

View of Family and Household in Shambhala - by Rebekka Henriksen

All children and the world into which they are born are basically good. The mind we are born with has a fundamental nature of sanity, wisdom, compassion and joy. It is inherently awake. The Shambhala teachings show us that basic goodness cannot be lost or altered, although it can be obscured. As parents and practitioners treading the path of basic goodness, how do we raise our children and conduct ourselves in such a way as to allow this basic awakesness to shine forth, unobstructed?

The Sakyong has put a special emphasis on the role of household and family in Shambhala, encouraging us to tend to our inner mandala with care, as a strong foundation for enlightened activity in the world. If each member of our family mandala can be encouraged to experience their own gentleness and goodness, this creates a powerful blossoming of compassion and sanity in the larger community and in the world.

Fostering kindness and virtue in our households offers a way of practicing the six paramitas of generosity, discipline, patience, exertion, meditation and wisdom in our daily lives. Raising our children becomes a profound activity of cultivating awake mind and open heart. This in turn cultivates in our children a strong trust in their own goodness and that of the world in which they have been born, allowing them to open their own hearts and minds.

Our practice does not stop when we exit the shrine room door. Parenting with the view of basic goodness provides us countless opportunities to transform our neurosis, and allows our children to find the courage to be warriors in the world. The first archery ground is in our home, in the discipline of our daily routines and interactions with our family. It is on this ground that we cultivate enlightened society. It is a challenging path, but well worth it.

By creating an environment of wakefulness and compassion, our children are nourished with daily reminders of basic goodness and confidence, giving them the tools to flourish in the world and to be of help to other beings.