

How to choose a Zen Master

“It is our own willpower and energy turned inward that creates *Zen Mind*. A Zen teacher can help keep us focused on this task, help us limit distractions and *hold our hands* as we traverse difficult terrain; but no teacher, master or other person can do the difficult work for you. No person, besides yourself, can instill the faith, fortitude and spiritual desire needed to succeed on the path. Every person however that we encounter on our journey has something to teach us. Every experience we have, be it painful or joyous, is a lesson for us if we attend to it as such. Even the most arrogant or conceited people have something to teach us about ourselves and can be a guide for us on our Zen path. Following the discipline of Zen we strive to realize our full potential as human beings. We turn our gaze inward, pulling back from the projections onto people that lead us to samsaric relationships of love and hate and idolatry of religious authority figures. Ideally, a Master is a guide*, a source of comfort when we need it, a source of inspiration when we become overwhelmed, a model of what we may aspire to. He or she is compassionate and knowing, but not above human frailties.”

**Perhaps one place to look is the old Buddhist idea of kalyana-mitra, that is, the idea of a spiritual friend. In this view, the kalyana-mitra is not idealized and elevated to a position beyond human and human frailty, but is viewed as someone having more insight, more experience, knowing more, displaying patience and the ability to listen, the merit of learning coupled with good meditative knowledge, a deeper understanding that a fellow practitioner can look to for guidance, advice, and help, as a mentor. One is a kalyana-mitra by being in relationship with someone else or others. This is a relationship between friends with a common interest, though one person may have more knowledge and experience than the other. The relationship is the responsibility of both friends and both bring something to it. (Stuart Lachs)*



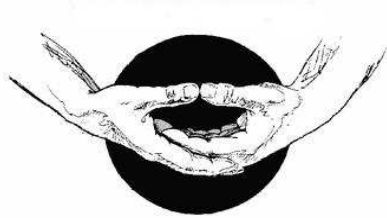
Becoming a Zen Student

A practical guide

*Lotus Zen Temple
Lincoln, Nebraska*

Purpose

The purpose of this program is to offer formal master to student training in Zen, if you would like to deepen your practice; and/or if you plan to prepare for taking the Zen Buddhist Precepts.



Module

Your program will consist of both distance elements and practice here at Lotus Temple. As with many things, pace and duration can only be determined by individual progress. Depending on your background and spiritual formation, it can take anywhere from a few months to a year.

Your Commitment

1. Commit to daily practice of zazen and frequently communicate with the master how the practice is progressing.
2. Enter regularly scheduled short conferences (Dokusan) between you and the master about Zen realization in your life.
3. Study an assigned number of books, one at a time, as determined; and discuss these books from time to time with your master.
4. Attend the three training Units as offered at the temple.



How to get started

You can become a Zen student at any time by talking to the Zen master. He will set up an interview in order to determine whether he can accept you at this time.

Tuition

There is no set tuition for this training. It is appreciated, however, when students make a commitment to the temple with a monthly pledge or any amount at their discretion.

Mind to Mind Transmission

While Zen realization and transmission are maintained solely through the spiritual experience of each individual, the genuineness of this experience by the student must be identified with that of his or her teacher. Thus, it is transmitted directly from mind to mind and not by reading religious scriptures or by repeating rituals, such as prayers or the chanting of mantras and sutras. In other words, while Zen insists that the spiritual experience of each individual is the fundamental grounding, at the same time Zen holds that the teacher's verification of the student's attainment is absolutely necessary. The mind-to-mind transmission in Zen thus has to be teacher-student identification.

