

Black Mountain Zen Centre

Sesshin Application

Please return this page only

Dates applied for _____

Your name _____

Address _____

Home phone _____

Mobile phone _____

Email _____

Date of birth _____

Do you identify as Male/Female/Other (circle one)

Are there any medical details we need to know in case of emergency?

Emergency contact name and phone number _____

Have you sat sesshin before? Yes/No (circle one)

Do you need a chair while sitting? Yes/No (circle one – it may be possible to use both a chair and a cushion)

Do you have any allergies or specific dietary requirements? Yes/No (circle one – if Yes, please describe them below)

Sesshin is offered on a donation basis: please feel free to offer what you can afford.

A suggested donation to cover retreat venue and associated costs is:

- £ 310 Tuesday-Sunday
- £165 Friday-Sunday

I enclose a donation of £ _____

If are a U.K. taxpayer, are you willing to Gift Aid your sesshin donation at no extra cost to yourself? Yes/No (circle one)

Signature _____

Date _____

Black Mountain Zen Centre

Please download, sign and return your completed application form to:

Black Mountain Zen Centre (Sesshin), Cathedral Buildings, 64 Donegall Street,
Belfast, BT1 2GT, U.K.

You can also scan and email the completed form to: reverendmyogan@gmail.com

- Bedding and towels are provided. You may wish to bring a sleeping bag and warm clothing in cold weather.
- Loose, comfortable clothing is advisable for zazen. Those with robes are requested to wear them. Clothing is usually of a dark, subdued colour.
- Sandals or slip-on shoes may be useful for walking meditation.
- There may be some stretching/yoga, so a change of clothing is advisable.
- Outdoor waterproof clothing and shoes may also be needed for work practice.
- Only vegetarian food is provided.
- Please follow the Health and Safety Guidelines issued by the retreat venue, and please do not smoke inside the building.
- Thank you for co-operating.

A Note on Dana

"The gift of Dharma exceeds all gifts." Shakyamuni Buddha

At the end of the sesshin there will be a bowl provided in the hallway for a Dana collection for the teacher. This is offered on a voluntary basis.

The sublime Dharma cannot be measured in material value. There has never been a charge for the teachings, yet there are, and always have been, costs involved in making teachings possible and teachers available. Traditionally, these have been covered by voluntary donations from those who value and participate in the teachings. Black Mountain Zen Centre, as a charitable organisation, accrues no funds to pay visiting teachers for their time or for the considerable expense involved in flying across the Atlantic Ocean to lead sesshin. Teachers give enormously of their time, energy, experience, understanding and interest, often without material security. We create a good heart for ourselves when we also give what we can in the same spirit. Buddhist teachers traditionally teach only where invited. They depend for their livelihood on your generosity alone. Our ongoing efforts to provide opportunities to further develop wisdom and compassion through Zen meditation depend upon the goodwill and assistance of all our sangha members and friends. Thank you.

Black Mountain Zen Centre

A Note on Sesshin

At sesshin, we separate ourselves from the concerns and preoccupations of our busy everyday lives and sink deeply into the question, “What is my essential nature?” In these special training circumstances we are free to devote ourselves entirely to the practice of realising the Buddha Way.

At sesshin we are free to be true to our hearts. We are free to transcend the background chatter of our busy minds and to see into the fact of our own nature. Sesshin offers us the chance to make great progress on the broad path of maturity.

The forms and procedures in use during sesshin are designed to establish an optimum setting for true Zen training, and a structure which supports each of us in giving full attention to the matter at hand. These will be explained at the start of sesshin. By internalising the guidelines, and practising them mindfully, we create an environment for the entire group which fosters and expresses our deepest aspirations.

It is all right to make mistakes. No one is judging you. You will find that you will pick it up as sesshin continues. Just practise with sincerity. If you have heard all this before, please consider it again with beginner's mind.

Sesshin is residential practice, and rather than ‘retreat’ offers instead a more intensive engagement with our life.

Dokusan (an interview with the teacher) is available on request.

Sesshin is silent practice and you are encouraged not to engage in conversations with others, or to read books or engage with telephone, computer, radio etc.

Questions arising from practice should be addressed to the teacher in dokusan.

A member of the sangha will be designated at sesshin to deal with enquiries relating to accommodation, food, etc. You should indicate to them that you wish to speak to them privately to avoid disturbing others.

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Wholeheartedly joining in with the group and the schedule is the key to a fulfilling sesshin. Engage fully with the timetable of activities, and in your free time have a sleep, go for a walk, etc. With this spirit, relaxing or working, everything becomes zazen.

If some emergency arises and you cannot attend practice as normal, please speak to the designated sangha member about it. Please do not skip parts of the schedule or leave sesshin just because you are upset. Such times can be important for your zazen, and your absence would disturb the group spirit. We ask that you never leave sesshin without speaking first to the teacher.

The term “sesshin” means “to settle the mind, to touch the mind, to convey the mind”. Each day provides myriad opportunities to continue this practice. Essentially, each moment contains everything we need. Doing zazen moment by moment opens us up to these possibilities, allowing us to settle into our depths.

Enjoy your sesshin. Guard every moment as if it were a precious jewel.

“The purpose of practice is to accept ourselves. Knowing that, all our efforts are to accept ourselves. Whether we become great or not is not the point. When we can accept ourselves, we are already one with all existence. When spring comes, we can enjoy the spring flowers. When summer comes, we can enjoy the cool moonlight. When autumn comes, we can appreciate the beauty of the foliage. In winter we will appreciate snow. When we can accept ourselves, we can accept anything. There is no self in our mind.

What we have is big mind, big self.”

—*Shunryu Suzuki*