

# Spreading Peace From Within

by Donna Jones

## Inner Peace

The most important lesson I've learned is how to create peace within myself. When I am angry, hurt, or frustrated I become like a turtle—its hard shell representing my body and its soft head, legs, and tail my inner being. When I need to calm myself, I withdraw into my body, like the turtle into its shell. After calming down and regaining my peaceful self, I reappear. During my time within my shell, I may walk alone, relax in a warm steamy bath, write, clean the house, or go to the library. If I don't withdraw, I stay mad.

## Peace in Our Home

I want my family's home, our shell, to have the same peacefulness. This proves to be a harder challenge than I had anticipated. An old and true saying is: "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink." I learned I cannot force people to be peaceful, they have to want it for themselves. All I can do is to encourage their positive behaviors and discourage their negative ones. If someone starts talking in a combative fashion, I quietly leave the room. This technique is a lot harder than it sounds. Also, I try to give every family member one or two compliments a day. It helps me recognize their good traits and their accomplishments. Seeing them in a different way makes the times of conflict easier for me to endure.

I have also created sanctuaries within our

home. One bedroom has plants, a small water fountain, and shiny rocks. A sense of calm seems to radiate from that area. For a quick and personal time out, our bathroom is a fantastic place to go. It is painted with serene colors, decorated with plants, has soft music playing, a hint of incense in the air. I exit both rooms feeling calmer.



## Peace in Our Community

Since I am happier within myself, I find I am smiling more. Boy, does it make a difference. A smile or a nod in greeting to strangers seems to brighten up most people's faces. When I'm in an especially good mood I will even say hello, which sometimes leads to a conversation. While shopping in my neighborhood, I often recognize somebody and will chat with them. For me, this makes living in my community much friendlier. I am not making a huge and obvious change in the community, but I am making a small difference in a stranger's life. Perhaps if they too practice the smiling and greeting campaign, eventually the whole community will be smiling and greeting one another. Just like the ripple effect of a stone thrown into a lake, the people become more outgoing and the community becomes a friendlier, more peaceful place to live.

---

*Donna Jones is an adult learner at Project Read Northern San Mateo County in South San Francisco, CA.*

---

If in our daily life we can smile, if we can be peaceful and happy, not only we, but everyone will profit from it. This is the most basic kind of peace work.

—Thich Nhat Hanh