

Yokoji-Zen Mountain Center

Instructions for the Way-Seeking Mind (Sesshin)

Sometimes it is difficult during Sesshin to adhere to the regulations set forth by tradition. There are many rules to follow, a schedule to keep and what seems like endless hours of zazen. It is easy to let some rules slide or even forget the guidelines in one's earnest attempt to accomplish The Way.

In the past, guidelines have been referred to as precautions, intended to secure and foster the practice of the Sangha. These precautions are far more than mere prudent suggestions. They are instructions, like the Tenzo's instructions, and should be only reserved for accomplished students who have way-seeking mind.

All students who come to sesshin have the way-seeking mind. The accomplishment is one's whole-hearted practice. The Tenzo watches for sand while examining the rice and watches for rice while throwing away the sand. Approach sesshin as a Tenzo, and you shall not miss your mark. These instructions are to help nourish your spirit and bring forth wisdom. Do not take them lightly, for they are the bones and marrow of the ancient masters and only through concentrated effort, become the bones and marrow of the self.

Instructions for Way-Seeking Mind (Sesshin):

Keep silence at all times.

Avoid distraction. Keep your eyes lowered in the Meditation Hall.

Keep your hands in shashu when walking.

Keep still during zazen. Breathe quietly.

If you must move, move quickly and quietly into another posture.

If you must sneeze or cough, cover your mouth with the crook of your arm.

Do not blow your nose or sniff in the Meditation Hall.

One may keep a tissue in hand if it is necessary to wipe your nose.

Do not be late. Be in your seat no later than five minutes before zazen.

Attend everything on the schedule.

Please do not go into the kitchen during sesshin, coffee and tea are served in the dining room.

Wear socks or go barefoot in all carpeted areas. Kinhin is a continuation of zazen. If you must use the restroom, please exit at the beginning of slow kinhin. After dokusan, return to the gaitan immediately.

No reading or writing. No telephone calls, e-mails, or outside contact (except in emergencies).

Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration. Our altitude is 5500 ft.

Turn off lights and heaters when leaving your room. Be conservative with heating.

Do not use any hair dryers or any other electrical items. (YZMC operates under solar power and a back-up generator). Be extremely conservative with water. We are in a drought.

These instructions are an opportunity. Do not give it away. Become a Tenzo of original self. Make certain your offering is of the highest merit. In doing so, you benefit all sentient beings. In doing so, you become one with the Great Ocean.