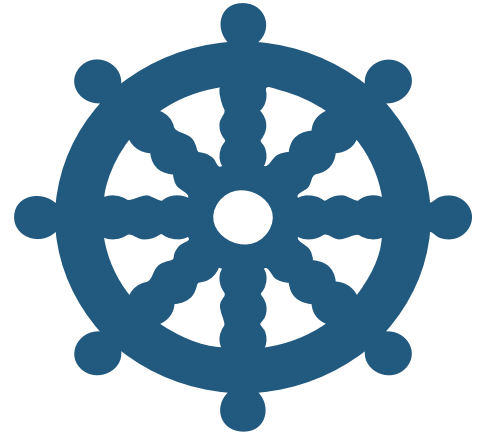


Teachings on Life: Buddhism

Buddhism is a nontheistic religion that encompasses a variety of traditions, beliefs and spiritual practices largely based on teachings attributed to Gautama Buddha, commonly known as the Buddha "the awakened one".



I am a Buddhist and Buddhism teaches that in an interconnected world all actions have consequences (karma). The consequences of acts undertaken in this and earlier lifetimes will be felt in a future time. The karma tied to an act is based on how it affects oneself or others. Even if you benefit from doing something, an act cannot be good if another being is harmed, or if it causes mental or physical pain to someone else.

Buddhist ethics can be summed up in our Five Precepts, the most fundamental of which is “not killing or causing harm to other living beings.” Buddhist teaching also highlights the Noble Eightfold Path – eight interrelated forms of “right” practice which guide us in how to live. Three of them are Right Mindfulness, Right Action, and Right Livelihood. Participation in an abortion as part of one’s medical practice would be contrary to Right Livelihood.

Should I be given the opportunity to speak to a Buddhist couple contemplating an abortion, these are the compassionate words I would share: As Buddhists we take full personal responsibility for our actions. Please consider that ending your suffering now does not mean that there will not be increased suffering in the future as a result.

The Buddha believed that there were many consequences to killing. These included “brevity of life, ill-health, constant grief of being separated from a loved one and living in constant fear.” I would not want you to deal with the grief of being separated from your child, nor the negative effects on your health that may come from the abortion procedure. Giving your baby the opportunity to live is a heroic sacrifice and an act of non-violence that is fully in accord with our faith.