



Supporting the Zen Path of Practice

with Choro Carla Antonaccio

Four Monday nights beginning January 8,
7:00 to 8:30 PM

This four week offering is intended for anyone who has taken the “Beginning Zen Practice” class with David Guy, or who has received zazen instruction and would like to establish their practice at the zendo or at home. We will begin with a 30 minute period of zazen, followed by a period of walking meditation, bowing or chanting practice. The rest of our time together will be devoted to exploring what is coming up for you in practice, your questions about Zen including the formal aspects of our practice together, finding ease in your zazen posture, and extending zazen into daily life.

Please sign up in advance by contacting Choro at subtlegate@gmail.com, or (919) 423-5987. You may also just come to the first class, but it is helpful to know how many to expect and to have contact information in case of any change (e.g. due to weather). Cost is \$40, payable the first night, and will be contributed to the Zen Center. Partial scholarships are available.

Choro began sitting zazen on a daily basis in 1999 at the Chapel Hill Zen Center. She was ordained as a Zen priest in 2010 and has participated in three, three-month practice periods at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center and a two-month Practice Period at Green Gulch Farm. She looks forward to sharing Zen practice with you.

Dharma Talks

Joshu Pat Phelan will give public talks on Sundays, January 14, and February 11, at 10:30 AM.

Choro Carla Antonaccio will give a public talk on Sunday morning, January 28, at 10:30 AM.

The 2018 Board Members

We are happy to announce that the Chapel Hill Zen Center Board Members for 2018 are President, Maura High; Vice President, Ken Wilson; Secretary, John Paredes; Treasurer, Mike McKillip; Members-at-Large, Andrea Ashdown and Colin Maxwell. We offer our deep gratitude to Steve Pickett for serving as Member-at-Large the past two years, and to Shawn Johnson for serving as Member-at-Large this past year – thank you very much for your service.

Study Group

The Study Group meets on Thursday nights, 6:45-8:00 PM, is open to everyone and there is no charge. It will resume meeting on January 4. We will look at early talks by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi which can be found on the San Francisco Zen Center website under Suzuki Roshi Archives, see: <http://suzukiroshi.sfzc.org/archives/index.cgi/621200U.html?seemore=y>. We will begin with the first talk from December 1, 1962, and continue in chronological order.

After Daitso Tom Wright’s new book, *Deepest Practice, Deepest Wisdom: Three Fascicles from Shobogenzo with Commentary*, is available, we will begin studying it, probably the beginning of February.

Eco-Dharma Discussion Group

Mountains and waters right now are the actualization of the ancient Buddha way.

— Master Dogen

When you realize the whole universe as nothing but yourself, you have to take care of it.

— John Daido Looi

In this group we will informally explore together Buddhist teachings on the natural world, caring for the natural world as an expression of bodhisattva vow, and our own responses to current environmental issues. The intention of this group

is to support and inspire one another in our efforts to make appropriate Buddhist responses to environmental concerns at a personal, local and global level. If you are interested, please contact Zenki Kathleen Batson at lulu@rumbleduss.com. We will determine the first meeting date based on people's availability.

All-day Sittings

All-day sittings are scheduled for Sundays, January 14, and February 11, and March 18, from 6:00 AM until 5:00 PM. The sitting will begin with orientation on Saturday night at 7:30 PM, and will include instruction on the meal form and one period of zazen. The regular Sunday schedule, with zazen at 9:00 and 9:50 AM and Dharma Talk at 10:30 AM, will be open to everyone. The day will include zazen, a lecture, *dokusan* and a work period, as well as breakfast and lunch. The fee is \$10 for members and \$20 for others. ***It is alright to sit half of the day, but please sign up in advance, and please speak to Jo-sho Sensei if this is your first all-day sitting.*** For more information on the oryoki meal form see: <http://www.kannondo.org/oroyoki>

Beginning Zen Practice

A Class with David Guy

February 12 to March 19

Monday nights, 7:30 to 9:00 PM

Stop searching for phrases and chasing after words. Take the backward step and turn the light inward. Your body-mind of itself will drop off and your original face will appear.

— Dogen

Zen Meditation, or *zazen*, is the simple practice of being present with our experience. We hear the instructions in a matter of minutes, but spend a lifetime learning the practice. This class will introduce participants to meditation and give them support as they develop a daily sitting practice. It will also introduce them to other aspects of practice at the Chapel Hill Zen Center.

The first night will begin with meditation instructions and a short period of sitting. Each week we will continue to sit for a period at the beginning of class, gradually increasing the time. Participants will have a chance to ask questions and raise concerns about their practice. As the weeks proceed we will study other aspects of Zen practice, including walking meditation, protocol around the zendo, and the service of bowing and chanting. But the focus will be on zazen, and participants' actual practice as it unfolds. The content of the class will emerge from participants' questions and concerns.

Cost is \$60, payable the first night, and will be contributed to the Zen Center. Partial scholarships are available. For more information, or to sign up, please contact David Guy at (919) 286-4952 or davidguy@mindspring.com.

David Guy has been practicing meditation since 1991, and regularly gives sitting instruction. He has co-authored two books with Larry Rosenberg of the Cambridge Insight Meditation Center – *Breath by Breath: The Liberating Practice of Insight Meditation* and *Living in the Light of Death: On the Art of Being Truly Alive*. In 2008 he published *Jake Fades: A Novel of Impermanence*. David's blog can be found at www.davidguy.org

Children's Program

The Zen Center's Children's program offers children four years and older a place in the Zen Center sangha through a variety of activities, including meditation, story, craft, song, and movement, as well as participation in Zen Center events and celebrations throughout the year. In each meeting, the children have the space and time to practice living mindfully and learn about Buddhist teachings and contexts while giving their parents an opportunity to meditate in the concurrent adult program. The Children's Program meets twice a month, on Sundays, from 9:00 until 11:00 AM; the next meetings are January

7 and 21, and February 4 and 11. For more information, please contact Maura High, the program coordinator, at maurahigh@gmail.com.

Spring Sesshin

May 4 to 11

This sesshin will be led by Daitso Tom Wright, beginning at 7:00 PM on Friday night, May 4, and ending early on Friday afternoon, May 11. It may be possible to attend part of the sesshin, but priority will be given to those attending the full sesshin. This will be a teaching sesshin, or *Genzo-e*, with two talks a day on Dogen's last teaching, *Hachi Dainin Gaku* or *Eight Awakenings of Great Beings*. Daitso Roshi's translation will be available soon.

The sesshin day will begin at 6:00 AM and end around 9:00 PM, with meals served oryoki-style in the zendo, a work period, and an opportunity for dokusan with Daitso Roshi. A registration form will be printed in the March newsletter, and there will be a link to it on the Event Calendar sooner. Questions can be directed to info@chzc.org

Daitso Tom Wright lived in Japan for over thirty years, practicing and studying under Uchiyama Roshi from 1968 until the latter's death. He was ordained as a priest in 1974. Daitso Roshi translated Uchiyama Roshi's teaching in the book, *How to Cook Your Life*, and he has a new translation of Uchiyama Roshi's teachings, *Deepest Practice, Deepest Wisdom: Three Fascicles from Shobogenzo with Commentary*, which will be published the end of January.

Recovery Meeting

The Recovery Meeting meets on Tuesday nights at 7:30 PM. This is a recovery group with a Buddhist perspective on the 12-Step Program which meets at the Chapel Hill Zen Center. The meetings begin with twenty minutes of silent meditation. For more information, contact: (919) 265-7600 or ZenandRecovery@gmail.com.

Sangha Network

The CHZC has a Sangha Network of volunteers to offer short-term assistance to those in the sangha who need help with simple tasks such as shopping, arranging for meals, or transportation, due to transitions in one's life including illness, disability, or death of a loved one. If you would like to volunteer or if you need assistance, please contact Kris at krisgarvin@gmail.com or Jeff Sherman at jeffsherman3333@gmail.com.

Aging Gracefully, Befriending Death

Sunday, January 21

This is an informal discussion group that gives the opportunity to share readings, information, and explore conversations among ourselves on these topics. The group meets on Sunday mornings, around 11:15 AM. Please contact Kris Garvin at krisgarvin@gmail.com, or Jeff Sherman at jeffsherman3333@gmail.com, if you have questions, would like more information. Everyone is welcome, regardless of age.

People of Color Sitting Group

Wednesday nights from 6:00 to 7:30 PM

The POC Sitting Group begins with zazen at 6:00 PM, with the option to stay for group discussion. Both those new to meditation, or experienced, are warmly welcome to join us or drop in as you like. For more information, contact Conal or Kriti at pocsittinggroup@gmail.com.

Richmond Zen Group

Josho Sensei plans to visit the Richmond Zen Group on Wednesday evenings, January 17, and February 21, at 7:00 PM. She will be available for individual meetings and will give a Dharma Talk.

Wilmington Zen Group

Josho Sensei plans to visit the Wilmington Zen Group on Wednesday, January 10, and will give a Dharma Talk. For more information, contact Elizabeth Darrow at elizdarrow@gmail.com

Chinese Brush Painting & Calligraphy

Jinxiu Zhao will teach Chinese brush painting/calligraphy class on Sunday afternoons from 2:15-4:10 PM, on January 7 and 21, February 4 and 18. The fee is \$30 per class and \$110 for 4 classes. Please contact Jinxiu at (919) 484-7524 or Jxznc@aol.com to register or for more information.

Prison Outreach

Members of the Chapel Hill Zen Center volunteer in both state prisons in North Carolina and the federal prison at Butner. We can always use more volunteers, and having volunteers present is usually a requirement in order for inmates to meet for religious services or to sit zazen. We are looking for people who have been sitting zazen at the Zen Center for a year or more. Orientation is required by each institution. If you would like more information, please contact Josho Sensei at (919) 967-0861 or info@chzc.org.

Listserv

You are invited to join an e-mail listserv now available via Yahoo for announcements about upcoming activities at the CHZC. If you wish to become a member of this listserv, please type "Subscribe" in the subject line and send an email to CHZCannounce-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. You can also go to: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CHZCannounce/> and click the box "Join Now." You may be requested to supply some information or to create a Yahoo "identity." Please note the options for making your e-mail address public or for receiving marketing or other messages not directly from the listserv. It is your choice whether or not to receive other messages. Joining this list will not increase the amount of spam you receive. If you have any questions, please contact the list moderator, Lance at lashdown@yahoo.com.

New Library Books

These books have been recently added to the Members' Library:

The Vow-Powered Life by Jan Chozen Bays

Milwaukee Zen Center: 30 Years of Reflection by Akiyama, O'Connor and Karnegis

Endless Path by Rafe Martin

Buddhist Faith and Sudden Enlightenment by Sun Bae Park

From Chinese Chan to Japanese Zen by Steven Heine

The Diamond Sutra Transforming the Way We Perceive the World by Mu Soeng

Buddhist Nuns, Monks, and Other Wordly Matters by Gregory Schopen

The Zen Poetry of Dogen, translated by Steven Heine

Also, we recently received a collection of Japanese Garden books, including:

The New Zen Garden: Designing Quiet Spaces by Joseph Cali and *A Japanese Touch For Your Garden* by Kiyoshi Seike and Masanobu Kudo.

The library catalogue is online at <http://tinyurl.com/chzclibrary>.



Looking Ahead

Buddha's Birthday Celebration is planned for Sunday, April 8.

We are planning to have a 4 week Practice Intensive in June.

What Can We Learn From Painful Zazen?

by Kuden Paul Boyle

Forest City Zen Group, Ontario, London

When I give zazen instruction, I often mention that there are two major categories of pain when sitting zazen. The first type is characterized by sharp pains in the joints, electrical sensations in the legs, numbness or a deadness in the legs. This type of pain is our body telling us that our body is in a physically comprising position, and that we should change our position to alleviate the pain. The other type of pain possible in zazen is the achy muscle burn pain. I would also include having a tingling sensation when one's legs fall asleep under this category as well. As unpleasant and intense as this pain may be, it is not normally harmful to our bodies. In fact, experiencing such discomfort can be quite insightful.

In 2016, I sat a 5-day sesshin, or meditation intensive, at the Chapel Hill Zen Center. I hadn't sat a 5- or 7-day sesshin since moving to Canada in 2012. I was a little nervous because I recalled when I first began sitting sesshins in the 1990s, I experienced some pretty intense leg pain while sitting zazen. I was afraid that my body had "back slid" to my 1990s level of ability. As it turned out, sitting the 5-day sesshin wasn't that difficult for me, and, afterward it gave me an opportunity to reflect on how my practice has changed over the years.

Before I first began sitting sesshins, I had considerable fear and anxiety about sitting for several days at a time. However, my desire to sit zazen was great enough for me to want to try to sit a sesshin. My first sesshin was a 3-day "Zen weekend". Wow, my legs were screaming. Actually, it wasn't my legs screaming, it was my mind which was doing the screaming. The pain was very intense.

I talked to my teacher about my fear of leg pain. She encouraged me to sit more sesshins. One year, I sat six 5-day sesshins. The pain was intense. During this time in my practice, I began to notice that it was my narrative about my physical discomfort which intensified the pain. I talked to my teacher and my teacher's teacher about this. They both

said to be present with the pain. I couldn't understand what they were talking about. Staying present seemed impossible. After some time, I began to notice the compulsiveness of the narration. It was very interesting. On one hand, I knew intellectually that talking to myself about my leg pain was making it worse. On the other hand, I was observing that my mind's habituated tendency to make narratives or comments about my experience was beyond my conscious control. No matter how much I tried to suppress my narrative, I couldn't get myself to shut up.

The Chapel Hill Zen Center has all-day sittings about once a month, and it was one during one of these when there was a turning point in my practice. I was sitting there with my painful legs, and suddenly, I stopped taking the physical discomfort personally. The drive to add narrative to the experience dropped away. That experience changed my practice. It's not like I never indulged in pain making narratives again, but they impulse has attenuated over the years. The compulsiveness to narrate was gone.

In reflecting on the trajectory of my zazen practice, it seems useful to talk about how my painful legs have informed my understanding of Buddhist teachings, and how my understanding of Buddhist teaching informs my understanding of zazen practice. For this talk, I would like to talk about how my experience can be understood in the context of the Buddhist teaching of emptiness.

When we talk about something to ourselves, we are essentially making what we are talking about an object, we are making it "a thing". So, I was making my leg pain "a thing" or an object during my meditation. When we perceive an experience as a thing, it necessarily follows that this "thing" has a name and attributes.

First, we make a dichotomy between the "I" or subject of the experience and the object of the experience. We believe the subject should be having a certain type of experience, or is entitled to a certain type of experience. The object is perceived to be different from, and independent of, the subject

and has its own set of attributes or characteristics. This is our fundamental delusion – that what we are experiencing is somehow “not us”. When this experience is an unpleasant or negative experience, we see it both as an imposition and as something we would like to avoid.

Second, we see our object (e.g. pain in our legs) as having a life of its own. Our flawed reasoning may go something like this: If I was really in control of this unpleasant experience, I could make it go away at will. Since it doesn't go away at will, it must have some ability to persist despite my wishes; it must have some ability to exist independently. This perception of independent existence is what is called “self-nature” or “inherent existence”. Emptiness is simply the lack of inherent existence with regard to a particular phenomenon. The other thing to notice about this deluded reasoning is that it is completely egocentric.

As long as I had a narrative going about the physically unpleasant sensations, I was really suffering. I was clinging to a notion of self which was entitled to have a pleasant and peaceful period of zazen. I had also built up this view of “pain in my legs” as this implacable opponent. I could not beat it no matter how hard I tried.

Why did I persist in this zazen practice when it was so painful to me? Because I believed or at least wanted to believe that Zen and Buddhism had something to offer. I felt something, an intuition maybe, that this path was an authentic spiritual path. I believed that an authentic spiritual path involved hard work and resolve on my part. For some reason, I was able to keep going. I am also fortunate to have a good teacher and have had positive supportive experiences with a number of other teachers as well.

Eventually, after the narrative-making dropped away, I was able to just feel the sensations. In Buddhist teachings, sensation, or *vedana*, occurs both in the teaching on dependent origination and as one of the five *skandhas*. *Vedana* is said to be of three kinds, pleasant, unpleasant, and neither pleasant nor unpleasant. The physical sensations in

my legs were definitely unpleasant. At some point, the labels “painful” and even “unpleasant” dropped away as well, and I was left with just bodily sensations. At this point, I was content to sit in zazen with just those sensations. It wasn't pleasant, but I wasn't struggling to avoid the ever changing flux of sensations either. This was a state of non-suffering.

You might remember in the *Heart Sutra* where it says: *Form is emptiness, emptiness is form*

Form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form. As the sutra also says, this is true for sensation, so we can also say: *Sensation is emptiness, emptiness is sensation, Sensation is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than sensation.*

What is the sutra telling us? For starters, let's first state what the sutra doesn't say. I have the impression that sometimes people think that “realizing emptiness” will be accompanied by bunnies and rainbows, and definitely a feeling of pleasantness. That's not what the *Heart Sutra* is saying. It is saying that the sensation you are experiencing right now is nothing other than the emptiness of that sensation. There is no special sensation which leads to emptiness nor are some sensations empty and others not empty. Emptiness is not a quality embedded in or hidden by sensations. If you were to hold such a view, you believe that you could dig through the nasty, unpleasant sensations you would find your cracker jack box prize of emptiness (and bliss). No, that's definitely not it. That's the junkie's version of Zen practice – looking for the next hit of relief and bliss.

Just sitting, experiencing sensation, is experiencing emptiness. Realizing means to make something real and actual in your life. However, this does not mean that you will know with your discursive consciousness what is happening. As Master Dogen puts it in *Genjokoan*, *Do not suppose that what you realize becomes your knowledge and is grasped by your consciousness. Although actualized immediately, the inconceivable may not be apparent. Its appearance is beyond your knowledge.*

In this sense, we are realizing emptiness in zazen. Take away the discursive consciousness which narrates the experience. Take away the discriminating consciousness which superimposes preference on an experience. Take away the notions of self and other, subject and object, which are based on ideas of attainment and entitlement. Take away notions of I, me, and mine. Just sit and there it is. There is nothing to seek or attain. Buddhist practice is more of a path of dropping off, of letting go, of losing the bits and pieces which we have added as extras to the direct sensory experience. This is the long iron road of Zen.

When one can sit like this, there is a certain fearlessness which arises. When I was first starting to sit sesshins, I was afraid of my leg pains. I thought of my capacity to endure leg pain was sort of like a gas tank – I only had a limited capacity to sit before the pain became intense. Consequently, in my early days, I would try to get to the zendo right before the period started, hoping I wouldn't run out of gas before the period ended. This never worked.

During this last 5day sesshin I sat, I felt no fear. Rather, I felt joy and gratitude. As soon as the *han* started, I started making my way to the zendo. The *han* is a wooden drum or sounding board that starts being hit fifteen minutes before zazen starts. So, for some 40 minute periods of zazen, I was sitting for 50 or 55 minutes. I was able to enter bodily sensations and abide there most of the time. My narratives were either not operating or were ephemeral and not grasped.

So, what's the point of all this? First, I want you to know that I believe if I can do it, you can do it. Buddhism is about **actually practising** and transforming ourselves. Arousing *bodhicitta*, or "Way-seeking mind" is important in practice. We need to believe that there is a better way to live, and that Zen practice and Buddhist teachings can point the way to a better way of living.

Second, I want to talk about the effects of fearless zazen. One thing my teacher says, and I have found to be true is that the more we able to face and be present with physical discomfort in zazen,

the more we are able to face and be present with sources of emotional or psychological pain in our lives. When we investigate and see deeply into our pain, we begin to be able to see it as "not pain", but rather a constellation of sensations, memories, labels, and narratives. The meaning we are giving to an experience drops away and it loses its charge and its ability to cloud our judgment.

The fearlessness we can develop in zazen has an impact on our ethical and moral behaviour as well. We often use unvirtuous actions to avoid sources of pain in our lives. As we are more able to face and be present with the reality of our lives, the roots of unvirtuous actions and habits start to wither. Conversely, the more we are able to face and be present with sources of emotional pain, the more we are able to see clearly and grow the roots of virtuous action. This is one way that Zen meditation and the Buddhist precepts fit together.

Alleviation of suffering is the reason why we practise Buddhism. Like many other facets of zazen, the physical sensations we experience during a period of sitting acts like a microcosm of the other issues and problems we face in our lives. Zazen is kind of a laboratory for exploring our consciousness, and our habit energies. The "escape hatches" we notice during zazen to try to escape physically unpleasant sensations are the same escape hatches we use in our everyday lives off the cushion. In zazen, we start to shine the light of awareness on these patterns. Once we are aware, only then do we open up the possibilities for transformation.

So, if you are new to Zen practice or have been practising awhile, but have hesitation about sitting sesshin, please just give it a try. Start with sitting an all-day sitting, then try sitting a 5-day sesshin or even just the first few days of a sesshin. Be persistent and exercise some resolve. You may find that through this effort you may go beyond your limiting conceptions and develop fearlessness in zazen. Such are the valuable lessons that painful zazen can teach us.

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Chapel Hill Zen Center

P.O. Box 16302
Chapel Hill, NC 27516



SCHEDULE

Sunday Morning	Tuesday Evening
9:00 AM zazen	7:00 PM zazen
9:40 AM kinhin	7:40 PM kinhin
9:50 AM zazen	7:50 PM zazen
10:30 AM service	8:20 PM service
Thursday Evening	Monday to Friday
6:00 PM zazen	6:00 AM zazen
	6:50 AM zazen

Meetings at 5322 NC Hwy 86, Chapel Hill, NC
2.5 miles North of I-40 exit 266

Josho Pat Phelan, Abbess
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Punna is blessings or merit in Sanskrit.
The Buddha said, “Don’t belittle what *punna* is, what blessings are,
what merit is. *Punna* is another word for happiness.
That brightness in the heart, the quality of blessings –
these are the basis of happiness and freedom.
Don’t belittle them or look down on them in a dismissive way.”

— Kobun Chino, *Embracing Mind*



Embracing diversity, the Chapel Hill Zen Center
expresses the fundamental connection of all beings
by welcoming everyone to the practice of zazen.

May all beings realize their true nature.