

Ethics and Precepts in Sangha Relationships

Zen Practice in Community

Purpose of This Document

In a Sangha, we are challenged to achieve a balance between “single effort” in our personal practice, and “harmonious effort” with all other members of the community. On one hand, we strive to be authentic, true to ourselves, and to honor our own path. On the other hand, we strive to be kind, compassionate, respectful, and considerate of others. Ideally these two sides of practice become naturally aligned as we integrate the Dharma into our lives. This document describes ethical guidelines and expectations that accompany the process of that alignment in our Sangha.

Core Values

This document presupposes the following ethical values:

- Compassion
- Respect
- Integrity
- Trust
- Kindness

Dharma Rain Zen Center is committed to providing an environment that is free from physical violence, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, disparaging or discriminatory treatment, dishonesty, and substance abuse. These behaviors are incompatible with the core values and goals of this Sangha. Procedures for addressing such conduct are described in the document *Ethics Complaint and Dispute Resolution Processes*.

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Section One: Sangha Relationships, Connection and Authority

Becoming a Buddhist begins with taking refuge in the Three Treasures: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Relationships within a practice community, or Sangha, are a reflection of these refuges. At the heart of it, taking refuge is an act of respect and veneration. Ultimately this refuge is in one's own deepest nature, the truth itself, and all beings. In practice, taking refuge includes cultivating an attitude of respect and veneration for the historical Buddha, respect and veneration for the Dharma in the form of the Sutras and other teachings, and respect and veneration for the Sangha in the form of the lineage down to the present time. In a community like Dharma Rain Zen Center, this finds expression in an attitude of respect and veneration for the temple itself. This attitude, when cultivated deeply, extends to the various teachers, to the practice traditions, and to the other members of the temple. This respect and veneration is deeply precious, even sacred. As a result, holding authority within the temple becomes a sacred trust to the degree that authority is held.

Respect and Kindness: At Dharma Rain Zen Center, we recognize a reciprocal relationship between respect and kindness. A graduated level of expectation and ethical accountability is directly related to the degree of formal commitment to practice and to this Center, and to the amount of authority held. This graduated expectation begins with the basic respect for others, for the temple, and for the tradition expected of all who come through the doors. As authority within the temple increases, the importance of kindness and compassion also increases, because differences in power increase the potential for doing harm. Various levels of involvement are described below. As the level of commitment and authority increases, members are held to the levels of expectation for previous levels as well as for the one they occupy at any given point in time.

Levels of Involvement in the Sangha

1. Casual participation. Since the temple is open to all for most events, expectations are very simple. We expect those attending to be respectful of others, to be courteous, to respect the property of others, and to participate in a way that respects the temple and the practice itself while they are attending. No other expectation or standards apply.

2. Membership. Becoming a member of the temple often, but not always, includes developing on-going relationships with other members as friends or simply as fellow Sangha members. It can include taking on temple jobs and developing relationships with teachers. As involvement becomes on-going, the expectation of basic respect for the temple and other members continues when one is not actually at the temple or temple functions. As involvement deepens, members are expected to begin using the precepts as a point of reference in their lives. The precepts are also useful in suggesting methods of, and vocabulary for, conflict resolution of various degrees of formality between peers, or between members and teachers.

3. Full Members. When members take the precepts formally (Jukai), support the temple, and participate regularly, they are called "Full Members" and become part of the fabric of the temple. "Taking" the precepts means to hold them, to reflect on them and measure all aspects of one's

life and actions by them, to let this have an effect, and to let their meaning unfold. At some point an aspiration to embody the precepts can start to develop. Because they are more established in the Sangha, full members need to be considerate of newer members. A Full Member, for example, should be careful not to make overtures toward a romantic relationship with a new member until that person has established herself or himself within the Sangha. Full Members are encouraged to treat newer members with both respect and kindness and to try to meet them in helpful ways.

4. Residents. Members in residential practice are subject to all other expectations that apply to them (such as those for Lay Disciples, etc.), but they are also subject to their Resident's Contract. In addition, we expect residents to be respectful of all who come into the temple, and to give them the space to feel comfortable. This means, for example, that flirting with someone who has come in for a workshop is inappropriate.

5. Board and Council Members. To be eligible for election to the Board of Directors a person must be a Full Member (see above definition). Board members have a responsibility to act in the best long-term interests of the Sangha, and to act as responsible stewards of the Sangha's resources. In their relationships to other members, they should endeavor to be responsive to members' questions and concerns.

In addition to the Board, there are other major councils that oversee various aspects of Dharma Rain Zen Center life and function. Their obligations with regard to other Sangha members are the same as that of Board members. The four councils and their duties, described very briefly, are the Dharma Council which oversees teaching functions, the Mandala Council which oversees staffing and jobs, the Elders Council which holds long-term institutional memory and has specific duties with regard to the other councils, and the Ethics Council, whose function is described in detail in the document *Ethics Complaint and Dispute Resolution Processes*.

6. Lay Disciples. Because they are formally connected to the Center and the lineage, we expect Lay Disciples to conduct their private lives in a way that would reflect well on the temple. We expect them to be honest and ethical in their personal and business dealings, to be faithful in personal relationships, and to be generally law-abiding good citizens of the community. These matters are generally considered training issues between the disciple and his or her teacher. The ethical guidelines for informal teaching relationships, however, (*see item three under Authority and Degrees of Formal Teaching Relationship on page 5*) apply to Lay Disciples when they act as Practice Advisors, when they are leading retreats, classes, or workshops, or whenever someone comes to them for advice or guidance because of their position as a Lay Disciple. Also, because of their increased visibility within the Sangha, they should be mindful of the perception of authority new members will have regarding them, and be careful of inadvertently taking undue advantage. Kindness and consideration for newer members becomes more important because of the perceived authority held by Lay Disciples.

7. Lay Teachers. The level of expectation and standards (accountability) are basically the same as for Lay Disciples. The perception of authority is even greater, and the Lay Teacher should be mindful of this. Accountability will go up whenever a formal teaching relationship with another member develops, and Lay Teachers then become subject to the guidelines in item ten.

8. Monk Disciples. The level of expectation and standards (accountability) are the same as for Lay Disciples, except that any aspect of their public conduct may become a matter for the Ethics Council. Usually, however, it should remain within the purview of the master/disciple relationship. Taking on a formal teaching relationship with a student is not permitted for monk disciples.

9. Junior and Transmitted Priests as staff members. The level of expectation and standards (accountability) are basically the same as for Monk Disciples. As Junior Priests (who have completed five years of training) take on more teaching authority their accountability is like that of Lay Teachers. Transmitted priests are even more independent, and may, with their teacher's permission and the agreement of the Dharma Council, take personal students formally. Issues between such teachers and their students should first go to the teacher's own teacher. If necessary, an issue could be escalated to become a matter for either the Dharma Council or the Ethics Council as deemed appropriate.

10. All Formal Teaching Relationships. Any undue advantage taken of formal students is a serious matter. Unconscious, heedless or careless actions that are detrimental to the welfare of formal students indicate a need for further training or education, and may become a matter for the Ethics Council. Formal students should remember, however, that they always have autonomy over their personal decisions (with regard to their health or finances, for example), within the guidelines of their commitment. For Lay Disciples, this means they always have the choice to back out of a training position if the requirements are more than they feel ready to meet. For Monk Disciples, training positions may be quite uncomfortable at times, and adjustments to them are a matter of discernment between the disciple and the teacher.

11. Abbots. To the degree that it reflects on the Center, anything abbots do in public, as well as anything they do in private that affects their ability to perform their duties, may be subject to a formal review process by the Ethics Council. Because abbots have some degree of authority over all aspects of temple life, their conduct with respect to all those who come to the Center should be undertaken with due care. Despite this high level of visibility and accountability, abbots do have the right to privacy when alone. Serious allegations concerning abbots, if found substantive, require bringing in outside mediation and assistance. The Ethics Council holds the procedures for investigating such allegations when deemed necessary in a joint decision with the Board of Directors.

12. Teachers Without Teachers. Whenever a Lay Teacher or Transmitted priest's own teacher is not present (deceased, no longer active, absent for an extended time, etc.), their public conduct and their relationships with their own students, formal or informal, is subject to oversight by their elders and peers. Because they carry authority within the lineage, they need to be mindful of this with respect to how their actions affect others, and they are subject to the ethical guidelines when they are working within the Dharma Rain Zen Center organization. Should a question about this arise, see item 14 below.

13. Visiting Teachers. Visiting teachers, when they stay for a night or two for any reason, are treated as guests. When they have regular interactions with the DRZC Sangha for anything more than a few days, they should be made aware of these guidelines. When a visiting teacher is in

residence, or will be in regular contact with the DRZC Sangha even though not in residence, a residence interview should be done, and an agreement signed that makes the expectations and boundaries clear. They are also made aware of this ethics document and the expectations it describes. Should a teacher from another lineage develop a long-term role at Dharma Rain, they would be treated in much the same way as “Teachers Without Teachers” above.

14. When Problems or Questions Arise. Any individual may report an ethical concern to the shuso, the Abbot, a teacher, a lay disciple, or a member of the Ethics Council. Those unsure about whom to contact can ask the shuso to direct them to an appropriate person. Members may be advised to work things out informally or with a mediator. If necessary, these concerns could become a matter for either the Dharma or Ethics Council as deemed appropriate. The Dharma Council, for example, would handle matters regarding methods and skillful means, while the Ethics Council would handle matters of misconduct. Conflicts and issues between members may be handled in much the same way. This process is described in detail in the document *Ethics Complaint and Dispute Resolution Processes*.

Authority and Degrees of Formal Teaching Relationship

1. Peer relationships: relationships between Sangha members in general. Quite often, this is the nature of an interaction, even when a difference of rank or status exists. Most of the time, interactions between Sangha members at Dharma Rain Zen Center are fairly informal. To a teacher, Lay Disciple, or a long term full member, these informal interactions may have the character of peer interactions, but not always. When they involve a newer member, however, that new member will often be very aware of the authority held by a teacher, Lay Disciple, or full member. Because of this, members who hold authority within the community should remember to emphasize kindness and be very careful in their interactions with newer members or any member with less authority.

2. Mentor: a Lay Disciple acting as a Practice Advisor to a new member is an example of a mentor relationship. Also, to a lesser degree, any Full Member helping out a new member has aspects of being a mentor. There is some on-going authority, even though the relationship may be fairly informal.

3. Teacher/student informally: the relationship of a priest or lay teacher to members who come regularly, developed more or less depending on the wishes and intent of the member, is one of informal teacher/student. Coming to sanzen/interview or attending a retreat or sesshin led by a teacher are examples of informal teacher/student relationship. The teaching authority does not extend beyond the events in which the teaching relationship occurs. For example, the leader of a retreat holds a degree of formal spiritual authority during the retreat. Extending that authority after the retreat is a misuse of it. The teacher is responsible for making this clear.

4. Teacher/student formally: teacher to Lay Disciple. Lay Disciples maintain complete autonomy over their personal lives. The authority of the teacher is in guiding their Zen practice and meditation, and pointing out to what degree their actions and practice conform to the traditions of Soto Zen and the expectations of Lay Disciples within this Sangha. As with the master/disciple relationship, the responsibility of the teacher is to bring the student into a mature

and autonomous relationship with the practice and the Dharma.

5. Master/disciple: transmitted priest to monk ordained. Rules such as the Taitaikoho and the *Eihei-shingi* guide the monk's deference to the teacher. They maintain autonomy in all personal decisions such as their health care choices and their personal finances, however. Monk disciples serve the temple in their daily lives, and they are subject to rules of discipline. Because of this, the highest level of ethical restraint is expected of the teacher. This does not mean, however, that the teacher has to treat the student with kid gloves. Just the opposite, because the teacher can push the student quite hard, the teacher must never take undue advantage of that power. The responsibility of the master in this relationship is to bring the disciple into a mature and autonomous understanding of the practice and the Dharma.

Section Two - The Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts

A Path of Practice and Guidelines for Sangha Relationships

At Dharma Rain Zen Center, the Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts are central to the teaching and practice of the Soto Zen path of Buddhism. Precept study along with zazen practice is the foundation of all we offer. We return to precept study each year before the Jukai retreat in March, and we offer a daily practice of precept study as a way of self-reflection that becomes, in effect, our koan method. This forms the basis of a life-long practice that is described in the Precept Study booklet recommended to Dharma Rain Zen Center members.

Practice with the precepts begins with *sange*, then taking refuge, followed by the Three Pure Precepts. Next we come to the ten grave precepts where ethical considerations are most apparent. The precepts are discussed here as a way of understanding Sangha relationships, authority, and our mutual obligations to each other.

SANGE

*All my past and harmful karma,
Born from beginningless greed, hatred, and delusion,
Through body, speech, and mind,
I now fully avow.*

Sange means contrition, which is, in essence, just admitting we are not perfect. The path of practice opens when we can admit our personal limitations. When members are willing to do this, relations with others become much easier. Harmony in the Sangha depends on this more than anything else.

THREE REFUGES

*I take refuge in the Buddha,
I take refuge in the Dharma,
I take refuge in the Sangha.*

In essence, this means to take refuge in one's own deepest nature, to trust in the truth itself, and to take one's place in relationship to everything. As stated in the very beginning of Section One, relationships in a practice community are a reflection of the three refuges, and it bears repeating here. In practice, taking refuge includes cultivating an attitude of respect and veneration for the historical Buddha, respect and veneration for the Dharma in the form of the Sutras and other teachings, and respect and veneration for the Sangha in the form of the lineage down to the present time. In the life and practice at Dharma Rain Zen Center, this finds expression in an attitude of respect and veneration for the temple itself. This attitude, when cultivated deeply, extends to the various teachers, to the practice traditions, and to the other members of the temple. This respect and veneration is deeply precious, even sacred. As a result, holding authority within the temple becomes a sacred trust to the degree that authority is held.

THREE PURE PRECEPTS

Cease From Evil – Release All Self Attachment

This is the house of all the ways of Buddha; this is the source of all the laws of Buddhahood.

The essence of this precept is about cessation, coming to “zero.” In practice, it is about dropping our agendas, aggression, defensiveness, and deeply ingrained habit energy. When we do this, we become open to conditions in front of us. This precept relates directly to sangha, so harmonious Sangha relationships depend on the willingness of all Sangha members to practice this precept.

Do Only Good – Take Selfless Action

The Dharma of the Annutara Samyak Sambodi is the Dharma of all existence, never apart from the present moment.

The essence of this precept is in expressing the best in ourselves. In practice, it is about finding original mind, beyond all karmic conditioning, and taking action that is free of habit energy, becoming clear, open, and joyful, within the Sangha and with all beings.

Do Good For Others – Embrace All Things And Conditions

Leap beyond the holy and the unholy. Let us rescue ourselves together with all beings.

The essence of this precept is about including everything within our practice. It requires us to stretch beyond the places where we are comfortable so that we grow. In Sangha relationships it refers to not avoiding the difficult, challenging elements of practice as well as developing our own unique abilities.

THE TEN GRAVE PRECEPTS

The Ten Grave Precepts provide an excellent way to keep an eye on our own behavior. They are guidelines to ethical conduct, but they are also a description of how people naturally behave when their actions flow from their own buddha nature. The Ten Grave Precepts are listed here, with a general description of their application in the life of the Sangha, followed by a description of how they can be viewed in different combinations of Sangha relationships. When reading them, bear in mind that the more basic levels apply to the increasingly formal levels; that is to say, the considerations of Member to Member relationships also apply to Master/Disciple relationships.

The first three precepts are about karma of body. They are discussed in terms of different levels of commitment and expectation. After that, the different levels have more to do with deeper levels of training, and can be applied to anyone going deeply into practice, not just to those in more formal roles.

1. Do not kill – Cultivate and Encourage Life

In the realm of the everlasting Dharma, holding no thought of killing is the Precept of Not Killing.

The life of Buddha increases with life; no life can be cut off. Continue the life of Buddha; do not kill Buddha.

In essence, this precept addresses aversion. When we experience so much aversion that the desire to cut something out of the mandala of existence arises, that is the mind of killing. On a basic, practical level, this precept expresses the intention to live compassionately and harmlessly. When understood in its broadest context, not killing can also be understood as not harming, especially not harming the body or psyche of another.

Therefore, physical violence and abusive behavior (which includes physical threats, extreme displays of anger and maliciousness) can be understood as a kind of “killing.”

In keeping with the aspiration of harmlessness, all firearms and other weapons designed principally for taking life have no place within Dharma Rain practice places.

Examples of the spirit of this precept applied to Sangha relations

1. **Member to Member.** When at Dharma Rain Zen Center, members are encouraged to be careful not to kill the spirit of practice in general, or the enthusiasm of others, while at the same time cultivating an appreciation for the life of practice in themselves and others. Cynicism and sarcasm, for example, can suffocate another’s faith in the practice. Practice with this precept also means not to kill the honest spirit of inquiry in oneself or in others that leads to deep questioning, sometimes of the forms and traditions of Buddhism itself, and in particular, those here at Dharma Rain. In addition, all members are encouraged to investigate the literal meaning of not taking life as presented in the Kyojukaimon as a way to deepen appreciation for life, and to deepen insight.
2. **Teacher/Student – Formal.** The teacher should be careful not to kill the vibrant, individual expression of lay life in the student, while cultivating and encouraging the life of practice, which includes questioning and discovery. The student should be careful not to kill the life of practice that connects the student to all life in an open way, while cultivating an appreciation for the life of practice seen in other Sangha members.
3. **Master/Disciple.** The master should be careful not to kill the spirit and enthusiasm of the disciple, while cultivating and encouraging the life of Buddhist practice and the spirit of discipleship in the disciple. The disciple should be careful not to kill the Buddha Way with selfish enthusiasm or attachment to self-view, while cultivating the life of discipleship, which requires humility and deference. When the master and disciple are not a good fit for each other, this may prove difficult to accomplish. Therefore, care should be taken before entering into this relationship. Ending it, or transferring discipleship to a more compatible teacher, may be the best course of action in some circumstances.

2. Do Not Steal – Honor the Gift Not Yet Given

In the realm of the unattainable Dharma, holding no thought of gain is the Precept of Not Stealing.

The self and the things of the world are just as they are; the mind and its object are one. The gateway to Enlightenment stands open wide.

In essence, this precept addresses grasping. We practice with this precept by letting things be as they are. Working with it expresses a commitment to live from a generous heart. At a personal level, stealing, or taking that which is not yet given, harms the person who steals as well as the one who is stolen from. On a community level, through the damage of trust, stealing can harm or even destroy the environment for Zen practice, depriving many people of the opportunity. Not stealing also means not to take undue advantage of others either inside or outside the Sangha. Those who handle Sangha funds or other assets also have a special responsibility to take care of them and avoid their deliberate misuse or misappropriation, both of which are institutional forms of stealing.

In addition, we recognize that the misuse of authority and status is a form of taking what is not given. Within the complex life of the Sangha various hierarchical levels of authority and seniority play a role in some situations and not in others. It is particularly important that individuals in positions of trust do not misuse their status or authority as a way to achieve special privileges or to inappropriately influence others. On the other hand, stubborn or presumptuous challenging of authority is also taking a gift not yet given, as it is asserting an authority one is not authorized to wield.

Examples of the spirit of this precept applied to Sangha relations:

1. **Member to Member.** Members are encouraged to cultivate an attitude of patience with each other regarding the amount of time or other resources given to the Center, to practice, or to others in the Sangha either collectively or singly. When we give a lot of ourselves we sometimes expect others to do the same. Instead, in keeping this precept, we honor the gift not yet given when we allow others to come into their own relationship to the Dharma in their own time and in their own way. In addition, all members are encouraged to investigate the literal meaning of not stealing as presented in the *Kyojukai* as a way to understand our relationship to all things, and to deepen insight. This precept should be considered in conjunction with the eighth precept, “Do Not Be Mean with Dharma or Wealth. Share Understanding, Give Freely of Self.”
2. **Teacher/Student – Formal.** The teacher should not take the respect or generosity of students for granted, and should instead honor the process of lay students finding their way into a healthy relationship with the teacher and the practice tradition. The student should not assume a position of authority with regard to the Dharma until offered that opportunity by the teacher, practicing with “The self and the things of this world are just as they are.” When authority is offered, students should follow the guidelines for teachers as expressed in the section on informal teacher/student relationships. Students are encouraged to honor the process with patience and wait until the gift of authority with regard to the lineage tradition is freely given.
3. **Master/Disciple.** The master should not take the deference of disciples for granted, or as something due to them personally. The master should honor the process of disciples finding their way to respectful deference as they open to it naturally. A disciple should not assume the position of a peer with regard to the master unless it is offered by the master, nor take positions of authority in relationship to others until the master offers the disciple the opportunity to move into that position. In that case, disciples should follow the guidelines for teachers as expressed in the section on teacher/student relationships. Disciples are encouraged to honor the process with patience and wait until the gift of

authority is freely given, demonstrating an understanding of the “unattainable” nature of the Dharma. In addition, ordained members, particularly ordained residents, should be aware that temple resources are given by the Sangha to support the practice and purpose of the temple and should never be taken thoughtlessly or used selfishly.

3. Do Not Misuse Sexuality – Remain Faithful in Relationships.

In the realm of the ungilded Dharma, not coveting or creating a veneer of attachment is the Precept of Not Misusing Sexuality.

The Three Wheels are pure and clear. When there is nothing to desire, we follow the way of all Buddhas.

In essence, this precept is about being clear and unadorned, and allowing others to be so as well. In practice, it addresses confusion with regard to personal relationships. From the beginning we have a subtle yet profound relationship to all things and all beings. Working with this precept is appreciating that connection just as it is. At the same time, the Dharma Rain Sangha recognizes that sexuality is as much a part of the field of practice as any other aspect of our daily lives. Acknowledging and honoring our sexuality is part of creating an environment where conscious, mindful and compassionate relationships can be cultivated.

Special care must be taken when people of unequal status or authority enter into any form of a romantic relationship. In particular, there are two forms of relationships which can lead to great harm and confusion. Therefore both are considered a misuse of sexuality within our community.

First, it is considered a misuse of sexuality for an adult within Dharma Rain to engage in sexual behavior with anyone at Dharma Rain who is a minor. Full responsibility for avoiding such relationships lies with the adult.

Second, it is considered a misuse of authority, responsibility and sexuality for a Dharma Rain teacher to engage in sexual behavior with his or her student. If a teacher and/or student feel at risk of violating this guideline, they should suspend their teacher-student relationship and seek counsel with a Dharma Rain teacher of senior standing.

Sexual advances or overt activity that violates a previous commitment, including practice vows, can cause harm to others. When it includes deception, this breaks additional precepts. When others are drawn into the deception, it creates disharmony in the community.

Everyone coming to Dharma Rain in any capacity has the right to be free from sexual harassment. Continued expression of sexual or romantic interest after being informed that such interest is unwelcome is a misuse of sexuality, and possibly authority as well. A subtler level of this is drawing another into one’s field of influence through a “veneer of attachment.” Generally known as “flirtation,” this is considered a normal part of life. Priests, teachers, and priests in training, however, are held to a different standard with regard to this, even if they are “unattached.” Cultivating an understanding of this takes place in the teacher/student relationship. At the same time, students or others with less authority need to become aware of their own actions regarding this precept.

Examples of the spirit of this precept applied to Sangha relations:

1. **Member to Member.** Members are encouraged to cultivate clear and open relationships with each other that are free of grasping and aversion. Actions that are “objective,” as in pursuing another person, or “subjective,” trying to attract another person, may run counter to the spirit of this precept when they are habitual, cross a boundary or a previous commitment, or when undesired by the other person. Practicing with this precept is moving toward “*When there is nothing to desire, we follow the way of all Buddhas.*” When we keep this precept, we meet others without personal agendas and give them the gift of participation in the Sangha in an uncomplicated way. Relationships will naturally grow and develop, and some will become romantic in nature. Practicing openhandedness with this is the essence of this precept. Established members should allow new members time to establish themselves in the community. Lay Disciples are required to allow a new member at least six months before approaching them. General members are encouraged to do the same.
2. **Teacher/Student – Formal.** The teacher is responsible for maintaining safe boundaries, emotional as well as physical, regarding, regarding the intimacy that develops as an important element in the teacher/student relationship. Taking undue advantage of the vulnerability of a student who is opening up in an important way can cause severe damage and must be avoided. Teachers should be aware of transference and counter transference, and take responsibility for maintaining acceptable boundaries. Students should bear in mind that currying favor with a teacher is never a good idea, and when it involves consciously flirtatious or seductive behavior, it runs afoul of this precept. Teacher and student should both work to uncover and understand any unconscious behavior of this nature.
3. **Master/Disciple.** The master should demonstrate practicing with the “ungilded Dharma,” maintaining relationships with students and members that can be intimate, but plain and simple, with nothing extra. Disciples should work to develop this in their own practice. The five years of celibacy required of single disciples and the practice of simplicity expected of those who are in a committed relationship, are expressly for this purpose.

Precepts 4 - 10 deal with karma of speech and mind. While presented in the same format of increasing formal teaching relationships, they can be understood as applying to deeper levels of personal development, applicable to any student, regardless of formal status.

4. Do Not Speak Dishonestly – Communicate Truthfully.

In the realm of the inexplicable Dharma, putting forth not one word is the Precept of Not Speaking Dishonestly.

The Dharma wheel turns from the beginning. There is neither surplus nor lack. The sweet dew covers the earth, and within it lies the Truth.

This precept is about straightforward mind. The precept to not speak dishonestly is particularly important for the community life of a practicing Sangha. While ethical transgressions can involve any of the precepts, many of these difficulties would not arise were there not an element of deceit involved. Lying to oneself, to another, or to one’s community obscures the nature of reality and hinders the intention of practice. Within our community life, lying can also entail the

deliberate withholding of information.

Open and direct communication is essential in our work and practice together. We are each entitled to straightforward, complete information when we request feedback regarding our behavior, standing, or performance within the community. We can expect, upon request, for this to be given by appropriate persons in the spirit of honesty and compassion.

Students at Dharma Rain should feel that they can carefully explore the Dharma and study the self in an atmosphere of trust. Typically, Dharma Rain teachers, monks, and lay teachers will not disclose information they receive in either formal or informal sangha or interviews when confidentiality is requested and agreed to. However, information may be disclosed under certain circumstances such as, for example, if a student reveals information that is subject to mandatory reporting guidelines, or if a teacher feels the need to consult another teacher to support their ability to be of most complete benefit to the student. See the document *Confidentiality, Privacy and Transparency Policy* for more information.

Even when there is no specific request for confidentiality, such information is not to be shared casually under any circumstances by any of the people involved in the conversation. Consultation among teachers regarding matters that are not strictly confidential may be appropriate, particularly where residential students are involved. All those who engage in such consultations should make every effort to ensure it is done in a sensitive, fair and respectful manner.

Examples of the spirit of this precept applied to Sangha relations:

1. **Members to Member.** Honesty in community life is essential to its health, and it includes not dissembling or misleading others as well as not overtly lying. Practicing this precept is learning to be deeply authentic, not only within the formal Sangha, but in the larger community.
2. **Teacher/Student – Formal.** Teachers work with this precept by “practicing what they preach,” living up to their principles. Being true to the practice includes not hiding their clay feet, and admitting their own shortcomings. Teachers should be honest and straightforward in their appraisals of their students. Students work with this precept by not hiding parts of themselves from their teacher. While it is natural for different parts of us to come out in different settings, this precept is also about not showing one face to the teacher or community and a very different one to peers or those outside the Center.
3. **Master/Disciple.** While the other levels of these guidelines apply here, at the deepest level, practicing with this precept means to embody the practice so that not one word is necessary. Moving toward this, disciples practice becoming completely transparent to the Master, and then to all beings.

5. Do Not Become Intoxicated – Polish Clarity, Dispel Delusion

In the realm of the intrinsically pure Dharma, not harboring delusions is the Precept of Not Becoming Intoxicated.

We are naturally pure; there is nothing to be deluded about. This is enlightenment itself. Understand this truly, and no intoxicants can be taken in.

This precept is about clear and even mind. Practice is best cultivated in a state of clarity and mindfulness, with the mind and body clear of intoxication. When clarity is lost it is all too easy to break the other precepts. Furthermore, it is our intention that Dharma Rain be an environment that supports those who are attempting to live without intoxicants.

No illegal drugs shall be brought onto DRZC premises. Alcohol or drug intoxication within Dharma Rain is inappropriate and is cause for concern and possible intervention. Coming to practice events under the influence (except for medication as prescribed) would be in violation of this precept. In addition, we encourage Sangha members to consider how their behavior reflects upon the Center and their fellow Sangha members.

When any resident of Dharma Rain is involved in abusive or addictive use of intoxicants, it is important to remember that release from all attachments lies at the heart of Buddhist practice and she or he is expected to seek help with the counsel of the priests. Because denial is frequently a symptom of addiction, the Sangha is encouraged to help addicted persons recognize the need for help.

Examples of the spirit of this precept applied to Sangha relations:

1. **Member to Member.** Practicing this precept in community means to be aware of the many forms of intoxication and addiction, avoiding it in oneself and not colluding with it in others. There are many forms of intoxication and/or addiction, including strongly held opinions and attachment to strong emotions, which often go together. This is a subtler form of intoxication that is easily justified. Releasing attachment to this level of intoxication is the deeper meaning of the precept.
2. **Teacher/Student – Formal.** Both teacher and student work to clarify intoxication with self and self-view, practicing with “we are naturally pure; there is nothing to be deluded about.” The teacher’s job is to move the student toward “sobriety” with regard to their intoxicant of choice regarding self-view.
3. **Master/Disciple.** Both Master and Disciple work with intoxication and attachment with regard to view of the Dharma. The Master should help the Disciple practice “not harboring delusions” with regard to their own experience and insights.

6. Do Not Dwell on Past Mistakes – Create Wisdom from Ignorance

In the realm of the flawless Dharma, not expounding upon error is the Precept of Not Dwelling on Past Mistakes.

In the Buddha Dharma there is one path, one Dharma, one realization, one practice. Do not engage in fault-finding. Do not condone haphazard talk.

This precept is about tolerant, accepting mind. Practicing with it builds social concord and understanding. Expounding upon error is an act of alienation from oneself and others.

The consequence of harshly critical speech is often pain for others and divisiveness in the community. Where the intention to expound upon error does arise, the effort to understand its roots is working with and keeping this precept. At the same time, if a Sangha member feels concerned about actions or situations observed, he or she should feel free to take their concerns to a senior in a spirit of honesty and care for the community. Information about resolving

disputes and conflicts can be found in the document *Ethics Complaint and Dispute Resolution Processes*.

Examples of the spirit of this precept applied to Sangha relations:

1. **Member to Member.** This precept points to divisive bickering and over-concern with perceived unfairness or a judgmental attitude toward others regarding community life. Working with it develops tolerance, patience, and mutual understanding, particularly regarding the motivations of others. This includes developing an understanding of how people may perceive things very differently. While we encourage open and honest discussions on any issue, keeping this precept within the community includes not stirring up dissension and dissatisfaction by nurturing the grievances of others while seeking support for one's own. Any real or serious grievance should be dealt with in an open and clear way, using the grievance guidelines and procedures as described in the document *Ethics Complaint and Dispute Resolution Processes*.
2. **Teacher/Student – Formal.** A teacher practices with “One path, one Dharma, one realization” as an understanding that all people, including his or her own students, are on the same path, regardless of the mistakes they make, or how selfish or deluded they may be. They also practice conveying criticism without complicating anger or aversion. Students should be working to see that people wake up to this “one path” when they are ready. They work to let go of criticism of the teacher and fellow students. Finding the place beyond “praise and blame” the student begins to understand the “flawless” nature of Dharma. To this end, by releasing emotional entanglements when receiving criticism from the teacher or anyone else, including self-blame, they release past mistakes and become open to learning from their experience.
3. **Master/Disciple.** Masters should practice with the “flawless” nature of Dharma by working to see the perfection in things as they are, including disciples, and in so doing become an example of this practice. Disciples should work on this by learning to see the perfection in the master and the practice tradition, despite inevitable flaws, but without becoming deluded with respect to them.

7. Do Not Praise Self or Blame Others – Maintain Modesty, Extol Virtue

In the realm of the equitable Dharma, not dwelling upon I versus you is the Precept of Not Praising Self or Blaming Others.

All Buddhas and Ancestors realize the empty sky and the great earth. When they manifest the noble body, there is neither inside nor outside in emptiness. When they manifest the Dharma body, not even a speck of dust is seen upon the ground.

This precept is about comparing mind. While rejoicing in one's wholesome qualities and deeds is a time-honored Buddhist practice, praising oneself or seeking personal gain at the expense of others arises out of a misunderstanding of the interdependent nature of self. Within the institution of Dharma Rain it is sometimes necessary to criticize the action of certain individuals or groups; when doing so one should pay particular attention to one's own motives and to the specific content of what is said, how it is said, and to whom. The attitude with which it is said is what matters, and it determines the effect on the community.

Drawing attention to oneself and blaming others can create divisions in the Sangha, or set “us” against “them.” A person in a position of authority should not misuse the attention and respect of others for personal aggrandizement, or to advance personal causes or opinions.

Examples of the spirit of this precept applied to Sangha relations:

1. **Member to Member.** This precept points to comparing mind in community life, moving past unfavorable comparisons of self or other, toward appreciation of differences. This precept is also about right action and interaction. Not dwelling on *I* versus *you* is an expression of non-oppositional mind *in* activity. Working with this precept involves learning to move in harmony with others.
2. **Teacher/Student – Formal.** Teachers practice with “the noble body,” to understand “there is neither inside nor outside in emptiness.” This is the “equitable” nature of Dharma. Teachers demonstrate this by seeing the value in others’ qualities *as well as* in their own, so that harmony develops. Students practice this by developing modesty, moving toward the teacher and others in the community in a place of mutual virtue, finding the real meaning of harmony.
3. **Master/Disciple.** Masters practice with the “Dharma body,” demonstrating the source of dignity in action, meeting conditions, leaving no trace of dust. Disciples move toward a place of equitable standing with the Master after dropping any thought of *I* versus *you* with regard to the master, developing dignity in their own position.

8. Do Not Be Mean with Dharma or Wealth – Share Understanding, Give Freely of Self

In the genuine, all-pervading Dharma, being jealous of nothing is the Precept of Not Being Mean with Dharma or Wealth.

One phrase, one verse - that is the ten thousand things and one hundred grasses; one Dharma, one realization - that is all Buddhas and Dharma Ancestors. From the beginning, not one thing has been begrudged.

This precept is about open-handed, generous mind. All positions at Dharma Rain, including that of the abbot, are for the support of everyone’s practice and awakening. Neither the resources of DRZC nor any position within the Center are the possession of any one person. It is not appropriate for anyone, especially a teacher, to use his or her relationship to Dharma Rain for personal gain or fame at the expense of the Sangha or the practice-intention of its members.

In a community, being willing to make donations, to come forward and lead, or to just participate, without holding in mind comparisons to others is an expression of this precept. A Sangha member’s involvement with Dharma Rain activities, or their contributions, may increase or decrease depending on their life situation and their practice, and other members should not judge them from their own point of view. When Sangha members are willing to give without discriminating about their “fair share,” the Dharma flourishes in an atmosphere of abundance.

Examples of the spirit of this precept applied to Sangha relations:

1. **Member to Member.** Refer to the second precept, Do Not Steal. This is a positive expression of that precept, becoming generous with resources, time, personal energy and attention. This generosity is most authentic when there is no thought of reciprocity, expecting something in return. Practice with this precept is the Dharma of “it is enough,” being satisfied with our lives as they are. Also, this precept is about moving past wanting the Center and other people to fill our expectations, allowing us to see others clearly, just

- as they are, appreciating what their presence adds to the community.
2. **Teacher/Student – Formal.** The Teacher practices with “One phrase, one verse. That is the ten thousand things and one hundred grasses” in realizing that we all have very little to offer, and yet it is everything. They should give to students as needed, without regard for what can be gained from the student in return. The student works with “not one thing has been begrudged” by dropping comparing mind, and recognizing that whatever teaching or recognition they receive is beyond measure.
 3. **Master/Disciple.** The Master practices with the “all-pervading” nature of Dharma by demonstrating that their own efforts are sufficient, regardless of their limitations. Disciples practice with “being jealous of nothing” in developing the mind of contentment.

9. Do Not Indulge Anger – Cultivate Equanimity

In the realm of the selfless Dharma, not contriving reality for the self is the Precept of Not Indulging Anger.

Not advancing, not retreating, not real, not empty. There is a brilliant sea of clouds. There is a dignified sea of clouds.

This precept is about calm mind. Harboring anger is a poison for individuals and for the community. Even more corrosive is harboring ideas of revenge. Sangha members having conflicts or tensions with others or with decision-making bodies should attempt to resolve them, working with those directly involved in a spirit of honesty, humility and loving kindness. However, if informal resolution is not possible, mediation should be sought as a way to clarify the difficulty. For more information about informal and formal procedures for resolving conflict, see the document *Ethics Complaint and Dispute Resolution Processes*.

Examples of the spirit of this precept applied to Sangha relations:

1. **Member to Member.** Overt acts of anger in the community can clearly be seen in harsh actions or speech, making others feel unsafe. Displaced anger can turn up as speaking ill of someone, sarcasm, or sabotaging another’s efforts. These are all examples of “contriving reality for the self.” Working with this precept means to face anger honestly, understanding the causes, and finding ways to resolve the underlying issues. This is a path to bright mind, and the source of real dignity.
2. **Teacher/Student – Formal.** Teachers work on “not contriving reality for the self” in learning not to take a student’s projections too personally, demonstrating equanimity in the face of anger or other strong emotion, both positive and negative. Students work with this by learning to accept things they don’t like, bowing gracefully, but also by learning to express their own truth with equanimity.
3. **Master/Disciple.** Both Master and Disciple work to become free of self-view to find the true source of dignity in the face of adversity, including anger. To do this is to be able to move with dignity and strength, expressing the truth forcefully when necessary.

10. Do Not Defame the Three Treasures – Respect the Buddha, Unfold the Dharma, Nourish the Sangha

In the realm of the One, holding no concept of ordinary beings and sages is the Precept of Not Defaming the Three Treasures.

To do something by ourselves, without copying others, is to become an example to the world, and the merit of this becomes the source of all wisdom. Criticize nothing; accept everything.

This precept is about authentic mind, and is an “all encompassing” precept. We at Dharma Rain Zen Center encourage each person to awaken to their own true nature, to become authentically themselves. We encourage each Sangha member to move forward in their own practice at the Center and in the larger community, and in so doing help create a culture that allows all people to openly express themselves without fear. This precept also connects back to the Three Refuges and Three Pure Precepts forming a seamless link of continuous practice.

Examples of the spirit of this precept applied to Sangha relations:

1. **Member to Member.** At the simplest level, this is a “catch-all” precept, covering any behavior that isn’t explicitly covered in the other precepts. After taking refuge, behaving in any way that would reflect poorly on the Three Treasures is to defame them. As we develop in practice, we each know with great clarity in our own hearts precisely what those actions are.
2. **Teacher/Student – Formal.** Teachers work on “doing something by ourselves, without copying others,” to become authentic in their own expression of the Dharma. They try to see, honor, and cultivate the deeper nature of each student, demanding the best from them. In their own teaching they cultivate authenticity by clarifying the distinction between “thus have I heard,” and “thus I have experienced directly.” Students move toward this in part by practicing “criticize nothing; accept everything” with respect to the teacher and the tradition, but without being blind to the human shortcomings in them.
3. **Master/Disciple.** The Master practices “holding no concept of ordinary beings and sages” by demonstrating humility, “nothing special,” by being open and self-revealing, and doing their own practice wholeheartedly and in full view of the disciples. Disciples practice with the same thing by holding respect for the Master, the tradition, and their fellow trainees in a light handed way, moving toward the same qualities of humility, “nothing special,” being open and self-revealing, and doing their own practice hiding nothing from the Master, and eventually, all beings.

For More Information

For more information see the following documents:

- *Ethics Complaint and Dispute Resolution Processes*
- *Confidentiality, Privacy and Transparency Policy*

These documents are available on the Dharma Rain website or by contacting Dharma Rain staff.