

Brooklyn Zen Center

Community Agreements

1. ARRIVE GENTLY, BE WITH

We begin and end our meetings on time. Arrive and leave when best for you. Appreciating how refreshing it is to be in a place that is well cared for, we take care of our ourselves and our community by keeping the space uncluttered and accessible, especially near doors, aisleways, bathrooms, kitchen, and tea area.

2. HONOR INTIMACY, PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY

We do not share the names or personal stories of anyone other than ourselves, now or later. If we want to follow up with anyone regarding something they said in community, we ask first and respect their wishes.

3. ASSUME NONE, BE ONE

We do not assume the race, class, gender, sexuality, or ability of anyone else. We have the individual option to share pronouns, and we will collectively respect pronouns.

4. DIALOGUE OVER DEBATE THROUGH MINDFUL LISTENING

We listen deeply with our full attention, in body, heart, and mind. We listen to understand, not to respond. We are willing to be surprised, to learn something new, to be changed by all viewpoints and ideas. Not knowing is most intimate.

5. PRACTICE CARE AND CONSENT

We practice care and consent by participating in what feels right and speaking our needs and concerns as they arise, as much as we can. We can say “I pass” or “No, thank you” if we don’t wish to speak. We ask before touching, and we are free to say no to touch. We ask for permission before offering advice, unless directly asked.

6. PRACTICE SELF FOCUS AND SPEAK FROM THE “I”

We attend to and speak about our own experiences and responses. We speak using “I” statements and do not speak for a whole group or express assumptions about the experience of others.

7. PRACTICE “BOTH / AND”

We substitute “and” for “but” when speaking. This practice acknowledges and honors multiple realities. This also supports creating spaciousness around our binary ways.

8. UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INTENT AND IMPACT

No matter our intentions, we take responsibility for the impact our actions have on others. Denying our impact by focusing on intent can be more destructive than the initial interaction.

9. REFRAIN FROM BLAMING OR SHAMING SELF & OTHERS

We practice giving skillful feedback and not performing quality control on another’s expressions, or our own, understanding that powerful emotions can arise as a shout, a stammer, a cry; and that these expressions, too, deserve space and care.

10. TAKING SPACE, MAKING SPACE

We encourage full participation by all present, knowing that courage takes different forms for each of us. Take note of who is speaking and who is not. If you tend to speak often, consider “tuning in” through mindful listening. If you tend to rest in silence, consider “making space” by sharing your experience.

Acknowledgements, Resources, References, Input

- Brooklyn Zen Center (BZC) sangha members
- East Bay Meditation Center, *Agreements for Multi-Cultural Interaction*, adopted from Visions Inc.'s "*Guidelines for Productive Work Sessions.*" www.visions-inc.org
- Buddhist Peace Fellowship, *Block Build Be Shared Agreements*, July 2017
- Intergroup Dialogue trainings (dialogue and debate, U. of Michigan, UCLA)
- "From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces" (article from *The Art of Effective Facilitation*, Stylus Publishing, 2013)
- *Natural Bravery* by Gaylon Ferguson (Shambhala Publications, 2016)
- Mindfulness, Concentration and Grounding Exercises (as taught by BZC guiding teachers and practiced by its sangha)