

Teacher Code of Ethics

The Spirit Rock teachers recognize that the foundation of spiritual life rests upon our mindful and caring relationship to the life around us. We acknowledge that without the support of monastic vows and Asian customs, we have a need for clear Western guidelines. In keeping with this understanding, and for the long-term benefit of ourselves and the community at large, we, as lay teachers, agree to uphold the five lay training precepts. Furthermore, we have specifically expanded the scope of these five precepts to make them explicitly appropriate to our role as teachers of the Dharma in our specific cultural setting. The Spirit Rock teachers have thus agreed to the following guidelines:

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 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 assume a sexual relationship with a student.

Because several single teachers in our community have developed 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) A sexual relationship is never appropriate between teachers and students.

b) During retreats or formal teaching, any intimation of future student-teacher romantic or sexual relationship is inappropriate.

c) 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 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.

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. We agree that if any teacher has a drug or alcohol addiction problem, it should be immediately addressed by the community.