

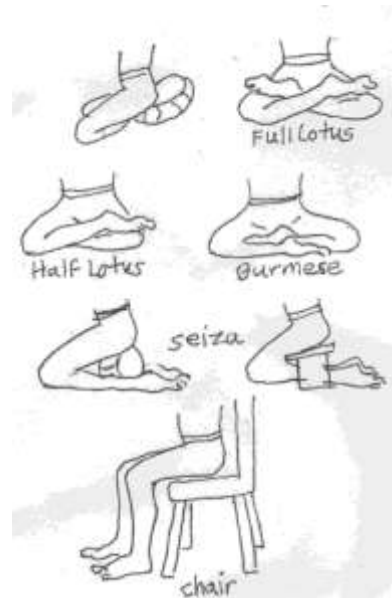
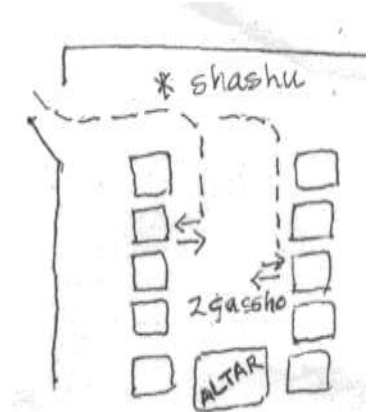
Zen Practice Forms at Red Cedar Zen Community

How to move and sit in the Zendo

Welcome to the Red Cedar Dharma Hall, a quiet place that encourages a peaceful mind and heart. When in the *zendo*, move mindfully and quietly, not talking.

Bowing to the Meditation Space

1. Once in the zendo, before you enter the meditation space, place your hands together in *gassho* and make a slight bow to the zendo.
2. Visually select a place to sit, walk quietly to it, approaching it from inside the sitting area.
3. Facing the seat, *gassho* to it, then turn (clockwise) and *gassho* to the other meditators.
4. If you will sit with crossed legs on the *zafu*, sit down, first facing *inward* and then turning around (clockwise) on the cushion to face *outward*.*
5. Sit on the *forward quarter* of the zafu so that the top of your pelvis tilts forward and your knees touch the mat. This provides the greatest stability.
 - Full lotus, half lotus or Burmese style are all good positions for your legs.
 - OR you may sit in *seiza* with the zafu placed on edge between your knees.
 - OR you may use a wooden bench.
 - If you need to sit in a chair, sit up straight without leaning back on chair back (a cushion can be used behind lower back if needed), with knees apart and feet parallel and planted firmly on the floor.

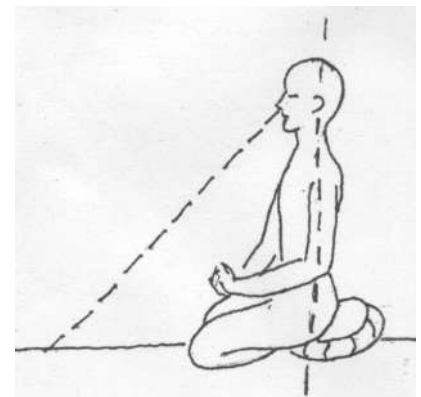


Zazen Posture

In all seated positions it is important to--

1. Sit upright with an elongated spine--with ears aligned over shoulders, shoulders over hips. The chin should be tucked in slightly as a result of extending the spine through the neck, the lips and teeth gently together with the tongue resting lightly against the roof of the mouth. The eyes remain open, gazing softly at the floor 3 - 4 feet ahead. Open eyes maintain alertness and guard against daydreaming or visualizing.

* If you sit in *seiza* on a cushion or bench or in a chair, it's hard to face inward first and then turn outward. Instead, after *gassho* to your place and to the other meditators, simply sit down on your cushion, bench or chair, facing outward.



(Zazen Posture, continued)

2. Place your hands in the *zazen mudra* (right palm up, left hand resting, palm-up, on the right palm, thumb tips lightly touching; hands resting against the lower abdomen).
3. To settle into *zazen* posture, rock gently from side to side in gradually decreasing arcs to find your natural place of balance. Take 3 - 4 slow, deep breaths to help settle your body and mind.

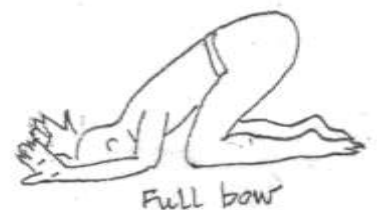
Suggestions for Doing Zazen

1. Keep your attention on the breath--counting 1 - 2, inhale and exhale—or simply observe the breath, not forcing it in any way. Breathe from the belly, allowing it to move in and out. Whenever you find thoughts arising, simply return to counting the breaths, without criticizing yourself for having thoughts.
2. As *zazen* continues, observe your body and gently correct your posture if you find you are slumping or leaning. In *zazen* we practice being in the present moment—observing the body and the mind (which is often very busy). We quiet both by returning again and again to focusing on the breath.
3. In *zazen* physical and emotional pain commonly come up. Meditation is an opportunity to work with pain--to practice not being so bothered by it: When you feel a physical pain—an aching shoulder, a sore knee—rather than change position immediately, stay with the pain for a few breaths. Notice what kind of pain; notice how the rest of your body feels; also notice what your mind is doing. Then if the pain persists, it's okay to adjust your posture to alleviate it. To change postures, do a *gassho* bow and quietly change your position.
4. Throughout the meditation period, do your best to pay attention to the present moment—your breath, your body, the stream of thoughts—and to let each go, moment by moment.



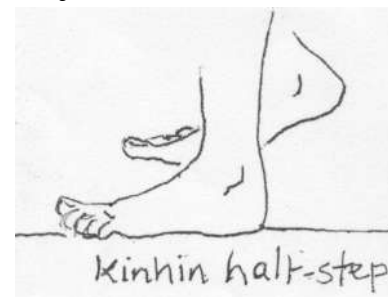
The Service: Bowing and Chanting

1. During our *zendo* Service, we bow toward the altar—usually three bows at a time. We are bowing to our (and everyone's) Buddha nature, offering our humility and respect. Just follow what others do and you will learn when and how to bow.
2. You may do either a standing bow or a full bow to the floor, whichever is comfortable for you.
3. In each service, we also chant one or more *zen sutras*. Sutra books and cards are handed out so you can join in.



Kinhin – Walking Meditation

1. When there is more than one period of *zazen**, we also do *kinhin* for 10 minutes between *zazen* periods. Following *zazen*, everyone stands and faces inward. *Kinhin* is announced by wooden clackers. Everyone does a *gassho* bow and then turns to walk in two ovals around the cushions on either side of the *zendo*.
 - Hands in *shashu*, forearms parallel with the floor.
 - Individuals evenly spaced in line.
 - Take a half step, inhaling as your foot rises from floor, exhaling as you place your foot on the floor.
 - Walk slowly, directed by your breath, moving forward a very little bit with each step.
 - Stay upright, eyes open and cast downward, as in *zazen*, aware of body and breath.
2. *Kinhin* is the time when you can take a bathroom break. You may leave just after the clackers are struck; following the bathroom use, you can return to the *kinhin* line.
3. After 10 minutes of *Kinhin*, the clackers are struck again. *Gassho* and bow. Walk in the same direction, quickly—with energy—back to your seat and stand facing inward. As a group, *gassho* and bow to the other meditators. Return to sitting (facing inward first, then turning clockwise on cushion to face outward). Repeat the settling in steps done at the beginning of the meditation session.



* Wednesday evenings, Saturday mornings, and at retreats

Why Sit Zazen? by *Nomon Tim Burnett, Spiritual Director, Red Cedar Zen*

Why *zazen*? The Japanese word *zazen* means sitting Zen. On purpose we don't use the word "meditation" because it has many connotations beyond what we mean by the simple and powerful activity of *zazen*. *Zazen* is not attaining any special states of mind. Rather it's a dynamic, courageous, quiet re-engagement with our minds and hearts.

Zazen is a deep break from our endless cycles of activity and doing. It's a whole body, experiential re-entry into the mode of *being* and, for those few minutes or hours, a release from the world of doing and activity. Our minds tend so strongly toward doing, towards problem solving and evaluating, that we are often not aware that there is another option for our minds and thus for our living. To just be. To just breathe. To just exist and appreciate this human life can be a very beautiful and healing experience.

What we find as we practice *zazen*, little by little over time, is that as we increase the amount of time spent in spaciousness, quiet and non-doing,

(Why Sit Zazen? continued)

our lives also become more spacious, quieter internally, and more peaceful. A non-reactive quality gradually develops in which we have more freedom in our responses to daily troubles.

Zazen practice also helps us to turn some of our non-adaptive habitual attitudes upside down and re-engage with the world in more healthy and productive way. Conventionally we see problems as things to avoid, solve, and remove from the equation. In zazen, we train in seeing the problems that arise as teaching and opportunity in a steady, endless, and quite wondrous exploration of the mind and heart. We come to appreciate problems as reminders of the depths of our human life and we enter into them like one enters a garden gate with our senses open and our mind stable and alert to the possibilities beyond.

Zazen practice also supports us in shifting our attitudes in all of our activity towards steadiness and sustainability. We practice steadily, gradually, little by little over time. We don't expect sudden results (or any results at all) and we welcome change as it comes. We increase our ability to see our life as an unfolding and an investigation rather than as a project with a deadline. In doing so it is easier to be available to others, we suffer less, and are more aware of what we are actually doing, feeling, or thinking at any one time.

Naturally we will turn zazen practice into its own kind of doing and try to make it into a skill and incorporate it into our identity. We will feel proud (or embarrassed!) to be doing it. We will wonder if we are doing it right or wrong. It is common to try a bit too hard. This is natural and not in itself a problem especially if we stay in contact with teachers and peers as our practice progresses. A kind reminder here and there is invaluable in helping us to release into the true depths of our lives through Zen practice rather than turning our spiritual lives into yet another item on our to-do lists which we will never quite complete to our satisfaction.

Zazen doesn't function so well in isolation. It comes to us within a rich matrix, or container, of practices such as formalized movement, chanting, bowing, and interacting with others in silent and harmonious ritualized ways - all done within a community setting. These rituals, which come to us through another culture, can take a little while to get used to and it is a good idea to suspend judgment for a while when starting practice. Ultimately no path is right for everyone. You may decide that Zen is not the path for you. Please enjoy this lesson and move on with our blessings and support if that is the case.

We hope you enjoy Zen practice with us at Red Cedar Zen Community. You are fully invited to participate in any way you choose to. Please know from the outset there are no experts here, we are all beginners exploring together and supporting each other as best we can.