

12 ways to create good karma



World-renowned feng shui expert Lillian Too has written more than eighty books on the subject – and she also publishes the excellent bi-monthly Feng Shui World magazine. Recently she extended her publishing enterprise with the first issue of Mahayana, a magazine which offers the wisdom of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, as the tagline says, “for the benefit of all sentient beings.” Mahayana was a crowd pleaser at major events in her home town of Singapore late last year, and we thank Lillian for allowing us to reprint an excerpt from an article in Mahayana on how to create good karma, which will form the basis of a book called *108 Ways to Create Good Karma* to be published next year.

[Some of these suggestions are also a preview from the book.]

According to Buddhist teachings, the law of karma explains that for every event that occurs there will follow another event, the existence of which was caused by the first, and this second event will be pleasant or unpleasant according to whether its cause was beneficial or harmful, to others and oneself. A beneficial event is motivated by the thought of benefiting others while craving, resistance, or delusions usually motivate a harmful event. Events are not beneficial in themselves, but become so by virtue of the mental thoughts that accompany the action.

The law of karma teaches that responsibility for harmful actions lies with the person who commits them. Karma thus has to do with cause and effect. Every action you take creates the cause for events to happen to you. This means that everything, every single thing that happens to you – good and bad – is in truth caused by you, yourself, your own actions and your own thoughts. There is no escape from one's karma. There are many ways to create good karma. Here are some of them ...

1. MAKE KINDNESS YOUR RELIGION

Creating good karma is not about being religious. One need not even be a Buddhist or belong to any religious faith to create good karma. What you do need is to develop a kind attitude toward others. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama repeatedly says, "My religion is kindness." So creating good karma is simply about being kind. Not just for a moment but always, throughout one's life, in every aspect of our living, in every relationship, in the way we conduct our business, in all our interactions – when you approach everything you do motivated by an attitude of kindness you are creating a great deal of good karma, the kind that creates the cause for others to be kind to you. It is the surest way of developing a life where aggravations simply dissipate.

2. CHANT A MANTRA

Chanting mantras is the easiest way of getting started on the road toward opening new horizons for the mind. To start with, it is a very powerful way to purify the negative karmic imprints we all bring into the world with us. Negative

imprints linger in everyone's consciousness, the mind-stream that we carry from one lifetime to the next. Start with the most famous mantra in the world, the mantra of the Compassionate Buddha: OM MANI PADME HUM – Hail to the jewel in the lotus.

While reciting the mantra, try to concentrate on its sound and allow it to penetrate deep into your inner consciousness and, eventually, into your subconscious mind. Always chant it with the thought of benefiting others. It will not take you long to sense wonderful benefits permeating through your consciousness. In no time at all you will feel yourself becoming kinder, more tolerant, and less prone to getting upset.

Many high lamas say that reciting OM MANI PADME HUM can bring us all to enlightenment, simple and easy though it seems. This mantra is certainly one of the most powerful mantras you can recite.

3. RECITE THE NAMES OF THE 35 BUDDHAS

An incredibly powerful way to purify negative karma is by reciting the names of the 35 Confession Buddhas contained in the Sutra of the Bodhisattvas. As you recite, generate thoughts of huge regret in your mind for whatever bad things you may have done in past lives, as well as everything bad you did in your present life. When you direct your thoughts this way with genuine regret, you are in effect confessing all the moral downfalls you ever accumulated since life began, many of which you may indeed have forgotten. It does not matter if you recall all the times when you succumbed to negativities leading to the creation of bad karma. The important thing is simply to generate the mind of surrendering to your inner good nature so that it manifests. For this you need the help of the Buddhas, so call them by their names. Generate devotion as you read the names of the Buddhas for they are powerful indeed. Better yet, put your hands together in the mudra of prayer, both palms touching, then think reverent thoughts as you read each name three times. After each name say the words, "I bow to you," or "I take refuge in you." Here are the names of the 35 Buddhas:

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* Buddha Shakyamuni * Buddha Great Destroyer * Buddha Jewel Radiating Light
 * Buddha King with Power over Nagas
 * Buddha Leader of Warriors * Buddha Glorious Blissful One * Buddha Jewel Fire
 * Buddha Jewel Moonlight * Buddha Pure Vision Bringing Accomplishments * Buddha Jewel Moon * Buddha Stainless One * Buddha Glorious Giver * Buddha Pure One * Buddha Bestower of Purity * Buddha Celestial Waters
 * Buddha Deity of the Celestial Waters
 * Buddha Glorious Good * Buddha Glorious Sandalwood * Buddha Unlimited Splendor
 * Buddha Glorious Light * Buddha Glorious One without Sorrow * Buddha Son of the Desire-less One * Buddha Glorious Flower
 * Buddha Enjoying Radiant Light of Purity
 * Buddha Enjoying Radiant Light of the Lotus
 * Buddha Glorious Gem * Buddha Glorious Mindful One * Buddha Glorious Extremely Renowned One * Buddha Banner of Victory over the Senses * Buddha Glorious One Subduing Everything Completely * Buddha Victorious One in all Battles * Buddha Glorious One Gone to Perfect Self-control
 * Buddha Glorious One Illuminating Completely
 * Buddha Jewel Lotus Subduing All * Buddha with Power over the Mountains

Recite the names in three rounds and when you come to the end, make a strong dedication. Remember that the merit created by this simple practice is as vast as the skies and as deep as the oceans. Close your eyes for a few moments and imagine all the negative karma just falling away from you. This is a very powerful practice for dissolving obstacles that bring aggravations and problems into your life.

4. GIVE WAY WHEN DRIVING

When driving, there are many opportunities to create good karma. Giving way to someone on the road, slowing down when someone wants to overtake you, curbing the sense of annoyance that arises when someone drives badly or inadvertently knocks you – these and other aggravations associated with driving are wonderful ways to train the mind to respond with a calm smile. Even when the right of way is yours, give way. When you refrain from making your time on the road a battle between you and other drivers, it becomes a far more pleasant ride, and every time you give way to someone, you can take great satisfaction in knowing that by just curbing your impatience you have created good karma.

5. PRACTICE SPIRITUAL MEDITATION

Years ago when I first met my lama, the incomparable Lama Zopa Rinpoche, I asked him if he would kindly teach me how to meditate. “I am always so stressed out, Rinpoche,” I told him, “and I need to meditate to relax and cool down my busy mind.”

Rinpoche gave me a gentle smile and replied, “Meditation is very good, Lillian, a wonderful practice. It is not just for relaxing the mind; it has a much higher purpose.” “What is this higher purpose?” I asked, and that was when Rinpoche explained to me the benefits of practicing spiritual meditation.

When you sit down on a cushion with your legs crossed, your spine straight and your eyes slightly closed looking three feet in front of you, the first thing to do is to set your motivation. Tune into your mind and focus on why you are doing the meditation – to develop your mind to benefit all beings. Setting this altruistic motivation establishes the basis

for meditation practice. From then on you can meditate on any subject related to the development of your understanding of life. When you meditate this way, lightly reflecting on how precious your life is, how lucky you are to have been born at all, to be alive and to be well ... in time you will come to realize just how lucky you really are in just having a human life, having the ability to think, to analyze, to understand and yes, to philosophize. This is how meditation can lead to wisdom realizations and good karma.

6. OFFER VICTORIES TO OTHERS & ADMIT DEFEAT

By offering victories to others, we subdue our pride and starve the ego of self-cherishing thoughts. By admitting defeat, we eliminate arrogance. This mind training practice is especially useful when working in the corporate world or when dealing with others at work. It is when you are engaged in doing something important or working against a deadline that tensions tend to arise between you and others, and that is when winning and losing take on delusional proportions. Look on these moments as the best times to create good karma.

I remember occasions when I would argue heatedly just to prove a point, yet in the end, I realized I was not only creating disturbances to my own mind but to others' minds as well. It was only after I met Lama Zopa Rinpoche and discovered the Dharma that I learned the antidote to always wanting to win. I discovered the liberation of losing and of letting go, of no longer being attached to the need to win.

That was when I discovered how much happier I felt each time I offered victory to others and admitted defeat. The act of surrender to someone else's opinion or viewpoint was not a cop-out on my part – it was a way of agreeing to disagree, and simultaneously continuing to give my support and help. In doing so I am creating the good karma of receiving similar kind support from others in the future.

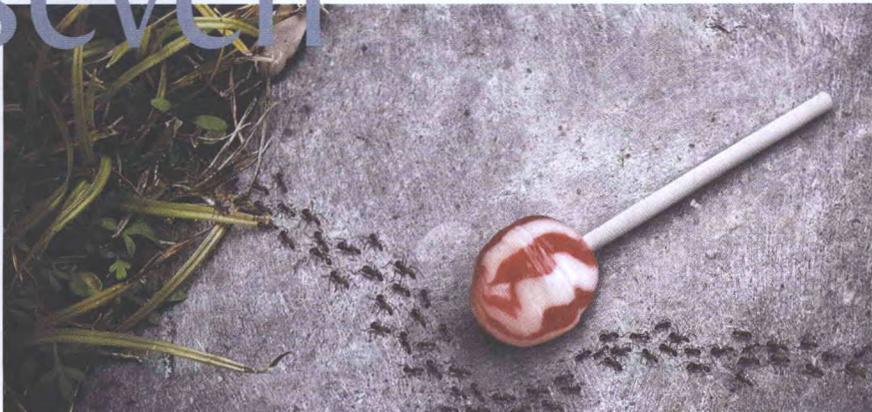
7. AVOID KILLING THE SMALLEST OF CREATURES

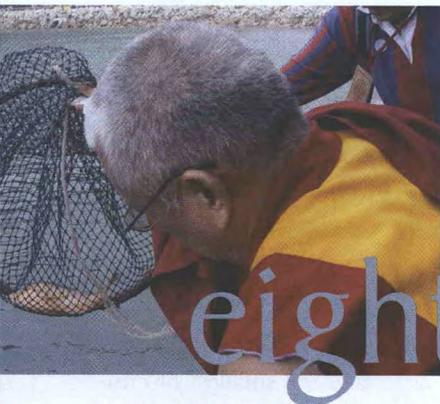
It is easy to disregard life, especially the smallest of creatures. Walking on the pavement one day, I realized there were many ants scurrying on my path and I knew if I had not been mindful, I would have killed many lives unknowingly and created so much more negative karma. When this realization came to me, I started to skip to avoid stepping on and killing these poor ants and, to my surprise, happiness arose in my heart. True happiness can never be ours if we only have self-cherishing thoughts. Never mind that I looked ridiculous that afternoon, gleefully skipping along the path to avoid killing the poor ants. By not killing, one creates the good karma of having long life. Next time a mosquito disturbs you with its annoying buzzing make a conscious effort to stop yourself from smashing your palm onto its helpless body. All he wants is a tiny drop of your blood. Let the mosquito have it. Wave it away but do not kill it!

8. RELEASE SOME FISH INTO THE RIVER

Some years ago I was in Varanasi, India on pilgrimage with my lama. He took us to the river to show us how to create karmic merit. There we were sitting on a boat, releasing fish into the river. It was a wonderful feeling watching the baskets of still alive fish which we had bought from nearby fishermen, frolicking as they dived and jumped happily back into the water and swam away to freedom. Later, Lama Zopa Rinpoche asked for a marker pen. No one had one so I passed him my lipstick. He used it to write mantras on the balloon that had been tied to the side of the boat,

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then allowed it to touch the water as the boat moved along. Rinpoche explained that by letting the mantras on the balloon touch the water, all the fish and other creatures of the water would be blessed by the mantras.

9. MAKE WATER BOWL OFFERINGS

Years ago when I first met Lama Zopa Rinpoche, I invited him to my home. He was most pleased with the single Buddha image I had in my living room and advised me to place seven water bowls filled with water as offerings to the Buddha image. He explained that making water bowl offerings created a great deal of merit and was a very powerful way of dissolving negative karma related to anger and other unresolved issues in our mental continuum. I followed Rinpoche's advice and before long we had water bowl offerings by the hundreds in my home – simply because over time, I kept adding new Buddha images to my home. I took great joy in looking for decorative crystal bowls, and changing the water each morning became a wonderful morning ritual in my household. Over time, I felt the beneficial effects: My home was transformed into an oasis of calm and loving energy, and whatever obstacles there had been in our lives soon melted away. Anger dissipated, as did the petty meaningless quarrels that used to mar the peace of our home. Temper tantrums became a thing of the past. It was magical.

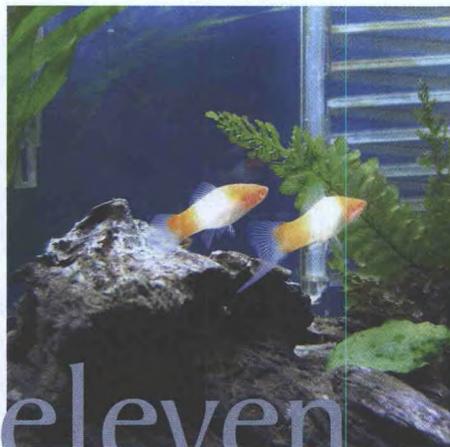
10. PARTICIPATE IN A CHARITY

The act of giving is a wonderful way to create good karma – generosity creates the good karma for one to enjoy the generosity of others. When you donate to a charity that

does good work you are expanding your store of accumulated karma associated with feelings of compassion. Always donate with a generous mind – give happily and with absolutely no trace of reluctance. The purer the motivation that accompanies your act of giving the more powerful is the act of charity. If you cannot afford to donate money, donate your time and effort, your skills or contacts – these count as much as cash. As long as the motivation is pure and not diluted with any negative thoughts of hidden agendas, you will have created powerful good karma.

11. FEED SOME FISH

In writing my books on feng shui, I always recommend people to keep fish to create the water energy of prosperous abundance. But there is also a higher spiritual purpose to keeping fish: Each morning as you feed the fish you are creating good karma. Indeed, each time you provide food and shelter to any living creature you are creating the karma of having plenty to eat. The fish do not need to be beautiful, nor do they need to have any feng shui significance to invoke your kindness. Any kind of ornamental fish will do. This way your pet fish will be helping you to create good karma. Think this way and your fish will bring you great joy.



12. LEND AN EAR TO SOMEONE

When someone comes to you for an ear to listen to their litany of woes, or a shoulder to lean on because they have no one else to turn to, do not push them away even when it is someone you may not be particularly close to, even when you are too busy, even when it irritates you to sit and listen to someone whining and complaining. You can be a friend to anyone and everyone. All you need to give up is your time. Be a friend even to a stranger. Be there for anyone. Use your stronger spirit to help a weaker one. Share the happiness of your soul, even with a stranger, and you will be practicing true compassion. ☸