

When dokusan is offered, the *jisha* will explain how to indicate if you would like an interview; usually we place a card in front of our seats. When it is your turn the *jisha* will stand in front of you and *gassho*. Simply get up and go directly to the dokusan line, which is in the hallway near the zendo. Because dokusan is part of our practice, the zendo expands to include the dokusan room and the waiting line. Therefore, when going to dokusan, don't bow to your seat or the sangha, and don't pause and *gassho* before leaving the zendo.

The dokusan line is a row of chairs in the hall. The person sitting nearest the interview room is next in line. Take your place at the end of the line; move forward as the line moves.

When the door opens and you hear the dokusan bell, enter and close the door behind you. Traditionally there are three full bows: the first is close to the threshold of the room, facing the altar. Step up to the foot of the zabuton mat, facing the teacher, and execute the second bow. You will make the third bow later as you leave. (Executing *gasshos* instead of the full bows is entirely acceptable.)

Take your seat in front of the teacher, either on the cushions or on a nearby chair. State your name (no matter how well you and the teacher know each other) and your question, or the nature of your practice (for instance, "My practice is counting my breath"). Then let the encounter unfold.

When the interview is over you execute a "tea bow": remaining seated, place your palms on your upper thighs and lean forward in a slight bow. Then stand and make the third bow. Leave the interview room, closing the door behind you. Keeping your hands in *gassho*, return to your place in the zendo.

## Clothing

Out of consideration for the practice of your sangha mates, please do not wear clothing that is brightly colored, revealing (tank tops, short shorts, low-cut necklines), or has logos or slogans. If the shirts available to you have such slogans, simply wear them inside-out. Dark and neutral colors, particularly black, are preferred. However, sometimes our schedules are tight; if you have to come to meditation directly from work, please don't worry if you don't have time to change.

## Dana Box

*Dana* means "generosity." The Henry Thoreau Sangha pays rent to the First Unitarian Society in Newton. There is a box for contributions near the door of the zendo; if you're able to contribute a few dollars, it will be greatly appreciated. However, there is no charge for practicing with us, and all are welcome regardless of ability to contribute.

## Any questions?

Please visit our website at  
[www.boundlesswayzen.org](http://www.boundlesswayzen.org)

Henry Thoreau  
Zen Sangha

## Zendo Etiquette

The ancient forms of Zen hold us and serve as a container for our practice. Because we follow them together, the forms remind us that we are a community. Our practice unites us with one another and with the countless Zen students and sages who have observed these forms through the generations. When you are new to Zen practice they may seem a bit bewildering, and you will undoubtedly make a few mistakes. We gather in a spirit of welcome and generosity, and you won't be corrected harshly. Once the forms become familiar you'll find that they free you to engage your practice wholeheartedly. Please relax into them and let them support you and your meditation.

## In the Zendo

*Zendo* means "hall of Zen," and it is wherever we gather together for our practice. When entering the zendo please stand slightly off the center of the door or passageway and *gassho* by raising your hands in front of your chin with the palms together, the tips of your fingers a little lower than your nose. When leaving, turn, face into the zendo, and *gassho* before going out.

When you arrive at your place, bow to your seat. The people flanking you (and those in rows directly behind you and your neighbors) will return your bow. Then, turning toward the altar, face in the opposite direction and bow to the community. The person directly across from you and his/her two neighbors (and those in rows directly behind them) will return your bow. If you come into the zendo after the *zazen* period has formally begun, perform your bows, but others will remain in their practice and will not return them.

## Sutra Service

We begin our meditation practice by passing out sutra books and chanting together. The *ino*, or chant leader, will announce the page number of the sutra or gatha to be chanted. We hold the sutra books with one of two hand positions, *gassho* or *zazen*; this instruction is marked at the top of the page. For *gassho* position, hold your hands in *gassho* and prop the sutra book between the thumbs and forefingers. For *zazen* position, bring the thumb and pinkie to the inside of the open book, and support it with the three middle fingers on the outside. Feel free to ask an officer for a demonstration. Please do not put the sutra book on the floor.

## Zazen

*Zazen* literally means "sitting zen." You were introduced to the posture and breath counting during the orientation meeting. After you've tried it a few times, you may have questions. You're welcome to ask the person who gave you your orientation or use the formal interview periods (*dokusan*) to ask the teacher (*sensei*) for further guidance.

## Kinhin

We alternate our 25-minute sitting periods with 6- or 7-minute periods of walking meditation (*kinhin*). *Kinhin* is a part of our meditation practice. Keep your hands in the *sashu* position. The first few minutes of *kinhin* are done at a very slow pace and then the pace increases. Stay in step and within arm's length of the person in front of you.

If you need to excuse yourself, stay in line until you reach the door. Step out of line quickly, then *gassho* to the person behind you. When you return, follow the line until you catch up, and take your place at its end.

## Dokusan

*Dokusan* means "going to the teacher." It is an opportunity for us to discuss our spiritual practice and its integration into our lives. *Dokusan* is voluntary, all are welcome, and the interview does not create a formal commitment to the teacher. There are any number of questions that you may wish to discuss in a formal interview with a Zen teacher, including:

- How do I begin my practice?
- How do I best continue this practice?
- How do I engage the issues that have arisen within my practice? Sometimes we encounter deep burning issues in our lives: death, illness, or loss. Such dilemmas have an impact on our practice, and you are welcome to discuss them with the teacher.

*Dokusan* is meant to be focused on the spiritual question at hand and is traditionally very brief. Our practice at Boundless Way Zen allows a little more time, but it is rare for a *dokusan* interview to last ten minutes. Please keep your discussion to the point of your spiritual question and remember that other members of the sangha are waiting for *dokusan*.