

# FOREVER ACTIVE

PERSONALIZED FITNESS AND WELLNESS FOR MEN 50+

## Zen and its Teachings

### Introduction

Zen is a school of Mahayana Buddhism that originated in China.

To have a Zen Mind means, to be in a state of calm attentiveness in which one's actions are guided by intuition rather than by conscious effort.

The mind is only focused on the present moment and not fixed on or occupied by any inner or outer thought or emotion. In other words, when you are in "Zen Mode," you are mentally under control, focused only on the present without distractions. You have a clear and relaxed mind.

Do you feel you have a Zen Mind? It is difficult to feel Zen in our hustle bustle world. When is the last time you felt calm and emotionally under control? For many of us it has been a long time.

This newsletter will present 10 invaluable Zen teachings to help you develop your inner self and help you reclaim control of your life.



### Did you Know?

#### 6 Ways to Unearth your Inner Zen

##### 1. Take Control of your Thought Life

- The way we think directly affects how we feel. When we allow our thoughts to control our emotions and attitudes, we become unbalanced and start to move away from our center.

##### 2. Clear the Clutter

- Clutter plays a major role in making us feel stressed out, anxious, and scattered. Wherever there is clutter you'll find chaos. It is important to release everything from your life that hinders you .

##### 3. Replace Bad Habits with Good Habits

- If it is impeding us from feeling good about ourselves, then we need to replace that bad habit with a good one. When we continue in our bad habits we lose confidence in the self.

##### 4. Strive to Resolve Conflict Quickly

- Nothing darkens our soul more than letting conflict go unresolved. Conflict stems primarily from pride and anger. If we can make it a point to resolve conflict quickly, we will not have to sacrifice our peace of mind.

##### 5. Set your Sights on Reaching Your Goals

- Focus, focus, focus on what makes you happy. If you are unsure of what makes you happy, focus some more.

# 10 Zen Teachings

## 1. Empty your Cup



Story - A professor went to visit a famous Zen master. While the master poured tea the professor talked about Zen. The master poured the visitor's cup to the brim and kept pouring. The astonished professor said, "What are you doing?" and the Zen master replied, "You are like this cup, how can I show you Zen unless you first empty the cup?"

Lesson - Open up your mind and your heart. Be willing to leave what you already know, emptying your cup, so you are open to learning from others with different perspectives, more skill and experience than yourself. Be a good listener, accept corrections and act on them.

## 2. The Monk and the Mirror

Story - There was a monk who always carried a mirror. He was asked one day why he did so. He replied, "I use it in times of trouble. I look into it and it shows me the source of my problems as well as the solution to my problems."

Lesson - You have to be accountable for who you become, never blame others, but focus instead on what you can do better.



## 3. The Burden- Let it Go



Story - Two monks were returning to their monastery in a heavy rain storm. An elderly woman was unable to cross the road. The elder monk approached and carried the woman across the road. Later in the evening the astonished younger monk said to the elder monk, "Sir, as monks we are not allowed to touch women, yet you carried that woman across the road." The elder monk replied, "Yes, but I left her on the other side of the road, and you are still carrying her."

Lesson - Stay in the present tense, focus on the moment and not the end result. Learn to quickly let go of all downfalls, defeats and disappointments but rather give yourself credit and celebrate for what you have done well.

## 4. Maybe

Story - A farmer was given a wild horse to train so he could plow his fields. His neighbours said to him, "What good future you have." The farmer said, "We will see." The next day his son tried to tame the wild horse but fell off and broke his leg. The neighbour said, "How unfortunate that your son broke his leg." The farmer said, "We will see." The next day military officials came to the village to draft young men into the army. Seeing the son's leg broken, they passed on him. The neighbour said, "Once again you have good fortune." The farmer said, "We will see."

Lesson - Don't be quick to judge events as good or bad. Don't become too high or too low when events unfold but rather stay level headed. Always make the best of the present situation.



## 5. Focus on the goal

Story - An earnest Zen student approached his master and asked, "If I work really hard how long will it take for me to find Zen?" The master replied, "Ten years." The student then said, "What if I work very very hard." The master replied. "Twenty years." The student said, "But what if I work very very, very hard?" The master replied, "Thirty years." Confused and frustrated, the student said, "Each time I say I am going to work harder you say it is going to take me longer to find Zen. Why do you say that? The master replied, "When you only have one eye on the goal, you only have one eye on the path."

When both eyes don't work together and focus on the same point in space, it leads to one or both eyes not seeing clearly.

## 6. The Frog and the Centipede

Story - A frog meets a centipede and after watching it for awhile says, “that is unbelievable how you can walk so fast and coordinate all those legs of yours? How do you do it? I only have four and find it difficult.” At this, the centipede stops, thinks about it, and finds himself unable to leave again.

Lesson – Overthinking leads to confusion and underperforming. Trust your skills, free your mind.



## 7. Breathing



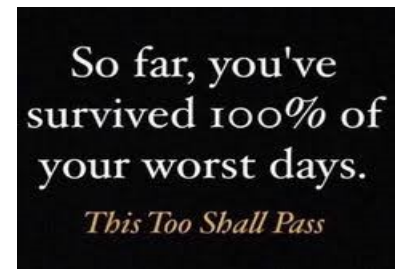
Story – After a year in the monastery a Zen monk complained, “All I have learned about is breathing.” After five years in the monastery, the monk complained, “All I have learned about is breathing.” When he reached enlightenment, the elderly monk and smiled and said, “Finally, I have learned about breathing.”

Lesson – Learn and practice the finer points of deep breathing. Breathing can become shallow when you feel stressed. Simply prolonging exhalation, regardless of the inhalation length, promotes the relaxation response.

## 8. It will Pass

Story – A student went to his meditation teacher and said, “My meditation is horrible! I feel distracted or my legs ache or I am falling asleep. It is just horrible!” “It will pass” said the teacher matter-of-factly. A week later, the student came back to his teacher and said, “My meditation is wonderful! I feel so aware, so peaceful, so alive! It’s just wonderful!” “It will pass,” the teacher replied matter-of-factly.

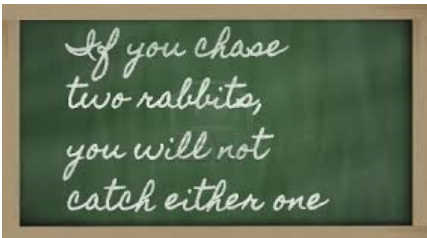
Lesson – Everything is temporary. Life is always in a state of flux. Don’t panic when you are not doing well; it will soon end. During those times when everything is flowing along perfectly, ride it out as long as you can. Everything passes.



## 9. Chasing Two Rabbits

Story – A martial arts student approached his teacher with a question. “I’d like to improve my knowledge of martial arts. In addition to learning from you, I’d like to study with another teacher in order to learn another style. What do you think?” The master answered, “The hunter who chases two rabbits catches neither one.”

Lesson – The path to success and happiness is taken one step, one day at a time. Do not get ahead of yourself or try two things at once. If you try to do everything you will end up with nothing. Trust your skills and training and focus all your energy and effort on doing one good thing at a time.



## 10. The Statue

Story – A young man had a clay statue, a family heirloom. However, he always wanted a bright shiny gold one instead. When he saved enough money, he had his statue covered with gold. However, the gold plating did not stick to the clay very well so he had it gold plated again and again and again. One day his grandfather returned from a long journey. The young man was excited to show his grandfather how he made the clay statue into a gold one. However, he was embarrassed because clay was showing through in many spots. The grandfather smiled, held the statue lovingly and gently rubbed it and gradually dissolved some of the clay and underneath a bright yellow colour shone through. The grandfather stated, “Many years ago, before your time, the statue must have fallen into the mud and was coated with it. Your statue has been gold from the very beginning.”

Lesson – The key to success and happiness in your life lies within you. If you can spot greatness in others, then you already have some of that greatness in yourself. Remove self doubt and other mental interference and let your gold shine through. You have an inner greatness waiting to be unleashed. Tap into your potential.

