



Guidelines for Guardians

Guardians in a Santo Daime work are the men and women responsible for caring for the people attending a work. They also maintain the orderliness and cleanliness of the space.

There are many facets to the role of guardianship, but it is often more about “being” than about “doing”. The presence of a guardian can create comfort and assure safety, while working in a way that promotes harmony and calmness.

As with all aspects of a Santo Daime work, spiritual beings are always available to provide guidance for guardians. The following guidelines can also provide a framework for how to provide the essential service of guardianship.

1. Being a guardian

As you enter the work, spend a few moments aligning yourself with the divine forces present. Let go of personal concerns and allow yourself to become quiet, surrendering to the role of being a guardian.

- Keep your movements slow, calm, and grounded. Sit or stand still. All interactions should be gentle but firm.
- Watch the room at all times, keeping your eyes open. Make frequent visual sweeps to see that everyone is doing well. If someone is not looking well, you may want to stand a little closer to them. This makes you available if you are needed physically, and provides energetic support and firmness. Be aware not to hover. Sometimes newer people have no sense of why you are there, and can easily become distracted by too close a proximity.
- Stay connected with the other guardians, working together in union.
- If you sing, sing quietly, as you may have to stop in the middle of the hymn if you are needed. If needed, help someone find which hymn is being sung after lying down.
- Guardians should normally not play the maraca, unless there is no chance that you will be needed, like during closing hymns. Occasionally, an experienced guardian will play at other times.
- As much as possible, face the center and the cross.
- If you are a guardian and you find yourself going through a passage and need to rest, tell another guardian or a co-protector that you need a break. Stay until a replacement can be found. If there's no replacement available, keep praying, breathe, and do the best you can.
- When you are not on duty as a guardian, stay focused on your own work and do not interfere with the guardians who are on shift. The lead guardian is the exception to this rule. He/she is always holding an awareness of the work and the guardian body.

2. Caring for the physical space

In Portuguese, guardians are called the “fiscal” [pronounced físs-kal], which translates to “administrator or supervisor”. So another basic job of the guardians is supervising the space, keeping the room orderly, clean, and in line with the needs of the work.

Before the work begins

Check, replenish and know where to find:

- Lighter
- Candles
- Smudging materials, like incense
- Purge bowls, strategically placed around the room (also know how to clean them)
- Tissues
- Blankets and pillows

Your seat/position

Check to see that you can see as many people as possible from where you are sitting or standing. If people are lying down, they should be in sight of a guardian. If you can't see everyone, change your position often enough to be aware of how people are doing. When there is more than one guardian on each side (men and women), guardians should place themselves on opposite sides of the room so that all angles are protected.

It's best to have a male and female guardian in the salão at all times. If you must leave, let another guardian or co-protector know where you're going.

During the work

Keep candles and incense lit where appropriate. Incense and smudge can be a difficult issue, because some people want it for its cleansing properties, while others don't want it because the cleansing causes them to vomit/purge, and still others become sick from the smell. As with all personal preferences within a Santo Daime work, each person's needs should be respected, within what is best for the group as a whole.

Water glasses on the altar should be kept full. Fill the glasses between hymns. It is helpful to take a breath and further align oneself before approaching the altar where the center of the power is most intense.

All rooms should be kept clean and orderly:

- Keep chairs around the edges free of spare clothes and hinários. (Note: they may belong to a person who is lying down and will be coming back to their chair. If so, leave them.)
- Keep hinário books off of the floor whenever possible.
- Keep used tissues off of the floor and out of the purge bowls (use appropriate trash cans).
- Keep water bottles where they won't be knocked over.
- When people leave a lying down area, straighten the blankets and mats.
- Keep the room temperature reasonable, opening windows as needed. Watch to see if a number of people are taking off or putting on sweaters.

Smudging

There are some specific times during a work when smudging is usually done:

- At the beginning of the work
- After the third serving
- During closing hymns
- After there has been a lot of cleansing, i.e. throwing up, laying down.
- Whenever the room gets “heavy”. This is a felt sense that the guardian develops.
- When asked for by a co-protector.

In general, try to smudge at a time when it will be the least disruptive. This can be when the Daime is being served, or when there is some kind of transition.

Single sacrament

We are a single sacrament church. We do not allow or condone sacraments other than the Daime to be used during our works. If a guardian sees a person using another sacrament (e.g. rapé, canibus) ask the person kindly but firmly to stop. At an appropriate time, a co-protector should be informed.

3. Caring for the people

- When caring for people, make your own alignment with God your priority. This will help to maintain harmony. Also, keep your interactions subtle and minimal, yet firm. The most important work going on is between each person and the Daime. Even kind actions can interfere with that process.
- Minimize talking and touching. Minimize eye contact where possible, but note that eye contact is helpful and often needed to assess the current state of a person and what they may need. If it is necessary to speak to someone, try to do so after a hymn is completed, and then say as little as possible. A hymn is not finished until the music is complete.
- If a person is purging, you can keep their hair out of the way, and notice if they need the help. They may be handling things very well on their own. Often the most helpful thing you can do is offer your presence and treat people with respect and compassion. Empty purge bowls when the person is done.
- Guardians are not “healers” within the Santo Daime ritual. We do not “send energy” or offer any other kind of healing.

What guardians can do:

- Pray for others.
- Keep your breathing even and relaxed. You may suggest to someone to relax and open up their breathing if they are struggling.
- Quietly sing the current hymn to them.
- Help them to recenter themselves, especially after purging, and face the cross. Sometimes when a person is scared or off-center, they only need a little help realigning.
- Sit with someone in the back of the room where the energy is less intense.
- Run some cool water on their hands and face.

These things can be done if they feel appropriate in the moment. They shouldn't be done out of a desire to "help". Sometimes the struggle someone is going through is necessary for their learning.

It is best for a person to learn to find their own place, whether that is sitting or lying down. This may change throughout a work.

As guardian, it is better to err on the side of caution, and not interfere unless you are very clear what the need is. Always allow harmony to prevail.

If someone doesn't want to do what you think is best, go along with their needs, unless someone will be harmed. Never argue with anyone. If you are uncertain about how to handle a situation, or if someone requests you do something that seems outside of the usual parameters, speak with the lead guardian who will either resolve the matter or consult with a co-protector of the work.

Be mindful when helping people get back up after they have been lying down for a while. You can gently help them to make the transition back to vertical, but let the person navigate to where they feel called.

A few more guidelines:

- Know where all people are at all times.
- When a person lies down, help them to remove their glasses and put them in a safe and obvious place. They will typically be lying on their backs in an open posture. If you see them curl up, gently help them to open again. If they continue to keep curling up, let them be.
- If a person is behaving inappropriately and not listening to you, and if they are not hurting anyone, let it go and let a co-protector know after the work. If they are being disruptive, you can consult with the lead guardian, seat them near the wall, or speak more firmly to them. Your main goal is not to be a police officer, but to maintain the harmony of the work and the safety of each individual. Watch for any "hooks" that you may have with this particular person or their behavior, and notice if there is a lesson in this for you.
- Find a balance between "the rules" and the needs of the moment. If it's time for everyone to stand and someone is sitting very much in the force with their eyes closed, don't disturb them. Any time you are asking a person to make some sort of shift, do so very gently. Even the most sensitive guardian doesn't fully know what a person is going through, and what effect their intervention might have.
- **Fainting:** When someone faints within a work, the main job of the guardian is to be sure that, if possible, they are not injured. Help them to meet the ground gently, perhaps by putting a hand under their head. Don't intervene any more than you have to, but stay close by. Once they are on the ground, leave them alone unless they are in a very twisted position, in which case you can gently straighten them out. Move the people around them so they can stay where they are as long as they need to. When you see that they are starting to come to, you can help them to sit up and then stand or move to a better place.

While Daime is being served:

- Keep lines orderly.
- Be aware of trip hazards near the lines, such as electrical cords, musical instruments/amps, chairs, etc. Address them as needed.

- In rare cases the guardian may need to help the line form. If so it may be best to have a few people come over at a time, and the rest stay at their chairs. Be clear with what you want people to do.
- Shift chairs if needed.
- Watch for those who may need a bowl.

Breaks and end of work:

- If you are a guardian and a break in the work occurs (e.g. to serve Daime), guardian responsibilities continue through the break. It is often not possible to keep track of every person's movements (e.g. to the bathrooms). Keep holding an inner space of calm. Keep watch of people and the needs of the work.
- Before you stop being a guardian, be sure that everyone is cared for and ensure the next guardian is ready to take over your duties. Let the next shift of guardians know who may be needing particular attention and whether anyone is not in the room or immediately accounted for (e.g. went to the bathroom).

Above all, learn to trust the Daime, trust each person, and trust yourself.

