

Zen Center of San Diego Newsletter

2047 Felspar Street | San Diego, California 92109-3551 | 858-273-3444 | November 2007

“As a species, we should never
underestimate our low
tolerance for discomfort.”

Pema Chodron

SCHEDULE

Dawn Sitting

Weekdays, Mon. – Fri. 6-7 am

Tues. Evening

Two Sittings, 6:30 – 8:00 pm

Wed. Evening

Two Sittings, 6:30 – 7:40 pm
Practice seminar follows
(until about 8:20 pm)

Thurs. Evening

Two Sittings, 6:30 – 8:00 pm

Sat. Morning

8:30 am Work practice

8:45 am Introductory workshop
for newcomers

Follow-up instruction
for those who have
attended introduction

9:00 - Noon Three sittings; Dharma talk

First Sun. Morning Each Month:

Three Sittings, 9:00 am-11:00 am

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ALL DAY SITTING

There will be All Day Sittings on Saturday and Sunday, November 17-18.
The sign-up will be on the table in the kitchen.

CLOSED FOR THANKSGIVING

The Center will be closed for Thanksgiving from Thursday, November 22 through Sunday, November 25.

2008 SESSHIN SCHEDULE

The 2008 sesshin schedule is included on the enclosed sesshin application

– Parking is Practice –

*Please park at least 2 blocks away
and please be mindful of our neighbors*

Please do not e-mail this form

APPLICATION FOR SESSHIN

ZEN CENTER of SAN DIEGO • 2047 Felspar St. • San Diego, CA 92109 • 858-273-3444

Please print clearly to avoid delay in processing your application, and please fill out this form completely.

Name _____ Age _____ Gender _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home phone _____ Work phone _____

Emergency contact (name) _____ (phone) _____
(must be blood relative or spouse)

e-mail _____ (ZCSD has no e-mail address, but volunteers may contact you by e-mail).

Circle the sesshin for which you are applying:

Please note: Applications cannot be considered unless a check for sesshin fees is included

<u>Date</u>		<u>Member</u>	<u>Non-member</u>	<u>Mail-in Date</u>
Dec 26-31	5-day	175.00	200.00	Sept 26
Feb 15-18	3-day	90.00	105.00	Dec 15
March 25-30	5-day	150.00	175.00	Jan 25
April 18-21	3-day (Santa Rosa)	150.00	175.00	Feb 18
June 19-22	3-day	90.00	105.00	April 19
Aug 12-17	5-day	150.00	175.00	June 12
Oct 23-26	3-day	90.00	105.00	Aug 23
Dec 26-31	5-day	150.00	175.00	Sept 26

Have you ever attended sesshins at ZCSD? ___ Yes ___ No

This will be my ___ 1st ___ 2nd ___ 3rd ___ + sesshin at ZCSD

Date/location/teacher of your most recent sesshin _____

Mail in form no earlier than the mail-in date above, marked: Attention Sesshin Coordinator. The postmark will be entered as the application date. Please wait to make air reservations until your application has been confirmed. We will notify you as soon as decisions have been made. If you haven't heard from us exactly one month before the sesshin begins, please call the Center.

Arrive by 6:30 pm the first night. Last day will end about 3:00 pm.** A light snack will be available the first evening. ****Newcomers please arrive early for orientation. Orientation begins at 4:30 pm**

Work Skills (circle): cooking, shopping prior to sesshin, electrical, carpentry, painting, computer, gardening, sewing, flower arranging, jobs prior to sesshin, other:

Physical conditions limiting participation: _____

I agree to maintain a daily sitting practice from the time of this application through the sesshin. I will participate in the entire schedule, including interviews, sittings, meals, work, and any assigned tasks. I will be on time for all activities. I understand that my physical, mental, and emotional well-being are my own responsibility. Zen practice is not a substitute for therapy. I am capable of undertaking the rigors of a sesshin at this time. I am seeking medical or therapeutic treatment for any condition(s) I have, and have revealed all pertinent information on this form. I will sign a waiver releasing ZCSD from accident and injury liability.

Signature _____

Legibly printed name _____

ALL BLANKS ON APPLICATION FILLED IN? ___ Yes ___ No

The Things We Fear Most - Part II

As human beings, a huge portion of our energy is expended in dealing with anxiety and fear. But fear makes our life narrow and dark. It is at the root of all conflict, underlying much of our sorrow. Fear also blocks intimacy and love, and, more than anything, disconnects us from the being-kindness that is our true nature.

We're often not aware to what extent fear plays a part in our lives, which means that the first stage of practicing with fear requires acknowledging its presence. This can prove to be difficult, because many fears may not be readily apparent, such as the fear driving our ambition, the fear underlying our depression, or perhaps most of all, the fear beneath our anger. But the fact is, once we look beyond our surface emotional reaction, we will see that almost every negative emotion, every drama, comes down to one or more of the three most basic fears – the fear of losing safety and control, the fear of aloneness and disconnection, and the fear of unworthiness.

The second basic fear is that of aloneness and disconnection, which can also manifest as the fear of abandonment, loss, or death. On some basic, yet very deep level, all of us feel fundamentally alone; and until we face this directly, we will fear it.

It's interesting that one of life's most vital lessons is something we are never taught in school: how to be at home with ourselves. When I first began going to meditation retreats, where there was no talking or social contact for days on end, I would sit facing the wall hour after hour, and invariably an anxious quiver rose up inside me. Sometimes it was so strong that I literally wanted to jump out of my skin. But just sitting there, doing nothing, brought me face to face with myself, with the fear of aloneness.

Most people will do almost anything to avoid this fear. Many enter into relationships or engage in affairs. In fact, the extent to which people have affairs is often proportional to the urgency of needing to avoid feeling alone. Ultimately however, the willingness to let loneliness just be – by truly residing in it – is the only way to transcend it. It's also the only way to develop true intimacy with another, because true intimacy can't be based on neediness, or on the fear of being alone. When we need people we can't truly love them, because we will see them and relate to them through the small mind's filter of neediness.

Still, we want and expect other people to take away these fears; we think that if we're with someone who will pay attention to us, our loneliness will disappear. But if this particular deep-seated fear is part of our make up, the mere act of our partner being engrossed in a book when we're expecting attention will be enough to make us feel abandoned. We may try to deal with this by demanding or attempting to attract their attention, but even if that demand is met, our fear is unlikely to be assuaged for long.

Furthermore, even getting the attention we desire does not necessarily mean we will experience intimacy. True intimacy comes instead when we're willing to acknowledge the uncomfortable feelings of anxiety and fear that are part of our own conditioning; it comes when we can say Yes to them, when we can breathe the aching longing of loneliness into the center of the chest and simply let it be there, no matter how uncomfortable we might feel. Once we truly learn to reside in our fear of aloneness, we will no longer expect those we are intimate with to assume responsibility for taking away our fear or making us feel good. Instead we will know reality; we will know Love.

The basic fear of aloneness may also include a related anxiety that is not usually recognized: the fear of disconnection – from others as well as from our own heart. This fear penetrates deeper than loneliness, and often manifests as a knotted quiver in the chest or abdomen. Remember, at bottom, the heart that seeks to awaken, to live genuinely, is more real than anything. It is the nameless drive that calls us to be who we most truly are. When we are not in touch with this, we may feel the existential anxiety of disconnection.

In a way, much of Zen practice is geared toward helping us address our feeling of basic separation. How does this occur? First, we acknowledge our fear, and see it clearly for what it is. We need to remember that the fear *is*, in fact, our path itself, our direct route to experiencing the being-kindness at our core.

Continued on page 4

Then we must face the fear directly, saying Yes to it. Essentially, this means we are willing to *experience* it rather than run away from it. When fear arises, in order to replace our usual dread with a genuine curiosity, we might ask, “Here it is again, how will it be this time?” As we truly feel it – breathing the sensations of anxiety into the center of the chest –the familiar thoughts that normally fuel our fear begin to fall away, and we can experience the healing power of the heart. This is a *non-conceptual* experience – it does not come from words or explanations, but rather from the spaciousness of a wider container of awareness. When the fear of living as a separate being dissolves, we naturally tap into the connectedness and being-kindness that are always available to us, and which are the real fruit of the practice life.

Ezra Bayda, *ZEN HEART*, Shambhala, July, 2008

Zen Center of San Diego
2047 Felspar Street
San Diego, CA 92109

NONPROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 19
SAN DIEGO, CA

NOVEMBER, 2007