



# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

## NEWSLETTER OF THE DANCING MOUNTAINS ZEN SANGHA

Issue 9: Spring

## Mindfulness

### Introducing the new Mountain Silence

Welcome to this new electronic version of Mountain Silence! The vast majority of subscribers to this newsletter in the past have been receiving it in their email as a PDF document. In response to this, the idea was born to launch a fully email-compatible version of the newsletter with clickable links to online articles. We welcome your feedback on this new version and hope that it improves your experience of reading Mountain Silence. [Click here](#) to express your view on this new format.

### Editorial

#### [Mindfulness in Healthcare](#)

*by Ji Den Dai U*

This edition focuses on the topic of Mindfulness. This is a hot topic in today's world with many interpretations of the word. Working within the NHS and teaching mindfulness-based approaches in healthcare, I bear witness to many interpretations which demonstrate an incomplete understanding of the term 'mindfulness.' There exists an incomplete understanding, often based on the developments within mainstream medicine and psychological services over the past 30 years. [Read more...](#)

### March 2010 retreat at Gaia House

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Reverend Myo Dennis Lahey, and ten retreat participants, after the retreat entitled "Just sitting: the Ten Oxherding Pictures" at Gaia House in March 2010.

## Dharma Talk

**The Five Faculties - cultivating the capacity for awareness**

*by Ryushin Paul Haller*

Today I was talking to someone who had just turned 40 and who had discovered a few months ago that an old cancer, which was thought to be in remission, had metastasised to several places in the body, and it was necessary to go through a process of surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. This person is also a practitioner and so we were talking about what it is like to practice with that. I was struck by a sort of nobility in the human capacity in being able to respond to something like that with the wisdom and compassion that somehow brings out the best in us... that nobility. [Read more...](#)

## News

**Visit by Catherine Gammon of SFZC to our UK Sangha**

*by Michael Elsmere*

Over the time since Reb's last retreat at Gaia House, Francis Checkley in Totnes has been pursuing with Roshi the possibility of having a priest in residence in the UK. Catherine Gammon has now very graciously offered to be with us for the period July to September this year. She has expressed her views and ideas of what she

by Zindel V. Segal, J. Mark G. Williams, and John D. Teasdale

[A Zen Life in Nature: Muso Soseki in His Gardens](#)

by Keir Davidson

### Events

[Dancing Mountains](#)

[Camping Retreat](#)

in Ermington, South Devon

[Visit by Catherine Gammon of SFZC to the UK](#)

Details of Catherine's proposals



## Upcoming Events

[Click here](#) for further details of these events. \*DM indicates a retreat using Dancing Mountains forms and liturgy.

### April 17

Totnes Sangha Zendo.  
Dogen Studies with Mike Eido Luetchford.

### April 21 -25

Sesshin with Ryushin Paul Haller Roshi.  
Benburb Priory, Northern Ireland.  
[Click here](#) for further details.

### May 7 - 9

Weekend Retreat \*DM  
In Ermington, South Devon.  
[Click here](#) for further details.

### August 27 - September 3

Zen Koans and Bodhisattva Precepts  
with Tenshin Reb Anderson. \*DM  
Gaia House, Devon.

### November 20 - 21

Chan weekend retreat.  
Led by Ned Reiter.

would like to offer during her stay (read on for details). Sangha members are requested to give her feedback on the proposals and also to give her ideas of their own. Catherine is open to travelling to other groups in the UK to offer teachings and support and would also welcome your proposals around this possibility. [Read more for details of Catherine's proposals...](#)

## Green Gulch Farm, California



Rebecca, Myo Yu, and Charlotte at a beach near Green Gulch Farm during the January 2010 Intensive, led by teacher Tenshin Reb Anderson (Photo by Wendy Klein, who was also present).

Shekinashram, Devon.

## Local Contacts

Visit the [Local Groups](#) webpage for details of Dancing Mountains groups in your area, and the [Diary](#) for their regular meeting dates and times.

## Donations

Download a printable [subscription form](#) for one-off or regular donations to Dancing Mountains.



Myo Yu, Tenshin Reb Anderson, Frances Collins (Ji Den Dai U) and Rebecca at the January Intensive, pictured post-Jukai ceremony.

### Next issue of Mountain Silence

Summer edition with a theme around "Sangha". Please send us accounts of your experiences of local Dancing Mountains sitting groups, and thoughts about plans for the future of our Sangha. We also welcome your articles, poetry, pictures, letters, retreat reflections and book reviews! Summer issue publication date: 30th June, deadline for submission of material 15th June.

Previous issues are available on the [Dancing Mountains website](#).

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For enquiries related to this newsletter please email: [chrisb.by.name@gmail.com](mailto:chrisb.by.name@gmail.com)

# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 9: Spring

Editorial

## Mindfulness in Healthcare

by Ji Den Dai U (Compassion Field, Vast Rain)

This edition focuses on the topic of Mindfulness. This is a hot topic in today's world with many interpretations of the word. Working within the NHS and teaching mindfulness-based approaches in healthcare, I bear witness to many interpretations which demonstrate an incomplete understanding of the term 'mindfulness.' There exists an incomplete understanding, often based on the developments within mainstream medicine and psychological services over the past 30 years.

To illustrate, one individual who is studying a PhD in Clinical Psychology told me a while ago that mindfulness all started 30 years ago in America. Just in case you didn't know that, I thought it might be a useful addition here within this dharma mag to clear that up once and for all! Those individuals who introduced mindfulness to medicine in USA, Dr. John Kabat Zinn, and many other colleagues, have diligently recognised the roots of dharma within the mindfulness-based stress reduction [MBSR] programme. Mostly dharma practitioners, they point clearly to the roots of Buddhist teachings and skilfully shape them in a way that people who have never been exposed to the teachings may begin to receive dharma. More than 250 US hospitals now offer this 8 week programme to patients attending medical services.

John Teasdale, Mark Williams and Zindel Segal, the three professors of clinical psychology, adapted this 8 week programme slightly to include cognitive behaviour therapy in the attempt to create a solution to relapsing depressive illness. This model is known as mindfulness-based cognitive therapy [MBCT] which also recognises the teachings of the Buddha at its heart. There is currently a lobby headed by the Mental Health Foundation in UK to roll out mindfulness training within the NHS. I have heard it said by many dharma teachers and senior students that the dharma survives because of its capacity to evolve. Within the Zen tradition, this is no problem since everything is Buddha.

Never, has the ground been more fertile for seeds of dharma. Never has there been more need for dharma students to be creative and generous, integrating the practice of the bodhisattva vows into modern services for health, education and social reform in the service of liberation.

Training in these mindfulness–based traditions are headed in UK by Oxford, Bangor and Exeter Universities.

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# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

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Dharma Talk

## The Five Faculties: cultivating the capacity for awareness

A Dharma Talk given by Abbot Ryushin Paul Haller on Wednesday, 10th February 2010 at Beginner's Mind Temple, San Francisco.  
*Transcribed by Frances Collins and Chris Brown.*

Today I was talking to someone who had just turned 40 and who had discovered a few months ago that an old cancer, which was thought to be in remission, had metastasised to several places in the body, and it was necessary to go through a process of surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. This person is also a practitioner and so we were talking about what it is like to practice with that. I was struck by a sort of nobility in the human capacity in being able to respond to something like that with the wisdom and compassion that somehow brings out the best in us... that nobility. It also made me think of this poem:

### **The way it is**

*By William Stafford.*

There's a thread you follow. It goes among  
Things that change. But it doesn't change.  
People wonder about what you are pursuing.  
You have to explain about the thread.  
But it is hard for others to see.  
While you hold it you can't get lost.  
Tragedies happen: people get hurt  
Or die; and you suffer and get old.  
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.  
You don't ever let go of the thread.

There is something about the vow or intention to keep turning toward the nobility of the human spirit, to let it be the guiding light, the reference point. In studying the Dharma, part of what we are doing is intentionally shifting from the more usual frame of references that can come up as we meet our life. The fears and desires that come up and the ways they seem to shape our existence: "When am I going to get what I want and avoid what I don't want?"

The Dharma presents a different perspective. It also presents a way of being the person that we are that resonates deeply and fully with this innate nobility. As we tap into it and express it something within us is

actually relieved. It's a bit like when we fall into, as the French call it, 'petit' or small mind - smaller ways of relating with the challenges of being alive. It casts its own description of what life is and what should be the intention with which we live it. When we do that, when we thwart our own nobility, there is a way in which we feel lesser; whether we begin to doubt our own capacity, whether our sense of what's possible in our ability to live our human life shrinks, or we begin to feel dissatisfied with the way life appears to be. Living up to and expressing this nobility is a challenge.

We are studying a process within this practice of witnessing how this nobility is brought into being and how this nobility is nurtured, strengthened and allowed to be a strong influence in our lives. The starting place is intention. Almost despite ourselves our nobility stirs up an intention to practice. Maybe you could say that the path of practice is to continually clarify the intention and learn to live it, learn to become it. Within the process of our practice perhaps we can support each other and bear witness to each other's question: What is your intention? And then to ask: What is it to live your intention? How does it influence how you relate to the different parts of your life? How does it influence how you relate to the different parts of yourself?

I'd like to talk about some formulations that come out of early Buddhist tradition that offer a reframing of the human experience. It's a little like way-seeking mind in which you are seeking a way, and practicing a way. It assumes that your life has brought you to being a practitioner. That's the nature of it - that your life has contributed to such an event. If you think about it, it's a little bit of an unusual way to think about our life. The teachings of the Dharma offer us a reframing. In the midst of all the utilitarian necessities of our life... e.g. How will I make enough money to do this or that, or the other functional things that get involved? We can ask ourselves: What is it to create the capacity to be aware? How do you do that? What's involved in it? What is it to engage in the process of becoming aware and let that being nurtured in our being? In the early teachings, cultivating this capacity was called 'cultivating the five faculties'. Engaging them and nurturing and becoming the factors of awakening is what was called the seven factors of awakening.

The five faculties are trust, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. When we create an intention it is an interesting proposition, because in some ways it arises out of our nobility. But it is also influenced by some sense of discontent, some sense of wanting to respond to our own suffering, get rid of it, fix it... something! When I was talking to this person today one of the things that we were talking about was not wanting to die, and wanting to be cured. When you go through these treatments, you want them to be successful, you want to be cured. But if you cling to that the world tightens, the world becomes rigid and stiff. It loses the capacity to hold the simple truth that we don't know.



We don't know how things are going to turn out. But there is almost a cellular wish to live, and that can give rise to this kind of motivation or intention. Then there's the intention of practice, this wide acceptance, this acknowledgement that everything changes. These forces within us are both there. You might say that one is more like what we are trying to cultivate and the other one is more of what rises inherently in our existence. Often our intention is a mix of the two... and not to eradicate the intention that arises out of some sense of self-preservation, because being alive is precious. It is a blessed opportunity; it is there to be appreciated and savoured. There is something in that appreciation and gratitude for being alive that lets something in us soften, and find its ease, that interestingly inclines us toward wider acceptance. So our intention is a mix. Intention gives rise to our engagement in the practice. Engagement that arises from our intention is stimulated by our discipline and perseverance. It is stimulated by our commitment, but it requests us not to become rigid in our commitment and our persistence, not to let it become a sort of white-knuckled determination. That gets too closely linked to thinking, "I have to live at all costs," which means it has to happen in accordance with my fears, my wishes.

The first faculty of trust (or confidence), which includes commitment, and the second factor of energy (or perseverance) - they balance each other. It's like trust in the way life is. When we become too anxious and determined in our practice, we are losing our trust and appreciation in how life is. It is almost as if we are in mistrusting or missing the beauty of each moment in our determined effort to make it how we wish it should be. One of the things in working with severe illness is learning to trust the practice and let the outcome happen. Of course when you have a severe or life-threatening illness, it is ferocious in how it keeps returning you to that... just trust the practice and let the outcome be what ever it is. Really, we all share that condition. We are all impermanent. We are not omniscient - we do not know how our life is going to unfold. The request is there for all of us - the request of trust and how it can influence and balance our commitment, our determination and our energy.

So our intention inspires, guides, and stimulates our efforts. Also, we can ask ourselves, "How can I relate to this in a way that expresses my intention?" In whatever realm old life it is. "How should I relate to this person in a way that expresses my intention?" In the engagement, something about our practice, something about our innate ability as a human being, something about revealing the nature of what it is, is activated. Something is activated and in the realm of practice that becomes our teacher. That becomes a teaching of the way things are, of what is, and it guides us in our effort. Sometimes the guidance is that our practice is too loose and sometimes our practice is too tight. We need to emphasise discipline or we need to emphasise loosening up a little bit - don't be so rigid or determined.

The next faculty is mindfulness. Sometimes the way the word 'sati' or mindfulness appears in the sutras seems almost contradictory. We can talk about being aware -you can reflect at the end of your day and say, "What were the notable events of today?" Then you can reflect on what exactly was experienced. "What were the responses that arose in me to those experiences? Is there any pattern to them? Do they reveal anything about the conditioned ways in which I respond to experiences, what I perceive as different personality types or different kinds of events?" That's one form of awareness. That form of sati or awareness helps us to cultivate the capacity to bring that same attention into real time, to be present for experiences and events as they are happening rather than later reflecting or revisiting them. We start to be present for events as they are happening, present for the feelings, the immediate sense impressions, the concepts that arise in our mind. As we start to do that, quite literally, the capacity to be present sets the stage for the capacity to respond intentionally. If we're only aware of it days later, there's no way to be intentional within it. To be intentional within our experience requires us to be present for it. The reflection helps to establish that capacity. In the process of reflection, just note: "What was that experience?" Especially if something stays in the heart and mind as unfinished business, we keep replaying it; something about it isn't settled.

Often it's helpful to reflect upon it matter-of-factly: this was the experience, this was the response to the experience. Sometimes it's mysterious - we just have some imagery. Something powerful and upsetting happened, but I can't remember exactly what that person said, I just remember how I felt when they said it. Taking the backward step: taking the experience as it is, in its unfinished way, and then stepping back. In the stepping back, cultivating the ability to just note what happened. This sets a foundation for doing that in real time: to just note what's happening, and how that's responded to. Then, meeting that with the intentionality that the other faculties are cultivating - the intentionality of engaging it right now with awareness and insightfulness, with wisdom. The different faculties set the stage for each other, balancing and promoting each other.

As sati becomes more evident in the moment, the different attributes of it become more readily experienced. Sati has no agenda, just saying "What's happening right now?" not "What should happen now?" It's an openness, very much the flavour of shikantaza – just sitting in the Zen school. Our zazen has at its centre point to just sit with open awareness. As you bring the intentionality that turns onto commitment, to that, all this unfolds some marvellous, organic, natural, way in which this just processes. Then, awareness, and the capacity to be in awareness, unfolds and becomes what happens.

As sati becomes more evident, the next faculty arises - samadhi, continuous contact. We start to see there are different forms of continuous contact; for example, the form of directing attention. Sometimes it's useful to ask "What's going on in my body?" This is very helpful for stabilising agitated emotions, or making contact when the mind is racing, either from emotional stimulation or because many different ideas are coming up. We can ask, "Is that how it is, or am I just making that up?" While being barraged by a wealth of ideas and concepts, we can ask, "What's happening in my body? Are my shoulders tight? Is my belly soft? Is my jaw clenched?" letting this become more immediate, in a simple sensed way. Or in our meditation, returning to the sensation of breathing, as a way to cut through rumination, distracting thought, as a way to become grounded in the body, in the moment. The other form of samadhi is open contact – just available to experience whatever arises in that moment. But, usually, we experience some blend of the two types. If there's just open awareness the mind tends to drift; the direction of attention helps to establish the ability to open without an agenda in objectless concentration.

The final factor of the five is prajna, or wisdom. You could say that our insights happen in layers. First of all, we become aware of what our mind says is happening in the moment. Perhaps I'm being annoyed by an annoying person. Maybe we start by just noticing there's an annoying person in our presence. Then we start to notice, we're having the experience of annoyance. Then we start to notice we're perceiving this person in a certain way, and that perception is contributing to the experience of annoyance. Then we start to notice, we have a pattern of perceiving certain kinds of people this way. Then we start to notice, there's something about conditioned existence, the human condition, that promotes patterns of response. Then we notice that these patterns of response are not permanent, they come and go. As they do that, they create a sense of lack of harmony, or suffering, dukkha.

So in one way, we could say it's a linear progression. In another way, we could say we're far too complex to have a neat orderly way to experience, a neat orderly process of insight. Sometimes we have a profound insight about the nature of existence, and then the next moment we pop back into believing our own constructed experience in that moment. The process of insight as a foundation for awareness is to be like this: when the insights arise, to let it register, and maybe in doing so to let it have the same or more authority than the other statements we make about reality. "This is a really annoying person." Our mind believes, that's how the world is, that's how this person is. So in studying the Dharma, in entertaining its propositions, it offers a reframing that can set the stage for insights; such as, this is a co-dependent arising, the product of what's experienced and how it's responded to. We can see it in real time, and discover how it is, letting it be witnessed – something about the nature of what is.

Reading about it is not a substitute for experiencing it. Reading about it is reading about it. You can read about Australia - that's not a substitute for going to Australia. But it can reframe, set the stage, and point our intention in a certain way. So there's something about letting our insights have authority. As we do that our insights will illuminate and make more evident the other statements we make about the nature of what is, and illuminate the thoughts that get interwoven into our patterns of response. As they do that, sometimes that has a painful quality to it. These sets of responses are, in a way, our best effort to make our life manageable and free of suffering. As we start to expose them, there's something disconcerting about that. We're challenging our own coping mechanisms. This is where the other faculties balance out our sense of distress or discomfort that arises as our insights challenge our sense of what is and who we are. Sustaining our trust the practice, sustaining our direct involvement in direct experiencing of our practice, sustaining the openness of mind that's just letting everything coming in, letting the thoughts and feelings arise and fall away. Sometimes our "a-ha!" moments are often very encouraging and greatly inspiring: "Yes, I'm really getting it now!" Or maybe there's an insight that helps you see how you can stuck that causes suffering, and it really sets you free. But it is helpful to note and remember that the process of insight can have a quality of being unsettling. Insight really challenges our coping mechanisms, the stories we hold on to, and that is often uncomfortable. Sometimes that discomfort expresses itself in that we can feel anything from a sense of failure, that things are not working out well, to a wish to pull back from practice... and so we try to practice with that. Notice that this is just what arises as you start to expose your own psychological strategies. Can I just keep breathing, and let something soften and stay open? It's still a matter of staying with the fundamentals of practice, and reminding yourself not to get caught in discouragement or aversion. It's helpful to remember this funny way in which are own insights can create that within us.

So that's the five faculties – setting the stage. Many of those faculties are included in the factors of awakening. It's a bit like the relationship between discipline and devotion. Discipline is like a directed, determined, effort. Devotion comes when through that effort, that engagement has become part of us. We've given over to it. As you continue to practice, mindfulness just becomes... what you do. So if you're ill, you might not think to yourself, "Well, best practice with this", but it's more like, what else can you do, except be awake for yourself? Even when it's not something you wanted or something that's easy to be awake for. So as we give ourselves over, the faculties become potent forces in our life; they become the factors of awakening. We start to taste directly that something about this way of involving a human life has a potency. It's not something that we can control, or even fully define or predict; it's more something we can allow fuller and fuller involvement in. As William

Stafford says,

There's a thread you follow. It goes among  
Things that change. But it doesn't change.

In Buddhism we might not say it doesn't change, but that it flows  
through all the change.

People wonder about what you are pursuing.

Maybe you wonder what you're pursuing, or not pursuing!

You have to explain about the thread.  
But it is hard for others to see.  
While you hold it you can't get lost.  
Tragedies happen: people get hurt  
Or die; and you suffer and get old.  
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.  
You don't ever let go of the thread.

Thank you very much.

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# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

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## Poetry

### Mahayana Mindfulness

*Written by Devin Ashwood*

breathing in, greed.  
breathing out, hatred.  
...delusion.

breathing in, greed?  
breathing out, hatred?  
...delusion?

breathing in  
breathing out

But how is this turning the great wheel?

breathing in  
breathing out  
...an offering to all the Buddhas of the three worlds!

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# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

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## Poetry

### A Brocade of Mindfulness

*Compiled by Michael Elsmere*

*"The important thing in our understanding is to have a smooth, free-thinking, way of observation. We have to observe things without stagnation. We should accept things as they are without difficulty. Our mind should be soft and open enough to understand things as they are. When our mind is soft it is called imperturbable thinking. This kind of thinking is always stable. It is called mindfulness."*

*from Zen Mind Beginner's Mind  
by Shunryu Suzuki*

"Almost midnight — I could feel the earth's  
soaking darkness squeeze and fill its darkness,  
everything spinning into the spasm of midnight"

"I went out to the hazel wood,  
Because a fire was in my head,  
And cut and peeled a hazel wand,  
And hooked a berry to a thread."

"It must somehow be felt in the pulse, ebb, and flow of the music that  
sings in me. My new song must float like a feather on the breath of  
God."

"Go into your own ground and learn to know yourself there."

"Don't be mindful, please! When you walk, just walk. Let the walk walk.  
Let the talk talk (Dogen Zenji says: "When we open our mouths, it is  
filled with Dharma"). Let the eating eat, the sitting sit, the work work.  
Let sleep sleep."

"You do not have to be good.  
You do not have to walk on your knees  
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
love what it loves."

"Before you know what kindness really is



you must lose things,  
feel the future dissolve in a moment  
like salt in a weakened broth.

What you held in your hand,  
what you counted and carefully saved,  
all this must go so you know  
how desolate the landscape can be  
between the regions of kindness."

"I go among trees and sit still.  
All my stirring becomes quiet  
Around me like circles on water.  
My tasks lie in their places  
Where I left them, asleep like cattle..."

"The birds have vanished into the sky,  
and now the last cloud drains away.  
We sit together, the mountain and me,  
Until only the mountain remains."

#### **References**

*Almost Midnight....* from the poem 'Field' in 'Woods' by Alice Oswald.

*I went out to the hazel wood.....* The Song of Wandering Aengus from The  
Collected Works of W. B Yeats

*It must somehow be felt.....* from the writings of Hildegard of Bingen.

*Go into your own ground.....*from the writings of Meister Eckhart.

*Don't be mindful please.....* Muho Noelke, the abbot of Antaiji

*You do not have to be good.....*from Wild Geese By Mary Oliver in Dream Work

*Before you know what kindness is.....* from Kindness By Naomi Shihab Nye

*I go among trees and sit still .....*from Sabbaths by Wendell Berry

*The Birds have vanished.....* Li Po (8th century Chinese poet)

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# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 9: Spring

## Article

### Do we really need mindfulness in Zen?

*Written by Chris Brown*

The following is not intended as a scholarly article, but rather is based on my own experience, observation, and limited interpretation of the Dharma.

Fundamental to the practice of Zen is the realisation of our Buddha-Nature. What does this mean, and how do we go about achieving this? Our Buddha-Nature can be thought of as the all-embracing, all-accepting emptiness of our being. In Zen there is an emphasis on “just sitting”; or to elaborate further, “just sitting, being Buddha”. In the act of our sitting (or walking, bowing, chanting, eating... etc.), we open ourselves to the Universal flow of conditioned experience. But, if all we need to do is sit still and be Buddha, what use is there for the practice of mindfulness?

Clearly just sitting is not the same as just idly doing nothing in particular, otherwise we would have all realised our true nature long ago. *Just* sitting appears to require something that isn't normally present when we just sit idly – and yet to add something to the sitting is to miss the point of the practice. I identify here two paths that can aid in the type of just sitting that realises Buddha-Nature. The first is essentially a path of devotion. Reb Anderson Roshi, in his visits to Gaia House over the last few years, has been clearly emphasising this form of practice, not providing instructions in mindfulness unless specifically asked to. On the devotional path, to realise the Buddha-Nature through just sitting requires Great Faith in the Buddha-Nature. This Great Faith is not a mere belief or attachment to an idea of what we think our Buddha-Nature is. Rather, it is total faith and devotion to whatever arises within our experience of just sitting, such that there is just the sitting and nothing extra, and no seeking for anything extra. Not knowing what this experience really *is*, we have total faith that it is who we truly are.

However, most people who first come to practice Zen, or any other form of spiritual practice, don't have this Great Faith from the outset. Why would they be looking for a spiritual practice if they did? A spiritual 'seeker', by definition, is someone who is looking for something extra. So they set about developing this Great Faith through listening to the dharma, through dharma discourse, and through practices of

mindfulness, although initially they may not realise it is faith that they seek.

Mindfulness helps to cultivate those qualities of heart that are naturally expressed by our Buddha-Nature, but that may have become obscured due to human habits of heart and mind. Mindfulness is literally “mindfulness”; in other words, the heart-mind is cultivating a fullness, the fullness of our true nature. On a practical level, mindfulness can be thought of as cultivating two main qualities, which may be emphasised differently at different times or during different forms of practice.

Firstly, mindfulness is essentially a *remembering*, which is somewhat closer to the typical English meaning of “being mindful of something”. Except in this case, we are specifically remembering to be aware of whatever is happening. As pointed out by the respected mindfulness teacher Jon Kabat-Zinn, this is literally a “re-membering” or a re-contacting with our true spiritual body.

However, upon becoming aware of what’s happening, various reactions can and often do arise, according to our habits and conditioning, which inevitably give rise to attachment and aversion. Unfortunately these reactions tend to undermine our “re-membering”. Hence a second quality is often emphasised: developing an attitude of acceptance to whatever is within our experience. This experience could be a wandering thought, physical pain, a strong emotion. All are treated with openness and kindness, which act to undermine our karmic reactions and to cultivate non-attachment. A deliberate cultivation of this second quality may not be necessary if it is already present – a remembering to be aware may be enough.

The two qualities of re-membering and acceptance are really all there is to mindfulness. Yet, commonly the modern formulation of “mindfulness meditation” is associated with concentration and yoga practices focussed on the body, which are not so strongly emphasised in Zen, but perhaps more strongly in Vipassana. They are a part of Zen practice, however; for example, focussing on sensations of movement during walking meditation. But it’s clear that Zen regards concentration practices as more of a skilful means than an end in themselves. This is important to understand, because concentration practices are what many people take to be the sum total of meditation practice, perhaps deriving from the Indian and Tibetan yogic traditions in which many levels of “Samadhi” are described, eventually culminating in the mind dwelling within the “substrate consciousness” after many years of adept and expert practice. This is normally only achievable under circumstances when the environment is especially conducive and one cannot be easily disturbed, but of course creating those environments is challenging and for most people not sustainable enough to form the backbone of their lives. Clearly, this type of practice is difficult to achieve when living in our

modern world.

Zen, however, is not limited to special environments. Concentration practice as a form of skilful means involves practicing the intentional re-direction of attention towards a chosen object of meditation. This type of practice is useful to cultivate at times when the mind and heart may be in turmoil. Hence we focus on the breathing, on other physical sensations in the body, or on external experiences such as sounds, as a way of taking energy out of the turmoil of the heart-mind, until it becomes calmer. This then facilitates acceptance and kindness, which when well cultivated require nothing more than a remembering to be aware in order to operate. Hence concentration practices can be thought of as a method of cultivating mindfulness skills.

Sometimes our hearts might but in a more subtle form of turmoil, which when not carefully attended to can escape our notice and eventually spiral out of control. Perhaps we wouldn't call it turmoil – more like just distractedness or preoccupation. Here again it can be useful to bring attention to the body in a more focussed way, searching for subtle perturbations in the stream of energy that we associate with physicality and emotionality. There are times when it's especially important to cultivate a stronger sense of intentionality in our practice, and the simple act of bringing attention to the body, mind and emotions is an important step in grounding our intentionality in the present.

The point of describing the practice of mindfulness in this way (and there are no doubt numerous other ways to describe this practice, depending on how it has been approached and experienced) is to draw attention to the relationship between mindfulness practice and the realisation of Buddha-Nature. Mindfulness practices give us a taste of our true nature without requiring faith or devotion from the outset. Rather, a sceptical attitude can be accommodated within this approach. In fact, a particular form (or perhaps, more formless) scepticism, "Beginner's Mind", is actively encouraged. Beginner's Mind is not a scepticism which doubts the benefits of the practice, but rather is wide open to infinite possibilities (one of which is that the practice may not meet one's expectations). This is more akin to Great Faith than it is to doubt – Great Faith is so great, it includes everything, including a doubting thought. But in particular, mindfulness cultivates the major attributes of a person who has realised their Buddha-Nature: all-encompassing acceptance and non-attachment. This is a useful prelude to adopting a more devotional, direct, style of practice that is open to the Buddha-Nature from the very beginning – a 'sudden' path, to use Zen terminology. In Zen practice we may oscillate between deliberate cultivation of awareness and acceptance on the one hand (a gradual path), and Great Faith in our Buddha-Nature on the other (a sudden path).

On a personal note, one mistake in practice I have observed in myself is

to assume that once practice starts to occur according with Great Faith, it will always be so, and the gradual path can be dispensed with. This is not so (or, not *always* so, as Shunryu Suzuki might say), except maybe in exceptional individuals. It's easy to set out into life after a period of intense training such as during sesshin, with Great Faith in one's true nature. But over time, this Great Faith will often require Great Support in the form of Sangha, which facilitates dharma discussion and practices of mindfulness. It is in the spirit of Sangha that I share these words for reflection.

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# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 9: Spring

## Retreat Reflection

### Paradox of the first sitting of the day: A Week with Reverend Myo Lahey

A report on the March 2010 retreat at Gaia House  
Written by Kath Bennett

*"What a difference a day makes"*

#### **Early in the retreat**

Its dark, the rising bell sounds... repeatedly.

The body moves but the mind is not yet fully awake; still a little disorientated with the surroundings and the demands of the new day. Summoned by the practice bell, we move towards the meditation hall. The body 'dragging its feet', and the mind finding distractions to delay its arrival. "Must wash my cup... oh, and go to the loo again... no need to get there too early." Remembering to remember the things to do: shoes straight, no yawning, bow at the right moments, hand position, thumbs in, bow to acknowledge Myo... so much thinking.

And so... to sit.

The body positions itself and 'just sits'. The thoughts and the aches arise slowly at first. Letting you know this is not normal, that it wants to move. Letting you know that it remembers yesterday.

You focus... sounds of the morning abound. "Why are those rooks so noisy at this time?"... "It's cold in here"..." "How long to go now?"... "Noisy woodpecker – he must be giving himself a headache". The heating drones away in the background, the body and mind complain. "Why am I doing this?" ... "Maybe a slight adjustment to alleviate things – no one will notice."

The sit continues.

Eventually the Doan moves to prepare for morning service. "Good, nearly there"... "Porridge will be under way soon." The heating switches off – droning ceases. "Only a minute to go now"... Ding... "Done it!"

You bow, rise and tidy your mat; the body grateful to be moving once more and the mind wondering which part of the body aches the most.

## Later in the retreat

Awake and about before the rising bell. Body and mind seem to know what they're doing. Refreshed and willing.

Practice bell is heard and you find yourself already on the way to the meditation hall, happy to be heading in that direction, to join the others; thankful for their support. Thoughts from the start of the week have formed into habit – you notice shoes neatly paired, everyone bowing together, showing up completely. A harmonising calm seems to pervade as each of us, somehow, practice in unison.

And so... to sit.

As the body bends, a momentary scream in the mind: "Oh no, not again!" It quickly subsides and the aches and pains that previously would have caught the attention have faded to the periphery. Mind and body accepting the calm.

You focus - sounds of the morning abound. Outside, the world begins to breathe: the rooks' chatter welcomes the day and the woodpecker strikes up again, familiar but different; now proclaiming his existence on a more distant tree. The heating purrs away in the background, doing what it needs to do.

The sit continues.

The Doan moves to prepare for morning service... "Not now ...so soon?" The heating switches off – only a minute to go – sitting wholeheartedly... Ding! You bow, rise and tidy your mat. Noting the reluctance but accepting the change as Body and Mind, united, rise in stillness and silence.

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# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

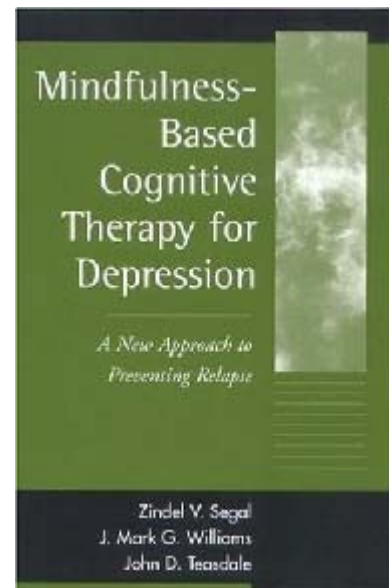
Issue 9: Spring

## Book Review

### Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression: A New Approach to Preventing Relapse by Zindel V. Segal, J. Mark G. Williams, and John D. Teasdale.

2002, New York: Guilford Press. 351 pages, ISBN:  
1-57230-706-4.

*Reviewed by Devin Ashwood*



I was inspired to train as a counsellor with a wish to be helpful to people in a response to receiving the Bodhisattva vow. Since then I have explored many theories and methods that assist the psychotherapeutic process. So it was with delight that a few years ago I came across an exciting development in the therapy field. People were offering Buddhist teachings (in all but name) as a therapeutic intervention. In discovering that Buddhist principles and techniques were being developed and validated in a paradigm accessible to the secular and sceptical West, I began to wonder if my journey into therapy may be coming full circle. Reading this book helped me to understand some of the potential and limitations of offering mindfulness training in the context of therapy.

The book is the story of a group of cognitive behavioural researchers who, seeking to develop a maintenance version of cognitive therapy to offer to recurrently depressed patients, discover the Mindfulness approach developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn. This approach, which was termed by him 'Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction' (MBSR) and is elaborated in detail in his book 'Full Catastrophe Living', consists of an eight week program teaching mindfulness meditation in a number of contexts to help patients relate differently to chronic conditions and the pain often associated with those conditions. The programme is based on the fundamental Buddhist training principle of relating to phenomena through letting go of both attachment and aversion.

The authors describe their journey with compelling honesty and humility; how their approach to treating depression changed as they changed

themselves. Realising that teaching mindfulness is not a skill that can be taught out of context, but that they themselves needed to establish their own mindfulness practice if they were to impart its spirit to their clients.

The book also describes in detail the programme they developed based on the formulation of Kabat-Zinn. It combines a meditation technique very much in the spirit of the 'Insight' or 'Vipassana' traditions of Buddhism that have developed in the West with some elements of cognitive therapy, the emphasis being heavily on the mindfulness meditation practice. It termed this model Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT).

Interestingly, the book does not make many references to the historical roots or deeper philosophy of the method. There are only two or three direct references to Buddhism in the whole work. In the closing pages of the book, it does however recommend finding an experienced teacher and refers readers to a number of Buddhist resources including Gaia House.

The book's final section describes a well conducted clinical trial of the model and presents impressive results. For the 75% of clients who had three or more previous depressive episodes, it reduced the chance of a further episode by half in comparison to treatment as usual (primarily antidepressant drugs).

I believe the book to be a highly valuable introduction to an equanimity practice that could alleviate much suffering in the world. I thought it was particularly helpful that the authors were scientists who were 'won over' to the meditation practice based on an experiential, logical and rational approach and that they developed and tested their model in a way that made it accessible to the mainstream healthcare system. So much so in fact that the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE), who advise all NHS practices, routinely recommend MBCT be offered to people with recurrent depression who are currently in remission.

So where does this leave Buddhism?

Mindfulness practice seems to me like a great practice for alleviating and even ending suffering. I do feel however that there is more to be said and that is largely about the nature of the self. This aspect is something that these therapies avoid. This is not a problem and I wholeheartedly embrace them, however...

I am concerned with the nature of the self, as at root the belief in a fixed self seems to me the cause of attachment, aversion and hence suffering. If the nature of the self – both limitless and ever-changing without any fixed point - is realised or even if we can develop faith in it, then this opens opportunities for great compassion, for me this is something worthwhile in a world where there is so much selfishness and pain. While

I appreciate it is not a practice for everyone, for me, the forms and ceremonies of Zen highlight the delusionary nature of the small self beautifully and manifest both delusion and enlightenment in an explicit way that might otherwise be missed. I pray that all those practicing mindfulness find this path.

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# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 9: Spring

## Book Review

### A Zen Life in Nature: Musō Sōseki in His Gardens by Keir Davidson

*Reviewed by Michael Elsmere*



Musō Sōseki

Long before I knew about Buddhism I was fascinated by the formal Zen gardens that I sometimes came across in my travels. Like much of the very best abstract art they often puzzled me but I felt strangely attracted by their spare, ordered beauty, their mystery.

'A Zen Life in Nature,' is a biography of Musō Sōseki (1275 –1351) who left behind him five major gardens, amongst them Saihoji in Kyoto. Even today in a form much changed from Sōseki's original vision, this is one of the great Zen gardens of the world and represents perhaps the culmination of his gardening practice. To Sōseki, designing new gardens and altering existing ones was an integral part of his practice of Zen. All those who visit them even today come into contact, however superficially, with his highly enlightened aesthetics and consciousness. These had been cultivated over many years of devoted practice, often surrounded by a few disciples in the wild remote mountains of China. One of the major influences in his life was the ancient story of Ryū Rasse who had been a reclusive monk of the T'ang era (618-907). Ryū was a legendary figure in the Zen world for his dedication and commitment to the enlightened life spent in the heart of nature.

Often Sōseki, much sought by Emperors and rulers because of his wisdom and diplomatic abilities, would, when possible, retire to the wilderness in his intent to be a part of 'distant mind', without leaving his place in this realm. Again he would be called forth or sought out by young monks wishing to become his disciples. After these periods of intense practice he, on a number of occasions, planned and built a garden. This would express the insights that he had acquired with the natural materials at hand. Maybe it would be the relationship between

life and death, or the physical and spiritual worlds, or some other refined aspect of his vision. In these artistic but earthy endeavours, he and his monks strove to express that 'something,' which is almost inexpressible. With stones, water, earth and trees, with wood and plants, Soseki in his gardens leaves us subtle pointers to the nature of reality and our place in it.

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# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 9: Spring

## Event

### Dancing Mountains Camping Retreat Ermington, South Devon

*Friday 7th May to Sunday 9th May*

Once again Sue and Adam have generously offered use of their lovely home and grounds for this retreat. The spacious house in a superb natural setting will provide a wonderful opportunity to practice and work together. This is a self-led silent retreat with recorded dharma talks and discussion sessions each morning. There will also be simple services morning, noon and evening as well as sitting and walking meditation both inside and in the extensive grounds surrounding the house. The retreat will be suitable for both experienced and those beginning a regular practice. There will be two 1 hour work periods on Sat. and one on Sun. based around food preparation and garden work. If you are travelling by car please bring with you basic gardening tools such as fork, spade, hoe or rake as well as suitable gardening clothing/footwear.

Please arrive after 6pm on Friday 7th May. A large field with the idyllic River Erme running along its border will be available for camping. If you wish to attend the retreat but feel unable to camp please ring Michael 01803 732761.

There will be a light meal and a short sitting prior to going into silence. The retreat will finish at 15.00 on Sunday 9th May.

Cost: £40 per person. To book send a cheque for £40 with your e-mail or mailing address to Michael Elsmere, Westerly, Washbourne, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 7UF. When this is received it will confirm your booking (if there are places left available) and you will be sent your confirmation along with a map and other joining instructions. We are limited to 20 participants and bookings will be accepted on a first come first served basis.

Any profit from this retreat to go to Dancing Mountain Sangha funds.

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# MOUNTAIN SILENCE

Issue 9: Spring

## Event

### Visit by Catherine Gammon of San Francisco Zen Center to Dancing Mountains Zen Sangha, UK

*July to September, 2010*

Dear Sangha,

Over the time since Reb's last retreat at Gaia House, Francis Checkley in Totnes has been pursuing with Roshi the possibility of having a priest in residence in the UK. Catherine Gammon has now very graciously offered to be with us for the period July to September this year. She has expressed her views and ideas of what she would like to offer during her stay (read on for details). Sangha members are requested to give her feedback on the proposals and also to give her ideas of their own. Catherine is open to travelling to other groups in the UK to offer teachings and support and would also welcome your proposals around this possibility.

*Michael Elsmere*

#### ***Catherine Gammon:***

#### ***Topics for Dharma Offerings with Dancing Mountains Sangha***

The following are brief descriptions of offerings I could make in various formats: a series of weekend or evening classes; as a study theme for a workshop sort of retreat; the dharma offering for a day of sitting; or just as the dharma theme of my time with you. As you indicated a general interest in the sangha in teachings on dependent co-arising, I could envision framing and illuminating any of these topics with reflection on dependent co-arising. I would especially enjoy doing the writing topic as a workshop/retreat of one, two or three days, if you think there is a good way to schedule something like that. I imagine any of these offerings as engaging a small group of committed people, so that our work together would be quite intimate and offer everyone opportunities of participation and discussion. These topics could also be approached more formally in a situation with a larger number of people.

#### **Writing as a Wisdom Project**



The title comes from a phrase of Susan Sontag, when commenting on an approach to autobiography as an occasion for deep self-study. I would like to broaden the application of the phrase to include and to emphasize any imaginative work in language, including poetry and fiction. From that position of understanding writing practice as an opportunity to study and reveal this present dependently arising body and mind, we will work together, using writing exercises as well as free writing, and reading and responding to one another's words. In the retreat/workshop format there would also be periods of reflection and silent meditation.

### **Bodhicitta and Emptiness**

Working with materials gathered for my shuso talks, we would look at teachings on bodhicitta both in terms of practices that cultivate and sustain it (including reasoning about suffering and ignorance, practices that cultivate compassion, and precepts, ritual and zazen), and in terms of the emptiness teachings of the Diamond Sutra and the importance of emptiness in our practice of the bodhisattva vow. In the retreat/workshop format there would also be periods of reflection and silent meditation.

### **Dogen: Three Mind-Only Teachings**

I would like to work with some of Dogen's mind-only teachings as presented in *Flowers In the Sky* (Kuge), *Painted Rice Cake* (Gabyo), and *The Triple World is Mind Only* (Sangai Yuishin). We would read and discuss the three texts, and I would present additional clarifying mind-only teachings from Vasubandhu/Hsuan-tsang and the *Samdhinirmocana Sutra*. (The readings would not be the line-by-line study we sometimes do, but would focus on particular parts in order to be able to read more broadly.) We would attempt to look at our own reception and the different impacts of Dogen's often metaphoric and linguistically playful way of expression as contrasted to the more analytic expressions of sutra and treatise. Everyone will be asked to express their own present understanding of these teachings in whatever language or physical form they wish to offer. In a retreat/workshop format there would also be periods of reflection and silent meditation.

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# Appeal for funds

Dear Friends,

Those involved in Dancing Mountains have a number of functions and projects. We uphold the forms and ceremonies of Zen by organising visiting teachers and retreats, networking, facilitating discussion, producing a newsletter and are working towards developing a Zen centre in the south of England. So far, these activities have been resourced from ad hoc donations, occasional surplus money from retreats and from the private finances of core group members. To develop our activities to their full potential, more money is needed so we can take the next step. Publishing and more widely distributing the newsletter in hard copy, purchasing items to support forms and ceremonies, financing the development of a centre, all these things can only happen with wider financial support. At present, we ask for no membership fee to be a part of our community but in the tradition of Dana, freely give what we have. If you would like to join us in the spirit of generosity and make a one off contribution, please send a cheque made payable to 'Dancing Mountains' and send it to the address below. However what may help even more is a regular contribution so that we can budget for the future. Please fill in and return the form below and we will supply you with a bespoke standing order form to send to your bank.

## Subscription Form:

**I wish to make an offering to Dancing Mountains**

Name:	Address:
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I would like to make a voluntary contribution of: (please tick as appropriate)	My contribution is for:
£2 <input type="checkbox"/> £5 <input type="checkbox"/> £10 <input type="checkbox"/> £20 <input type="checkbox"/> £50 <input type="checkbox"/> £other <input type="checkbox"/> each month <input type="checkbox"/> each year <input type="checkbox"/>	Newsletter publication ..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Please post me <input type="checkbox"/> paper copies of Mountain Silence each issue	Ceremonial texts\equipt..... <input type="checkbox"/>
I prefer A5 <input type="checkbox"/> A4 <input type="checkbox"/> format	Zen Centre development..... <input type="checkbox"/>
Signature:	Any Dancing Mountains work. <input type="checkbox"/>

note: It costs about £4 to cover minimum costs to post out a years worth of newsletters for one person in A5 format.

return to: **Devin Ashwood, D.M. Secretary, 18 Westfield, Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0BT**