

Reconciling Clarity, Realizing Stillness

As both the pursuit of clarity and the promise of stillness, Zen can be depicted as a three-legged stool, where the legs are:

1. Instruction
2. Engagement, and
3. Practice.

Instruction: Jodo instruction aligns with the Zen master Joshu Sasaki's teaching of clarity. Sasaki so often taught that *"clarity is not a state and is not fixed. It is an activity that inevitably separates and reunites."* (Surely a bit of a riddle - one that can be solved with the help of Jodo.)

Engagement: Next, engagement is the activity of assessing one's progress in understanding Sasaki's riddle. For Sasaki, there were sanzen - one-on-one meetings with each student. In Jodo, our teacher is the attacking sword. In a flash, one's understanding of clarity is put to the test.

Practice: Practice is the activity of reconciling the gap exposed by engagement. *"How is it that I'm not able to respond spontaneously? Where is my attention at the moment of attack? Where is my attention at this moment? Who wants to know?"* And on and on. And, of course, zazen is the primary tool of practice.

And finally, a typical Jodo training session is:

- 45 minutes of zazen
- 45 minutes of sword training
- 60 minutes of Jodo

With 15 minutes of prep and 15 minutes of straightening, students should expect to spend 3 hours of continual practice at AZC.

Your Instructor

Jim Redel has been a member of AZC almost from its inception in 1989. And during this time, he had attended over a dozen *sesshin* (7-day silent retreats) with the late Zen master Joshu Sasaki. These retreats entailed countless hours of zazen, sitting in on nearly 100 *teisho* (formal talks) on the topic of stillness and clarity and engaging in another 350+ *sanzen* (one-on-one meetings).



In addition, Jim has studied and taught both Aikido and Jodo for over 30 years.

Even More Possibilities

Ultimately, your progress in the realization of stillness is paramount. We are always open to small groups forming and proposing additional practice times.

Always happy to entertain these and other ideas. See the email addresses below.

Questions?

We've tried to cover a lot of ground here. But, as there will undoubtedly be questions that you may have, Email is probably best:

- AZC: officeazc@gmail.com, or
- Jim: zenoptimism505@gmail.com



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Sword Staff Zen

Reconciling Clarity
Realizing Stillness

2024
Training
Resumes in
March



In a nutshell ...

Deepen your understanding of clarity and stillness by combining regular sitting practice with training in the traditional Japanese sword and staff. Jodo (the way of the short staff) dates back to the 1600s and features the staff (or walking stick) in defense of the traditional Japanese sword.

And, as you alternate between the role of attacking sword (teacher) and defending staff (student) in no time, you will become proficient in both weapons, inevitably understanding that the goal of Jodo is the goal of Zen - the manifestation of stillness as clarity, certainty, and spontaneity.



Sitting, Tea, Kinhin, and Now Jodo?

It may seem much, but the intent here is not to add yet more to an existing practice but to offer a separate path to stillness.

We recognize there will be those of you who are happy with your current sitting practice. And there will be those who feel that zazen and the discussion group are sufficient. But now, Jodo training offers you the chance to test your current understanding of clarity and stillness all in real time.

And as a plus, training is currently offered on both Sunday and Thursday mornings.

Skills and Forms, Sword and Staff

Like most martial arts, Jodo practice comprises two distinct components - *kihon waza* (basic skills) and *kata* (forms), and your training will incorporate plenty of each. And what makes Jodo especially rewarding is that you will be mastering two completely different styles of weapons at the same time.

You will start by learning and perfecting the basics. We dedicate four sessions to each *kihon waza*. And as each of the twelve is perfected independently of the others, [you can begin your Jodo training about every four weeks throughout the year.](#)

Finally, after mastering a handful of the *kihon waza*, you will begin studying the twelve *kata* that are the heart of Jodo. And it is here that the teachings of clarity and stillness will start to come alive.



You can get there - as so many have throughout the last 400 years.

Possibilities

Lastly, some members may want to explore advanced training in one or the other of these weapons. So if there is interest, there is always the possibility of future, concentrated study in the staff or the wooden sword alone.

Who Can Take These Classes?

Jodo training is open to all, although, in the event of full classes, preference may be given to regular AZC members. Jodo training is suitable for men and women of all ages - and mature teens. No prior martial arts experience is necessary.

Note that all weapons training is outdoors, although we may move to the AZC zendo for some zazen sessions.

When and Where?

Classes run from March through November, weather permitting. Individual class times may change throughout the year, so check the AZC website for the latest. All Jodo practice is held at AZC.

Suggested Donations

- Jodo is free for fully active AZC members who regularly contribute to the center through samu (Saturday work periods) or as officers in the zendo.
- For other AZC members, there is a suggested donation of \$45 for each 4-week session
- For non-members, the suggested donation is \$95

Equipment

Naturally, Jodo training will require some gear. A typical kit will include the following:

- Bokken (wooden sword)
- Jo (short staff)
- Hakama and keikogi (training uniform)

For your first few sessions, we will provide all of this equipment. And as you continue your training, you will naturally start accumulating your own.