

Zen Center

OF SAN DIEGO

ZCSD Newsletter

July-August 2024



The Worldly Winds

I remember, in the zendo, when one of our sangha members spoke up after a talk and said, “There’s this belief that I have to defend myself. I sometimes wonder how many times I’m going to fall for that.” He could say this with a smile because he knew that our self-protection scheme is a scam.

But we all do it, don’t we? We feel the sting of criticism or the soft underbelly of shame, and we rush to protect a fragile ego that we believe—at least in that moment—is the truth of who we are.

We might say the winds of the world seem to buffet us about. And, indeed, the Buddhist teaching of the Eight Worldly Winds provides a framework for looking at a range of human experiences in which we easily get caught. Sometimes called the Eight Worldly Conditions, the winds are presented in pairs: gain and loss,

Our sincere thanks to all who responded to our recent request for donations. We truly appreciate your generosity.

2024 Sesshin Dates

September 13-16
December 27-31

September Sesshin enrollment is open until September 6.

<https://zencentersandiego.org/schedule/sesshin>.

praise and blame (approval and disapproval), status and insignificance (fame and disrepute), and pleasure and pain. All part of the tapestry of life.

How much these conditions disturb us depends on how much we want or don't want them in our lives. We can see the first and second arrows operating here. The situations themselves—landing the good job, spraining an ankle, and so on—are “just the facts,” the first arrows, while our attachments and aversions are the second arrows compounding our suffering.

It's natural for human beings (and other creatures, too) to prefer the experiences in what we might call the “positive column” and to resist, even flee from, those in the “negative column.” This is hardly surprising, and sometimes it's no doubt necessary.

But we fall into delusion when we believe that the positives—gain, praise, status, pleasure—will give us abiding happiness or profound peace of mind, and that the other conditions—loss, criticism, failure, pain—must be avoided because they threaten this contentment. Yes, there may be wonderfully pleasurable times in life, but if we believe we cannot be happy unless they continue, we are bound to be disappointed and, inevitably, we begin to fear change. What's more, if we are trying to manipulate people and situations to get only what we want, we create suffering for self and others.

The message of the Eight Worldly Winds is not that we should abandon pleasure and seek out pain or that we shouldn't do what we can to have a nice life. Equally, the message is not that if we practice enough, the winds won't blow in our lives—we'll have things sorted. All kinds of conditions will occur, whether we practice or not. The essential message is, Experience everything! The pleasure of a summer day and the sharp bite of rejection. The joy of a baby born and the sorrow of a loved one's death. Experience everything—and cling to nothing.

With the winds blowing in all directions, the

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Wednesday Programing for August

<https://www.zencentersandiego.org/>

The Sexual Misconduct Complaint Procedure and Code of Ethical Conduct for Teachers/Practice Leaders can be found on the ZCSD website under "Policies."
<http://www.zencentersandiego.org/Policies/>

*"Suggestion:
Consider taking a
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question for us is, do they buffet us about, or do they blow through us more or less freely? Practice can make a big difference in this. It won't stop the winds from blowing. It won't make them blow only one way. But it can show us, and remind us, and remind us again, that nothing is permanent—life is always changing. On the one hand, it is futile to stake our happiness on any circumstance; on the other, it is possible to know moments of joy in many circumstances. Our practice is to bring awareness to whatever is arising, whether it be gain or loss, pleasure or pain, and so on.

Practicing with the Worldly Winds is no different from our usual practice, but the framework can help us to notice *when* winds are blowing, *which* winds they are, and *how* we react when they do. Are we prone to the tug and tension of some pairs more than others? What are we clinging to or pushing away? What are we believing?

So, let's remember: When we really believe that the first set of winds will make us happy and the second set will invariably make us unhappy, we are caught in a dream in which a sense of self is getting all wrapped up in outcomes and circumstances. Recognizing these various forces as they show up in thought and sensation makes it possible to refrain from fueling them with emotion-thought. Over time, with practice, this makes a difference in our lives, and we save ourselves and others a lot of suffering.

Practice suggestion: Consider taking one pair at a time—for example, approval and disapproval—and, for a week, notice how you react or respond to either element arising in your life. Can you recognize both conditions as opportunities to wake up?

—Myoku

Any practice that pretends it will bring you sweetness and light is not honest. But one thing we gain from sitting regularly is an ability to deal—unwillingly, at first—with the crisis of our lives.

—*Joko Beck*
