

Symposium | Psychotherapy : [Symposium 70] Approaches to the clients' 'everyday life' in psychotherapy and its links to 'mental liveliness'

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[Symposium 70] Approaches to the clients' 'everyday life' in psychotherapy and its links to 'mental liveliness'

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[SY-70-04] Settling the Body, the Breath, and the Mind: *Zazen* Meetings as Group Therapy

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Neuroscientific research has mainly focused on the individual therapeutical benefits of *zazen* or seated meditation. In this paper, we will show that Zen practice does not consist merely of *zazen* and that *zazen* is not merely an individual practice. We will do this by analyzing *Recommendations for Zazen Meetings*, written by Yamada Mumon and Shibayama Zenkei. In this text, Yamada and Shibayama explain how to organize *zazen* meetings. According to them, *zazen* meetings include not only the collective practice of *zazen*, but also other interrelated practices like one-on-one encounters with the teacher, dharma lectures, chanting scriptures, tea ceremony, meal etiquette, and manual labor. Furthermore, they re-think *zazen* meetings as a form of group therapy, while arguing that these meetings have a special characteristic individual psychotherapy lacks: it allows a practitioner to expand himself to include others. When the participants bring their minds on a single thing, Yamada and Shibayama explain, their individual selves are absorbed in the collective self. Through this experience, the individual's concern will begin to head not only towards himself but also towards others. At this stage, it is advisable to assign a *koān* to a practitioner, so that he can discover the individual that encompasses the whole, that is, his true nature, through one-on-one encounters with his teacher. This continuous discovery, Yamada and Shibayama argue, is a truly healing experience. Finally, we will argue that a multidisciplinary perspective that combines history, anthropology, and neurobiology is necessary to determine when and how *zazen* meetings began to be understood as group therapy and to determine whether and how they can help an individual to expand himself and include others and transcend his ordinary self.