



EAST BAY MEDITATION CENTER

Dear Community,

We write to you with gratitude for the many ways our sangha continues to show up for each other and for the values we hold dear. As we navigate the complex world we inhabit, we are continually inspired by your compassion, adaptability, and care, even as we continue to heal from the grief of this global pandemic and the losses so many of us experienced. Together, we are gently moving forward.

After deep reflection and careful review of feedback from our recent Community Survey, we want to share an important update:

Starting January 1, 2026, EBMC's in-person masking policy will shift from "masks required" to "masks strongly encouraged."

This decision emerged from heartfelt listening and discernment. Through the Community Survey and dialogues, it became clear that our community is facing a form of **accessibility friction** where the needs of different members appear to be in tension.

- For some, **masks are essential**, especially for those who are immunocompromised or care for vulnerable loved ones.
- For others, **masks present barriers**, including people who rely on facial expressions for communication, those with breathing challenges, or those navigating trauma and mental health conditions that are worsened when faces are obscured.
- And some shared that masking, in the current political climate, can feel isolating or even frightening, raising fears of being surveilled.

We acknowledge that there is no perfect solution. In the spirit of the Middle Way, we are choosing a direction that holds complexity, prioritizes relationships, and invites each of us into deeper awareness and discernment.

We will continue to provide:

- Free **N95 masks** and **COVID-19 test kits** at the center

- Strong **encouragement** to mask indoors, especially in large gatherings
- Support for ongoing **online and in-person** programming

We also remain committed to safety and equity through the following ongoing protocols:

- **Self-assessment:** Please stay home if you have a fever or symptoms of illness.
- **Vaccination:** All in-person participants must be fully vaccinated (first two shots plus one booster.)
- **Air Quality:** Three HEPA filters will run in the temple during all programming.
- **Sanitation:** Bathrooms are stocked and clearly marked with handwashing instructions.
- **Exposure Notification:** If you test positive after being at the center, please contact us at admin@eastbaymeditation.org so that we can notify others of potential exposure.

We know this change will be welcomed by some and difficult for others. Please know that this shift is not a departure from our values; it is an attempt to live our values in practice, amidst paradox and complexity.

Staff and the LSangha Executive Committee will revisit the policy monthly and remain open to adaptation as the context evolves. Individual teachers and practice groups may continue to require masks at their discretion, and EBMC will support those choices fully.

Thank you for continuing to navigate this threshold with care, curiosity, and courage. If you have questions or reflections, we welcome them at admin@eastbaymeditation.org.

In community,

EBMC LSangha and Staff