
The Way of Zen Summary PDF Cheatsheet —

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?? 1. Zen is Taoism: The ancient Chinese philosophy that values spontaneous intuition over intellect

Zen is as much from Taoism as Buddhism. Taoism is an ancient Chinese philosophy, started by Lao Tzu with his book Tao Te Ching. It emphasizes naturalness and spontaneous action, guided by our greater intelligence of intuition. This is outside of conventional knowledge—outside thinking with words, symbols, and labels.

? 2. Escape Social Convention: Zen starts with disillusionment of typical goals, leaving a wonderful emptiness

Like Taoism, Zen can't really be described in positive terms. So learning Zen begins with clearing our illusions, that come from social convention. Illusions like: happiness lies in a promising future and an improved reputation. In the end, we're left with a marvellous emptiness.

? 3. Buddha's Awakening: Around 500 BC, Siddhartha Gautama awakened under a tree and began teaching others how to end suffering

Buddha lived around 500 BC. He was born a wealthy prince, but became a poor monk. He followed Hindu spiritual disciplines and teachings like moksha, samsara and maya. After he became awakened, his own teachings started with the Four Noble Truths: 1. There is suffering, 2. grasping causes it, 3. the end of suffering is letting go of grasping, 4. and the Noble Eightfold Path to ending suffering.

?? 4. The Growth of Zen: Indian Mahayana Buddhism came to China and combined with Taoism

Mahayana Buddhism contains a greater number of techniques than the earlier Theravada. It was brought to China from India around 400 or 500 AD, by either Bodhidharma or Kumarajiva. Zen Buddhism was born as Chinese Buddhist monks added ideas from Taoism, and by 900 AD it had become very popular. In 1200 AD Zen came to Japan, and continues there today with the Rinzai and Soto schools.

? 5. Sit Just to Sit: Za-zen meditation is not “practice” and has no purpose

Za-zen, or sitting meditation, is sitting in a comfortable and upright position. There is no real technique, you simply sit and let all impressions pass by without grasping onto them. Done right, there should be no end in mind while you're doing it, but za-zen can help you see the world more as it is.

? 6. Zen Arts: The flavour of Zen can be seen in its paintings, poetry and tea ceremony

Zen action follows the Tao principle of being effortless and spontaneous, without hurry or hesitation. Sumi-e paintings show spontaneous brushwork and appreciation of nature. Haiku poems are incredibly simple, but can provoke vivid mental imagery. The Cha-no-yu tea ceremony is given full

attention, which elevates an everyday chore to a timeless moment.

This is just a sample!

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