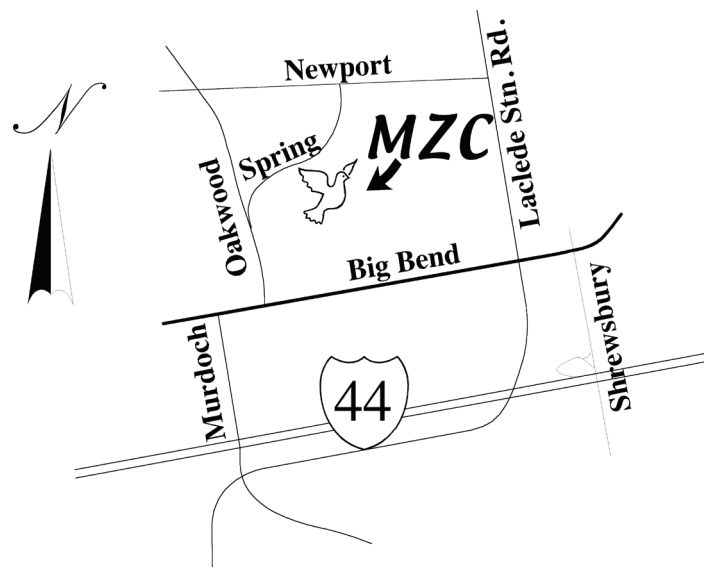


# **Welcome** to the **Missouri Zen Center**

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[www.missourizencenter.org](http://www.missourizencenter.org)

*We invite you to join us in still, quiet meditation*



## **What is Zen?**

Zen means meditation. Part of Zen practice is taking time every day to sit in a balanced position in which the mind and body are allowed to relax. In everyday affairs, our minds are usually cluttered with random thoughts. This is because of our desires. We strive for good things, and worry about the unpleasant. We will never be satisfied in this way because our desires are endless. New desires will quickly come to replace the old ones. We can spend our whole lives aimlessly trying to satisfy these insatiable desires.

However, when we sit in a calm and balanced posture without talking or moving, we become free from our desires. We become free because our desires no longer force us into action. We can watch thoughts of greed, anger, joy, frustration, or sadness come and go without being moved physically or mentally. After some practice sitting in this way, called zazen (pronounced ZAH ZEN), we begin to see that all these thoughts have no substance. They cannot affect us if we do not act on them. Like ripples on the surface of a bottomless lake they are noticed, but the lake is not affected by them. It is important that you have experience watching how your own mind works. When you understand your own mind, you won't be led astray by erroneous ideas.

Although zazen is the foundation for Zen Buddhism, anyone, regardless of his or her beliefs, can sit zazen. In zazen, we don't learn new beliefs or ideas but rather become free from old thinking. Please come join us at the Missouri Zen Center, a non-profit organization.

# The Mechanics of Zazen

“Now, in practicing zazen, a quiet room is suitable. Eat and drink with propriety. Avoid thoughts of good and bad; drop judgements about right and wrong, discarding all external concerns and putting all internal struggles to rest. Do not design to become a buddha, letting the drives of mind, will and consciousness cease, and stopping the measuring of memories, ideas and meditations. Zazen is beyond sitting or lying.

The usual practice is to spread out a thick mat and to place a cushion on it. Then you sit in full or half lotus position (cross-legged): in the full cross-legged position, place your right foot on the left thigh, and your left foot on the right thigh; in the half cross-legged position, simply press your right thigh with the left foot. Wear your robes and belt loose, but neatly and orderly. Next, place your right hand on the left foot, and place your left palm on the right palm (both upward), thumb-tips supporting each other. Now sit upright, neither leaning to the left nor to the right, neither forward nor backward. Make sure your ears are directly over your shoulders and your nose is in line with your navel. Put your tongue against the upper gum with your lips and teeth closed. Keep your eyes always open. Breathe gently through the nose. Maintaining the proper body posture, deeply exhaling once, rocking to the left and right, settle solid and steadfast into immovable sitting, thinking the measureless thinking. How do you think the measureless thinking? No measured thoughts. Such is the essential art of zazen.”

from *Fukanzazengi* (A Universal Recommendation for Zazen) by Master Dogen

## ZAZEN (sitting meditation)

- Enter the zendo on the left side of the doorway with the left foot. Stop there and do monjin.
- With hands in isshu walk to sitting place (tan). Do monjin to your neighbors, who do the same. Then turn (keeping hands in gassho) and do monjin to the person at the opposite place (tan), who does the same.
- Sit on the zafu (round pillow) facing in. Turn around and face the wall.
- Sit either cross-legged (full lotus) or half cross-legged (half lotus) as described above.
- By the end of the three bells, you should be still and quiet. Minimize sounds (moving, breathing, nose-blowing, coughing, etc.) that may disturb the harmony in the zendo.
- Keep the eyes half-opened looking down at the floor, but un-focused, about three feet in front of you so the sightline forms a 45° angle.
- Breathe through the nose and employ deep, long and smooth diaphragm-breathing rather than chest-breathing. Beginners may count breaths (exhale and inhale count as one) up to ten (and repeat the process) to help stay concentrated. If you lose count, merely start over.
- Neither repress nor attach to thoughts. As they arise, be aware of them, and let them go.
- If you need to change position, do gassho before and after adjustment. Again, try to be as quiet as possible.
- At the bell(s) signalling the end of a zazen period, do gassho, then rest both hands upward on the knees. Rock side to side (same as at the beginning). Then turn around on the zafu.



Seiza with bench



Seiza with zafu



Seiza



straight-backed chair

# Three Pillars of Zen Practice

At the Missouri Zen Center, we articulate three pillars of Zen practice: 1) The Awakened Way, 2) The Global Ethic and 3) Voluntary Simplicity.

## 1. The Awakened Way

Every morning and evening we sit and still our physical and mental fabrications, enjoying the calm and clear state of the unified body/mind/world. Through continued practice, we learn how we are conditioned by the environment throughout our lives, and begin to clarify what life and death mean. We witness the “unconditioning” processes and appreciate the more unconditioned and awakened state. We can learn to continue this unconditioned/awakened state penetrating through mental and physical realms throughout the day and for life. We recreate our insight and refresh our energy to engage fully in individual/social/global life.

## 2. The Global Ethic

In the January 2003 issue of *Interreligious Insight*, an excellent article by Dr. Hans Küng traced the history and development of the “global ethic” movement, based on the document *Toward a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration*, issued by the 1993 Parliament of the World’s Religions (Chicago) — attended by more than seven thousand persons representing the rich spectrum of the world’s religious communities. Religions and their adherents have too often ignored their fundamental responsibilities toward other religions and cultures, other humans, and other living beings and systems. In the wake of the catastrophic global problematique, awakened people must reunite and return to the most basic principles to save and sustain life and the global life system. The basic principles that can guide the process are the common elements of the teaching of the world’s great religious traditions (here presented as they are set forth in *Toward a Global Ethic*):

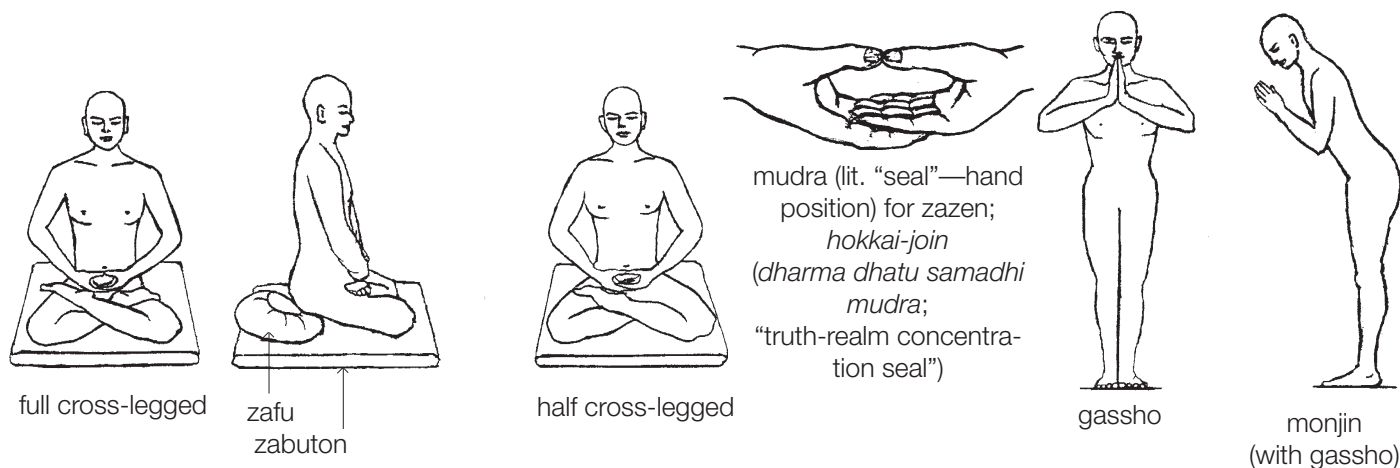
1. Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life.
2. Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order.
3. Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness.
4. Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women.

If all religious persons, composing as they do a large majority of the world’s population, will observe these core principles — essential prerequisites for salvation, sanctification or enlightenment — then peace can prevail on earth.

## 3. Voluntary simplicity

Countless religious leaders devoted their lives to awakening (Insight) and action (Engagement), that is, to wisdom and compassion. They have lived the path of perspective, prognosis (prajna), peace, purity, and poverty, embodying all of the principles enumerated above. Those who live these principles are benevolent, blissful, bountiful, beautiful and blessed by the whole holy life community. We follow their paths.

Our staff members give workshops, lectures, and offer books, information and ideas in our newsletters, and further check how we do at our practice place, advise and actualize. We participate in community efforts to raise awareness of simple living and wakefully live our daily lives in a manner that is simple, safe, sustainable, systemic and that saves all life forms and life systems, including even time and space.



# What is Buddhism?

**BUDDHISM** means “awakened way” (*Buddha Dharma*, Awakened Form). Since Gotama Siddhattha became awakened (*buddha*) 2.5 milenia ago, Buddhism has spread all over the world. Buddhists take refuge in the three treasures of *Buddha*, *Dharma*, and *Sangha*.

**BUDDHA** means “awakened one”. Anyone, regardless of age, sex, race, etc. can cultivate and verify buddhahood, and lead an awakened life in peace and freedom. Buddha Gotama was awakened to the *dharma* and taught it with complete understanding and concrete action in compassion.

**DHARMA** stands for forms (dharma), norms (dharma) and the teaching of them. The Buddha’s awakening and teaching lie in **Dependent Origination** (Dharma of all dharmas): all forms (phenomena) are dependently originated on causes and conditions. Our consciousness-world is originated on six sense organs and objects. Our self-sense/self-centeredness originates from our ignorance of this. Our suffering originates from our craving for the self and the sense world. The way to unconditioned peace (nirvana) lies in its cessation. The Four Noble Truths are suffering, origination, cessation and way.

## Zendo Etiquette

The first rule you should know when you enter the Zen Center is: take off your shoes. This keeps outside dirt from being tracked into the practice area. There are a lot of seemingly picky rules and procedures, along with a lot of bowing, in Zen practice. These formalities keep you concentrated on the present, and since there’s no talking until after the meditation ends, these rules help keep the practice running smoothly. We may learn them step by step.

Bell signals keep everyone on the same track. Three bells on the big bell mean a period of *zazen* (seated meditation) has begun, and practitioners should observe silence. Two bells signal the end of *zazen* and the beginning of *kinhin* (walking meditation). One bell means the meditation period has ended. Run downs on the small bell signal the time for prostrations. At this point, practitioners stand up and face the statue of the Buddha. When the bell is rung again, they kneel and bow their heads to the floor raising the palms of the hands upward. This is done three times. **They are not bowing to a deity.** Buddha was just a man. Instead, they are “bowing down” their small egos in recognition of the interdependence and unity of all things, and raising an aspiration to the Buddha’s way. However, if you feel uncomfortable doing the prostrations, simply remain seated.

The most important part of zen practice is *zazen*, sitting meditation; the surrounding rituals are merely meant to reinforce practice.

Zen practice is demanding. The rewards are incalculable. Be patient. Enjoy.

## Regular Zendo Schedule

### Sunday

6:20-7:00 am	Zazen
7:00-7:20 am	Service (sutras)
7:20-8:00 am	Zazen
8:00-8:10 am	Kinhin
8:10-8:30 am	Zazen
8:30 am	Talk/discussion, work period, tea

*You are welcome to come throughout the morning, but please do not enter the zendo during zazen. Enter quietly at other times.*

### Monday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
11:00-11:40 am	Zazen
6:30-7:00 pm	Instruction
7:00-7:20 pm	Zazen
7:20-9:00 pm	Writing Practice

### Tuesday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
11:00-11:40 am	Zazen
7:00-7:40 pm	Zazen
7:40-9:00 pm	Tea/discussion

### Wednesday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
11:00-11:40 am	Zazen
7:00-7:40 pm	Zazen

### Thursday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
7:00-7:40 pm	Zazen

### Friday

6:00-6:40 am	Zazen
7:00-7:40 pm	Zazen

### Saturday

8:00-8:40 am	Zazen
8:40-9:30 am	Discussion
10:00-10:30 am	Family Sitting

*Work periods may be scheduled following zazen. Any changes to this schedule: please contact the Zen Center.*

## Membership

Anyone is welcome to practice with us at any time without making a membership contribution.

For those who want to join the sangha and make a membership commitment, we suggest \$25 per month.

*The Missouri Zen Center is a non-profit organization. Donations may be tax-deductible. (Consult a tax advisor.)*