

# The Craft of Zen

## Five Teachings for Walking Our Talk

A course in embodying clarity, compassion, and appropriate response — together.  
In a time of uncertainty, confusing information, and increasing acceleration, many of us are not seeking more input — but an orientation we can trust, postures we can embody, and practices that reach into the details of our lived life.

This course offers a way to cultivate that orientation.

**Over five months, we will explore, embody, and learn to enact five foundational qualities that open us to the transformative potential of the Zen Buddhist teachings.**

**The five qualities we'll explore are: Openness, Acceptance, Resonance, Stillness, and Integrity.** Each is not something to achieve or to possess, but an accessible resource — something we can return to, feel, and begin to trust.

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## How it works

At the heart of this course is a **monthly live teaching** with Nicole Baden Roshi. Over the span of five months, each session introduces one of the five foundational qualities and sets the focus for personal exploration that month. These live teachings are the core of the course — they offer the ground, the depth, and the real-time encounter around which everything else unfolds.

From there, the course continues through:

- **Weekly practice guidance** (*delivered via email*)
- **Weekly small-group reflection** (*optional*)
- **Weekly access to a practice leader or teacher**
- **Daily morning & evening live-streamed meditation** from our online zendo (Online-Campus-Feature)
- **Monthly Q&A sessions** with Nicole Baden Roshi
- **Access to a group forum** for exchange and support (Online-Campus-Feature)
- **Optional individual meetings with Nicole Baden Roshi**
- **All materials available on demand**, so you can revisit or catch up anytime

This course primarily invites **inner time** — a willingness to stay close to the material in ways that are personally meaningful. While many supports are offered, you are encouraged to move at your own pace. Attendance at every meeting is not expected. The structure simply offers a shared field of practice you are welcome to step into as your life allows.

## Access to Our Online Campus

### **Online Zendo Daily Meditation**

Every morning and evening, we'll stream live from the meditation halls of our two practice centers — one in Europe, one in the US. You're invited to sit with the residents. These sessions follow traditional forms and offer a quiet, steady space to sit in silence, wherever you are. With clear instructions for newcomers and a supportive team, our online zendo extends the experience of monastic Zazen into your home.

### **Community Practicing together**

The genius of monasticism lies in the discovery of mutuality. With the Dharma Academy, you'll meet practice companions in breakout sessions, forums, and group activities. Peer-led and peer-supported community listening spaces are dedicated to going deeper in areas of shared interest and study. As opportunities for supporting inquiry through resonance, community members will be able to suggest, steward, and support forums where speaking and listening are held in equal measure.

### **Koan Study**

These audio recordings and transcripts cover over a decade of Zentatsu Richard Baker Roshi's teachings on the koans within The Book of Serenity and Blue Cliff Record. Each lecture comes with a corresponding study guide with key ideas, practice supports and glossary. This study collection will grow over time to include transcripts, recordings, and study materials covering the over five decades of Baker Roshi's teachings.



# The Craft of Zen Chapters

The course offers five core “crafts” — embodied, repeatable skills that help translate insight into action. These are not ideals to master, but real capacities that grow through practice:

- **Tolerating not-knowing (when we actually don’t know)**
- **Inhabiting immediacy (before expectations and judgments kick in)**
- **Grounding thinking in feeling (but not emotion)**
- **Steadying attention (and cultivating a field of absorption)**
- **Acting from what matters (without getting in the way of ourselves)**

You don’t need to get them right. You only need to stay close to what they open up — and let them guide your path.



## Chapter 1 – Openness

### Openness – Practicing Beginner's Mind

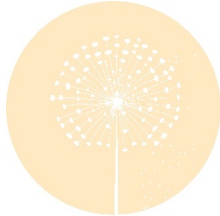
*"Beginner's mind isn't about forgetting what you know. It's about seeing what you missed while you were certain."*

Zen practice begins—and continues—with a return to the openness of not-knowing. What we call “beginner’s mind” is more than a poetic phrase. It is a practical, embodied attitude that disrupts the automatic repetition of familiar views, habits, and self-images.

Openness is not vague or passive. It is a discipline of suspending the known, again and again, so that something unfiltered can appear. This chapter explores how beginner’s mind lives on four levels:

- **As a physical and mental posture**
- **As a perspective that reshapes perception**
- **As a new way of relating to the world**
- **As the capacity to change and transform**

Openness is the first foundation on the path. It is necessary to enter a process in which change can occur. In this chapter you will experience openness not as a loss of boundaries or stability, but as the capacity to enter a transformative process, in which life and the world itself can become your teacher.



## Chapter 2 - Acceptance

### Acceptance – Grounding the Mind in Suchness

*"Acceptance is not approval. It's contact."*

In Zen, we don't start by deciding whether something should be accepted or changed.

Instead, we ask: what is this, really—before my ideas about it take over?

Acceptance points to suchness – the immediate, embodied reality of what presents itself. Not what we want, not what we fear, but what is. Contact, without defense. Attention, without agenda.

#### **This chapter explores:**

- **The chemistry of radical acceptance: What it is - and what it is not**
- **Suchness and a shift in worldview: Reality as Relationality**
- **Transforming expectations into intentions or good wishes: How to hold our views constructively and beneficially**
- **The origin of clarity and insight: Grounding thinking**

**Acceptance is essential if we are to cultivate more immediate contact with the 'world as it is'.** In this chapter, we explore the subtle dynamics of how to step out of the seeming dualism between acceptance and change — and how to begin from clarity in order to enact our intentions in beneficial ways.



## Chapter 3 - Resonance

### Resonance – The Awareness of the Feeling Body

*"When the thinking mind falls silent, the body begins to speak—not the way a book does, but in the way of a compass."*

Zen practice teaches us to listen not only with the mind, but with the body. In this chapter, we explore two distinct ways of knowing: conceptual consciousness and the category-free awareness of the feeling body.

Where the mind interprets, the body resonates. Where the mind explains, the body aligns. We learn how these modes can enter into dialogue—and how awareness of the feeling body becomes a guide toward integrity.

#### **In this chapter, we explore:**

- **Modalities of knowing: The distinction between conceptual thinking and the awareness of the feeling body**
- **How to deal with too much thinking in meditation**
- **How to shift into 'feeling' and 'knowticing'**
- **Shifting our point of reference: From self to aliveness**

This chapter introduces a version of one of the core teachings of Buddhism: the two truths, as reflected in two different modes of relating to the world. These two will be introduced in thoroughly experiential ways. We will learn how to differentiate, then inhabit, and then integrate these two states of mind (and modalities of knowing).





## Chapter 4 - Stillness

### **Stillness – Releasing ourselves into the Spaciousness of Mind**

*"Stillness is not what you escape to—it's what allows you to stay."*

Stillness is not the absence of movement. It is the field in which movement becomes visible—a quiet spaciousness that allows us to perceive without grasping and to meet life without collapsing into it.

In this chapter, we explore the practice of shikantaza—"just sitting"—as a path into this stillness. Shikantaza is not a meditation on a specific object. It is a sustained turning toward whatever appears, without control, without gaining idea, without preference. Attention shifts from chasing content to inhabiting the field in which content arises.

As this field stabilizes, something transforms. Attention becomes less like a focused beam and more like a field. In this field, we can feel, respond, and release—without losing our ground.

#### **In this chapter, we explore:**

- **The meaning of shikantaza - or 'just sitting'**
- **Four stages of stabilizing attention**
- **Establishing the field of mind**
- **A new inner location: Spaciousness**

The experience of stillness can be unpacked and unfolded, like a Trojan horse, in the midst of ordinary mind. It may become a regulatory resource, resourcing all other resources, and changing the overall architecture of your experience. We will grow stillness (and instill growth) with subtle instructions into the practices of meditation.



## Chapter 5 - Integrity

### **Integrity – The Ground of Compassionate Action**

*"Integrity is the feeling that gives power to our actions - and to our life. If one is going to flourish and live courageously, one must be able to trust the integrity of one's path."*

When we meet the world, where do we meet it from? This chapter brings together the five foundational qualities and all eight crafts into a coherent set of four skills. These skills form the inner ground of a life lived with integrity — a life that is clear, compassionate, and responsive.

We'll explore each of the four core skills of this chapter with an eye not toward mastery, but toward felt understanding. Each takes time. But together, they begin to anchor something essential.

We bring the fruits of the course home — into our daily choices, relationships, and responsibilities — and establish a practice that can **support us where it really counts**.

**This chapter we will focus on:**

- **Taking responsibility for our experience**
- **Self-regulation through embodied presence**
- **Non-violent, self-reflective communication**
- **Shifting from personal identity to ethical intention**

Integrity is when nothing prevents our actions, feelings, and thoughts from expressing our deepest intentions. It's when our actions are filled with power and feeling. If one is going to flourish and live courageously, one must be able to trust the integrity of one's path.