



Compassionate Ocean Zen Center

A Center for Mindful Living

652 17th Avenue NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413 • Issue No. 54 • Winter 2020

Preferences and No Preferences

Michael O'Neal

From time to time in our introductory mindfulness classes someone will begin a question by saying, "I know we're not supposed to have preferences, but..."

This often catches me by surprise because I am pretty sure I never tell people they shouldn't have preferences. But this seems to be a common belief about mindfulness, and Zen, practice, and it is worth looking at.

In his book *Full Catastrophe Living*, which we use as a course text in our mindfulness classes, Jon Kabat-Zinn writes, in a section entitled "Non-judging," "Mindfulness is cultivated by paying close attention to your moment-to-moment experience while, as best you can, not getting caught up in your ideas and opinions, likes and dislikes...When practicing mindfulness, it is important to recognize this judging quality of mind when it appears and assume a broader perspective by intentionally suspending judgment and assuming a stance of impartiality, reminding yourself to, as best you can, simply observe what is unfolding."

When we practice mindfulness with some seriousness, part of what we are doing is getting beyond our usually incessant habit of experiencing everything in terms of "what's in it for me." This habit of mind typically happens on a pre-conscious level; it is actually easy to be aware of, but because it is so constant, it has a quality of hiding-in-plain-sight. When we look at something or someone, a large part of what we are paying attention to is not the object on its own terms but our reactions, judgments, and preferences about that object.

When we practice mindfulness—when we live more mindfully—we open more to the object as it is, beyond or before our preferences and prejudices. We respect the object enough to meet it with a sense of discovery. When we do this, the object, ourselves, and the whole world immediately become more lovely, more kind, and more holy.

But if we were to try to force all aspects of our life to be treated perfectly equally, our life would quickly break down. Of course we have preferences. When we walk toward a doorway we want to go through the opening, not into the wall next to it. When we drive a car we want to arrive safely at our destination. We want to be healthy, we want the people close to us to be healthy, and, if we have enough largeness of heart, we want all beings and the great earth to be healthy.

Dainin Katagiri Roshi once talked about his time as a teacher at the San Francisco Zen Center: "In San Francisco in the 1960s there were many young people called hippies. One day I came across a hippie-style Zen student on a train and asked him where he was heading. He said, 'I don't know, I just rely on my feet.' Well, that way of life seems to be freedom, but I don't think it is freedom. It is confusion....This is not a good answer."

When we practice non-judging, we do so in order to experience how things are more deeply. In this sense, we are "preferring" to experience the truth, or more of the truth, of the way things are, and then act on that basis. To experience the world more truly gives rise to new, and deeper, preferences. Katagiri Roshi went on to say, "Know where you are headed but don't attach to your destination....The depth of life is your destination, but don't attach to it. Just constantly try to deepen your life. This is spiritual practice."

In a sense, our life is nothing but preferences. But, cultivated and related to properly, these become the great aspiration and motivation of a bodhisattva—a priceless jewel at the heart of human life.

2019 Year–End Appeal

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.

—Winston Churchill

Dear Friend,

As 2019 draws to a close I find myself reflecting on the **six paramitas**, a core teaching of the Buddha that we have been studying at Compassionate Ocean this fall: generosity, upright action, patience, continuous practice, meditation, and wisdom. These practices offer us a way of opening the heart to receive, embrace, and transform whatever comes our way, allowing us to see ourselves in everyone we encounter.

It is in this spirit that I write today, asking you to **consider making a donation to our Year-end Appeal** that will allow us to continue to offer this profoundly human teaching and practice to the greater community.

As a friend of Compassionate Ocean—and most likely a graduate of one or more programs—**you know the value of this practice**. Compassionate Ocean supports the cultivation of mindfulness and engaged living through our Total Dynamic Living/MBSR programs, Buddhist Studies classes, meditation sessions, dharma talks, introductory activities, retreats and sesshins. We have quarterly music nights featuring local musicians. And we have an ongoing program that faces the climate crisis. Week by week, year after year, we offer many opportunities for everyone to share in this practice.

In 2020 we will continue to build on this foundation. Our goals include increasing our program participation, membership, social media presence, and our presence in the Northeast neighborhood. We are optimistic about our progress to date. Our membership is at an all-time high, and more young and neighborhood people are finding their way to our Center.

Compassionate Ocean operates with a very lean budget of around \$125,000. Our income comes from program fees, membership donations, fund raising appeals and events, and general donations. The support the Center has received—including time, labor, financial support, encouragement, and practice—from so many people is truly wonderful, and **we are deeply grateful**.

Our goal for this Year-End Appeal is to raise \$18,000 to end the year in a positive position. This is crucial for us because we do not have significant reserve funds. Mary Oliver encourages us to “Practice giving until the giving feels like receiving.” With your support, we can begin 2020 in a strong financial position.

Your tax deductible donation may be mailed in the enclosed return envelope. Please feel free to include any ideas you have for the future development of our Center. You can also contribute online at OceanDharma.org (see the “Giving” tab, Donations and Appeals).

Yours in gratitude,

Richard Sutton

Richard Sutton
Chair, Board of Directors

Compassionate Ocean Zen Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.





Winter Programs 2020

Compassionate Ocean Zen Center

652 17th Avenue NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413
(612) 781-7640 • www.OceanDharma.org

Mindful Speech & Deep Listening

Taught by Joen O'Neal

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I vow to cultivate loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am determined to learn to speak truthfully, with words that inspire self-confidence, joy, and hope. I will not spread news that I do not know to be certain and will not criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. I will refrain from uttering words that can cause division or discord, or that can cause the family or the community to break. I will make all efforts to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

—from *For a Future to Be Possible* by Thich Nhat Hanh

In this course we will look deeply into the ways we create happiness or suffering with the words we speak and the ways we listen. By bringing mindfulness to the basic human practice of speaking and listening, we will explore the opportunities and challenges that arise with every sound we utter.

We will study excerpts from the book *For a Future to Be Possible* by Thich Nhat Hanh, as well as writings by other teachers, ancient and modern. The course will include presentations by the instructor, discussion, and suggestions for home practice.

Each session will also include meditation practice with instruction.

Joen O'Neal is a Guiding Teacher of Compassionate Ocean Zen Center. She teaches this course periodically in the conviction that all of us can benefit from support in this crucially important aspect of human life.



Wednesdays, Jan. 22 – March 11 (eight sessions) (#B92)

7:00- 9:00 p.m.

\$160 (members \$150) (includes course materials)

Member rates apply to members of all local Dharma centers.

Reduced fees are offered as needed; please contact the Center at (612) 781-7640.

To register, use the form on page 6 or go to www.OceanDharma.org.

Total Dynamic Living - An Eight-Week Program in Mindfulness and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

Total Dynamic Living is a thorough, well-structured introduction to mindfulness practice in everyday life. It follows the nationally acclaimed mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) model developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, presenting mindfulness as a universal practice for people of any (or no) religious background.

The program includes instruction and practice in sitting meditation, gentle yoga, body awareness meditation, and daily-life applications of mindfulness. It also includes information about stress and relaxation. The program enables participants to develop their own base in mindfulness practice integrated into everyday life.

The course includes eight weekly classes, an individual interview with the instructor, a Saturday retreat, the book *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, four MP3s, and handouts. 27 CEUs are available for all courses.

The course fee is \$295 plus a \$35 materials fee. Payment plans and some scholarship aid are available. Please contact the Center to discuss.

Enrollment is limited, and pre-registration is required. Please let your friends and colleagues know about this program.

#602 Minneapolis: Tuesdays
Jan. 21 - March 10 • 6:30-9:00 P.M.

Instructor: Joen O’Neal
Location: Compassionate Ocean Zen Center
652 17th Ave. NE, Minneapolis
(in the Northeast Arts District)

#283 St. Paul: Thursdays
Jan. 23 - March 12 • 6:30-9:00 P.M.

Instructors: Amy Knox & Lisa Mesick
Location: Clouds in Water Zen Center
445 Farrington St., St. Paul
(near University Ave. and Western Ave.)

27 CEUs are available for nurses, social workers, educators, and psychologists.

Total Dynamic Living: One-Day Retreat

This retreat is open to all current participants in Total Dynamic Living courses. It is also open to graduates of past Total Dynamic Living courses on a donation basis. People not enrolled in a current course should call the Center in advance to reserve a space.

Saturday, March 7 • 9:00 A.M.-3:00 P.M.
Location: 652 17th Ave. NE, Minneapolis



Gift certificates for the Introductory Program in Mindfulness are available. Please email admin@OceanDharma.org or call (612) 781-7640.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Teachers



Joen O’Neal

...is a Guiding Teacher of Compassionate Ocean Zen Center. She has been teaching this program since the mid-1990s after completing a training in MBSR for professionals with Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of the MBSR program. She has been active in Zen practice for almost 50 years, including extensive training with her root teacher, Dainin Katagiri Roshi. She has also practiced with Thich Nhat Hanh in France and the United States.

Amy Knox & Lisa Mesick

...are nurses working in women’s health and birthing. They first took an MBSR course ten years ago, and since 2018 have interned with Joen and Michael O’Neal to teach MBSR.

In Memoriam

John Carmody (1947-2019)

John was on the Board of Directors of Compassionate Ocean for many years and chaired the Building Committee that oversaw the renovation of our building. He donated the funds (and his son’s expertise) to build the shoji screens for our windows. His friendly, enthusiastic, and good-humored spirit helped our community bring a challenging project to a successful completion. With deep bows.

Meditation and Dharma Talks

Most Sunday and Friday mornings throughout the year Compassionate Ocean offers meditation practice (sitting and walking) followed by a Dharma talk and discussion, focusing on aspects of Buddhist teaching and their application to everyday life. Our practice is in the mindfulness traditions of Soto Zen and Thich Nhat Hahn. Everyone is invited to participate. There are no prerequisites; people are welcome to come when they wish. There is no fee; donations are welcome. The Sunday gathering is co-led by Joen and Michael. Joen leads the Friday group.

Sundays, 9:00-11:15 A.M.

Schedule: 9:00 sitting, 9:25 walking, 9:35 sitting, 10:00 dharma talk and discussion, 11:15 ending.

(Note: we are on winter break from Dec. 21-Jan. 4.)

Fridays, 9:30-11:00 A.M.

Schedule: 9:30 sitting, 10:00 walking, 10:10 dharma talk and discussion, 11:00 ending.

(Note: we are on winter break from Dec. 21-Jan. 4.)

Welcome Sessions

New people are always welcome at our Sunday and Friday morning gatherings. To provide a special welcome, sessions that include an orientation to our practice are offered periodically. These are excellent opportunities to find out more if you are curious but haven't got around to coming.

- **Sunday, Jan. 5, 9:00-11:15 A.M.**
- **Friday, Jan. 10, 9:30-11:00 A.M.**

Orientation to Zen Meditation

Basic instruction in Zen sitting practice. No pre-registration needed.

Sunday mornings at 8:15 A.M.

Introduction to Zen Practice with Michael

A two-class introduction to Zen meditation and related practices. No fee; pre-registration required.

Mondays, Jan. 6 & 13, 7:00-9:00 P.M.

Weekday Meditation Sessions

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings
7:00 A.M. zazen (sitting), 7:40 chanting service, 8:00 temple cleaning (to 8:15)

Thursday evenings

7:30 P.M. zazen (sitting), 8:00 kinhin (walking), 8:10 zazen, 8:40 ending.

People are welcome to come for any part of the weekday meditation schedule.

Retreats

These practice events are open to community members as well as others who have had some experience with Buddhist practice. They offer extended opportunities to settle the mind and body and open to the deep wisdom of human life. These are excellent opportunities to strengthen and deepen the practice of presence and of being supported and supporting others in community.

Weekend Sesshins at Compassionate Ocean

- **Friday, Jan. 10, 7:00 P.M. – Sunday, Jan. 12, Noon**
- **Friday, March 15, 7:00 P.M. – Sunday, March 17, Noon**

Led by Joen and Michael

These practice events will include sitting and walking meditation, a Dharma talk, body practice, and a work period. There will also be an opportunity to meet with a teacher. Includes three vegetarian meals. Fee: \$50 (members \$45).



Weekend Sesshin at Ryumonji Monastery

- **Friday, Feb. 21, 5:30 P.M. – Sunday, Feb. 23, 1:00 P.M.**

Led by Rev. Shoken Winecoff

This weekend sesshin will take place at Ryumonji Monastery, near Decorah, Iowa, about a three-hour drive from the Twin Cities. The sesshin will include a Shuso (head monk) ceremony on Sunday morning for Genpo Michael O'Neal, which is an important stage in traditional Zen training, as well as a "Shuso Tea" the evening before. To register for this sesshin, please contact admin@OceanDharma.org well in advance. Fee: \$175 (members \$150).

For further information about Ryumonji, see <http://www.ryumonji.org/>.

Winter 2020 Registration Form

Name _____

Address _____

Zip _____ Email _____

Phone

C: () _____

Other: () _____

To register, please check the appropriate activities.

Total Dynamic Living—Introductory Program in Mindfulness (\$25 deposit)

- Minneapolis, Tuesday evenings (#602)
- St. Paul, Thursday evenings (#283)

Total Dynamic Living: One-Day Retreat

- Saturday, March 7, 9:00 A.M.— 3:00 P.M.
(by donation for program alumni)

“Mindful Speech & Deep Listening” course

- Wednesday evenings (#B92)
Jan. 22 - March 11 (\$25 deposit)

Introduction to Zen Practice Mini-Course

- Jan. 6 & 13 (no fee)

Weekend Sesshins at Compassionate Ocean

- Friday-Sunday, Jan. 10-12
- Friday-Sunday, March 15-17

Facing Climate Change (no fee)

- Friday, Jan. 24
- Friday, Feb. 28
- Friday, March 27

Enrollment for these activities is limited, and early registration is encouraged.

To register, send this form along with the non-refundable deposit listed (payable to CODC) to: Compassionate Ocean Zen Center
652 17th Ave. NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413
(612) 781-7640 • www.OceanDharma.org
Or register online on our website in the “Classes & Retreats” section.

Facing Climate Change:

For a Future to Be Possible

These monthly drop-in gatherings are an opportunity to educate ourselves about the unfolding crisis in climate disruption and to consider what we can do. Optional vegetarian potluck at 6:00 P.M. followed by a program from 7:00-9:00. The usual facilitator is Michael O’Neal. No fees, but please register in advance by sending an email to admin@OceanDharma.org.

Winter Schedule:

Friday evenings, Jan. 24, Feb. 28, March 27



Winter Zendo Music Night



The Gated Community at our fall Zendo Music Night

Friday, January 31 at 7:30 P.M.

Performers to be announced in January

Wish List

- Plumbing help—replacing a toilet mechanism, hooking up a washing machine
- Carpenter/painting/ handyperson help (various projects)



You are invited...

...to become a **Sustaining Member** of Compassionate Ocean, joining with others to support the continued life and health of our Center.

For further information please go to our website or contact the Center to request a Membership Brochure.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) One-Day Retreat in November





Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center
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Minneapolis, MN 55413
(612) 781-7640
admin@OceanDharma.org
www.OceanDharma.org

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Winter Program Highlights

- **Buddhist Studies Course:
Mindful Speech and Deep Listening**
- **Introductory Programs in Mindfulness (MBSR)**
offered in Minneapolis and St. Paul
- **Intro to Zen Mini-course**
- **Climate Change Action gatherings**
- **Ongoing Meditation and Dharma Talks**
- **Monthly Sesshin (Days of Zen Practice)**
(including Shuso ceremony for Michael O'Neal)
- **Winter Zendo Music Night**

Special Community Ceremony at Ryumonji Monastery in February



Sunday, February 23 at 9:00 A.M.

A Shuso Hossenshiki (Head Monk) ceremony for Genpo Michael O'Neal will take place this winter at Ryumonji Zen Monastery in northeastern Iowa. Genpo will be serving as Head Monk for the six-week winter Ango (practice period) there. This ceremony is intended to be the community's examination of and support for the Head Monk in his training as a Zen priest. It will include an exchange of questions and responses between community members and the Head Monk. The photo at left is of the summer 2019 Shuso ceremony at Ryumonji with Eishin Tom Houghton.

Everyone is welcome to attend the ceremony. There will be a Shuso Tea the evening before, with a Dharma talk by Rev. Konjin Gaelyn Godwin, Director of the International Division of Soto Zen, North America.