

Ethical Principles, Conflict Resolution, and Grievance Procedures

Adopted: October 22, 2017

At Nebraska Zen Center (NZC), we aspire to treat each other with respect, warmth, and kindness. Everyone interested in living a life of meaning and inquiry is welcome at NZC, regardless of ethnicity, age, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, or history at NZC.

I. Ethical Principles: Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts

The Three Refuges

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

I take refuge in the Buddha as the most venerable one among beings.
I take refuge in the Dharma as the most venerable teaching that frees me from clinging.
I take refuge in the Sangha as the most venerable of all assemblies.

I have taken refuge in the Buddha.
I have taken refuge in the Dharma.
I have taken refuge in the Sangha.

Three Collective Pure Precepts

The precept of observing guidelines.
The precept of taking wholesome actions.
The precept of benefiting all beings.

Ten Momentous Prohibitory Precepts

1. Taking up the way of not killing.

*Life is not killed.
The buddha seed always grows.
May [we] continue the bright life of buddha.
Do not kill life!*

2. Taking up the way of not stealing.

*In the suchness of heart and field,
open the gate of liberation!*

3. Taking up the way of not misusing sexuality.

*Three pure wheels, no desires.
All Buddhas and fellow travelers!*

4. Taking up the way of not telling lies.

*Turning the dharma wheel's source – no remainder, no deficiency.
Entirely moistened with sweet dew – obtaining the real, obtaining the true.*

5. Taking up the way of no intoxicants.

*Nothing coming in, then not teaching.
Exactly great brightness!*

6. Taking up the way of not speaking excessively.

*Ah! Within buddhadharma, same path, same dharma, same verification, same journey. Do
not teach with scolding words. Do not cause chaos.*

7. Taking up the way of not uplifting the self and damaging others.

*To be a buddha, to be an ancestor – demonstrating thoroughgoing emptiness,
confirming the great earth.
Or appearing as the great body – empty, no inside or outside.
Or appearing as the great dharma body – no measure for the world.*

8. Taking up the way of not being stingy with dharma treasures.

*One sentence, one gatha – every manifestation of nature, all the myriad grasses!
One dharma, one demonstration – all the buddhas, all the ancestors!
[It's] never been stingy!*

9. Taking up the way of not indulging in anger.

*Not retreating, not advancing, not real, not empty.
This is an ocean of radiant clouds.
This is an ocean of dignified clouds.*

10. Taking up the way of not disparaging the Three Treasures.

*Making it personal, there is a bridge for crossing over.
Bodhisattva virtue returns like the ocean.
This cannot be measured.
Diligently uplift this and offer it respectfully!
This is unfathomable.
Please accept it with respect and gratitude.*

II. Ethical Standards and Teacher-Student Relationships

While the Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts are the foundation of our vows, we recognize that ethics standards and guidelines are needed to provide processes for addressing difficult situations that may arise in community.

1. **Teacher-Student Relationships**

We commit to conduct relationships in accord with the Bodhisattva precepts.

The teacher-student relationship is founded on deep commitment for inquiry and is the mutual responsibility of both parties to honor. The authority of the teacher carries with it an increased responsibility to avoid situations and actions that could result in harm to the student, the community and the teacher.

We recognize that harm may result if a teacher and student become sexually or inappropriately emotionally involved or if the teacher uses power for personal ends.

The commitment of the teachers is to protect the integrity of all students and encourage students to do so as well. The teachers will not sexualize relationships with students nor engage in sexual relationships with students.

2. **Privacy**

Matters discussed in individual meetings (practice meetings or dokusan) are considered private. Teachers may consult with others and share information about students, including what comes up in dokusan, when in their judgment doing so is in the best interests of those concerned.

Students are encouraged to also keep matters discussed in teacher-student meetings private. Koan responses by either teacher or student should not be shared outside dokusan.

III. Conflict Resolution and Grievance Procedures

1. If a student has a concern about another student's or a teacher's behavior, it should first be addressed directly with that person. The student with a concern may discuss the situation with another person to assist in discernment and in resolution of the concern. In addition, the student may wish to find a third-party to help process the concern.
2. Formal hearing process: If matters of importance are not informally resolved utilizing the processes mentioned above, or if the matter is about a serious breach of ethics, the person with the grievance should contact the chairperson of the Board of Directors (see below). If the grievance is with the chairperson of the Board of Directors the vice-chair of the Board of Directors will lead the process. A hearing panel may be convened to implement a formal process. The panel will consist of three people as appointed by the chairperson of the Board of Directors.

a. Bringing a concern

A formal process is initiated by communicating in writing with the Board chairperson. This "letter of request" must include:

- a. A clear statement that a formal ethical hearing process is requested.
- b. The name of the person(s) to whom the matter pertains.
- c. A description of the alleged matter enough to allow the Board Chairperson to decide whether the matter is appropriate for a formal hearing process.
- d. A description of prior attempts to resolve the matter.
- e. A statement of the resolution sought.

b. Accepting a concern

Once the Board Chairperson has received a letter of request, the Board Chairperson will respond within thirty days to the requester regarding whether the grievance will move to a Formal Hearing. In the event the matter is accepted for formal hearing, the Board Chairperson will also notify persons named in the letter of request.

c. Convening the Hearing Panel

Once the parties have been notified, the Board Chairperson will schedule and convene the private hearing. One of the panelist will facilitate the hearing and another will insure that a record of the hearing is maintained.

d. Hearing the concern

The Board Chairperson will do their utmost to see that the persons involved have a full and fair opportunity to present their understanding of the matter at the hearing. The panel may ask questions and request information.

e. Hearing panel decision

Once the hearing panel determines that it is sufficiently informed of the matter(s)

heard, it will close the hearing and deliberate. As soon as reasonably practical, the panel will issue a written decision and distribute it as appropriate.

f. Partial list of possible resolutions by a hearing panel

- a. Finding of no ethical breach.
- b. Finding no ethical breach while acknowledging the existence of a problem which needs resolution between the parties.
- c. Reversal of an administrative decision or action.
- d. Direct or mediated private apology.
- e. Apology to the community.
- f. Recommended education or training or intervention program (e.g. therapy or relevant 12-step program).
- g. Limiting the decision simply to whether an ethical transgression occurred.