

It's All in the Details

IN ZEN PRACTICE we give attention to the details of our lives. If we're not interested in the details, we are likely to find that as we give our attention to some thing or person, interest will develop. If you're painting, for instance, details such as the quality of the paint, the shape and width of the brush, fluidity and thickness of the paint, how it is applied—all these details are essential.

In the zendo when asked to pay attention to the sounds that your feet make or the sounds made fluffing your cushion, you begin to notice many things: how you carry your weight on your feet and hips, how the foot meets the tatami mat, what part of the foot comes down first, how the weight shifts from one foot to the other, tension or relaxation in the body, what creates sound as you dust your cushion, how we can move the hand across cloth silently. If you take this on as a practice, you will notice all kinds of things about your body, and the infinite details of your movements become quite interesting. But if someone doesn't ask us to notice the sounds we are making, we don't notice any of this.

THE TRUTH OF THIS LIFE

Being available for what we are doing requires that we allow ourselves to come into the present moment. To do this we abandon desire and regret. Desire means the future, regret means the past. In order to be available for the present moment we give up past and future. See if you can do that, if your present activity, your present breath, is compelling enough to draw you out of your planning mind, out of your past mind.

To be willing to be in the present moment you have to know in your own body that life is passing quickly, that we're all going to die. This is called the truth of impermanence. Next you have to know that the seed of completeness and wholeness is inside of you. Finally, you need to know that you are your own teacher. You have to really come to rest in your heart, to give your complete attention to yourself.