



A Lesson in Meditation

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When my husband traveled to the small village of Cofradia de Suchitlan on the slopes of Colima's Volcano of Fire in Mexico for a Spanish immersion course, neither of us could have predicted how our lives would change. This course was offered by a non-profit organization called Project Amigo, which provides the poor children of Colima programs encouraging them to stay in school, promoting literacy, and improving access to higher education.

Each student in the Spanish immersion course was provided a personal tutor. The tutors are university students who receive scholarships from Project Amigo. One day Jim called and said, "Honey, we now have eight "adopted" hijas Mexicanas (Mexican daughters), and they are waiting in line to talk to you. Oh, and I should tell you we are sponsoring my tutor, Cintya." Jim and I believe strongly in the power of education, especially for girls and women, and I have always believed in giving back through volunteer work and charitable giving. So sponsoring Cintya by paying her college tuition seemed reasonable to me, and I was happy to support Jim in this endeavor.

Since that day, we have visited Colima many times, developing deep friendships with some of the kids Project Amigo serves and their families. You might think that, having suffered the hardships of poverty, extremely humble living conditions, and lack of medical care, these kids would be bound for an equally difficult future. Yet they come with kind and giving hearts. They laugh easily and find fun in the simplest pleasures. These kids don't own cars, computers, or iPods; they don't go to concerts or clubs. So we dance in the living room of their boarding house and tell stories and jokes into the wee hours. We barbeque with their families. It doesn't matter that they don't own a barbeque: an old car wheel rim with a rack over it will do.

Project Amigo demands a lot from the students in return for the opportunity of an education. They work unbelievably hard at school and take their responsibilities very seriously. They know first-hand the grinding poverty they will continue to face if they fail.

Our involvement with Project Amigo has required our time, energy, and money—things that have sometimes been in short supply. But it is so easy to help. The outpouring of love and appreciation from these kids and their families makes me more grateful for what I have—not just for myself but also what I have to give. When I am with our Project Amigo friends, my heart is open. I don't feel judged. I feel appreciated. And when I am in that space, reality touches me in a way it doesn't normally.

We cannot always be in an environment that is as supportive of our sense of well-being. But I try to carry that sense of well-being into the rest of my life, to express the same love and compassion for myself as I do for my friends at Project Amigo, and they for me. I have sometimes been frustrated by my meditation practice; I have yearned for a clearer, more relaxed mind. But I have realized that living my life with love and intention is a moving meditation in itself.



1. Queseria labor camp



2. Project Amigo bus



3. Jim, Christa, Project Amigo scholars, and house mom



4. Project Amigo school