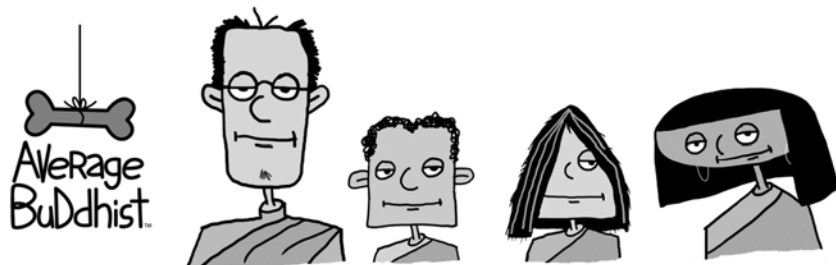
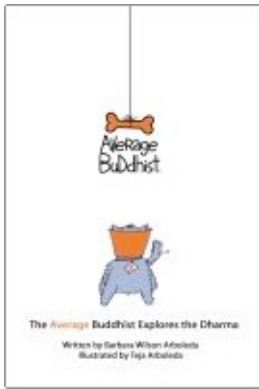


# The *Average* Buddhist Explores the Dharma





*The Average Buddhist Explores the Dharma is a humorous, easy-to-read tour of Buddhist principles for everyday people who want to cultivate mindfulness and compassion such that it can be applied to daily life. Modeled after the Buddhist spiritual classic, the Dharmapada, one topic is addressed per chapter, incorporating personal stories, observations and examples from popular media. The combination of the text and the single-panel cartoons make the concepts both accessible and memorable.*

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First Edition

## Lovingkindness



**D**o unto others as you would have them do unto you. It's the Golden Rule. In the United States, we usually associate this with Christianity and an edict of Jesus, but many religions have versions of this same concept. It is a simple human recipe for the application of lovingkindness. What it doesn't take into account, however, is the fact that "as you would have them do unto you" can be very different for different people.

One morning, when I was home from college, my sister was in high school and my dad was away on business, I heard my mom yelling from downstairs. "Amy! Mouse! There's a mouse! Amy!" My sister is the animal person in the family. So, naturally she was the go-to person for any mouse "situation." Neither my sister nor I wake up easily in the morning. I continued with my face stuffed in the pillow while I heard my sister stumble out of her room.

"Amy!"

My sister announced she was coming and shuffled down the stairs.

After that, I couldn't make out their words, but clearly my sister was taking charge and my mother was still upset. There was a brief swell in the activity and my mother shouted, "I don't care. Get rid of it!" This was followed by more mumble, mumble. Finally, my sister lurched back upstairs to her room and closed the door again.

Here's the story as I got it after the fact. My mother, an early riser, woke up and went downstairs to make some coffee. She walked back and forth in the kitchen a few times before she noticed a "dead mouse" lying in front of the kitchen sink. This is when the commotion started.

When my sister came downstairs, she assessed the situation and promptly announced, "Mom, it's not a mouse. It's a vole." This prompted the "I don't care"

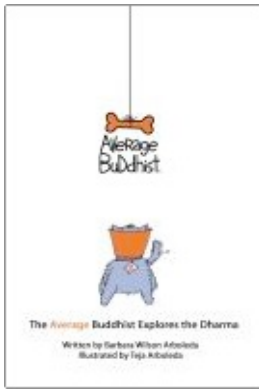
exchange. My sister figured out that our cats had caught the unfortunate vole, killed it and placed it deliberately where they knew my mother spent time to give her a gift.

Apparently, cats believe we humans are inconceivably inept hunters. After all, there's no chasing and slaughtering going on in most households and all the cats get are various textures of brown mealy material. In the cats' minds, we could use some help. So, when given the opportunity, they do unto others as they would have done unto themselves.

So, my sister told my mother that she had hurt the cats' feelings because they were only doing what they thought was something good to support the pack and got negative consequences for it. You can imagine how that went over.

As people we frequently deposit voles on the floor by each other's kitchen sinks, usually without even realizing it. We make jokes about it in comedy sketches where someone insists on helping an elderly person to the other side of a street they didn't want to cross in the first place. How many times must I tell people who don't know my house *not* to help me clean up the kitchen after dinner? I have a way I like things and places where things belong. If someone who doesn't know my routine "helps" me, it only makes more work for me later on.

There is an aspect to lovingkindness that is much more complicated than the Golden Rule would imply. In order to really accomplish the goal, you need to pay attention to what makes the other person feel good, regardless of what you want. If they actually want a vole at their kitchen sink in the morning, great! Otherwise, you'll have to be a little more creative than that.



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