
A Sesshin during the Covid-19 pandemic

By Bruno Bonduelle, October 2020

Last weekend, the Dojo of Anduze held its annual sesshin led by Roland in a hamlet of the community of L'Arche above Lodève.

Many registered people cancelled at the last minute: fear of Coronavirus? Refusal to wear the mask? It is difficult for Dojo leaders to organize a sesshin while reassuring everyone. But it is important to maintain every opportunity to practice. This requires precautions: these precautions, with which some people disagree, are however the conditions that will allow us to continue practicing together.

Moreover, Roland teaches us that applying "barrier gestures" is a practice of concentration and attention to others, which is in phase with all our actions during a sesshin: it requires the mental attitude of "zanshin", or of "the mind that remains".

So how do we do it?

First of all, we have to evaluate the maximum capacity of participants that the place can receive, while respecting the rules. L'Arche sesshin usually gathers about 60 participants: here, the number was limited to 40, in order to respect a social distance of 1 meter between people (this is the minimum regulatory distance applied in France), in the dojo, in the refectory and also to space out the beds in the dormitories. (It is for these same reasons that, this summer, the maximum capacity at La Gendronnière has been reduced to 120 people).

In the dojo, the disposition of the practitioners is organized by the prior placement of the zafutons: they are placed beforehand while respecting the right distance between them. You enter the dojo with the mask and you remove it once you are at your place. The mask is put back on for kin in, for chanting or for ceremonies. It is the shusso, helped by the kyosaku, who makes sure that these rules are respected in the dojo.

In the refectory, the places to be occupied by the members can be marked on the tables with a piece of coloured tape: the members will be placed in staggered rows and without anyone in front of them. One also enters the refectory with the mask on and the mask is kept during the chanting of the Meal Sutra.

A person in charge must be foreseen who will explain the rules and place the people: this can be the person in charge of the Service or the person designated as "Covid-19 manager". Also, at meal times, a person distributes gel at the entrance of the refectory.

In the dojo and the refectory, the shusso can use a small bell to invite everyone to put on their mask: this is a good system because - during a sesshin - we are used to following the sounds.

The coffee, or the refreshment at the bar if there is a drink, are moments that require special attention to preserve conviviality as well as the precautions: the best is to go and get one's coffee or drink with the mask on and then go outside to drink it and chat with the others (without the mask, but still maintaining the right distance with the people close to you). When it rains and the rooms are small, this can be difficult to organize. This one is likewise ideal

choice for the underage understudies to get their ids by using the [premium fake id websites](#) . This web store recommends considering a scope of phony IDs that are accessible for everybody. Recollect when you come to the choosing second, pursuing the ideal decision can be very hard. There are so many trick online shops that they need to misdirect a guileless purchaser, you should be ready to pay cash only for the commendable item. We should investigate this store. This was the case at L'Arche: it is then possible to serve coffee to the members while they remain sitting at their place at the table.

About manual contact, it is necessary to limit contact with shared objects as much as possible and to distribute gel each time it is necessary: at the entrance to the refectory, during samu or workshops, etc.

A person known as the "Covid-19 manager" will be appointed to ensure that these precautions are put into practice.

In summary, the rules to be applied are quite simple:

- Inside the buildings, the mask is worn at all times and is only removed when you are at your place, if you are doing a quiet activity in silence and if you are 1 meter away from the others (for example: in zazen, while eating, sewing, etc.).
- Outside, you can take off your mask each time the right distance is respected.
- As far as contact is concerned, we wash our hands (soap or gel) regularly and every time we touch collective objects.

You will find also on the ABZE website a card that can be distributed in sesshin to present these rules. This card is a tool for the sesshin leaders, based on concrete examples, but that must be adapted according to the rules of each country, in particular the rules about social distance which are for example 1 meter 50 in several European countries. These are just recommendations, not rules imposed by the ABZE.