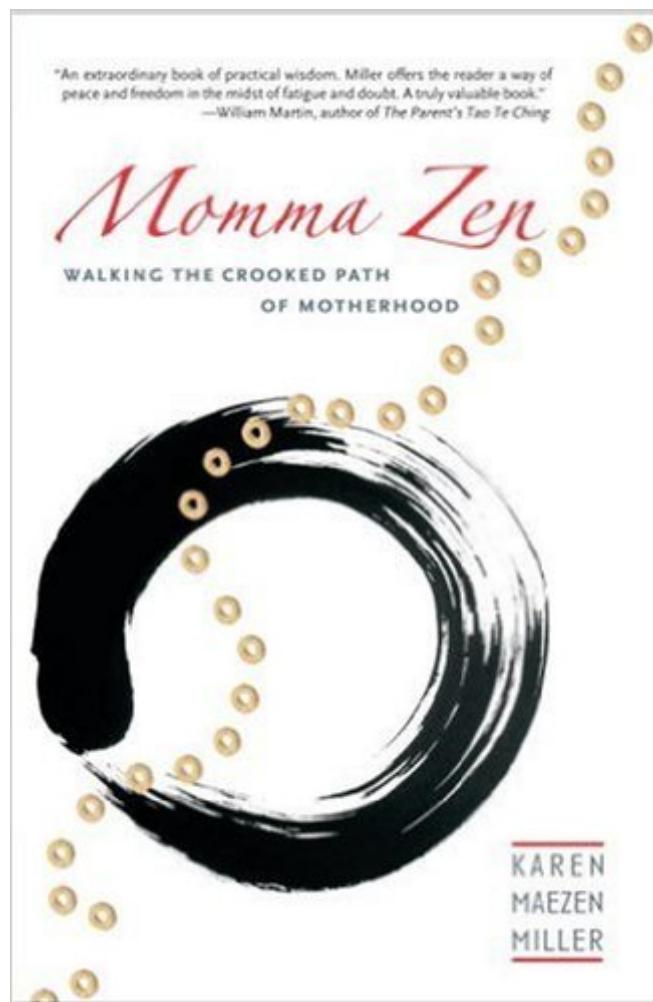


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# Momma Zen: Walking The Crooked Path Of Motherhood



## 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 a 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

I'm a Dad, not really a full-on Zen guy, but I do have a healthy appreciation for Zen. I can honestly say that whether or not you're into Zen, or are a Mom or a Dad, this book is wonderful. The writing is superb, lyrical and flows like a fresh spring stream, bubbling, laughing, and crying all the way. If you are a parent you'll like it even more; this is not a preachy book, or some strange mystical women's

book. This is a great book about life and love and it's a special treat to read. Even for a Guy.

"Momma Zen" is a book to come back to again and again. I dip into it whenever I am having a difficult day, or just seeking inspiration during a quiet moment. Usually I gobble books cover-to-cover, but Karen Maezen Miller's work is wonderful when savored in small bites. "Momma Zen" reads like a series of thoughtful discussions with a wise friend. Motherhood is full of uncertainty, reversals, and discovery. "Momma Zen" is a wonderful companion on this journey. Whether you are an expectant first-time mother or the a seasoned Mom, this book has something for you. I recognize myself in every chapter. We live in an era where an avalanche of advice books can feel overwhelming. "Momma Zen" takes a different approach by connecting with the heart of motherhood--the enduring, essential challenges, lessons and blessings that we encounter in relationship with our children. Karen Maezen Miller's work is a true gift to give yourself or a friend.

With three kids under 5 I was struggling with a whole host of emotions and new depths of sleep deprivation. A desperate search on revealed scores of books for parents on how to manage the kids; almost nothing on how to manage yourself. Then I found Momma Zen. It is broken up into short sections to address all different kinds of issues: your anger, your guilt, your fears about being a good enough parent, your miserable sleeplessness. Each section can work like a daily meditation, and there's a "concordance" of sorts in the back that helps you go directly to the section you need. I've given this to three other moms, who all thought it was a lifesaver, just like I do! Buy it! SOOOO helpful.

Karen Maezen Miller summarizes both her book and my gripes with it when she writes, "[t]his is how I would live if I had mastery of myself." Essentially, a mother of one who happens to be a Zen Buddhist priest looks back on her anxious and strung-out first few years of motherhood, distilling lessons learned like "[l]etting food [just] be food," taking a deep breath (or ten) to avoid losing her temper, living in the moment (rather than obsessing over regrets or to-do lists), and taking time for herself in order to better serve her family. Far from producing the "messianic message[]" Miller envisions in the "gentle and reassuring voice" the book jacket advertises, her reflections grated on my nerves. Throughout most of the book, Miller confesses her decidedly un-Zen behaviors while employing liberal use of the pronoun "we" (generalizing about mothers) and a didactic tone. Of course, the latter would be totally appropriate in a missive directed only at first-time parents (which this book was, she reveals about half-way through) if Miller offered any unique strength, wisdom, or

perspective. And I personally have had many a ruffled feather smoothed by inspired or clever prose. But - and the caps are key here - FOR ME, Miller's work largely lacks all of the above (her best line: "[f]or mothers, finding a sitter is a nuanced blend of desperate need, blind faith, gut instinct, and overpowering guilt, delicately seasoned by a sense of your child's developmental readiness and emotional well-being"). At the end of the day, "Momma Zen" is a memoir that ought to become intensely precious to Miller's daughter and a handful of others with whom Miller would "click" in person. Unfortunately, most experienced parents will find nothing particularly well-written, new, or Zen; and newbies can find the same common parenting advice better delivered elsewhere (ahem, "Brain Rules for Baby").

This is no simplistic 12-step program to perfect parenting. Rather it is a thoughtful memoir of the author's own plunge into the amazing experience of motherhood that both turned her world upside down and at the same time gave value to everything. Her simple, elegant prose is enough in itself to keep you reading, but it is also graced with humor, and Miller's willingness to reveal herself for better or worse creates a bond with all of us less-than-perfect parents. The book is stitched together with insights from her practice as a Zen priest, but this too is treated with delicacy, and we are given instructions for meditation if we wish to try it.

This book is a beautiful meditation on life. I wish I had it when my son was younger, but it doesn't matter, it's universal. It is a primer on Zen Buddhism and one of the best I've ever read. And it is a primer on motherhood that is revealing and comforting in ways unimagined. It truly flows with such ease and beauty that you won't put it down until the end. It also includes a wonderful chapter on tending your marriage after childbirth that is incredibly apt and meaningful. I highly recommend this book to all mothers and fathers, and to any person seeking inner peace. You'll find the way here.

What is it with this trend where "authors" take their overwrought journal entries and turn them into a book? I am a new mother with limited time, so I confess I bailed on this book pretty early on. I gave up right after reading the chapter where she appears to be shocked that having a newborn means you might be awake at all hours of the night. Maybe the book has some redeeming qualities later on but I didn't have the grit to stick it out.

I am a new Mom and with all of the books out there on motherhood and parenting, it's hard to find one that is as wonderful as this little gem and not preachy or giving you all kinds of impractical

advice. It's funny, insightful, and spiritual. It's simply a beautiful book. I would recommend it to anyone and everyone, even my husband has enjoyed the pieces that have really touched me and I have shared with him! Truly excellent!!!

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