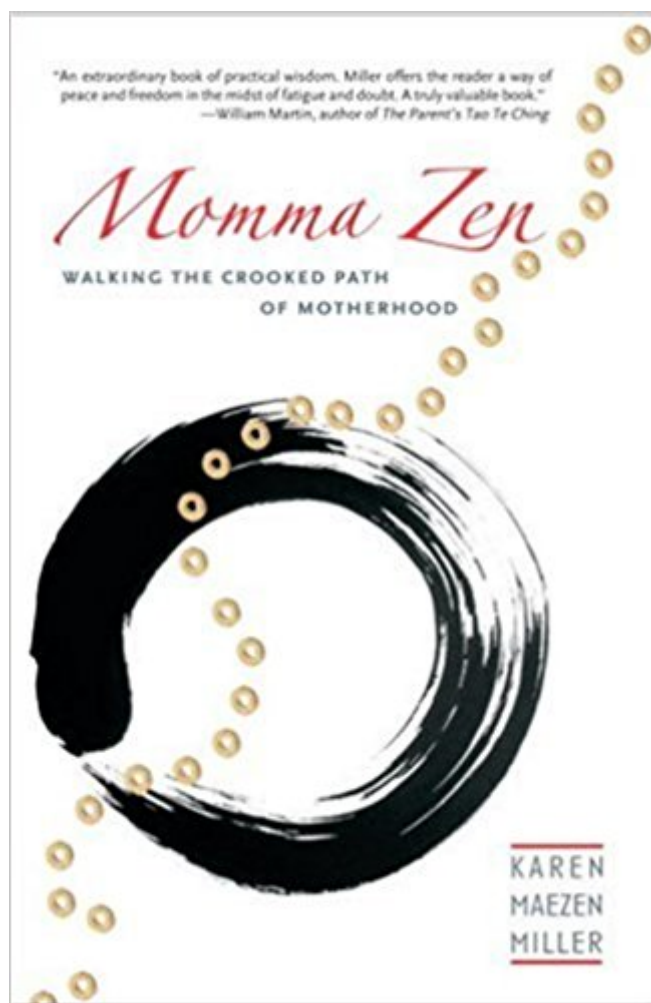


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Momma Zen: Walking The Crooked Path Of Motherhood



Synopsis

Combining humor, honesty, and plainspoken advice, *Momma Zen* distills the doubts and frustrations of parenting into vignettes of Zen wisdom. Drawing on her experience as a first-time mother, and on her years of Zen meditation and study, Miller explores how the daily challenges of parenthood can become the most profound spiritual journey of our lives. This compelling and wise memoir follows the timeline of early motherhood from pregnancy through toddlerhood. *Momma Zen* takes readers on a transformative journey, charting a mother's growth beyond naive expectations and disorientation to finding fulfillment in ordinary tasks, developing greater self-awareness and acceptance to the gradual discovery of "maternal bliss," a state of abiding happiness and ease that is available to us all. In her gentle and reassuring voice, Karen Miller convinces us that ancient and authentic spiritual lessons can be as familiar as a lullaby, as ordinary as pureed peas, and as frequent as a sleepless night. She offers encouragement for the hard days, consolation for the long haul, and the lightheartedness every new mom needs to face the crooked path of motherhood straight on.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A former student of the late California-based Zen master Taizan Maezumi Roshi, Miller spent years working on this book, which distills years of Zen practice in the crucible of her experiences parenting her daughter. From the beginning, Miller is very frank about feeling overwhelmed, jealous of her husband's love for their newborn, and her periods of depression. The path from these feelings to the

realization that "your life is not yours at all" but "an unbroken line of love" to others in one's family and in one's life-and to maintaining that awareness through all of the changes of parenting-comprises the rest of the book. Short chapters on having "No Expectation" (which begins with Miller's difficulty conceiving for the first time at 42 and ends with her preeclampsia), on "Being Unprepared" (labor is induced early, and Georgia Grace is born healthy), on the power of lullabies as a kind of meditation, on learning from small failures (and from the difficulties of breast feeding), on sleep and sleeplessness, and on the paradoxical freedom of parenting's "No Exit" center unfold into something more than aphorism. Wresting oneself free from the need for control is, as Miller describes it, a constant struggle (or, in Zen parlance, a practice). This book realizes it with warmth, engagement and winning honesty. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“Here at last is what we mothers have been waiting for: momma-hood held in equal respect to monk-hood.” —Shambhala Sun “Wrestling oneself free from the need for control is a constant struggle. This book realizes it with warmth, engagement, and winning honesty.” —Publishers Weekly “Eloquently frames the everyday experiences of parenting as opportunities for spiritual growth.” —Mothering “Miller has written a powerful synthesis of the insights she has attained, both through the experience of motherhood and as a Zen Buddhist priest.” —Literary Mama “Miller’s book offers guidance, insight, and wisdom. She shows us how to embrace not only the ups and downs of our own mothering, but also helps us open our heart to those who have mothered us. I recommend her book to anyone who wants to really learn something about spiritual practice in everyday life.” —Diane Eshin Rizzetto, author of *Waking Up to What You Do: A Zen Practice for Meeting Every Situation with Intelligence and Compassion* “Miller’s practice has seeped deeply into her life and the result is an extraordinary book of practical wisdom. She avoids the preaching and moralizing so common in parenting books, and instead offers the reader a way of peace and freedom in the midst of fatigue and doubt. A truly valuable book.” —William Martin, author of *The Parent’s Tao Te Ching* “Momma Zen, filled with honest tales of the bedlam of motherhood, beckons us to an oasis of silence and acceptance. Miller deftly leads us to the realization that, rather than searching outwardly, this oasis can be located in the center of the life we are living right now.” —Vivian Glyck, author of *The Tao of Poop* “Honest, revealing, funny, and poignantly accurate, Momma Zen unfolds the powerful path of raising a child, as well as the opportunities for deeper spiritual understanding. An important contribution.” —Nicolee Jikyo

I will admit - the first time I read this book, I cried multiple times - at last, someone who understood! All of it! My oldest child is about to turn six and I have returned to this book many times, always finding a new insight or nugget to carry me through my evolving phases of motherhood - as a new mom to preemie (a 34 weeker - it was very profound to begin this book and read the author's own experience as a mom to a 34 week preemie - I had no idea that was part of her experience and for me, having everyone around me outside of nicu saying "oh, it's not like she was that early" and frankly dismissing my struggles, well, my love for this book was sealed - someone else who had walked that road!), as a mom to a toddler and infant while struggling with post partum depression, considering preschool/childcare/etc... No doubt I will be consulting this for years to come. I have given it as gifts and frequently recommend this one - not a baby book, not a book about becoming a mother, but a book that speaks to the total metamorphosis that is motherhood.

All those little doubts you have, all those 'why me's', all those 'it is supposed to be this hard'- for those who think they are alone in it, this is a wonderful book - during those brief baby naps this book has boosted my spirits multiple times. We are a fan of the SF Zen Center podcasts and Karen Miller has a wonderful way of combining one's spirituality with motherhood.

I really enjoyed this book and for me, it offered more than I was expecting. Not just a book on being "zen" when it comes to child raising, but also in your every day life. Each chapter has a little lesson to impart and a Buddhism-inspired practice to bring into your daily life. Throughout the book, the author's mentioning of her mother dying of cancer and being a big impact on her life and how she managed through her zen practices, brought everything together at the end. Loved this book so much, will keep it for reference (it has a handy topic listing in the back so you can easily refer to the corresponding lessons you need based on what you are feeling in the moment) and was sad when I finished. I just purchased the author's other book, Hand Wash Cold and am excited to read that as well.

I am a childbirth educator and present each of the mothers in my classes with a thank you gift. I give them this book because it's the book I wish I'd read when I was a new mom 11 years ago. Miller offers a warm, guiding hand to the dazed, bewildered and love-struck mothers on all stages of their "crooked path." The chapters are short, just the right length for new mothers. They are insightful,

meeting moms where they are in this new country called motherhood. The prose is beautiful, lyrical and spare, and rewards readers no matter how often they're able to pick it up. Best of all is the reassuring message, delivered without sentimentality and with a writerly jujitsu that dissolves your resistance to it before you even feel it: you are enough. Nothing matters more than this.

Momma Zen is a book I picked up on the recommendation of a friend and fellow mother and I will never be able to thank her enough for it. Miller is a mother and recently converted Buddhist Priest whose perspective will alter your own views on how to handle everyday occurrences. She shares experiences that the reader can connect to even in the event they have never had a child of their own. During my own journey through this book I have found greater peace and comfort and feel better equipped to handle the challenges that come my way. Every mother or future mother I know will be receiving a copy of this book. I can hardly begin to explain how inept you feel as a new mother (even the second time around) and Miller helped me to know that I am not alone in my feelings. She shares experiences that make you laugh out loud, but in almost every chapter I also found myself crying. From the actual experience of having a child to caring for and loving my own, I finally have begun to understand that I am not alone. This is a book that I would also recommend to anyone seeking more peace in their own lives. Miller discusses how she handled the loss of her mother and how it affected the way she cared for those around her. Her writing and explanation of this one experience is beautiful beyond words. If you are interested in learning more about meditation I would read this book, because she offers advice even to those with only a few minutes to spare. There is even a "When you need a little help" section in the back of the book referencing each chapter with a subject to refer to, brilliant. Momma Zen is a beautiful book that breathes new life into its readers. I give it a 5 out of 5. I plan on rereading it over and over again as I grow older to see how my perspective changes.

Absolutely love this book! If I had the time to write a long review I would (but my daughter will wake from her nap and we've got lots more playing to do today). So here's the short and long of it: buy it, read it, collect it, highlight it, read it again, and by all means share it with your spouse/co-parent/significant other! I loved every bit of this book and shared several parts with my husband. Some parts had me laughing out loud and others had me nearly in tears with sentiment and self reflection. I am so glad I stumbled upon this book and you will be too!

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