



What is Zen?

by Michael O'Neal

When I was fourteen years old I was browsing in a bookstore and came across a book called *Zen Buddhism*. It was on a wire rack, part of a series on various world religions and philosophies. I remember looking at several, but this was the one I took home.

It was a small book, beginning with a short, straightforward introduction giving some background information. Zen, it said, was a branch of Buddhism. Buddhism is a tradition that cultivates waking up, or enlightenment, and Zen is a particular approach to this that first developed in China.

The rest of the book consisted of very short anecdotes, mostly dialogues between an ancient Chinese Zen teacher and a student, with no commentary provided. Some of these seemed somewhat clear:

One time a Zen master was asked, "How is it possible for the truth to be expressed without speaking and without keeping silent?" The master replied, "In southern China, in the spring, when I was only a boy, Ah! How the birds sang among the blossoms!"

Others seemed much less clear:

One time a master and his student were talking in the master's quarters until late in the evening. Finally the student got up to leave, and, sliding open the door to the passageway, exclaimed "Oh! It's dark!" The master picked up a candle lantern and handed it to him, saying "Here, take this." The student took the candle and began to turn away. Just then the master leaned forward and blew it out.

Something was going on in these stories that moved me. As it turns out, since first encountering this book over 50 years ago I have been wayfaring in Zen. As I look back I can see that I have continually worked to arrange the cir-

cumstances of my life to be able to explore Zen. To me, Zen is central to the project of being fully human.

So what is Zen? To begin with, Zen isn't a particular belief structure. Although what we believe certainly has consequences, and there are a great many teachings in Buddhism, loyalty to a pre-determined set of beliefs isn't valued. What is valued is seeing how the mind works, how the world works, and in the seeing, finding a way of being human that reflects the fundamental beauty and dignity of human life.

Zen isn't about particular practices, although there are plenty of these in traditional Zen. These practices are like an exercise bar, or a garden trellis, that makes it possible for certain aspects of human life to be experienced and expressed. They are a kind of yoga practice that transforms our sense of who we are and how we can act, including in situations outside of formal Zen.

Zen isn't even primarily about meditation, although the word "Zen" derives from a Sanskrit word that refers to meditation, and *zazen*—sitting Zen—is the foundational activity. To put it differently, Zen meditation isn't limited to our usual idea of meditation. It is unlimited—it is about how we are, how we "be," in the world.

Ultimately, Zen isn't any *thing* at all. It isn't contained within any conceptual category. As my teacher used to say, "No matter what you say, it doesn't hit the mark." Zen is a pointer word, and the important issue is where it is pointing: at the life process itself.

So what, then, *is* Zen?

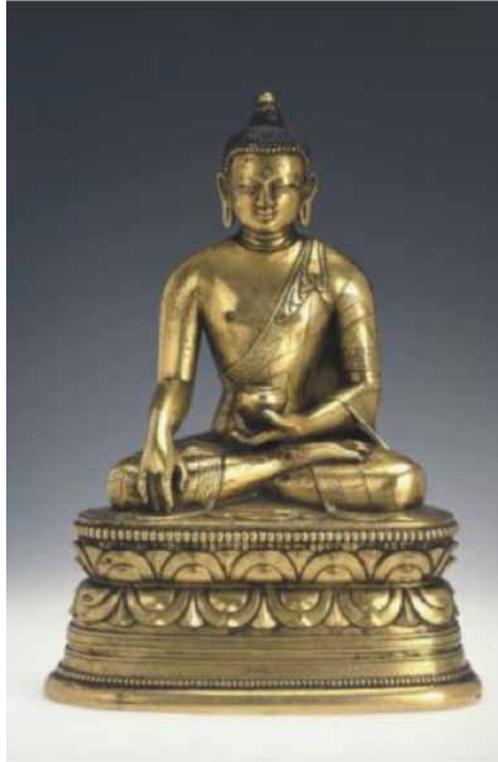
Just this.

Just this.



Buddhist Psychology Series

Fall 2017 – Spring 2018



Mind is the forerunner of all things.

– the Buddha

A central concern of the Buddha Dharma, and of all of us as humans, is the nature of our mind. Our mind largely determines our experience in this world—how much trouble for ourselves and others we cause, how much kindness and support we offer, how much freedom and luminosity we realize. Meditation practice helps us see how our mind works, and the teachings of Buddhist psychology help us know what to look for.

In this three-part series we will explore various aspects of consciousness and how the mind functions to create our world. We will draw upon over a thousand years of development in Buddhist investigation of the mind, from the Abhidhamma of the Pali Canon to later Mahayana teachings, including the Yogacara teachings of *manas* and store consciousness. We will also examine some of the recent discoveries in neuroscience.

Fall 2017	Understanding Our Mind
Winter 2018	Constructing the Self
Spring 2018	How Enlightenment Works



Fall Programs 2017

Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center

652 17th Avenue NE., Minneapolis, MN 55413
(612) 781-7640 • www.OceanDharma.org

Buddhist Psychology Series

Understanding Our Mind

Taught by Michael and Joen O'Neal



A twelfth-century Zen master said, "When we understand how our mind works, the practice becomes easy." In this course we will explore classic Buddhist teachings on the nature of mind and its functions, including how these combine to bring about the world and the life we experience. The course will include meditation, lecture, and discussion.

Minneapolis (#B83)

Wednesdays, Sept. 27-Nov. 15 (eight sessions)

7:00–9:00 p.m.

\$185 (members \$165) (includes two course texts)

Member rates apply to members of all local Dharma centers.

Reduced fees are offered as needed; please contact the Center at (612) 781-7640.

To register, use the form on page 6 or go to www.OceanDharma.org.

Total Dynamic Living - An Eight-Week Program in Mindfulness and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

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, four 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.

#193 Minneapolis: Tuesdays
Sept. 19-Nov. 7 • 6:30-9:00 P.M.

Instructor: Joen Snyder O'Neal

Location: Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center
652 17th Ave. NE, Minneapolis (in the Northeast Arts District)

#274 St. Paul: Thursdays
Sept. 21-Nov. 9 • 6:30-9:00 P.M.

Instructor: Michael O'Neal

Location: Clouds in Water Zen Center
445 Farrington St., St. Paul (near University Ave. and Western Ave.)

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, October 28, 2017 • 9:00 A.M.-3:00 P.M.

Location: 652 17th Ave. NE, Minneapolis

– 27 CEUs are available for nurses, social workers, educators, and psychologists. –



Total Dynamic Living Annual Reunion

For all graduates of our Total Dynamic Living: Introductory Program in Mindfulness, we will be holding a **reunion** from 6:30-9:00 P.M. on **Thursday, Sept. 14** at our Center in Minneapolis. The evening will include a body scan meditation, yoga, sitting, remarks by Joen and Michael, and time for refreshments and conversation. Fee: \$10. Please register in advance using our website or the form on page 6.



Guiding Teachers

Joen and Michael O'Neal are the guiding teachers of 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.

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

Meditation and Dharma Talks

Most Sunday and Friday mornings throughout the year Compassionate Ocean offers meditation practice (sitting and walking) followed by a Dharma talk and discussion, focusing on aspects of Buddhist teaching and their application to everyday life. Our practice is in the mindfulness traditions of Soto Zen and Thich Nhat Hahn. Everyone is invited to participate. There are no prerequisites; people are welcome to come when they wish. There is no fee; donations are welcome. The Sunday gathering is co-led by Joen and Michael. Joen leads the Friday group.

Sundays, 9:00-11:15 A.M.

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

Fridays, 9:30-11:00 A.M.

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

Welcome Sessions

New people are always welcome at our Sunday and Friday morning gatherings. To provide a special welcome, welcome sessions that include an orientation to our practice are offered periodically. These are excellent opportunities to find out more if you are curious but haven't got around to coming.

Friday, Sept. 8, 9:30-11:00 A.M.

Sunday, Sept. 10, 9:00-11:15 A.M.

Orientation to Zen Meditation

Basic instruction in Zen sitting practice. No pre-registration needed.

Sunday mornings at 8:15 A.M.

Introduction to Zen Practice with Michael

A two-class introduction to Zen meditation and related practices. No fee; pre-registration required.

Mondays, Sept. 11 & 18, 7:00-8:30 P.M.

Weekday Meditation Sessions

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings
7:00 zazen (sitting), 7:40 chanting service, 8:00 temple cleaning (to 8:15)

Thursday evenings

7:30 zazen (sitting), 8:00 kinhin (walking), 8:10 zazen, 8:40 ending.

People are welcome to come for any part of the schedule.

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.

Practice Period at Hokyoji Zen Community

Located in southeastern Minnesota

Seven-day practice period:

Monday Aug. 28, 5:00 P.M.-Monday, Sept. 4, 2:00 P.M.

Sesshin only:

Friday, Sept. 1, 7:00 P.M.-Monday Sept. 4, 2:00 P.M.

Led by Joen O'Neal, Michael O'Neal, and resident priest Dokai Georgeson.

If you are interested in participating in this event, or for further information, please call the Center.



Weekend Sesshin—September-October

At Compassionate Ocean

Friday, Sept. 29, 7:00 P.M.-Sunday, Oct. 1, Noon

Led by Joen and Michael.

Sesshin means "to gather the heart, to gather the mind." Includes sitting and walking meditation, Dharma talks, individual meetings with teachers, liturgy, and formal meals. Register at least one week in advance. Fee: \$60 (members \$50) (includes meals)

Weekend Sesshin—November

At Compassionate Ocean

Friday, Nov. 10, 7:00 P.M.-Sunday, Nov. 12, Noon

Led by Joen and Michael.

See description above.

Fall 2017 Registration Form

Name _____

Address _____

Zip _____ Email _____

Phone

H: () _____

W or C: () _____

To register, please check the appropriate activities.

Total Dynamic Living – Introductory Program in Mindfulness (\$25 deposit)

- Minneapolis, Tuesday evenings (#193)
- St. Paul, Thursday evenings (#274)

Total Dynamic Living: One-Day Retreat

- Saturday, Oct. 28, 9:00 A.M.– 3:00 P.M.
(by donation for program alumni)
- Total Dynamic Living: Annual Reunion
Thursday, Sept. 14 (\$10 fee)
- “Understanding Our Mind” Course (#B83)
Sept. 27-Nov. 15, (\$25 deposit)

Introduction to Zen Practice Mini-Course

- Sept. 11 & 18

Practice Period at Hokyoji

Aug. 28-Sept. 4

Call the Center to register for this event.

Weekend Sesshin—Sept.-Oct.

- Sept. 29-Oct. 1, Fee: \$60 (members \$50)
(includes meals)

Weekend Sesshin—Nov.

- Nov. 10-12, Fee: \$60 (members \$50)

Facing Climate Change (no fee)

- Friday, August 25
- Friday, Sept. 22
- Friday, Oct. 13
- Thursday, Nov. 16
- Friday, Dec. 15

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

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
Register online on our website in the Classes & Retreats section.

Benefit Concert with Adam Kuenzel

Principal Flute with the Minnesota Orchestra



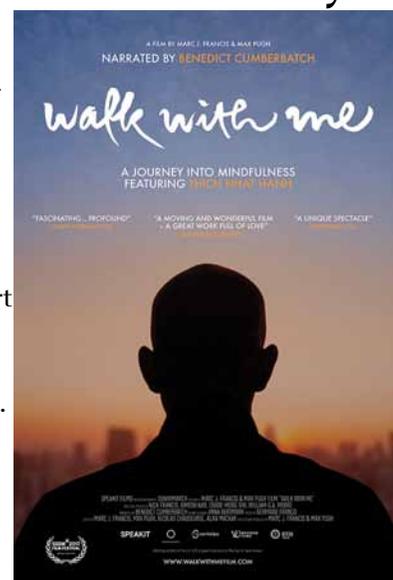
4:00 P.M. Sunday, Oct. 8
At Compassionate Ocean

This intimate performance by Adam Kuenzel will be the first musical event in our renovated Center. This will be the fourth time Adam has performed for the Compassionate Ocean community, and each event has been exceptional. Further details will be forthcoming; please make sure we

have your email address by contacting us at admin@OceanDharma.org.

Special Screenings of New Thich Nhat Hanh Documentary

“Walk with Me: A Journey into Mindfulness” is a new feature-length documentary on Thich Nhat Hanh. The Still Water Sangha is hosting a special screening at the Oakdale Cinema at 7:30 P.M. Monday, Oct. 9, and the Blooming Heart Sangha is hosting a screening at the Lagoon Cinema on 7:30 P.M. Wednesday, Oct. 25. Tickets need to be purchased well in advance. For further information, contact admin@OceanDharma.org.



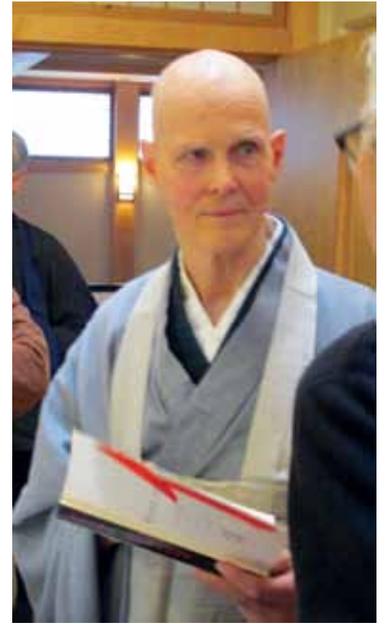
Wish List : Video Projector
: Computer technical support

Let's Stay in Touch

We're making greater use of email communication to send information about our activities. There is more happening at Compassionate Ocean than we can fit in the newsletter. If you aren't currently receiving periodic emails from us, please send your email address to admin@OceanDharma.org and we will include you.



Tenshin Reb Anderson, Senior Dharma Teacher at the San Francisco Zen Center, visited our Center in May. Tenshin Roshi grew up in Minneapolis, moved to San Francisco in 1967 to practice with Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, and has been visiting and leading practice events in the Twin Cities since the 1970s.



In June our sangha participated in a weekend sesshin at Ryumonji Zen Monastery near Decorah, Iowa. Above, Adam and Andy enjoying the closing luncheon.



Washing the dishes and purifying the mind at Ryumonji.



Our summer class on “The Wonderful Teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh” included mindfulness songs from the Plum Village tradition.



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Fall Program Highlights

- **Buddhist Studies Course:**
Understanding Our Mind
- **Introductory Programs in Mindfulness (MBSR)** offered in Minneapolis & St. Paul
- **Total Dynamic Living Annual Reunion**
Details on page 4
- **Benefit Concert with Adam Kuenzel**
Principal Flutist, Minnesota Orchestra
Details on page 6
- **Special Screenings of New Thich Nhat Hanh Film**
Details on page 6
- **Introduction to Zen Practice Mini-Course**
- **Retreats at Hokyoji and Compassionate Ocean**

Facing Climate Change: For a Future to Be Possible

This ongoing monthly series focuses on the crisis of climate disruption and the many related issues facing us at this time, including how we can meaningfully engage.

Each evening begins with an optional vegetarian potluck at 6:00 P.M., followed by a program from 7:00-9:00. Programming includes guest presenters, films, information sharing and dialogue. Anyone with an interest is invited to come to any of these gatherings.

There are no fees, but please sign up in advance by emailing the Center at admin@OceanDharma.org, including whether you will be attending the potluck. Also email if you would like to be added to the "For a Future to Be Possible" email list to be kept informed of future events.

Fall Schedule

- Friday, August 25
- Friday, Sept. 22
- Friday, Oct. 13
- Thursday, Nov. 16
- Friday, Dec. 15

