

Money and the Middle Way

At the Zen Center, we don't charge for the teachings. Since we began, that has been our one firm, unchanging policy. And, from the beginning of our Center, people have regularly expressed concern that without being charged, people won't pay.

Three things are true about that for me. 1) I don't believe it. I am convinced that we are far more generous when we're allowed to be, than when we're required to be. 2) People will support what is meaningful to them. There is no reason for people to have to pay for something that hasn't benefited them. 3) If people don't find this work meaningful or beneficial, and don't support it, we won't be able to continue and we'll stop.

We cannot and we will not attempt to sell our spiritual practice. It cannot be sold and it cannot be bought. The Teachings are freely given and those who receive benefit are welcome to support those who offer the teaching in any way they are able.

“So how much should I give?” (The inevitable question.)

The answer: Whatever you can. Whenever you can. If supporting this work is seen as a form of “payment for services rendered” point of view, then when you have no money, you will believe you can't do the work. Well, the time when you have no money might just be the time you most need to do the work!

A rule of thumb we've always offered folks is that there is a “right” amount for you to give. If you give too much, you'll feel taken advantage of. If you give too little, you'll feel guilty. Somewhere between those points is the middle way... and notice, it is constantly changing! One time, \$5 is too much, another time, \$500 is not enough.

Now, this policy of ours has resulted in a strange, extremely erroneous assumption on the part of a lot of people not intimately involved with the Zen Center. People assume that we don't charge because we have plenty of money. As an example of how untrue that is, one July, we dipped down to \$166 in the bank!!

So, does what each of us does matter? Absolutely. And we must continue to know that we are doing the very best we can do in each moment. And together, we are continuing to do this work.

Gasshō
Cherí