

A Code of Ethics for Vermont Insight Meditation Center

Claire Stanley is the Guiding Teacher at Vermont Insight Meditation Center. This document will apply to the guiding teacher and any teachers invited by the guiding teacher to teach at VIMC based on their activities of giving dharma talks, conducting interviews, and presenting classes. While this document is primarily focused on Teacher Ethics, the Board of Directors at VIMC and all Practice Leaders at VIMC have also agreed to abide by this Code as well.

VIMC teachers recognize that the foundation of spiritual life rests upon our mindful and caring relationship to the life around us. In keeping with this understanding and for the long-term benefit of teachers and the community at large, teachers agree to uphold the five lay training precepts. The scope of these five precepts is expanded below to make them appropriate to our role as teachers of the Dharma in our specific cultural setting:

1) We undertake the precept of refraining from killing.

We acknowledge the interconnection of all beings and our respect for all life. We will refine our understanding of not killing and non-harming. We seek to understand the implication of this precept in such difficult areas as abortion and the right to die with dignity.

2) We undertake the precept of refraining from stealing.

We will not take that which does not belong to us and will respect the property of others. We will bring consciousness to the use of all of the earth's resources in a respectful and ecological way. We will be honest in our dealing with money and not misappropriate money committed to Dharma projects.

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

We will avoid creating harm through sexual misconduct and will refrain from all forms of sexual exploitation. Teachers will not use their teaching role to exploit their authority and position to assume a sexual relationship with a student. Specifically, with respect to relationships between a teacher and a student, we will abide by the following guidelines:

- a) A sexual relationship is never appropriate between teachers and their students.
- b) During retreats, formal teaching occasions, or interviews, any speech or actions indicating interest in a student-teacher romantic or sexual relationship is inappropriate. This applies to anyone in a less formal teaching role, including practice leaders and senior students.

c) If interest in a genuine and a committed relationship develops over time between a teacher and a student, the student-teacher relationship must clearly and consciously end before a romantic relationship begins. A minimum period of three months should elapse from the time when they mutually agree that their formal teacher-student relationship has ended. This understanding must be coupled with a conscious commitment to enter into a relationship that brings no harm to either party.

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

We will speak what is true and useful and refrain from gossip. We will hold in confidence what is explicitly told to us in confidence. We will cultivate conscious and clear communication and 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.

Substance abuse is the cause of tremendous suffering. There should be no use of intoxicants before teaching at VIMC or at VIMC, during Sunday or weekly teaching sessions or during retreats. We will not abuse or misuse intoxicants at any time. If any teacher develops a drug or alcohol addiction problem, the VIMC Board of Directors will address it immediately.

All Practice Leaders and Board Members are equally committed to and subject to this Code of Ethics.