



GREAT HEARTLAND
BUDDHIST TEMPLE
of TOLEDO

Code of Ethics

Table of Contents

[Code of Conduct](#)

[The Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Relationships and Intimacy](#)

[Teachers and Priests](#)

[Sexual Harassment and Inappropriate Behavior](#)

[Confidentiality](#)

[Teacher and Priest Code of Ethics](#)

[Ethics and Reconciliation Council \(EAR Council\)](#)

[Informal Reconciliation Process](#)

[Formal Reconciliation and Grievance Processes](#)

[Appeal Procedure](#)

[Significant Ethical Breaches](#)

Code of Conduct

The Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts

The Three Treasures

- Oneness, the Awakened nature of all beings. **I take refuge in the Buddha.**
- Diversity, the ocean of wisdom and compassion. **I take refuge in the Dharma.**
- Harmony, the interdependence of all. **I take refuge in the Sangha.**

The Three Pure Precepts

- Not knowing, thereby giving up fixed ideas about myself and the universe, **I vow to cease from evil.**
- Bearing witness to the joy and suffering of the world, **I vow to practice good.**
- Healing myself and others, **I vow to save all beings.**

The Ten Grave Precepts

- Recognizing I am not separate from all that is, **I vow to take up the Way of Not Killing.**
- Being satisfied with what I have, **I vow to take up the Way of Not Stealing.**
- Treating all beings with respect and dignity, **I vow to take up the Way of Not Misusing Sexuality.**
- Listening and speaking from the heart, **I vow to take up the Way of Not Speaking Falsely.**
- Cultivating a mind that sees clearly, **I vow to take up the Way of Not Intoxicating Mind and Body.**
- Unconditionally accepting what each moment has to offer, **I vow to take up the Way of Not Discussing the Faults of Others.**
- Speaking what I perceive to be the truth without guilt or blame, **I vow to take up the Way of Not Praising Myself While Abusing Others.**
- Using all the ingredients of my life and being generous with the fruits of my dharma practice, **I vow to take up the way of Not Sparing the Dharma Assets.**
- Transforming suffering into wisdom, **I vow to take up the Way of Not Indulging in Anger.**
- Honoring my life as an instrument of the Great Way, **I vow to take the Way of Not Defaming the Three Treasures.**

Introduction

Together, we commit to aligning our lives with these precepts and to using them as a compass for wise and compassionate action. We also acknowledge that we are human and so embody all the possibilities of being human. Some things may happen within our Sangha that cause concern. All those who practice at our temple have a right to be treated with dignity and respect and to be free from physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse.

This code is not based on ideas of good or bad, blame or guilt, but on acknowledging and addressing the suffering of all concerned. We try to keep to the forefront the true nature of everyone, no matter how problematic their actions may be, while recognizing our responsibility to provide a safe, ethical and respectful environment.

Everyone who is involved in the Sangha, from visitors to the most senior practitioners and guiding teachers, is expected to conduct themselves according to this code of ethics and may avail themselves of the [Formal Reconciliation and Grievance](#) process outline below.

Relationships and Intimacy

While the Great Heartland Sangha acknowledges romantic relationships may develop between Sangha members, its primary purpose is to provide an opportunity for Zen Buddhist practice so individuals can attain awakening for the benefit of self and others. As in all matters, we encourage full respect and care. Members will respect the rights of all to say no to romantic/sexual advances and will accept no as no. Continued expression of romantic/sexual interest after being informed that such interest is unwelcome is “misusing sexuality” and a violation of the third precept.

Where romantic relationships do develop, it is the Sangha’s hope that both parties should always continue to feel comfortable in the Sangha environment even if the relationship changes. In the case of a disagreement or breakup, both members may feel free to reach out to the [Ethics and Reconciliation \(EAR\) Council](#) should they need consultation, advice, support, or mediation.

We want to offer an environment where new practitioners have enough time to develop their practice and their relationship with the Sangha, free from the pressure or exploring a romantic relationship with another Sangha member. Therefore we request that all sangha members maintain an environment where new students are not distracted from the primary activity of establishing their own practice. This request applies especially within the container of sesshin, where we concentrate wholeheartedly on activities as given and embrace our vulnerability as we meet ourselves.

Teachers and Priests

Teachers, priests, and priests-in-training have additional responsibilities and will not use their role, authority or position to impel a sexual relationship with a Sangha member. If the teacher or priest-in-training is in a committed relationship, they should not engage in sexual activity with any person outside of that relationship. Sexual activity outside of a long-term, committed relationship is never appropriate between a teacher and student.

We believe that openness and transparency are important tools in navigating the vast gray areas that exist in the landscape of human sexuality. Achieving this offers a middle way between the Temple unnecessarily legislating personal relationships on one hand, and ignoring the potential for harmful actions resulting from the real or perceived power differential between teacher and student on the other.

Any teacher, priest, or priest-in-training, not in a committed relationship, who finds themselves at the beginning of a mutually desired romantic relationship with a member of the Sangha should inform the [EAR Council](#), which will inform the Board of Directors of this intention and seek guidance as to the most healthful way to proceed. The EAR Council and the parties wishing to pursue the romantic relationship should then discuss creating safeguards to protect both involved parties and the Sangha. For example, the EAR Council may recommend that one of the individuals take a break from Sangha practice so the couple can focus on exploring the new relationship or that a student change to a different teacher.

Whatever the details of the path forward, in the case of teachers there should be a formal time-out from that student-teacher relationship of no less than one year. In all cases there must be a conscious commitment to enter into a relationship that brings no harm to either party or to the Sangha. The EAR Council should help in this decision-making process. A resolution should be achieved with as little delay and as much openness and transparency as possible.

Sexual Harassment and Inappropriate Behavior

"Sexual harassment" means unwelcome sexual advances, unwelcome requests for sexual favors, unwelcome physical contact of a sexual nature or unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Persons of any gender may be a recipient or instigator of sexual harassment. Unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature includes but is not limited to the deliberate, repeated making of unsolicited gestures or comments of a sexual nature; the deliberate display of sexually graphic materials; or deliberate verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, whether or not repeated, that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. Our goal is to create a practice environment where we all treat each other respectfully. Any disrespectful behavior, even if it does not escalate to the level of "harassment," interferes with that goal and will be referred to the EAR Council for action. The Buddhist Temple of Toledo (BTT) also reserves the right to respond to inappropriate behavior even where no one has complained or indicated they have been offended.

Confidentiality

We understand confidentiality to be a reasonable assumption of privacy. It is not a strict code of secrecy.

A central part of our practice is spiritual direction. There is a right to a reasonable sense of confidentiality regarding what is said in dokusan or similar conversations. However, it is regarded as a healthy practice in this community that the transmitted teachers may choose to consult with each other in matters of spiritual direction with the students.

Those involved in pastoral care and in leadership roles such as Guardian Council or seminarians may also consult with each other and with the teachers and share confidences where appropriate.

Questions during Dharma Combat, discussions during workshops or Sangha Circles, and other group sharing scenarios such as Open Sozan are venues in which highly sensitive personal information may arise. All participants are expected to treat personal information with kindness and compassion and respect the confidentiality of these environments. In accordance with postings in the temple, participants should be aware that certain events are broadcast and recorded.

When complaints are made or concerns are expressed, one person should not be expected to hold these things in secret. It is understood that members of the EAR Council and the appropriate bodies with which it consults during the Formal Reconciliation and Grievance Process will be privy to information

relevant to the process and that the EAR Council is charged with keeping records pertaining to cases going through this process. Where the outcome of the process results in action to be implemented by administrative bodies, those bodies will be privy to the relevant information.

It is understood that action will be taken on anything that a therapist or clergy person would be mandated by law to report, such as suspected abuse or neglect of a child, an elder, or a disabled person.

Teacher and Priest Code of Ethics

Teachers, priests, and priests in training undertake to uphold the Sixteen Zen Bodhisattva Precepts, to adhere to this code of ethics, and to embrace the additional responsibilities expressed below.

As teachers and priests, we recognize that we are the recipients of the Sangha's trust. We receive our roles as a deepening of our own practice, as service to the Dharma, and as supporting the practice of awakening others. Our conduct is also guided by the following specific commitments:

A. **Authority and Power** - Teachers and priests should live in service to the Three Treasures and live selflessly with regards to authority and power. While we carry spiritual authority within the sangha, this should never be used in ways that bring harm to individuals or the community.

B. **Funds and Assets** - Teachers and priests should live in a way that is financially appropriate to their life as a practitioner in the world, while being in harmony in spirit and action with a life based in non-attachment. We are mindful that all BTT funds and assets belong to the Sangha as a whole and acknowledge our responsibility to be scrupulously honest with them. Where Sangha members offer material gifts as an expression of gratitude, we will consider all gifts over token amounts to be gifts to the temple and they will be donated accordingly. Donations will not result in any preferential treatment by a teacher.

C. **Sexual Relationships and Intimacy** - Teachers and priests will not exploit their authority and position to initiate a sexual relationship with a Sangha member. If they are in a committed relationship they should not engage in sexual activities with any person outside of that relationship.

We understand that attraction and affection between people may arise. We are mindful of the harm that can be done even under the most sincere consensual circumstances. We acknowledge that shifts in romantic and sexual dynamics can occur and require both vigilance and integrity. Where those of us not in a committed relationship find such a shift occurring, we vow to be open and transparent, to seek the guidance of the EAR Council, and to follow the relationship and intimacy guidelines as outlined in this Code of Ethics.

D. Refraining from False Speech - We undertake to speak what is true and useful and to refrain from gossip. We will cultivate conscious and clear communication and the quality of loving-kindness as the basis of our speech. We will respect the sensitive nature of what is communicated to us in our spiritual roles and vow to adhere to the Code of Ethics with respect to confidentiality. We will use speech to foster awakening, to express compassion, and to cultivate harmony in the sangha.

E. Refraining from intoxicants that cause heedlessness or loss of awareness - Substance abuse is the cause of tremendous suffering. We undertake not to abuse or misuse intoxicants at any time. If any teacher or priest has a drug or alcohol addiction problem, the EAR Council will address it immediately.

Any sangha member who feels a teacher or priest is seriously transgressing this Code of Ethics should take their concerns the EAR Council.

Ethics and Reconciliation Council (EAR Council)

The EAR Council is a standing council, the number and membership of which is decided by the Executive Committee and Guiding Teachers Council with Board of Directors' approval. Members serve for one year terms which may be renewed successively through the same approval process. Contact information and details for the Council will be posted on the BTT website. Its primary role is to administer the Formal Reconciliation and Grievance Process, recommending steps toward reconciliation in cases where the Informal Reconciliation Process is unsuccessful or inappropriate. EAR Council members are also available to support Sangha members who are engaging in the Informal Reconciliation Process by serving as a resource for consultation, support, and advice where direct discussion between the parties involved has been unsuccessful in reaching a solution.

Informal Reconciliation Process

When someone has a concern about the action of anyone associated with our Sangha, ideally, we can approach one another and speak about the matter in an honest, direct, and mutually-respectful manner. Members of the EAR Council are available to act as mediators or witnesses between parties in conflict in this context. Any Sangha member or active participant may approach any EAR Council member for consultation. In some cases, a meeting with a member of the EAR Council may be sufficient to clarify the issues involved. While we strongly encourage Informal Reconciliation as a first step, we also recognize that sometimes this may not feel comfortable, right, or safe. In such cases, the EAR Council can offer support through the Formal Reconciliation and Grievance Process.

Formal Reconciliation and Grievance Processes

The Formal Reconciliation and Grievance Process is available where attempts at reconciliation have not been successful or are inappropriate.

Requests for use of this process must be made in writing and submitted to the EAR Council, must provide the name of the person(s) whose behavior the complaint involves, must provide a detailed description of the alleged behavior, a history of attempts at resolution, and a general statement about the desired resolution.

Any member of the EAR Council or of the bodies with which they consult, who has an actual or perceived bias or conflict of interest will not be permitted to be part of this process. It is the responsibility of the EAR Council to ensure this is the case on receipt of a request for use of the process.

The EAR Council has responsibility for determining whether alleged misconduct has occurred and for making Recommendations to the parties involved regarding consequences:

- If a concern has been brought forward to the Formal Reconciliation and Grievance Process which **does not involve a teacher**, then the EAR Council will make a Recommendation to the parties involved after consultation with the **Guiding Teachers Council**. The Abbott makes the final decision regarding implementation of Recommendations. Both the Abbott and the EAR Council, when relevant, may seek the opinion of other parties during this process (e.g. a legal opinion).
- If a concern has been brought forward to the Formal Reconciliation and Grievance Process which **involves the Abbott or the Abbott's immediate family**, then the EAR Council will make a Recommendation to the parties involved after consultation with the **Board of Directors**. The Board makes the final decision regarding implementation of Recommendations. Both the Board and the EAR Council, when relevant, may seek the opinion of other parties during this process (e.g. a legal opinion).

Where a Recommendation involves expulsion from the Sangha or sanctions against a teacher, then the Recommendation is not made directly to the parties involved, but to the appropriate leadership bodies for decision, as follows:

- In cases of expulsion from the Sangha, the Recommendation is forwarded to the Guiding Teachers Council for decision.
- In cases of sanctions against a teacher, the Recommendation is forwarded to the Board of Directors for decision.

The EAR Council will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within seven days and, under most circumstances, issue a formal written response within thirty days.

Among the possible responses are any combination of the following:

- finding of no breach
- suggestion of mediation

- a limited finding acknowledging some breach and forwarding this to an appropriate second party
- a reversal of an administrative decision or action
- a private and mediated apology
- a private reprimand
- follow-up meetings with affected parties
- a public apology, public censure and reparation when possible
- a recommendation for psychological counseling
- a period of probation, suspension or dismissal with the exceptions noted above.

If an appeal of an EAR Council Recommendation or of a decision by the relevant body of expulsion from the Sangha or sanctions against a teacher is desired, it may be made by the Appeal Procedure described below.

Appeal Procedure

Requests for use of this procedure must be made in writing and submitted to the EAR Council. Requests should include a rationale for disagreement with the Recommendation or decision, any new evidence not previously available during the Formal Reconciliation and Grievance Process, any concern of violation of the Process, and a statement about the desired resolution. Pending outcome of an appeal, implementation of the original Recommendation or decision will be put on hold.

Any member of the EAR Council or of the bodies with which it consults, who has an actual or perceived bias or conflict of interest will not be permitted to be part of this Appeal Process. It is the responsibility of the EAR Council to ensure this is the case on receipt of a request of a formal Appeal.

- In case of an EAR Council Recommendation resulting from the Formal Reconciliation and Grievance Process which does not involve an issue with a teacher, the Recommendation and Appeal are forwarded to the Guiding Teachers Council for a decision. This decision is final.
- In case of an EAR Council Recommendation resulting from the Formal Reconciliation and Grievance Process which does involve an issue with a teacher, the Recommendation and Appeal are forwarded to the Board of Directors for a decision. This decision is final.
- In the case of an appeal of a decision of expulsion from the Sangha (by the Guiding Teachers Council) or of sanctions against a teacher (by Board of Directors) the Appeal will be considered by the relevant body which will then issue a final decision.
- In all cases of appeal, the EAR Committee members involved in the original Recommendation should be present for clarity of understanding, but have no vote on the matter.

The EAR Council will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within seven days and, under most circumstances, issue a formal written response within thirty days.

Significant Ethical Breaches

The EAR Council is also charged to look into alleged breaches of ethics by anyone involved in the Sangha that concerns significant inappropriate behavior, inappropriate sexual conduct, abusive behavior, harassment, misuse or misappropriation of temple funds or assets, efforts to create schisms in the Sangha, gross and harmful incompetence in leadership or teaching, the use of position for personal gain or exploitation or anything that a therapist or clergy person would be mandated by law to report, such as suspected abuse or neglect of a child, an elder, or a disabled person. Anyone aware of such matters must bring them to an EAR Council member immediately.