Introductory Meditation Course and Workshop

The Zen Buddhist Temple offers the Introductory Meditation Course and Workshop in order to make the practice of Buddhist meditation available to the general public.

Meditation is the heart of Buddhism and the direct path to freedom and enlightenment. The prevailing spirit of Buddhist teachings and meditation practice is that one is always capable of helping oneself regardless of one's situation. It is the Buddhist belief that common, ordinary beings are Buddhas, that is, unattained Buddhas. However, we usually lack full trust in ourselves and as a result, all too easily relinquish our trust and willpower to outside agents. Meditation practice challenges this lack of trust and willpower from the very outset. Any sincere and serious practitioner of Buddhist meditation soon realizes that one cannot sit in meditation for long without both accepting oneself fully and developing a positive attitude to one's life and the world, for meditation is a world-affirming and a life-renewing experience.

> Who can take the Introductory Meditation Course and Workshop?

Anyone who wishes to learn meditation can participate in these sessions and benefit from them. People who take the Introductory Meditation Course and Workshop fall into two categories:

1) People who are interested in or sympathetic to Buddhism, and
2) People who are not interested in Buddhism but would like to learn meditation for their own benefit.
Meditation is pure awareness and concentration. It is a spiritual discipline and liberation. Through meditation:

1. **You learn how to be peaceful, content and happy and to develop a spiritual (non-materialistic) attitude to your life**

   People living in the consumer society suffer from an excess of materialism and lack of spiritual values. The result is a lot of worry and a lack of peace of mind. Peace of mind is your single most important asset for it is the basis of a happy life. The most simple and wholesome way of attaining peace of mind is to learn to sit still and stop worrying through the cultivation of ocean mind and 'let go' practice. At the same time, it is important to embrace spiritual values such as gratitude and reverence. With peace of mind and a spiritual outlook on life, it is easy to appreciate who you are and what you have and lead a simple and happy life.

2. **You learn to concentrate your mind and take care of this present moment.**

   Modern society is complex, fragmented and full of distractions. There is general lack of purpose and moral integrity in people's lives. Many feel helpless and unhappy with their lives. They find their work unsatisfactory and that the overall quality of life has been slipping in spite of a high living standard. In this situation there are two ways you can help yourself. One is awareness: you have to become fully aware of yourself and your own life by paying attention. The other is concentration: you have to realize yourself by concentrating your mind. In other words, at some point you have to stop running after distractions and start taking care of your present life for the sake of the world. The sooner the better. Focussed attention and concentrated mind take care of this very moment of your life. This very moment is the most precious thing in your life and contains both your past and future. Apart from this very moment, your life does not exist.
3. You learn to strive for right livelihood and compassionate living and to become accountable for your actions.

_Ahimsa_ or non-violence is the first Buddhist precept. First you must start to lead a harmless life of non-injury, not hurting, not wasting and not polluting things. It requires attention and a mindful attitude which are stressed throughout the Course and Workshop. You learn to take good care of things at hand. For instance, you are instructed to do small things carefully such as taking your shoes off and washing your feet. The viewpoint of Zen is that life lived fully in each moment is the end and purpose in itself and not the means for something else. Thus, each task you perform becomes an awakening of your heart and fulfillment of your life. You must become accountable for what you do. Buddhist life, in short, is no other than a life of full heart and enlightenment.

> **Who teaches the Course and Workshop and how can I register?**

Venerable Samu Sunim and his ordained disciples (priests and Dharma teachers) teach the Course and Workshop.

Two kinds of programs are offered by the Buddhist Society of Compassionate Wisdom through the local Zen Buddhist Temple and affiliated meditation groups.

The Regular Introductory Meditation Course takes five Thursday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. The Overnight Introductory Meditation Retreat runs from Friday evening at 7 p.m. through Saturday at 4 p.m. with an overnight stay at the temple. The Retreat serves both out-of-towners and those who cannot make it to the regular Thursday evening course, and also those who wish to experience temple life by staying overnight. Both courses cover the same content.

The Meditation Workshop is for people who have difficulty sitting on mats on the floor or who simply prefer to sit in a comfortable chair for meditation practice. The Workshop runs from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and is divided into two parts with a break for light exercise at mid-morning.
The session is based on a 5-step approach toward a full awareness of the purpose of human life:

1. Relaxation of one's body-mind
2. Peace of mind and happiness
3. Mindfulness
4. Right livelihood
5. The path of wisdom and enlightenment

The fee is $120 ($100 for full-time students and unwaged) for the Regular Thursday evening Course and $160 ($140 for full-time students and unwaged) for the Overnight Retreat (which includes meals). The fee for the Meditation Workshop is $65. You can register by sending a $25 deposit. Please inquire about the dates for the next course. Those wishing to become a practising member of the Temple are required to take the 5 Thursday night Course or the Overnight Introductory Retreat.

> Can I take the Introductory Meditation Course again?

Quite a few people repeat our programs. Some beginners who find sitting difficult for physical or mental reasons take the course over again until they feel comfortable. Some who have taken the course but lapsed from regular meditation take it again to refresh their memory and renew their meditation practice. Some members or long-time practitioners take the course again in order to recommit themselves and strengthen their practice.

"Meditation practice can help bring peace and happiness to the world. No one is too sinful to do meditation, no one is too wrong to meditate. It takes only willingness to begin meditation and a resolve to continue. One should never underestimate what one's sincere commitment to meditation practice can do for the world."

— Ven. Samu Sunim

Three Guidelines for Beginners

1. Simplicity
2. Clarity
3. Spiritual Strength

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