



The Zen Heart Sangha Code of Conduct

November 2015

"On the eighteenth day of the ninth month of the first year of the Pao-ching Era of the Sung Dynasty (1225), the late abbot of Tien-tung instructed me, Eihei Dogen Osho, saying: "The Buddha Sila are the single most important matter of our school. In the past, the masters of Mount Grdhakuta, Shao-len, Tsao-chi, and Mount Tung transmitted these Dharma Sila of the Tathagatha to their successors generation after generation until they came to me." Now I transmit them to you. You should receive them in deep faith and not permit them to be discontinued. For this I earnestly pray. "

Eihei Dogen Zenji

The Japanese word jukai contains the character "ju," which means "receiving," and the character "kai," which means "to awaken." So "jukai" literally means "to receive awakening." What that means concretely, practically, is simply that we acknowledge our true nature, we acknowledge that our life itself is the way of "awakening," that the perfect life is our life. When we choose to acknowledge this in our Zen practice, we participate in a ritual during which the teacher "transmits" the precepts to us. These precepts are the natural expression of who we really are, of our awakened nature, even though we are not always aware of it. They have been handed down from teacher to student for generations and are the living, dynamic reminders of how we aspire to live our lives boundlessly, truthfully, at peace with ourself and others.

Amy Hollowell Roshi

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Preface

In the recent past, numerous cases of serious abuse and misconduct in Buddhist organisations and communities have come to light. These cases and their consequences have touched me deeply and have been the main reason for developing this code. Primarily because they caused a lot of disappointment, confusion, upheaval and pain. But also because of the erosion of trust in the Buddha way, while there are so many practitioners and teachers, who are trying to practice in deep mutual trust and commitment, and who have to deal with a completely understandable mistrust in society. I hope with all my heart, that this code will not be seen as a further confirmation of the necessity of this mistrust, but that it may help in some small way to protect and deepen the trust that we have in each other within our community.

As the resident teacher of the Zen Heart Sangha I will try my utmost, to maintain the conduct described in this code and I hope that the members and the board of the sangha will support and help me to maintain it well.

The White Plum Asangha has established a model Code of Ethical Conduct (CEC) which has been partly incorporated in this text. But after consideration of the CEC and talking about it with people close to me and especially my teacher Genno Pagès Roshi, I concluded that I wanted to return to the precepts, to the vows I received with all my heart during my lay ordination and again when I received transmission.

Atonement

Receiving and maintaining the precepts is not a one time event. The deed is done, but it is never finished. It is an endless process. I commit myself, I use them as a touchstone for the way I conduct myself, I lose sight of them, break them, I return to them and commit myself again. This is how I maintain my vows and this is why the verse of atonement plays such an important role. I take full responsibility for what has happened, try if possible to set right what has gone wrong, and then I go on and take the next step.

*All suffering ever caused by me since of old
On account of my beginningless greed, anger and ignorance
Born of my body, mouth and thought
Now I atone for it all.*

It is a complete and healing admission of my responsibility and fully owning the pain that I have caused. This way I can consider, own, change, let go, and go on. I promise to contemplate this daily.

The Sila

This Code of Conduct is based on the Sila. The Sanskrit word Sila is often translated with "precepts" or "vows", but this translation doesn't completely cover the meaning. Sila indicates a way of life, an attitude of developing virtue, morality and (self)discipline. So to regard the Sila as a set of rules and regulations is too limited. It indicates an inner desire to live in harmony with myself and those around me. It is a way of life that I wish to develop continuously and that is deeply rooted in the core vow that reflects and incorporates all the precepts and all my vows.

"May I love always more".

Taking refuge in the Three Treasures

I take refuge in the Buddha.

I take refuge in the Dharma.

I take refuge in the Sangha.

I know I'm a refugee and I seek and find refuge in these precepts. I seek true protection and liberation in openness and in a home without walls, certainties and self-justification. Again and again I want to return home in the spaciousness of myself as *I am*. And I promise to try and see myself, all around me and particularly my students and all visitors and guests, as Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. And I promise to do everything that I possibly can to help create, maintain and protect the well being, safety and integrity of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

The Three Pure Precepts

I vow to refrain from causing harm.

I promise to try not to be reactive, to let go of my ideas and judgements about myself and others and not to act (or be inactive) arising from these ideas and judgements and selfish desires arising from separated reactive awareness.

I promise to do all I can to try and do good.

I promise to try and be an inclusive open participant in, and witness of life, with all it's suffering and joy, and to act (or refrain from actions) coming from inclusive non-reactive awareness, openness and interconnectedness.

I promise to do all I can to try and do good for others.

I promise to try and deeply know that I am the other and that the other is me, and to act (or refrain from actions) coming from this knowing in non-reactive awareness.

The ten Grave Precepts

Aware of the oneness and diversity and of the harmony between oneness and diversity, I commit myself to these ten vows:

1. I vow to refrain from taking life.
I will try to experience and realise that I am not a separate entity, that I am life and one with life and to respect and love all that lives. I promise to try not to cause any harm or injury and will try to live in harmony with life.
2. I vow to refrain from stealing.
I will try to find peace with whatever is present in my life. I will try not to take anything that is not given, to ask for what I need and to receive and accept gratefully whatever is given, and to freely give as much as possible what is needed by others.
3. I vow to refrain from greed and sexual misconduct.
I will try to treat all people and all living creatures with dignity and respect. I promise to try and give love and friendship and to receive love and friendship without claiming and without abusing these gifts.

4. I vow to refrain from lying
I promise to try to be truthful, to not tell lies or to be silent in an untruthful manner. I will try to listen and speak from the heart, and to express in the moment what I perceive to be truthful in the moment, in a loving and respectful manner, without denying the truth of what others see as truthful.
5. I vow to refrain from being deluded and living in ignorance.
I will try to develop and deepen my understanding and awareness. To be as clear as I can be and to be mindful of the need to deepen always further. I will refrain from abuse of substances that hinder the development of non reactive awareness and understanding.
6. I vow to refrain from being judgemental, from criticising and speaking ill of others.
I promise to try and lovingly accept whatever is present in the moment and to extend this love to others as well as myself.
7. I vow to refrain from elevating myself and not to put others down.
I promise to try to be open and honest and to express what I feel to be true and just, knowing that this is just my perception of truth and justice and that others feel their own truthfulness and justice.
8. I vow to refrain from being stingy.
I promise to try and appreciate, use and share all the ingredients of my life. I promise to try and live in the awareness that everything that I have and everything that I am has been given and is not a personal possession. Thus I can freely pass on whatever I have and know and am, without holding on to anything and without living in a poverty mentality.
9. I vow to refrain from dwelling in anger.
I promise to try and transform suffering into wisdom and not to evade the pain through expressions of anger and aggression.
10. I vow to refrain from speaking ill of the three treasures, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.
I will try to awaken more and more and to experience that all beings are by nature Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. I promise to honour and use my life as a path and means to create and maintain peace in the world.

I want to express, expand and specify these precepts in the following areas:

Confidentiality

The open relationship between student and teacher often requires the sharing of sensitive personal information. I promise to treat this with the utmost confidentiality. Only when I firmly believe that the safety of a member of the sangha or the sangha as a whole or of one or more persons outside the sangha are in jeopardy, I will in deepest confidentiality seek advice about the proper handling and conduct in the given situation. If I feel that a member of the sangha has the intention of harming him- or herself or others, I may be required to inform the proper authorities about it.

Non symmetrical relationships

As resident teacher I will seek advice from experts and councillors, other teachers within our tradition and lineage and in particular from my teacher Catherine Genno Pagès Roshi, on the aspects and effects of the sometimes non symmetrical relationship between teacher and student. I also promise to continue to study and to develop myself in this area.

Openness and safety

I promise to try and create and safeguard a safe and open atmosphere in the sangha so that all those that practice with us have the opportunity to deepen their practice and to express

themselves in a safe environment. I promise this in the knowledge that openly dealing with differences of views, perspectives and opinions can deepen the relationships and intimacy in the sangha and that covering up these differences can break the truthfulness and the intimacy, although on rare occasions the opposite may be true also.

I promise also that I will try to do what I can to let the dialogue in the sangha develop in deep mutual respect, dignity and compassion. I will try to set an example as best as I can and to speak and act:

- without lies and untruths
- without elevating myself
- without raising my voice
- without accusations and blaming
- without self-justifications
- without remaining silent about what should be expressed publicly

Being aware of vulnerabilities

I promise to school myself and deepen my awareness of my desires and needs and to see these within the framework of needs and desires of the members of the sangha, the sangha as a whole and of society. I feel it is necessary to continuously develop myself further as the functioning as teacher could in subtle and not so subtle ways undermine my openness, my awareness and humility. A lack of humility may cloud my understanding of my responsibilities as teacher so I see the necessity of regularly asking for the views of the board of the sangha, and seeking guidance from my dharma-brother Frank De Waele Roshi, my dharma-sisters Amy Hollowell Roshi and Corinne Frottier Sensei and especially from my teacher Genno Roshi.

Boundaries

Ultimately the responsibility for maintaining clear boundaries between teacher and students in the Zen Heart Sangha rests with me as teacher, although the students and the sangha as a whole share this responsibility with me. When I am requested to speak or act in another capacity than teacher and/or when this goes beyond the boundaries of teaching and/or my capacities, I will refer my students to others with capacities and competence in other areas, such as (mental) health, legal council etc.

Dual or Multiple Relationships

Relationships are complex and have many facets and can extend into many areas. Examples can be deep friendships, financial and professional relationships between a teacher and (a) student(s). These relationships are often wonderful and without problems for the sangha as long as there is enough transparency about them. But they do have a real potential to create confusion and disturb the harmony within the sangha. I promise to be vigilant in maintaining clear boundaries and to be open about these relationships. I also promise that I will not enter into a client/therapist relationship with any of my students or a member or visitor of the sangha.

Romantic and sexual relationships

As romantic and sexual relationships between a teacher and a student have a huge potential for subtle or open abuse and therefore almost always lead to a lot of pain, deep disappointment, confusion and disruption in and outside the sangha, it is clear to me that such a potential of suffering and pain should be avoided. I deeply believe that a romantic and/or sexual relationship between a teacher and a student is unacceptable and I promise that I will not allow such a relationship to develop. I promise that I will be vigilant and open about this and will be careful and precise in my feelings and the expression of them, not only towards myself, but also towards

others. I believe it to be obvious that this care and precision are completely my own responsibility. I also promise that I will honest and open about any relationship outside of the sangha.

Collegial respect

Whenever someone enters the sangha for practice and/or requests to become a student, I will ask this person whether he or she is already connected to an other teacher or sangha. If that is the case I will ask him/her if possible to contact that teacher to discuss the situation and to reach a clear understanding. If it is about a request to become a student I will ask him/her to formally leave the previous teacher. I promise that I will not encourage sangha members or visitors to enter into a formal teacher student relationship and to leave the initiative for that completely with the other.

Openness and horizontality

I promise to work, together with the sangha, in processes of horizontal openness and sharing (such as the practice of council) so that we develop a culture of listening and speaking in safety and equality and to not avoid issues regarding ethics and ethical conduct.

Transparency

I promise to try and develop a healthy balance between openness and confidentiality in the sangha, and to be alert for possible conflicts of interests between myself and members of the sangha and between different members of the sangha. Whenever I become aware of such a conflict I will as soon as possible inform the board and whenever necessary or desirable inform Genno Roshi. I believe that the harmony and well-being of the sangha depend largely on openness and safety and this I feel is one of the most important responsibilities of teacher and sangha together. I will support the board whenever and where-ever I can and be clear and open in all areas of governance, decision making and finance. I will inform the board as much as possible and as soon as possible about any conflicts within the sangha and about any signals given concerning any kind of unethical behaviour in the sangha.

Awareness of this Code of Conduct

I promise to inform all those that enter the sangha of the existence of this Code of Conduct and will try to make sure that all sangha members are familiar with its content.