



Buddha in Your Backpack: Everyday Buddhism for Teens

By Franz Metcalf

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A guide for navigating the teen years, Buddha in Your Backpack is for young people who want to learn more about Buddhism or for those who simply want to understand what's going on inside themselves and in the world around them. Buddha in Your Backpack tells Buddha's life story in a fashion teens will relate to, describing Buddha as a young rebel not satisfied with the answers of his elders. It then introduces Buddha's core teachings with chapters like "All About Me" and "Been There Why'd I Do That?" The author presents thoughtful and spiritual insights on school, dating, hanging out, jobs, and other issues of special interest to teens - inviting readers to look inside themselves for answers.

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Buddha in Your Backpack: Everyday Buddhism for Teens By Franz Metcalf Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 8 Up-Metcalf straddles an interesting line with great success: avowedly evangelistic, his book nevertheless repeatedly reminds readers that Buddhism in general and the specific form of it embraced here are not likely to appeal to everyone. As such, the tone is both enthusiastic and testimonial without being pushy or "in your face." Whether discussing home and the family, school, self-image, sex, or drugs, the author's advice aims always at what is healthy and what reduces the amount of suffering in the world. Unlike other guides to living produced from a religious viewpoint, this book eschews discussion of morality and hews close to a practical line—not what is "good" but rather what is good for you. The author also emphasizes the necessity of self-awareness and rational independent decision making over rote following of rules—a stance that will raise hackles in many communities when the subject is teen sexuality or substance abuse. Metcalf also surveys the life and basic teachings of Buddha and makes recommendations for those who want to attempt to walk the path of Buddhism. He examines various schools of the religion, gives instructions for types of meditation, and explains that incorporating Buddhist principles into one's life need not mean a conversion to Buddhism or renunciation of other religious affiliations. While its frank and nonjudgmental approach to certain areas of teenage life will likely lead to censure in some corners, *Buddha in Your Backpack* is flush with good advice, sensibly given. As such it should prove useful both to students interested in Buddhism and to others who simply need good counsel. In fact, Metcalf's approach is so down-to-earth and inviting that many adults may sneak it off the shelves for themselves.

Coop Renner, Blackshear Elementary School, Austin, TX

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 7-12. Most YA guide-to-life books try to be hip by using lots of soon-to-be-dated slang, but here's a handbook to teendom that wins its hipness the hard way: by using good humor and the wisdom of a 2,500-year-old man. After introducing Siddhartha Buddha by focusing on his childhood, Metcalf outlines the four "simple" truths of Buddhism, using them as the foundation for his guidance. It's all about learning to live with *dukkha*, or suffering, whether that means overprotective parents, bratty siblings, or drama-queen pals. Taking inner action to resolve your outer problems, Metcalf says, is often (but not always) the best solution because teens (like the rest of us) often find themselves in situations of powerlessness. It may sound boring, but Metcalf makes Buddhism fun and funny ("*Dukkha* happens") without shying away from difficult issues like drugs and sex. His refusal to condemn such supposed vices might trouble some parents, but teens will treasure it. This is the rare advice book that kids won't be ashamed to have in their backpacks. *John Green*
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About the Author

Franz Metcalf teaches comparative religions at California State University in Los Angeles.

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Richard Tipton:

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Raymond Llamas:

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Lourdes Tyner:

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