

[Zazen] on high

www.zohi.org

*All beings by nature are Buddha, as ice by Nature is water.
Hakuin Zenji, Song of Zazen*

Every Sunday morning at 8:00 at Yoga on High we practice zazen in the Diamond Sangha tradition which Robert Aitken Roshi brought from Japan to America. To learn more about this zen practice, we recommend his classic book, *TAKING THE PATH OF ZEN*.

Zazen is open to anyone with serious intent. While we encourage a donation to cover our facility use, there is no cost to attend.

Meditation Practice

Zazen means "seated mind" and is a means to become aware of your true nature; it is the heart of zen practice. Posture is important. Using a cushion or chair, keep your back straight, shoulders and abdomen relaxed, ears aligned over shoulders, chin slightly tucked in, eyes open and gazing at the floor a few feet in front of you. Unless you are in a chair, be sure that your knees rest solidly on the mat. Sit with the solidity of a mountain and the energetic strength of a young lion. Rest your hands in your lap with palms up, your dominant hand on the bottom, fingers over fingers and with thumbs gently touching.

Locate your breath, then begin to count your breaths from 1 to 10, then repeat again. You will lose count since it's the nature of the mind to wander from one thought to another. Without judgment, simply locate your breath and start again---over and over again. That's it! Zen practice requires stillness; please do not casually move to adjust your position. If you need to change position, first gassho (join your hands together in a gesture of awareness), then make your adjustment.

Zen Etiquette

Please arrive at the center by 7:50 a.m. in order to be ready to sit at 8:00. The center doors will be locked a little after 7:55 and you will not be able to enter after that time. Please bring your own zafu (cushion) if you have one or use the center's blankets. You'll remove your shoes just after you enter the center and place them on the shelves provided. Proceed to the zendo and get set up.

To formally enter the zendo once the candle is lit, stand at the door and do a bow (with hands in gassho, bend at the waist). Then hold hands in kinhin position (see below) and proceed to the front of your mat. Do a bow to your cushion (the seat of your enlightenment) and then turn in the direction of the altar and bow toward the center of the zendo. Sit and prepare for zazen.

Zazen and Kinhin

One strike of the clappers and three of the gong mark the beginning of meditation blocks. Sits are 25 minutes. Two strikes of the gong mark the beginning of kinhin. Do a bow on your cushion and begin to stand. When the leader strikes the clappers once, bow to the center and turn to your left. With arms at elbow height, clasp your left hand over your right fist. Fill in any spaces by quickly walking forward, then keep the pace of the person in front of you. If you need to use the restroom, bow and leave the line. Rejoin the line in your spot (the person behind you gasshos as you enter the line). When the leader strikes the clappers once, quickly continue around to your place and wait until the leader signals silently. Bow to the center, turn facing the altar and bow to your cushion, then prepare for zazen. A single strike of the bell marks the end of the final period of zazen. Do a bow at your cushion and prepare to stand.

Raihai

When the leader rings the inkin, this is the signal to rise and face the altar. After a pause, the inkin is rung once and all do a full prostration towards the altar. To do a full prostration, bow then continue down to your knees, elbows on the floor, palms up, then lift your forearms up a few inches as though lifting the robe of the Buddha. Come to standing. Repeat twice more at the sound of the inkin. At the next ring, bow towards the altar; then turn toward the center and bow again with the final ring.

Sutra Service

Sit as for zazen. Locate your sutra book under your mat. Hold the book up near your face and chant loudly enough so you can hear your voice. After "Great Vows for All" the leader rings the inkin for raihai (see above). After raihai, the service is over.

This sounds like a lot to learn and you won't remember it all at first. This is all part of the challenge of this centuries-old zen practice!

If you have questions, please email info@zohi.org with "zen" in the subject line.

Please Note: We are not connected with Yoga on High other than thru their graciously providing space for our practice.