

Tassajara Zen Mountain Center

Pure Standards (Guidelines of Conduct) for Summer Zen Training

Since the birth of Zen training in China over a thousand years ago, it has been common practice for each monastery 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.

ZENDO ATTENDANCE AND DECORUM

- Please make a commitment to completely follow the *zendo* (meditation hall) schedule. This means attending morning and evening *zazen*, morning and evening service, *soji* (pre-breakfast temple cleaning), lectures, and all special ceremonies.
- Be on time for all scheduled events; arrive early enough to be settled at your place before an event begins.
- If you cannot attend an event because of work or illness, write a note on the *tenken* (attendance taker’s) pad behind the *zendo* or tell the *Ino* (Meditation Hall Manager). Due to the work schedule, some crews will need to miss some *zendo* events.
- Do not leave the *zendo* during *zazen*, except for Practice Discussion or in case of an emergency.
- Muffle sounds such as coughing, sneezing, blowing the nose, yawning, or clearing the throat.
- Wear clean clothes to the *zendo* and be sure that your face, hands and feet are clean. Appropriate *zendo* clothing is neutral 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 lotions or perfume, jewelry, watches, or mala beads in the *zendo*.

DHARMA DISCUSSION

- The Abiding Teacher, the Tanto (Head of Practice) and other Practice Leaders are available for formal or informal discussions regarding Zen practice, other aspects of life at Tassajara, and any difficulties that arise.
- All long-term students – three months or longer – are asked to be in regular communication with a Practice Leader.

THE PRACTICE OF SILENCE

- Observe silence from evening *zazen* through the breakfast silent period the following day.
- If it is necessary to speak during this time, do so in a way that supports the communal silence and does not disturb others.
- Observe the period of silence at breakfast and lunch after the meal chant, ending at the double hit of the clackers.
- Observe silence in and around the *zendo*, in the bathhouse during residents' silent bathing time (4:30 – 5:45 p.m.), and at the back door snack area in the kitchen.
- Refrain from playing musical instruments within hearing distance of Tassajara.
- Use portable audio devices only with head-phones or earbuds, and listen in private or away from the central area of Tassajara.
- Refrain from singing, humming, or whistling within Tassajara; do not call to others from a distance.
- Refrain from running in the central area of Tassajara.

THE PRACTICE OF BOWING

- Stop and bow in *gassho* (with palms joined) when passing other practitioners outside (not in the courtyard, the bathhouse, on the *zendo* walkway, or in other enclosed spaces).
- Stop and bow to the toilet altar when entering and leaving toilets.

DIVERSITY

- Tassajara 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, or you observe a harmful situation, you may speak to the Tanto, Director, a Practice Leader, or Senior Staff member.

APPROPRIATE SEXUAL CONDUCT

- *In order to support new students in finding their practice without the distractions and complications of forming new sexual or romantic relationships, Tassajara has the following guidelines. Not following these guidelines may result in being asked to leave the monastery, not earning practice period credits, and/or not being accepted to Practice Periods:*
- Refrain from beginning a new sexual relationship, at any time, in which either person has not practiced at Tassajara for at least 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.
- Be aware of how sexual energy is communicated through speech and non-verbally through touch, eye contact, body language, and attitude.
- Refrain from engaging in non-committed sexual relationships.
- Refrain from being at “the Narrows” when there is nude swimming there.
- If considering a relationship with someone at Tassajara, speak with a Practice Leader about it first.
- If in a relationship, do not isolate yourself from the community. Respect silent times, and be sensitive about how affection is expressed in the presence of others.

APPROPRIATE DRESS

- It is traditional for priests to shave their heads; laypeople are requested not to do so.
- Dress modestly, in a manner that is appropriate to and supportive of our life of practice. [For example, refrain from wearing tight-fitting or otherwise revealing clothing, going without a shirt, from wearing short-shorts, thin-strapped tank tops or tops with bare midriffs.]
- Wear a bathing suit at the swimming pool and the Narrows; put on additional clothing when leaving the pool area.
- Refrain from going barefoot; wear closed-toe shoes in the kitchen and shop.

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 being asked to leave the monastery, and not being accepted to Practice Periods.]
- The use of tobacco at Tassajara is discouraged. Smoking is allowed in the smokers’ area only.
- The Tassajara monastic environment offers an opportunity to disconnect from the distractions of interacting with electronic media. Please do not bring PC’s or laptops to Tassajara. Tassajara computers are not available for personal use. With the director’s permission, electronic devices are permitted for listening to dharma talks or reading. Do not use electronic devices for entertainment (movies, TV, videos, games and similar interactive applications). In the summer, music is permitted with headphones or earbuds, in the privacy of one’s cabin or away from the grounds of the monastery.

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Using resources responsibly:

- Be aware that Tassajara is off-grid, and depends on solar power and fossil fuels to generate electricity.
- Turn off all lights when you are the last to leave a room.

- Refrain from bringing any non-rechargeable electrical equipment to Tassajara without permission from the Director. Recharge during daylight hours only.
- Be aware that spring water may be very limited in the summer; the community may be requested to conserve water by taking shorter showers, etc.
- Use only the telephone in the booth near the Stone Office for personal calls. The back porch phone is available from 4:30p.m. – 8:30a.m.
- End phone calls within ten minutes if someone else is waiting for the phone.
[All calls to Tassajara residents are received at Jamesburg; messages are brought in and posted on the message board in the mailroom.]
- Take care of your living space and clean it thoroughly before leaving Tassajara.
- Leave Tassajara grounds and surrounding wilderness as you find them. Refrain from creating structures, earth art, altars, stupas etc.

Hiking:

- Prepare for a long hike on an unfamiliar trail by consulting with someone who knows the trail.
- Tell someone at Tassajara your expected route and return time.
- Be aware of poison oak, rattlesnakes, and ticks.
- Be aware that the trails in the Wilderness Area surrounding Tassajara are not well marked or maintained and that it is very easy to get lost. If lost, do not deviate from the planned route; if it is nearing evening, find shelter for the night.

Awareness of fire danger:

- Smoke only in the smokers' area. Refrain from smoking on trails or anywhere in the Ventana Wilderness area or inside any building at Tassajara.
- Refrain from using candles in living spaces.
- Extinguish incense when leaving living spaces.

KITCHEN AND MEALTIME PRACTICE

- Refrain from entering the working area of the kitchen without permission.
- Keep silence at the kitchen "back door" snack area.
- Take snacks offered for breaks to the porch behind the Stone Office, not the courtyard.
- Sit down to eat or drink anything (standing to drink water is permitted).
- Notify the *Ino* if you become ill and need food brought to you.
- Speak with the *Tenzo* (Head of the Kitchen) if you have questions about diet.
- Go to the kitchen to help bring food to the student eating area when the *umpan* (gong hanging outside the kitchen) sounds before meals.
- Maintain silence during the food offering as the drum sounds and then join in the chanting that precedes breakfast and lunch.
- Accept the meal prepared and offered by the kitchen. Eat only in the student eating area, except on your personal day.
- Refrain from reading during meals or snack time.
- Refrain from taking food from the walk-in or other storage areas without permission of the *Tenzo*.
- Refrain from taking food from Bag Lunch except for making a lunch on day off.
- Refrain from giving food to Tassajara pets or to wildlife.

WORK PRACTICE

- Arrive at work meeting on time, in work clothes, and ready to go to work.
[Work is signaled twice a day – 8:25 a.m. and 12:55 p.m. – with a drum roll-down.]
- Refrain from bringing food or drinks to work meeting.
- Enter wholeheartedly into the work that has been assigned. [See the document *Work as Practice*.]
- 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.

BATHHOUSE PRACTICE

- Observe silence and refrain from reading in the bathhouse during residents' silent bathing time (4:30 – 5:45 p.m.).
- Before entering the bathhouse, make three standing bows to the altar, reciting the bath verse silently. When leaving, bow once to the altar.
- Shower thoroughly with soap before using the “plunges” or the steam room.
- Refrain from being in the bathhouse after 8:40 p.m.

[Although the bathhouse is divided according to gender in the conventional way, we want to acknowledge that this division regrettably may not serve members of our community who are gay, lesbian or transgendered.]

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- If a conflict arises, try to work it out one-on-one, ask the Crew Head for help, or ask the Tanto, Director, or a Practice Leader 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 Director or Tanto if you believe that this policy has been violated, in an effort to seek resolution and re-establish harmony.

THE PRACTICE OF SIMPLICITY

- First-summer and short-term students are to remain at Tassajara during their entire scheduled time, except for vacations, medical emergencies, or local hikes.
[Those who have practiced at Tassajara for six consecutive months or more may go out on their personal day, once every five calendar weeks.]
- If you wish to go out for the day, request permission from the Director and check in with the Ino before leaving Tassajara, and return by the end of evening zazen.

THE SIXTEEN BODHISATTVA PRECEPTS OF THE SOTO ZEN SCHOOL

Three Refuges:

Taking refuge in Buddha (the Awakened One)
Taking refuge in Dharma (that which is Awakened to)
Taking refuge in Sangha (the community on the path of Awakening)

Three Pure Precepts:

Refrain from all evil
Make every effort to live in enlightenment
Live and be lived for the benefit of all beings

Ten Major Precepts:

Not killing
Not taking what is not given
Not misusing sexuality
Not lying
Not intoxicating mind or body of self or others
Not speaking of others' faults
Not praising self and belittling others
Not being possessive of anything
Not indulging in anger
Not disparaging the Buddha, Dharma, or Sangha