

End of Year Practice for Families and Children.

The following are guidelines and/or suggestions for how families and children of the Shambhala Community may integrate an end of year practice into their family life.

The period before Shambhala Day (Tibetan New Year or Losar) is an appropriate time to work to clear away obstacles and or negativity that has been gathering over the year. In an effort to include children in the preparations and culture of this celebration, a family could do some or all of the following:

1. During the dön period (the ten days before the day immediately preceding Shambhala Day) take time to talk about difficulties, and/ or negativities and discuss them. Depending on the age of the children, adults can lend a hand (not too heavy a hand, please!) Create a simple ritual of writing them down, folding them up and burning them. If you have a fire place or a wood stove, you could do this in your own home. If not, you could go to a park or a beach, your deck or back yard, or some place where it is allowed. If it is not possible to do this outdoors, then create a safe environment indoors –light a candle inside a large container and burn the paper there.
2. On ‘Shambhala Day Eve’ (also known as the neutral day- or the day immediately preceding Shambhala Day) or Shambhala Day itself, establish a ceremony, inspired by the Japanese bonenkai, at your local centre, or do one yourself in your own home. To begin, all you need is writing materials and a place to store some papers. Each member of the family sits down and writes a few of his/her aspirations for the upcoming year. Store them in a safe, out of the way place (that you will remember!). Gather the family, pull out last year’s aspirations, read them over (privately or together) and burn them. The process of writing, remembering/reflecting and offering is an opportunity to acknowledge our path as human beings and to acknowledge that even the simple gesture of writing down an aspiration is an act in and of itself.
3. Lastly, clean house. Spruce up your environment. (contrary to popular belief, children enjoy this, especially if everyone is involved) Buy some flowers, clear away debris from your property, pay outstanding debts, donate old clothes to charities. Begin the New Year with a fresh outlook. Invite your friends and neighbors over to do a lhasang for your house/apt.

(The bonenkai ceremony has been introduced to the Shambhala community by the Kyudo Society)

-Offered by the Families and Children Working Group
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