now taught ludically, so as to access children's minds, minds of beginners.

Slowly and slowly you can see the signs that the meditative moment is making sense and difference for the children. Meditation requires effort, assiduity and time, it is important that parents are engaged in the Project so that children feel encouraged to attend classes.

It is indeed a great joy to begin together this wonderful experience of teaching meditation to children. I believe, with a sincere heart, that well-oriented minds at their base can effectively change other minds and so we can change the world, step by step.

METODOLOGY

The Growing Zen Project, through years of observation and practice with adults and children, has developed a methodology that works with what we have called “The Eight Attentions”:

Full Static Attention

Mindfulness on the Move

Mindfulness with Specific Focus

Full Body Attention

Full Auditory Attention

Mindfulness of Emotions

Full Attention to Food

Interconnection Notions

These are attentions that we consider primordial and essential for the development of what science interprets as “Brain Integration”, where we bring together different elements to produce a well-functioning, coordinated, balanced and happier whole, working different focuses on both. The cerebral hemispheres, emotional and rational.

SPECIFIC PROJECT OBJECTIVES

GROWING ZEN has the specific objectives that participating students can be calmer, peaceful, happy and relaxed, less anxious children, thus reducing the stress to which they are exposed on a daily basis, improving the interaction between them and the world, that can maintain serenity through conflict situations, preventing mentally and emotionally dangerous attitudes and developing a more balanced behavior.

These are some of the benefits already experienced in practice by the Project:

Concentration promotion

Development of greater emotional balance

Anxiety control

Promotion of internalization process

Improvement in mindfulness

Encouragement of joy and happiness

Improvement in self-esteem and self-confidence

Increased creativity and imagination

Memory iprovement

Connection with essence

Promoting peace, serenity and tranquility

Development of multiple intelligences

Notions of Compassion

Establishment of Respect

Relations with all beings

FOCUS OF THE GROWING ZEN PROJECT

Full Attention to the Present Moment
Conscious Breathing and Conscious Walking
Self Regulation and Control
Capacity Understanding Duality
Sensory Perceptions and Body Consciousness
Confidence Building
Understanding on Interdependence
Observation and Understanding Cause and Effect
Consciousness on the Senses
Integration with Animals and Nature
Emotional Reasoning
Ability of Contemplation
Mental and Body Balance
Notions of Compassion and Tolerance
Sensory Communication
Mental and Material Organization
Understanding Impermanence
Collaborative Capacity
Patience and Respect
Establishment of Amorousness
Open Mind and Notions of Detachment
Ability to Accept Challenges
Analytical ability
Full attention to food
Etc.

PROJECT DURATION TIME

For greater action and determination of the project, it is suggested that classes be taught once or twice a week in each class, with sessions that have on average between half hour and 45 minutes with activities extend throughout the year.

Students may repeat activities in the following year regardless of whether they have participated in the previous year.

This is a continuous project. The longer children stay in the activities proposed annually, the greater the medium / long-term impacts, with fixation of learning the content of universal humanistic themes in early childhood, which they will carry for life.

QUANTITY OF STUDENTS BY CLASS

08 (eight) students per class from 02 to 07 years old, maximum, in order not to compromise the integrity of the execution of the proposed activities of the GROWING ZEN Project.

Up to 08 years old, 20 students maximum.

PUBLIC

Children from 02 (two) to 12 (twelve) years old, each one in age specific classes according to project modulation.

May all children find happiness and the causes of happiness!