

MBZC Winter Practice Period 2023
Sundays February 5 through April 2, 2023
Shining the Light Within:
Awakening to the present moment

Until you make the unconscious conscious,
it will direct your life and you will call it fate.
~ Carl Jung

Learn the backward step
that turns your light inwardly to illuminate your self.

To study the Buddha Way is to study the self.
~ Eihei Dogen

This 9-week practice period will focus on some of the basic aspects of meditation and also allow us to work on what gets in the way of present moment awareness - the hindrances. For those participating in the practice period, there will be a tea at McGowan House on Sunday mornings from 9 to 9:30 AM followed by the practice period class from 9:30 to 11. The teas will offer an opportunity to connect more intimately with other participants by way of "Way seeking mind talks" and discussion. The class will include time for zazen at the beginning followed by a discussion about our personal experiences with the practices of the last week and set up for the practices the following week. Practice period will also include a sesshin beginning on Thursday evening February 16 at 4:30 PM through Sunday afternoon February 19 at 3 PM (see the website or speak w/Shogen for more details). This is a rare and precious opportunity to dwell in stillness and silence with the support of Sangha. The talks in the sesshin will be infused with the practice period theme.

Sunday morning classes will focus on three different teachings: Adyashanti's The Way of Liberation, which is available as a free PDF download online [here](#) on the Open Gate Sangha website; the hindrances supported by Gil Fronsdal's book "Unhindered - A Mindful Path Through the Five Hindrances"; and the skandhas or five aggregates.

The Way of Liberation will be the focus the first three weeks. Week one we'll discuss what Adyashanti calls The Five Foundations. These include: Clarifying Your Aspiration; Unconditional Follow-Through; Never Abdicating Your Authority; Practicing Absolute Sincerity; and Being a Good Steward to Your Life. Week two, we'll investigate the Three Orienting Ideas, which he names as The Question of Being, The False Self, and The Dream State. Week three will happen during sesshin and the dharma talk on Sunday will address the Core Practices of Meditation, Inquiry and Contemplation. Sesshin gives us the opportunity to practice with these practices immediately. Even if you can't attend the entire sesshin, you are encouraged to sit as many full days as you can.

Week four will begin our study of the five hindrances. Gil's book includes three introductory chapters orienting us to the hindrances and how to practice with them that would be best reviewed prior to jumping into working w/the various hindrances. Each of the next three weeks will include reflections and practices related to each hindrance. Week four will focus on the opposing twins of "Sensual Desire" and "Ill Will." Week five the pair of "Sloth and Torpor" and "Restlessness and Worry" will get our attention. And week six we'll consider "Doubt."

Weeks seven and eight we'll dive into the so-called skandhas or aggregates of self: form, sensation, perception, formation and consciousness. The previous six weeks will facilitate the practice of taking up and looking into these various aspects of self, to see for ourselves in what way they are empty. The heart sutra teaches that through mindful awareness of the five skandhas (i.e. deeply coursing in or practicing with them), Avalokitesvara "clearly saw that all five aggregates are empty and thus relieved all suffering." We will set an intention for ourselves as we wrap up the teas and classes on week nine, Sunday April 2.