

Zen Center

O F S A N D I E G O

May 2013 Newsletter



The Resistant Strain

During six years of volunteering at the San Diego Hospice hospital, occasionally we'd put on a gown and gloves and visit folks with MRSA, an antibiotic resistant staph strain. As humans, each of us has a resistant strain, a stuck place, that could be abbreviated MRSA: M-my; R-resistant; S-strategies; and A-attitudes. It sometimes shows up as a stubborn, unskillful pattern that takes over and impacts our well-being. Unlike a staph infection, ours can't be avoided with a gown and gloves, since it's already within.

Poet W. H. Auden may have had the resistant strain in mind when he wrote:

*We would rather be ruined
than changed*

*We would rather die in our dread
Than climb the cross of
the moment*

And let our illusions die.

Zen regards the primary resistant strain as our ego-system, the individual self that we think is all we are. Extreme identification with the ego leads to self-obsession, where we make life, and even practice, "all about me," and scarcely take others into account.

Usually our version of ego is not that constricted, and is more an amalgam of our primary personality flavor, including our unintegrated parts that come up periodically—our many me's, with their mixed motives. To get a sense of the impact of the components of our ego's resistant strain, let's consider these questions:

- ♦ Why do I avoid or neglect things that I know are valuable, and keep doing things that are unenlivening, or harmful?

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For some clues as to the specifics of our resistant strain, here are some very revealing additional questions:

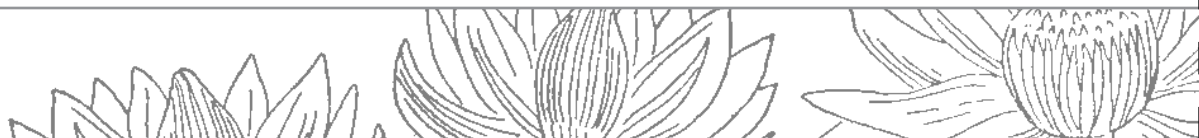
- ♦ What do I feel defensive about or deny, if it is pointed out to me?
- ♦ What do I fear others will find out about me?

Sometimes people regard these issues as "mere psychologizing," and wonder what they have to do with Zen. Yet if we're disinterested in the specifics of our intrapersonal landscape, we remain unaware of the ways our ego structure keeps us asleep. This allows our resistant strain to remain a roadblock to awakening. If this goes on for long, we end up asking the wrong questions: "Is there something wrong with me?" "Doesn't practice work?"

Sometimes our resistant strain is a blind spot, even if others see it readily. One form of blind spot is our socially or culturally acceptable addictive traits, like overworking or being excessively helpful, that are sometimes rewarded by educators, bosses or parents.

Even serious practitioners may not want to bring mindfulness to the ways we seek comfort, security or pleasure. Perhaps there's a fear that observation will make them less enjoyable, and we won't have any fun.

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The Resistant Strain

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Paradoxically, it's usually the opposite: when we invite embodied, nonjudgmental awareness into our murky corners, it expands our sphere of enjoyment (and even our definition of enjoyment). This in turn frees up some of the energy it takes to keep things unconscious.

Comfort and enjoyment are no problem—enjoy! However, if we suspect that we're overdoing activities or substances in a driven way, by numbing or over-stimulating ourselves, we might want to ask: Is there something that I'm trying to avoid? Then, we pause for a minute or so, before jumping into one of the escape hatches that's a symptom of our resistant strain. We may discover that we're trying to outrun a sense of disconnection, meaninglessness, unworthiness, or the upwelling of core pain.

We may also be trying to evade our "Achilles' heel," something at the deep end of the resistant strain. It's something that might seem worse than death, at least to us; somebody else might not be troubled by our scenario, yet have an entirely different off-limits area. Our Achilles' heel may reflect something that happened long ago, and hasn't yet reached resolution emotionally. Or it might be something that we dread having happen, even if it doesn't "make sense" rationally. The Achilles' heel combines a felt sense of cellularly-embedded pain, strong thoughts and an intense emotional tone. See if something comes to mind that sounds beyond your edge, as of now.

As a partial antidote to the resistant strain, we've asked ZCSD participants to develop a practice or

"mission" statement, a reminder of our aspiration to wake up to the maturity and completeness of our full being. We can also check to see if it's clear how to bring meditative awareness to the resistant strain—

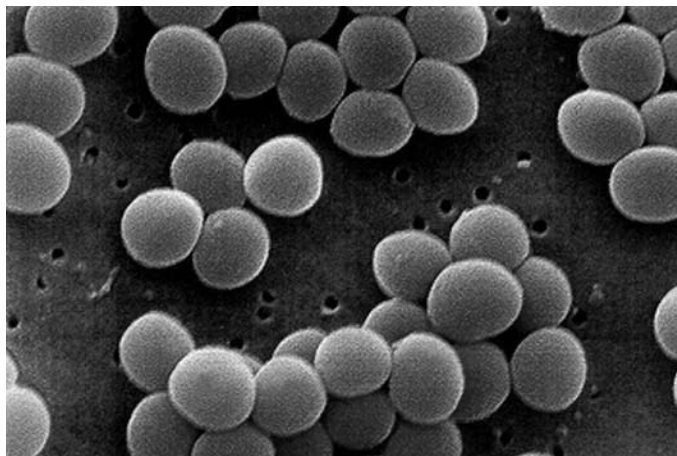
recognizing it, and becoming willing to stay present with its discomfort, in small doses, in the context of the fullness of the moment.

Even though our resistant strain may not kill us, the way MRSA sometimes does, its hidden agendas can sap our vitality and dim our open heart and generous spirit. That's why Zen training must be a canopy, encompassing our multifaceted nature as physical, mental, emotional and spiritual beings—spiritual in the sense of aspiring to awaken to our interconnectedness with all existence, as well as cultivating the kindness,

gratitude and insight that reflect increasing intimacy with our real nature.

Elizabeth Hamilton

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Sesshin Schedule and Application

Schedule

Sesshin Dates	Length	Member	Non-Member	Mail-In Date for Application
June 6-9 (Questhaven)	3-day	\$175	\$200	April 6
August 6-11	5-day	\$150	\$175	June 6
October 11-14	3-day	\$90	\$105	August 11
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. If I do not plan to participate in the entire schedule, my request for exception is attached to this application.** 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 12-14-12

Zen Center

OF SAN DIEGO



Announcements

Questhaven

Applications are still being accepted for the Questhaven Retreat (June 6–9). The retreat is now full, but you will be put on the waiting list.

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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.

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Zen Center San Diego

2047 Felspar St.

San Diego, CA 92109-3551

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