

Prefatory Words from Roshi

The Term Intensive (TI) offers members a supportive structure in which to extend one's practice efforts for a set period of time. Participants pledge to uphold a schedule of increased sitting and perhaps other aspects of discipline that are directly or indirectly related to Zen practice, such as Buddhist devotions, Dharma study, or body work. Sitting, as the core practice in Zen, serves as the basis of the TI, and increasing it will fortify any other pledges one makes – “Upholding the precepts, repentance and giving, the countless good deeds, and the way of right living all come from zazen.”

For each participant the program begins by formulating specific commitments that are then submitted on the TI form, which can be downloaded here or picked up at the Center. Participants should be intent on extending themselves in their efforts, while being realistic at what they can manage. It is better to undertake a more modest pledge and fulfill it than to overshoot. It is like executing a hatha yoga posture, in which you stretch as far as you safely can and then hold that posture.

There will be weekly meetings for Term Intensive students. This sharing of experience has proved to be one of the most rewarding parts of the program, creating a strong bond among participants.

If one has a family or partner, it is wise to consult with them before committing to the new daily and weekly demands of the program. This will help minimize tensions that could arise over your schedule.

For the Term Intensive to serve its purpose, each participant must reach, but not overreach. If your sitting has been sporadic and your daily life undisciplined, don't expect a single TI to rehabilitate you in any grand way. Consider your vows carefully rather than formulating them impulsively. Succeeding at baby steps is better than failing, week after week, at more ambitious goals. Be realistic—we are accountable for what we pledge to do.

Out-of-town participants (and local participants when they can't come to a meeting) are required each week to send a report to me on how they are faring in the program. This is the accountability that gives fiber to the program. In return, the Center will send out-of-town participants notes of what was said in the meeting each week.

The central pillar of the Term Intensive is commitment. This is where the fixed beginning and end of the period has value - knowing that our heightened commitments are for just a limited time, we are more likely to venture into the challenge.