

# Shinzen Young ~ Primal Feel and the Zen Keisaku - 1 of 2

00:00:00 There's a lot of research that has been done on this.

00:00:05 When I lived in Japan,

00:00:09 they would carry, to keep you awake

00:00:13 and also to sort of help you with physical discomforts,

00:00:17 but mostly to scare you into alertness,

00:00:22 they carry what's called a keisaku

00:00:25 in the Rinzai-zen tradition.

00:00:29 called a kyo-saku in the Soto-zen. It's the same Chinese characters that mean

00:00:35 wake up stick, literally. Wake, waking stick or wake up stick. But also the same

00:00:43 character that means wake up, it also means startle actually. And I used to

00:00:49 carry the keisaku and whack people and people used to carry the keisaku and

00:00:53 whack me. And when I came back to the United States, I initially moved into a

00:01:02 Vietnamese style Buddhist temple in Los Angeles, the International Buddhist

00:01:07 Meditation Center on New Hampshire in Koreatown. It's still there. And because I

00:01:15 had been in Japan and had the Zen background, I initially sort of taught in

00:01:21 the Zen mode. So I had a keisaku and I used to use it at retreats. And this is

00:01:34 way, way, way back in the 70s. Security was not, you know, the crazy fear that it is

00:01:47 now at airports and so forth. So I would actually carry the keisaku onto the

00:01:53 plane. Sometimes they'd ask, you know, at the checkpoint, sort of like, what's that?

00:02:00 Right? And I said, well, it's used for giving a Japanese massage, which is

00:02:07 true. When it's done right, and I've had the privilege of having it done right by

00:02:16 real masters. I once got sakud by a roshi, not Sasaki Roshi, a different

00:02:25 roshi, who was also a kendo master. Imagine what it would be like to be a

00:02:30 basketball being dribbled by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Okay? That's what my body

00:02:38 felt like. It was like he could dribble me at the end of the keisaku, like pick

00:02:42 me up and put me down. I mean, obviously physics laws don't allow for that, but

00:02:47 it sort of seemed like, I mean, he had that much power at the end of that thing.

00:02:53 And when it's done right, it hits on what I think is called bladder 21, which is

00:03:00 both a stimulating point and a mellowing out point at the same time. And boy, that

00:03:07 is what it does to you. Okay? It causes a shower of endorphins. It doesn't, I mean,

00:03:15 hurts a little bit, but it doesn't really like hurt the way you might think it

00:03:19 hurts. All your muscles relax, all the pain goes down right down into your toes

00:03:23 if it's done right. And you are awake. You are definitely awake. So I used to carry

00:03:34 it, you know, at IBM, at the International Buddhist Meditation Center.

00:03:39 But what I noticed is that as I began to move more into the vipassana mode,

00:03:47 I noticed that, first of all, initially people are like really scared. And then

00:03:59 they develop an addiction to it and want it. See, they could request it the way I

00:04:04 was doing it. So it's like, oh, I'm sort of fostering fear and then addiction here.  
00:04:11 And maybe, you know, it's like, well, so I just sort of got out of the habit.  
00:04:18 Years later, I discovered Sasaki Roshi, and I translated for him for five years,  
00:04:29 but didn't really study with him. But then I guess, you know, the center of  
00:04:34 gravity just gradually had a strong enough influence that I just couldn't  
00:04:39 resist. So I started to go to sessions at Mount Baldy. So it's like, by that time I  
00:04:49 meditated for quite a while. It's my first session at Mount Baldy, and they're  
00:04:53 sitting, and they bring out the kesaka, right? They walk in a very menacing,  
00:05:03 threatening way, intentionally, with a kind of mincing pace that sort of like  
00:05:09 gives you the impression at any instant they're gonna turn, they're gonna  
00:05:13 suddenly turn around and beat the living crap out of you, okay? Now, mind you, it  
00:05:21 feels good, okay? And I've had it done to me, and I'd done it to people for  
00:05:30 years and years and years previously, okay? So I'm sitting there, and it's like  
00:05:41 the guy starts to walk by, you know? And this terror arises within me,  
00:05:51 this primordial, intense, intense terror. Actually, I couldn't even control my body.  
00:06:02 I actually started to move, so I got hit, okay? Which felt good, but so you  
00:06:17 might think, and that happened every time for the whole session, and for  
00:06:22 the next session, and for the next session, okay? It was like that's what the  
00:06:28 whole thing was about, was like I'm like sweating bullets and shitting bricks  
00:06:34 every time these guys are carrying the stick, which is frequently during the day.  
00:06:41 So now you might think that the self-talk would be like, what is wrong  
00:06:50 with me, okay? That I'm having this huge overblown reaction, but that's not the  
00:07:02 self-talk that arose, not in the slightest. What arose was wisdom function  
00:07:09 that understood what was happening, why it was happening, and what to do about it.  
00:07:16 So what was the difference? What, 15 years ago when I was in Japan, and they'd carry  
00:07:25 it with the same threatening, you know, whatever, okay? And I didn't even notice  
00:07:30 it. I was so lost in my thoughts, and you know, in my memory, plan, and fantasy,  
00:07:39 whatever, I didn't even notice what was going on. Years and years and years of  
00:07:45 meditation, be careful what you ask for, you know, how many people come to me and  
00:07:50 say, oh, if only I could have a peaceful mind. Well, you can have a peaceful mind,  
00:07:57 but there's a price to pay for a peaceful mind. What's left if the image  
00:08:03 and talk turns off? What's left of you? What's left of you is a frightened  
00:08:09 little infant's body is what's left of you. And so when Darth Vader is coming  
00:08:22 out of the world of threatening archetypes, okay, that's all that  
00:08:31 was there. Now, could I have turned that all off by rationalization? Easy, just  
00:08:40 start thinking. It's like, okay, that's so-and-so, and I've known him for years,  
00:08:46 and he's a friend of mine, and if he hits me, it's gonna feel good. I could  
00:08:51 rationalize away the fear, but that's not the idea. The idea is to scour down into  
00:08:58 the infantile animal levels of your being, no matter how embarrassing that  
00:09:03 might be, no matter how inconvenient that might be, you don't rationalize it away,  
00:09:09 you train the body at that primitive level, and it doesn't, you just, it's like,  
00:09:18 okay, that's what's happening, and I know exactly what to do, and eventually it

00:09:25 reached the point where as soon as they started to carry the kesaku, this wave of  
00:09:31 power fear would spread to me, turn into flow, cause me to merge with the person  
00:09:39 carrying the kesaku and the entire room, and it was like just catharsis city, this  
00:09:48 bliss city. So you want oneness? Well, one way to get it is work through  
00:09:53 separateness at the primitive level of the body.