

Zen Center

O F S A N D I E G O

December 2011 Newsletter



The Natural Order of Mind, WIPITS

Recently in the natural setting of sesshin at Questhaven, a large dog led us on a long meditation walk in the wilds. It was reminiscent of the notorious dog who is the subject of a famous Zen *koan*: A monk asked Zhaozhou, “Does a dog have Buddha-nature, or true nature?” Zhaozhou answered “*Wu*,” or Japanese *mu*, meaning emptiness, or having no fixed nature.

We won’t answer the koan, since that requires entering cellularly into the subject. Still, we can say that the response is yes and no, both of which are included in the *wu*: like everything, a dog is a form of emptiness, interwoven with all existence, not just a dog. And, if you say *wu* aloud (maybe twice), you’ll appreciate Zhaozhou’s sense of humor, his demonstration that a dog is also a dog. The yes and no together reflect one interdependent reality.

This koan could also be reversed, to ask, “Does a Buddha have dog-nature?” Years ago, living in a Jungian community, I took the Meyers-Briggs Personality test, and got a ‘O’ in the category of *sensation*, meaning that I was almost unaware of being on the planet. I borrowed a friend’s dog, sniffing where it sniffed, trying to experience life from the perspective of a dog, to develop more sensory awareness. Six months later, my score had risen to six—out of fifty-seven.

Dog nature and sensory perception remained largely dormant, because at the time I didn’t understand the necessity of inner work, for awakening from our blind spots. I was only dealing with externals and behavior modification.

Dog nature, Buddha nature, natural settings. Nature trips don’t necessarily awaken us to our true nature, yet being engulfed by nature’s wildness can enliven certain seeds of awakening, like wonder, curiosity, gratitude and seeing things anew.

Of course this can occur anywhere, yet we seem less likely to notice the majesty of existence when we’re in the office or on the freeway. Besides, whether we’re in the outback or at home, we’re unlikely to realize that we ourselves *are* nature, as well as true nature. This requires cultivating the natural order of

Nature trips don’t necessarily awaken us to our true nature, yet being engulfed by nature’s wildness can enliven certain seeds of awakening, like wonder, curiosity, gratitude and seeing things anew.

mind through practice. The Meal Verse alludes to this, saying “To experience the natural order of mind, we must first be aware of our greed.” Our relationship to food certainly highlights our greed, yet manifold other needy-greedies come with us into Zen practice. It can be shocking to acknowledge how much of our time and energy are spent attempting to feed the hungry hole within—a hole that doesn’t really exist, except

as a physical feeling of emptiness, which we probably don’t equate with the emptiness we hoped Zen would reveal.

The Meal Verse also reminds us that seventy-two labors, the efforts of many workers, past and present, make eating possible. This is a reminder of interconnectedness, the gateless gate to which practice points. The process requires becoming better acquainted with our greedy, wanting mind. Like Sesame Street’s Cookie Monster, it wants and wants, from food to fantasy to constant stimulation.

(continued on page 2)



The Natural Order of Mind, WIPITS

(continued from page 1)

Sometimes we speak of “getting our needs met,” which might mean our *wants*, or perhaps reflect a sense of neediness, like beseeching others with the unspoken cry “Please, help me feel good about myself.” Sadly, this is a losing proposition. They can’t. Even if someone adores us, it won’t heal our inner ache, if we’re still feeding the *unnatural order of mind*, through our dependencies and hidden agendas.

We can learn a lot about the unnatural order of mind by observing our reactions and responses to the Occupy Wall Street movement, which Ezra and I stumbled into, on a recent visit to New York. It’s probably easier to see corporate greed than our own “Inner Wall Street” of entitlements, particularly when our grasping is socially condoned. Our Inner Wall Street includes our strategies for seeking comfort and avoiding discomfort: addictive approach to substances, attitudes, and emotion-based thoughts. Then there’s our baseline addiction, the attempt to maintain a carefully crafted identity for public consumption. Even if this identity is well received, it can’t heal the fear in the belly, or the deep-seated belief that we don’t measure up.



A practice tool that can help awaken the natural order of mind is WIPITS, “what is practice in this situation.” WIPITS is a *koan* of conditioning, an umbrella question, with plenty of room for a whole rainbow of practices. Its three basic categories are:

- *what’s going on right now*: the actual objective facts of the situation;
- *what am I adding*: our personal reactions to the facts, including our strategies, reactions, self-images, and strongly believed thoughts;
- *what am I leaving out*: How can we smell the roses when we’re caught in our ego-driven add-ons and blinders? Our reactive barriers block contact with clear thinking,

objectivity about our emotional states, and even the open awareness that we so diligently cultivate in meditation.

For example: Someone corrects our timing or touch on ringing bells (*what’s actually happening*), and what do we add—shame, resentment, defensiveness? What do we leave out? Almost everything—body, breath, environment—all of which pass largely unnoticed in the morass of our reactions.

When we succumb to the temptation to focus more on our subjective automatic responses than on the actual objective situation, we can stay upset for a long time about something that’s not happening anymore. Rather than judging ourselves for this, we can learn to witness it all, in the mirror of awareness.

WIPITS is part of what helps unite open awareness and clear, fact-based thinking, including observation and witnessing. This makes it possible to greet our old dramas with nonjudgmental, objective awareness, when they audition to resume center stage.

In the process, emotionality and judgmentalness can begin to transform into compassion and discernment, which includes knowing when it’s appropriate to take skillful action.

So let’s refresh our aspiration to greet the present moment with fresh eyes, and to nurture our capacity to awaken to what life is, to what we actually are—dog nature, true nature, natural settings and all.

By Elizabeth Hamilton



Sesshin Schedule and Application

Schedule

Sesshin Dates	Length	Member	Non-Member	Mail-In Date for Application
December 26-31	5-day	\$150	\$175	October 10
January 13-16 (Santa Rosa)	3-day	\$200	\$200	November 12
February 17-20	3-day	\$90	\$105	December 12
April 2-7	5-day	\$150	\$175	February 18
June 14-17	3-day	\$90	\$105	April 16
August 14-19	5-day	\$150	\$175	June 9
October 11-14 (Questhaven)	3-day	\$175	\$200	August 15
December 26-31	5-day	\$150	\$175	October 10

Arrival/Departure Schedule

Arrive by 6:30 pm the first night, unless this is your first sesshin.

Newcomers please arrive in time for orientation, which begins at 4:30 pm. A light snack will be available the first evening.

Last day will end about 3:00 pm.

Application Instructions

Circle the sesshin for which you are applying.

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

Mail in form no *earlier* than the mail-in date above, marked: *Attention Sesshin Coordinator* to the address below. 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 contact the Center.

Please note: Applications cannot be considered unless a check for sesshin fees is included. Make checks payable to the Zen Center of San Diego. Mail to: 2047 Felspar St., San Diego, CA 92109-3551.

Contact/Personal Information

Name _____ Age _____ Gender _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ e-mail _____

Emergency contact (must be blood relative or spouse): Name _____

Relationship _____ Phone _____

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 _____

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: _____

Agreement

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.

Name (please print legibly)

Signature

ALL BLANKS ON APPLICATION FILLED IN? ___ Yes ___ No

Revised 10-10-11

Zen Center

O F S A N D I E G O



Announcements

Contributions The Center welcomes your end of the year tax-deductible donations.

December Sesshin The Center will be closed for the December sesshin from Monday, December 26 through Sunday, January 1. Daisan will resume on Tuesday, January 3.

February Sesshin Sign-up for the three-day February sesshin—which begins Friday, February 17 and ends Monday, February 20—is December 17.

New Year's Brunch The annual New Year's smorgasbord brunch will be from 11–2 on January 1 at the Lamont Street Grill in Pacific Beach. The sign up will be on the kitchen table. The cost is \$15 for adults and half price for children. Checks should be made to ZCSD by December 26. Family and friends are welcome.

Board Election Nominations for the 2012 Board of Trustees will run through December 10. Voting for the nominees will be from December 11 through January 7. Ballots are available for voting members and will be located in the ZCSD kitchen.

FOLD

Schedule

Dawn Sitting

Weekdays, Monday–Friday, 6:00–7:00 am

Tuesday Evening

Two Sittings, 6:30–8:00 pm

Wednesday Evening

Two Sittings, 6:30–7:40 pm

Practice Seminar follows (until about 8:20 pm)

Thursday Evening

Two Sittings, 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 Sittings, Dharma Talk

First Sunday Morning Each Month

Three Sittings, 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