



# ATLANTIC SOTO ZEN CENTER

## The Method of Zen

### INTRODUCTION

The thought of Zen is the flower.  
The mind is attracted by its beauty.  
The art of Zen is the fruit.  
Its savor comes home to one's heart.  
The practice of Zen is the life.  
By it the body and mind become strong and continue to prosper for eternity.  
The place of the practice of Zen is Zazen.  
The ideal of Zazen is the seated figure of Buddha.  
We love the flower of Zen.  
We rejoice in the fruit of Zen.  
We yearn for the life of Zen.

### DISPOSITION OF THE BODY

“Lotus form sitting” or sitting with folded legs is characteristic of an ideally seated figure of the Buddha. The right leg is folded and placed on the thigh of the left leg. Then the left leg is folded and placed on the thigh of the right leg. It is permissible to reverse this order.

There are various kinds of seated figures of the Buddha. It is sufficient so long as one folds one's legs and sits. It does not matter if one cannot place one leg over the other. It is also acceptable to sit on a chair and have the feet rest on the floor. However, the feeling of stability which one experiences when one sits with his legs folded is so wonderful that one cannot help but wish to sit in this manner.



Once the disposition of the legs is completed to the best of one's ability, the hands should then be rested in front of the lower abdomen. The palm of the right hand should be turned upward. The palm of the left hand should also be turned upward and placed on the right palm. The thumbs of both hands, the left lying on top of the right, are then raised with the right thumb in contact with the

left thumb. The thumbs which are raised, one in contact with the other, then face the palm of the hands and form a beautiful, gem-like ellipse.

Next is the disposition of the upper half of the body. The lower abdomen (below the navel) is forcibly pushed forward. The lower back becomes straight, and strength enters into the lower abdomen. If strength should rather penetrate into the upper abdomen at this time, one should attempt this over and over again until the strength enters only into the lower abdomen.

When strength has entered into the lower abdomen, one's posture will be as if one is lifting the ceiling with the vertex of their head. The neck will stretch with strength. The face will be cast downward just a fraction.

When strength enters into the lower abdomen and one has established a posture as described above, then his upper body will assume a straight poised appearance. His mind will be clear and refreshed.

### **DISPOSITION OF BREATHING**

When the disposition of the body has been established, the next step is the disposition of the breathing. Inhale the breath as much as possible through the nose. One should inhale the breath -keeping in mind the thought of having it go deep into the bottom of the lower abdomen, filling it entirely.

The inhaled breath should then be let out through the nose in a thin stream, beginning quietly, lightly and slowly. Then the breath should be exhaled gradually in a thick stream, stronger and then rapidly, until it is all gone.

Inhaling breath deeply through the nose is known as "kyuki" or "drawing in breath". Exhaling breath is known as "koki" or "expelling breath".

### **DISPOSITION OF THE MIND**

When Zazen is being practiced satisfactorily, one's mind is always quiet, peaceful, clear and serene. The mind then functions perfectly. The intellect is crystal-clear, without a cloud to dim it; the emotions and will are pure and strong. When one is practicing Zazen, there are times when one becomes sleepy, when one's mind becomes cloudy and heavy; when one is restless like a monkey jumping from tree to tree. Such conditions are due to an unsatisfactory Zazen practice. It is most effective to recompose one's body when you find that you are not doing Zazen satisfactorily. It is also traditional to ask to receive the kyosaku.

### **PERFECTION IN ZEN**

When one is able to put into actual practice the disposition of the body, the disposition of breathing and the disposition of the mind, then one's Zazen is already in the stage of perfection.

Here are some of the effects which will appear when one's Zazen is in the stage



of perfection. The body is filled with the feeling of good health, and has the elasticity of a rubber ball. The mind is clear and refreshed. Its functions are agile and quick. One finds happiness in whatever one does. One finds richness of life in everything one attempts. One knows clearly one's life's direction and has no hesitancy. One is calm, brave and happy in thought, speech and conduct.

One is openhearted, unsophisticated and spontaneous. One does not hide things from others. One is in harmony with the surroundings into which one assimilates oneself. One does everything with sincerity and initiative.

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