

## **Teacher Code of Ethics and Conduct**

### **Adopted by the Board of Trustees**

We have created this document with the motivation to hold the interest and the needs of our students above our own. We write this with the understanding that the teacher role is a position of power and our task, as teachers, is to respect and honor the trust that we are being given by students. We recognize that because of the power dynamic in this situation, it is up to us to refrain from misusing that power in any way.

At Tara Mandala, we recognize that the foundation of spiritual life rests upon our mindful and caring relationship to the life around us. We ask that all resident and visiting teachers agree to uphold the five lay precepts while at Tara Mandala. We have specifically expanded the scope of these five precepts to make them explicitly appropriate in our specific cultural setting.

This agreement pertains to all visiting teachers, Tara Mandala Authorized Teachers, and Tara Mandala Apprentice Teachers. While teaching at Tara Mandala, or with Tara Mandala in an online capacity<sup>1</sup>, we ask that you agree to the following five precepts:

**1) We undertake the precept to abstain from taking life, to care for and protect all living beings, our mothers.**

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 non-harming in all our actions. While some of us recommend vegetarianism, and others do not, we all commit ourselves to fulfil this precept in the spirit of reverence for life. The Buddha was not a vegetarian, he took the middle path, eating meat if it was given to him, but he never engaged in the act of taking life.

Special note: At Tara Mandala, we do serve small amounts of meat at our Tsog (Feasts Offerings) in accordance with our Tantric samaya vows. We eat meat in mindful awareness and with the intention to bring that being to a higher rebirth.

In cases where the presence of rats or insects is a threat to the health of the community, we have been advised by our guiding teachers that we must eliminate the threat to public health; however in general, we try to avoid taking life.

Tara Mandala strongly opposes violence, including, but not limited to, behavior that threatens, intimidates or coerces another staff member, retreatant or member of the public. Prohibited violence also includes all acts of harassment or threat of violence made verbally or in writing. Prohibited violence also includes any other conduct (including email, text or other electronic

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<sup>1</sup> Online includes virtual retreats, online courses, video conferencing, discussion groups, online forums exchanged, chats, social media platforms, etc.



communication, telephone, and social media network postings) that communicate a direct or indirect threat of physical harm, harassment or intimidation.

**2) We undertake the precept to abstain from taking what is not given, to respect the property and boundaries of others.**

We agree to not take that which does not belong to us and to respect the property and boundaries of others, both physical and personal space. 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 dealings with money and not to misappropriate money committed to Dharma projects. We agree to offer teachings without favoritism in regard to student's financial circumstances.

**3) We undertake the precept to abstain from false speech, to tell the truth with compassion.**

We agree to speak that which is true and useful and to refrain from gossip, lying, and discursive speech 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.

**4) We undertake the precept to abstain from sexual misconduct: refraining from breaking the sexual boundaries of your own or others in committed relationships.**

We agree to avoid causing harm through sexual misconduct 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 a person who has made vows to another. Teachers with vows of celibacy will live according to their vows. Teachers in committed relationships will honor their vows and refrain from adultery. All teachers agree not to use their teaching role to exploit their authority and position in order to engage in a sexual relationship with a student. A sexual relationship is never appropriate between teachers and students. During retreats or formal teaching, any intimation of future student-teacher romantic or sexual relationship is inappropriate.

Tara Mandala strongly opposes sexual harassment and inappropriate sexual conduct. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Inappropriate sexual conduct that could lead to a claim of sexual harassment is expressly prohibited by this Code and Tara Mandala's policies. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to, sexually implicit or explicit communications whether in:

- Written form, such as cartoons, posters, calendars, notes, letters, email;

- Verbal form, such as comments, jokes, foul or obscene language of a sexual nature, gossiping or questions about another's sex life or repeated unwanted requests for dates;
- Physical gestures and other non-verbal behavior; or
- Unwelcome touching such as grabbing, fondling, kissing, massages or brushing up against another's body.

We acknowledge that there may be occasions when a single teacher and student may want to enter into a devoted intimate relationship. In this case, great care and sensitivity are needed. We agree that in this case, the following guidelines are crucial: If interest in a genuine and committed relationship develops over time between a single teacher and a student, the student-teacher 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 retreat. 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 relationship has ended must be coupled with a conscious commitment to enter into a relationship that brings no harm to either party.

**For Tara Mandala Authorized & Apprentice Teachers:** If a relationship begins between you and a former student after three months of a retreat ending, you must notify Lama Tsultrim and Lopön Chandra so that we are aware of it and we can avoid any gossip spreading in the community.

**5) We undertake the precept to abstain from intoxicants which tend to cloud the mind, cause harm, and lead to breaking the other precepts.**

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. There are occasions at Tara Mandala in which we have a Tsog (Feast Offering) or social gatherings where small amounts of alcohol are offered. We agree not to abuse or misuse intoxicants at any time. We agree that if any teacher has a drug or alcohol addiction problem, it should be immediately addressed by bringing it to the attention of the leadership at Tara Mandala, either Lama Tsultrim or Lopön Chandra.

Accepted

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Printed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_