

Tips for Seshin

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And yet, to me, though, that is hard to do from a point of view that it will take, oh, it's hard to do. When I think of hard and easy in terms of practice, what I think of is all crunching and austerity. There's something in me trying to find a place where the hard that appeals to me to be destructive is let go, or is mine, so that there's room to deal with what is hard. I feel like I am always struggling with that line, that my anger and my resistance are not mine, that my joys and my energies are always struggling in that line. Maybe some more cheap than others in me that plays. It says, and reading a poem, I could respond. I could respond maybe later.

Nodded. Is she I, i.e., no, that's hard. It's really hard. It's hard at *sesshin*. God, you're interested enough to watch your lack of interest. I'm interested already. And there's another time for me that I, we, or as she, which is really hard, especially like, I don't really know, and I don't want to practice too hard now. You do practice in me. She and I got again, all right. When good men made in she Oliva laughed up, and I feel like hard practice part is that she.

But in your lecture you're talking about she and those of other time. And if that's part of the problem, I think of it that others I enation to, but it's other stuff can, oh, maybe I, at what I call, I think I need so much. You said it said enough. It's just to—

This is, in some ways, it'll be a bit arbitrary almost to single out *sesshin* to give us this talk. This talk could be used about our practice, all practice, period, of our life, all the time. And so you can relate. This could just as well be a talk used for us next week as it could be during *sesshin*. Just stay simple, and stay quiet, and stay interested, and stay really simple.

You know, the problem with an anticipation like *sesshin*, if we get so caught up in our thoughts and anticipation that we're no longer simply resting in the moment experience. It's like Bodhidharma regretting that the emperor left. And we're not regretting something that's

left, but kind of fearful or anticipating or worrying about something that can happen in the future, and now is not the future. Now, *sesshin* is not happening at all. So just simply staying in the present. And if I just stay in the present, in some ways the *sesshin* will never come.

And if this is a way that I approach my life, I try to approach it, I turn out to worry about things in the future because it's just my thoughts, my concepts of it. I try to just stay each day. That may be helpful. They're very real. They're very real. So most—no, no, I, they all believe it. It's my thought that there might—I had been very real.

You know, I really thought I can. Something I thought is to see, what do you think? If so, maybe in your situation where you feel thoughts and concepts so real, identified with them so solidly, maybe it's so good to conduce you up a little bit for *sesshin*. You can really throw yourself in wholeheartedly and start realizing that they're not so real. I say accurately or something. But I mean, that's my deepest wish for you, mister. I start breaking up the solidity, coca at way, word pleasure, glib, cold. You see what I mean?

I said that it's not easy things to do, and they're not sort of just, if you're just in the present moment, that takes care of it all. If that's true, it's true, but it's very difficult to do, particularly if you come from a background where your tendency is to beat yourself for every moment that one spends in the present moment, and every moment that you don't spend the time watching impermanence go on, and every moment that you don't want to be silent. And I think that most of what goes on is a seesaw that way. If you have a tendency to be that way towards yourself, then you're just bludgeoning yourself, cushion after cushion, as a failure. You are in tension. And I think that these things are not easy ones, not easy to do, and that they are laudable activities to engage in our practice.

But is it that you have that compassion and patience? Why force so much in taking that as assumed? But I don't think it is. I think that all of us, probably for as long as the practice is practice, need compassion and patience with ourselves. And I might apologize. It's not assumed, and I assume that all of us are. I note that a lecture that I want to give was I want to give a lecture on compassion and loving-kindness, not of giving one entirely on loving-kindness, because I think loving-kindness is one of the greatest things I discovered in the practice of Buddhism.

But in Zen feeling, it gains—you don't like to talk about love and kindness, that if, you know, it's a kind of *Theravādin* or Hindu idea of practice, and we're more interested in our direct penetration of reality, and there's something more sentimental. And that kind of take it as being assumed and a necessary part of the practice. And maybe, you know, at some point down the line, I can give a talk about love and kindness. But again, you know, I sympathize

very much with people, all of you who feel any little bit dumb, oppressed by this kind of talk. But both sides are true. There's both sides of one coin.

And there has to be the compassionate, gentle, loving side, accepting side of ourselves. A lot of what Zen practice is about for me is total, radical self-acceptance. And there also is a side of making some kind of a very soft, gentle effort of applying oneself. And now and then to talk about simplicity, and quiet, and stillness, and silence, and some interest, I didn't think was going to imply or cause a lot of difficulty. I apologize very much if people get anxious and confused and self-critical, or my notes, Jim, you and me come into this.

Well, this was about some way that if one has ideas of spiritual progress, not certain that it's sort of fed in that, a spiritual progress, yet in some way we can make a human being as at all steady concentration. That's a sort of—one human being not so concentrated being said. Well, if one person is concentrated and another person is not concentrated, in some ways there's some difference. It's obvious. There's this difference there. But I think inherently they're both Buddhas, and both of them, in a way, not a lot. What our practice is, is simply accepting us as we are, as being Buddhas.

And Dōgen doesn't talk about changing your state of mind, does he? Doesn't talk about changing who you are. It doesn't talk about changing what you're experiencing. You may say, like I read in here, there's no mistakes, no increase or decrease, no delusion. Whatever mental state you have, that itself is Buddha. Clearly, a difference between it too is that one difference is possible, is that there's a big difference between accepting yourself as a Buddha, for whatever is going on is Buddha, even distractedness and restlessness and resistance as being Buddha, and not seeing it, not doing it, being caught up in other ideas.

When I used to be walking around, and now that I sit facing out, I have more chance to see people sitting. To me, it's always more encouraging. I'm more encouraged by people who have obviously a hard time sitting there and make some effort to sit there than by the people who display concentration or have an easy time. Then, in certain terms of usefulness to other people, I think people who have a hard time, to me, are very often more encouraging and more helpful.

But I do these things in this thing, right? The first time at Tassajara, and for the last ten years I was working in a way of life, and on and on I go. I was looking for me was to hear, later, or then, or was all I am beside the little man near. That's a shield. I am on to a way, a sea, and again that. He said, no, I do have an action for, too. The other five to what you say, or *sesshin*. In that practice, fishing for a beginning, not a— I make sure this way somebody who does those *kyōlins* beyond those *kyōlins* should be a person, a thing. And when all events, it won't

be a mat once in me.

I was the aspirant myself once to an almost age, but I'd take a win to why they will be beyond those. If I be you to that, I will do—was go and press coke. That was what I said before. I think it was what's just transpired, this conversation. I don't have—I think that go on, aid on, and judge yourself as aid me. Let's be silent. I have. And I very much want to have a *shashu*—we never said a word to each other.

And I think that my problem is that my feeling about you is that these things do not come hard for you, that they are extremely easy things for you to do. And therefore it's difficult for me for you to tell me yet that these are things that I should do when I feel it easy for you. And that if, when you say, I take it like, oh, they're so easy now. I should be able to keep my mouth shut in the whole *sesshin* and stay concentrated on my back and my breath, and it should be like one way or another. So when I'm taking it, that's my reaction. I sort of feel like I want to hear from you on the other side. I want to hear that even that should yourself ask, be patient when you can't do things because they're not so easy to do.

Yes, thank you for saying that, Chan. Zen practice is not easy for me either. So some things are easy. You mean my legs are so stretched out now that I don't have much pain in my legs anymore? I get pains elsewhere, like my back. So certain things are easy. But boy, you know, I've gone through so much tremendous pain to get to this point. I remember really well. And the reason I kind of ended this talk was talking about how hard *sesshin* can be. I really know how hard it is, and it can be hard for me too. I don't doubt it.

Just some things are easier, and I have an easier time with my legs. But in terms of harmonizing my mind, I think there are people here who have a much easier time than I do. So I appreciate what you said. Listening to all this talk, what's been going on, what can come up in my mind is that we all have a difficulty with judging. You know, we either judge ourselves by what's presented outside, and what's even worse is we judge ourselves by our own standards. And it's constantly going on. And I've been doing it a lot, and I'm still doing it.

And one thing I've found living here at Tassajara is, if I measure myself too much from the outside, then that's not actually what I'm here for. And what I'm really here for is my own practice. And when I sit *sesshin*, what really matters at the end is what I actually did with myself. And it doesn't matter so much what was presented to me from the outside, or if people think I'm good or bad or anything. The only feeling which matters is what I actually did with myself, or how much I practiced. And I might not even be aware of what I was practicing because it's so deep, unconscious, that I can't name it.

But it's the only thing I feel is important because it's going to help me once I leave here. No one is going to help me if I measure myself up to anything, my own judgments or other people's judgments. And that's a very strong feeling I have now. The only thing that matters is my own intention to practice, and practice, and trust, my willingness to be here and practice.

But one of the things we do sometimes, and I apologize if I offended any of you, is yes, some people sit up here and talk about, you know, different kinds of advice or points of view about how to do our practice, and you'll have to accept it. Or you still should trust, and especially trust, and be centered in your own practice, and especially for yourself. But if you can use anything I said, great. If you can't use it, then I don't— But what I want to do, what I want to use, I want to encourage you all to make a really good effort, and I now encourage you to make a really good effort yourself.

But to have a real deep respect for this *sesshin* and for everybody else's sitting *sesshin*. So even if Albert, you know, has to talk, then he should talk to himself, because I mean this again, this is, you know, you have to figure out the spirit of this for yourself. But please respect everybody else around here. And I can see sometimes, even during the practice period, I can see another kind of thing. There's a lot of talking going on during times it must be silent, and there's a lot of ways in which, slowly, more and more over the course of the practice period, people are taking one more edge off the schedule and off the basic guidelines for practice period.

And I do want to remind you all to please respect each other. And if you talk to someone else, you're disturbing their concentration, or their practice in some ways. Of course, you guys can decide together to talk, but I just wanted—I want to encourage you to make your best efforts, whatever that means for you, and to respect everybody else's efforts, and help them kind of be hermits if they can, if they want to be.

No, no, no. I'm sorry. I was just driving home the bigger point for everybody. I'm sorry. I personally love it when people talk about loving-kindness, and I thought it's kind of you to talk about concentration, and I'm watching how we're responding in language. I'm very glad we're a silent person. So I get to continue at which we stop. He wants to stop. You want lunch? If it seems only very—I want to stop, and won't. People won't stop it. See hands. Oh, that's enough. It's enough people that we shouldn't—we'll stop. Maybe go to the call of it.

And I appreciate it. It was fun to stir things up a little bit. And I do really hope that you are really kind to yourself, really compassionate and respectful for yourself, and to realize that whatever you are right now, whatever you are right now, it's fine. Whatever state of mind, whatever lack of concentration, whatever, nothing really matters. It just matters that we ac-

cept ourselves as perfectly exactly who we are. And please, you'll make that foundation of your life. And love yourself. I love myself. I thank you very much.

Things we—and place real, we the unknowable, there is no more. Vows are inexhaustible. To join this small mind we have with the big mind, to join, to immerse our mind with the universal mind, to immerse ourselves.

In a way, when I was in Japan, one of the writings of Dōgen, which isn't really part of *Shōbōgenzō*, which the monks in Japan often recommended I read, seemed to be one of his writings that was most revered by people actually practicing. And it was called *Guidelines for Studying the Way*. In here Dōgen writes:

Those who study the Way seek to be immersed in the Way. For those who are immersed in the Way, all traces of enlightenment perish. Those who practice the Buddha Way should first of all trust in the Buddha Way. Those who trust in the Buddha Way should trust that they are in essence within the Buddha Way, where there is no delusion, no false thinking, no confusion, no increase or decrease, and no mistakes. To arouse such trust and illuminate the Way in this manner, and to practice accordingly, are fundamental in studying the Way. You do this by sitting *zazen*.

So I think, for Dōgen, whatever mental state, whatever conscious state our mind is in, without exception, that mind, that mind itself, is already immersed in the Way. But usually I don't think we're completely, a hundred percent, realizing or accepting this, or living that way. So I think of *sesshin*, also *zazen* and practice, as being not so much something you actively do. Maybe you actively even harmonize your small mind, or join your small mind with the big mind. What's more, a lining or tuning. You're tuning yourself to this fundamental fact, to reality, that already we're immersed in the Buddha Way.

So it's not so much a matter of doing something as just leaving everything alone, leaving everything alone in a very fundamental, radical way. And so, in that sense, I think our practice is very simple. And at least one of the hallmarks of our practice is to keep it real simple. I suppose if you complicate it, I think we often miss the point, miss the Way. So this is the first point I want to bring up, which is simplicity.

During *sesshin*, I think that to sit *zazen* is to be simple, almost simple-minded. And as it says in *Okumura Roshi's* practice, intimately working within as though a fool, like an idiot. So to practice within, to be intimate, I think, is to stay very intimate, very close to our actual direct experience of what's happening. The only place that the Buddha Way can unfold for us,

the only place that our practice is going to unfold, is in our direct experience. And so the trick is to find some way to have a very simple, direct relationship with our direct experience.

So again, it's not doing something with our experience. It's letting it be, and so on. One thing that's very important to investigate or study when we're sitting there is how we react to our experience, whether or not there's any kind of subtle forms of aversion or attachment to what's going on. And this not-doing of *zazen*, this leaving things alone, is walking a very narrow edge, kind of a razor's edge, between any kind of clinging and holding, or any kind of pushing away.

For me, maintaining a simple relationship with what's happening is somewhat like resting myself, resting my mindfulness, in whatever is predominant at that time. And usually we take the breath as being the predominant object, as the main focus of our concentration during *zazen*, following the inhalation, exhalation, and now. But sometimes, especially during *sesshin*, other things become predominant. We can get pretty uncomfortable, like we have a lot of pain, or a lot of strong emotions. And it's unnecessary to struggle during *zazen*.

If there's any sense of struggle, then our attention is split. If we're trying to keep our attention or focus or concentration on one thing, but something else is really going on, and a struggle comes up in a tension between those two things, then rather than struggling, the feeling of *zazen* is more like rest. So rather than struggling with a split attention, if something else becomes more dominant than the breath, take that up as the main focus of concentration. Make that the predominant object in your sitting, and stay with it as long as it's there, as long as it really hooks your attention. As its power to hold us starts to decrease, one can return to the breath and stay with the breath again.

I like to try to align concentration without elimination. Don't eliminate anything. We don't limit anything from our concentration. And we also don't take everything as our object of concentration. Notice that when we try to stay in the present moment, in present experience, there's some kind of selection that goes on. We don't try to be aware of the whole range, the whole spectrum of possible experiences that's going on. Usually we select the breath, and if something else becomes dominant, we go to that.

And it's very important to maintain our continuity of concentration, of mindfulness, or continuity of being in this simple presence, in our actual, direct, nonconceptual experience of what is going on. And there are, too, two *dharmas*, or two technical Buddhist terms, which are helpful enough to understand in maintaining some continuity in our practice, continuity of concentration. And the usual English translation of these is applied and sustained application of thought. And I think, in a more practical way, I think of the first as being aiming or

placing, hooking the mindfulness, the concentration, on some object, onto the breath.

It's important to very clearly settle down, settle down into the abdomen, and place the concentration there. And the second one, sustained application of thought, is more like keeping the mind there once it's placed there. The literal translation, partly, of the Sanskrit word *vicāra* is to rub. When you rub the abdomen, you're following the breath and your hand on your stomach. You keep your mind there and rub it gently, rubbing it.

I sometimes use the analogy of fishing in my *zazen*, and the first placing is kind of like hooking a fishhook, my mindfulness hook, my concentration, onto the breath and my abdomen down here, and then I start reeling it in. And I don't know too much about fishing, but my impression is that when you're reeling in a fish, it's very important to maintain a very gentle tautness on the line the whole time you're easing it in. If you pull in a fish too hard, the line might break, or the hook might tear out of the fish. However, if you're too slack, if you let the line be slack, then sometimes the fish can loosen itself from the hook and swim away.

So it's very important to maintain a continuous kind of tautness or tension. So as I'm sitting with my breath, I kind of feel a tautness, a kind of gentle, soft tautness that's sustained over time, kind of reeling in the thought, staying with it and staying with it and staying with it. And it's only with staying with it that the body can really start opening up. It's only by staying in our experience. As soon as we leave our experience, which means to get involved in our distractions or distracted thoughts, then the unfolding of the body is going to stop, my experience of the unfolding of it.

Then if we can, if it's possible to maintain some continuity of the concentration, then it's possible to start seeing the gaps and discontinuities, the gaps and discontinuities of our actual experience of phenomena itself as it comes up. That thing is really important, especially during *sesshin*, when there's sometimes very intense experiences, very strong feelings. It can be a lot of pain, a lot of strong emotions. And if you can keep your concentration really focused, really continuous, and sometimes the longer, more intimate you get with the breath, the easier it is to see the discontinuities which are inherent in everything that's happening, so that all these difficulties that we have during a *sesshin* don't have to be so difficult.

If we can see them as being discontinuous, see the gaps in between them, it's when there is some experience of discontinuity that *bodhicitta* has a chance to arise in us. And I would say technically that *bodhicitta* doesn't newly arise until it's very clear and very strong, an experience and seeing of impermanence, of the rapid arising and passing away of phenomena. And in that same section, *Guidelines for Studying the Way*, Dōgen opens his essay by

saying that *bodhicitta* is the mind which sees into impermanence, that sees fully the uncertain world of life and death.

And when we start to experience this continuity of phenomena, of our emotions and mental states and our physical sensations, when it becomes strong enough, the sense of impermanence, then the mind will naturally shy away from identifying with it, will naturally incline itself, naturally move in the direction of awakening. It's that natural movement, the movement towards awakening, which is the aspiration of enlightenment, which is *bodhicitta*. And until that time, until impermanence is strong enough that the mind naturally shies away from identifying with anything, *bodhicitta* is just an abstraction, just an idea, a very good abstraction, a very good idea. But it's still in the realm of ideas and abstractions.

So continuity is really important. Continuity is a very simple practice of being present. And also during *sesshin* is an opportunity of maintaining this continuity throughout the whole day. And I've found in my experience this to be extremely important. We can do it in the *zendō*, but on the break, especially when you leave the *zendō* or during meals, is to do real simple things. Stay simple. Stay simple-minded, simple enough so that you can maintain the momentum of the mindfulness and concentration which is building. There's a real momentum that builds over seven days.

And it's very good to please respect this momentum. And if you don't really know, you don't really recognize the momentum is building, even when you're having a real hard time, you can interrupt the momentum and just start over again. So maintain that momentum. It's really helpful. So during a break, do simple things. Rest is fine, or having some tea, or going for a walk. But anything more complicated, like writing or talking, is strongly discouraged.

Talking in particular is discouraged during *sesshin*. It's very important to respect the silence for everybody, not only for yourself, but also for the *saṅgha*. Everybody else is trying so hard. So please try to refrain as much as you can from talking to anybody. You might feel it's nice for you, but it's somewhat disrespectful for the effort of other people.

So silence is the second main point that I want to bring up, to maintain it, maintain this maintenance of silence. And it doesn't just mean talking. It means almost any form of communication at all. And one of the guidelines we have for speaking is to avoid eye contact. So it's a matter of reducing communication to an absolute minimum. And the reason for that is that we can really rest and stay with our own direct experience.

As soon as we start communicating, our relation with people and our communication is really complicated, full of abstractions, full of conceptual ideas. And during *sesshin*, we're trying

to step out of that world of concepts, out of the conceptual world, to be in the world of our direct experience. So if we can not have any forms of communication, really feel like you're a hermit for a week of *sesshin*, it's really good, like a fool, like an idiot.

And another meaning of silence, maintaining silence, is not talking to yourself. That may be much harder for you to do, but also it's important to try not to talk with yourself during *zazen* or any time. And in this context of talking to yourself, I think it's useful to distinguish something I distinguish in my mind between thoughts and thinking. The mind will almost always think, just produce thoughts. They can just bubble up. They bubble up and they arise. They pass away. Just simple thoughts.

And this happens a lot during sitting. Thoughts will come, thoughts will go. But then there's thinking, and thinking is when we get involved in the thoughts. We connect the thoughts together in chains. We get involved in more and more thinking. The thoughts kind of pull us away.

And you can feel sometimes, if you have some experience of a real stillness and clarity, then you can feel what it's like. It's really tangible, the feeling, what it's like to suddenly think. Suppose you're settled. Your thoughts kind of pass through you. If you've got that feel, then thinking can so pull you away. Sometimes I have a feeling of the thinking as like an elastic band that's pulling me out from the mind. Or sometimes there's a feeling of a tightness or tension that kind of pulls in on the mind when I start thinking. And if I can let go, kind of relax that, relax the mental muscle, then the thinking will stop.

Probably I make it like the idea of the sky, making the mind like the sky. It's a way of just—your thoughts can come and go like clouds in the sky, but we are filling it up with thunderclouds. It's attention. Suzuki has been talking about nonthinking this practice period. And the traditional, usual way of understanding the instruction nonthinking is simply to leave your thoughts alone. Don't do anything about them. Just let them come, then let them go.

If you can really let them go, they'll disappear real fast, because the nature of thoughts is, one, they're very short. They're always passing away. Any sense of thoughts lasting over time means that we're involved in them in some subtle way. So if we can really learn to leave thoughts alone, we'll see that they never trouble us. So nonthinking is just to let thoughts come and let them go without restricting our minds, to the unrestricted mind of neither suppressing nor getting involved in our thoughts.

And a crucial factor in not getting involved in our thoughts, not involved in our thinking, which is such a strong tendency in our *zazen* when we're sitting, the only important guard against

it is maintaining a strong sense of interest. And if we are, especially during *sesshin*, even during *zazen*, really interested in that whole world we're following, when we're following the breath, the breath has to become the most interesting thing that you can possibly think of. You have to find or arouse some interest, arouse that this is the most interesting thing in the world. And if you can't do that, then other things can become more interesting.

And all our thoughts, all the planning and concerns and memories and futures and wonderful creative ideas, all seem so much more interesting and important than our breath and the simple-minded practice that we have. So it is important to arouse this interest, what we call *way-seeking mind*. So often when I sit down, I check out what my interest is, or I arouse that interest so I can stay with the breath.

I think interest, and also the maintenance of silence, maintaining some kind of interest in *zazen* and silence, are not grim affairs. It's not some kind of grim restraint. If that was what silence was like—or silence. I think silence is, and a lot of wonderful things are born out of silence. And even if we didn't sit *zazen* for this week of *sesshin*, if we just maintained silence that week, we would probably develop a very deep sense of inner intimacy with ourselves, or some feeling of austerity.

If we really can respect and really can get into the world of silence, a world of stillness, during *sesshin* it's possible, it's an opportunity, to be in touch with some deeper sense of fullness, of completeness that we inherently have. And oftentimes, like gratefulness, a feeling of gratefulness, are very closely related to our experiences of silence, gratefulness and eternity and joy.

And interest itself, the interest with which we stay with our breath, the interest with which we stay with our actual direct experience, is a very gentle, almost passive interest, gentle, soft, a flexible interest. And I think sometimes of the interest, the effort that I make in Zen, as more like listening, a profound form of listening. I am listening to my breath rather than seeing. Or, you know, oftentimes we talk about what we see when we sit, watching and following the breath, following and seeing. Sometimes, for me, seeing has connotations of being more active, actively involved in doing something, and listening is more not-doing.

Listening to the abdomen, listening to the *hara*, listening to the whole inhalation and the whole exhalation. And listening has for me a feeling of being nonjudgmental, friendly with my experience. Friendly, nonjudgmental. There's no mistakes, as Dōgen said.

These are just three simple things which I just wanted to share with you. And I think that in my experience of sitting *sesshin*, they have been very valuable for me in staying simple, staying

silent, and keeping up the interest. Especially as *sesshin* draws to the end, it's important. Sometimes, as *sesshin* gets to the end, we also get sometimes quite calm, quite settled. It sometimes is very hard to maintain the interest. When we get calm, you probably have had the experience, you are getting very centered and concentrated and calm in *zazen*, and the mind starts thinking because it's kind of— And that's really a crucial time to reawaken that interest, to keep going even when you start getting calm.

So it's a real special opportunity to sit *sesshin*. And I don't think it's easy. I think *sesshin* is hard, and whenever people sit a *sesshin*, I think there's a lot of respect and appreciation for the effort. I want to read something from that section by Dōgen. He talks how hard it is.

People of the present say you should practice what is easy to practice. These words are quite mistaken. They are not at all in accord with the Buddha. If this alone is what you regard as practice, then even lying down would be wearisome. If you find one thing wearisome, you will find everything wearisome. It is obvious that people who are fond of easy practice are not capable of the Way.

In fact, the Dharma spread and is now present in the world because our great teacher, Śākyamuni, practiced with difficulty and pain for immeasurable eons and finally attained this Dharma. If the original source is like this, how could the later streams be easy? Students who would like to study the Way must not wish for easy practice. If you seek easy practice, you will for certain never reach the ground of truth or dig down to the place of treasure.

Even teachers of old who had great capacity say that practice is difficult. You should know that the Buddha Way is vastly profound. We can see that breaking bones and crushing marrow is not difficult, but to harmonize the mind is difficult. Again, the practice of prolonged austerities is not difficult, but to harmonize bodily activities and the mind is most difficult.

So I think what Dōgen is saying about the difficulty of practice, of *zazen* and *sesshin*, is not to put ourselves under some grueling, horrible, austere discipline. Oh, that's not what our practice can unfold as. But to actually do a simple thing, immersing ourselves in a way of harmonizing the body and mind, these actually are very difficult things to do. So I think it's important not to forget that, so we can make our best effort during *sesshin* and follow the schedule the best we can, and have a good time.

Even though it's a week away, the *sesshin*, my wish is that all of you can have lots of joy throughout *sesshin*. Any questions or any comments?

Very resistance— that is up to you all. So that happens. That happens. It's reasonable to happen. And I don't think, again, Zen practice or *sesshin* practice needs to feel like a struggle. Even if you might feel resistance come up, just enter into the resistance as much as you can, like make that the object of your concentration. Concentrate really deeply, going to the core of the resistance, and sometimes in the physical manifestations of it.

It's really interesting to enter, like sometimes it might not be easy to kind of find where exactly the mental state is, but you can kind of feel what the body is like, the tension that's building up in the body. As you enter into that, rest in the core of that physical tension. And then there won't be any actual resistance or struggle. It can always change pretty quickly. One tendency often in a *sesshin* is to try to make things different from how they are.

And as I've heard you talk about, it's a little different, you know, how you practice with pain. This is common for people. If a pain comes up, to feel a lot of pain sometimes in *zazen*, and there's lots of manuals, New Age books out about how to deal with pain. And one common way is you enter into it with concentration. You concentrate and get as mindful as you can on the pain until it'll go away. So this is not Zen. That's trying. That's a kind of aversion. That's trying to change the situation.

When we're not trying to get the pain away, we might enter into that world, concentrate on it, and be mindful of it. But we don't try to change it. We aren't doing it in order to get the pain to go away. I can keep in mind. I would have you get interested in getting interested in—well, means mindful for you.

Is it out in talking about enjoying greed? I think perhaps with pain it's easier for me, in a way, to realize it with a smart *sesshin* mind. For me, when I enjoy something, it means a close attention. The other thing that occurred to me is that all the guidelines he suggested sounded like very good ones, but impossible. The greatest of all for me, that concentrated practice, I myself thought about my right and fortunes line in a young place from a book, I think *The Elements of Style*, where they lay down all kinds of rules about the proper use of English. And then at the end they say, break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

Now, it seems to me what I would keep in mind is both minds, this suggestion, and it's a great—any of them, writing *sesshin*, committed some great unkindness. Sure, you have to know, we have to think, you have to know in a situation what's going to be most agitating. Sometimes if you restrain yourself too much, talking for example, it could be much more agitating than simply saying something, a kind of knocking yourself out of a bind. So use those guidelines, those suggestions, in a kind of spirit. They aren't being offered as kind of

difficult things to do. Just stay simple. Any simple thing, try to make it simple for yourself.

How far told you that also, like I saw deliberately, so in noticing that— you were saying that if you can watch and be present for the arising and fading of interest, then you naturally have an interest. Then you already have, then you're already interested enough to begin with.

You used continuity and discontinuity. To me, that means when you go down—say that again. The different use of the moment for continuity, it's interesting to be used in so different a sense. The first way I used it was talking about my concentration and mindfulness and trying to make it as continuous as possible. And if the concentration gets strong, continuous enough, then you can actually see that what we're actually experiencing with our minds within concentration is actually a series of discontinuous experiences.

And when it gets strong enough, when concentration gets really strong, then it starts to see the concentration moments themselves as discontinuous. But you need to have very strong continuity built up. You know, it's kind of like an illusion in some ways. But our effort has to be an effort that doesn't have any gaps in it. We aren't experiencing gaps, so we know there's no gaps in the effort. Then we can start seeing there actually are lots of gaps in everything all the time.

When it becomes strong enough, we actually see that concentration itself is fading away, arising and passing away all the time. Even our awarenesses eventually, everything passes away. Body and mind and the Way and everything fall away. So you're talking about immersing ourselves in the Way, we harmonize. Sometimes this *sesshin* is called harmonizing body and mind. I think that though the purpose is not to harmonize the body and mind, but to harmonize enough so you can drop body and mind.

And in that, as George was talking about, pausing and thinking, and these chains of thinking you call chains because they do shackle. This is the kind of— So I have a way hard all this is, it seems to me, if you have a penny, this is because I want a way of identification. To me, what about just seeing reason?

I think that though in some ways I was somewhat the same way as you. I think I wouldn't have stood for a lecture like this eight years ago. I wouldn't know what to do with it. But it's fine to talk about trust and expect, repeat a whole lecture on trusting ourselves in some fundamental way. I would hope that in this kind of community, in a Zen monastery, there's enough maturity, spiritual maturity, to be able to handle both, to be grounded enough in a kind of basic trust in ourselves to not get agitated or greedy or confused when we're actually talking about more specific things we can do in practice, actually maintain some interest in

practice.

It is a kind of spiritual maturity that's able to handle the idea of spiritual progress. There is spiritual progress, and Dōgen is uncompromising. You and I, in the way you were some years ago, couldn't, wouldn't want ever to have met Dōgen, because he's so uncompromising about really making a strict, strong practice. And he talks about attaining all the time, realizing. He talks about realization and practice-realization being one. But he also really makes a strong emphasis that you need to get enlightened. You need to have some experience of dropping body and mind.

And he's always making it from this point of view of basic trust: you're already perfect, already complete. So for him, he has the maturity to balance both of them. And this is how I feel, you know, that it's possible to do both. And I think, you know, in a community like this, and especially during *sesshin*, I feel some permission to kind of talk a bit more about each side. But it's not to discourage anybody, or to get anybody to feel dumb, or ready, can't do this. I don't think anything anybody can do any time is attainable quite easily. A simple thing.