

# Kintsugi

Though we may keep a little quiet about this, especially when we're young, we tend deep down to be rather hopeful that we will – eventually – manage to find perfection in a number of areas. We dream of one day securing an ideally harmonious relationship, deeply fulfilling work, a happy family life and the respect of others. But life has a habit of dealing us a range of blows – and leaving nothing much of this array of fine dreams save some shattered and worthless fragments.

It's at moments of disillusion that we might turn our minds to a concept drawn from Japanese philosophy, and in particular, from the Zen Buddhist approach to ceramics. Over the centuries, Zen masters developed an argument that pots, cups and bowls that had become damaged shouldn't simply be neglected or thrown away. They should continue to attract our respect and attention and be repaired with enormous care – this process symbolizing a reconciliation with the flaws and accidents of time, reinforcing some big underlying themes of Zen. The word given to this tradition of ceramic repair is *kintsugi*:

**Kin = golden**  
**tsugi = joinery**

It means, literally, 'to join with gold'. In Zen aesthetics, the broken pieces of an accidentally-smashed pot should be carefully picked up, reassembled and then glued together with lacquer inflected with a very luxuriant gold powder. There should be no attempt to disguise the damage, the point is to render the fault-lines beautiful and strong. The precious veins of gold are there to emphasize that breaks have a philosophically-rich merit all of their own.



Source: [Kintsugi -The School of Life Articles | Formerly The Book of Life.](#)

she is a  
beautiful piece  
of broken  
pottery, put  
back together by  
her own hands.

• and a critical world  
judges her cracks  
while missing the  
beauty of how she  
made herself  
whole again.

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