

Everyday Zen Tassajara Sangha Week Retreat
May 14-19, 2024

Spiritual Friendship

A Week of Practice, Reflection, Stories and Fun
With Jaune Evans and Susan Moon



photo by Robert Harrison

**“Just as the dawn is forerunner of the sunrise,
so good friendship is the forerunner
for the arising of The Noble Eightfold Path.”
The Buddha**

**What have you learned from a spiritual friendship?
Is there such a thing as a friendship that is not spiritual?
Is a spiritual friendship egalitarian?
Can each person serve as the teacher and supporter and student of the other?**

We will follow the Tassajara summer practice schedule with all other guests at that time.

Here is the registration link for the [Everyday Zen Sangha Week](#).

Our theme will be spiritual friendship.

During the course of our time together, each person will have a chance to speak to the group to tell a story about their own experience of spiritual friendship, and hopefully describe a particular friendship. So we'll probably have a few speakers each day.

Some possible questions to address:

What have you learned from a spiritual friendship? Is there such a thing as a friendship that is not spiritual? Is a spiritual friendship egalitarian? Can each person serve as the teacher and supporter and student of the other?

We may work with the mantra: "I am your friend, and I will accompany you."

What does "accompaniment" mean in the context of spiritual friendship?

What agreements might you make with a person who is your spiritual friend? Might you enter into a spoken agreement to follow certain ethical guidelines, particularly in the realm of right speech?

Each time we meet we may do some or all of these activities:

Hear life stories from several people.

Discuss what came up, in the whole group and/or in twos or threes.

Discuss some short readings on spiritual friendship that Jaune and I will provide.

Have each speaker or a listener choose and write down a sentence from each person's presentation.

As we go through our time together, prepare a ceremony in praise of spiritual friendship for the last day, perhaps using the sentences from the various presentations. It could be a dramatic reading, a play, a poetry reading, and accompaniment project of some kind...

Explore the idea of accompaniment. We may be able to find ways to practice accompaniment while we are together at Tasajara.

Perhaps each day, the people in our sangha group could draw names out of a hat and each person could have a new spiritual friend for each day—somebody to pay some special attention to.

Find ways to bring some humor into our practice.

- 1. Being present to another person's pain; it is not about taking away the pain.**
- 2. Going to the wilderness of the soul with another human being; it is not about thinking you are responsible for finding the way out.**
- 3. Honoring the spirit; it is not about focusing on the intellect.**
- 4. Listening with the heart; it is not about analyzing with the head.**
- 5. Bearing witness to the struggles of others; it is not about judging or directing these struggles.**
- 6. Walking alongside; it is not about leading.**
- 7. Discovering the gifts of sacred silence; it is not about filling up every moment with words.**
- 8. Being still; it is not about frantic movement forward.**

9. Respecting disorder and confusion; it is not about imposing order and logic.

10. Learning from others; it is not about teaching them.

11. Compassionate curiosity; it is not about expertise.