

Zen Center of San Diego Newsletter

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

www.zencentersandiego.org

“In separateness lies the world’s
great misery; in compassion lies the
world’s true strength.”

Buddha

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

Future Newsletters

The postal service has added new requirements and costs to the newsletter mailings. In light of this, we will be going through our mailing list and deleting some of the names that we haven’t heard from in some time.

If you don’t receive the next newsletter, but would like to remain on the mailing list, please send an e-mail with your name and physical mailing address to

newsletter@zencentersandiego.org.

March/April Sesshin

The Center will be closed for sesshin from Monday, March 29 through Saturday, April 3. Daisan will resume on Tuesday, April 6.

– *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	Jan 29
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

Achilles Heel

By Elizabeth Hamilton

In Greek mythology, when Achilles was born, his mother dipped him in the River Styx, to make him invulnerable. For years he seemed to be an invincible warrior, until Paris shot him in the heel where his mother had held him, and the wound killed him.

These days, *Achilles heel* refers to a highly vulnerable area lurking within us. It can go incognito for years, until something takes us to our edge and the scab comes off. Our illusions of invulnerability are shattered, and we're face to face with the core pain that we've tried to outrun or cover over for years, even though it's as familiar as a longtime fellow traveler.

The psycho-physical pain of the Achilles heel includes emotion-thought components like feeling unwanted, unlovable, unworthy or abandoned, and physical sensations like sinking, quaking, shriveling, or crumbling. As children we had no way to deal with such overwhelming pain, so to avoid hurting, we made *decisions* about how to be, adopting self-images, strategies and attitudes designed to fend off the ache. These ways of being aren't caused by our childhood circumstances; obviously, two children in the same situation come up with very different styles and strategies for warding off misery, based on their essence personality traits: being helpful, competent, invisible, easygoing or melodramatic.

We're not really talking about the past, since we're probably still engaging in our longstanding conditioned patterns, attempting to forge a protective shield so that we, like Achilles, can be invincible. Illusions die hard. Poignantly, these efforts to keep the pain out usually backfire, since the pain we're trying to avoid is already inside us, and our protective attempts put it under lockdown.

Even if our self-preservation maneuvers seem effective for a long time, the Achilles heel lies in wait like a land mine, until it is detonated by something that threatens our strongest identities and fear-based beliefs.

Even if someone else's Achilles heel seems trivial to us, ours seems cataclysmic when an upheaval occurs. Our defense mechanisms are incapacitated, and we're unable to distract ourselves with our usual compensations, activities, and substances, since

nothing relieves the pangs for long. Our practice eye closes, and we lose sight of what we know.

Triggers can be external situations or existential implosions from within. Situational triggers include being deceived or ridiculed; financial or work reversals; loss or change in areas that provide meaning or purpose; major relationship shifts; and changes in abilities or appearance, including signs of aging – which brings us to the category of existential factors. These might be emerging negative self-identities, like believing that we're

stupid, unlovable, or unworthy. Or, if our original decision was akin to "it's all hopeless", we might fall into despair after feeding ourselves the "bad food" of blaming others, grievance collecting, re-living painful memories, self-pity, seeing our pain or childhood as worse than other peoples', or ruminating over the why's and who's: how did I get this way? Whose fault is it?

Hopefully this doesn't sound dismal, since clarifying our Achilles heel is a path to genuine happiness. When our Achilles heel comes to light, it's an opportunity to become clear about what makes the pain worse, and what the path of awakening is, with suffering.

.....
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Useful questions for illuminating these issues are: do I know my primary Achilles heel? What brings on an attack? What are the symptoms and reactions? What unskillful responses do I use to cover over the pain – usually disconnecting mind-states like the anger family, feeling sorry for ourselves, or taking a victim or martyr stance.

The antidote involves grounding practices like dual awareness, for maintaining presence, approaches for practicing directly with core pain, and cultivating compassion and loving-kindness, both to defuse self-judgment and discouragement, and to awaken the capacity to empathize with the pain of others. It can be

helpful to consult someone who has walked these paths, provided they know the difference between empathy, and the kind of sympathizing that leads to what Twelve Step programs call the “pity potty”.

Unaddressed, the Achilles heel distorts our vision and increases disheartenment. Embodied practice makes it clear that the Achilles heel is a delusion, not the deepest truth about us. As the healing light of awareness shines on the Achilles heel’s aggregates, the gates can open into fundamental interconnectedness, with the heart of the world, and with one another.



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