

## **A Guide to Dokusan and Practice Discussion at Mountain Rain Zen Community**

### **What is dokusan?**

Dokusan is an individual meeting with a person who is fully ordained as a Zen priest and teacher.

### **Who gives dokusan?**

At Mountain Rain Zen Community our resident teachers Myoshin Kate McCandless and Shinmon Michael Newton offer dokusan. Our guiding teacher Zoketsu Norman Fischer offers dokusan when he is here leading retreats.

### **Who can receive dokusan?**

Anyone is welcome to receive dokusan

### **What do you talk about?**

Dokusan is a practice of authentic meeting. It is an opportunity to discuss your meditation practice and how it applies to your daily life. It is fine to bring up a problem or question, or you can just describe your practice. You do not have to be profound or “zen”. Just be yourself.

### **When is dokusan?**

Dokusan is offered during the weekly zazen schedule and during retreats, and also outside the regular schedule by request. Phone dokusan is available for those out-of-town or who cannot come to the zendo.

### **How often do you have dokusan?**

If you are practicing regularly with Mountain Rain, it is recommended to have dokusan about once a month. It is helpful to develop a connection with one or both teachers. In our sangha we do not have a formal process for becoming a student of a particular teacher. This is something that evolves over time through practicing together, but it is good to discuss your commitment to practice with a teacher.

### **How long is dokusan?**

Dokusan usually takes 5-15 minutes, occasionally longer. Sometimes during retreats we practice having very short focussed dokusan.

### **How do I “sign up”?**

This varies depending on the setting. Usually the teacher’s jisha (attendant) will announce when dokusan will begin and what procedure to follow. During weekly zazen we have file cards under the

sitting mats (zabuton) for you to put out behind your seat to indicate that you want dokusan. You can arrange for a phone dokusan by contacting the teacher directly.

### **What is the form for dokusan?**

The jisha will explain with this if you're new, and feel free to ask if you've forgotten. When you enter the dokusan room you do a full prostration before the altar, and a standing bow (gassho) before the teacher, and the reverse when you are finished. This helps to create a container of trust in which both parties can give full attention to meeting each other, supported by the truth of the Buddha Dharma.

### **Is dokusan confidential?**

Dokusan is private and confidential within limits. The limits to confidentiality are: 1) when the individual expresses intention to harm self or other, 2) when a teacher seeks peer consultation from another teacher. The resident teachers do consult each other from time to time, and may consult their own teacher occasionally, in order to best support sangha members. This is standard practice in major Zen centres. When an individual requests complete confidentiality, we will respect that request, as long as there is no risk to that person or another.

**Teacher Contact info:** Phone-604-462-0604 Email: Kate at [kakushi@shaw.ca](mailto:kakushi@shaw.ca) or Michael at [onshin@shaw.ca](mailto:onshin@shaw.ca)

### **What is practice discussion?**

Practice discussion is an opportunity to discuss your practice with a dharma mentor in a less formal setting than dokusan. As with dokusan, anyone is welcome to have practice discussion.

### **Who gives practice discussion?**

Those who have served as the shuso (head monk) for a practice period can offer practice discussion. The shuso can be an ordained priest or a lay practitioner. Currently Mountain Rain has three people who offer practice discussion, Dai-I Flo Rublee, Nin-en Susan Elbe and Jiko Claire Talbot.

### **When is practice discussion?**

Sometimes practice discussion is incorporated into retreats, but mostly it takes place mostly outside regular zazen time. It can take place at the zendo, at an outside location, or by phone.

### **How do I "sign up"?**

You can contact any of the practice leaders through [info@mountainrainzen.org](mailto:info@mountainrainzen.org) to arrange a practice discussion.