



The Eight Gates of Zen: A Program of Zen Training

John Daido Looi

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This accessible introduction to the philosophy and practice of Zen Buddhism includes a program of study that encompasses practically every aspect of life. The American Zen teacher John Daido Looi shows us that Zen practice should include not only meditation, the study of Zen literature and liturgy, and moral and ethical action, but should also manifest in work, artistic, and everyday activities. The Eight Gates are:

1. Zazen, a type of meditation described as "sitting Zen"
2. Face-to-face meetings between teacher and student
3. Academic study of the sutras related to Zen training, other schools of Buddhism, Buddhist history, psychology, and philosophy
4. Zen rites and rituals and their meaning
5. The moral and ethical requirements set in the Buddhist Precepts
6. Art practice as an extension of Zen practice
7. Body practice as an extension of Zen practice
8. Work as an active function of zazen

Beautifully illustrated with Looi's own photographs, this edition also includes a new introduction and an updated reading list.

The Eight Gates of Zen: A Program of Zen Training Details

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From Reader Review The Eight Gates of Zen: A Program of Zen Training for online ebook

Robert Mccarthy says

Was assigned the book during my month long residency at Zen Mountain Monastery. I found the teachings contained within to be down to earth and up to date with the American Mind. Daido Sensei's knowledge and recognition that Zen and indeed all forms of Buddhism change when they shift into another culture. A new Zen for a new world.

Laura says

Interesting, but be prepared for some serious learning. I should have red this book with flash cards.

Merri-Todd Webster says

The book that introduced me to this wonderful author, who died late last year.

Barbara Wild says

I read this after a weekend at the monastery in Mt. Tremper. Very helpful in devising structure for my days.

Walter Burton says

This was a great book to introduce someone tot the practice of Zen Buddhism. It is as written by the founder of the Mountain River monastery and give a very I depth explanation of what it means to seriously practice Zen and the steps to begin.

Having some back group before was helpful but even person totally new to Buddhism or Zen find it good start. Be warned towards the end the author does get into some pretty deep philosophy of the falling away and Leaving Home, but it is worth the read.

Another nice feature is the Appendix which has much of the Liturgy and Sutras used in the group practice in Shanga and the Zendo.

Adam says

Books on Zen are difficult to read and review. Since the nature of Zen cannot be described with words, using words to describe it is, at best, circumspect. As a result, Zen books tend to either err on the side of being

obscure, impenetrable, and unhelpful for beginners, or on the side of being pop-spiritual works, New-Agey and innocuous. Moreover, too many books with "Zen" in the title are not written by experienced, knowledgeable practitioners. In the worst cases, the word "Zen" is used as a sort of catch-all for anything mystical or vaguely paradoxical.

Fortunately, *The Eight Gates of Zen* walks that narrow path between being obscure and blase. Written by John Daido Looi, who founded the Zen Mountain Monastery in New York. He was one of the great ambassadors who brought Zen to America, and also a great teacher. In *The Eight Gates of Zen*, he wrote an excellent primer to Zen in general and to the approach of ZMM in particular. The Eight Gates are eight facets of Zen practice that are central to monks, students, and lay practitioners at the monastery. Anyone, from the most experienced teacher to a new beginner, can engage in the eight practices.

Perhaps the most useful element of the book is the very clear, concrete instructions that Daido provides for zazen, which is sitting practice. Zazen has been taken over by pop culture images of smiling people in robes chanting "OM," but most people, when they attempt to start sitting, worry they are "doing it wrong." The instructions in this book are clear and simple (although zazen is simple, it is not at all easy!).

In the afterword at the end, the writing starts to become a little more abstract and difficult to follow. But by that time, the reader has been adequately prepared to advance to new levels of understanding. Finally, end of the book provides a suggested reading list for further exploration into Zen.

I had the good fortune of attending an Introduction to Zen retreat at ZMM several years ago, when I first received this book. Revisiting the text now, I can say that *The Eight Gates of Zen* is an accessible and practical entry point for those interested in Zen practice.

Steve says

interesting. but a lot more work to find enlightenment than i have the energy for.

Jonn says

While this book is billed as kind of a beginner's primer to Zen practice, I personally felt after finishing it that it's a better book for someone who has been practicing a while and wants to get a bit more insight into how this practice influences all areas of your life. Looi's style is a bit too formal and monastic for me, and combined with the fact that he can get pretty deep into the philosophy (which I find great), this could be a bit off-putting for people who want to ease into it. With that said, it's still a good book and worth reading for those who have been practicing for a while (and the appendices with the sutras and reading list is great), but it didn't exactly jump off the page for me. For beginners just starting out with Zen practice, I'd recommend Brad Warner's *Hardcore Zen* or Kosho Uchiyama's *Opening the Hand of Thought*.

Cathy says

One teacher's very thoughtful overview of Zen and his own monastery's approach to training. An essential, as well as a revealing peek into what American Buddhists do.

Martin says

This guide to spiritual practice at Zen Mountain Monastery by its founder is a very clear explanation of what to do, how the eight areas of concentration enable us to realize the mundane as transcendent. "The technique is very simple," the present abbot writes, "and, in that simplicity, very difficult ... There is no magic in the 'Eight Gates'; they are just a matter of how we use our mind." This is a book to read over and over again.

Keegan says

My second time through this. Happened to read it this time while _at_ the author's monastery for a weekend.

The chapters on the actual eight gates program were brutally uninteresting, but the remaining chapters on zazen, work practice, body practice, etc., were all greatly beneficial in a very immediate sense, even though I've been casually practicing for years.

The book could be retitled "Zazen As A Practical Tool."

Monkey C says

a great introduction to the classical path of zen passed down through the rivers and mountains by dogen. breaks zen down into 8 disciplines of study.

Heather says

This is a book assigned to me by my lay zen teacher, Komyo. It lays out a method used at the rivers and mountains monastery in NY by the recently deceased John Daido Looi, abbot of the monastery. The method is that which is used to train serious long-term students of zen. There are 10 levels of training accomplishment, which he describes in the first few chapters of the book. It is interesting to read about how the long-term student progresses and how his/her teachers perceive and assess their progress.

The eight gates are eight aspects of zen practice, including zazen, body practice, liturgy, and art practice. I'm on the zazen chapter now.

I'm a little excited and a little leery of starting a more formal zen training. I know it is my choice, but once I commit to working with someone else, I will go whole hog and try my best. I think it would be really good for me, too. It's just such an unknown quantity, and I don't know what I'm getting into. An adventure and a mystery as well as work. This book, I think, is intended to take some of the mystery out of it, so that I can commit myself with less anxiety and ignorance.

I can see from the content of the first few chapters that I am still a novice in every way. I think I need to at least sit zazen every day, to start.

Robin Scanlon says

Started me on zen practice

John says

Read just before attending weekend Intro to Zen retreat at the monastery in the Catskills. Both- the book and the retreat- are great.
