

Questions for Reflection
Talk 7, Series 11

Here are some ideas for your reflection during the week:

1) First: While "It is not ethical to take what is not given, so trying to gain anything other than what comes to us through our practice is an ethical infraction," most of us still practice zazen with some idea of gain. What is yours? Making your motivations conscious, even though not ideal, is preferable to keeping them unconscious.

2) Second: Why not take a pain inventory right now of your pain during zazen? Please list the pain that you experience in your body and separately the pain that you experience in your mind. As a second step you might note their varying degrees like on a scale of 1-10. Afterwards you should study what you've written as a way of becoming even more intimate with your pain.

3) Third: In bodhisattva meditation (zazen), thinking is not eliminated AND it is not grasped. That is the basic rule. But what are you thinking about during zazen? Outside of zazen it is okay to think about what is bothering you. If you think about these things consciously, perhaps it will help you to let go of them during zazen.

4) Fourth: "Clouds come and go with no mind. With me thoughts flow accordingly. At some point they disappear without my being aware." Memorize, if you can, these words of Akiko describing her relationship with her thoughts during zazen. Try to emulate them if you can.

5) Fifth: Even our great ancestor Bodhidharma encouraged practicing pacifying our minds without contrivance. What are your own personal ways of doing this?

6) Sixth: *We do not practice zazen to make ourselves into excellent meditators, to experience tranquility or even to acquire insight. We vow to be in the world in a way that offers our practice as a gift to the great earth and all living beings.* Maybe to write this out and pin it on your refrigerator and read it everyday.