

Residential Training Guidelines and Agreements

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Great Vow Zen Monastery is a training center established for the purpose of enabling students of Zen Buddhism to deepen their practice in a residential environment. In choosing to enter into this intensive training you are making a commitment to discover new levels of understanding and meaning in your life. You will also learn to use tools that will help you end your own suffering and the suffering of others. As a resident you will be continually encouraged to investigate your own heart, mind and intentions and, at the same time, to serve the sangha and local community. The monastery is not just a nice place to live with a supportive group of like-minded people; it is a place in which you are called upon to explore the great matter of your own life and death.

The essence of Zen practice is to respond appropriately with your whole being to whatever life brings you in each moment. Life is unpredictable. Residency at Great Vow Zen Monastery reflects this unpredictability. It gives you the opportunity to meet life's challenges by adapting to the varying schedules and expectations; often visitors come, spontaneous meetings are held, and public events are frequent. Since our schedule is already demanding and our sleep periods are shortened, it is important to use all the tools we have acquired through our practice in responding smoothly and fully to these occurrences. In life we never know what is coming next, either from others or ourselves, but we can do our best to be open, balanced and tranquil in whatever circumstances arise.

As a resident you will be expected to participate fully in the training program by attending all meditation periods, formal meals, sesshin, sanzen and other group events. Our schedule is intentionally meant to be personally demanding because learning to adapt ourselves to challenging situations matures our spiritual practice.

As your practice deepens you may bear witness to the first noble truth (we all encounter obstacles) as it manifests in community life. The arising of internal and interpersonal dissatisfactions and conflicts is a normal part of life. How we work with them is the difference between a practice center and an ordinary job. Being willing to hold the tension between the practices of inner observation and letting go and sharing one's doubts and views is important. Developing tolerance for our internal experience and for others' different ways of being is a cornerstone of practice. All residents are asked to commit to using kind curiosity and active self-inquiry when problems and conflicts arise. Please look at a copy of the tri-fold brochure entitled *Sangha Harmony* for the guidelines for conflict resolution.

Great Vow Zen Monastery is under the spiritual direction of the teachers of Zen Community of Oregon. By becoming a resident you agree to follow their spiritual guidance and the leadership of the sangha.

NOTE: Nothing will be asked of any resident that is not in keeping with high ethical standards and appropriate interpersonal behavior.

Some of the primary responsibilities of Residential Training

1. To learn and apply tools to cut through fixed opinions, confusion and distraction.
2. To encounter personal challenges and barriers, and to learn to master them.
3. To learn to relate with kindness and cooperation in community living.
4. To explore the Great Mystery, Absolute Truth.

General Guidelines for Living at Great Vow Zen Monastery

Temple Work

Wholeheartedly participating in work such as, cooking, gardening, shopping and cleaning is a very important part of spiritual training. It is also the way the monastery is maintained for both residents and the community. Work areas (such as ZenWorks, kitchen, housekeeping, office, garden) present wonderful opportunities for everyday practice. It is critical that you participate fully and take responsibility for whatever task you are assigned. If you have specific limitations please tell the head of training or the work leader. Social visits, personal conversations and telephone calls should be limited to break periods.

Meals and Food

As a resident you are required to attend all formal meals. Meals are vegetarian. Grains, seasonal fruits and vegetables are emphasized. **We provide gluten free and vegan options with every meal. Other dietary preferences cannot be accommodated by our kitchen** (although serious medical food allergies are taken into consideration). Please do not cook or ask to cook special meals except on days off. Our basic attitude toward food is to appreciate whatever we are given. Please make it part of your practice to adapt yourself to the monastery diet, rather than trying to change the monastery to adapt to you. We accept all donations of vegetarian food whether it be organic, fast, junk, canned or food straight from the garden. We will serve it all and be grateful that we have been offered these gifts.

Please be mindful of taking only as much as you need during meals. (Make any medical reasons for avoiding or eating certain foods known to the monastery leaders and to those who do the cooking.)

Kitchen Use

The tenzo (head cook) is in charge of the kitchen. On days off residents *may* volunteer to bake or to cook meals. On days off we are

practicing *open kitchen*, where we eat primarily leftovers from the refrigerator. Do not use any food or ingredients without first checking with the tenzo to make sure they are available. Kitchen cleaning is shared among all residents. After clean-up there should be no dirty dishes, plastic bags, spilled food or kitchen appliances left on the counters. The floor should be swept and, if necessary, mopped. A general rule is to always clean up more than your share. Please keep the kitchen clean on days off. Please do no fasting without first consulting with one of the teachers.

Personal Time

Personal time is generally from Sunday afternoon through Tuesday morning or afternoon depending on the training period. Please use your time appropriately in accordance with your intention on coming to the monastery. Some suggestions for personal time activities are zazen, art, music, or other projects, going on a bike ride or doing other exercise (there are many bikes and helmets at the monastery), making use of our library or doing other reading, going on a monastery-sponsored trip, helping with extra monastery caretaking, volunteering in the local community, catching up on laundry, movie nights at the monastery, private retreat, etcetera. Short term residents are encouraged to consider not leaving the container of the monastery even during time off. However, this is ultimately your decision and doing other activities on time off is permitted. If you choose this, please be back on the grounds by 10PM Monday night and let the shuso know.

Activities after Evening Zazen

During zazen we are working on settling the waves of the mind. To support this continual process, reading after evening zazen is discouraged. The time after evening zazen and before lights out

should be honored as a time of stillness and contemplation. Activities such as drinking tea, taking a walk or continuing sitting or walking meditation, inside or out, are suggested. Lights out in the dorm at 10pm (closing rounds). Further, the dorms are considered quiet spaces at all times. Be aware that there may be someone resting in the dorms at any time on a break. Please don't turn lights on in the morning until the wake-up bell rings.

Visitors and Personal Guests

An important practice at the monastery is hospitality. This is both an offering to the community and part of our spiritual practice. Being gracious and welcoming to whoever comes is a test of our willingness to serve. Visitors may be given a tour of public rooms, served tea or invited for a meal (except during sesshin or workshops). Please let the tenzo (cook) and housekeeper know if a guest is coming. We ask for a donation for meals and overnight stays.

Personal guests of residents are welcome except during sesshin. Inform the director of training, shuso, and tenzo if you have invited someone for an overnight stay. You must vouch for the person's willingness to be respectful of the monastery's policies of conduct and schedule. As host, you must take responsibility for providing and cleaning bedding, towels and other things your guest may need or use, and for making sure they are taken care of and kept informed of what is happening. Do not expect other residents to entertain your guests for you.

Media Use

At the monastery we cultivate a still, clear and responsive mind. Since the use of media such as television, radio, musical devices, videos, dvds, computer games, etc will inevitably stir up the mind, we

minimize use of these while in training. For instance, we have no TV reception, and limit our movie viewing to Sunday and/or Monday evenings. The Sunday movie may be a recreational movie (themes or images of extreme violence, degradation or explicit sexuality are not permitted). On Monday nights a senior resident may offer a Dharma movie.

Music is restricted in various ways throughout the year. Generally, recorded music may be played on days off, but should not be heard by other residents; headphones are appropriate. Usually live music may also be played on days off and during break time. Please get permission to play any monastery instruments and be considerate of your noise level.

Computer and phone use during the scheduled week is also restricted in various ways throughout the year. During days off and during breaks, email may be checked and personal business attended to on designated computers. Cell phones may be used in front of the monastery or in the office (be considerate of others hearing). Please do not use them in the dorms. No texting, calls, or Internet use in the dorm rooms or general public spaces in the monastery. Playing computer games is not permitted. The telephone in the office may be used for personal calls with the permission of the office staff. Staff members may inevitably need to take care of monastery business on phone and computers outside of the general parameters for use. You are welcome to turn in your cell phone to the office staff during any part of your stay if it will help you to follow these guidelines.

Abbots' Teaching Library

The library in the center of the residents' sleeping area is primarily for the abbots and those who are preparing teachings. It is not primarily for residents' use. However, residents may use anything in the library as long as it is returned to the "return books here" shelf afterwards or returned to the precise location you found it. ***Nothing may be removed from the room except with express advance permission***

from one of the abbots. Please treat the library environment with care. The library is a quiet space; it is not to be used for conversation. The library is also the location of the Sangha Box. Any resident may write down and offer any concern, suggestion or appreciation. This may be done anonymously if desired. The ordained leaders will reflect

Drugs, Alcohol and Smoking

Alcohol, marijuana and illegal drugs are not permitted at the monastery; smoking cigarettes is discouraged. If you bring alcohol or drugs onto monastery grounds you will be asked to leave, period. If you have ever suffered from substance abuse please discuss your situation with one of the teachers or the director of training. If you must smoke cigarettes, please bring this to the director of training for discussion. Cigarette smoking is permitted in some cases (after discussion).

Gross Misconduct

Residents, whether on monastery grounds or elsewhere, are absolutely not to engage in any violence, pornography use or sexual misconduct. Weapons of any kind are not permitted on the grounds. Any case of gross misconduct as described here will result in your being asked to leave the monastery.

Medical

If you take prescription medicine for an on-going condition, or have any other medical issues, please inform the director of training before you enter training. The monastery does not have medical insurance for residents. You will be responsible for any medical treatment you may need.

Illness

When minor illness inevitably comes, plan on continuing the

monastery schedule, just as you would if you had important employment. We recommend resting when you are very sick with symptoms like fever or vomiting. With serious illness you will be encouraged to consult a physician. Part of the training is to show up for your life even when strong challenges present themselves and to discover the freedom that comes from releasing attachment to comfortable conditions. Our willingness to follow the schedule regardless of how we feel is also a way of supporting the monastic container and the practice of others. Of course this view must be balanced and you are encouraged to be well and take care of yourself within the parameters of the monastery schedule. Please consult the shuso if you get sick.

Silence

There are times in the monastery's rhythm when Noble Silence is primary. Generally, we are in silence from evening zazen until the clappers end silence during the next day's breakfast. This is true especially during sesshin, intensive training periods and after closing rounds at night. Each morning we have quiet work periods. Very loud talking and unnecessary noise are not appropriate at any time.

Zendo

The quiet and cleanliness of the zendo should be respected at all times. Please bear in mind that when the zendo is in use, activities that might be disruptive to meditation should be avoided or conducted very quietly. During zazen please be settled in your seat *before the han* (wooden block) to begin meditation finishes ringing. If you expect to find and try out seating supplies (bench, support cushions, blanket, etc.) come early so as not to cause undue disruptions at the last moment. Zendo clothing should be modest, loose fitting, clean, simple and presentable. Solid, dark or muted colors are preferred. Please do not wear watches, hats, socks, shorts, shirts with writing on them, noisy pants, short sleeves above the elbow, or tank tops in the zendo. Skirts should be full length.

Sanzen

Everyone will have weekly practice interviews with Hogen Roshi. Interviews are an opportunity to share your practice with someone experienced on the spiritual path. Interviews are an extension of our zazen. What is shared in interview is personal, and relevant to you and your practice in that moment. Please do not leak the energy of interview, by discussing it with others. This can compromise the trust and vitality of interview for both yourself and others.

Clothing in the Monastery

Please dress modestly while at the monastery, and consider how immodest dress or clothing that attracts attention to you may distract others from their practice. Do not wear shorts unless working outside or exercising. Shorts should be not shorter than just above the knee. Please don't wear them in the zendo for zazen or service, or at community meals. Tops should cover the chest and shoulders. Clothes should be loose fitting, and opaque. Please don't wear tops with words or pictures on them in the zendo. Please do not wear tight yoga pants or any very tightly fitting clothing.

Any resident who has been here for over six months is asked to wear a samu-e to the zendo for zazen and services, and to community meals.

Cleanliness

You will find that living at the monastery means living in a public environment. We try to maintain an uncluttered atmosphere

conducive to meditation. Please keep yourself and living quarters clean and neat.

Bathrooms are public spaces. "Leave no traces" is a good habit to cultivate in using the bathrooms. When you wash, wipe up all traces of water, soap or toothpaste around the sink. For the most part, personal toiletries (shampoo, razor, etc.) brought into the bathroom should be removed when you are finished. Replace rolls of toilet paper, paper towels or boxes of facial tissue as needed.

Relationships and Courtship

Your stay at the monastery is a time for intense practice. It is not the place or time to seek or develop a new romantic or sexual relationship or to solve relationship problems. If you find yourself attracted to someone physically or emotionally, please discuss the situation with an abbot or senior student so that together you can work out what would be best for your practice and the community. Exclusive friendships, consistently spending time alone with one person without inviting and including others, are also not permitted.

Becoming a resident means that you agree not to begin a romantic or sexual relationship until you and your potential partner have each been in residency for at least one year. If you feel you must enter into a sexual relationship during this time, you will be asked to leave the monastery. This may be a time to change your place of practice so that you can give your attention to developing a healthy relationship, which requires more time and attention than is available here. This rule is regarded as extremely important.

*please read "Clarifying the Relationship Guidelines"

Physical Touch

In a community in which we live and practice together physical contact can be misinterpreted or can be a catalyst for forming a sexual relationship. The standards for physical touch at the monastery may be more limited than what you are used to.

Consider your motivation when the desire to touch arises in you, especially towards a person you're attracted to. Be aware that others may have a different relationship to physical contact than you do. Know that your touch may be interpreted in a way you did not intend, or may make the person you touch uncomfortable. Please do not give massages.

Head Shaving

The only residents who are allowed to shave their heads are the ordained priests. Please do not shave your head for any reason.

Residential Fees

The initial cost for residential training is \$600 per month. The training fee covers room, meals, monthly sesshin, and most other retreats and workshops. Please continue to pay this fee for as long as you are able. No one is turned away for lack of funds. We offer three tiers for the monthly training fee. \$600 is the standard rate for one month. \$700 is the rate for those who are financially stable and able to assist in providing funds for residents/ applicants who are less financially well resourced. And \$500 is the rate for those who would benefit from financial assistance and avoid future hardship by receiving a lower rate for the training program.

Leaving the Monastery

Each person who joins the monastery does so for a specific amount of time. We ask that you keep whatever time commitment you make for residential training and not to leave until you have completed that time period. We encourage everyone to be realistic in their commitment.

Coming and Going

If you leave the monastery for any period of time, even on day off, please let the Head of Training or Shuso know. Please schedule medical, business, and social appointments on the day off (Mondays) and consult the head of training or Shuso if you cannot. See the time-off policy for guidelines about vacations and additional time-off.

The Ten Precepts

Residents agree to abide by ten Buddhist precepts at all times during the period of their stay. The first five are especially important. If you are concerned about unethical behavior on the part of others, please follow the procedures as specified in the *Sangha Harmony* tri-fold available in the front office, at the Portland Dharma Center or from any board member. There is sometimes a discussion of one of the first five precepts during lunch on Sunday. Anyone is welcome to attend.

The 10 precepts are:

1. Vowing not to kill, but to cherish all life.
2. Vowing not to steal, but to respect the things of others.
3. Vowing not to misuse sexual energy, but to be mindful and respectful.
4. Vowing not to lie, but to speak truthfully.
5. Vowing not to misuse drugs or alcohol, but to keep the mind clear.
6. Vowing not to speak about others' faults, but to be understanding and sympathetic.
7. Vowing not to praise oneself by criticizing others, but to overcome one's own shortcomings.
8. Vowing not to withhold spiritual or material aid, but to give freely when needed.
9. Vowing not to give vent to anger, but to seek its source.
10. Vowing not to speak ill of the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha), but to cherish and uphold them

Conclusion

All of the above rules and guidelines arise from our long experience in residential training. It is important to follow all of them. If you have difficulties with these or any other rules, or if you find yourself not wanting to abide by them, please talk with the director of training. It may be that it is time for you to leave the monastery, or it may be there is some training obstacle that needs attention. If you do not follow the rules, forms, or schedules, even after discussing the problem and working on it with the director of training or an abbot, you must leave. Except for cases of gross misconduct, no one will be asked to leave without discussion of the situation and attempts to work things out.

My request for residential training at Great Vow Zen Monastery is for the purpose of focused spiritual practice. I have read the 6-page document entitled "Residential Training Guidelines". I agree to live by these guidelines for the full period of my residency.

Signed:

Date: