

# Mountain Rain Zen Community Practice of Ethical Conduct

## Introduction

MRZC is a practice community and a non-profit organization. We are not a workplace and we do not live in a residential practice community. We regularly study and practice together in different ways – in seminars, dialogues, sesshins, community celebrations and meetings – which bring us into close contact with each other. We share physical space, eat together, engage in ceremonies, and exchange money. We welcome everyone regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, age, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation.

The following guidelines and processes are intended to help ensure a safe practice environment and provide a way to proceed when faced with possible ethical violations. They provide a format for students and teachers to explore individual and mutual questions, confusion, expectations, and misunderstandings that may occur in this setting. All quotations are from *Taking our Places*, by Zoketsu Norman Fischer

## Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts

The shared life of community is an integral part of our practice. It is based on the Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts: the Three Refuges, the Three Pure Precepts, and the Ten Clear Mind Precepts

## The Three Refuges: The cornerstones our practice

### **We take refuge in the Buddha**

Returning to Buddha is acknowledging that our inmost nature is the nature of awareness and awakening. Awareness is the root of our consciousness and awakening is the birthright of our lives. We commit to meet and interact with each other with respect and integrity.

### **We take refuge in Dharma**

'Returning to dharma is acknowledging that we have always longed to understand life in accord with our open mind and tender heart, and that we have always wanted to live lives based on that understanding.' Our commitment is to bring our most sincere effort to living and practicing in accord with an open heart and a clear mind.

### **We take refuge in Sangha**

'Returning to sangha is acknowledging that we have always been a part of an interconnected network of all beings - and that we want to embrace that fabric of connection fully, and be embraced by it, living in concert with all that is.'

We aspire to create an inclusive and responsive environment of practice. Even when our differences appear to divide us we are committed to deep listening, ongoing open communication, and mutual support of practice.

## The Three Pure Precepts: Our aspirations and intentions

### **To avoid all action that creates suffering**

We commit 'to restraining ourselves from doing or saying - even, as much as possible, from thinking - things that will cause harm'

### **To do all action that creates true happiness**

We commit to 'discover and do that which is wholesome and promotes not a superficial but a lasting happiness'

### **To act with others always in mind**

We commit 'to promote happiness unselfishly in order to benefit others, not only ourselves.'

## The 10 Clear Mind Precepts: How we manifest our maturity in the world.

### **1. Not to kill but to nurture life.**

We commit to cultivating an attitude of respect for each other and all living beings. We commit to nourishing the dignity, integrity and well-being of all forms of life.

### **2. Not to steal but to receive what is offered as a gift**

We commit to cultivating and living from generosity rather than interacting from places of fear, narrowness and contraction.

### **3. Not to misuse sexuality but to be caring and faithful in intimate relationship**

Acknowledging and honoring our sexuality is part of creating an environment where conscious, mindful and compassionate relationships can be cultivated.

Everyone coming to MRZC has the right to the safety and respect of appropriate sexual boundaries.

### **4. Not to lie but to cultivate and encourage truthful communication**

Clear and truthful communication is essential for the health and well-being of human interactions within the MRZC community. We commit to cultivating awareness of our own motivations and desires and to speak truthfully out of concern for the good of all involved.

### **5. Not to intoxicate with substances or doctrines but to promote clarity and awareness.**

We commit to bringing awareness and clarity to the ways that we escape and avoid difficult or unpleasant situations and to meet reality as it is.

### **6. Not to speak of other's faults but to speak out of loving kindness**

Regardless of circumstances, we commit to speak from a heart of kindness and understanding.

### **7. Not to praise self at the expense of others, but to practice humility**

We commit to not praising oneself or seeking gain at the expense of others. Practicing humility we do not demean perspectives that differ from our own.

### **8. Not to be possessive of anything but to cultivate and encourage mutual support.**

We commit to practicing generosity recognizing that our lives are always interconnected. For the benefit of sangha and all beings we freely offer our material support, time, energy, presence and love.

### **9. Not to harbor anger but to forgive**

We commit to facing those places where we are brittle and defended and aspire to resolving conflicts and tension in a spirit of honesty, humility and kindness.

### **10. Not to do anything to diminish the Triple Treasure but to support and nurture it.**

The Triple Treasure of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are central to our practice and community. We honor Buddha, study Dharma and nurture Sangha and not do anything to diminish them. We recognize that this practice is grounded in the teachings of Buddha, the wisdom of Dharma and mutual support provided by the Sangha.

## Guidelines for Resolving Conflicts and Ethical Concerns

Sangha members are encouraged to talk to one another directly in order to try to resolve misunderstandings, hurt feelings, resentments, and other difficult situations which may arise. When the conflict cannot be resolved by a private, informal, or facilitated discussion a process exists by which a formal grievance can be made to the MRZC Ethics and Reconciliation panel. **All discussions in the informal or formal resolution procedures will be kept in confidence unless otherwise agreed upon by all the parties.**

### Informal Resolution Process

- A member who is in conflict with another or feels that a member has acted inappropriately is encouraged to discuss the situation directly with the other person involved. Both are asked to speak and listen with the precepts in mind.
- A member, who feels unable to discuss the situation directly with the other person, should speak to a MRZC priest, former shuso or chaplain. (see list below) These individuals have made a commitment to the health and well-being of the sangha. They will maintain confidentiality and foster a safe and supportive process. It may be mutually agreed that a face-to-face discussion between the parties in conflict would be of benefit. The priest, former shuso or chaplain would help facilitate and witness.
- If a face to face discussion, facilitated or privately between the two individuals, does not resolve the issue, one or both may wish to pursue a formal grievance process. If a priest, former shuso or chaplain has been involved in helping to facilitate he or she can assist in helping to prepare the formal grievance.
- Please attempt an informal resolution before beginning a formal grievance.

### Formal grievance process

The MRZC Ethics and Reconciliation panel does not assign blame but works to resolve conflicts and promote harmony in the community. The committee consists of two sangha members, one MRZC teacher and a teacher from another local Buddhist community. Each year the MRZC teachers will ask four to five sangha members who are willing to be potential panel members and have received jukai to be part of the sangha members' grievance pool.

- A formal grievance should be written and include:
  - A clear statement requesting a formal ethics process
  - The name of the member requesting the formal grievance process and all others who are involved.
  - A description of the alleged ethical violation (a description of the grievance) clear enough to allow the MRZC council to decide whether the matter is appropriate for a formal hearing process.
  - A description of prior attempts to resolve the matter.
  - A statement of the resolution sought.

- The written grievance will be given or emailed to a member of the Ethics and Reconciliation panel who will give a copy to the person(s) named in the grievance. Generally, the person(s) named will have two weeks to prepare a written response. After receiving the written response, Ethics and Reconciliation panel will meet. ***All those involved will agree to observe confidentiality in regard to the matter under discussion and any documentation pertaining to it.***
- During the proceedings the panel will meet with both parties at least individually and if possible together in order to ensure that each feels that their positions are being adequately heard and addressed in the process. Either party is welcome to bring someone for support, but that person will be there as a witness only, and will not actively participate in the proceedings.
- Once the panel determines that it is sufficiently informed of the matter(s) at hand, it will deliberate privately. The panel will work toward a consensus opinion. As soon as reasonably practical, the majority position on the panel will issue a written decision with recommendations and distribute it as warranted.