

Mental Health

Mental health can make or break Japan for you.

Some things are easy here, like finding a convenience store, no matter where you live, or finding excuses never to leave your kotatsu in the winter/air conditioning in the summer. Unfortunately, for many staying safe and sane aren't necessarily one of those. Here are some tips and resources that could help you this year.

Mental Health Support Lines

Remember that your first line of support can always be your Prefectural Advisors (PAs)

Prefectural Advisors: PA's are perfect for local support, and can be your first option in a crisis. They're wonderful and kind, and at least consider them before heeding a secondary resource!

Jason Shon: 080-6453-1461

Nicole Gallagher: 090-8562-7922

CLAIR JET Line: 03-5213-1729

- Staffed by Program Coordinators (the people who ran your Tokyo Orientation), the JET Line runs **Monday-Friday, 9AM-5:45PM** and has two main roles, which are listed here along with examples of each (though your reasons for calling obviously can be different than those listed)

Counselling	Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workplace information Mental Health Culture Shock Harassment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JET Program terms and Conditions JET Program Administration General Info about Japan

Peer Support Group (PSG) 050-5534-5566

- Run by JETs, for JETs, PSG serves as a listening and support service from 8PM-7AM every day of the week
- One of the main differences from the CLAIR JET line and PSG is that PSG is 100% **confidential and anonymous**. Your name and personal information will not be asked for, and while CLAIR is also confidential, it is not necessarily anonymous, as if you break the law or your contract, they may be required to enquire further or make a report
- Run by JET volunteers, its purpose is to provide an ear and support when you're in need. Some possible reasons to call include:

• Counselling	• Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling lonely and isolated culture shock Problems at school Legal Issues Health issues Drug and Alcohol abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JET Program terms and Conditions Need to find a English-speaking doctor or professional General Info about Japan Mental Health Referrals.

- PSG believes that no problem is too small, so feel free to contact them with whatever you need!

Tokyo English Life Line: 03-5774-0992

- Similar to the PSG Line, but operates from 9AM-11PM daily
- Is NOT JET affiliated in any way.

Other supports include friend and family back home. Sometimes all you really need is an ear to listen to, and they can be great for that!

SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder)

Some of you from the more northern parts of the English-speaking realm may scoff at Kyushu winters (I'm looking at you Canadians, Alaskans, Scottish North Highlanders), but no matter where you're from, by the time February comes around, not only have you had enough, but your mind's taken a beating as well. Here are some symptoms of SAD, and some ways to avoid it.

Hopelessness

Anxiety

Loss of energy

Social withdrawal

Oversleeping

Loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed

Appetite changes, especially a craving for foods high in carbohydrates

Weight gain

Difficulty concentrating

SAY NO TO SAD!

- Do Physical Exercise. ENDORPHINS FOR THE WIN!
- Get Outside. Ride a bike! Go see friends! Bring your dictionary to a bar and study! Sometimes a change of scene can help (Bonus points if where you're going is heated)
- Light Therapy: Get a "Light Box." These aren't just UV lamps, regular light bulbs, or heat lamps, so make sure you get SAD specific ones. Just 30 minutes a day, usually in the morning, has been shown to help with SAD symptoms.
- Diet. SAY NO TO CONBINI'S! Eat well, cook your own food, and failing that, make sure you keep your supply of fruit and veggies up. You'll feel better about yourself and your lifestyle.
- Counselling: Professional help can be a good idea, especially as a last resort!

Culture Shock

You've heard of this baby. It's a loaded term, and packs the power to make or break your stay in an incredible country. It *will* hit you, and hopefully this guide will help you roll with the punches and show culture shock you're not to be messed with!

Culture Shock is a four-stage cycle triggered by difficulty adjusting to a new culture. There's a trend, but most people go through these different phases a number of times. This may force you to re-examine the assumptions and social behaviors which were once thought absolute, and may throw you off and disorient you.

Knowledge is power, so here goes:

The four stages of Culture Shock

1. Initial Euphoria (Honeymoon Period)

Anything new is intriguing and exciting.

"AAAAHHHH, LOOK AT ALL THE VENDING MACHINES. MMMM SQUID. GIVE ME DRIED SQUID. ALL THE

CHILDREN ARE SOOOOO FRIENDLY.”

2. Irritation and Hostility (Culture Shock)

Feel homesick and have a negative attitude towards the host culture.

“Why is everyone staring at me??? They’re all so rude, why can’t they just be normal, like the backwoods Canadian farmers/ West Coast American hippies/ London Metropolitan aristocrats I grew up with.”

3. Gradual Adjustment

Start to adjust and the culture seems more familiar.

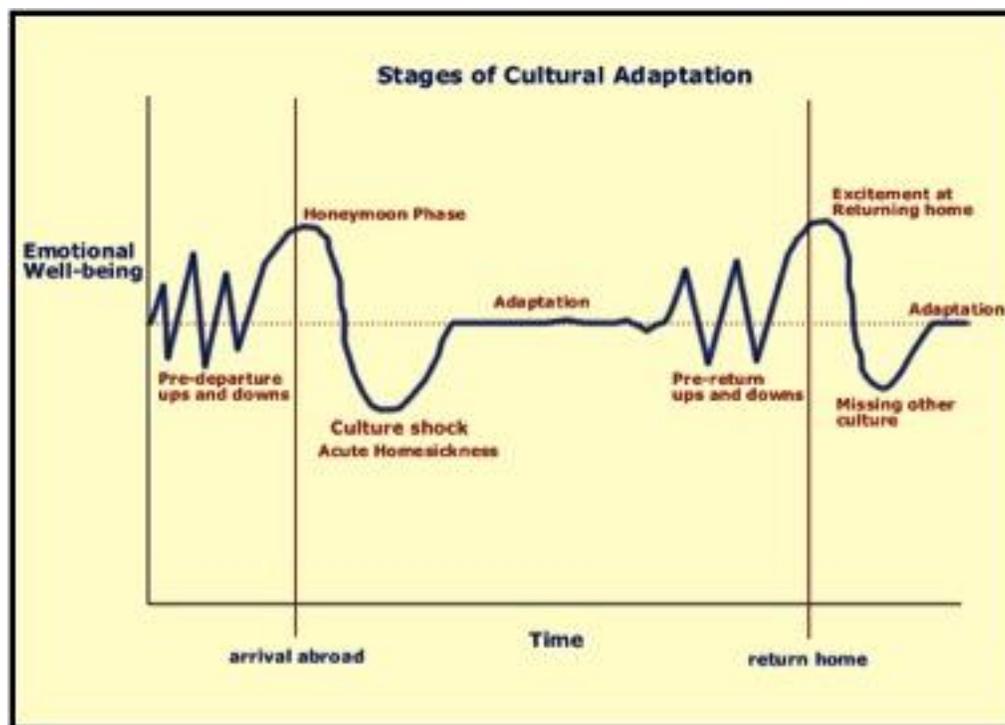
“The other day I went for udon and rocked out that all-kanji menu like it was my job! I own this city, and I’m going to write a kick-butt blog post as soon as I get back from *ikebana* practice”

4. Adaptation and Biculturalism

Completely adjust to the host culture and may even experience Reverse Culture Shock upon return to home country.

“I think I’m going to apply for citizenship.”

“I can’t believe I’m back in New Zealand Suburbia. Why in the world are the roads so wide? Also, I can’t believe I have been sitting in this restaurant for three minutes and no one has served me. The least they could have done was yell ‘welcome’ at the top of their lungs.”



Signs of Culture Shock

Everyone is affected differently by Culture Shock. Be aware that Culture Shock is not depression, and recognizing Culture Shock is an important step toward dealing with it.

You may experience some of the following.

Free-floating anxiety. Anxious but don't know why.

Lack of self-confidence.

Lack of energy or interest in life.

Panic attacks.

Loss of initiative and spontaneity.

Excessive anger over minor things.

Feelings of hopelessness.

Strong desire to associate with people of your own culture or nationality.

Excessive amount of time spent isolated, avoiding exposure to the foreign environment.

Coping with Culture Shock

Give it time! If you are experiencing Culture Shock, it does NOT mean that you are doing anything wrong. It is a natural reaction that many people go through.

Try the following to help deal with Culture Shock.

Eat well.

Exercise.

Try relaxation techniques like meditation, yoga, or tactical breathing.

Explore your neighborhood.

Develop your network of friends here. Don't isolate yourself.

Don't cut yourself off from the Japanese community around you.

Keep a diary or journal. Write down why you came to Japan, and refer to those points.

Learn to say "no" to things you don't want to do and keep some time for yourself.

If a lot of your trouble is coming from the inability to speak Japanese, study!

Talk to people. Friends, family, support lines.

Physical Health

Health Insurance:

Through JET and the mandatory Japanese health plan, you are covered for 70% of all *necessary* health costs. This includes non-cosmetic dentistry, most health problems, and emergency care. Usually the 30% is small and certainly affordable, but in many cases, we also have extra JET insurance to cover the remainder in cases where costs are high. Simply show them your blue insurance card, and you will be covered!

General Hospitals

General Hospitals (byouin) in Japan are not necessarily only for emergencies and major illnesses. Japanese people may suggest going to the "hospital" when you have a cold, but they mean just to go visit the local doctor's office or any clinic. The word "hospital" has a different nuance here in Japan. You may find that your Japanese colleagues go to "hospitals" for colds, headaches, or even general sluggishness. Kumamoto City also has a variety

of specialized hospitals, such as Kinoh Hospital for bone and tissue damage and Fukuda Women's Hospital. So if something terrible or unexpected should happen, never fear, there are ALTs who have been there before you who can point you in the right direction. Most hospitals and clinics will make you a card which you must have with you when you go to see a doctor. It is used when you arrive and you get it back when you pay for your visit. Often your Health Insurance card (hokensho) is required at the same time so keep them together in your wallet if you can.

If you want medication (even for the flu), it's often cheaper to visit the doctor and get your prescription through the pharmacy, often attached to the clinic, than it is to go the drug store and pick out one yourself. Just be sure to take your Health Insurance card (hokensho) with you. A visit to the clinic to see a doctor about the flu will cost you around ¥1000 with your Health Insurance card and then approx another ¥300 to get some medication. It's cheap and easy to do and you may find that your BOE will request you visit a doctor if you don't feel well and want to take the day off. So keep those cards handy!

Japan Health Info: This is an incredible resource. They will locate an English speaking doctor in your area, for free, and can even make an appointment for you, (though that costs 1100Y). Highly recommended!

Web: <http://japanhealthinfo.com/>

Email: contact@japanhealthinfo.com

TEL: 080-4421-7477

Hospitals in Kumamoto City (with English-speaking doctors and/or staff members)

Jikei Hospital

6-1-27 Shimasaki, Kumamoto-shi 860-0073

TEL: 096-355-6131

FAX: 092-359-8221

Kokuritsu Kumamoto Hospital (Kumamoto National Hospital)

1-5 Ninomaru, Kumamoto-shi 860-0008

TEL: 096-353-6501

FAX: 096-323-7601

Kumamoto Chiiki-iryō Center (Medical Association Hospital)

5-16-10 Honjo, Kumamoto-shi 860-0811

TEL: 096-363-3311

FAX: 096-362-0222

Kumamoto Chuo Hospital (Kumamoto Central Hospital)

96-35 Tamukae Taino-shima, Kumamoto-shi 862-0965

TEL: 096-370-3111

FAX: 096-370-4017

Kumamoto Sekijūji Hospital (Kumamoto Red Cross Hospital)

2-1-1 Nagamine-machi-minami, Kumamoto-shi 862-0932

TEL: 096-384-2111

FAX: 096-384-3939

Kumamoto Shimin Hospital (Kumamoto Municipal Citizens' Hospital)

1-1-60 Koto, Kumamoto-shi 862-0909

TEL: 096-365-1711

FAX: 096-365-1712

Kumamoto Daigaku Hospital (Kumamoto University Hospital)

1-1-1 Honjo, Kumamoto-shi 860-0811

TEL: 096-344-2111

NTT Kyushu Hospital

1-17-27 Shinyashiki, Kumamoto-shi 862-0975

TEL: 096-364-6000

FAX: 096-362-5204

Saiseikai Kumamoto Hospital

5-3-1 Chikami, Kumamoto-shi 861-4193

TEL: 096-351-8000

FAX: 096-326-3045

A fantastic resource that was put together by a Kumamoto City ALT is this Google maps page with a list of all the various hospitals and clinics across the city. Some of the hospitals listed above are also on the map.

You may be able to find one that's close to you and copy and paste the name of the hospital that's given in kanji into your web browser for more information on your selected hospital.

<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=217409504738395804726.000499000d26bafa8c193&z=12>

For recommended hospitals outside of Kumamoto City, please contact your Area Leader, Prefectural Advisors, Supervisor, or someone at your school.

Optometrists

Eye exams in general are similar to your home country. You will usually be shown a series of "C's" rotated in different directions, and you will have to say or point whether it is up, down, left, or right. If you can read hiragana and katakana, there may be a "What-Character-Is-This?" exam you can take as well.

Many places that sell glasses will check your eyes for free if you buy a pair. Glasses are not covered by insurance, but they are quite reasonably priced. I got an eye exam and two sets of frames & lenses for less than 1.5 man.

Dentists

Dental care in Japan can be slightly different than what you are used to at home. Most procedures are done by dental technicians and the dentist is more of a supervisor. Also, it is common to be asked to return for multiple check-ups. Dentists may be much cheaper than dentists back at home, but some dentists will ask you to come again and again so they can get a little bit more money from the insurance. This doesn't necessarily mean they are a crooked dentist, just a difference with the system here in Japan.

Unlike medical doctors where you can just drop in for a visit, you have to make an appointment with a dentist. 70% of most dental treatments are covered by the Japanese National Health Insurance so don't forget your insurance card (hokensho). The remaining 30% is generally not covered by the supplementary JET insurance. A check up and clean will cost about ¥ 2000. There are many many dentists all over Japan, even in the deepest inaka. A dentist that has been recommended, who speaks English quite well is Dr. Fukumoto at Angel Clinic, located behind the Kumamoto City Hall. The phone number is 096-324-0070.

Ask around and someone will be happy to recommend you a good dentist nearby! Some inaka dentists even speak a little English – often enough to explain what's going on with that glamorous smile of yours!

Dermatologists

Dermatology is similar to home but with less variety. You can expect the usual questions and less of a plethora of drugs and more of a holistic approach. The cost of the treatments and medicine is extremely cheap.

Fujiki Hifuka Hospital
藤木皮膚科病院
TEL: 096-356-4112
Kumamoto-shi, Gofuku 1-21

Kokuritsu Kumamoto Byoin (General Hospital)
国立熊本病院
TEL: 096-353-6501
Kumamoto-shi, Ninomaru 1-5

Makino Hifuka Iin
牧野皮膚科医院
TEL: 096-371-8112
Kumamoto-shi, Izumi 1-1-87

Nishinohon Byoin
西日本病院
TEL: 096-380-1111
Kumamoto-shi, Hattanda 3-20-1

O Iin
黄医院
TEL: 096-354-6383
Kumamoto-shi, Shin-machi 1-7-26

For Dermatologists outside of Kumamoto City, please ask your supervisor, someone at your school, your area leader or your PA.

Women's Health in Japan

Going to the Lady Doctor in Japan is, as you'd expect, slightly different than back home. Experiences with examinations vary; mine tend to be very brief whereas others have had visits that lasted a while.

When going in for an examination, be prepared for how different it can be. Experiences vary, but it seems pretty common for the exam to be less private than you may be used to/expect— Think the doctor and at least two nurses in the room. The equipment might be a bit off putting as well, but outside of this, it is just as straightforward as it was in our home countries.

Sexual Health

Not your average birds and the bees. Some attitudes about sex and sexuality are different in Japan than in our home countries. As with most places in the world, the most important to things are to be informed and be careful! It's usually not appropriate to discuss sexual issues at school, work or in social situations. For the most part, when you first arrive and don't know people very well, as much as some people might want to know more about you, try to creatively brush off any inappropriate questions or remarks.

Condoms

Japanese condoms for men tend to be smaller than their western counterparts. You can buy them at most drug stores, convenience stores and places like the Don Quixote (ドンキホテイ) in Shimotori. Some JETs get Western-sized condoms sent from home or order them on the Internet (try www.comdomania.com, www.drugstore.com). The female condom is sold under the name "MyFemy".

The Pill

The Pill is fairly easy to obtain. It is available at private hospitals and at women's clinics. Picking up the prescription monthly is fairly easy: There is a brief consultation with the doctor ("Has anything changed?", "How are you feeling?", etc. It is not a full examination.) and your blood pressure will be measured. It is covered by your insurance and the price runs from 2,000 to 3,000 yen.

If you do not want to deal with a clinic or hospital monthly, there are other options! You may want to check out BirthControlBrands.org or see if your preferred brand is available for sale online. You can have it shipped to you, however you will need to include a written prescription from your doctor.

The Morning-After Pill

In Japan the “Morning After Pill” is officially only given in emergencies as it is viewed by many Japanese doctors as unsafe. In Japanese, it is called ‘kei kou shinin yaku’ or in katakana ‘moruingu afuta piru’. It must be taken within 72 hours after the incident. This pill is not covered by national insurance, it requires a prescription and Fukuda Women’s Hospital is one of the only places in Kumamoto willing to administer this pill.

There are English speaking doctors at Fukuda Women’s Hospital – Dr. Fukuda, Dr. Yamamoto, Dr. Hagiwara and Dr. Obaru. They are used to foreigners so it is easy to explain what you need from them. It’s located near the central post office and the Kotsu Center in central Kumamoto and the clinic is open Monday to Saturday 9:00am – 6:00pm. You cannot make an appointment ahead of time, so be prepared for a long wait. The phone number is 096-322-2995.

Pregnancy Tests

The home pregnancy test called “Clear Blue” is available from pharmacies and major drug stores for about 500 Yen. It is reportedly quite accurate and comes with English instructions.

Pregnancy

If you decide to have a baby in Japan, you need to register the pregnancy at your city/town/village office within the first month. You will be given a mother and child information booklet and the Tokyo Childbirth Education Association (see the JET Diary) has information about pregnancy and childbirth in Japan.

Abortion

Abortion seems to be the most common way of dealing with an unwanted pregnancy in Japan. It is not covered by insurance and cannot be done after the second trimester. Again, Fukuda Hospital in Kumamoto City is best for this as they are able to do abortions and the location in the city offers you anonymity.

While abortion is still a big decision for women and their partners to make, there is often minimal counseling offered at the clinic. There are dozens of counseling resources available online as well as hotlines.

HIV/AIDS and other STD Tests

The test is simple and free. It takes about 15 minutes and involves filling out a simple form and giving a blood sample (8cc or 3mL). The tests are anonymous. You need to return to the center in person a week after the test to get your results. Gynecologists and General Practitioners can also do the tests if asked but they may not be free.

Unfortunately or fortunately depending on how you look at it, there have been other people in your situation before who have left anonymous records of their experiences, so this is what they can tell us:

Getting a HIV Test at Kumamoto City Public Health Center

This is a description of the HIV test given at the Kumamoto City Public Health Center (Kumamoto-shi Hokenjo / 熊本市保健所), and is intended as a reference for non-Japanese speakers who go in for testing.

No appointment is necessary. The Health Center is open weekdays from 9am-12pm and 1pm-5pm. The centers phone number is 096-364-3185 and the address is 1-13-16 Kuhonji. There are other Public Health Centers in Kumamoto but they are only open one morning a week.

Getting there:

In Kumamoto City, take the street car to Kotsukyokumae Station. The building is on the north side of the road (the same side as Daiei, the pharmacy), and contains the Kumamoto Public Health Center (熊本市保健所). It's a grey building with 5 floors and vertical gardens in strips on the outside.

Go in and turn right at the information desk. Past the washrooms there will be an elevator. Take it to the 4th floor. Outside the elevator there will be a telephone. Pick it up, and say "HIV kensa, yonkai ni imasu" ("HIV test, I'm on the 4th floor")

Someone will come and show you to a testing room, where a counsellor will ask you to put down a nickname. This can be your name, a number, or any word at all. This is for you to use when getting your results.

At this point you can ask for syphilis and chlamydia testing as well, for which they use the same blood sample. The counsellor will inform you that the test will not pick up anything contracted in the last two months, and that the results will be in one week.

I had a nice chat with the counsellor because she was friendly, but my Japanese is limited, so I think less questions regarding sexual history were asked than might be routine.

Finally, a nurse took my blood both quickly and painlessly, and they sent me on my way.

To pick up results, you'll have to go back to the same place on a weekday between 9–11AM or 1–3PM. Just pick up the same phone, and say "HIV kekka" (Results) and someone should either come, or ask over the phone for the nickname you gave when they took blood.

A doctor will then match your sample number to your result number. I speak little Japanese, so I just gave a thumbs up and a thumbs down and said "daijobu desu ka?"

After a nice smile, a relieved and hearty thumbs up, and some bowing, I was sent on my way, both happy and disease free.

Please Note: *There is an incubation period of 8 weeks for the HIV virus, and 4 to 6 weeks for Chlamydia and Syphilis. This means that it may take up to 8 weeks from the possible exposure date for the HIV Virus to appear in your blood. So you should not go in for a test until it has been 8 weeks since the possible exposure date.

Counseling

Because the language barrier might make it difficult to receive the kind of counseling that goes along with HIV tests in other countries, you might consider calling the Japan HIV/AIDS line. It operates on Saturdays from 11:00–14:00 at (03) 5259–0256 (Tokyo#) and (0720) 43–4105 (Osaka#). They provide a safe, non-judgmental place to discuss any concerns you might have. They have trained telephone counselors who provide emotional support (pre and post HIV testing) as well as counseling, info, and referrals.

For more information on any of these topics, please contact the Prefectural Advisors.

All inquiries are confidential!

Spiritual Health

Here is a list of places of worship that is by no means comprehensive. Please ask people in your area for more information.

Protestant Churches

Ozu Christian Church, Ozu Town

Sunday 10:00am – Japanese service with simultaneous English interpretation; tea and coffee, lunch after

Kumamoto Lutheran Church, downtown Kumamoto City

5:00pm – English Bible Study; 6:00pm – Non-denominational English Worship Service; tea and fellowship after.

Miyuki Christian Fellowship, southern Kumamoto City

10:30am – Bilingual (English/Japanese) Worship Service; coffee/tea served before and lunch after.

Takamori Christ Church, Nishihara Village

Service begins at 10 am

TEL: 0967-62-0214 Web: <http://takamorchurch.sakura.ne.jp/>

Catholic Churches

Tedori Church

Uedorimachi Kumamoto-city Kumamoto

Saturday 6pm (in Japanese)

Sunday 9am, 11:30pm (in Japanese)

First Sunday of every month, 11:30 – International Mass

TEL 096-352-3030

Minamata Church

Sakuraimachi Minamata-city Kumamoto

1st & 3rd Sunday 3:00 PM

TEL 0966-62-4286

Kumamoto Baha' i Community

Regular events: Pancake Breakfast and Garden Party the 2nd Saturday of every month at 10 am.

Devotionals every Saturday at 9:30 to 10am

Games Night 1st and 3rd Sundays of every month from 6pm.

TEL: 096-235-6165

Islam

The Kumamoto International Foundation may have more current information about Islamic places of worship. Please call the Kumamoto International Foundation

TEL: 096 359-2020.

You can also try <http://islamcenter.or.jp/eng/index.html>.

Here is a Kumamoto Islamic prayer schedule:

<http://islamcenter.or.jp/salat%20timetable/Kumamototimetable.htm>

This shop provides Halal meat:

http://shop.azhar.jp/ihf/mise/index.html?bread_reset=1

Zen Buddhism

If you want to practice Zen Meditation in Kumamoto-ken, the following are foreigner friendly places.

Rinzai Zen: This is the main practice hall in Kumamoto-ken, however there are also places in Kumamoto City, Uto, Yatsushiro, Aso with meditation at various times.

Kumamoto Ningen Zen Doujo, 798-1 Miyoshi, Koushi-shi

Sitting meditation every morning at 5:30am

Sitting meditation and reading every Tuesday 7:30pm

TEL: 096-242-0263 (in Japanese)

Email: hori@kumagaku.ac.jp (in English)

Soto Zen

Shogoji Temple, 2034 Hanjaku, Kikuchi-shi, 861-1672

Sitting meditation on 2nd Sunday each month, at 9am and 1pm

TEL: 090-3730-7128

Web: www.shogoji.com

Jokokuji Temple

2-20-35 Takahira, Kumamoto-shi 860-0085

Sitting meditation, each Thursday night at 8pm

Daijizenji Temple

Kawashiri

Sitting meditation on the 3rd Sunday each month, at 10am

TEL: 096-344-7603

Zazen

Zazen is a meditative discipline performed to calm the body and mind and experience insight into the nature of existence. While the term originally referred to a sitting practice, it is now commonly used to refer to practices in any posture—try it at your desk. Alternatively, visit any of the locations listed below. It is recommended that you learn the basics of Zazen before showing up, or take a Japanese speaker to the lecture given at the temple before you start to avoid being beaten on your shoulders with a stick during the session <http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/>