

## HEALING WORDS: A GIFT TO TEACHERS

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Teacher's Day is celebrated twice! On October 5<sup>th</sup> across the world, and on September 11<sup>th</sup> in Argentina. For this special day, I cannot think of a better gift to teachers than this: some ideas and poems to thrive on the power of language. The use of literary quotes are musical boxes; they open to send out healing vibrations through their messages and musical quality, which can help us create special states of quiet and comfort. On this occasion we will be exploring some concepts and poems of Zen origin.

Let me share with you two poems by Thich Nhat Hawn, the Vietnamese Zen Master proposed by Martin Luther King for the Nobel Peace Prize.

**Drink your tea slowly and reverently,  
as if it is the axis  
on which the world earth revolves  
- slowly, evenly, without  
rushing toward the future;  
Live the actual moment.  
Only this moment is life.**

**Walk and touch peace every moment.  
Walk and touch happiness every moment.  
Each step brings a fresh breeze.  
Each step makes a flower bloom.  
Kiss the Earth with your feet.  
Bring the Earth your love and happiness.  
The Earth will be safe  
when we feel safe in ourselves.**

These poems help us slow down, take life in little sips and kiss planet earth with our feet. Probably by this time you are eager to learn some more Zen facts. The following ten Zen basics are worth delving into.

### Ten Zen Basics

1. Zen emphasizes the **Here and Now, the present moment**.
2. **Awareness and perception are important in Zen** — more important than logical, rational thinking.
3. If you examine the etymology of the word "Zen", you find that **Zen means meditation, sitting meditation**. The best way to understand meditation is to practise it.
4. **Meditation is non-doing, non-thinking, non-willing**. Zen teaches you to enjoy not only pleasant thoughts, but also no thoughts, a blank mind.
5. Zen sees the Ego, the I, not as an island, but **as part of the mainland**; Zen sees the Ego not as independent, but as merged with the surrounding world.
6. In merging the Ego with the surrounding world, Zen **puts us in touch with nature**, Zen teaches us to appreciate nature.
7. Zen is **partly a religion, partly a philosophy**, and partly a rejection of both religion and philosophy.
8. Zen is a type of mysticism. It resembles other types of mysticism — Christian, Islamic, Hindu, etc. **The Zen spirit can be found in every country and in every religion**.
9. Zen flourished in Japan, and left its mark on many facets of **Japanese culture**: haiku poetry, the tea ceremony, swordsmanship, archery, flower arranging,
10. While most drivers prefer green lights to red lights, **Zen likes red lights as much as green lights**. Lao Zi said that the most valuable part of a house is not its walls and roof, but the empty space within.

*Brain Teaser: what is the sound of one hand clapping? Answer at the footnote. Take some time to think...<sup>1</sup>*

Here are some more quotes of immense inspirational value:

“Silence is a source of great strength.” - Lao Tzu

“Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy.”  
-Thich Nhat Hahn

According to Zen philosophy, the very simple things in life are a source of enlightenment and joy. Zen philosophy urges us to accept and integrate the light and the dark, the yin and yang of human existence.

**Sources:**

Austin, James H. *Zen and the Brain*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998.

De Andrés, Verónica & Arnold, Jane. *The Seeds of Confidence*. Hebling Languages, 2009

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Based on *The Seeds of Confidence* by Verónica de Andrés and Jane Arnold-Hebling Publishing

**Biodata**

**María Teresa Manteo** holds a degree as an *English Teacher for Primary and Secondary School* from Lenguas Vivas Teachers' Training College, where she also completed a post-graduate course in English Literature. She has obtained a *Further Professional Studies Certificate in Education Management* from the University of Bristol UK as well as a *Practitioner's Certificate in Neurolinguistic Programming Applied to Education*.

She has taught Literature at IGCSE and International Baccalaureate levels and lectured for various publishers of English reading materials. As *Support Learning Educational Consultancy* Director, she trains teachers in affective methods in the teaching of reading and writing. She also runs SL educational programme *Touch the Author Workshops for Children* as well as the new reading project in Spanish *Arte y Lectura*.

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<sup>1</sup> The sound of silence.