



**Zenshinji**  
*Zen Mind Temple*  
*Tassajara Zen Mountain Center*

***Pure Standards***  
***(Guidelines of Conduct)***  
***for***  
***Practice Periods***  
*(revised June 2025)*

These *Pure Standards (Guidelines of Conduct, Monastic Practices)* along with the *Bodhisattva Precepts*, the *Practice Period Schedule*, and other monastic forms and ceremonies, create a container of support and nurturance for everyone. This is the body and mind of Zen training and practice. Please follow them completely and wholeheartedly.

*“To train constantly...requires unstinting support. The structure of the three-month Practice Period provides such support. It is the head and face of Buddha Ancestors. It has been intimately transmitted as their skin, flesh, bones, and marrow.”*

*- Eihei Dogen Zenji -*

*“Just sit and see what happens...Following the rules lets you find yourself...The rules are not something to restrict you, but something to support your practice.”*

*- Shunryu Suzuki Roshi -*

**TYPICAL DAILY SCHEDULE**

3:50 am	Wake-up bell
4:20	Zazen / Kinhin / Zazen
6:10	Morning Service
6:45	Oryoki Breakfast
7:55	Study
9:00	Soji (cleaning) or Dharma talk
9:50	Zazen / Kinhin / Zazen
11:20	Noon Service
11:30	Oryoki Lunch
1:15 pm	Work
4:15	Exercise / Bath
5:50	Evening Service
6:00	Oryoki Supper
7:30	Zazen / Kinhin / Zazen
9:00	Three Refuges
9:30	Firewatch / Lights out

## **ZENDO PRACTICE**

### **GENERAL ZENDO GUIDELINES**

- Be on time for all scheduled events: allow enough time to arrive and settle at your place before any event begins.
- Maintain quiet in and around the zendo. Do not speak in the zendo or on the zendo walkway.
- Walking, bowing, sitting, and rising from your seat should all be done silently. Muffle sounds such as coughing, sneezing, blowing the nose, yawning, and clearing the throat.
- Make sure your feet are clean before entering the zendo.
- Do not place your feet on the meal boards.
- Do not leave the zendo during zazen, except for dokusan or practice discussion, or in case of an emergency.
- If you are unable to attend any part of the monastic schedule, communicate the reason and any needs to the Ino. This may be done in person, by sending word with someone, or by leaving a note on the tenken pad.

### **ZENDO ATTIRE**

- Wear monastic robes for all zendo activities.
- Always wear at least one layer of clothing under your robe.
- Change in and out of robes in private.
- Keep robes clean and in good repair.
- Walk in shashu while wearing robes.
- It is traditional for priests to shave their heads; laypeople are requested not to do so (the closest setting on clippers is fine).
- If you have long hair, tie it back and wear it off the neck.
- Do not wear scented lotions or perfume.
- Do not wear nail polish.
- Do not wear jewelry, watches, or malas in the zendo.
- In cold weather, neutral colored slippers or socks may be worn in the zendo (remove for zazen).
- White socks (bessu or tabi if you have them) may be requested for special ceremonies.

### **ENTERING THE ZENDO**

- Remove shoes before stepping onto the walkway, and place them on the shoe rack.
- Carry okesa, rakusu, and oryoki at eye level in the zendo and at heart level outside the zendo, using both hands.
- During the han or densho, enter through the front door. At any other time, use the back door. Step over the threshold with the foot closest to the hinge side of the door. Take two steps forward and bow in gassho.
- Do not cross in front of the altar.
- When walking to your seat, as you pass the end of the tan behind the altar, stop and bow in shashu.
- Be in the zendo by the end of the second rolldown on the han or densho.
- If late, go to the back door and wait for the tenken. If the tenken has already entered the zendo, it is too late to enter.
- If too late, note it on the tenken pad and sit in the kaisando (if no one is in the kaisando, you may sit in the library).

### **KINHIN**

- Stay in the zendo for kinhin unless it is necessary to leave. Do not make coffee or tea during kinhin.

- Walk in the same order in which you were seated. Maintain the same pace as others, spacing yourself evenly between those in front and behind.
- When the kaishaku (clackers) are struck to end kinhin, walk rapidly back to your place.
- If you leave the zendo during kinhin, after using the toilet return to the zendo walkway and do kinhin there. You may re-enter the zendo after the three bells that signal zazen.

#### **SERVICE**

- Attend service unless you have been assigned work during this time.
- If you are late, enter through the back door. Do three bows behind the altar before going to your place.
- “Chant with your ears,” i.e., listen to and blend in with others and to the pace set by the mokugyo.

#### **ZENDO MEALS: ORYOKI PRACTICE**

- Receive all food as an offering.
- Attend all meals unless you are sick.
- Priests use traditional Soto Zen oryoki sets. Lay practitioners use three nesting bowls with white cloths. All wiping cloths are to be solid white. All utensils are to be wooden or lacquered and setsus are to be cloth-tipped.
- After the Buddha tray has been offered, it is too late to enter the zendo.
- Use oryoki bowls and utensils quietly.
- Clean oryoki on 4 & 9 days (i.e., personal days), and change setsu tip as necessary.
- After serving in the zendo, attend servers’ meals.

#### **DOKUSAN & PRACTICE DISCUSSION**

- The Abbot, Abbess, or Senior Dharma Teacher leading the Practice Period is available for dokusan, and the Abiding Teacher, Tanto and other Practice Leaders are also available for practice discussion.
- All students should be in regular communication with one (or more) practice leaders.
- Phone or Zoom dokusan or practice discussion is permitted during study period by permission of the Tanto. Phone meetings must be conducted in the phone booth. Please arrange details of Zoom dokusan with the Tanto.

#### **STUDY HALL PRACTICE**

- Be in study hall early enough to chant the opening verses with everyone (the verse is chanted five minutes after the railroad bell is rung).
- Read books related to Buddhism and Zen practice.
- All books in study should be wrapped in a sutra cloth and treated respectfully.
- Okesa and rakusu sewing may be done during study.
- If unable to be in study, please communicate with the doan taking attendance for that day, either personally or by note left with the attendance sheet in study hall.

#### **KITCHEN PRACTICE**

- If you have special dietary needs or need to use the kitchen, speak with the Tenzo to make arrangements. Do not take food from any storage areas without permission from the Tenzo.
- Do not use the kitchen as a passageway at any time.
- Refrain from entering the working area of the kitchen without permission.
- Wash your hands before serving or handling any food, or doing any kitchen work.

- The “back door” snack area is available from after lunch until the densho begins for evening service. Fruit and leftover medicine bowl are available after supper. Take food and leave the kitchen before eating.
- Refrain from taking food from the walk-in or other storage areas without permission of the Tenzo.
- Maintain silence in the snack area.
- Sit down while eating or drinking.
- Refrain from giving food to Tassajara pets or to wildlife.

## **WORK PRACTICE**

- Be ready for work when the work bell sounds and go directly to the work meeting.
- Maintain silence as much as possible during work time (maintain functional speech).
- Do not bring food or drinks (except water bottles) to work meeting.
- Always clean and return tools and equipment at the end of work.
- Do personal work during free time.

## **BATHHOUSE PRACTICE**

- Bathe during scheduled bath times.
- Before bathing, offer three standing bows at the altar and recite the bath *gatha* (verse) silently. When leaving the baths, bow once to the altar.
- Shower thoroughly with soap before using the “plunges” or the steam room.
- Observe silence at the bathhouse.
- Do not enter the bathhouse on either side during Abbot’s bathtime.
- On 4 & 9 days (personal days), baths are open and quiet talking is permitted after Manjushri’s bath following breakfast until evening service.
- Do not read at the baths.
- Men and women are to bathe only on their respective sides of the bathhouse. Transgender and/or non-binary students shall bathe on whichever side of the bathhouse that best corresponds to their gender identity. Private gender-neutral tub rooms are available for everyone.

## **PRACTICING WITH ILLNESS**

- When sick, you may get your own food if you are able and eat silently in the dining room. If you need food, hot water, or other help, inform the tenken or Ino by sending a messenger or leaving a note on the tenken pad.
- When you have recovered sufficiently to rejoin the monastic schedule, begin by attending zazen or service, a zendo meal, or other Dharma event.

## **PRACTICING WITH RELATIONSHIPS**

- If you are 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.
- Students are asked not to begin a new romantic or sexual relationship during Practice Period, especially during one’s Tangaryo Practice Period. This includes refraining from expressing romantic or sexual interest to that person.
- Do not begin a new sexual relationship at any time in which either person has not practiced residentially at San Francisco Zen Center for at least six months.
- SFZC recognizes that harm and confusion can result from relationships which entail power

inequalities. Consultation with, and in some cases approval from, leadership\* is required when people of unequal authority or seniority, or who are in a supervisory work or practice relationship, consider engaging in a romantic or sexual relationship.

- For more details and guidance related to sexual conduct at SFZC, please refer to the discussion under the third precept of the Ethical Principles statement of SFZC (<https://www.sfzc.org/about-sfzc/how-sfzc-operates/ethical-principles>).  
\* Note: The level of leadership approval varies depending on levels of seniority. Please refer to the 3rd Precept, #3 and #4 at the link.
- Do not engage in a sexual relationship in which either person is under 18 years of age under any circumstances. Sexual relations between an adult and a minor are unlawful.
- Do not engage in casual sexual relations.
- Do not touch or hug anyone without their consent.
- Having followed these guidelines, those considering starting a new romantic relationship are asked to speak with a practice leader for assistance in reconciling the often conflicting demands of a new relationship and the Tassajara schedule, as well as its impact on the community.

## **GENERAL MONASTIC PRACTICES**

### **SAFETY**

- Due to great fire danger, never leave a burning lamp unattended. Candles are not permitted.
- Extinguish burning incense before leaving your room.
- Be aware that the trails in the Ventana Wilderness area surrounding Tassajara may not be well marked or maintained, and that it is very easy to get lost. If lost, do not deviate from your planned route. If it is nearing evening, find shelter for the night.
- Prepare for a long hike on an unfamiliar trail by consulting with someone who knows the trail.
- Be sure to sign out and in again at the Stone Office, which includes communicating your expected route and return time.
- Be aware of (and try to avoid) poison oak, rattlesnakes, and ticks. Ask someone on senior staff if you need assistance.

### **CLARITY OF MIND AND HEALTH**

- Do not use or possess alcohol or any illegal or other inappropriate drugs. Not following this guideline may result in being asked to leave the monastery.
- The use of tobacco is discouraged. Smoking is allowed in the smokers' area only (near the front gate). The smoking area is silent during scheduled silent times. Smoking inside buildings or in the wilderness is prohibited.

### **PRACTICING WITH MINIMAL TECHNOLOGY**

- Be prepared for very limited connectivity, and to fully engage in a respite from the distractions of the internet and electronic media that life at Tassajara offers.
- MINDFUL USAGE: Do not use electronic devices for entertainment (e.g., movies, games). However, electronic devices are permitted for listening to dharma talks, reading, or taking photos. In preserving the contemplative atmosphere of Tassajara, please refrain from use of technology in public spaces.
- RESTRICTED INTERNET ACCESS: Internet access is very limited, allowed solely on Tassajara devices, and only at specific times in the schedule. All personal internet use is by permission of the Director, and should be functional in nature.
- CONNECTIVITY RESTRICTIONS: Personal phones do not receive a signal at Tassajara and are

blocked from accessing the minimal internet in the valley. For this reason, please be prepared for your phone's usual connectivity to be completely disabled. We suggest the following preparations:

- NOTIFY OTHERS: Inform family, friends, and colleagues of your lack of availability. You may receive messages at Tassajara's emergency contact number (831-659-2229) and/or at the [tassajara@sfzc.org](mailto:tassajara@sfzc.org) email.
- FINANCIAL PREPARATIONS: Complete any necessary banking transactions and bill payments before arrival.
- OFFLINE CONTENT: Download any reading materials or other essential documents you might need.
- "OUT-OF-OFFICE" SETUP: Configure your automatic email responder and update your voicemail. If you plan to check voicemail while at Tassajara, make sure you set up a pin number, enable remote access, and test that it works before coming to Tassajara. Note that incoming calls do not reach Tassajara. For many applications it is useful to download and set up an offline authenticator app that uses a time-based one-time password (TOTP) algorithm and/or set up google backup codes.
- EMERGENCY INFO: Carry important phone numbers and addresses, including Tassajara's contact information.
- MEDICAL INFORMATION: Especially if you have a medical condition, it is helpful to know your nurse hotline phone number, in case of an emergency.

#### **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 for help (this could include facilitating a conversation).
- Tassajara / SFZC prohibits verbal, physical, and sexual harassment. This includes refraining from contact with a person who has requested no contact. Please speak with the Director or Tanto if you believe that this policy has been violated.

#### **MAINTAINING A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT**

Given that Zen Buddhism teaches that everyone has the capacity to awaken, and that one's own liberation is bound up with that of all other sentient beings, we recognize how embracing diversity enriches our community and enhances collective growth and understanding. It is important to Tassajara's and SFZC's mission to maintain an environment where all who come to Tassajara can feel welcomed, included, and treated equitably. This includes people of every gender, age, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, political belief, and physical ability.

- Students are encouraged to be welcoming and kind to all who come to Tassajara, whether they are a part of the practice period, or if they have arrived unofficially. If someone is lost, courteously help them find their next destination, or ask the Director, Abbot/Abiding teacher, or a member of senior staff to help.
- Tassajara / SFZC welcomes and invites feedback about any experiences related to diversity, equity, inclusion, or accessibility. If you feel you have been harmed by the words or actions of another, or if you observe a harmful situation, please speak to the Abbot/Abiding Teacher, Director, a Practice Leader, or Senior Staff member. You may also submit an anonymous DEIA Feedback Form online at [www.sfzc.org/deia-feedback-form](http://www.sfzc.org/deia-feedback-form).

#### **LIVING OFF THE GRID**

Tassajara is off the grid. Living off the grid requires a judicious use of our limited solar electricity. Excessive load engages the generator, which burns fossil fuels to provide energy. Therefore:

- Do not bring non-rechargeable electrical equipment to Tassajara without permission from

the Director.

- Personal electrical devices with a heating element are strictly forbidden (e.g. irons, blow dryers, hot water kettles, toasters, etc.)
- Recharge electrical devices in your room during daylight hours only to avoid using fossil fuels.
- Turn off all lights when you are the last to leave a room.
- Be aware that spring water may be very limited, especially in drought years. The community may be requested to conserve water by taking shorter showers, etc.
- Personal telephone calls may be made in the phone booth or in the office during free time when silence is not being observed. If someone needs to make a business call in the office, end your call as soon as possible. End calls within ten minutes if someone 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.
- Leave Tassajara grounds and surrounding wilderness as you find them. Refrain from creating structures, earth art, altars, stupas etc.

#### OTHER

- When arriving at and leaving Tassajara, please check in with the Director and Ino. At either time you may offer incense in the zendo.
- Plan to stay at Tassajara during the entire practice period. If a medical or personal emergency arises, speak to the Director for permission to leave and for help in travel arrangements. Inform the Ino if leaving.
- Observe silence from evening zazen until after lunch 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.
- Refrain from singing, humming or whistling within Tassajara. Do not call to others from a distance.
- Do not play musical instruments or listen to music during Practice Period, with or without headphones.
- When passing others, stop and bow in gassho except in the courtyard, the bathhouse, on the zendo walkway, in enclosed spaces, and during soji.
- Do not run in the central area of Tassajara.
- Stop and bow to the toilet altar when entering and leaving toilets.
- Turn off all lights when you are the last to leave a room.
- By evening firewatch, be in your room with lights out.

If you have questions about, or difficulties with any of these practice guidelines, please speak with a practice leader.

*“The assembly of practitioners in the hall should blend like milk and water to support the activity of the Way. Although now for some period you are guest and host, later you will be Buddha Ancestors equally throughout time. Therefore, you should not forget the feeling of gratitude. It is rare to meet one another and to practice what is rare to practice. This is called the body and mind of Buddha-Dharma.*

*– Eihei Dogen Zenji -*