

*San Francisco Zen Center  
Beginner's Mind Temple*

**PURE STANDARDS (Guidelines for Conduct)  
FOR RESIDENTIAL ZEN TRAINING**

*“All students should be like milk and water—more intimate than that even, because we are all good friends from past lives, sharing eternal Buddha Nature as each one’s own.”*

—Shunryu Suzuki Roshi

Since the birth of Zen training in China over a thousand years ago, it has been common practice for residential practice communities to compose “pure standards” that enable the residents to live with each other in mutual respect, peace, and harmony. This way of life is the body and mind of Zen training and practice. Please follow these guidelines completely and wholeheartedly.

**16 Bodhisattva Precepts**

Our practice is grounded in the 16 Bodhisattva Precepts. These ethical principles provide skillful means for the ways we interact as individuals within the community and serve as guidelines for our embodiment of the practice.

Residents explicitly reflect on and renew their commitment to practicing with the precepts in a Bodhisattva ceremony, held each month at the time of the full moon. The precepts, as we chant them during our monthly Full Moon Ceremony, are as follows:

I take refuge in Buddha.  
I take refuge in Dharma.  
I take refuge in Sangha

I vow to refrain from all evil.  
I vow to make every effort to live in enlightenment.  
I vow to live and be lived for the benefit of all beings.

I vow not to kill.  
I vow not to take what is not given.  
I vow not to misuse sexuality.

I vow to refrain from false speech.  
I vow to refrain from intoxicants.  
I vow not to slander.  
I vow not to praise self at the expense of others.  
I vow not to be avaricious.  
I vow not to harbor ill will.  
I vow not to disparage the Three Treasures.

### **Zendo Attendance and Decorum**

First-year residents participate fully in all practice periods, in one class each practice period, and one seven-day sesshin. Those who continue in residency beyond the first year participate fully in one practice period each year, one class and one seven-day sesshin. All residents are expected to attend all monthly one-day sittings.

Please make a commitment to completely follow the formal practice schedule. This means attending morning zazen and service, soji (pre-breakfast temple cleaning), dharma talks and special ceremonies. WPAs and staff members whose work does not conflict time-wise are expected to attend noon service during practice periods and encouraged to attend evening zazen and service.

Be on time for all scheduled events; arrive early enough to be settled at your place before an event begins.

If you cannot attend a practice event because of work, illness or any other reason, please write your name, what event(s) you are missing, and the reason in the tenken notebook outside the ino's (meditation hall manager's) office. There is a page in the notebook for each day. Alternatively, you may send the ino an email explaining your absence. Some crews will need to miss some zendo events because of their work schedules.

If you leave City Center for more than one night, please inform the ino of your absence, the reason and how long you will be away. Also consult ahead of time with the tanto, director and your practice leader.

Stay in the zendo for kinhin unless it is necessary to leave. Do not go to the small kitchen or drink tea or coffee during kinhin. You may use the restroom during kinhin.

Muffle sounds such as coughing, sneezing, nose blowing, yawning, or throat clearing.

Wear clean clothes to the zendo and be sure that your face, hands and feet are clean. Appropriate zendo attire is dark and subdued in color, and extends beyond the shoulders and below the knees.

If you have long hair, tie it back and wear it off the neck.

Refrain from wearing scented products or perfume, watches or jewelry, including mala beads, in the zendo.

### **Dharma Discussion**

The abiding abbot, senior dharma teachers, the tanto (head of practice) and other practice leaders are available for formal or informal discussions regarding Zen practice, living in community at City Center, and any difficulties that may arise. All residents are asked to choose and be in regular communication with a resident practice leader.

### **The Practice of Silence**

Observe silence from the goodnight bell through the breakfast chant the following morning, and from the end of evening service until after the meal chant and clackers at dinner. Observe silence in and around the zendo whenever people are sitting.

If it is necessary to speak during this time, do so in a way that supports the communal silence and does not disturb others.

### **The Practice of Bowing**

Stop and bow in gassho (with palms joined) when passing other practitioners in hallways during formal practice times (e.g. during the morning program), including one-day sittings and sesshins.

Do not stop and bow during soji, or in functional spaces such as bathrooms, kitchen, etc.

Stop and bow to any procession, e.g. doshi and jiko or jisha, Buddha tray, wake-up bell, etc.

Stop and bow to the toilet altar when entering and leaving toilets.

### **Community Responsibilities**

Each resident is expected to perform two weekly doanryo tasks (ceremonial activities which support the formal practice, such as ringing bells, cleaning altars, watching the door during zazen, etc.), a weekly dishwashing shift, and a temple job that takes approximately one hour each week. As needed, meal preparation shifts of approximately two-and-a-half hours each week may also be required.

All residents are expected to attend a monthly residents' meeting. Currently the meetings are at 8:45 am on Saturdays.

## **Work Practice**

WPAs, staff members and practice period work students are all expected to attend work meeting Monday through Friday.

Please be on time for work meeting. The morning work meeting is signaled by a drum at 8:55 am, and you should be in the dining room by the time the densho is rung at 9 am. General labor students and guest students also attend the afternoon work meeting in the dining room at 1:30 pm.

Refrain from bringing food or drinks to work meeting.

Enter wholeheartedly into the work that has been assigned.

Maintain silence as much as possible during work time, especially in the morning.

Notify the work leader or your crew head if you are unable to work.

## **Kitchen and Meal Practice**

Refrain from entering the working area of the kitchen without permission. If you need to speak with a member of the kitchen crew, first ask the permission of the fukuten or tenzo.

If you are ill and need food to be brought to you, please notify the ino by writing your name on the white board outside the ino's office or by sending her an email.

The morning program extends through the breakfast food offering, meal drum and chant until the clackers. Please go to the kitchen immediately after soji to participate in the before-breakfast chant.

Dinner, and getting one's food in the kitchen, is silent until after the chant and clackers in the dining room.

Eat only in the dining room and front or back courtyards. You may sit at the silent table in the dining room if you prefer not to be involved in conversation. Refrain from reading during meals.

Eat only what is served unless you have dietary restrictions or special needs, in which case please consult with the tenzo about your dietary requirements.

Between meals, snacks are available in the small kitchen, including fruit, bread, spreads, coffee and occasional leftovers or other items. You may also store personal food in the small kitchen refrigerator; be sure to label it with your name and the date.

SF Zen Center is a vegetarian community. Please do not prepare or store meat products in any communal kitchen designated as SFZC residential space.

Refrain from taking food that has been prepared for bag lunch unless you will be away from City Center at lunchtime on a weekday and are making your lunch to take with you. Bag lunch is available in the kitchen from 7:20 am until 8 am on weekdays.

We encourage the practice of sitting down to eat or drink anything except water.

### **Clarity of Mind and Good Health**

Refrain from the use or possession of alcohol or any illegal or other inappropriate drugs. Not following this guideline may result in a student in being asked to leave City Center residence.

Smoking is discouraged, and is allowed only on the roof of 300 Page Street. Do not smoke in any other area of 300 Page Street, in either courtyard, on the steps of 300 Page Street, or in your room. Similarly, smoking is prohibited in 366-370 Page, 340 Page and 293-295 Page.

### **Relationship Practice**

In order to support new students in finding their practice without the distractions and complications of forming new sexual or romantic relationships, City Center has the following guidelines. Not following these guidelines may result in a student being asked to leave residential practice, or not being accepted for future Practice Periods.

Refrain from beginning a new sexual relationship, at any time, in which either person has practiced as a resident at City Center for less than six months, or in which either person is under 18 years of age. This includes refraining from expressing your romantic or sexual interest to that person and also includes beginning a relationship with any practitioner in the wider community who has begun practicing at City Center within the last six months or is under 18 years of age.

If you are part of a couple, please maintain behavior that supports residential practice. Do not isolate yourself from the community, respect silent times, and be sensitive about public displays of affection.

Refrain from engaging in non-committed or casual sexual relations.

Be aware of how sexual energy is communicated through speech and non-verbally through touch, eye contact, body language, and attitude.

Having followed these guidelines, those considering starting a new romantic relationship are asked to consult with their practice leader and the tanto or abiding abbot. The consultation will address reconciling the often-conflicting demands of a new relationship and the City Center practice schedule, as well as the possible impact on the community.

## **Appropriate Attire**

Dress modestly, in a manner that is appropriate to and supportive of our life of practice. For example, refrain from going without a shirt or wearing short shorts, thin-strapped tank tops or tops with bare midriffs or very low-cut necklines.

Refrain from going barefoot; wear closed-toe shoes when working in the kitchen and shop.

## **Use of Electronic Devices**

In order to establish and preserve a refuge from media bombardment at City Center, please do not use your cell phone in any communal or public space at 300 Page Street. You may use your cell phone on the sidewalk (but not the steps) in front of 300 Page, in the Art Lounge with the door closed if it is not otherwise in use, in the phone booth on the second floor, or in your single room. Do not use your cell phone in either courtyard, on the roof, or in any other space at 300 Page Street except as listed above, including a shared room.

Laptops and tablets may be used in the reading room and the residents' lounge. The residents' lounge is for light computer use only, limited to one hour. Laptops, tablets and e-readers may be used in the dining room on Sundays when other events are not happening there. E-readers may be treated like a book.

Please do not wear headphones or earbuds in any communal or public space or in the hallways of 300 Page Street, including the residents' lounge, the front or back courtyard, the roof, the kitchen, etc. You may use them in the privacy of your room and in the reading room only, or in the dining room on Sundays when other events are not happening there.

## **Listening to Music and Playing Musical Instruments**

Musical instruments may be played during times when there is no scheduled practice event between 7:45 am and 8:30 pm, as long as neighbors are not disturbed. If you wish to listen to music, please do so in the privacy of your room using headphones or earbuds.

## **Diversity**

City Center welcomes people of every gender, age, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, political belief, and physical ability. If you feel hurt by the words or actions of another person, or you observe a harmful situation, you may speak to the tanto, director, a practice leader, or a Senior Staff member.

## **Conflict Resolution**

If a conflict arises, try to work it out one-on-one, ask your crew head for help, or ask the tanto or director to act as a facilitator to restore peace and harmony.

Observe the policy of San Francisco Zen Center, which prohibits verbal, physical and sexual harassment. This means refraining from contact with a person who repeatedly requests no contact. Please speak with the tanto or director if you believe that this policy has been violated, in an effort to seek resolution and re-establish harmony.

(See the booklet *Ethical Principles and Procedures for Grievance and Reconciliation* and the San Francisco Zen Center Work Practice Policy.)