

Code of Ethics for WBS Teachers

(The following code was adapted from the Insight Meditation Society (IMS) Code of Ethics for Teachers)

As Williamsburg Buddhist Sangha (WBS) lay teachers, we recognize the foundation of spiritual life rests upon our mindful and caring relationship to all the lives and life around us. For the long-term benefit of ourselves and the community at large, we agree to uphold, at a minimum, 1) the five lay training precepts as expanded to make them explicitly appropriate in our role as teachers of the Dharma in our specific cultural setting, and 2) the principles of right relationship between teachers and participants as outlined below.

1. We undertake the precept of refraining from killing.

We agree to acknowledge the interconnection of all beings and our respect for all life. We agree to refine our understanding of not killing and non-harming in all our actions.

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. This includes the use or appropriation of teachings, practices, and ideas developed by others without proper attribution. 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 any student's financial circumstances.

3. 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 the bounds of the relationship commitments we have made to another, or that involve another who has made vows to someone else.

WBS teachers in committed relationships will honor their vows and refrain from breaking that trust. All teachers agree not to use their teaching role to exploit their authority and position in order to assume a sexual relationship with a student.

Single teachers in our community may potentially develop partnerships and marriages with former students. We acknowledge that such a healthy relationship can be possible, but that great care and sensitivity are needed. We agree that in this case the following guidelines are crucial:

- A sexual relationship is never appropriate between teachers and current students.
- During retreats or formal teaching, any intimation of future student-teacher romantic or sexual relationship is inappropriate.
- If mutual interest in a relationship develops between an uncommitted teacher and a student, the student-teacher relationship must clearly have ended, and the student and teacher must consult with a senior teacher 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 retreat. A minimum period of three months from the last formal teaching between them, and an understanding from both parties that the student-teacher

relationship has ended must be coupled with a commitment to enter into a relationship that brings no harm to either party.

4. 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 quality of loving-kindness and honesty as the basis of our speech.

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 retreats or while on retreat premises. We agree not to abuse or misuse intoxicants at any time.

Right relations between teachers and participants

We are mindful of the unequal power between teacher and participants, the possible emotional vulnerability of participants who come to our programs seeking refuge and healing through Buddhist practice, and the importance of trust and safety as a condition for practice and learning. We agree to refrain from words or actions that may be perceived to convey pressure, judgement, intimacy or intrusiveness. Rather, we seek to maintain a welcoming presence of loving friendliness and respect that extends equally to all participants, without attachment or aversion.

Appropriate Response to Any Code Infractions

WBS and its Board of Directors are committed to responding to any violation of the letter or spirit of the code described above. WBS Members and participants are encouraged to contact board members directly or via email to address any complaint of unethical behavior by teachers or volunteers. If any teacher demonstrates a violation of any of the above code – including inappropriate sexual conduct, drug or alcohol addiction, or breach of confidentiality – the teacher assumes all actionable liability.

Teachers understand that any such violation will be addressed immediately by the WBS Board of Directors or Lead Teacher and may result in WBS severing its relationship with the teacher.

I, _____ acknowledge the WBS Code of Ethics for Teachers and agree to follow it to the best of my ability.