

Zen Center of San Diego Newsletter

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

“Perseverance requires a kind of courage, the courage to look deeply into our beliefs, and particularly to uncover our illusions about ourselves.”

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

PRACTICE PERIOD

Practice Period will be from September 15 through October 20. An explanation of Practice Period, plus guidelines and a Practice Period application form are included in this newsletter.

If you wish to participate, fill in the application form, and mail in or turn in a copy of it to ZCSD.

ALL DAY SITTINGS

There will be All Day Sittings the first two days of Practice Period, on Saturday and Sunday, September 15-16. The sign-up sheet will be on the table in the kitchen.

DECEMBER SESSHIN

The sign-up date for the five-day December sesshin is on September 26. Note that the registration date is earlier than the usual two month lead time, so that out of town people can make reasonable airline reservations. Also note that if you can't attend the full five days you can apply for the last three days.

– *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> |
|-------------|-------|-------|---------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Oct | 12-15 | 3-day | 175.00 | 200.00 | Aug 12 |
| 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

Practice Period

At any point in our practice, we may find we've lost track of the broad view of the function of practice. Whether we're in the rather blind honeymoon phase, or in a dry spot where our interest in waking up seems to have gone dormant, we always need to raise the questions, "What's the point of practice? Is practice clear? Do I assume I know what practice is, when perhaps a deeper look might be in order?"

Practice Period provides an opportunity to take a look at our current view of practice, and to renew our aspiration. It is a time devoted to re-prioritizing our commitment to practice – a commitment which is made more real by intensifying our practice in specific ways, both on and off the cushion.

As we observe ourselves over and over, it becomes painfully apparent how little time we are actually awake. We come to realize how much of the time we're lost in whatever we're doing, or totally believing our thoughts as truth, or mechanically acting out of our conditioning, which includes all of our emotional reactivity.

We also come to realize that we can't stop doing these things simply because we want to. It takes a certain kind of effort, plus an almost dogged perseverance, to gradually counteract the seemingly relentless force of our habitual patterns and mechanicalness. A Practice Period is a means of setting up special conditions within which the kind of effort needed can be specifically cultivated.

One way to cultivate this kind of effort is to deepen your commitment to practicing by intensifying the amount of time you prioritize for formal practice. As a minimum, participants are asked to sit each and every day for the entire month, for at least 30 minutes. If you already sit daily, you can consider sitting twice daily.

Another way to intensify and clarify your practice is to look at where there is a gap in your current understanding, for example, what dubious ideals you add to practice, or what you have declared is off-limits in practice, such as thought labeling, particular situations, etc. Writing down where you see a gap in your practice, and how specifically to address it, will help you to clarify what you're doing.

You can also intensify Practice Period by setting up a *practice menu*, where each day you choose a different specific practice to focus on. For example, on a specific day, you might choose the practice of saying "yes" to fear – which means to remember to invite fear in, to reside in it physically, instead of our normal response of trying to push it away or avoid it. Other guidelines for intensifying practice are listed on the Practice Period Guidelines. But you need not limit yourself to these suggestions; the point is to find specific ways to help make practice a more central orientation in your life. Consult with a teacher if you have questions about how to work with menus.

Whatever particular practices we choose from, they are all meant to do one thing: to make being awake the central theme of our day, in very specific ways. We can also include some pattern interrupts, such as refraining from sweets, TV, coffee – whatever attachments are strong – as reminders to return to awareness of the present moment. As all of this is added to the intensified and more committed sitting schedule of Practice Period, we can find a renewed enthusiasm for practice.

All of this can be seen as an experiment – an experiment in ways to create interruptions to our self-centered dream, an experiment in prioritizing the practice of awareness as the central orientation of our daily lives, an experiment in ways to intensify our commitment to waking up –waking up to the reality that all of us seek.

Ezra and Elizabeth

PRACTICE PERIOD GUIDELINES

FOR EVERYONE:

1. Write down your planned sitting schedule for the month (how often, how long). This should be your minimal commitment. For Practice Period we ask that you make a sincere effort to maintain this commitment.
2. State what you see as your primary gap or difficulty in practice. Write down how, specifically, you will address this during Practice Period.
3. State specifically how you plan to make your practice more continuous throughout the day, such as using 'menu' items. You can choose from the menu list below or add your own.
4. Spend at least one hour a week in formal study (reading, writing, listening to tapes).
5. Attend daisan (or call if you live outside San Diego County), focusing on what you wrote down is most difficult for you to practice with.
6. If possible, attend the 3 day sesshin from October 12-15.

FOR THOSE LIVING NEAR ZCSD:

- Come to at least 2 sitting blocks a week from start to finish.
- Prioritize coming to Saturday talk and Wednesday night practice group.
- Prioritize attending Sunday morning sittings and Saturday afternoon workshops.
- Prioritize the closing ceremony to end Practice Period on Sat., October 20, at 11:00.

POSSIBLE "MENU" PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS: Focus on one for an entire day, changing each day:

Sense-awareness-based menus: Follow the breath, be aware of sounds, posture, etc.

Emotion-based menus: Non-manifestation of negative emotions, saying yes to fear (criticism, rejection), no blaming/complaining, etc.

Verbal reminder menus: "What *is* this?" – to whatever arises ; "What is practice right now?"; "What identity am I maintaining right now?"; "How is it 'supposed' to be?", etc.

Moving Meditation menus: practice a form of moving meditation, like yoga or chi gung daily.

(View a complete list of menu items at www.zencentersandiego.org.)

2007 practice period agreement

Name _____ e-mail _____

I agree to abide by the following commitments for the Practice Period from September 15 to October 20.

SITTING SCHEDULE: Minimum is to sit at least once a day every day.

PRIMARY GAP: Write down how you see your primary gap in practice, and how, specifically, you plan to address it:

DAILY INTENSIFICATION: Indicate how you plan to make your practice more continuous throughout the day, including menu items, pattern interrupts, etc. (View a complete list of menu items at www.zencentersandiego.org under Practice Period.)

OTHER COMMITMENTS: Saturday morning sittings, Sunday morning sittings from 9-11, Saturday afternoon workshops, Wednesday evening practice group, sesshin from October 12-15, and closing ceremony on Saturday, October 20 at 11 AM.

LEGIBLE SIGNATURE

DATE

Please mail copy to "Practice Period, ZCSD" or put it in the box on the kitchen table marked Practice Period.

Please do not e-mail this form.

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

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

SEPTEMBER, 2007