

# Confucius Teachings on Building a Happy Life (12)

## - a foundation for Mahayana Buddhism practice

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### When Encountering Gains, One Must Think of Righteousness

Hello my friends, good evening to you all.

We have just spoken about Tsai Shun, who went to pick mulberries. Knowing his mother liked to eat the sweet ones, he purposely used one basket to hold only the ripened mulberries, and he kept the sour ones for himself. His filial piety had moved the bandits, who not only let him go free but also gave him some food from their camp.

Dear friends, if you were Tsai Shun, should you accept the food? No! (\*The Audience replied.)

But what would you do since the bandits were so sincere. They said, "We implore you, please take this food home to serve your mother."

Take or not? Take! (\*The Audience replied)

Wow, how do you change your mind so fast? Yes or no? Some of you said yes! Well, Tsai Shun had accepted your suggestion and brought the food home. When he had just sat down after returning home with the food, suddenly, local officials came and asked, "Why is the rice belonging to Chang San at your house? Why are the vegetables belonging to Li Si also in your house? Arrest him!" What could he do? At that time, he had no way to prove his innocence.

Confucius said, "There are nine aspects on which a virtuous man must deliberate."

They are about ways of introspecting and observing when encountering various situations.

One of which is:

When encountering gains, one must think of righteousness.

When you have opportunities to obtain something, you must first consider whether its origin is lawful and proper. Where did the things in the bandits' camp come from? They came from robbery! In this situation we must not accept them.

My friends, do you have a deep impression after listening to Tsai Shun's story?

It is very important to let our children know the morals behind the stories. Only then will they be able to synergize the story with morals effectively. If we just tell the story, our children would say, "I have heard this story before." If we tell them only the morals, in less than 5 minutes, they would say, "Mom, I want to go to bed." So, when a story is well supported with good morals, children would find it especially rewarding.

Whether you are a teacher or a parent, you can make use of storytelling to include some morals as well as life reminders and inspiration.

### Do You Know Your Mother's Favorite Food?

When telling stories to children, we should remind them that filial children in the past would first think of their parents. So I asked my children, "Do you know your mother's favorite food?" When I

asked this question, they had to think for quite a while. Some of them were more conscientious and could think of it, most of them could not.

Seeing their embarrassment, I continued, "Does your mother know your favorite food?" They immediately beamed with smiles and replied, "Yes, of course!" They even named many of them. I then told them, "You see, your mother knows what you like to eat, but you have no idea about your mother's favorite. Is this fair? Your mother loves you so much, and yet you don't even care for her. So, what is your homework today? You must find out your mother's favorite food. Only then can you practice this phrase, "I will make efforts to satisfy what my parents like and what they expect from me."

From now on, when we go out to buy things, we should not buy what we like first. We must emulate the ancient sages! Confucius told us,

"Don't look down and give up on yourselves,  
the state of saints and sages is certainly achievable."

We must take the sages as role models and buy our parents' favorite food first instead of ours.

### **On the Shoulders of a Giant**

Parents actually care for our health very much. A person who wishes to be healthy must harmonize their mind and body. A Chinese saying goes,

"Misfortune comes out from your mouth while illness goes in through your mouth."

We must pay special attention to our diet, otherwise many diseases caused by civilization may fall upon us. My friends, can you guarantee that you will not catch these diseases? Why do none of you raise your hand? Knowledge is power! Only the right knowledge can give us confidence. So, we do not need to worry! How do we eat healthy?

Many people have devoted decades to researching this. Do you need to read them all from the beginning? Yes or no? No need to! I often say,

"One can look farther by standing on a giant's shoulders."

My friends, who is the giant? We must teach children to grow their wisdom;

Confucius and Mencius are the giants.

You can directly inherit their wisdom and experience. Now in the aspect of health, who is the giant? You can visit the bookstore to see which books on health are particularly popular, then you can learn from them.

### **People Today Have an Overnutrition Problem**

Many years ago, I happened to read the book, *The Pursuit of Life*, by Chiu-Nan Lai, PhD. It was mentioned in this book that we should eat less meat and more vegetables in order to stay healthy. Why should we minimize meat consumption? We should pay some effort to find out the reasons.

Is the poor health of people today due to nutrition-deficiency or overnutrition?

Yes! Overnutrition! Right!

People are obviously overnourished, yet, how do they always think of themselves? Do you notice that people seem to be slow by half a beat? They would still be worried of lacking this and that. In reality, this fear seldom happens.

It is not easy to find children with nutrition deficiency today, you have to fly all the way to Africa to find such children. We indeed can't find them in Taiwan. All you find are children going to weight loss classes in Taiwan during the winter and summer vacations. These children would jump hard in the slimming class and think, "As long as I survive today, I can eat at McDonalds tomorrow." Is this way effective to shed pounds? If we do not work on the root cause but force them to keep sweating, they would feel more hungry and eat more later.

So, the problem of people nowadays is not about nutrition-deficiency but overnutrition.

## **The Wrong Diet Causes Diseases**

As a matter of fact, our bodies do not need a lot of protein. However, many people eat a lot of meat because they regard it as high in protein. In fact, eating too much protein will damage your liver and kidneys. The daily requirement of protein per person is between 40g-60g. The protein found in plants is not less than that in animals. Foods like peanuts, Chinese yam rhizome, and seaweed are all good sources of protein.

When our protein consumption is excessive, the body would become acidic. Experts state, "A body high in acid is the primary cause and breeding ground for chronic diseases." Why? Let's imagine: if your body composition is very acidic, and all your internal organs are immersed in it; could you hear your liver complaining at midnight, "I am suffocating!" Or your stomach might say, "I cannot stand it anymore!" Could you hear them calling for help? No? How could you, the master, be so irresponsible! As these internal organs have been soaked in an acidic environment for quite a while, their functions would easily decline.

So, the onset of people's chronic diseases today has become earlier than in the past. I once heard of an eighteen-year-old child who died from stroke. I wonder if there are any other cases younger than this. I heard of this case a few years ago. You see, the chronic diseases have been manifesting earlier, it is all because of people's wrong diet.

Not only our internal organs become easily exhausted, the wrong diet has developed into another very serious disease. It is called "osteoporosis". It is estimated that this disease will catch up and become one of the top ten causes of death in the future. Why? When your osteoporosis becomes very serious, what would happen when you sneeze sometimes? The bones would fracture. Don't let me scare you! I did not say it, it has been reported.

We often ask, "What are old people most afraid of?" Falling down! Because the bones may fracture once they fall and they would not be able to stand up. Now, not only the elderly are afraid of bone fractures, many young people also take a bone density test. When I went for the test, the examiner did not show a good face and said, "You barely passed!" People in their thirties and forties must not let their bones test as the bones of an eighty-year-old; that would be troublesome!

Why does a body high in acid lead to osteoporosis? Because the human body is like a huge chemical factory; it must maintain its acid-base equilibrium. If your body were full of acid, it would not be able to bear it. It must find alkali to neutralize the acids, and the largest source of alkali in the human body is calcium. Where is the calcium stored? In your bones. So, the calcium would seep through the bones bit by bit every day, and after a long period, it would cause osteoporosis. So, we must consume a balanced diet; meat contains very high protein, we must not eat too much of it.

## **Meat Contains Toxins**

In addition, not only is the protein level too high in meat, there are also tangible and intangible toxins in it. What are tangible toxins? Let's see how long are the chickens raised nowadays? Does it need long? It actually needs only 5-6 weeks to raise chickens for the market today. How about in the past? Half a year! Isn't the technology really advanced? Right? Why are they breeding the poultry so quickly?

The Chinese often say, "Dao is conforming to nature." These livestock are not bred according to the laws of nature. What were they injected with? Growth hormones, antibiotics, and other jabs. And whose stomach would these drugs end up in? Ours! Correct!

I remember before I went vegan, I saw there were lumps of fat in the chicken nuggets I ate. What are those fats? Hormones! Girls' menstruation starts earlier nowadays; some had their menses before 10 years old. The earlier their menstruation starts, the shorter their lifespan would be. So, these foods are killing our younger generation. As parents, we must be extra vigilant! Besides monitoring our children's diet, we must also take good care of our own health.

Other than these tangible toxins, there are also intangible ones. Let us imagine: when animals were slaughtered, they would surely become terrified and furious emotionally. We can take ourselves as an example: how many days would it take for us to resume calmness after we lose our temper? Three days. Why?

Have you ever seen anyone feeling good and refreshed after losing their temper? Never, right? Because after being angry, the level of adrenalin in your kidneys would rise, and your glands would secrete a lot of toxins. You would then feel weak all over your body. When animals were slaughtered, they would be furious and would secrete a lot of toxins. Consequently, meat contains a lot of bad stuff which causes people today to suffer from many new diseases.

## **Mass Breeding of Livestock Causes Severe Harm to Our Planet**

Eating meat is not only harmful to one's body, the mass breeding of livestock for human consumption has also caused severe harm to our planet. What are the harmful effects? Many friends said, "Why did you complicate the situation? Why haven't I thought of it before?"

As matter of fact, the entire Earth is definitely a shared life-entity. A saying goes, "When we pull one strand of hair, the entire body would feel it."

You must not underestimate the food that you eat everyday; it is affecting the survival of our whole planet. Due to humans' large consumption of meat, a lot of virgin forests were cut down to grow grains to feed livestock. What would happen when these virgin forests are cut down? Landslides...etc, because much of the soil has been loosened.

Besides, what function do the virgin forests offer to the Earth?

They function like lungs! It is like the lungs in a human body, helping one to filter a lot of dirty air. When these virgin forests continue to decline, the air quality of the entire Earth would be getting worse.

Why is our weather getting so unstable now? It snows even in Mexico. Mexico is a tropical area but has started to snow; very abnormal temperature. In modern terms, it is called the 'greenhouse effect'.

We studied the greenhouse effect in school before, what causes it to happen? It is a result of voluminous exhaust fumes from human industry as well as the lungs of the Earth having been cut away bit by bit. Had those crops grown to feed the livestock been used for human consumption, surely no one would starve to death.

Other than affecting the air quality, deforestation for farming has also a direct impact on the soil and water sources. Because of the mass breeding of livestock, what large amount of stuff would these animals emit? Excrement! They will then cause soil and water pollution.

In fact, humans could live a more relaxed and hygienic life as long as we know how to choose the right eating habits which are beneficial to ourselves and the environment. We can therefore protect the environment by adopting good eating habits in daily life. If such acts can benefit oneself and others, why not do it?

We could have a great sense of mission even when eating; it is for the sake of a healthy Earth. Only when we have the right knowledge can we really keep our body healthy. Then we are practicing this phrase, “I will make efforts to satisfy what my parents like and what they expect from me.”

### **Avoid What Parents Detest**

The next phrase is, “I will cautiously avoid what they detest.”

Parents do not wish to see us develop bad habits; we should eliminate them as soon as possible. Or, if some certain friends you made have caused much worry to your parents; you should make a wise decision to cut off those friends, because friends indeed inflict a particularly big impact on us.

Dear friends, are you worried that your children would make bad friends in the future? Are you worried? Is it helpful to worry? What can we do? We must improve our children’s ability to judge people. Only then would they know how to befriend virtuous ones and stay away from bad friends with the attitude of Confucius’ teaching: respect them yet keep distance. And when they keep distance from them with respect, they will also know how to transform these friends by being an exemplary model.

### **The Demon-Revealing Mirror & The Sage-Manifesting Mirror**

But how do we help our children choose friends? In fact, we have already learned this earlier. From where can we tell whether a person has virtues or not? From their acts of filial piety.

We can decide whether a person is worthwhile to befriend by only judging how much they have practiced the teachings in *Dizigui*. I told many friends that *Dizigui* is a ‘demon-revealing mirror’; whether you want to choose a friend or a spouse, you will immediately know the answer by using *Dizigui* to evaluate them. That is why *Dizigui* is a ‘demon-revealing mirror’. It is also the ‘sage manifesting mirror’.

When you see someone who has practiced much of the teachings, you must make such a person a lifelong friend.

### **The Story of Three Inmates**

Next, let’s discuss “what my parents detest” from the aspects of bad habits.

Let’s say, there were three convicts who were sent to prison at the same time. The prison warden happened to be very kind; seeing that they have been convicted, he used the Four Embracing Methods to treat them.

By using 'Giving', one of the methods, the warden asked them, "All of you will be imprisoned for three years, would you like to tell me your wishes? As long as it is within my capability, I will help you to fulfill them."

The first prisoner was an American. Without thinking, he said, "Give me a pack of cigarettes." The warden agreed and gave him the cigarettes before locking him up.

The second prisoner was Italian. My friends, what impression do the Italians give you? What impression? You never knew any Italians? They are very artistic and very romantic? You make them sound too nice! Some would say, they are actually 'lustful'. He immediately said, "I want a woman." The warden said, "Okay, it's still within my ability." He was locked up afterwards.

The third prisoner was Jewish. Jewish people are very good at doing business. He said, "I have already failed terribly in life and should learn my lesson well. Could you give me a telephone to connect with the outside world? The warden agreed and gave him a telephone.

### **The Bad Habit Leading One by Nose**

Three years later, the three inmates were released. The American dashed out and said, "Match...Match...Where is my match?" What had he been thinking of during these three years? He was trembling all day, thinking, "How could I have forgotten to request the match! He wasted those three years on what? On his bad habit.

My friends, if a person has developed bad habits, he would not be able to master his own life. The bad habits would lead him by the nose!

Are there many people like this? Yes, many! How do we help our children avoid such a pitiful situation? Provide them with virtuous education while they are still little. Only if one had set a firm aspiration at a young age, would he not 'overindulge in pleasure and erode his will'. This American had the bad habit of smoking, he would feel very uncomfortable without it.

Please do not laugh at him, because we may also have some bad habits which we may feel miserable if we don't do everyday. What are they? For instance, watching the drama series; every time after watching, you would say, "How could it be so ridiculous! No sense at all!" Yet the next day, you would still watch faithfully. What you watch is all about other people's lives, but you spend so much time on it every day. Will it help your own life at all? Not at all! We just let time slip away by the day, not fulfilling our own duties in life. We may not have the opportunity to do it when we want to.

Confucius once said while he was standing by a river,

"The passing of time is just like the flow of water, never ceasing day and night."

You see, when Confucius saw the water flowing in the river, he could relate time to the flowing water right away; it never comes back once it is gone.

We must not let our lives be idled away on these unbeneficial matters.

### **The Bad Habit of Lust Wreck the Happiness of a Family**

We have just mentioned the first bad habit of smoking, what was the second prisoner's bad habit? Lust! I once told the middle school students, "Lust is a very bad habit, can you comprehend it?" They said yes, because

on the top of the Chinese character of lust 色 is a knife.

Aren't the Chinese wise in creating characters? Yes, they are! There is a knife on the top of the Chinese character for 'lust'! What would this knife do to you? It will ruin your whole life, wreck the

happiness of a family; more possibly, it could doom a country. Are there such cases? In the Tang dynasty, before Emperor Xuan Zong met his favorite concubine, Yang Guifei, he developed the Kai Yuan era, a period of political stability and economic prosperity. He devoted his best effort to govern his empire. But what happened after he met Yang Guifei? Tang's golden age ended in the An-Shi Rebellion (\*775-763, a catastrophic setback for Tang dynasty, a rebellion led by An Lushan and Shi Siming).

My friends, who should bear the responsibility for the decay of Tang dynasty? Who?

Men would say that it was Yang Guifei's fault, but women would say it was Emperor Xuan Zhong's fault. However, there is only one truth for it;

lust does not delude people, people delude themselves for lust.

The problem still lies on Emperor Xuan Zong, right? If Yang Guifei had appeared during Emperor Tai Zong's era, probably nothing would have happened because Tai Zong focused his attention on governing his empire and taking care of his people at all times.

So, when encountering various problems in life, we must not deny the responsibility. What should we do? Introspect ourselves! This is the key point of the causes!

Since the Italian prisoner was lustful, what sound do you think he had heard before he walked out of the prison door? Children's voices.

Many of these middle school students burst out laughing after hearing this. I then asked, "Who is more miserable?" The American or the Italian? The Italian or the American? Both of them? A female student said "The Italian is worse, because when he came out of the prison, not only he had to earn a living for himself but also had to take care of many children." May I ask if he was capable of caring for the children? Could he? I am sure you can conjecture accurately; because he only indulged in sexual pleasure and had no sense of responsibility.

### **One Must Have a Sense of Responsibility Before Getting Married**

From this anecdote, I would tell the students, "What kind of a person should you look for as your life partner? Someone with a sense of responsibility." I then picked a student who never seriously swept the floor and often did not hand in his homework. I would tell him,

"You, stand up! You must not get married!";

He was so frightened and did not know what I was talking about. I said,

"You cannot even take care of yourself and are not responsible for yourself, you are not qualified to get married. If you did, you would ruin the next generation since you cannot even take care of yourself. You must not get married."

How long would this student remember my words? Even though I was scolding him, actually, who was I referring to? To everyone in the class. What impression would be left on the girls? They must find someone with a sense of responsibility to lean on. Other boys would also introspect themselves, "Do I have a sense of responsibility?" So, many 'immunization jabs' have to be given early, it would be too late after they have tasted the joys of romance.

This is the second bad habit which must be eradicated.

### **A Better Choice, a Brighter Destiny**

The third prisoner, the Jewish person walked to the warden in a respectful manner, gave him a deep bow and said, "Thank you for giving me this telephone! In these three years, I have received

news of the outside world through phone calls. I have also made some investments and have some asset now. I will live my life meaningfully in the future.”

These three inmates had made three different choices and had created three different destinies. We hope that our children would not degenerate in this life because of some bad habits, we must help them eradicate their bad habits starting from their young age.

### **The Bad Habit of Gambling and Four Others We Must Cope With**

There is another bad habit which will harm oneself, cause disaster, and dismantle one’s family; it is gambling! If there was a boy who indulged in gambling, you must never befriend him! It is too dangerous! Since he would not be able to restrain his gambling, he may very likely consume his whole family’s property or even his inheritance. Chinese ancient sages had sorted out four bad habits in humans that must be coped with, which are:

arrogance, extravagance, lust, and idleness.

Let us introspect and see if we have these four habits. We must start from introspect on our own! As the ancients stated,

“Only by self-cultivating can we then harmonize a family.”

We must rectify ourselves immediately if we have these bad habits. Next, we should carefully observe if our children have this habit? If they do, we must hurry and guide them to rectify it. We have mentioned in the previous lessons that

education is to promote children’s goodness and correct their shortcomings.

The ancients exhorted us,

“One must not let arrogance grow.”

Once arrogance arises, not only would it hinder the development of his wisdom, he would also unknowingly cut off the affinities with his potential benefactors.

What kind of people would a wise and virtuous person like to befriend? A modest person! As soon as you become arrogant, those virtuous friends would naturally leave you.

I am very fortunate! When I was in middle school, one day, my science teacher wrote a line on the board. I never dared to forget these words since then. He wrote,

“One must not have arrogance, but must not live without moral integrity.”

When my teacher wrote this line, it was as if a beam of light had illuminated my heart because it was very rare to hear such a life lesson under the academic elitism. It was really so. It gave me a very deep impression and also reminds me to never become arrogant.

### **Serving Elders Like You Would Serve Your Parents**

When I went to Australia to learn from Master Chin Kung, I met many elders who also went to learn from the master. When we learned

‘Serve the elders of your parents’ generation like serving your parents, serve the elders of your brothers ‘generation like serving your older brothers’,

I suddenly felt that I must practice the teaching right away. I also felt deeply that it is really not easy to be parents. Besides contributing to raising their own children, these parents have also been contributing to society every day.



When I returned to our dorm, I started asking the elders, “May I know which year you were born?” When I learned if one was older than my father, I would greet him with a bow, “Hello Tan Bobo!” (\*Bobo addresses to uncles who are older than one’s father)

My friends, when I gave my deep bow, do you know what chemical reaction happened?

When I stood up, I saw this elder was grinning from ear to ear. He was elated because he said that he had gotten a new nephew after flying for thousands of miles. As I continued asking, I came across Mr. Chen and greeted him, “Hello Chen Shushu!” (\*The title that Chinese address to elder who are younger than one’s father)

Suddenly, an elder came over and said, “I want one too!” This elder was Lu Shushu (\*uncle Lu) who had far-reaching influences on the later part of my life.

## **Manners Beget Benefits**

As I thought over it later, this elder has been truly kind and caring to younger generations. Being afraid that I would not go and greet him, he initiated himself to come over and said, “I want one too!” He was actually creating an opportunity for young people to show respect. Respectfully, I gave him a deep bow and said, “Hello Lu Shushu!” After this deep bow, an enormous change had transpired in my life.

My friends, do we need to teach children manners? Yes, we must!

The next afternoon, Uncle Lu\* (\*Lu Shushu) called me to the living room. We sat there, and he told me that he became a general manager at the age of 29. This title was not self-given at all. I heard when a billboard falls nowadays, several general managers would be hit. He was not that kind of general manager! It is the kind that shareholders sit in two rows and ask questions to assess the capabilities of this candidate in solving a variety of problems. It requires the candidate to have true wisdom and experience.

Uncle Lu was able to answer all the questions fluently and convincingly. He has been a professional general manager since he was 29, dedicating himself to helping others solve corporate matters and crises. It is rather difficult for us to encounter such a capable person.

Fortunately, my manners had given much joy and comfort to this elder, as he was surprised that such polite young people still exist. As soon as we sat down, he tirelessly shared with me his decades of life experiences and wisdom.

## **A Truly Capable Person Is Humble**

The more I listened, the more I was overwhelmed with happiness and sadness! Why was I sad? I was sad about my poor judgement, ‘failing to see the true shape of Mt. Lu’ as the famous poem describes(\*Written by Su Dongpo 蘇東坡, Song dynasty). Uncle Lu was just sitting next to me these days, yet I could not tell his real identity. I also came to realize one truth;

a truly capable person tends to be more humble.

Just like the amiable elder next door, he will never boast about himself to you. After over two hours chit-chatting, my inner sentiments were invigorated to a high degree. I just wanted to do one thing on the spot. What did I want to do? At that moment, I deeply understood why Chinese people attach great importance to the ‘Dao (\*Tao, The Way) of Respecting Teachers’. Why? Because teachers, with their wisdom, are truly selfless to help students succeed in life. They completely do not request us to repay. Having such a deep comprehension, I knelt down on the spot. Uncle Lu has

learned Judo since young, his reaction was very swift; he instantly stopped me and said, "You must not do it!" So, I did not succeed in kneeling down.

### **Complacency Incurs Disadvantages, Humility Brings Advantages**

From that day onward, every time after class, Uncle Lu would ask me to go for a stroll with him. While walking, he would ask me, "What did you gain after listening to *Dizigui* and the ancient moral stories?" I would tell him my thoughts and understandings. He would say, "Your comprehension is not deep and broad enough." He then analyzed to me one by one.

Even though we had only known each other for just two months, the inspiration and guidance are indeed not something that can be calculated by the time of two months; it is indeed lifelong help. Except that two months, later after leaving Australia, whenever I had the opportunity, I would take the initiative to call Uncle Lu on the phone. He would selflessly give me very good suggestions and inspirations.

Dear parents, we must not let our arrogance grow. *The Book of Changes* states, "Complacency incurs disadvantages, humility brings advantages."

Therefore, we must help children to foster the attitude of humility.

### **The Bad Habit of Extravagance & Using Make-Up Sparingly**

The second bad habit is 'extravagance'. If a child was extravagant, it would be very tough to change him because 'it is hard to go from extravagance to frugality.'

There was a calligraphy teacher who received a phone call from a parent. The parent said that he would be a bit late to pick up his son. The parent asked, "Can you have dinner with my son before I pick him up later?" the teacher agreed and brought this child, a primary student, to eat in a restaurant.

As soon as they entered the restaurant, the student took the menu and asked the waiter to come over. After the waiter came, he said, "Give me two bottles of coke!" The waiter went to get the coke, he started to read the menu and swaggeringly made the order. After the coke was delivered, he gave his order, "This, this, and this."

The teacher was stunned. When he had finished ordering, the teacher looked at the menu and found out that the dishes ordered were all very expensive ones.

My friends, from whom had this child learned this?

His father is an official. To whom has the father's extravagant behavior been passed on directly? His son.

Dear parents, we must not bring children out for sumptuous meals often. When they get used to eating fancy food, they would be unwilling to eat plain food in the future. In addition, taking children to expensive restaurants would expose them to some adults' misbehavior. So, try not to bring children to these places when it is not necessary.

We must be cautious! Do not nurture children's extravagant habits.

My mother seldom applies make-up, she would wear light make-up only on some formal occasions. As a result, my two sisters also rarely put on make-up. Interestingly, they have very good complexion despite not using make-up. You see,

"The people below would emulate the people above."

*Zhu Bolu's Maxims on Family Management* states,

“Don’t employ handsome and pretty servants,  
the wife and concubines must avoid glamorous make-up.”

So, as a wife, one should not wear seductive make-up every day. What would happen when she goes out? She might attract a lot of ‘flies’. It will bring trouble to oneself and others, it is certainly not good.

There was a child who was going out with his parents. Seeing his mother wearing heavy make-up, he said to his mother, “The wife and concubines must avoid glamorous make-up.” Because he had just memorized *Zhu Bolu’s Maxims*. Upon hearing his words, the husband and wife looked at each other and smiled. The mother felt that her son comprehended the teaching well, she then went to lighten up her make-up. We must not develop extravagant habits.

### **The Bad Habit of Overindulgence and Idleness**

Next is lust. Many people interpret it as lust for women. In fact, it is not limited to that; it also refers to a situation when one is unable to extricate himself from certain desires.

Take the example of children playing video games; once they are connected to the internet, how long would they stay on surfing? Hours and hours! As the saying goes,

“Overindulgence in pleasures would forfeit one’s aspiration.”

So, we must try our best to restrain children from indulging in entertainment. Actually, when one has truly tasted the joy of seeking wisdom and really senses his mission, he would not waste time on matters which are unrelated to his purpose in life. Instead of persuading him not to do this and that, it is better to help him broaden his mind to aspire himself to set an aspiration for his life. Together, you learn with him to nurture his enthusiastic learning attitude. This is very important!

The last habit is idleness, or goofing around aimlessly.

We can see that a lot of family admonition from the past attached great importance on fostering children’s diligent attitude. The opening phrase of *Zhu Bolu’s Maxims* states,

“Wake up at dawn, sweep the courtyard,  
and keep inside and outside of my house tidy and clean;  
prepare to sleep after dusk, lock all doors and windows,  
and check everything in person before going to bed.”

So, in the past, who did most of the housework? The children.

Only through physical labor would he not become idle and lazy. When children know how to shoulder responsibilities at home, they would then be able to feel the toil of those working hard.

We have mentioned that only by doing labor can one arise the grateful mind. Have you noticed that children today hardly ever feel grateful? What is the reason? Because they only need to ‘open mouth to eat and stretch out hand to drink’.

Upon hearing this, a child said, “Teacher, how do you eat and drink without opening your mouth and stretching out your hand? What a child! He does not know the hardships of people!

### **The Lesson of the Cucumber Dish**

There once was a little girl whose teacher used *Dizigui* to guide the class that one's birthday is 'Mother's Suffering Day'. In the past, she would only think of cake on her birthday, but it was different now. The teacher guided them that they should put in more efforts on this day so that their parents would not have to work so hard.

This fourth-grade student went home and told her mother that she wanted to cook a cucumber dish for her. Since she was not tall enough, she took a chair and stood on it. She poured the oil to the pot. When it splattered she immediately went to look for a big glove to protect her hand. When she poured in the cucumber, what happened? The oil splattered even higher! Urgently, she went to get her father's helmet and was fully armed. After sweating heavily, she finally had her cucumber dish done.

Do you believe that she became more mature when she served this dish on the dining table?

Would she dare to complain again when she eats her mother's dishes in the future?

No, she won't!

After contributing her effort, she would know that it is really not easy for her mother to work and cook so many dishes every day.

That is why by doing labor, one can then arise the grateful mind.

After starting the first job with little salary, many people would suddenly realize that making money is indeed not easy at all, they would also realize that they had been splurging too much money previously, and they are truly sorry to their parents. However, 'People are neither saints nor sages. Who can be fault-free'? We must learn to be frugal now.

## **Doing House Chores Creates the Grateful Mind and Boost One's Willpower**

Secondly, children who help out with household chores will be very industrious besides being grateful. Diligence can not only help improve one's health but also exercise their brain simultaneously as they do the chores.

So, students who often help out with the housework are very responsive and adaptable.

Some students performed very well in the exams but never do housework, they may drive you crazy when you delegate jobs to them due to a lack of experience. I even encountered a student who would ask his mother to call me whenever he needed to tell me something. I told him that he could have just told me directly; no need to bother his mother. He just lowered his head silently but still continued to ask his mother to call me.

Due to seldom undertaking tasks, he would be timid when facing challenges; this is actually detrimental to him.

Thirdly, physical labor will boost one's willpower.

Uncle Lu said when he was little, one time, the neighbor used up the water in their vat. His mother said, "Come, fill up the vat with water!" Whose family's vat? The neighbor's vat.

It was already four or five o'clock in the afternoon at that time. He needed to carry the water to the vat from a stream in the distance. It needed two trips for him to fill up the vat with water. It would probably be eight or nine o'clock at night by the time he finished two trips.

Should he shoulder it?

People of his generation were very respectful to their parents.

"When my parents ask me to do something, I must do it promptly."

So he went. When he returned home, it was already eight or nine at night, he then sat down to eat the cold meal.

Can you forbear to do this to your children? Can you forbear it? You would not be able to raise a talent like Uncle Lu if you cannot forbear it. His mother knew how to lend a hand to others and forge her son's willpower at the same time.

He said whenever he faced great pressure at work, his childhood memory of carrying the water would emerge in his mind: the memory was,

"I cannot endure it any longer... but it would be useless to stop now!

I must insist on moving forward step by step."

Whenever he faced challenges in life, what would be his first thought?

Keep on walking and overcome it!

So, physical labor can strengthen one's willpower!

My friends, aren't children today lacking in such training? Yes! So, we must have children do more chores and to contribute more of their efforts. Only then can they develop such good virtues and attitudes. We will stop here for now, thank you all for listening.