

Zen Center

O F S A N D I E G O

November 2010 Newsletter



Commitment • Identity • Community

What is commitment? This month at ZCSD is Practice Period, a four-week commitment to intensified practice. The usual schedule is enriched with added workshops, and opportunities to serve the practice of others and support a sense of community.

What is commitment? It is a seed of awakening, encompassing determination, intention, motivation, and unifying our energy and our stated values. Like seeds in nature, the seeds of commitment can go dormant, since we humans cycle through seasons, ranging from tastes of Zen's "mindflower blooming in eternal spring" (glimpses of reality), to the wintry dormancy that sometimes follows shortly thereafter.

These interior fluctuations often relate to our shifting identities, which span a spectrum, from the narrow band of me-selves (or ego), to the inclusive dimension, or the self that knows no other. These identities interweave, as manifestations of our absolute nature; the Identity of Relative and Absolute states, "Each thing has its own intrinsic value [absolute, nondual nature] and is related to everything else in function and position [the relative appearance of things, forms of emptiness]." Relative and absolute are simultaneous, not separate realities.

So, if this intrinsic nature is what we already are, why aren't we awake to it? One of the main things that clouds awareness is that our many-faceted ego-identities

insist on staying in charge, and masquerade as our "true self." These multiple me's are *self-centered*, which isn't an insult, but a description: self-centered means that our thoughts, words and actions reflect the belief that our identity is limited to this body, personality and history. Then we view life through the prism of this ego-self, and, even after many years of practice, we can fall into believing that these incomplete and contradictory ego-identities define us—especially when our views or expectations are challenged.

It follows that if we're unclear about our identity,

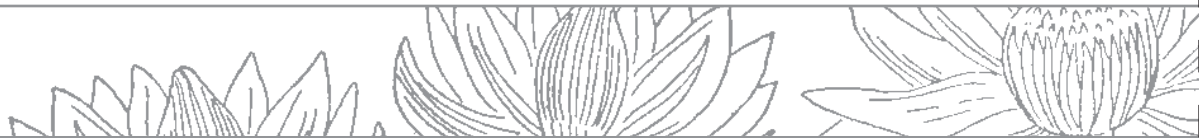
we'll be unclear about commitment. Since each ego-self has different commitments, no wonder we're confused. Someone once told me that, in relation to her commitment to Zen training, she used to believe that she was really "in," but was leaving one foot out. Later she realized that she only had one foot in, and the rest of her was left out! All of us are like that in some ways: we appear to be committed to all sorts of things, yet

as we investigate where our time, energy and resources go, it provides a stark mirror for discerning whether there's alignment between our professed values, and the way we live.

The ego-selves have a dualistic view of commitment: someone commits to something or someone outside of themselves. There's a place for this level of commitment,

(continued on page 2)

"Within the context of community, we give the gift of our presence to others, and are in turn enriched by one another's presence."



Commitment, Identity, Community

(continued from page 1)

between persons and institutions. However, the commitment to awakening isn't between individuals; it's a vow, a determination, to live wakefully and compassionately, and to contact the ground of our being, which pervades and encompasses individuals, groups—everything. This level of commitment is without borders, transcending the divisive, painful notions of self and other that cause so much suffering.

How can a commitment like Practice Period help sort all this out? For starters, it helps in fostering a vital practice community.

Many folks, like the Practice Period participants who live in other states or countries, don't have access to a community of practitioners. They value the sense of community that Practice Period provides, in the sense of a joint endeavor, connected at times only by phone, computer, and periodic sesshins (retreats) at ZCSD.

Community is one of Zen's three indispensables, along with the determination to live increasingly awake,



and to understand what tools serve living awake and aware, in all arenas of life. Within the context of community, we give the gift of our presence to others, and are in turn enriched by one another's presence. Functioning as one makes it

possible to have activities like seminars and longer sittings and retreats. Of course, we could do retreats alone, but do we usually?

In contrast to practicing in solitude, interacting communally brings us face to face with Zen's *vines and entanglements*, the conditioning that blocks awareness and compassion. How are you different alone, and in a group? Community helps illuminate

some of the dead leaves on our tree of life: our outdated aversions, resistance, constricting attitudes, and mixed motives—both the skillful ones, and those that lurk in the shadows and cause mischief.

The microscope and telescope of both solitary and community practice serve as a crucible, honing

our ability to see through the illusions that bind us and blind us. We can see our fleeting identities and fluctuating commitments more clearly, as well as discovering how all the essentials of practice work together, to reveal our innate wholeness.

As we reflect on commitment, identity, and community, we discover what blocks the genuine, deep happiness that Ezra has discussed recently—the happiness that accompanies the shift from self-centeredness to life-centeredness. These issues can become *koans*, since they can't be resolved by linear logic alone. For instance, we can raise the question "What is commitment?" And then, instead of ruminating, we let the question drop into our being, to reverberate on its own.

Through reflecting on commitment, identity and community, we may just stumble into the ground of our being, which isn't something arcane, or elsewhere, or up ahead. As the Identity of Relative and Absolute puts it: "If you do not see the way, you do not see it even as you walk on it."

Elizabeth Hamilton

Please do not e-mail this form***APPLICATION FOR 2010 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 12/26 – 12/31 5-day	150	175	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

Zen Center

OF SAN DIEGO



Announcements

December Sesshin

Applications are still being accepted for the five-day Sesshin at the end of December.

January Sesshin

Applications for the January 14-17 Santa Rosa Zen Group Sesshin are available at santarosazengroup.org/srzgapp.pdf. They are due November 12.

All Day Sitzings

There will be All Day sittings on November 20 and 21. The sign-up sheet is on the table in the kitchen.

2011 Sesshin Schedule

January 14-17 (Santa Rosa)	August 9-14 (San Diego)
February 18-21 (San Diego)	October 14-17 (Questhaven)
April 18-23 (San Diego)	December 26-31 (San Diego)
June 16-19 (San Diego)	

FOLD

Schedule

Dawn Sitting

Weekdays, Monday-Friday, 6:00-7:00 am

Tuesday Evening

Two Sitzings, 6:30-8:00 pm

Wednesday Evening

Two Sitzings, 6:30-7:40 pm
Practice Seminar follows
(until about 8:20 pm)

Thursday Evening

Two Sitzings, 6:30-8:00 pm

Saturday 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 Sitzings, Dharma Talk

First Sunday Morning Each Month

Three Sitzings, 9:00-11:00 am

Parking is Practice

Please park at least two blocks away and
please be mindful of our neighbors.

FOLD

Zen Center San Diego

2047 Felspar St.

San Diego, CA 92109-3551

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