

## What is Zen practice?

The teachings of Zen, in their essence, are quite simple: your inmost self is originally (and also right now) perfect, lacking nothing, whole and complete. Paradoxically, what is most simple is also quite difficult to grasp, primarily because of deep habit patterns that draw arbitrary dividing lines between interconnected things, make judgments about the blameless, ignore the obvious, grasp for the transient and reject the painful.

Zen practice is nothing more than entering into the truth of your perfection with *attentiveness* in each and every situation: in the midst of delusion and suffering, comfort and joy, and whatever may come your way by virtue of the law of cause and effect. Plunging into this present moment—letting drop resistance and opposition to it—is to be *already* manifesting your original perfection. This activity is called “zazen”—the meditative practice of Zen Buddhism.

With steady and devoted zazen practice, the automaticity of your habit patterns begins to fall away just as an elaborate edifice left untended gradually crumbles back to dust. Like sunshine breaking through clouds, the truth of your original perfection will suddenly shine through—at first, perhaps, at odd moments when the clouds part of their own. And then one day, when every last cloud evaporates or blows away, it’s clear and bright and things are just precisely what they are.

A Zen master once said, “There is nothing in particular to realize. Just let go of the notion of buddhas as opposed to sentient beings.” Is this not your original perfection? If you can’t quite grasp this, look directly, right into the *heart* of your life. What is this life confronting you? Don’t be fooled by any idea but grab hold of it directly! *JUST THIS!* That is Zen practice.

*Paul Gerstein, Sensei*