

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR TRUST MEMBERS

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Principle

The trustees form the executive apparatus of a Vipassana organisation. They fulfil the legal requirements of the state and work according to long established guidelines for this tradition set down by S. N. Goenka. The centre/area teacher is the administrative head of the centre or local Vipassana organisation. The Trust provides an opportunity to involve, train and give responsibility to more and more Dhamma servers in the many administrative areas of a centre or area.

Appointment of Trustees

Serving on a trust and temporarily taking responsibility for some aspect of the operation of a particular Dhamma centre or an area where courses are held, is one way old students can develop the quality of serving others. Undertaking this serious responsibility is actually a direct form of service that ensures Dhamma activities are properly organised, and that Dhamma funds are carefully spent and fully accounted for. It is difficult to earn money and even more difficult to give donations. Therefore it is essential that money be spent very carefully. Membership on the trust should never be regarded as a platform for imposing one's opinions on others. Trust service should be carried out in a logical, practical manner, free from attachment to one's views.

Trust members should work harmoniously and cordially with the centre/area teachers, the assistant teachers, other Dhamma servers, and with each other, understanding that this is essential for the successful operation of the Dhamma organisation.

Members and officers of the trust are appointed solely by the centre teachers, and usually serve for one or two years. Sometimes a member is re-appointed at the end of the term.

There should be a strict delineation of duties for trust officers, and whenever a new appointment occurs, the incoming officer should be properly trained and these duties handed over completely. Office bearers should understand that their position is not one of honour, but of responsibility. New trust members are appointed to encourage more and more meditators to give service. Appointment of a new trust doesn't mean that old trust members stop giving Dhamma service. They are welcome to give Dhamma service in other capacities.

A trustee is appointed for a limited period also to ensure that they don't start thinking of themselves as owners of the centre. This prevents false pride in their mind about their position or status. Appointment as a trustee is not for power, authority, status or prestige. A trustee learns to

serve in different fields of Dhamma service. Each trustee should understand that the whole purpose of their service is to progress on the path of Dhamma, to earn merits by selfless service.

Conduct of Trust Members

Trust members must do their utmost to maintain their *sila*. Particular attention must be given to the third and fifth precepts, that is, complete restraint from sexual misconduct, and complete abstinence from the use of drugs and intoxicants.

It is required that a trust member has total commitment to the path of Dhamma and the technique of Vipassana as taught in this tradition.

A daily practice of a minimum of one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening is essential. All trust members must sit at least one annual 10-day course and, in addition, must endeavour to serve at least one 10-day course per year. This service is particularly important to help keep trust members in touch with the running of courses. The requirement to serve a 10-day course may be waived for trust members who are already giving substantial time to other trust activities, such as student registration, part-time service at courses, maintenance, centre searches, etc.

Trust members must not be commercially involved with, or employed by the trust.

Trust Decision-making Process

Major trust decisions should be made by consensus of the trust members, as well as the local assistant teachers who will be able to help in the decision-making process. Meetings should include all trust members, assistant teachers, and centre/area teachers and sufficient notice should be given so that all may attend. If consensus cannot be reached on an important issue, then the centre/area teachers will make the final decision. To avoid unnecessary discussion of topics for which there is already a firm policy, it is helpful to keep in touch with the centre/area teachers or senior assistant teachers regarding current issues of concern.

The consensus process is one of working harmoniously to reach agreement about the matter at hand. Consensus does not mean majority rule, or voting, or lobbying, or putting pressure on people to agree to a certain view. Nor does it confer on trust members any veto power over decisions with which they do not fully concur. On occasion one may need to accept the group's decision even though one may have some disagreement with it. There should always be a balanced give and take in the spirit of selfless service.

When the trustees or assistant teachers are not satisfied about a decision made by the centre/area teacher on an important issue they should seek

clarification from that teacher.

Role of the Assistant Teachers

The assistant teachers should be contacted for guidance and their experience utilised. They will act as advisors, ensuring that the decisions and general functioning of the trust follow the Principal Teachers' guidelines. Serving as a trust member is of limited duration so that newer students may also have an opportunity to undertake this Dhamma responsibility. The assistant teachers, however, are usually appointed for life. This continuity of service of assistant teachers helps provide stability to the trust's activities. Assistant teachers are in frequent contact with the centre/area teachers on various Dhamma matters and policy, and their familiarity with the trust's activities over a longer period of time is important

Role of the Centre Teachers

The centre/area teachers have been given ultimate responsibility for the welfare, growth and operation of each centre and part of their duty is the appointment of members of the trust. They should strive to work harmoniously with the trust members and with all of the assistant teachers in that area. Their job is to ensure that the decisions and general functioning of the trust are in the best interest of the centre and are conducive to the spread of Dhamma in that area.

Trust Meetings

Meetings should be short, to the point, and properly chaired. They should generally be open to all old students. The work of chairing and timekeeping a meeting may be rotated according to procedures adopted by the trust, but minutes should always be taken by the appointed secretary. Every meeting should be preceded by a one-hour group sitting which the assistant teachers and trust members should attend.

The old students attending meetings (who are not trustees or committee members or assistant teachers) are to act as observers only. They should keep silence. They may give advice on topics about which they have experience or expertise if they are asked to. They may not introduce their own items for discussion unless such items have been previously approved for addition to the agenda. Decision-making is limited to the trust members in consultation with the assistant teachers under the supervision of the centre/area teachers.

Old students should be made aware that there are many ways in which to serve, even without being given a particular position on the trust or on a committee. A constant effort should be made to involve more students in Dhamma service.

The chairperson should ensure that:

a) The meeting follows the agenda, b) people speak only in turn, and c) the time agreed on for each topic is not exceeded. If this happens, the chairperson may request more time from the members.

Also note that: (a) an individual's objections to an issue may be raised at trust meetings a maximum of three times and then should be dropped if not accepted. This willingness to be flexible in one's views on an issue is most helpful in the efficient and harmonious running of the trust. (b) The chairperson needs to remain aware of the atmosphere at meetings. A short period of meditation may be helpful if tension develops.

Committees

A trust will usually create a number of committees which can directly and more efficiently oversee the various aspects of its operation; for example, executive, finance, registration, Dhamma service, kitchen, household, maintenance, construction, spreading information about Vipassana, etc. These committees are formed by the trust with the approval of the centre teachers. The committees are responsible to the trust. Their members may include old students who are not trustees.

Important Note:

Assistant teachers and teachers are expected to remain closely involved and supervise all issues such as new construction or any other major issue that involves significant expenditure of Dhamma funds or affects the functioning of the centre.