

Ordinary Mind Zen Brisbane

Code of Ethics

1. Preamble

Those in leadership roles within OMZB (teachers, practice leaders, and management committee members), together with the members of the Group at large, recognise the need for high ethical standards to be the foundation for teaching, practice, organisational processes, and all our relationships within the group. We recognise the need for those standards to be explicit and for appropriate ethical guidelines and grievance procedures to be available. This Code of Ethics seeks to codify the core ethical responsibilities of everyone who practices within the group, assumes leadership roles, or are teachers.

We recognise at the heart of our organisation the pervading principle of the Three Pure Precepts:

Not to create harm.
To practice good.
To actualize good for others.

We recognise that our ability to live up to the highest standards may not always be perfect, and we rely on: the compassionate guidance of these principles; our core practice of honest self-reflection; the discernment and counsel of others; and our commitment to embody the higher values of Wisdom and Compassion in our dealings with one another and in our stewardship of the group.

To that end, we undertake the following.

2. Openness and Non-discrimination

We seek to avoid discrimination, explicit or implicit, on the basis of difference, including age, race, gender identification, level of ability, sexual preference, religious or cultural background, or parental status. We will make reasonable accommodations to assist or enable participation in our activities.

3. Mutual Respect and Safety

We acknowledge that Right Speech and Right Conduct are core values, and undertake to foster an environment of mutual respect and safety, free from bullying, harassment, verbal or physical threat or abuse. Mutual respect is an essential foundation for sound practice. Group members should treat one another with respect and engage with others honestly and compassionately and with a positive intention. Group harmony is promoted when leaders model, and all members observe, the precepts regarding right speech: refraining from lies, self-serving talk, slander, angry or abusive speech, and apportioning blame.

4. Stewardship and Administration

Respecting and protecting Dharma assets, we recognise the legal responsibilities imposed on us by the Associations Incorporation Act 1983 (as amended) and its Regulations and by the Rules of Ordinary Mind Zen Brisbane Inc. Members of the group who serve in management and stewardship roles should act strictly in accordance with these responsibilities and work solely in the best interests of the group and its members in administering group resources, without promoting their own personal interests or seeking personal gain. They should be aware of and declare any conflicts of interest, and should strive to implement informed, transparent, consultative and accountable processes in the management of finances and in guiding important decision making processes.

5. Confidentiality and Privacy

(1) In the administrative processes of the group, members' personal information (including but not limited to personal details, financial status, private communications etc) shall be treated confidentially. Information about a member will be shared only to the extent necessary for the efficient administration of the group and its processes on a "need to know" basis.

(2) We recognise that at times Zen practice involves significant personal self-disclosure, to the teacher in the course of interviews or in other teaching settings, or in the Zendo during practice discussions or other practice processes. Sensitive personal disclosures in interviews should be treated confidentially by the teacher. Personal disclosures made in group practice settings will be respected and treated as private by those present. Confidentiality, however, may be limited by Queensland and Australian law where requirements for legal reporting exist. Confidentiality may also be

broken if there is a danger of serious physical harm to a member or another person.

6. Teachers

(1) We recognise that teachers are accorded a special position of respect and authority within the group, and that this carries with it heavy demands and fundamental obligations and responsibilities. Teachers should aspire to continuous practice of honest self-reflection and should engage in self-monitoring and self-care. Occupying the role of teacher can subtly undermine a healthy sense of humility. In turn, a lack of humility can impair the ability to grow fully as a person and as a teacher. For that reason, teachers should balance their teaching role with sincere practice and study of the Dharma, leisure interests, engagement with family or friends, and sabbaticals from teaching when appropriate. It may be useful for a teacher to establish a relationship of confidence with another teacher, so they can together discuss and reflect on their work as teachers.

(2) The Rules of Ordinary Mind Zen Brisbane specify the processes of appointment, reappointment, suspension or removal of a teacher and permit the group to impose specific conditions and requirements on a teacher. Here, we explicitly state that any person appointed to a teacher role within OMZB shall, as a condition of appointment and continuation, be expected to meet high standards of ethical conduct in their dealings with members and in their other activities within and outside the group.

(3) Teachers should act in accord with the principles set out in this Code, paying particular attention to respect for individuals, confidentiality, and the modelling of appropriate standards of ethical speech and behaviour.

(4) Teachers should always seek to act in the best interests of each student and avoid discrimination or favouritism.

(5) Teachers have an obligation to educate themselves about the subtle power issues that inhere in the teacher role, as well as the potential effects of that power and its exercise on both teachers and others.

(6) Teachers should not violate trust or use power or position for personal gain or self-satisfaction in the course of their teaching, by crossing personal, physical, or sexual boundaries that might constitute exploitation or abuse. A teacher should ensure that teaching settings such as interviews are safe

places and the locus only for legitimate teaching interactions. The ultimate responsibility for maintaining appropriate and clear boundaries between teacher and student always rests with the teacher, and failure to maintain appropriate boundaries constitutes a serious ethical breach.

(7) Any member who believes that an ethical breach by a teacher has occurred should inform the management committee. In response, and following the process set out in the Grievance and Resolution procedure (Part 7, below), the Committee should conduct a review to consider whether a teacher's behaviour has been ethical, given all the circumstances, and how the behaviour might impact the immediate parties and the group generally. If an ethical breach is found to have occurred, the Management Committee should determine what actions should be taken.

(8) As set out in the Rules of OMZB, the Management Committee has at its disposal a wide range of actions, including but not limited to imposing conditions on a teacher, suspension, or dismissal. In such matters it may wish to consult with other teachers within the Ordinary Mind School, other Zen teachers, or other professionals. At the end of any ethical review where a breach is found to exist, the members of the group should be informed of the circumstances and outcomes of the review and actions the Management Committee has taken.

(9) As set out in the Rules of the Group, any appeal against a decision of the Management Committee shall be determined by General Meeting of members, whose decision is final.

7. Grievance and Resolution Procedure

(1) Any member who believes they have an unresolved grievance concerned with any aspect of the group's administration or functioning, or which touches on any aspect of this Code of Ethics, including behaviour of a teacher, may lodge a grievance.

(2) Before declaring a formal grievance, a member may wish to (but is not required to) consult with a trusted person or persons of their choosing within or outside the group on a confidential basis. A trusted person could be a senior member, a leader, a member of the Management Committee, the group's teacher, or another person, as appropriate. Trusted persons should familiarise themselves with this Code, taking it into account in

advising the member. It is important that the member's concerns should be heard in a non-partisan and non-judgemental way and should not be disclosed to others without the express permission of the member. Other parties to the grievance might also wish to avail themselves of the advice of trusted persons.

(3) Sometimes it may be appropriate for an aggrieved member to seek reconciliation directly with another party, in writing or in a personal meeting. Attempting this should be solely the choice of the member. Trusted persons may give support in such a process if desired by the complainant. Where such an attempt at reconciliation fails, or where one of the parties does not wish to attempt this, a formal grievance may be lodged.

(4) A formal grievance should be in written form and should be directed to the Convenor of the Management Committee or the Secretary, or to the Management Committee as a whole. It should set out in objective terms details of the grievance and its circumstances, any actions towards reconciliation already attempted, and such other information as the complainant may wish to present.

(5) As set out in the Act which governs our Association and in our Rules, the Management Committee is ultimately responsible to regulate the conduct and affairs of the Group. It should ensure the grievance is appropriately investigated, should seek reconciliation or resolution if possible, and/or determine what other formal actions should be taken.

(6) Any member of the Management Committee who is a party to a grievance or complaint, should immediately declare this and withdraw from all discussions and proceedings. They should have no involvement in any part of the process other than as an informant in an investigation.

(7) Initially, the Management Committee should determine whether the grievance warrants further investigation or whether it lacks substance and should be dismissed, or it may make some other determination. It should advise the parties of this decision and of any further action it is taking.

(8) Where the Management Committee believes the matter should be further investigated, it should appoint an Independent Sub-committee to investigate the matter, consisting of such persons and such number of

persons as it may determine, but consisting of at least two respected members of the Group in good standing. It should normally include in its number at least one member of the Management Committee if appropriate.

(9) In investigating a matter, the Independent Sub-committee may regulate its proceedings as it sees fit, given the circumstances of the matter. As far as possible, it should treat the matter in strict confidence. It should give the complainant and other parties full opportunity to be heard in a non-judgemental, non-adversarial, safe and supportive way. It should not require the parties to a dispute to meet one another unless they agree to this. It may take advice from other persons including but not limited to relevant professionals and other Zen teachers. It may recommend to the Management Committee at any time that counselling support be provided to a party to the grievance.

(10) It should attempt to thoroughly understand the issues, seek any grounds for reconciliation or resolution that might exist, and where possible, assist the parties to arrive at some reconciliation or resolution. Where it is not possible to find sufficient common ground for a resolution or where the complainant remains dissatisfied, it shall proceed directly to the reporting stage.

(11) A report shall be prepared for the Management Committee. The report should summarise the circumstances of the matter, and make recommendations concerning the complaint and any actions the Management Committee might take. The Management Committee shall determine its response to the report and shall communicate its decisions to the parties.

(12) As prescribed in the Rules of the Group, final appeal against any decision of the Management Committee is to the members of the Group in a General Meeting, whose decision shall be final.