

Zen Center

O F S A N D I E G O

ZCSD Newsletter

September-October 2020



Surrender and the Zeropoint

The matter of surrender has been more on my radar in the last year or so. And with the way life often proceeds, that doesn't seem too surprising. As we experience things, as we age, as we play out our ego game of being a separate somebody doing something (and progress through it perhaps more effectively with a Zen practice), we might be characterized as a bit less resistant to our life as it is. Not to say we won't get more resistant to change with age.

But in a way maybe surrender, or change, is easier when it's mandatory. Decline of the body, and memory—there's pretty much no going back on that. We've got to go forward with it. And for all of us, there are some things that are happening that are rapidly changing us and the world in a way we might not be too happy with, and these things, too, could be irreversible. So we need to re-orient, adjust, shift course. Perhaps it's a good time to consider how we might adjust effectively, with minimum suffering. You might agree that minimum suffering is related to minimum resistance to change, and also agree that human beings are change-resistant.

My tendency toward being dominated by

October 9–11

Sesshin ZCSD will be offering an online sesshin starting Friday, October 9 through Sunday, October 11. Participants can sit part-time or full-time. The main morning block on Saturday is open to everyone (you can use the usual Saturday link); however, please note that this block starts at 10:30 am and ends at 1:10 pm. The talk begins at 11:45 am.

To receive links for the rest of the program, you will need to register for the sesshin (a minimum donation of \$35 to \$100 is requested; we hope you will give generously). Please [register online](#). Registration for the sesshin will close

thinking seems like it has been something of a destiny for me, to actually develop it about as far as it can. I can understand how this might be something of a goal for some of us—a role we have to play. This adventure, if I can call it that, for me, is still going about its job and I'm still providing it fuel. But the practice, over years, has slowly served to de-energize it. My thinking mechanism is quite adaptive, and it's gotten pretty quick and efficient in using the energy it's still provided. In fact, sometimes it seems so proficient that if it isn't fairly clearly seen for what it is, it can become somewhat disabling. This used to be more disconcerting than it is now. I'm getting so I view it as more OK. I can be more of an observer and experiencer, less taken in by it. I suspect it will be dismantled in time.

It's presented quite a ride over the years and now it's more evident that to continue to feed this wolf is folly. Here I'm referring to the Cherokee tale of the Two Wolves that are within us, separation and unity, and how the one we feed is the one that dominates our life. Some spaciousness around the whole phenomenon has just about become mandatory. I'm fortunate because otherwise I'd likely just keep developing my ability to conceptualize who and what I am, feeding that self-centered dream. With the fear-based, often somewhat dark thinking that tends to go with this, I also experience awareness and some space around the thoughts that has come about through many years of practice. The growth of awareness, its healing potential, being able to relate to it more and less *from* it, is slowly beginning to prevail.

I relate this to surrender because there is no place to hide. There is no way around, only through.

We talk about the importance of perseverance in our practice. This might be even more true when our mood tends towards dark and fearful thoughts. Just to remember to label thoughts, stay with the breath and body awareness, and not let our negative thoughts take over is a crucial step. And to that we might add some kindness—extending to ourselves some compassion. If we can do this we have a better chance of not getting caught in a downward spiral that

on Wednesday,
October 7.

Wednesday and Saturday Sitting Programs During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Zen Center of San Diego is conducting two Zoom meetings, one for Wednesday sitting and the other for Saturday. The program will begin at 6:20 pm on Wednesdays and 9:50 am on Saturdays. You can access the meeting on your computer or your phone and you are cordially invited to join us. Please [email us](#) and we will send the links to you.

[Announcements](#)
[Sesshin Application](#)

*...in the silence
of just Being, we
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way forward
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heart.*

can take over when we are not very conscious of what is going on.

I'm reminded of that word Joko Beck (who founded Zen Center San Diego) used in a talk years ago, the Zeropoint. Our Zen practice is really all about the Zeropoint—to dwell there, which we might call the point of surrender. The push and pull of the self-centered mind has been quieted. This is a point of energetically awake Beingness.

I spoke not long ago about the Third Patriarch, Xin Xin Ming's, *Faith In Mind* verses. We recite a shortened version called *Relying On Heartmind*. These verses, to me, are about the zeropoint. What they say boils down to, "Not this, not that, right here and now." And quoting, "Without hate, without love, everything becomes clear and undisguised." "The more you talk and think about it, the further astray you wander from the truth." The longer versions of *Faith In Mind*, particularly, make the same vital point in many varied ways that can get their point across with some effectiveness—being wary of over-thinking them.

Our practice is about spending time at the zeropoint, the point of surrender, and seeing how our life is thereby affected. And along the way we also learn about, gain objectivity toward, being *not-surrendered*. The practice widens our perspective on both. We experience the myriad points along the way, back and forth, moment by moment, over years.

We might relate to surrender as allowing an evolutionary process that is running through us to proceed. Over time it lessens resistance to growth and lets our life just unfold more. It means acknowledging and lightening-up on our need to control and manipulate, on our need to have things the way we want them to be.

Surrender is not resignation, giving up in hopelessness, in defeat. It's just no longer resisting what is. We might even embrace or engage what-is, which may be anxiety, fear, feeling hopeless, alone. We might go right to the core of what's there, not separate from it—the thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations. None of it being good or bad, just what's there. We have to be willing to

do this over and over.

It is about allowing older and smaller versions of ourselves to die and new, greater versions to emerge. It's challenging, hard on the ego, because it threatens our identity. We might say surrender is about getting out of the way of this evolution.

Here and there some faith and courage might be called for, to enable ourselves to go forward with something that part of us may vigorously caution us against doing. The part that will warn you about going forward is the ego, whose job it is to maintain, at all costs, the life drama and the story of "me."

Where does faith and courage come from? For me, largely, experience with the practice. And some from that still, small voice that says it's OK to do this (basically giving up an identity, or part of one).

When my life, more than once, has really backed me into a corner, it's occurred to me to ask for help. Not so much years ago, but now I see this as asking ourselves for help, since anything we might enlist is not outside ourselves. In times or in circumstances where we feel we lack the strength or ability to do something that we know in our heart, or in some part of us, is the way to go, we can surrender to that not-knowing, let go of controlling, and ask God or Great Spirit or Higher Self, or All-That-Is for help to lead us through. I have found this to be helpful numerous times. And it's OK if we need to see the helping force as coming from outside us—that's probably inevitable to some extent. But one might ask if it's really outside us.

As we ask for help, we can get out of the way, open up, better access those invaluable inherent capacities that are within us. And the way forward is clearer and more doable. I happened across a moving performance, presented on YouTube, of the adagio of the *Concierto de Aranjuez* by Joaquín Rodrigo, where the guitar was very capably played by Pablo Sáinz-Villegas. This is an orchestral piece that showcases the Spanish guitar player at its center. Though it goes only so far to the point without hearing the piece, I was taken by this comment by a Yari Mann:

"Sad and beautiful. Even more so when you know the story behind it. Rodrigo wrote it for his baby who was stillborn. He almost lost his wife. The strumming is the beating of his wife's heart. The louder sections are his anger at God for taking the life of his baby. At the end there is quiet acceptance as to what is God's will, no matter how seemingly cruel or confounding. A profound and moving piece. Powerful and deep."

I was reminded of the death of my parents, and a deep surrendering to what-is that took place. And a peace, an "all-is-well" that was experienced.

We don't go *into thought* about acceptance or resistance—we go into presence, complete presence. And in the silence of just Being, we can come to know and experience a way forward that is more in accord with wisdom and heart. That is the grace, our grace.

—Chuck Sweet

Shedding the light of awareness in our dark corners fuels the process of healing.