



ZEN CENTER OF LOS ANGELES
GREAT DRAGON MOUNTAIN - BUDDHA ESSENCE TEMPLE

STATEMENT OF RIGHT CONDUCT

PREFACE

Practicing in a Sangha carries with it certain responsibilities, and it is important that the proper environment be continually actualized for the practice of the Buddha Way. To this end, we commit to right conduct by endorsing the following statement.

STATEMENT

The Zen Center of Los Angeles (ZCLA) Great Dragon Mountain-Buddha Essence Temple is committed to providing an open, supportive and nurturing environment for the practice of the Buddha Way. The ground for right conduct is the practice of the Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts, which are:

The Three Treasures

Be one with the Buddha, the awakened nature of all beings.

Be one with the Dharma, the ocean of wisdom and compassion.

Be one with the Sangha, the community of those living in harmony with all Buddhas and Dharmas.

The Three Pure Precepts and The Three Tenets

Do not commit evil: I will practice the First Tenet of Not-Knowing, thereby giving up fixed ideas about myself and the universe.

Do good: I will practice the Second Tenet of Bearing Witness to the joy and suffering of the world.

Do good for others: I will practice the Third Tenet of Taking a Loving Action that serves the whole.

The Ten Grave Precepts

Do not kill: I recognize that I am not separate from all that is.

Do not steal: I am satisfied with what I have.

Do not be greedy: I encounter all creations with respect and dignity.

Do not tell a lie: I listen and speak from the heart.

Do not be ignorant: I cultivate a mind that sees clearly.

Do not talk about others' errors and faults: I unconditionally accept what each moment has to offer.

Do not elevate yourself and put down others: I speak what I perceive to be the truth without guilt or blame.

Do not be stingy: I use all of the ingredients of my life.

Do not get angry: I transform suffering into wisdom.

Do not speak ill of the Three Treasures: I honor my life as an instrument of peacemaking.

INTENTION

We recognize that the study and practice of the precepts is a life-long effort and is the responsibility of each person who endeavors to live the Buddha Way. These guidelines are intended to encourage each of us continually to examine the basic attitude and conduct necessary to accomplish the Way and to mature fully as human beings.

We also recognize that the resolution or, preferably, the dissolution of conflicts can consume a significant amount of time and energy for those whose position it may be to attend to these situations as members of the Wisdom Circle, allies or facilitators. We appreciate and support the generous attitude and efforts of these people, who take on the practice of attending to people in such situations in wise and compassionate ways.

As human beings striving collectively to awaken and accomplish the refined life of the Buddha, the responsibility rests with each one of us, with the Sangha, and

with the organization. We urge all who come to practice here to assume this responsibility for themselves, for the Zen Center organization, for the welfare of others and the Sangha, and for the Buddhadharma. It is through our efforts that mutual trust and respect and the joy of practice will flourish in our Sangha.

HARMFUL CONDUCT

Harmful conduct is conduct that is harmful to ourselves or others. It includes forms of violence, sexual impropriety, drug or substance abuse, gossip, abusive language, triangulating, or not dealing with problems directly (See Attachment on Triangulation: Definition and Example). People who encounter inappropriate conduct from any member of the ZCLA Sangha, including its abbot, teachers, priests, instructors, stewards, staff, or who themselves practice such conduct, should be aware that these actions cause harm and, therefore, violate the spirit and practice of right conduct and seriously undermine the harmony of the Sangha. Sangha members should also know that each person is expected to take the actions necessary to address one's own harmful conduct.

ADDRESSING HARMFUL CONDUCT

The Zen Center's Wisdom Circle (ZCWC) receives all complaints of misconduct. We are committed to working through conflicts and difficulties that arise from violations of right conduct. Sangha members who bring conflicts to be addressed through the Zen Center process, will not be subject to reprisal in any form and will be expected to participate in the resolution process.

The precept "Do Not Talk About Others Faults and Errors" can be used to evade our responsibility to report misconduct or attend to problems in the Sangha. Each of us needs to know that not speaking up when misconduct has occurred is a serious evasion of responsibility.

Discussion of conflicts shall be limited to those with a bona fide "need to know." Where a problem potentially affects the whole Sangha, it will be the responsibility of the Abbot or Teachers Circle to call a meeting of the Sangha to

discuss the issue(s) in an expeditious manner. It is common courtesy not to talk about, much less gossip about others' problems. Doing so feeds energy into the situation, making it harder for the parties directly involved to resolve it, weakens the container of the Sangha and puts each person at risk of defamation.

Different forms of harmful conduct call for different responses. We set out below five categories of harmful conduct. The five categories of harmful conduct are:

1. Situations involving mundane misconduct that is not criminal in nature.
2. Situations in which conflicts are not being addressed and are affecting others.
3. Situations involving conduct of an egregious or criminal nature.
4. Situations in which a ZCLA Sangha member is in conflict with person(s) of another sangha.
5. Situations in which a change of teacher might result for an individual student.

A complaint may arise from anywhere in the Sangha. The ZCWC can guide Sangha members on how to effectively handle complaints or difficult situations.

THE ZEN CENTER'S WISDOM CIRCLE (ZCWC)

The purpose of the ZCWC is to facilitate the resolution or dissolution of disagreement, complaints, or grievances. The ZCWC will vet all complaints and determine how to proceed in accord with the Zen Center's Grievance Procedure. The particulars of the Wisdom Circle and the Grievance Procedure are set forth in separate documents. It is the responsibility of all Sangha members to be familiar with these documents.

ATONEMENT

Any person(s) who violates right conduct is also expected to make every effort to realign his/her conduct with the precepts and to take the action(s) necessary to restore the harmony of individual relationships and of the Sangha. Such atonement is an integral part of right conduct.

Atonement can take many forms, including but not limited to person-to-person apologies, letters of amends, financial restitution, and acts of service as amends. The formal practice of atonement is held regularly at the Zen Center and members are strongly encouraged to make this an ongoing practice.

SUMMATION

It is our sincere intention to continually realign our lives in accord with the precepts and to provide an open, supportive, and nurturing environment for the practice of the Buddha Way. The Zen Center upholds core values and core practices to support us in continually facing and shifting our individual and collective conduct for the mutual awakening and benefit of all. We are committed to maturing fully, both individually and collectively.

ENDORSEMENT

This Statement of Right Conduct has been revised and adopted by the Abbot, Board of Directors, and Sangha on November 4, 2012.

(This statement was first issued on October 28, 1991 and approved and endorsed by the Abbot and Board of Directors of the Zen Center of Los Angeles on March 10, 1993. It was revised in 1999, 2011, and 2012.)

Attachment: Triangulation.

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The term “triangulation” describes a situation in which two people are in conflict and one or both parties entangle other people in the situation usually to gain favor for their individual positions. In triangulation, contacting a third person is done not to dissolve the conflict, but rather to avoid the conflict or solidify one’s position.

For example, person A and person B are in conflict with each other. Instead of working directly with each other to dissolve the conflict, person A talks to a third person, person C, about what is going on and to gain sympathy and support for her/his view or position. Person A is usually, but not always, unaware of his/her dynamic.

When person C is unaware, C will become entangled in the conflict by taking sides or, even worse, begin to spread the conflict further by talking to others. Hence, a triangle is formed among person A, person B, and person C, although person B may be unaware of the triangulation. Perhaps person B is also triangulating someone else regarding this same situation, in which case, multiple triangles are being formed. Triangulation spreads the conflict to others not previously involved and many more patterns of triangulation result as other people are snared into the situation. This dynamic makes resolution more complicated and difficult.

The preferred situation is when an aware person A or B approaches a person C, a responsible party, with a straightforward intention to sort out one’s confusion about the situation with the aim of better understanding his/her role in the conflict and discuss options on how to move the situation forward.

When person C is aware, person C will listen, ask guiding questions, and re-direct person A back to person B or to an appropriate person who can be involved in resolution. Person C will listen openly and affirmatively and may ask questions that can help cut through the situation. For example: 1) What are the facts of the situation? 2) What is your story about these facts? 3) What is your role in this conflict? 4) What is your motive in speaking with me about it? 5) What is being triggered for you in this conflict? Person C will also re-direct person A to

the Statement of Right Conduct and review the steps outlined for dissolving a conflict.

Person C must be aware that she/he is hearing only one side of the story, no matter how compelling or convincing the account may appear or how emotionally upset the person is. Person C needs to be self aware of how she/he may favor one of the persons involved in the conflict over the other. When this is the case, person C may communicate to person A by following these guidelines: 1) I suggest that you speak to so and so for an unbiased assessment ... ; 2) I am not able to listen to you because ... ; and/or 3) Your behavior is harming ... and so forth.

Triangulation often results when we have been conditioned to not deal with conflicts directly, when we want to be right, when we want to be liked and approved of, and when we are blind to how much suffering we are capable of causing to ourselves and another person. It also is likely to happen when people lack the skills to deal with conflict. People who have been conditioned to triangulate and, therefore, not take responsibility for their role in a conflict, may be offended when redirected to the appropriate parties. Nevertheless, practicing at Zen Center implies a commitment to maturing by facing one's conditioning, by taking the necessary steps to learn about the triangulation dynamic, and to address any conflicts you are a part of.

Triangulation can also occur when a problem is being discussed by a group of people, including those who are designated as being responsible for helping to address conflicts. People who hold these positions must undergo the appropriate awareness training, be self-aware enough to know when they are not being objective, and be able to take a detached and open view.

END.