

Insight Meditation Community of Charlottesville (IMCC)

Code of Ethics for Teachers and Leaders

(Adapted from New York Insight Spirit Rock Meditation Center with many thanks)

We believe that as Dharma teachers and leaders we must become stewards of the trust students place in us.

It is essential that teachers and leaders have a high level of personal integrity and seek to maintain clear boundaries when serving students. As teachers and leaders, we remain ever aware that students hold us in a position of power. Some may idealize us, projecting more wisdom or attainment upon us than truly exists. As a result, it is incumbent upon us to refrain from exploiting students for personal gain or gratification. In addition to cultivating an awareness of the power dynamic, we expect IMCC teachers and leaders to uphold a safe environment within which inner focus can be cultivated. In practical terms, we ask our teachers and leaders to undertake the practice of the Five Precepts set forth in Appendix I and especially to endeavor to refrain from any sexual and/or romantic involvement with students. Our intention is not to be punitive or repressive, but to foster safety for the practice of the Dharma. Because we do recognize that attractions develop and could evolve into a healthy, conscious relationship, we ask our teachers and leaders to, in the first instance, follow the guidelines contained in the Five Precepts and also to seek direction and guidance from the IMCC Ethics and Reconciliation Committee (EAR) in these matters.

AGREEMENT

As a teacher or leader representing IMCC, I agree to the following code of ethics:

- I agree to hold myself as a steward of safe and sacred space by maintaining clear personal and professional boundaries. I will maintain awareness of my position of power and influence in relationship to students, being especially attentive to my own agendas, perceptions, and expectations. I will not seek to fulfill my needs – money, sex, power, love, truth, or insight – at students' expense.
- I agree to undertake the practice of the Five Precepts as set forth in the guidelines appended hereto as Appendix I.
- I agree that my purpose as a Dharma teacher or Leader is to serve students' practice and personal exploration. I agree to avoid any activity or influence that is in conflict with the best interests of students or that is solely for my own personal gain or gratification.

- I agree to hold myself as a steward of safe and sacred space by endeavoring to refrain from romantic or sexual relationships with any student of mine. I understand that any sexual or romantic relationship is potentially distracting and may be possibly even harmful for students who have come to me to do inner work. I will not invite, act on, respond to, or allow sexual or romantic contact with a student during the time that person is a student even if the student initiates such contact.
- If a romantic attraction to a student does develop, I agree to immediately seek support, and clarify from IMCC's EAR Committee and to adhere to the guidelines set forth in the Five Precepts appended hereto. I understand that the purpose of the EAR Committee and this agreement is to protect the environment of refuge for the students and to support the clarity, consciousness and self responsibility of individuals. I understand that the EAR Committee will develop an individual approach to each situation.
- I agree to represent my qualifications honestly and provide only the services I am qualified to perform.

I understand that all actions that breach the principles of this code will be fairly investigated by the IMCC EAR Committee. I understand that if the situation warrants, my invitation to teach at IMCC may be revoked or restricted. I have read and understand this document in its entirety and agree to honor this Code of Ethics.

Appendix I

1) We undertake the precept of refraining from killing.

In undertaking this precept we acknowledge the interconnection of all beings and our respect for all life. We agree to refine our understanding of not killing and nonharming in all our actions. We seek to understand the implication of this precept in such difficult areas as abortion, euthanasia, and the killing of pets. While some of us recommend vegetarianism, and others do not, we all commit ourselves to fulfilling this precept in the spirit of reverence for life.

2) We undertake the precept of refraining from stealing.

We agree to not take that which does not belong to us and to respect the property of others. We agree to bring consciousness to the use of all of the earth's resources in a respectful and ecological way. We agree to be honest in our dealing with money and not to misappropriate money committed to Dharma projects. We agree to offer teachings without favoritism in regard to students' financial circumstances.

3) We undertake the precept of refraining from false speech.

We agree to speak that which is true and useful and to refrain from gossip in our community. We agree to hold in confidence what is explicitly told to us in confidence. We agree to cultivate conscious and clear communication, and to cultivate the qualities of loving-kindness and honesty as the basis of our speech.

4) We undertake the precept of refraining from sexual misconduct.

We agree to avoid creating harm through sexuality and to avoid sexual exploitation or relationships of a sexual manner that are outside of the bounds of the relationship commitments we have made to another or that involve another who has made vows to another. Teachers or leaders with vows of celibacy will live according to their vows. Teachers or leaders in committed relationships will honor their vows and refrain from adultery. All teachers and leaders agree not to use their role to exploit their authority and position in order to assume a sexual relationship with a student. We acknowledge that a healthy relationship between a teacher or leader and a former student can be possible, but that great care and sensitivity are needed. We agree that in this case the following guidelines are crucial.

a) A sexual relationship is never appropriate between teachers or leaders and students.

b) During formal teaching, any intimation of a future student–teacher or student–leader romantic or sexual relationship is inappropriate.

c) If interest in a genuine and committed relationship develops over time between a single teacher or leader and a student, the student–teacher or student–leader relationship must clearly and consciously have ended before any further development toward a romantic relationship. Such a relationship must be approached with restraint and sensitivity—in no case should it occur immediately after a teaching period. A minimum time period of three months or longer from the last formal teaching between them, and a clear understanding from both parties that the student–teacher or student–leader relationship has ended, must be coupled with a conscious commitment to enter into a relationship that brings no harm to either party.

5) We undertake the precept of refraining from intoxicants that cause heedlessness or loss of awareness.

It is clear that substance abuse is the cause of tremendous suffering. We agree that there should be no use of intoxicants during teaching events. We agree not to abuse or misuse intoxicants at any time. We agree that if any teacher or leader has a drug or alcohol addiction problem, it should be immediately addressed by the community.