

# 山門寺

## Mountain Gate Journal

Summer 2020

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Mountain Gate is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization established to provide the environment and training in the specific mindfulness practices of Rinzai Zen, focusing on meditation and work with koans [traditional paradoxical anecdotes or questions]. Requiring Balance, a nonsectarian outreach program, was established by Mountain Gate some years ago- to offer free, nonsectarian retreats for women veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress, and for women who are wives or partners of veterans with PTSD

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*“Relaxing into the experience of the present moment is a life changing practice.”*

—from a Zen student

Of utmost important in meditation practice—and life itself!—is attention, awareness, presence. But this is not so easy for most of us. Anyone who has experienced trauma usually finds it difficult, even frightening. But as well, all of us, entranced by our technological toys and fueled by our “more-more-more!” culturally driven lifestyles, have become less and less present in our daily life and in our relationships. And we wonder why we are not feeling fulfilled.

The quote below is by Peter Levine, who developed the psychotherapeutic process called Somatic Experiencing to help free people from the clutches of traumatic conditioning. He was inspired after noticing that animals in the wild, despite frequent encounters with life-threatening experiences, were able to recover rapidly—within a few minutes or even seconds—and move on with their activities and their lives with no apparent traumatic residue. It speaks to how we human animals can learn to relax in the experience of the present moment; here he’s responding to the intensified level of anxiety perpetrated by the coronavirus pandemic, and his audience is therapists, but the process he’s describing is something all of us can understand and benefit from working with by ourselves or with a therapist:

*In Somatic Experiencing, we have a map for a person’s inner experience, called SIBAM, that can help clients focus their nonverbal awareness, especially in highly stressful times like these. S stands for sensation: bodily sensations,*

*muscle tension, joint perception, visceral movements. I is for images, what comes from the outside into our inner experience. B is for behaviors. A is for affects, things like anger, fear, sadness, disgust, surprise—characteristic of all people everywhere in the world.*

*But A also refers to what sometimes are called contours of feelings, felt-sense feelings. You see somebody that you haven’t seen for a while and you’re filled with gladness. Gladness isn’t a categorical emotion: it’s a physiological experience, like when you walk out in the morning and see the dew on a blade of grass, the absolute beauty of it. That’s very important in our life. M stands for meanings. When a person has been traumatized, the meanings aren’t fluid anymore: they become concretized as fixed beliefs, like something bad is going to happen to me, or I’m unlovable.*

*The idea is to be able to help clients experience their inner landscape by observing the minute adjustments that their body is making, moment to moment. If you pay close enough attention, you can see in a person’s microbehaviors all kinds of autonomic shifts, what’s going on in the brain stem, the limbic system, the emotional brain.*

—from Psychotherapy Networker,  
June/July 2020 issue

This practice of tuning into the “felt sense” of our body and maintaining awareness of it is not limited to people who have experienced trauma, however. It is equally relevant to anyone, and especially to any of us who are practicing meditation. It is a very effective tool for bringing us into the present moment. And when we can live fully in that present moment, life is rich and fulfilling, even when the present moment is not what we could necessarily desire.

The practice of mindfulness requires that we live in awareness, and in order to do effective meditation, we also need to maintain—or at least, keep working to stay present with—that awareness. Awakening and its potential for positive transformation in our life arises when we are so present we have forgotten ourselves. This may be sudden and spontaneous, but in actuality there’s a lot of important work behind it. Working with attention as Peter Levine describes in SIBAM can make all the difference in our meditation practice as well as in our unfolding life. And these days it’s especially important as anxiety is so prevalent.

Our usual instructions with regard to meditation are for a focused meditation: the extended outbreath, for example. But when strong experiences interfere, it’s important to temporarily relax that focus and tune in to the felt sense as fully as possible. It’s a different kind of meditation but equally important, especially for anyone who has had painful or traumatic experiences in life, as they can make it very difficult to open to the freedom inherent in sustained, committed, ongoing meditation practice.

There’s no better time than now, with all the ramped up challenges in the world these days, to throw yourself into this critical practice!



***Fundamentally, if we don’t realize true peace of mind then no matter what fame, what possessions we have, we are not at peace. Most people settle for this.***

—Harada Shodo-roshi,  
May 2015 *ōsesshin*, Tahoma Monastery



## Why Is There Suffering in the World?

From a student:

*I was talking with a friend and he said: “If everything is perfect whole and complete, why is there extreme suffering in the universe?” He brought up some of the worst of the worst stories of what humans can do and I’m not going to repeat them.*

*I didn’t really have a good answer. I thought of the chant: “Within the darkness, there is light but do not look for the light, within the light, there is darkness but do not look for the darkness.” I also thought of a talk I heard by Thich Nhat Hanh where he said: “I would not want to be in a world where there is no suffering.” Lastly, I thought of the story of JOB in the Bible where the standard interpretation of the story is that “God has good reasons for suffering but Job shouldn’t expect to know what they are.”*

*I believe the causes for suffering are not able to be known by the thinking mind but are there are reasons just as there are reasons why Saturn orbits our sun as it does. Also, as the Buddha said: “The world of form - life and death has within it a certain amount of suffering.”*

*While this type of contemplation satisfies my mind, it doesn’t help someone when their family member is fallen by some tragedy.*

*So I’m asking you if you have any wisdom you could share on the topic of why “suffering is part of the human condition.”*

Thank you,

Mitra-roshi responds:

The Buddha taught a basic fundamental truth, that we are all perfect, whole and complete. He also taught the way to realize that truth. But his own traumatic experience with encountering evidence of suffering is what set him on a path to find out WHY there is suffering, and to seek relief from it.

It took him awhile: six years of ascetic practice—the common spiritual practice of the era in which he lived—followed by the realization that mortifying his body, as ascetic practices did, was only going to bring him death without relief, and the subsequent understanding that the only way to find that relief was to go within and explore beyond words. This he did, and the result was a profound insight into the truth that would lead to freedom from suffering, and release from that suffering. For the rest of his long life he taught how everyone can become free from suffering.

And each of us has the potential to realize that truth ourselves, and to free ourselves from creating suffering for ourselves and others.

It is now known that as a child begins to develop, their brain begins to create what is known as autobiographical memory—a sense of who they are in time and space and relationships. Depending on what that child experiences, that sense is positive or negative, and it impacts the child's various responses and reactions to living in that autobiographically colored world.

When painful, traumatic things happen, the child's autobiographical sense is that they are worthless, or unloved, or unprotected, or living in a violent environment, all of which may well be true. On the other hand, if the child's early experiences is of being loved, protected, cherished, nurtured, their sense will be of living in a safe and beautiful world.

What happens then, however, impacts their life in deep ways, for they react or respond out of these early autobiographical experiences. This is a natural process, but it can be a significant source of suffering. An example comes to mind of one of our women veterans with PTSD, whose growing up was one of significant negative impact; she was taught through many, many experiences that she was unloved, that she was not worth being loved, and that life was dangerous as a result. Her previous experiences had taught her that, much as she longed to believe otherwise, she was indeed unworthy, and that bad things would continue to happen to her. The result was that she interpreted—or rather, misinterpreted—experiences that were actually positive and caring, as negative and trauma-reactivating. And she suffered a great deal with this.

Although bad things DO happen, it is the meaning we make of these experiences that adds to the suffering or can relieve it. Years ago I was doing some late shopping on a Sunday evening in a grocery store. As I approached the checkout counter, it was clear that the clerk was in a nasty state of mind. My initial reaction was to take it personally: She was angry at me, which fed right into my own autobiographical narrative of the time. But suddenly I realized—thanks, no doubt to several years of meditation practice and some psychotherapy by then—that it wasn't about me, it was about her having a "bad hair day" for reasons I wouldn't ever be privy to. That realization was eye-opening and offered immense relief. Moreover, it made me realize that if I'd started to interpret her anger as being personal against me, what other experiences like that was I misinterpreting? It was a life changing moment, and relieved a great deal of ongoing self-inflicted suffering in my life.

There is also the true story of Jacques Lusseyran, the blind Frenchman who was imprisoned in the notorious Nazi death camp, Buchenwald, and who, pushed to an inner wall of his own being as a result of the extremity of being there, ritually starved, vulnerable to murder or execution at any moment, housed in a barracks so crowded that, he wrote, you could not move without touching another human body, had a profound awakening, and found joy in the middle of that environment. He wasn't crazy, he'd just let go his ideas of what he felt he needed to do in order to be happy. Not so easily done, but this is what the Buddha was teaching about. Yes, there is suffering, but how we interpret that makes all the difference in the world whether we add suffering on top of that suffering. And when we do not add suffering on top of that suffering, that initial suffering is relieved.

"God has reasons..." we can also translate that as, "Karma is why..." The source of our suffering is attachment—to ideas, to things, to people, to events, and most importantly, to a self image. We can say that but it's not sufficient to find relief from suffering. It has to be realized, which means, we have to comprehend that truth at a profound, way-beyond-words, level in order for it to register. And that's why we do our Zen practice: to let go enough of the overlay of assumptions and conditioning to be able to open to that deep truth, and with it—and with the essential, ongoing work on letting go our habit patterns

of greed/anger/delusion—find freedom in the midst of suffering.

It's not quick. It's not easy. But it is transformative! This practice would not have endured more than 2500 years if it weren't.

Warmly, Mitra-roshi



*The mere fact of enlightenment does not mean that all of one's impulses are suddenly perfect, but rather that one sees more accurately how one should live.*

—Shōdō Harada Roshi



*The following is an edit of the first part of a talk given by Mitra-roshi in May via the Turtleback Zendo Zoom. The remainder of the talk plus the questions and answers that followed will be published in another issue of the Mountain Gate Journal. The talk was videotaped and is available for viewing on YouTube.*

## **Mitra-roshi Talk and Q&A at Turtleback Zendo via Zoom, Part 1**

Welcome, everyone! It's good to see that many people are here by Zoom tonight. We've got a couple of extra people here in the zendo as well and it's a delight to be able to speak with all of you. It was too bad that it became necessary to miss coming to Turtleback Zendo in March, but hopefully by next March it will be possible to do so, and maybe we can make up for it.

At any rate, now is a really, really, fertile time for practice! Initially, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, people were in shock—there was a great deal of not knowing what was going to happen, how things were going to unfold, and people were just busy trying to deal with what was initially falling out (and lots of things were falling out at that time). And then as time passed, people started getting antsy, getting reactive; the shock wore off and things started happening: Anger

grew against State governors who were trying to protect their residents by ordering lock-downs and other limitations, some people deciding that “nobody's going to tell me to wear a mask,” and people arriving at State buildings with guns. It's been quite something, and clearly many people are increasingly stressed.

Hopefully we who have Zen practice to anchor us are less stressed. But even stress can rise for people doing Zen practice. The good news is, we've got tools to help us de-stress, and it's important to use those tools; I'll speak in a minute about that.

It is important not to use the practice to create a barrier against life, to create a barrier against coming to deal with our issues—and most people (pretty much everybody in the universe!) have issues. Moreover, those of us who have taken up zen practice often have a little bit more than some people. But that's what actually can benefit us because that's what motivates us to want to move beyond, to become free of where we're caught, where we're suffering. The practice can do that, but it can do that only if we don't use it to barricade ourselves against these situations, barricade ourselves against the anxiety that many of us are feeling with what's going happening with the whole world. So many challenging things are going on: earthquakes, tidal waves, super-storms, the desecration of the forests that provide us oxygen to breathe, global warming that threatens many life forms on this planet, and all of the different emotions that all of these subjects inspire. But when we do the extended out-breath, the *sussok'an* whether you're working on a koan or whether you are a beginner, it is (when it's used properly), an extremely grounding practice. The parasympathetic nervous system (which is rest and relax) becomes activated and it counteracts the stress response. It's very beneficial for blood pressure, for toning down the release of the stress hormones. But again, the extended out-breath—an practice in general, for that matter—can be used to blockade yourself against feelings, and that's not what it's meant to do. If you're doing it correctly you're both focusing as clearly as possible on the physical experience of extending your out-breath as well as the increasingly expanding awareness of all around you. You're not shutting anything out: emotions will come and go and thoughts will come and go; that's not a problem. It's sort of like when you wake up in the morning and there are clouds in the sky, you don't say “get outta here clouds, I want sun”! You may yearn for the sun, or you may yearn for the



clouds too, but the clouds are neither good or bad and that's the same way with thoughts, and with feelings. Yet we try to shut them down, misunderstanding the traditional Japanese Zen teaching to "cut your thoughts," which really means to cut our attachment to thoughts. When we are trying to push the thoughts away and deny them, trying to get rid of them, we are expressing an attachment, just as much as if we are calling them to us and engaging in them, going down the merry lane with those thoughts.

Practice is about allowing ourselves to be open to the moment exactly as it appears to be. And again, when we're doing the *sussok'an* properly, both there is this narrow focus on the physical experience within the body but then there also seems to be (in my experience, and Harada Roshi speaks of this as well), an expanding general awareness, so that you're aware of the birds chirping, or the truck going by, or the airplane overhead, or somebody knocking on the door, or whatever's going on. You're not shutting anything out of your awareness. This is really-really-really important because it is possible to get yourself into a dark hole if your try to shut down your senses.

Avoidance of the moment as it appears to unfold is not practice. To emphasize the importance both of presence (as well as not judging our practice), there was the experience of a woman many years ago at the Rochester Zen Centre. In those days (this is back in the 1970's), whenever somebody had a *kensho* experience, Roshi Kapleau as them to write him a letter about it, and often he would read these letters as a part of *teisho*. In this particular case, the letter was actually published in a very early Zen Bow, the Rochester Zen Centre quarterly magazine. I clung to that account because Zen practice for me was extremely difficult; it was quite painful emotionally, and accordingly it was quite difficult to practice; it took me a lot of tooth-gritting effort to bring myself to the mat again and and again. Some of your know that when I was first part of the Rochester Zen Centre I was actually living in Istanbul, Turkey and commuting to *sesshin*. The first *sesshin* I went to was a 4-day *sesshin*—that was what was required in those days; you didn't get to attend a *sesshin* with Roshi Kaplea until you first attended a 4-day *sesshin* with no teacher. The 4-day *sesshins* were taught by his senior students who were not yet allowed to give *dokusan*. They could give group instruction—though they were all senior students, they were not deep enough and experienced enough to teach. All I cared

about in that first *sesshin* was surviving the schedule; I don't do very well with not enough sleep, even in my early 30's as I was at the time. And of course I was flying over from Istanbul, which is quite different in time-zone. (That actually made it really easy to do *yaza* because that was my wake-up time!) I managed to grit my teeth and get through that *sesshin*. Then to my amazement, the Sunday morning after the *sesshin*, I sat for a whole two hours without moving. Then I flew back to Istanbul and for three weeks I could not bring myself to even cross the threshold into the room where my mat and cushion were. It was just impossible. It was so, so challenging. Thankfully, more than 40 years later it's not like that anymore.

Because of that, I clung to this woman's story, for she had obviously been to a number of *sesshins* and she still had to "nail" herself to her mat (her words). I know now who that woman is but that's irrelevant at this point. She wasn't resident at the Center because she had a child, but she came to all the *sesshin*. When she wrote that she had to virtually nail herself to the mat—exactly how I felt—she stuck it out, and she did have a *kensho* in that *sesshin*! Afterwords she wrote,

*"This practice is truly bodhisattvic: first it shows us where we're caught and then it sets us free!"*

When it is showing us where we're caught there's a fantastic opportunity! To take advantage of it we have to pay attention and open to that experience, otherwise we will not be set free. This is something most people don't really understand about Zen practice; they feel that it's all got to be sweet and lovely, otherwise it's not really working. But that's not necessarily the case. In fact, it's usually not the case. "First it shows us where we're caught"—an indispensable part of the progress toward freedom from being caught!

Practice can sometimes be incredible; we simply disappear, and when we come to (so to speak), we are in a very different mind state that is much more free. It is more free because we have given up trying to be somebody, at least for that short period of time. Persist, and gradually it makes a big difference. Now I walk into the *zendo* here, and there's certainly no problem with sitting. It's a wonderful little *zendo* and has wonderful energy and I hope all of you have a chance to come and be here. I know that some of

you listening already have done sesshin here and that's pretty terrific.

The challenge is that now a lot of extra stuff is going on. We may have a life (pre Covid-19) that was going along pretty decently, just a few hiccups every so often (enough to make us want to do practice anyway), and then comes this, and people are losing their jobs, and people are being closeted with their families (which in some cases is turning out to be quite beneficial, and sometimes a source of ongoing trauma) . I know one family in the Washington DC area, husband and wife and sister-in-law and two kids, school-age kids and he's working on-line, his wife is working on-line, his sister-in-law is working on-line and his two kids are going to school on-line. It certainly must stress the internet capacity of his home; he told me that the kids have been given iPads by their school (so at least they don't have to share too many computers). That family is a harmonious family; but for families that have a lot of stress already, pre Covid-19, the current situation can really exacerbate it.

I think of the man who has inspired me for years, and whose experience actually triggered my getting into Zen at the Rochester Zen Centre. I was already doing zazen and when I read in a book a story attributed to Hakuin but which really was about Shido Munan. Shido Munan, whose name means literally "The Great Way is Not Difficult", was the grandfather in Zen of the great Japanese Zen Master Hakuin. He was Dokyo Etan's teacher; Dokyo Etan was the Zen master who brought Hakuin so much deeper.

Dokyo Etan, the "Old Man of Shoji Hermitage", was the nemesis of countless monks in Japan but, Hakuin stuck it out with him and finally reached a place where he was deeply awakened. Dokyo Etan apparently was such an acerbic gentleman that nobody stuck with him very long, but one monk had done so and Hakuin when he met him, was so deeply impressed by the depth of that monk's understanding, that he asked if he could meet his teacher; that teacher was Dokyo Etan. Dokyo Etan met Hakuin after Hakuin had had a kensho which Hakuin was sure was the most amazing, deep kensho that anybody had had in 300 years. But Dokyo Etan saw where Hakuin's practice was not complete, and refused to accept his answers to the koans. One time he pushed him off the narrow "mini-deck" that ran along one side of his small hermitage; it must have

been the rainy season because Hakuin landed in the mud. We can all end up at one stage of our practice, doubting our teacher. But Hakuin did persist; on some level he was willing to accept that Dokyo Etan could see something that he couldn't yet see, and that maybe it was worth listening to him instead of going off on his own.

Shido Munan, Dokyo Etan's teacher, actually started zazen later in his life. By the time he was living in a small temple in a seaside village in Japan in the 1600's he was a very deeply realized person. Nowadays, Japan is quite different now in that that back in the 1600's, a Buddhist monk was celibate. That was part of being a Buddhist monk. With the Meiji Restoration in Japan, the government allowed Buddhism to continue, but with a number of significant conciliations, one of which was that monks were not considered clergy (as they are in America—separate from Church and State); they were considered ordinary people, which is why they could be conscripted for the Second World War. But in Shido Munan's time, they were celibate. There's also an aspect of the Japanese culture that is imbued in people from birth: and that is the importance of the group over the individual. Here in America and Europe, and a lot of the rest of the world, the individual is of primary importance. This is especially true in America because America was founded on people who were individualists to begin with, which is why some people get very upset about wearing masks, experiencing it as an impingement on their personal freedom, not considering the benefits to everyone of wearing them.

In Japan, it is very different: you don't do anything that will create a difficult or inconvenient situation or discomfort for anyone else. This is a deeply engrained part of the culture, the group being the more important than the individual in Japanese culture. In the 1600's in Japan, Shido Munan was a middle-aged man, a monk in a tiny little temple in a small village. A young girl in the village got pregnant; her parents tried very hard to get her to identify the father and she refused until finally she announced, "It's that monk." They were horrified. The whole village was horrified because he's a monk, and celibacy is expected, he's middle-aged and this much younger girl is now pregnant. When the baby was born, the grandparents marched the infant over to Shido Munan and announced: "Here! You are responsible for this incredible embarrassment to us and to the village! Now you must take care of this child that you have

brought into this world!”

It is very difficult for us to comprehend the intensity of the experience because here in the modern American/European world, if a woman gets pregnant out of wedlock it's no big deal. In fact, many single women are getting themselves pregnant simply because they want to love and raise a child. But the Japanese culture was not, and still isn't so accepting of such a situation. Moreover, it was creating an enormous embarrassment for the family and therefore for the whole village. But Shido Munan simply received the child and humbly, deeply humbly responded with an expression that is not translatable accurately into English; you can literally translate it but it has very different connotations in English. In essence he said: “Oh, it looks like that, I see”...and he received the child, and this middle-aged man tenderly raised this child for a whole year. It is written that he carried it around on his back like an old grandmother, and I'm sure he was partial to that child because the level of compassion for all beings was deep within him. Then after a year, the girl confessed who the father was. During this intervening year, Shido Munan had an extremely difficult time; letters from the time speak of this, how the whole village scorned him, and he was hard put to find food, not to mention raise an infant. Now the grandparents are embarrassed twice over because first, they accused this humble priest of something he hadn't done and created a great deal of pain and suffering (technically) for him, and then caused him for that year to raise the child. So they returned, heads hanging down, to beg for the child back. Again Shido Munan simply says: “Oh, I see, this is how it seems, isn't it” and he returned the child whom he had most likely become quite partial to. The reason we know this story is because the village was so struck by his humility, his lack of felt need to accuse and to fight back and to get angry and say and do all the things that many people would do those circumstances. And it was honest! He wasn't putting on an act.

How did he get there? The same way we can, because that humility, that clarity, that honesty, that let-go-ness, is something that each one of us can uncover within ourselves. This is why we do our Zen practice, because at some level, we yearn for this. It's the only real freedom there is, and in freeing ourselves we are relieving the suffering of so many others as well. Shido Munan was free not to have to get angry, not to have to rebuke, not to have to say “Well, I told you so!” None of that. It just wasn't there

for him. And it wasn't there because he was so clearly let go, he had understood who he was at a deep level, and understood that this self-image was just that: an image. It was a story, it wasn't real. As each of us do our practice, we are little by little, weaning ourselves from that self-image. This is important because self-image can be so dictatorial, it can cause people to do all kinds of things that they would not ordinarily want to do if they were in their right minds. A big example of this is the stock market crash in 1929, when stockbrokers literally jumped out windows to commit suicide rather than face the failure of not being the big, wealthy success they thought they were.

So again, how do we get there? Well obviously through zazen. Through determination, through a willingness to walk into whatever the physical experience in our bodies feels like, tuning in to the energy of that experience, and sticking with it in such total presence until it dissolves. It brings us a measure of peace, it brings us a measure of freedom; it may be only a millimeter, but it's significant. And each time we do that, it brings us further into truly embodying that innate freedom that we are.

If you want a contemporary example, we have Jaques Lusseyran, imprisoned in World War II in the infamous Nazi death camp, Buchenwald. Jaques Lusseyran (as most of you know), was a young Frenchman who was blinded in a school accident when he was 8 years old when the kids rushed out to recess and somebody shoved in their excitement and he went crashing into the corner of the teacher's desk; he was wearing glasses 'cause his eyes weren't very good anyway. The accident blinded him for the rest of his life. But his parents were quite open-minded and they worked with the school to allow him to mainstream; all he had to do was to learn Braille over the summer (which he did), and he stayed in the same school, with the same friends. In high-school he even went hiking up in the mountains with his friends. He had been able to open to an intuitive sense, of his environment. When he was first blinded he realized that when he got upset and angry he would bang into things; he couldn't tell where they were. But if he allowed himself to be let go and clear he was able to navigate easily around the furniture, down the streets, without help. When we ourselves let go we're able to move through life more flexibly, more easily, more peacefully, more happily. Letting go is the challenge.

—to be continued





## UPCOMING Calendar

### Monday/Wednesday/Friday Zoom Sittings:

**Every Monday and Friday evening from 6-8 pm Mountain Time**, join those sitting in the Mountain Gate zendo for zazen, beginning with guided Metta [lovingkindness] practice. **Every Wednesday evening from 6-8 pm Mountain Time**, the sitting begins with a short talk by Mitra-roshi. To be added to the mailing list for announcements and the Zoom links, please email [mountaingate1@gmail.com](mailto:mountaingate1@gmail.com)

**July 18, Zoom Zazenkai at Mountain Gate, 9 am to 4 pm**, with a lunch break from 12-1 pm. You can join for the entire day or for just the morning or just the afternoon segments but no partial segments. Please email [mountaingate1@gmail.com](mailto:mountaingate1@gmail.com) for the links and to attend.

**August 1, Zoom Zazenkai at Mountain Gate, 9 am to 4 pm**, with a lunch break from 12-1 pm. You can join for the entire day or for just the morning or just the afternoon segments but no partial segments. Please email [mountaingate1@gmail.com](mailto:mountaingate1@gmail.com) for the links and to attend.

The **July RegainingBalance Retreat for Women Veterans with PTSD** has been cancelled; however, **the August retreat is ON!**

**August 5-9 RegainingBalance Retreat for Women Veterans with PTSD**, with social distancing and masks at appropriate times. There is still at least one space available for a qualifying woman veterans for this free, nonsectarian retreat another which can help bring a measure of balance and renewal into her life.

**August 19-26 Zoom Sesshin at Mountain Gate**, with room for an additional few participants within the social distancing guidelines. Masks are required for all chanting. Whether you would like to attend via Zoom or in person, please download an application form, available on the [sanmonjizen.org](http://sanmonjizen.org) website, fill it in and submit it to apply for sesshin. Anyone applying for full time via Zoom is also eligible for sanzen during those days they are full time. Part time participation is possible but without sanzen.

**September 13 Zoom Zazenkai at Mountain Gate, 9 am to 4 pm**, with a lunch break from 12-1 pm. You can join for the entire day or for just the morning or just the afternoon segments but no partial segments. Please email [mountaingate1@gmail.com](mailto:mountaingate1@gmail.com) for the links and to attend.

**September 23-27 RegainingBalance Retreat for Women Veterans with PTSD**, with social distancing and masks at appropriate times. We expect to have two additional spaces available for a qualifying woman veterans for this free, nonsectarian retreat in which we teach tools to help reduce stress, and during which women vets can enjoy the company of other women veterans in our very quiet, deeply peaceful northern NM mountain valley, and enjoy daily rambles in our adjacent Carson National Forest, as well as learn special meditations that can bring about relaxation and ease.

**October 9-16 Zoom Sesshin at Mountain Gate**, with room for an additional few participants within the social distancing guidelines. Masks are required for all chanting. Whether you would like to attend via Zoom or in person, please download an application form, available on the [sanmonjizen.org](http://sanmonjizen.org) website, fill it in and submit it to apply for sesshin. Anyone applying for full time via Zoom is also eligible for sanzen during those days they are full time. Part time participation is possible but without sanzen.

**November 13-20 Zoom Sesshin at Mountain Gate**, with room for an additional few participants within the social distancing guidelines. Masks are required for all chanting. Whether you would like to attend via Zoom or in person, please download an application form, available on the [sanmonjizen.org](http://sanmonjizen.org) website, fill it in and submit it to apply for sesshin. Anyone applying for full time via Zoom is also eligible for sanzen during those days they are full time. Part time participation is possible but without sanzen.

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For information about the RegainingBalance program and to offer support: [www.RegainingBalance.org](http://www.RegainingBalance.org)  
For information about Zen meditation practice and sesshin [meditation retreats]: [www.sanmonjizen.org](http://www.sanmonjizen.org)  
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