

## **Stone Soup: A Japanese Parable about Gifting**

Once upon a time a tattered traveler came to a small village and asked for something to eat. “No, we have barely enough for ourselves,” said the wary villagers as they started shutting the door. “Then could you spare some water for my pot,” he said with a twinkle in his eye. Producing some ordinary rocks from his pocket, “These magical stones would make a delicious Stone Soup.”



“Stone soup!” the villagers cried, thinking the stranger quite mad. “Who ever heard of stone soup?” Still they gave him the water hoping to get the crazy man away from their village.

Soon a crowd gathered as the traveler built a fire under his large pot of water and reverently added a handful of stones. After a while he tasted a steaming spoonful and sighed, “Hmm.”

“How is it?” the curious villagers asked. “Not bad,” he smiled, “but it’s a shame I don’t have any onions.” A bag of onions was quickly passed forward. Then the traveler said the soup might be good with potatoes, which another villager eagerly gave. Everyone wanted to have a hand in this mysterious soup. Very soon the pot was filled with celery, mushrooms, peas, and barley. Happily, the traveler used them all to cook a delicious soup that fed the whole village.

The villagers were amazed that such a wonderful soup could be made from stones.

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This 16<sup>th</sup> century Japanese fable has many meanings. It is a lesson in community, that when we join together with a smile and our magical stones, we can create amazing outcomes. It’s about individuals combining their resources in order to create something good for all. It is about reciprocity, the belief that what you give will eventually come back to you in like fashion. It is a story of abundance—when you offer what you think may be meager, there will still be plenty.

