**Zen Master Gives Students a Lesson in Zazen**

If you’re looking for a healthy way to boost your focus, reduce anxiety, improve your immune system and have a more restorative sleep, then zazen meditation might be a technique you should incorporate in your daily routine.

Zen teacher Debra Seido Martin visited Whitman earlier this month and held two Zen meditation workshops in the Spirituality Room of Prentiss Hall. The workshops were co-sponsored by ASWC, WEB and the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life.

During the workshops, Martin taught eager Zen novices more about zazen aka Zen meditation. The workshops covered body postures, proper breathing, mindfulness and the purpose of zazen.

“Even though we think we have to keep being ‘on’ because we have so much to do, we're more effective when we can stop, put down what we're doing, relax, come into the present moment and return to the task at hand,” Martin said.

Included in the workshop was a discussion on basic Buddhist teachings on the nature of the mind and lessons on how to develop focus.

Martin, a Soto Zen Lay teacher, psychotherapist and organic farmer, received dharma transmission in 2009 and currently maintains a therapeutic practice titled [Open Field Therapy](https://www.openfieldtherapy.org/) in Eugen, Oregon.

Originating in China, Zen meditation is practiced by non-Buddhists from different religious and cultural backgrounds. Martin said Zen is an open unstructured meditation that is done in silence and doesn’t attempt to achieve states like peacefulness.

“It teaches ‘non-opposition’ to whatever is happening, which paradoxically leads to more calm and peacefulness,” she said.

During the process of meditation, one might become open to unpleasant direct body experiences such as fear, sadness or loneliness. However, by just sitting, the meditation points to a deeper wisdom that reveals the ego’s sense of separation from the flow of life, and instead, realizes the depth of our own interdependence, Martin said.

But how can someone pack zazen into an already jam-packed schedule?

Use natural transitions to pause and take a few minutes to center the mind before a class, while walking or even before drinking the first cup of coffee or at dinnertime, Martin said.

“This might look like closing the laptop for a few minutes, sitting upright with the body, and lowering the eyes.” she said. “One can then turn attention to the breath and perhaps all the sound in the room, letting go of ruminating thoughts, and noticing all the senses that connect us to the present moment - touch, smell, sound and even taste.”

Another way to incorporate zazen into your daily routine is to join a local meditation club or meditate with a friend. Most serious practitioners devote 20 – 40 minutes a day in silent meditation.

“Once one feels the benefits of bringing calm to life and getting in touch with what's most essential in any one moment, it's not so hard to continue,” Martin said.