

Zen and the Art of Student Affairs Leadership

The fundamental premise of Zen is a deep understanding of oneself and how it aligns with the world around you. Contrary to some assumptions, it is more of an attitude or a philosophy than a belief or a doctrine. By tuning in to our true nature, Zen allows us to free ourselves from the distractions of the world around us, which often stands in conflict with that nature in that it constantly asks us to conform to any number of “norms” that may or may not be alignment with our own beliefs, desires and values. The result of this freedom is what we call authenticity and it is the foundational Commitment that makes up Leadership Zen. (Michael L. Redd, 2011, <http://www.leadershipzen.org/why-is-zen-part-of-leadership-zen/>)

**“ If we learn to open our hearts, anyone, including the people who drive us crazy, can be our teacher.”
— Pema Chodron**

*There is no reality except the one contained within us. That is why so many people live such an unreal life. They take the images outside them for reality and never allow the world within to assert itself. (Hermann Hesse in *Siddhartha*)*

ACPA: COLLEGE STUDENT EDUCATORS INTERNATIONAL
INDIANAPOLIS, IN
MARCH 31, 2013



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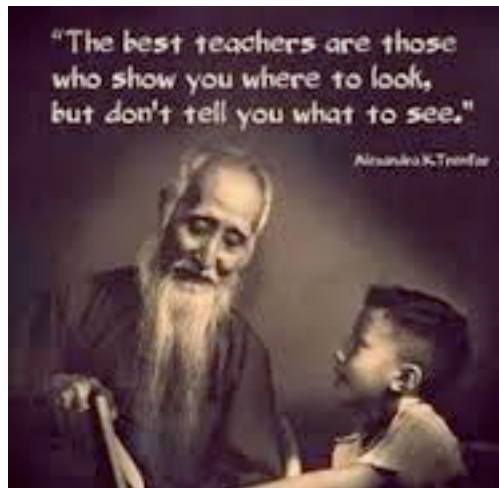
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Program Agenda

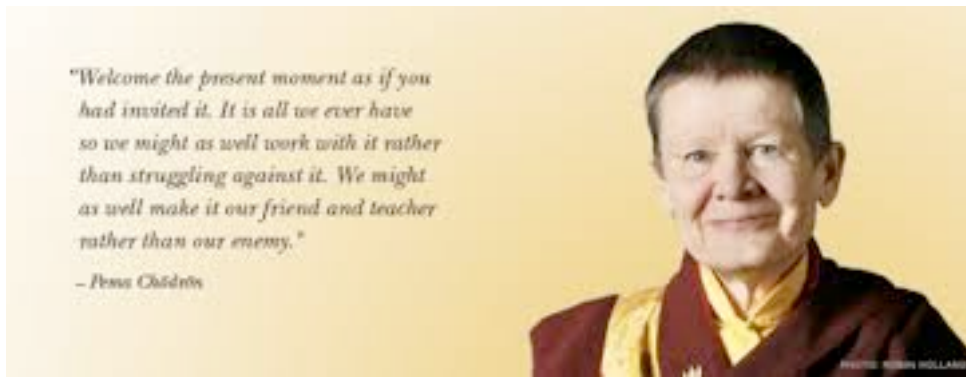
- I. Welcome and Introduction
- II. Moment of Silence – Reflection: What brought you here?
- III. What brought the four of us together and brings us here today
- IV. Zen Stories: Listen for the song beneath the notes
- V. Reflection & Implications for Your Professional Practice
- VI. Silent Personal Reflection: What is Your Commitment Moving Forward
- VII. Conclusion: Appreciation & Gratitude (Handout available on ACPA website)



Important Zen Leadership Themes

Ego
Mindfulness
Control
Empathy
Authenticity
Unfinishedness
Intuition
Being over Doing
Detachment
Emptiness

Compassion
Now
The Middle Way
Vulnerability
Justice
Process
Non-dualism
Gratitude
Meditation
Quietness



Some Other Quotes We Like...

Adyashanti

The more we try to control, the more out of control we feel.

Adyashanti

Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional.

Mother Teresa

If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.

Joanna Macy

The heart that breaks open can contain the whole universe.

Joanna Macy

Presupposing that world and self are essentially separate, [individuals] imagine they can heal one before healing the other. This stance conveys the impression that human consciousness inhabits some haven, or locker-room, independent of the collective situation -- and then trots onto the playing field when it is geared up and ready... It is my experience that the world itself has a role to play in our liberation. Its very pressures, pains, and risks can wake us up -- release us from the bonds of ego and guide us home to our vast, true nature.

Vandana Shiva

Earth Democracy connects people in circles of care, cooperation, and compassion instead of dividing them through competition and conflict, fear and hatred.

Tao Te Ching

We shape clay into a pot, but it is the emptiness inside that holds whatever we want.

Artur Schnabel

The notes I handle no better than many pianists. But the pauses between the notes - ah, that is where the art resides.

Albert Einstein

The true value of a human being can be found in the degree to which he has attained liberation from the self.

Carl Jung

The most terrifying thing is to accept oneself completely.

Robert M. Pirsig

So the thing to do when working on a motorcycle, as in any other task, is to cultivate the peace of mind which does not separate one's self from one's surroundings. When that is done successfully, then everything else follows naturally. Peace of mind produces right values, right values produce right thoughts. Right thoughts produce right actions and right actions produce work which will be a material reflection for others to see of the serenity at the center of it all.

Zen Saying

When an ordinary [person] attains knowledge, [ze/she/he] is a sage; when a sage attains understanding, [ze/she/he] is an ordinary man.

Tao Te Ching

The more you know the less you understand.

Miles Davis

Don't play what's there; play what's not there (which one biographer said was sometimes articulated as "play the space between the notes").

Miles Davis

You have to play a long time to be able to play like yourself.



The Six Commitments



The primary aim of *Leadership Zen* is to create positive change in the world by helping others to grow as individuals and ultimately, help others to do the same. Leaders create change, which by definition requires the ability to see things differently than they exist today, to communicate that possibility to others who can help make a difference, and to have the courage to act upon it to make it a reality.

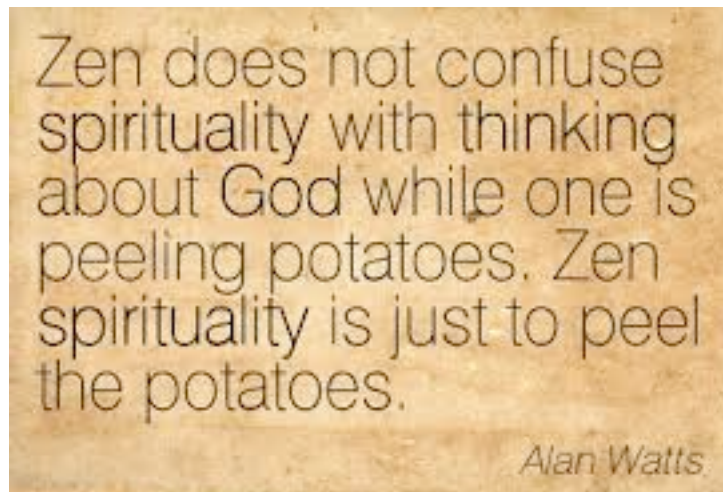
To do this, leaders must commit themselves to a difficult but exciting journey of self-discovery and self-awareness that will allow them to overcome some of the challenges that evolution and the pressures of society place on us all. There is no road map to do this, no series of steps for formula that will suddenly get you there, but by embracing certain key values as a leader, you can position yourself for long-term success in both your personal and professional lives that can lead to dynamic change. These are called the *Six Commitments of Leadership Zen*, and are as follows:

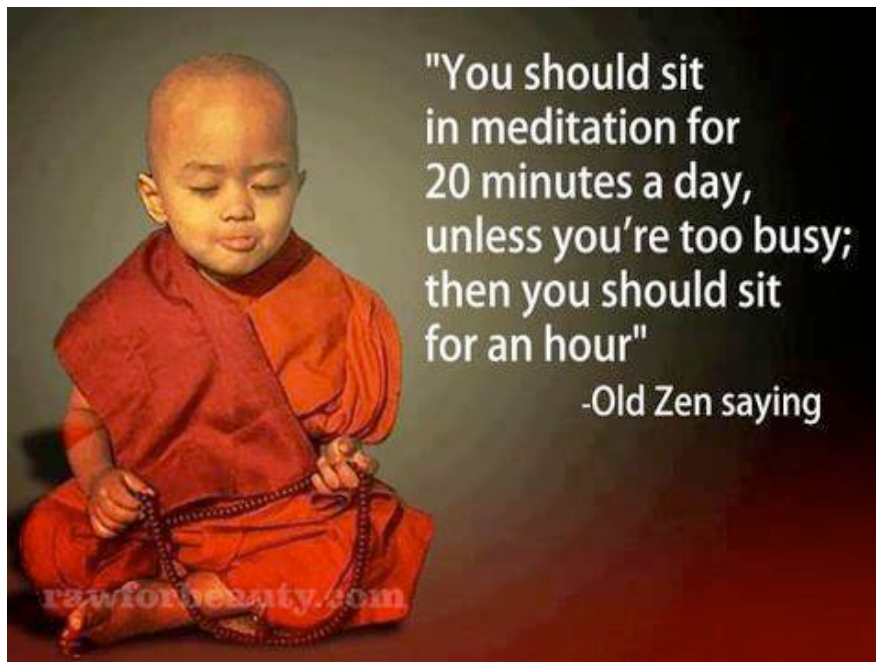
- **Authenticity** – leading through the real you, a combination of self-awareness, self-acceptance, and integrity
- **Curiosity** – the ability to challenge perception and wonder what can be, not what is or is not
- **Vision** – articulating a compelling picture of change, enlisting followers and creating momentum
- **Passion** – a visible and exciting connection to the change you are trying to bring to life, one that invests others in bringing to life
- **Courage** – having the strength of your convictions and your values, doing the right thing even in the face of criticism
- **Humility** – remembering we don't do it alone, valuing your followers and celebrating combined success

Embracing and practicing these Commitments you will find yourself able to unlock significant potential in yourself and others, everywhere you go.

Every good house needs a strong foundation. Great houses need an even stronger one. Please explore the meanings of these Six Commitments and how they work together to make you a more complete leader.

Welcome to *Leadership Zen*. Make the choice to be great.





Online Authenticity Assessment*

Please answer the following questions using a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree)

Score

Intuition

- 1) I listen to my inner voice more than the voices of others before I act
- 2) I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses, dominant traits and behavioral preferences
- 3) I am aware of how I am perceived by others around me

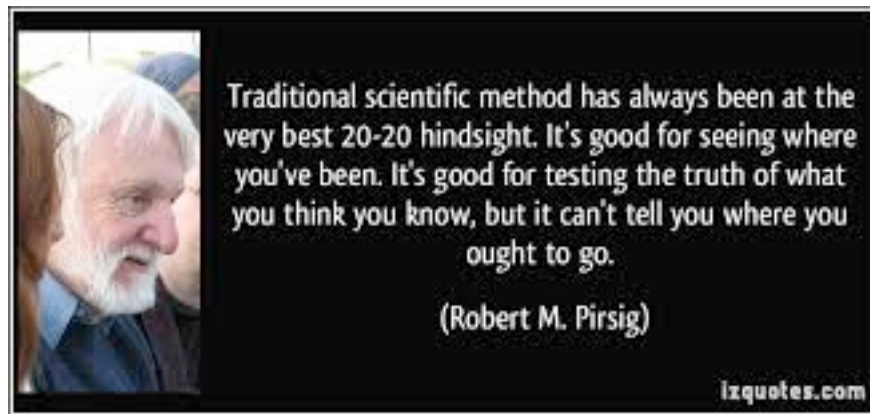
Inspiration

- 4) I act from my own vision more than I look for outside motivation to do so
- 5) The value of my goals is best measured on my own terms rather than the perceptions of others

Integrity

- 6) I live according to my values, beliefs, and desires rather than what is expected of me by others
- 7) I prefer to act according to my beliefs rather than adopt personas to achieve rewards and/or to avoid punishment
- 8) I adopt lifestyle choices (wealth, fashion, etc.) because they fit me rather than because they are in favor with my peers

*This inventory comes from the following web site: <http://www.leadershipzen.org/>
 The assessment is a modified version of Michael H. Kernis and Brian M. Goldman's "Authenticity Inventory" (2006) and has been tailored to fit the Leadership Zen Model.



10 “Flips” from *The Zen Leader* by Ginny Whitelaw

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1. From Coping to Transforming | 2. From Tension to Extension |
| 3. From <i>Or</i> to <i>And</i> | 4. From “Out There” to “In Here” |
| 5. From Playing to Your Strengths to Strengthening Your Play | 6. From “It’s All About Me” to “I’m All About it” |
| 7. From Driving Results to Attracting the Future | 8. From Controlling to Connecting |
| 9. From Local Self to Whole Self | 10. From Delusion to Awakening |

Implications for Student Affairs Professionals

1. Lean into a Zen approach by doing some quiet meditation and focusing on what is important to you and who you are.
2. Practice releasing control and invite others to meet you in the space between.
3. Listen more deeply.
4. Become conscious of how your mind calls you to complete projects and takes you impatiently away from practicing leadership both in the moment and with (rather than through) others.
5. Practice discerning voice: your own, others, and ego’s.
6. Breathe.
7. And probably most important...truth won’t be found in reading what we just listed here as “implications.” The best we can do is point the way, the journey has to be yours. In Zen, the words we write may give the illusion that we “know”. However, according to the Zen Proverb, “Those who know don’t tell and those who tell don’t know”.

Recommended Resources

Web Sites:

<http://samkillermann.com/10-zen-stories/>
<http://www.leadershipzen.org/>

Magazines:

[Shambhala Sun](#)
[Tricycle; The Buddhist Review](#)
[Turning Wheel](#)
[Inquiring Mind](#)

Books and Articles:

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- Adyashanti (2006). *Emptiness dancing*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True, Inc.
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- Suzuki, D. T. (1994). *Essays in Zen Buddhism*. New York: Grove Press.
- Wheatley, M. (2006). *Leadership and the new science: Discovering order in a chaotic world*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
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