



ASSOCIATION ZEN
INTERNATIONALE
FONDATEUR MAÎTRE TAISEN DESHIMARU

Ethical Charter of the International Zen Association

In our practice centres, as everywhere, our behaviour is imbued with the Buddha's teaching, with awareness of interdependence, attention to the consequences of our actions, the Four Noble Truths, and the Eightfold Path.

Our words and actions must be guided by the sixteen mahayana precepts and the six paramitas.

KIND SPEECH

"When you see a living being, you arouse the heart of compassion and offer words of loving care (...) which have the power to move heaven."

Master Dōgen, *Shobogenzo Bodaisatta Shishobo*,
The Bodhisattva's Four Methods of Guidance

In the sangha, relationships between practitioners are based on friendship, sincerity and empathy. Their words are invariably kind, reflecting the care each takes for the other.

So in a practice place, we should refrain from:

- using hurtful, slanderous or deceitful language, including the misuse of humour, irony or criticism in ways that exclude or harm others.;
- spreading false information or rumours in order to promote oneself;
- having inappropriate conversations.

In general, any language that can lead to conflict and suffering, whether for the speaker or for the sangha, is to be avoided at all costs.

MUTUAL RESPECT

"If we respect each other and maintain a caring heart for one another, we can discover the joy of coming together in harmony and become friends in the Way."

Master Dōgen, *Shuryo Shingi*
The Rules of the Study Hall

All human beings are interdependent. This relationship is based on respect for others, their nature, and their beliefs.

In a practice place, therefore, we should refrain from:

- abusing authority and/or position;
- using behaviour which is intolerant, sectarian, disrespectful, racist, sexist or discriminatory.

Generally speaking, Sōtō Zen practice is based on mutual respect, as well as respect for the rules and recommendations specific to this tradition.

RIGHT CONDUCT, PREVENTION OF ABUSE

“The members of this sangha will be companions in the Buddha's truth for all eternity.”

Master Dōgen, *Ju Undo Shiki*, The Rules of the Sodo, second rule

In order to prevent abuse, harassment, and the misuse of authority or control — sources of suffering — conduct yourself in alignment with the bodhisattva precepts.

Thus, in a practice community it is agreed that we refrain from:

- forming relationships which include any type of manipulation—be it physical, psychological, intellectual, or spiritual;
- using a position of responsibility or authority to intimidate, humiliate, or reject others.

May our intentions and actions always be guided by the spirit of offering.

AUTHORITY and RESPONSIBILITY

“In the practice community, everyone is each other’s parent, sibling, relative, teacher, and good friend. With mutual affection take care of each other sympathetically. Mutual sympathy develops naturally but must be cultivated: it is the role of those with responsibilities to create this harmony.”

Master Dōgen, Shuryo Shingi
The Rules of the Study Hall

Having a responsibility means being at the service of others. Rules exist to protect the practice, the harmony, and mutual respect within the group. Those in a position of authority, responsibility, or seniority must always behave as a benevolent ‘parent’. They should guide practitioners by modeling exemplary behaviour and by their own ability to allow themselves to be guided and advised.

Thus, in a practice community, we should avoid:

- imposing personal views through aggressive attitudes or moral coercion. Respect for the community’s rules should arise naturally through the teachings of Sōtō Zen, not through force;
- requiring actions that are not directly aligned with the practice of Sōtō Zen or the established rules of the community.

Among the activities offered in the practice community, samu involves focusing on everyday tasks—such as cleaning, cooking, gardening, and secretarial work—that are done collectively for the benefit of the community. Tasks are assigned based on the voluntary agreement and abilities of each person. Participants should receive clear instructions and the proper equipment to ensure safety and hygiene for everyone. The duration of samu should be clearly defined.

The kyosaku, through its massaging action, is an aid to posture and concentration. Its use must be explained and demonstrated precisely, during a specific introductory session. Only experienced practitioners should administer it. The kyosaku may be given occasionally, **on request**, and only to people who have received appropriate instruction.

Oral teachings (kusen, teisho, mondo) must not be used to settle personal disputes.

MODERATION AND DISCERNMENT

“Don't trade in intoxicants: don't bring in toxic substances, don't let them in. This is the light of wisdom.”

Master Dōgen, *Kyojukaimon*
fifth precept

Toxic products and substances are, of course, alcohol and all kinds of drugs. But they also include all dogmatic or ideological opinions, personal interpretations of the Dharma and the teachings, theories based on intellectual understanding alone, and all the other ‘mental intoxications’ that one may try to impose on others.

Consequently, in a practice community, it is advised that we abstain from:

- offering, selling or consuming strong alcohol or any type of euphoric product (beer or wine may be offered in moderate quantities for special or social occasions) ;
- coming to the practice venue having previously consumed alcohol or drugs, or in an altered state of consciousness;
- starting or feeding passionate debates which act to create animosity between practitioners;
- seeking to impose one's own opinions or beliefs on others, whether Buddhist or not;
- using the teachings (kusen, teisho, mondo) to disseminate erroneous, dogmatic, personal or ideological views.

Generally, we must reject all forms of manipulation or control over others.

AVENUES OF RECOURSE

When persistent tensions or interpersonal conflicts cannot be resolved within a practice place, it is recommended to initiate a mediation process by calling upon the ethical referents, one woman and one man, designated within each sangha. Their contact details will appear in each practice place or can be obtained from the AZI secretariat: secretaire.generale.azi@gmail.com .

In the UK, please see the IZAUK complaints policy <https://www.izauk.org/izauk-complaints-policy/> .

In the event that mediation does not enable the dispute to be resolved satisfactorily, the referent will bring the matter before the AZI Spiritual Council or a delegation of this Council in order to take the appropriate steps to reach a resolution.

The AZI Spiritual Council undertakes to remain impartial and to show equal consideration to all parties.

With regard to disputes concerning compliance with the laws and regulations in force, the parties concerned shall bring the matter before the competent judicial bodies, in accordance with the legal provisions in force.

In addition, any practice place manager (ie: dojo/group responsible) who becomes aware of any criminal abuse will inform a competent external authority without delay, in compliance with the applicable legal procedures.

If in doubt, you can consult an association specialising in help and assistance, such as France victimes: <https://www.france-victimes.fr> . In the UK - there are other organisations which may be helpful, for example: .