



Association for Spiritual Integrity
Transforming the paradigm of spiritual leadership

Student Guidelines

Ethical Guidelines for Students

Preface

The purpose of these guidelines is to help empower individuals on the path of spiritual awakening to examine how students, seekers or aspirants (“students”) personally relate to leaders, teachers and guides (“teachers”) and the teachings. These guidelines remind us that as humans we are all subject to growth, maturation, and yet, in the deepest part of our being we are Divine. As students we can greatly benefit from our teachers; especially teachers who are adult, psychologically mature, competent and supportive. Yet we must understand that teachers are not perfected beings; they are, like all of us, evolutionary beings. They may be particularly more developed than us in some ways such as: capacity of awareness, depth of spiritual experience and realization, or direct knowledge of their innate essence. This however does not always translate to being psychologically mature or, for example, knowing how to raise children or how to solve the complex human relationship questions that we may bring to them.

In our modern spirituality, it also needs to be acknowledged that there are some teachers who unfortunately have major wounds and psychological shadows. Unresolved psychological issues can express as a confused or unhelpful teaching. If we, as individuals have the education and clarity to discern such shadows or unethical behavior, we are less likely to become confused or harmed by the ignorance of a spiritual teacher. This document is an attempt to shed light on the student-teacher relationship so that both students and teachers are more educated and less likely to cause harm or be harmed.

This document is meant to be read in tandem with the Association for Spiritual Integrity’s [Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Spiritual Leaders, Teachers and Guides](#).

These guidelines seek to:

- help students to know what behavior is healthy and helpful for their own growth along the path
- offer understanding that teachers and students alike are evolutionary beings, and human; that healthy student-teacher relationships can flourish
- encourage students to examine the health and integrity of their relationship with their teachers and teachings
- safeguard the integrity of the student-teacher relationship

Guidelines

1. Students are invited to understand that teachers and students alike are human and therefore always subject to growth, both personally and professionally. Growth has no end; it is a characteristic of our humanity.
2. Students and teachers should have open channels of communication so that misunderstandings and miscommunication can be worked out. If and when ethical grievances arise between a student and teacher or within the community, great care should be taken to ensure open and clear communication, so that all parties learn, grow, heal and evolve in a mature manner.
3. If major ethical violations of abuse have occurred, boundaries must be set and the appropriate administrative or legal actions should be implemented so that such abuse does not continue. Ethical grievances are not taboo topics and can and should be openly discussed in a way which is appropriate and healing.
4. Everyone has blind spots in their personalities. Habits and patterns that once helped create the ego can remain even after years of spiritual work and create suffering. Whatever remains in our shadow must be seen, healed, and integrated. This can take time, even for the most advanced teachers. An openness to our humanity, to growth, to love and compassion is the correct attitude for students and teachers alike.
5. Spiritual teachers have professional limitations. Sometimes additional support systems are required to help students progress. Other support systems should be considered by all students to supplement their spiritual path, e.g., it is wise to learn the tools for healing trauma and integrating one's shadow.
6. Students should realize that spiritual development and psychological development are mutually supportive. Spiritual wisdom cannot be cultivated without psychological maturation.
7. Students acknowledge that they should not seek financial or relationship advice from spiritual teachers unless the teacher is trained in those areas.
8. Students will refrain from gossiping about teachers and belittling teachers or spiritual traditions.
9. Healthy student attitudes are humility, honesty, integrity, open-heartedness, kindness, compassion, sincerity, morality, and objectivity.
10. Students are encouraged to develop an awareness and responsibility for any projections, in particular projecting God or celebrity status onto their teacher. Students should also develop an awareness and responsibility to not project their personal pain onto a teacher, or friends, and family.
11. It is wise for the student to develop a healthy sense of individuality and autonomy along the path. If a student becomes infatuated with a teacher, it is also wise to let time pass, and allow the dynamic to normalize.
12. Students will not make sexual advances towards or flirt with a teacher.

13. Students will not use retreat time or spiritual groups as an opportunity to meet romantic partners. It is wiser and more mature to respect the sacred environment of spiritual meetings.
14. Students will not donate more than they can afford to their spiritual teacher. All donations must be given from the heart, with no expectation of favoritism or special treatment from the teacher. Otherwise it is advised not to donate at all.
15. Students will not neglect their children and/or dependents as a consequence of seeking enlightenment or spiritual experiences.
16. Students and teachers will keep confidential the processes and experience of other students shared during spiritual meetings. Teachers are obliged to make it known to students when meetings are audio and or video recorded.
17. Students have the right to know and understand the confidentiality policies of the teacher or the organization that their teacher works with.
18. Students are allowed to leave a retreat or group at any time. Students should not surrender their personal authority to cult-like rules or allegiances.
19. Students are encouraged to engage with the teachings that they receive in an active way and to discover the Truth of the teachings within themselves.
20. Students are encouraged to become more autonomous (not less) throughout their journey on the path.
21. It is wise for students to respect each other and to honor that no two paths are the same.
22. No one individual, teacher or Guru has the right to force their opinion on a student. No student should be coerced into acting against their own inner wisdom. Each must ultimately choose how to live one's own life and must take full responsibility for their unique path.
23. Students will refrain from spiritual bypassing or using any teaching to avoid looking at one's own shadow. It is unwise to make excuses for one's own unethical or harmful behaviors; it invariably leads to suffering. Students choose to take full responsibility for their own path, behaviors and outward expression.
24. Using consciousness-altering substances (psychedelics) within a sacred and spiritual ceremony requires careful consideration. It is neither an entertaining nor subtle means for spiritual evolution. If you have an inner calling to use psychedelic (plant or chemically derived) medicine to assist your spiritual growth, it is imperative that you research the substance(s) offered so that you know what you are getting to. Permanent side effects can result in people who have a history with mental health issues. Find out about the substance offered at an event and find out if you can trust the ceremony leader who is responsible for your health and wellbeing while you journey to what can often be darker parts of your own psyche. If you are taking medication that is mood-altering or you have a history of mental health issues, psychedelics are not appropriate for you. If you are taking other medication you must research to find out what is compatible with the plant medicine you are considering. Always consider what supports that you might need to call on after a psychedelic journey, in order to process and integrate what comes up for you.