

Zen Mountain Monastery Residential Training

Thank you for contacting us about residential training at Zen Mountain Monastery.

Our commitment to making the Monastery an inclusive and equitable place for everyone who wishes to study Buddhadharma and engage the Zen practice and training offered here includes acknowledging the history and enduring karma of structural oppression in our country and the inequities that persist today. If you are a woman; are black, indigenous, Asian, or a person of color (BIAPOC); lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQIA+); and/or economically disadvantaged, we welcome and especially encourage you to apply. We are happy to share that we have various forms of [financial assistance](#) available, including DEIJ scholarships for BIAPOC and LGBTQIA+ applicants and need-based scholarships for all applicants. We also participate in the [Hemera Fellowship Program](#). These fellowships are available to professionals with a passion for service.

For applicants with physical and mental disabilities: the Monastery's main building was constructed in the late 1920s as a summer retreat center for adolescents. It is four stories, built before the Americans with Disabilities Act. In the past couple years, we have undertaken efforts to make the building more accessible to those with mobility issues, installing handrails along the staircases, renovating bathrooms to make them more accessible, and constructing a lift from the first floor to the zendo level, which was completed in late 2020. We have also undertaken a building project that provides retreat and residential space for those with mobility issues. This building was completed in the summer of 2021.

Over the years, we have done our best to accommodate anyone who wishes to practice here. Practitioners who use wheelchairs, or with visual or auditory impairments, or different kinds of mental and/or cognitive impairments have done periods of residency with us. Because practice and training at the Monastery centers around zazen, or seated meditation, it is also true that people need a certain degree of mental stability in order for residential training to be nourishing and beneficial. If you have a disability of any kind and are interested in residency, we encourage you to contact us so that we can talk about how we can best support you in your aspiration to practice and train at the Monastery.

You might start reading these residency materials and application and wonder: *Is this for me? Is this what I'm looking for?* If so, we want you to reach out to us. If you need more information, have a particular concern, or just need a boost of confidence to help you consider a period of residency, give us a call. We want to hear from you if you have questions.

Residential Zen training at Zen Mountain Monastery is a unique and powerful experience. In the nearly 40 years that we've been offering residential training, we've learned a lot about what makes it a positive and nourishing experience for people, and we're still learning. We'd like to share some of those insights here in the hope that they help you clarify whether residency at the Monastery is the right form of spiritual training for you in your life right now.

Living Within the Three Treasures

Entering into residential training at the Monastery means living within the Three Treasures. In Buddhism, the Three Treasures are the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha—the teacher, the teachings and the community. During the Buddha’s time, ordination consisted of taking refuge in the Three Treasures. The Monastery’s abbot, Shugen Roshi, often says that when we are suffering, it is because we have become estranged from the Three Treasures. They are the foundation of Buddhist teaching and practice and provide a useful lens for looking at residential life at the Monastery.

The Buddha Treasure

It was through sitting in meditation that the Buddha awakened to liberation, and it is this ancient practice that has been transmitted person-to-person over millennia and oceans to our time and place. Zazen is the heart of Zen. It helps us learn to concentrate the mind, calm the endless waves of distraction, and begin to see who we really are apart from our habits and reactivity. The practice of zazen is the heartbeat of residential training. We sit together each morning and evening and spend a week of each month doing an intensive silent meditation retreat called *sesshin*.

In residency, as we begin to study our mind through zazen, the guidance of a teacher is invaluable. Monastery residents normally have a chance to meet with the teachers in private interview once a week, and more frequently during *sesshin*. Working with a teacher is an important part of dharma training while in residency, and gives you a chance to ask questions about your zazen, about the teachings, and receive guidance about how to practice situations and issues that arise for you within residency.

You can learn more about the MRO teachers—Shugen Roshi, Hojin Sensei, and Hogen Sensei—on our website under About > [Teachers & Staff](#).

The Dharma Treasure

The teachings of the Buddha are ancient and profound, and speak to universal truths that are deeply relevant for modern practitioners, and they are also completely in tune, aligned with and applicable to our contemporary culture and life. The questions of human suffering, life and death, and how to live a meaningful, beneficial life—and do that with others—are the questions the Buddha brought to his own search. These are the same questions that set many of today’s student on the path.

At the Monastery, dharma study takes the form of the Eight Gates of Zen, a training program created by our founder John Daido Loori, Roshi, based on the Buddha’s teaching of the Eightfold

Path. In addition to Zazen and Study with a Teacher, discussed in the previous section, the Eight Gates are:

Liturgy

Daido Roshi referred to liturgy as “making visible the invisible.” It is a way of using our body, speech and mind to embody, invoke and speak the truth of the Buddha’s teachings—as we chant sutras, expressing our deepest aspiration to manifest wisdom and compassion, and do this together as a community.

Daily liturgy services include chanting and bowing, and services throughout the day bring our attention to activities, like meals and work, that we might otherwise do in a state of distraction. Because Buddhist liturgy is largely unfamiliar to new residents, it’s helpful to enter it as we enter all forms of training—with an open mind and a willingness to ask questions or ask for support when you need it.

Work Practice

Eighth-century Master Baizhang said, “A day without work is a day without food.” In traditional Zen monasteries, work practice was seen as not only integral to the functioning of the monastery, but as a gateway to practice and liberation. Through engaging work as practice, we begin to see how our zazen functions within activity and close the gap between our practice “on the cushion” and “off the cushion,” bringing every part of our day together into a seamless whole.

Each morning, all of the residents do caretaking, or silent work practice, as a form of selfless giving to the sangha and the buildings and grounds that support our life. This can include working in the kitchen, housekeeping, gardening, light construction and office work. Because many of us enter residential training with some experience of working, work practice gives us a chance to take up and transform the binding habits that we may bring to it.

Right Action

Right Action is the study and practice of the Buddhist Precepts, the moral and ethical teachings of the Buddha. Though the Precepts are based on the experience of selflessness, they are designed to function in our everyday lives. They define how a buddha lives in the world. To learn more about the precepts, see Daido Roshi’s book on the moral and ethical teachings of Zen Buddhism, [*The Heart of Being*](#).

Body Practice

Our physical body is our vehicle of self-realization, an experience that encompasses our whole being. The search for self-knowledge is too often reduced to a purely mental pursuit. Body practice helps us to unify body, breath and mind through activities ranging from refined practices like qigong and yoga to everyday ordinary activities like washing our face and eating breakfast.

Art Practice

The history of creative expression within Zen Buddhism goes back centuries and includes highly developed styles of brush painting, calligraphy, poetry, and ceramics. At the Monastery, art practice is guided by the training staff and is intended to give you an ever-unfolding way to study the self, emphasizing the creative process as a path to discovery.

Buddhist Study

Bodhidharma, the founder of Zen, said that Zen does not rely on words and letters. Yet, having a good conceptual understanding of the essential teachings and principles of Buddhism is critical to establishing a sound practice. Though words are not the same as the reality they describe, when used skillfully, they can act as a medium for direct realization.

The Sangha Treasure

“Sangha” means “the virtue of harmony,” and refers to the community of people who practice the Buddha’s teachings. Understood more broadly, it includes all beings. The teachings say that “self and other are one.” What does this actually mean? Residency provides a powerful and nourishing training ground for studying the relationship between self and other.

If you are relational by nature, residency will challenge you to cultivate stability within your solitude. Regular periods of silence, combined with daily zazen and monthly sesshin, present you with an opportunity to develop your own inner resources and discover that you are your own refuge.

If you are solitary by nature, residency will challenge you to extend yourself to others. Living with the residents, hosting newcomers on retreat weekends, and serving the teachers and sangha give you a chance to study yourself in relationship. We refer to this as “mutual polishing,” evoking rocks whose edges become smooth when tumbled together. With time, we discover not only that we are deeply interconnected and interdependent with others, but also that we need others in order to awaken and liberate ourselves.

The sangha in general, and the residential sangha in particular, is a group of people who live and practice closely together throughout the day. While practicing and training in Zen Buddhism is what we have in common, our lives and experiences are both unique *and* profoundly impacted by our social identities—age, race, class, gender, sexuality, gender identity, physical ability and so on. Systemic oppression in the United States functions to make the identities of dominant groups—white people, men, straight, cisgender, and able-bodied people—seem normal, universal, standard, and therefore invisible. This “normalizing” simultaneously creates “othering,” causing harm to self and other.

Thirteenth-century Zen master Eihei Dogen said, “To study the Buddha Way is to study the self.” Studying the socialized self is part of studying the Buddha Way. While the teachings tell us that

we each possess an unconditioned body with no fixed form or characteristics, it is also true that our various social identities have meanings that impact every aspect of our lives, including our lives in residency.

Just as expressions of bias arise in the world, they also arise in a cloistered spiritual community like ours. While these expressions of bias harm everyone, they disproportionately harm marginalized folks—BIPOC, women, LGBTQIA+ people, the elderly, disabled people, etc. In the study of our self through zazen and in relationship with others, we begin to make visible and conscious what is subtle and hard to see. This allows us to begin taking responsibility for the effect we have on others—interpersonally and communally.

Another way we take up anti-oppression work as dharma training at the Monastery is through our Beyond Fear of Differences initiative (BFoD). In addition to meetings that happen at the Monastery that residents may opt to attend (Earth Initiative, Diamond Net, LGBTQIA+, White Affinity), all residents are asked to participate in ongoing study groups focusing on racism, patriarchy, and other forms of oppression. This study has taken different shapes at different times, including sharing in relevant readings, watching films, holding discussions, and special trainings and workshops.

We've found that this study can be emotionally activating for some, and that it impacts people differently based on their social identities. While we ask that you be prepared to attend these meetings with the same open mind of inquiry you would bring to any other aspect of residential practice and training, please know that teachers, training staff, and peer mentors are here to help support you in this work.

Some people ask us, "What does anti-oppression work have to do with Buddhism or dharma training?" The Buddha said, "I teach one thing and one thing only: suffering and the end of suffering." Given the pervasive suffering that results from centuries—even millennia—of violence and oppression based on social identity, the practice of self-study and anti-oppression work is dharma training. The mind that we work with in zazen, the self that we study in relationship to others, is the mind and self conditioned by society, family and culture. None of us escape this deep and pervasive conditioning.

Hosan

Hosan is a period each week from Sunday at 2pm until Tuesday at 2pm when the formal training schedule lifts. During hosan, residents have a chance to rest and practice in a self-directed way. Residents can take care of personal business, explore the mountains and rivers in the Mount Tremper area, avail themselves of the library, art practice and body practice rooms at the Monastery and get a sense of how to practice from their own internal aspiration.

Communal Living

Residential Zen training is a unique opportunity to focus all of your attention on your spiritual practice and to engage with the resident sangha in the spirit of spiritual friendship. To ensure

that you and everyone else who enters into residency is able to practice in a safe and respectful environment, we emphasize that residency is not the time or place to initiate intimate or sexual relationships (please see the [Doshinji Code](#)).

During the training week, Monastery residents wear clothes that cover their shoulders and knees. Because shaving the head is part of our monastic liturgy, we ask that lay people not shave their heads while they are in residency. While we don't strictly prohibit or monitor the use of smartphones during the training week, we do strongly encourage residents to reflect on their use and consider the benefits of the cloister that the Monastery offers. During periods of silence and during sesshin, residents should not use smartphones or engage in electronic communication of any kind.

BIAPOC & LGBTQIA Applicants

In acknowledging that the Monastery's teachers and current training staff are all white, cisgender people, we welcome you to make contact with one or more of our sangha affinity groups. These groups meet regularly via Zoom and can be a valuable support before, during and after your period of residency. We also have peer mentors who would be glad to connect with you before you come. For more info on affinity groups, check out [our website](#) or look ahead to the end of this application.

Applying for Residency

As you prepare to fill out an application, please reflect on your motivation for wanting to enter residential training, as well as what you have to offer to the resident sangha in terms of skills, life experience, maturity, etc. Here's how to apply:

1. Complete the Residency Application and Training Agreement and email them to the Training Office at registrar@dharm.net, or you can print and mail your application and send it to Zen Mountain Monastery—Residency; PO Box 197; Mt. Tremper, NY 12457.
2. Call the registrar at 845-688-2228 to schedule a phone interview. During this interview, you'll have a chance to talk about your motivation for wanting to enter into residential Zen training. This interview is also an opportunity for you to ask questions about residency based on the materials you reviewed, and to ask about scholarship and fellowship opportunities.
3. As part of your application process, we suggest you listen to some of the recent dharma talks from the Monastery, available on the [podcast page](#) of our website. This will give you a sense of the teachings being offered by the teachers and senior students here at the Monastery and may help you decide if this is for you.
4. If you are accepted for residency at the conclusion of the interview, you'll be asked to make a non-refundable \$100 deposit to the Training Office. If the deposit is a barrier to applying, please let us know. Be sure to indicate the dates of your intended residency.
5. We are happy to share that we have various forms of [financial assistance](#) available. You can learn more about these on our website.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. We look forward to hearing from you.

Are you considering a longer-term residency?

If you intend to do a period of residency that is longer than one month, please indicate this on your application. Following completion of a first month of residency, we ask that you initiate a more in-depth conversation with one of the teachers or senior monastics about your plans and motivation. If residency seems like a good fit for both you and the sangha, you may ask to extend your stay. Residential training can happen for any time period, from several months up to a year. Year-long residents are eligible for full scholarship support, while those staying less than a year are asked to make a financial commitment within their means. See the financial assistance section of our website for more information.

A year-long residency requires careful discernment and a clear commitment on the part of both the applicant and the Monastery for the relationship to be mutually beneficial. When someone wishes to do a year-long residency, both that person and the Monastery are making a commitment to each other. The teachers, monastics and sangha commit to supporting the resident in their practice and training as it unfolds over the year. In turn, the Monastery relies on year-long residents to fill significant work and service responsibilities that require maturity, stability, and a clear commitment. Those interested in a year of residency can learn more about the process for this by speaking with one of the teachers or senior monastics once you are here.

What to Bring & Travel Information

What to bring: We recommend keeping it simple—travel lightly, and bring only what you feel is necessary. To this end, it can be helpful to keep in mind how full the weekly training schedule is, so you won't have a lot of time for personal activities. We cannot provide storage space, so make sure you bring only what you can easily store in your sleeping space or can carry in two pieces of luggage, at most. If you have any questions, please call us.

Please bring the following: Towel and toiletries (liquid and bar soap are provided at the Monastery), loose-fitting clothes for meditation, work clothes and outdoor work shoes or boots; boots for rain and snow, ice cleats and clothes sufficiently warm for very cold days/nights (winter only), flashlight, battery-powered alarm clock.

During the training week, we wear clothes that cover our shoulders and knees and avoid excessively tight clothing like leggings (unless worn with something over them). As a courtesy to those with allergies, we don't use perfumes or scented lotions or body products.

Art & Body Practice: We engage in art and body practice as part of residential training. If you have a regular art or body practice, you may want to bring some simple supplies to continue this during residency. Musical instruments that can be played without disturbing others should be small enough to carry in one's hand and stored in one's room. These are only to be played during hosan or scheduled periods of art practice.

Do not bring: Pets, drugs, alcohol, musical instruments (unless it is for your art practice), or personal food. Portable music players, smartphones, etc., may be used on hosan.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

By Car From the South: Take NY Thruway 87 to Exit 19 (Kingston). At the traffic circle, take Route 28 West (Pine Hill) for about 20 miles. Turn right at the Mt Tremper exit. Follow the road until you reach a four way intersection. Turn left (onto Plank Rd), cross the bridge, and the entrance is a driveway on the right. It takes about 2.5 hours to drive from NYC.

By Car From the North: Take NY Thruway 87 to Exit 20 (Saugerties). Turn left on Route 32, then turn right onto Route 212. After about 10 miles, you will need to turn right to stay on Route 212. Go 9 miles and turn right onto Plank Road/Old Route 28, cross the bridge, and the entrance is a driveway on the right.

If you are searching for us using a GPS device, use the address 871 Plank Road, Mount Tremper, NY, 12457.

By Bus: Mt. Tremper is serviced by Adirondack Trailways via Kingston. When you arrive in Mt. Tremper, cross the bridge and walk until you see the Monastery sign and gate. The bus trip from NYC is about 3 hours.

By Plane: Fly into any NYC area airport (Kennedy, LaGuardia, or Newark) and take the bus to the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City. See bus instructions above

Application for Residential Training

Residency requires careful discernment and a clear commitment, on your and our part, for the relationship to be mutually beneficial. Clarifying your intention is an important part of the application process, allowing you and the Training Staff to determine together if residency is the right form of spiritual training for you and also to help you get the most out of your stay.

As you fill out this application, please use the questions as an opportunity to express yourself as clearly and authentically as possible. Consider what you can offer in terms of attitude, effort, experience, skills, and abilities.

Dates of Residency

I am applying for residency beginning _____ and ending _____.

Personal Contact Info

Name _____ DOB ____/____/____

Gender _____ Pronouns _____

Racial/ethnic identity _____

Relationship Status _____

Address _____ City _____ ST _____
Zip _____

Phone numbers (w) _____ (h) _____

(c) _____

Email/Website _____

Retreat housing is in shared rooms and dorms. Please let us know in which of the following dorms you would like to sleep. You may select more than one (all dorms are trans inclusive). If you would prefer to only be roomed with other trans/nonbinary roommates, please select this option.

Women

Men

Trans/Nonbinary

Trans/Nonbinary ONLY

COVID protocols:

Our protocols for entering residency can shift depending on what's happening with the pandemic. Have you received information on the current protocol? If not, please contact us to learn more.

Education/Work History/Skills

1. What is your educational background? If you have received training and/or education outside of formal educational systems, please tell us about it.

2. Tell us about your work history. Describe how long you were employed and what your responsibilities were. If your work history has included unpaid and/or non-traditional labor, e.g. care work, artistic/trade apprenticeships, organizing/activism—please include that here.

3. Traditional Zen training and residency at the Monastery includes daily work practice as an important part of the spiritual life. Tell us something about your relationship to work.

4. Please list any hobbies or special skills. If you have skills in sewing, gardening, or work with Wordpress, Indesign or Photoshop, please let us know that.

Living in Community

5. Living within a Sangha asks each of us to practice being mature and responsible in relationships with other residents. It also asks that each of us be able to develop the ability to be in solitude.

What is your experience of being in a group with others? What is your experience of being alone? What challenges and/or benefits of each have you experienced?

6. Part of our residential culture is to illuminate and explore bias and oppression as a specific aspect of our delusion. As a resident, you will participate in the study and discussion of racism, patriarchy, and other systems of oppression. Are you open to being a participant in this? Please describe any concerns you may have. Also, please note item #17 on this application, which speaks to affinity groups and support for this kind of work across different identities.

7. Residency creates an intimate container, living and working every day with a group of people dedicated to practice and training in the dharma. It is natural for feelings and affinities to arise between people. However, to nurture each other's commitment to focus on Zen training and to maintain sangha harmony, we ask residents to commit to regarding and relating to each other as spiritual friends. This means not forming romantic and/or sexual relationships with other residents—or non-residents—during your time in residency, including abstaining from behavior that creates a sexual charge, such as flirting, spending excessive time with another resident, having intimate conversations, and intimate physical contact. As stated in the [Doshinji Code](#), forming an exclusive and/or intimate relationship can result in the termination of a person's period of residency.

How do you feel about entering residential training and taking responsibility for your relationships in this way? What are some ways you can imagine asking for/needing support in the event that strong feelings for another person arise for you during your time in residency? How can you imagine asking for support for yourself should you feel like another resident or sangha member is taking a romantic or intimate interest in you?

Health

8. Residency at the Monastery can be physically, emotionally and mentally demanding. We ask you the following questions to help us determine, with you, whether your health and well-being can be adequately supported in this environment. Please answer as honestly as you can. If there are questions that you don't feel comfortable or able to be transparent about, please let us know that.

Do you have any limiting physical conditions (e.g. bad back, migraines, recurring illness, panic attacks,) that might affect your full participation in residency?

9. Do you have any past/present experience with mental illness, such as depression, anxiety? If so, please describe it and any treatment you've received.

10. Do you have any history with trauma? Please describe it to the degree that you are comfortable. Include how this experience impacts your daily life.

11. Do you take any medication? If so, please indicate what they are and what they are for. (We ask that residents do not make any changes to their medication during their stay).

12. Do you have any history with addiction (including gambling, pornography, food, technology, etc.) or substance abuse? If so, please describe any treatment you've received.

13. Do you have medical insurance? If not, please explain how you will provide for your medical care while in residency.

14. Please list all intolerances or allergies to food, chemicals, animals, etc. and any dietary restrictions you may have.

Other

15. Are you in the process of any major life changes or challenges at this time that you have not already mentioned in this application? This could include moving, the end of a relationship, a job change, the death of a loved one, etc. If so, please explain.

16. What are your plans for when your residency concludes?

Affinity Group Support

17. Our sangha affinity groups meet by Zoom and can be an important way to receive support from people who share your identity within the MRO sangha. You may find connecting with an affinity group helpful before, during, and/or after your period of residency. More information for these groups, including meeting times and a Zoom registration link, is [available on our website](#).

Check off any affinity groups you might be interested in participating in:

Zoom affinity groups:

- ☐ Black, Indigenous, Asian, People of Color (BIAPoC)
- ☐ Asian Sangha Gathering
- ☐ People of African Descent (PAD)
- ☐ LGBTQIA+
- ☐ Transgender Non-conforming (TGNC)
- ☐ What is Whiteness? affinity group

Affinity Group Peer Mentors:

Would you like to be connected to an affinity mentor for a one-on-one contact?

If so, we'll have one of the group leaders reach out to you in advance of your residency; this person will not necessarily be in residence with you, but will be an active member of the sangha and available for questions, conversation, and support.

Emergency Contacts

Please list two emergency contacts with name, phone number, address and relationship to you.

- 1) Name _____
 Phone _____
 Address _____
 Relationship _____

- 2) Name _____
 Phone _____
 Address _____
 Relationship _____

Spiritual Practice History and Personal Statement

Please attach a one- or two-page statement about your interest in training at Zen Mountain Monastery. Speak to what is motivating you to apply for residency. Why do you want to do this? As part of your response, please include a brief overview of your spiritual history, including any previous experience you may have with meditation, or any teachers or spiritual guides you have studied under.

You may also wish to reflect on the following:

Based on your reading or previous experience, what aspects of practice at ZMM appeal to you?

What aspects of practice that may be difficult for you?

Previous experiences with living in community.

How you interact with authority (teachers, bosses, elders).

What you feel you can contribute while you are here.

What you hope to learn or gain by being here.

What are the questions, concerns that are foremost for you in your life right now?

I understand that if I cancel or postpone residency once registered, I forfeit my deposit. I agree to follow the rules of the Monastery and understand that if I leave residential training before the ending date stated on this application that I forfeit any and all payments to Zen Mountain Monastery applied toward residential training.

I hereby release, discharge and absolve Zen Mountain Monastery/Zen Arts Center, Inc., its agents and staff of and from any and all accidents and/or injuries I may sustain during my stay at Zen Mountain Monastery, whether the same are caused by or attributed to the negligence of Zen Mountain Monastery/Zen Arts Center, Inc. or the negligence of its agents or staff.

Signature of

Applicant: _____ **Date:** _____