



# Entering the Stream

Meditation and mindfulness, for well-being and awakening

Transcript

{Our Signature Free Workshop} “How to stop hurting and find peace”

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Hi, hello. The warmest welcome! I am a Zen meditation and mindfulness teacher. My name is Mary Hartley Platt. It's wonderful to be here with you. Today I'm going to help you get started in learning how to practice Zen meditation and mindfulness, to enhance your inner peace, healing, joy, wisdom, and freedom.

Many of us are hurting. If you are hurting – if you're experiencing stress, suffering, confusion, fear, anxiety, or pain, in any part of your life – this workshop is going to be ideal for you! Starting a daily Zen meditation and mindfulness practice is by far the deepest and fastest healing for stress and suffering that I've ever found, anywhere. I was deeply hurting myself, many years ago, and searched high and low for the deepest healing path. In my experience, Zen practice offers a unique relief for inner pain and suffering. Using methods refined over thousands of years, it washes away your pain and confusion from within, clearing it step by step from your mind, body, and energy field, and uncovers your real self, and your most meaningful and genuine life. Things can get so good. I'm going to show you how to get started.

In our workshop today, I'll introduce you to Zen meditation and mindfulness. I'll share my experience and story, to give you some concrete inspiration for how thoroughly Zen practice can improve your daily life, consciousness, health, relationships, work, and life path.

Then, we'll practice a 10-minute guided Zen meditation together, right here and now.

And at the end, I'll give you an invitation to book a free call with me, and learn about and apply for my one-to-one program, which is called Finding Zen, and gives you step by step guidance in creating your own life-changing, deep healing Zen practice. Together, we can get you started on the path out of suffering and pain, into your most extraordinary life of peace, and freedom, and happiness. And doing this with people is my greatest honor and joy. It's the most beautiful and fun process, and I would love to share it with you. I'll put the link to schedule your free call right below this video.

Zen completely changed my life, and I'm so excited for you to experience it!

So, let's dive in :)

Zen meditation and mindfulness is a path of inner practice that began 2,500 years ago in India. It migrated across China, and then was refined and developed further in Japan. Our teacher in the mountains of central Japan, Zen master Shinzan Miyamae, taught our Zen tradition there to our teacher from London, Zen master Daizan Skinner, over many years of monastic training. I learned it from Daizan once he moved back to the UK, when I was in graduate school at Oxford University, and now I'm sharing it here with you.

Zen uses highly effective, daily meditation and mindfulness practices, to help you open your consciousness, wash away past pain and suffering from your mind, body, and energy, and discover and come into alignment with your real self – with who you really are, and the life that's most meant for you. Our brains and nervous systems have a property of neuroplasticity, which means that they can change based on new stimulus from your environment. This means that you're not set in stone. You can absolutely transform and heal from within. By practicing Zen methods day by day, you shift your brain and automatic baselines, clearing away suffering and strain and past pain at the roots, and uncovering the deep peace and flow of your authentic life. All of this is waiting for you, as you start to practice.

Most people don't realize how good life can get, when you expand your consciousness and heal within. In our Western culture, many of the inner blocks and knots that trouble human beings are treated as a life sentence, more or less – they're pathologized – as if there's no way to access and reverse and heal them. But in my experience that's not actually true. It certainly takes courage to try a new path, but with the right tools and daily practices, I've found that even very deep challenges can be healed and washed away at the roots, so that the painful, and seemingly defining, and inhibiting symptoms you may be experiencing no longer appear in your life. They're truly washed away, cleared, from your mind, body, and energy. I have experienced this firsthand in my Zen practice. If you are facing suffering like depression, anxiety, tension, trauma, PTSD (including complex or developmental PTSD), chronic pain, migraines, insomnia, digestive issues, panic, difficult emotions, confusion, painful habits, unhealthy relationships, not knowing your vocation, limiting beliefs, a general sense of pain and unhappiness, and more – *all* of these can be met, and worked with, and unwound at the root level in your Zen practice, and your natural, baseline experience of life can transform, and deepen, and clear. You can become free and well beyond your wildest dreams of what you thought was possible in life.

This is what happened for me, and it's why I get so excited to share Zen :)

I reached a personal rock bottom of pain and suffering, in 2010. In a way, I wish I could have met you as I was then, so you could see the difference now! I was in graduate school in England, starting my PhD in Classics. I was doing exciting and celebrated research, at the top-ranked university in the world. On the surface, I seemed to be experiencing success and belonging. But within, I was struggling and miserable, buried under decades of anxiety, depression, a life-threatening eating disorder, and complex PTSD, all caused by intergenerational trauma. I didn't actually know what was wrong back then. I wouldn't have been able to call it all those things yet. I just knew I was in a state of deep unhappiness and anguish. I was putting on a brave face, but I was slowly dying – and I believe many people can relate to that. I tried reaching out for help, within the environments I was in. But I wasn't finding clarity or healing in the traditional perspectives and methods. So, I did what any good

researcher would do in modern life: I started Googling. I was seeking new information, new mentors, and new perspectives. I was typing questions like: “Does anyone actually understand the nature of life? Why are we here? Why does it hurt so much? Who am I? Who are we? How should we live, when there’s so much suffering everywhere?” These are what you might call “dark night of the soul” questions. Before long, this led me to my Zen teacher, Zen master Daizan Skinner, who founded Zenways in London and also taught in Oxford. Meeting him felt like a lightning strike – there was a deep sense of recognition in my body, and a readiness to turn in this new direction, toward the deep peace and healing and freedom that he represented and embodied. Daizan taught me how to channel my desperation for relief into a highly effective daily Zen practice. And in time, step by step, using the empowering tools of Zen, I was able to pull myself out of the deep hole I had gotten stuck in, and enter a new stage of my life, a new level of well-being, joy, peace, happiness, freedom, and honestly even bliss. The levels of healing and personal development available through Zen are far beyond anything I realized was possible. It just keeps getting better, year after year. I’ve had many doctors and therapists express astonishment at my transformation, people who hadn’t themselves seen or experienced such deep healing before. It’s been an extraordinary path, turning my life around from within. Transforming. And I continue to deepen into my genuine alignment, my genuine life, day by day.

This is what I want for you, too, and it’s fully possible! It’s been working for thousands of years. If you are hurting, there’s so much peace and freedom waiting for you.

Starting a daily Zen practice is the best way in that I know.

Zen is a path that’s been refined over generations, and there’s obviously much more than I can teach you in a short workshop. But I want to get you started right now in your own Zen practice, with one of our introductory Zen meditation techniques. This is one of the first practices you’d learn in a Zen temple in Japan – and it works to strengthen your focus, so you can gain new control and empowerment, and to settle your mind, to let it come to rest and clear, so you can start to see life more clearly.

So, let’s give it a try right now, together:

“Welcome to Entering the Stream. We’re going to practice a ‘Counting the Breath’ meditation. The Buddha taught that mindfulness, or awareness, of the breath can take us all the way to deep peace and awakening, so don’t think of this as just beginners’ work.

Begin by finding your comfortable meditation position. Today I suggest getting started in your Zen practice by meditating in a chair.

Make sure your knees are separated and your feet flat on the floor. Have your hands in your lap, and sway your body a little bit from side to side, forwards and backwards, to help you settle into your balanced, upright posture. With your spine extending upwards to the crown of your head, bring a slight tuck to your chin, as if you’re holding an orange or a soft rubber ball underneath your chin. This will encourage your neck to lengthen. Let your shoulders relax, and bring your gaze down to the floor in front of

you. Allow your gaze to soften. Here you can either keep your eyes slightly open, or allow them to close fully.

If at any point in the meditation, you start to feel overwhelmed, please feel welcome to open your eyes, breathe, and take a rest. Nothing needs to be forced. This will ensure that you're going at a pace that's safe for you.

Breathing through your nose, if you can, let your tongue be broad and resting on the roof of your mouth.

Allow your whole body to relax.

Tune in to the sensation of your breath as low down in the body as you can feel it. You might feel it in your chest, or down in your belly. Don't try to change anything; simply observe.

As you become aware of your breath, you can start mentally counting: in-breath, one; out-breath, two; in-breath, three; out-breath, four. And so on, all the way up to ten – then starting again at one. Very simple. Just breathing, and counting.

Any time you get distracted or lose count, just come back to one. No judging, no effort. Simply coming back to one and carrying on with your counting: in-breath, one; out-breath, two.

Allowing any thoughts, feelings, memories, sensations, anything at all to arise and pass in the background – you just stay with the breathing in your belly, and the counting.

We can imagine our mind like a set of busy train tracks. In meditation we sit on the grass by the side of the tracks, watching all the trains rumbling by, back and forth, and we just allow them to come and go, come and go. If at any point you find you've started to take a ride and gone off on one of those "trains of thought," then all you do is just get out, and come back to sit on the grass by the side of the tracks. Doing your best not to make any judgments. Just coming back to the breath, coming back to your counting.

Very simple. Just breathing, and counting.

If you have many thoughts or feelings arising, that's absolutely fine. Just allowing them to come and go, to arise and pass, in the background. Doing your best to stay focused on the breathing, stay with the counting.

Little by little, you may find that your mind begins to settle, and clear. You don't need to try to make this happen, neither by pushing away your thoughts nor trying to edit or control them. Simply by focusing on your breath, focusing on your counting, the rest looks after itself.

When it's time for your meditation to come to an end, you can gently begin to sway your body from side to side. Bring a bit of movement back into your fingers, into your toes. Let your eyes lift, and take a good deep breath."

How did that go for you? Many people find it surprisingly difficult, trying to stay focused on the breath, and the counting, with all the thoughts coming and going. If you frequently got distracted before you made it to 10, or ended up at 11, 12, or 20 – you're definitely not alone. Keep practicing!

We did about 10 minutes here together. In your daily practice, you'll want to do this for 25 minutes, once a day. It gets easier and more rewarding, the more you do it. You'll find that beautiful benefits for your well-being and happiness start to flow into your life from all different directions, like a stream of pure refreshment and positive changes arriving on all different levels.

Doing your Zen practice day by day will unlock this for you.

Great work!

This has been a short introduction to Zen meditation and mindfulness as a path out of suffering.

There is so much more I'd love to share with you. So, I'd like to invite you now to come and work with me one-to-one. I've created a program that is so near to my heart – it's exactly what I wish had existed when I first was learning Zen. When we're really trying to heal, we need amazing, highly effective techniques, and also personal support and guidance and accountability. So I created a one-to-one program, called Finding Zen. You can choose a 6-month or a 12-month option. And together, we'll guide you step by step in starting your own deep and life-changing Zen practice, to wash away your stress and pain at the roots, and uncover who you really are, so you can start to express that fully, and begin your most fulfilling and joyful life.

If you are hurting, this will lead you to peace.

So, the next step is to schedule a free call with me, to hear about Finding Zen, and apply, and ask your questions, and see if it would be a great fit for you. You can schedule your free call using the link right below this video. I hope you'll come and learn about the Finding Zen program, and give yourself the gift of unlocking your genuine life, and the deep healing and happiness that are waiting for you.

I hope to see you soon on a free call. Again, the link to schedule your free call is right below this video. I'm wishing you all good things! Thank you so much :)