

*The following code was adapted from Spirit Rock Meditation Center with many thanks. It is agreed to by all NYI Board Members, Teachers and Peer Leaders. For the NYI Grievance Process, see below.*

## **New York Insight Meditation Center Code of Ethics for Teachers and Leaders**

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 New York Insight 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 New York Insight Meditation Center Ethics and Reconciliation Committee (EAR)\* in these matters.

### **AGREEMENT**

As a Teacher or Leader representing New York Insight, 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. I understand that any sexual or romantic relationship is potentially distracting and may be possibly even harmful for students who have come 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 New York Insight'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 and 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 EAR Committee. I understand that if the situation warrants, my invitation to teach at New York Insight may be revoked or restricted.

I have read and understand this document in its entirety and agree to honor this Code of Ethics.

Members of the New York Insight EAR Committee are available to anyone with an ethics issue at New York Insight and/or involving any New York Insight Teacher or Leader. We are committed to fostering integrity, consciousness, and self-responsibility in relationship with students, teachers, leaders and each other. If you have an ethics question, please contact any member of the New York Insight EAR Committee.

New York Insight Meditation Center offers programs within a safe space for study and we hold it as our responsibility to uphold and foster this sacred environment.

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\*The New York Insight EAR Committee shall be appointed by the Board of Directors of New York Insight Meditation Center and shall be comprised of persons from each of the following categories:

The Executive Director of New York Insight, the Guiding Teacher of New York Insight, at least one member of the New York Insight Board of Directors, and at

least one person from the New York Insight community who is neither a teacher, leader, nor a member of the Board of Directors.

# 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 student's 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 quality 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 (former) teacher or leader and 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 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.

# Grievance Process

An important function of the EAR Committee is to define the guidelines for ethical behavior within our community and to encourage an intention of mutual respect and reconciliation whenever conflict arises. On the rare occasion that a deeper coming together is necessary the following process is available.

## 1. Bringing a Concern

A grievance process is initiated by communicating in writing to the EAR Committee. This "letter of request" must include:

1. A clear statement that a formal grievance process is requested.
2. The name of the person(s) whose behavior the concern concerns.
3. A description of the alleged behavior sufficient enough to allow the EAR Committee to decide whether the concern is appropriate for initiating a formal grievance procedure.
4. A history of the attempts, if any, to resolve the concern through other means.
5. A general statement about the resolution desired.

After receiving the letter, the members of the EAR Committee will communicate with all parties and may investigate the concern to the extent it deems appropriate (including sharing the letter of concern with the teacher or leader about whom the concern was brought). The EAR committee may then recommend in writing either a formal grievance process, an informal grievance process or no process.

## 2a. Informal Grievance Process

If, upon review, the EAR Committee recommends an informal grievance process, suggestions for conversations, informal mediation or other methods for resolving the conflict will be made.

## 2b. Formal Grievance Process

If, upon review, the EAR Committee recommends a formal grievance process, it will convey its recommendation within two weeks to both parties. As part of this notification, the EAR Committee will state its understanding of the issue under inquiry.

## 2c. No Process

If, upon review, the EAR Committee recommends no process, it will convey this within two weeks to both parties.

## 3. Forming a Grievance Council

Once a concern is accepted for a formal grievance process, the EAR Committee will select three of its four members to constitute a Grievance Council. In keeping with the tradition of monastic council, this council will investigate, issue findings, and render a decision on the concern. The EAR Committee will also appoint the fourth member to be the moderator of the Grievance Council who guides the procedures but does not participate in any decisions.

## 4. Investigating the Concern

The moderator schedules closed hearings in which all parties are given a chance to present their understanding of the issue under investigation. The Grievance Council may question all parties and may request additional information. The moderator will document the proceedings.

The Grievance Council may ask other people to provide information pertinent to the concern. All parties will have a full and fair opportunity to respond to all information – oral, written, or otherwise – gathered by the Grievance Council.

Except for informing the EAR Committee and appropriate community leaders, the proceedings will be held confidentially for the duration of the proceedings.

#### 5. Grievance Council Findings

When the Grievance Council members are satisfied that they are adequately informed they will review and discuss the concern among themselves. At its discretion, the Grievance Council may seek non-binding advice from any other source. The Grievance Council's decision should be reached by majority. Within two weeks of a decision, all parties will reconvene at which time the Grievance Council will distribute copies of its written findings and read them aloud. For matters involving the potential suspension of a teacher or leader, the Grievance Council will consult with the NYI Board in jointly establishing the best course of action.