

Zen Center of San Diego Newsletter

2047 Felspar Street | San Diego, California 92109-3551 | 858-273-3444 | February 2010

www.zencentersandiego.org

“Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. The third is to be kind.”

Henry James

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

Board Elections

The election for members of the Board was completed on Jan 23rd. Board member list will be published next month.

February Sesshin

The Center will be closed for the Feb sesshin from Friday, Feb 12 through Monday, Feb 15. Daisan will resume on Wed, Feb 17.

March Sesshin

The 5 day Easter sesshin begins on March 29 and ends on April 3. Applications are now being accepted.

– 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 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>
Feb	2/12 – 2/15	3-day	90	105	Dec 12
April	3/29 – 4/3	5-day	150	175	Feb 29
June	6/10 – 6/13	3-day	90	105	Apr 10
August	8/10 – 8/15	5-day	150	175	Jun 10
Oct	10/29 – 11/1	3-day (Questhaven)	175	200	Aug 15
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

Mercy

Ezra Bayda, from *Zen Heart*

Mercy is sometimes referred to as loving-kindness, but whatever we call it, it is a quality that is necessary throughout the practice life. The word mercy may turn some people away if they fear a false sentimentality, an airy-fairy approach that is contrary to the rigorous approach they imagine practice must entail. But what we're actually talking about is the ability to abandon the harshness of the judgmental mind. After all, isn't it the judgmental mind that runs the constant subliminal message that we're not good enough, and that we never will be? Mercy is about cultivating an attitude of mind in which we desire the welfare of everyone, including ourselves.

Without mercy, we cut ourselves off from the heart, which means we also cut ourselves off from others. Without mercy, our practice will always have that hard edge created by the mind that's constantly judging, evaluating, finding fault. For instance, when breathing into the center of the chest, which is an essential part of the loving-kindness meditation, the mind might say, "Shouldn't you be doing something more tangible and worthwhile?" This is the voice of the ego, not wanting to give up control, not wanting to feel vulnerable. Perhaps there is the underlying belief, "I must be hard on myself or else I'll falter." This view is completely upside-down, and sadly it leads some people to miss out on the essential quality of mercy – a quality that goes all the way back to the teachings of both Jesus and the Buddha, as well as other spiritual traditions.

It might be worthwhile to look at your views in this area a little more deeply. What strong beliefs arise when you hear the word "mercy?" What do you really fear when you withhold mercy? What prevents you from applying to yourself the basic tenderness and compassion that you would to a loved one in duress?

Mercilessness is an aspect of the judging mind. Mercy is a quality of the heart – the heart that is spacious beyond the mind's imagination. No matter how serious we are about practice, no matter how much we persevere with techniques, no matter how curious we are, without the quality of mercy we will always stay stuck in the mind's judgment.

Almost every teacher and every book on practice will emphasize the need to be gentle with ourselves. This is not a new message. The problem is how to do it. What does it actually mean to be kind to ourselves? How do we generate kindness when everything in us is feeling just the opposite?

One way to cultivate mercy is by knowing ourselves deeply – seeing through all of our so-called faults, our imagined unworthiness, our deepest fears. The more we come to know these aspects of ourselves, the more we develop a benign tolerance, not only for ourselves but also for the whole human drama. Every time a negative core-belief judgment arises, we have to see it and label it with precision. We have to observe our tendency to judge over and over until we learn to see it as nothing but the conditioning that it is. And then we have to stay with the subtle felt sense of contraction in the body – whether it's heaviness, soggy, feeling crumbled, feeling lost, or whatever. Much of this work is done in the Me-phase of practice.

We are often merciless in our self-judgments – not only when we're upset at ourselves but as an ongoing frame of mind. What is a negative core belief if not an ongoing negative self-judgment about who we are, such as the belief that I'm unworthy? Such judgments are always lurking under the surface, waiting to arise.

At some point, when that deepest, darkest negative truth about ourselves comes to mind, we have the opportunity to *know* that this so-called "truth" is a lie. Only by consciously entering this deep hole inside can we see through these unreal perceptions of who we judge ourselves to be. By breathing the physical feelings right into the center of the chest on the inbreathe, we can ultimately connect with awareness of our basic or true nature. This *non-conceptual* process is how "I-as-a-me" is transformed into "I-as-Awareness."

As we become more and more familiar with our merciless self-judgments, we can begin to develop a benign tolerance for all of it, even the shame. In looking deeply into ourselves, the qualities of warmth, friendship, and appreciation for ourselves, in all of our human foibles, begin to come forth naturally. Our self-judgments may still come up, but we will be able to see them through merciful and compassionate eyes. It's awareness that heals. This is the most fundamental tenet of practice. But for this healing to take place, the depth of our mercilessness must be seen clearly for what it is. Thus, looking deeply is one way to counter our mercilessness of mind.

In addition to basic awareness and knowing our ego's script, there are also specific practices, such as the loving-kindness practice, that can accelerate the process. It takes a certain kind of courage to do this, because the practice of loving-kindness requires that we do something radically different with our core pain of unworthiness, which is to let it in and bring to it the quality of mercy.

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Although it's a given that we don't want to feel the pain of unworthiness, at some point we have to understand that it's more painful to hold onto these self-judgments than it is to actually feel them. Mercy is the quality of opening, of allowing the pain to be experienced within the spaciousness of the heart. Mercy is the ultimate Yes.

When I first became seriously ill when I was in my late forties, and it wasn't yet apparent whether I'd ever get better, a lot of self-judgment arose around being sick. I believed that if my practice had been deeper, I wouldn't have gotten sick. Moreover, I believed that because I had so much fear around what might happen to me in the future, it proved that I was weak. In fact, there was so much shame, fear and self-judgment that experiencing them was actually almost as painful as the physical symptoms of my illness.

It wasn't until I started a loving-kindness practice that this mercilessness of mind began to

dissolve. The loving-kindness meditation in particular was like an accelerated path, apparently undercutting the solidity of my negative core-belief judgments, including the universal self-judgment of unworthiness. What I learned through the practice of loving-kindness was the real healing, regardless of whether or not my body got better.

As we begin to experience a sense of spaciousness around our dark and claustrophobic beliefs of unworthiness, we can discover that there is nothing more satisfying than living from the awakened heart. When we are connected with the Zen Heart, with our true nature, the sense of who we really are and what our life really is are no longer just vague intimations; there is a clarity about what we are doing on this earth, and it is a clarity that brings with it both joy and appreciation.



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