

URBAN NUN ZENDO

Etiquette

Awareness training and mindfulness form the core of Zen practice. This is what makes the Zendo (literally translated as "The Zen Path", a place where Zen is practiced) the heart of most Zen centres and Zen monasteries. When you practice in a group, you learn to interact with others consciously and the impulsiveness of the Ego. But because practitioners are at different spiritual levels, each Zendo has guidelines that prevent them from colliding with each other and helps their practice. Rules may vary from one Zen centre to another, but principles are always the same, although the rules minimise certain type of obstacles, they are also great tools to help us learn more about ourselves and our world.

As with any other tool, you will be regularly reminded how to handle it. Nevertheless, mistakes are not considered as a reason for shame, criticism or embarrassment, but rather as a chance to broaden the practice.

Urban Nun ZENDO is a practicing place in the middle of the urban Zürich, operated by the Zen nun Maya DoKa. In addition to classes and urban programs, Zendo also conducts social support through the DoKa Foundation project.

Zendo is based on the principles of monasticism and hermitage: simplicity, constant spiritual practice and bodhisattva devotion. It is a non-profit, non-religious and non-institutional place. Everyone is welcome and will be supported according to individual needs. This is conducted through various trainings for students (urban people who want to improve own health and well-being) and for disciples (people who seek final realisation of their true nature).

Zendo can only be entered during the scheduled practice and with appointment. All participants are required to follow the Zendo Guidelines (Basic Guidelines for urban students; Advanced Guidelines for disciples). Special Rules are applied for participants with the health issues or disabilities.

Basic Guidelines

Basic Guidelines are for those who are interested primarily in methods and tools for improvement of health, longevity and well-being.

Your practice is already starting by ringing at the doorbell. By following the Zendo guidelines, you are paying respect to the teacher, yourself, other students and the teaching itself.

Cherish silence and right speech

Chatter and babbling have become a part of modern communication. Leave superficial communication behind the Zendo door. Zendo offers you an atmosphere of peace and well-being beyond words. You will practice mindful talking and listening and learn to exchange with others on a deeper level.

Respect time

Please, arrive latest 10-15 min before the class. This gives you sufficient time to get short instructions (for the first timers), to close administration (teaching fee / Dana) and choose Zafu (meditation cushion). 5 minutes before the start of the class, Zendo door will be closed for further arrivals. But, if you are late, take this as your personal Zen bell: contemplate on the reasons behind your late arrival and the feelings that arose after you realized the door was closed.

Support your practice

You will support your meditation if you dress comfortably and your blood circulation is not interrupted. When you enter Zendo, you will practice on tatami, so please, leave your shoes outside and wear clean socks.

Show respect and kindness

Enter Zendo with an open heart and kindness. Practice mutual respect, and don't forget that the way you perceive someone is not what they are, but how you are.

Practice generosity (Dana)

Dana is an important practice in the Buddhist tradition, which is exercised by making offerings for received teachings (including monetary). Please, close administrative part before the class. If you pay in cash, use provided envelope that bears your name. Keep in mind that this is not a common-world transaction, but rather part of the practice. It is most important to keep the pure heart and break the pattern of the ordinary consumer.

Special

The practice is limited to only five people per class, what makes pre-registration a requirement. But, if you can not attend, please do not forget to send the cancellation. This can open an opportunity for someone on the waiting list.

Advanced Guidelines

Advanced Guidelines are a bit extended and are meant for students who are interested in spiritual growth and serious practice.

Be on time

To be punctual in Zendo means to arrive ten to fifteen minutes before the beginning of Zazen (Zen meditation). The late arrivals bring a hectic energy that can influence other

practitioners and interfere with their practice. Early arrival allows you to slow down the pace and to settle easier in Zazen.

=> *Five minutes before the beginning of the class, the Zendo door will be closed.*

Shoes

When you enter the Zendo, take off your shoes at the door. This will not only keep Zendo clean, but will also symbolically keep the outside world behind the Zendo's door.

=> *Stepping on the tatami is only allowed with the clean socks.*

Clothing

Tight clothing impedes circulation and causes pain and numbness. Wear loose clothing, comfortable for sitting meditation. Avoid bright colours, jewellery and fragrances. Put your watch in your pocket and turn off your cell phone. This prevents over-stimulation of the senses and creates a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere.

=> *Ordained Sangha members should wear their Rakusu.*

Silence

Avoid speaking in the Zendo and keep your gaze down. Do not stare at teacher or other students. Chatter and conversation would not only distract others but also inhibit our awareness and our grounding into the present moment. There is plenty of time for talk later.

=> *After meditation, some people require prolonged silence time, respect that.*

Entering and leaving the Zendo

On entering or leaving, bow in Gassho. Bowing is not only a sign of respect for everyone and everything, for the practice and received teaching, but also a good practice for dissolving your Ego.

=> *Hang up your coat, leave your bag and put your shoes neatly in line.*

Finding a seat

Remember that the practice started when you enter the Zendo (at latest). After removing your shoes, enter the Sodo (meditation room) with your hands in Shashu (left hand in fist with left thumb held in fist, right hand covers left hand). When you enter the Sodo, bow in Gassho (palms held together) in the direction of the altar. Return your hands to Shashu position and walk to your seat, without walking back and forth in front of the altar. Walk mindfully to your place with hands in Shashu. Avoid running into each other. Walk behind the Zabutons (square cushions) to find a seat and when you find it, take a step on the tatami.

=> *Do not step on or cross the tatami with the Buddha Altar.*

Sitting down

Once you arrive at your seat, bow once in Gassho to your Zafu, then turn and bow in Gassho to the opposite seats. Sit on the Zafu with your back turned to the wall, bend your legs, turn right on your cushion until you face the wall. Arrange yourself and swing into a sitting position. At the beginning, people are not used to sitting on the Zafu for a long time, if at all. Some may have problems with knees, hips or back. Inform teacher about this, so she can show you other sitting option that is more suitable for you.

=> *As we bow, we pay our respects to our practice, our life, our sitting companions, and all beings.*

Starting Zazen

Three rings on the Zen bowl mark the formal start of Zazen. Swing to the right position and start.

Zazen

Do your best to sit still during Zazen. Observe itches, irritations or minor pain and learn how to stay calm no matter what. On the other hand, do not ignore significant pain. If you need to move, please do it as quietly as possible. In an emergency, however, in an emergency, you can leave the Sodo, again, please it as quietly as possible.

Ending Zazen

The end of Zazen will be signalled by the two ring tones of the Zen bowl. Swing out of your Zafu and still sitting, bow in Gassho.

Following sounds will signalise the start of the Kinhin, start of the lecture or the end of practice:

- Sound of Inkin (hand inverse bell) will signal to stand up (1 ring tone). Bending your legs, turn right on your cushion until you face outside and slowly get up. Bow to your Zafu and turn right until you face the middle of the Sodo. Stand in Shashu until you hear the clapping of the Toku (wooden clappers) (1 clap tone). Turn left and after the second clapping of the Toku (1 clap tone) start with the Kinhin.
- A ringtone of the bell indicates that a talk about the chosen topic begins. In this case, you don't need to get up, turn right until you face the teacher. The end of the talk is announced with bell ring too.
- Sound of Inkin will announce final end of the practice. At the first ring, get up slowly, quietly plump your Zafu and brush off your Zabuton. At the second ring bow in Gassho in the direction of your Zafu. At Inkin's final ring, bow in Shashu to the meditators across from you. Keep standing with your backs to Zafu.

Kinhin

If the Kinhin is announced, once you stand (see “Ending Zazen”), turn left, with hands in Shashu and start Kinhin after the second clapping of the Toku. The end of Kinhin is announced with a clap of Toku. Bow in Shashu and keep walking (clockwise) at a normal pace back to your Zafu. Ring of Inkin will signal you to take a sit again. Bow to Zafu and sit down. Turn right until you face the wall. Three rings of bowl announce the beginning of the second zazen session. If you need to enter or leave the Zendo, do so during Kinhin. As you walk, harmonize your breathing with your steps and keep a good distance between yourself and the people in front of and behind you.

=> *Consider Kinhin as a walking meditation that gives you deep insights into yourself, your relationship with others, and more generally, your life.*

Leaving Sodo

As soon as the sound of Inkin has announces the end of the practice (see Ending Zazen), the meditator in the first row, furthest from the altar, leads out, followed by the meditator in the first row closest to the altar. The meditator of the second row, furthest to the altar joins the walking line of the first row, followed by the meditator of the second row closest to the altar.

=> *Always walk in succession, do not walk over the Zabuton, jump over Zafus or cross the tatami with the Buddha Altar.*

Special Rules

Health / disability

The teacher is not liable for your health but your health and well-being are of the utmost importance to her. If you have any health problems or disabilities, you should consult your doctor before practice to ensure that you are allowed to practice and inform the teacher immediately about your health condition so that she can adjust the practice for you.

Infectious disease

- If you suffer from a strong cold but would still like to practice in a group, please wear a protective mask. To minimize infection of others, you will practice in Genkan (entrance room). Inform teachers in advance so that place in Genkan can be arranged for you
- If you have any other infectious diseases transmitted through air or direct contact, please take an online practice.
- Blood and sexually transmitted health problems are not considered risky for group practice, but please consult the teacher to adjust your training.

Dana

Generosity (Dana) is an important Buddhist practice. Teaching and your remuneration for it should be perceived as exchange of Dana and considered as an additional element of the practice. For this purpose, pre-registered practitioners will put their donations in provided envelopes at the entrance. The names of the practitioners are written on the envelopes and can be reused at the next opportunity.

=> *Money will be used to manage Urban Nun ZENDO and to sponsor the DoKa Foundation project.*

Final Word

Zendo rules can vary from place to place.

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Everyday life is filled with different rules that some people respond to with rebellion and others with blind obedience. Zendo rules are meant in the beginning with the same worldly approach: consent or disagreement, obedience or disobedience.

But there is more to the Zendo rules than just keeping things orderly. It is the practice that makes our Ego visible and gives us opportunity to observe it in a safe environment in order to dissolve it through the practice.

Rules can cause different emotions, from embarrassment, anger and irritation to hate. Whatever the emotion, people often feel insecure enough to admit their own Ego issues and instead blame others, behave defensively, go into denial or try to escape and avoid the problem. But escape is never possible and you should instead better confront it in the security of the Zendo. You have to face your own issues that are triggered by the specific rule. Zen training prevents you from running away and going into denial. Because practitioners need to be silent, their urge to find excuses or justify their actions can not be done and habitual escape strategies (asking, ignoring, cheating, denying etc.) can not be executed. Instead one gets the chance to observe own decisions, own insecurities, own worries or own irritations. One learns to recognise the Ego in all these feelings, and begins to accept and let go of everything, returning again and again to the present moment.

When we stop clinging to feelings that have been triggered by our past mistakes or by mistakes of others, the rules stop controlling us, instead we can use them mindfully and can experience more compassion for others and for ourselves.

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Urban Nun ZENDO
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Please, contact Urban Nun ZENDO if you need more information