



# Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center

## A Center for Mindful Living

681 17th Avenue NE, Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN 55413 • Issue No. 35 • Winter 2013

### Coming Home, Sitting Down by Michael O'Neal

Simply put, what we call “meditation” is just the art of coming home. For a moment, we stop being somewhere else, doing something else, and settle into the richness of the present situation, whatever it is, just as it is. This is our true home. To do this is to arrive for what Thich Nhat Hanh calls our appointment with life, which takes place only in the present moment.

Woody Allen once said something to the effect that 90% of success is just showing up. In a deep sense, this is what our practice is, what the Zen teacher Yvonne Rand calls “radically showing up”: not indulging our usual anxious habit of taking our awareness somewhere else, and instead opening to—radically engaging with—this moment, in all of its fullness.

We can practice this art of coming home at any time. It doesn't need any special set of circumstances. The living reality of the present moment is always at hand, available to us. Our challenge, and our opportunity, is to remember to do this act of simple engagement—or to put it another way, to be mindful. “Mindfulness” is the usual translation of the Pali term *sati*, but another translation is “recollection,” which brings the sense of re-collecting ourselves, re-memorizing ourselves, again and again. We never come to the end of this practice.

Dainin Katagiri Roshi used to say, “Settle the self onto the Self, and let the flower of your life force bloom.” When we choose to give our whole life energy to this activity at any given time, when we completely come home and enter our “living room,” the magnificence of the way things are in this moment has a chance to reveal itself, and we encounter our true self.

Practically speaking, when we come home to our living room, it makes sense to sit down. Looked at from the outside, this appears to be a formal technique, so-called sitting meditation. But sitting is, for most people, just the most natural and appropriate way to arrange the body to be comfortably at home. This activity of sitting down in the



living room of our true home is a very natural one, very uncontrived, although because of its relative newness it may not feel that way at first.

We might say that 90% of the activity of sitting meditation is accomplished by simply doing it on the most basic level—by stopping doing anything else, physically or mentally, and just sitting down. But because of the enormous amount of inertia and “habit energy” in our lives, because of all the internal and external demands on us, this is quite a significant event, one easy to underestimate. Most of us have no support in our lives for settled mindfulness practice, and so the transition to mindful sitting is itself a very important practice. In general, the more structure we can build into our lives to support regular sitting practice, the less struggle there will be to “get ourselves” to do it, and the more energy will be freed up for the sitting itself.

Once we are actually seated on our cushion or chair, we could say that 90% of the remaining activity of sitting meditation is accomplished by coming into and then maintaining a balanced, upright posture. How do we do this? Initially, instruction from an experienced practitioner is important. Then, as we sit, we mindfully engage with the body as it seeks out its best posture. To practice awareness we want to cultivate a posture that is stable, upright, balanced, aligned—and comfortable. To do this we need to pay attention to the song of the body as it expresses itself through sensation. As we continue to sit, this is a continuing practice—to permeate the body with awareness, and to sustain our intention to sit upright in an excellent posture.

Shunryu Suzuki Roshi said, after describing the basis elements of good sitting posture, “These forms are not a means of obtaining the right state of mind. To take this posture itself is the purpose of our practice. When you have this posture, you have the right state of mind, so there is no need to try to attain some special state.”

*“Coming Home, Sitting Down” continued on page 6*

# 2012 Year End Appeal

*To give means first of all to offer joy, happiness, and love.*

Thich Nhat Hanh

Dear Friend,

As 2012 draws to a close I find myself reflecting on one of the Buddha's teachings that we have studied at Compassionate Ocean. It is the teaching of the six paramitas—generosity, upright action, patience, continuous practice, meditation, and wisdom. Each of these practices is contained in the other five, and they offer a means "to cross over from our shore of suffering to the shore of well-being." They offer everyone a way of opening the heart to receive, embrace, and transform whatever comes our way, allowing us to see ourselves in everyone we encounter.

The paramitas are a way of living for us as individuals, but they also are a core practice of our community as a whole. They are at the heart of what we offer to the larger community with our classes and special events, weekly gatherings, and retreats.

It is in the spirit of the paramitas that I write today, asking you to consider making a donation to our Year-end Appeal that will allow us to continue offering the Buddha's teaching and practice to the greater community.

For the past ten years, Compassionate Ocean has operated with an annual budget of around \$125,000 per year. Our income comes from class and retreat fees, membership donations, fundraising events, and general donations. The support the Center has received—including time, labor, financial support, encouragement, and practice—from so many people is truly wonderful, and I am deeply grateful.

As I write this we need to raise \$26,000 to end the year in a positive position. This is crucial for us because we do not have a substantial cash cushion—each year we operate on a very lean budget. We are hoping to raise this amount through this Year-end Appeal. Raising this will allow us to go forward at a very important time, as we complete the renovation of our building and begin offering activities at our long-awaited new home. With your support, we can reach our goal.

Please consider making a donation to Compassionate Ocean at this time, to help us to continue to offer the teachings of generosity, upright action, patience, continuous practice, meditation, and wisdom.

With appreciation,

*Donneen Torrey*

Chair, Board of Directors



# Winter Programs 2013

## Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center

681 17th Avenue NE, Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN 55413  
(612) 781-7640 • [www.OceanDharma.org](http://www.OceanDharma.org)

### Continuing on the Path of Mindfulness

*Taught by  
Joen Snyder O'Neal*



This course is designed for people who have completed the Introductory Course in Mindfulness (Total Dynamic Living) and would like to reinforce and deepen their practice. The emphasis will be on both formal and informal ways to practice mindfulness, including integrating the challenges of everyday life. We will continue to explore sitting meditation along with various body meditations, including walking, body scan, yoga, and chi gong. We will also study selections from Jon Kabat-Zinn's *Full Catastrophe Living*.

This class has limited enrollment. If you are interested, please register early.

**Minneapolis (#B60)**  
**Mondays, Jan. 21–Feb. 18**  
**(five sessions)**  
**7:00-9:00 P.M.**

**Fee: \$100**

### Mu Is a Gate

*Taught by  
Michael O'Neal*

*Assisted by  
Joen Snyder O'Neal*



*A monk asked Joshu, "Does a dog have buddha nature?" Joshu answered, "Mu [No]."*

This is one of the most well-known and highly-regarded Zen koans. A koan is a record of a saying or doing of a Zen master, highly compressed in meaning and charged with transformative energy. Joshu's "Mu" is often used as the entrance to working with koans. In this course we will explore this koan together, taking it as an opportunity for the mind to unfold into clear seeing. The course text will be *The Book of Mu: Essential Writings on Zen's Most Important Koan*, which will be given out in the first class.

**Minneapolis (#B61)**  
**Wednesdays, Jan. 23–March 6**  
**(seven sessions)**  
**7:00-9:00 P.M.**

**Fee: \$140 (members \$120)**  
**+ \$15 materials fee**

Reduced fees are offered as needed.

**These courses will meet at the CASKET ARTS BUILDING**  
**681 17th Ave. NE, Suite 210 (in the Northeast Arts District of Minneapolis)**

### Total Dynamic Living - Introductory Program in Mindfulness

Total Dynamic Living is a thorough, well-structured introduction to mindfulness practice in everyday life. It follows the nationally acclaimed mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) model developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, presenting mindfulness as a universal practice for people of any (or no) religious background.

The program includes instruction and practice in sitting meditation, gentle yoga, body awareness meditation, and daily-life applications of mindfulness. It also includes information about stress and relaxation. The program enables participants to develop their own base in mindfulness practice integrated into everyday life.

The course includes eight weekly classes, an individual interview with the instructor, a Saturday retreat, the book *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, two CDs, and handouts. 27 CEUs are available for all courses.

The course fee is \$295 plus a \$35 materials fee. Payment plans and some scholarship aid are available. Please contact the Center to discuss.

Enrollment is limited, and pre-registration is required. Please let your friends and colleagues know about this program.

**#179 Minneapolis: Tuesdays**  
**Jan. 15–March 5 • 6:30-9:00 P.M.**

**Instructor: Joen Snyder O'Neal**

**Location: Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center**  
#210 Casket Arts Building, 681 17th Ave. NE, Minneapolis  
(in the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District)

**#257 St. Paul: Thursdays**  
**Jan. 17–March 7 • 6:30-9:00 P.M.**

**Instructor: Michael O'Neal**

**Location: Clouds in Water Zen Center**  
308 Prince St., St. Paul (near I-94 & the 7th St. exit)

### Total Dynamic Living: One-Day Retreat

This retreat is open to all current participants in Total Dynamic Living courses. It is also open to graduates of past Total Dynamic Living courses on a donation basis. People not enrolled in a current course should call the Center in advance to reserve a space.

**Saturday, March 2, 2013 • 8:30 A.M.-2:30 P.M.**

**Location: 681 17th Ave. NE, Suite 210, Minneapolis**

**Gift certificates** for the Introductory Program in Mindfulness are available. Please email [admin@oceandharma.org](mailto:admin@oceandharma.org) or call (612) 781-7640.



### 2013 Great Gatherings

The two Great Gatherings below were postponed from last fall until this winter. We have not yet scheduled them. Contact the Center if you are interested in attending. We will post times and dates on the Compassionate Ocean website when they are re-scheduled.

- **Good Eating**

Bobbie Fredsall will discuss why we might want to know more about where our food comes from, not only for our own health, but for the effects our choices can have throughout the food system in our world. She has written many articles on food issues for the Eastside Food Co-op newsletter.

- **Sustainable Living**

John Carmody, Director of the Center for Sustainable Building Research at the University of Minnesota, will discuss what each of us can do in our daily lives to address the environmental crisis we are in.

### Sangha Gatherings

The Compassionate Ocean Sangha is a group practicing in the Buddhist mindfulness traditions of Soto Zen and Thich Nhat Hanh. Throughout the year the sangha (community) has weekly gatherings that include sitting and walking meditation, dharma talks and discussions, mindful movement, chanting and singing, and other spiritual practices. Dharma talks focus on aspects of Buddhist teaching and their application to everyday life.

Everyone is invited to participate in our sangha gatherings. There are no prerequisites to participate, and people are welcome to come when they wish. There is no fee; donations are welcome.

There are two weekly gatherings of the Compassionate Ocean Sangha. The Sunday group is co-led by Joen Snyder O'Neal and Michael O'Neal. Joen leads the Friday group. There is also a meditation session offered on Wednesday mornings.

#### **Sunday Gathering: Sundays, 9:00-11:15 A.M.**

*681 17th Avenue N.E., Suite 210, Minneapolis*

Schedule: 9:00 sitting, 9:25 walking, 9:35 sitting, 10:00 dharma talk and discussion, 11:15 ending

*Note:* No Sunday gatherings on December 23 or 30, and March 17. Gatherings resume after the December break on January 6.

#### **Friday Gathering: Fridays, 9:30-11:00 A.M.**

*681 17th Avenue N.E., Suite 210, Minneapolis*

Schedule: 9:30 sitting, 10:00 dharma talk and discussion, 11:00 ending

*Note:* No Friday gatherings on December 21 or 28. Gatherings resume on January 4.

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### Guiding Teachers



Joen Snyder O'Neal and  
Michael O'Neal

*The guiding teachers are available for individual meetings regarding life and practice. To set up an appointment, call the Center.*

Joen Snyder O'Neal and Michael O'Neal are the guiding teachers of the Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center. They practiced and taught for many years at the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center and Hokyoji Zen Monastery under the guidance of Dainin Katagiri Roshi. They have also practiced with Thich Nhat Hanh in France and the United States, and have completed a training for professionals with Jon Kabat-Zinn. Joen was ordained as a Zen priest by Katagiri Roshi in 1980 and received Dharma transmission from him in 1989.

### Sangha Retreats

These retreats are open to community members as well as others who have had some experience with Buddhist practice and meditation. Each retreat offers an extended opportunity to settle the mind and body and open to the deep wisdom of human life. These retreats are excellent opportunities to strengthen and deepen the practice of presence, including benefiting from the support of others.

#### **One-day Retreats**

**Saturday, Jan. 19, 9:00 A.M.-4:30 P.M.**

**Saturday, Feb. 16, 9:00 A.M.-4:30 P.M.**

*681 17th Avenue N.E., Suite 210, Minneapolis*

Led by Joen Snyder O'Neal and Michael O'Neal

This includes sitting and walking meditation, yoga practice, and a dharma talk by Joen Snyder O'Neal or Michael O'Neal. Participants should bring a bag lunch; drinks will be provided. Fee: \$20 members, \$25 nonmembers

#### **Weekend Retreat at Ryumonji Monastery**

**Friday, March 15, 5:30 P.M.-Sunday, March 18, 2:00 P.M.**

*Location is in northeastern Iowa*

Led by Shoken Winecoff, Joen Snyder O'Neal & Michael O'Neal. Fee due in advance: members \$110, non-members \$130 (includes meals and lodging.)



#### **Membership:**

You are invited to become a member of the Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center. Membership is a way to support the programs of the Center, and is encouraged for those who participate regularly as well as those who simply would like to help make possible the continued life of the Center. A membership brochure is available at sangha gatherings or can be sent out by mail; please call if interested.



## Winter 2013 Registration Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone

H: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

W: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

To register, please check the appropriate activities.

### **Total Dynamic Living—Introductory Program in Mindfulness (\$25 deposit)**

- ☐ Minneapolis, Tuesday evenings (#179)
- ☐ St. Paul, Thursday evenings (#257)

### **Total Dynamic Living—One Day Retreat**

- ☐ Saturday, March 2, 8:30 A.M. - 2:30 P.M.  
(by donation for program alumni)

### **Continuing on the Path of Mindfulness**

- ☐ Minneapolis, Monday evenings (#B60)  
(\$25 deposit)

### **Mu Is a Gate**

- ☐ Minneapolis, Wednesday evenings (#B61)  
(\$25 deposit)

### **One-Day Sangha Retreats**

- ☐ Saturday, January 19
- ☐ Saturday, February 16  
(enclose payment of \$25, members \$20 each)

### **Ryumonji Retreat**

- ☐ Friday, March 15, Sunday, March 17  
(Full payment with registration: \$130 non-members, \$110 members)

**Enrollment for these activities is limited, and early registration is encouraged.**

Please call if you have any questions.

To register, send this form along with the non-refundable deposit listed (payable to CODC) to:  
Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center  
681 17th Ave. NE Ste. 210, Minneapolis, MN 55413  
(612) 781-7640 • [www.OceanDharma.org](http://www.OceanDharma.org)  
Or register online on our website. See the program pages.

*"Coming Home, Sitting Down" continued from frontpage*

Once we are sitting upright, taking care of our body, we could say that 90% of the remaining activity of sitting meditation is accomplished by bringing awareness to the breath—becoming aware that we are breathing, and being present throughout the cycle of each breath. To simply be aware of our breathing has an enormous influence on our mind and body, and is another fundamental dimension of healing our habitual mind-body split. The Buddha specifically taught awareness of in-breaths and out-breaths as a core awareness practice.

What remains of the practice of sitting meditation after we are sitting comfortably upright, mindfully maintaining awareness of body and breath? Although we have accomplished 90% of the activity again and again, there is still an infinite territory for awareness to explore. Nonetheless, this gives us a very strong foundation that will have an impact on all aspects of our life. We will experience a deep sense of relief and peace when we practice the art of coming home and sitting down.

Originally published Fall, 1999

## Haiku from Rohatsu by Terry Miller

stay with the silence  
the teacher said,  
patiently and wholeheartedly.  
and all week long  
things spoke of silence.

soft footsteps on  
solid floorboards, this one  
spoke to me.

oriyoki sets lined  
up in rows for the next meal,  
so much mindful touch.

rakhusus hanging  
by the front door, make  
crooked gashos.

chant in Compassion Hall,  
the building next door leans  
closer, to listen.

lying down yoga,  
watch a ceiling cobweb  
sway gracefully.

slow walking around the  
zendo, our shadows on the wall  
follow us.

hum of the furnace,  
pains in my back.  
who is in this body?

the teacher bows  
slowly and mindfully,  
stillness covers us.

stay with the silence  
she said.  
all week long  
things spoke of silence.

*Editor's note: Terry Miller participated in the seven-day retreat this month commemorating the Buddha's enlightenment, called Rohatsu. He wrote these poems expressing some of his momentary experiences.*

# Zen Koans

This fall Michael O'Neal, Joen Snyder O'Neal, and Sosan Flynn again joined to offer a class together. This year the class was about Zen koans, based on the delightful book by John Tarrant, *Bring Me the Rhinoceros*. We studied one koan each week. We learned how these koans fit into their time and culture, about their place in Buddhist teaching, and how they connect with our daily life. After examining, experiencing,, and discussing these unusual stories for eight weeks, they began to come alive, and along the way we deepened as a community as we looked at our lives differently.





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## Winter Program Highlights

- **Introductory Programs in Mindfulness**  
Continuing on the Path of Mindfulness  
– Five week class in Minneapolis
- **Buddhist Studies course:**  
– “Mu Is a Gate”
- **One-day Retreats:**  
– Jan. 19 and Feb. 16
- **Weekend Retreat at Ryumonji**  
– March 15 - 17

**Winter Appeal**  
see page 2