



## POLICY

**TITLE:**

Society Members' Code of Conduct and Discipline

**POLICY #:**

12.2

**WRITTEN BY:**

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**INITIALLY APPROVED:**

May 9, 2016

**REVISED BY:**

Peggy Lipinski

**REVISION APPROVED:**

June 10, 2017

**CATEGORY:**

Membership

**NOTE: The first appearance of a term in bold in the body of this Policy (or its Appendixes) means that the term is defined in the Definitions part of this Policy.**

**PURPOSE:**

This **Policy** outlines the standards of ethical conduct that all **Society Members** are expected to follow, the philosophical sources of those ethics, and the procedure to be followed when ethical standards have been breached.

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

- The **Society** is a **Dharma Community** based on trust, harmony, and respect. As a Tibetan Buddhist organization, the Society's practice is guided by the two philosophical principles of interdependence and non-harming. These principles are the heart essence of Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings, and are the basis for our practice of compassion, wisdom, and ethics.
- The ethical standards formulated by Buddha Shakyamuni based on these philosophies are the 5 precepts. Being mindful of these precepts and acting out of a compassionate motivation for others helps to maintain a mutually respectful atmosphere in the Society, which builds trust and harmony among Society Members. Further, the practice of ethical discipline is the foundation of an individual's own development of meditative concentration and wisdom.
- Society Members are expected to conduct themselves in a reasonable and responsible manner at all times, but particularly when visiting the Society's facilities and grounds, attending a Dharma program offered at the Society's facilities or any external facilities, and when representing or acting on behalf of the Society.

## **APPLICABILITY:**

All Society Members will abide by this Policy. All visitors to the Society's facilities and programs are encouraged to become familiar with these ethical standards as part of developing their understanding of Buddhist teachings.

## **POLICY ELEMENTS:**

### **1. The 5 Precepts**

- 1.1 *Not harming the lives of others* – This means not taking the life of another (not even an insect), not harming others' bodies, and not having ill will towards others. It also includes not bringing weapons or harmful devices to the Society's facilities and grounds, or to any Dharma programs offered at external facilities.
- 1.2 *Respecting the property of others* – This means not coveting or desiring the possessions of the Society or others, not taking the property of the Society or others, and not using the property of the Society or others without permission. This ethical standard includes not taking things from the Society's facilities, not using the Society's assets and equipment for personal use, and not using items (which are not freely offered) in the Society's facilities or borrowing them without permission from a **Director**. When given permission to use items within the Society's facilities, Society Members are expected to treat the Society's possessions with the same care and respect they would show towards their own possessions. When given permission by a Director to borrow items, Society Members are expected to return items within 7 days. Society Members using the Society's facilities are expected to clean up after themselves, help the Society keep its facilities tidy, and return all items used within Society facilities to their correct location (if in doubt, ask a Director).
- 1.3 *Speaking respectfully* – Respectful speech means speaking mindfully, truthfully, and kindly from a compassionate intention. Society Members are expected to avoid lying, self-serving talk, gossiping, spreading rumours, and speaking divisive or harsh words, including using profanity.
- 1.4 *Having self-control over sexual energy* – Specifically within the Society's facilities, which are sacred environments for monastics and lay practitioners, Society Members are asked to refrain from public displays of affection such as kissing, holding hands, and other sexual contact. Out of respect for the **Spiritual Director** and other monastics, Society Members are asked to abide by this same ethical standard at all Dharma programs offered at external facilities.
- 1.5 *Not consuming intoxicants* – Intoxicants include **Alcohol**, recreational drugs, tobacco, and prescription medications that were not prescribed in an individual's own name by a physician. (For their own health, Society Members are asked to take any medications prescribed by a physician on schedule in accordance with their physician's advice.) Consuming intoxicants causes lapses in judgment which can lead individuals to violate all other precepts. To avoid harming themselves or others, Society Members are

prohibited from possessing, using or selling intoxicants on the Society's facilities and grounds and at all Dharma programs offered at external facilities. Society Members are further asked not to attend any Dharma program if they are currently under the influence.

## **2. Dharma Etiquette**

In addition to the 5 precepts, the Dharma teachings offer general etiquette advice on personal appearance and behaviour in a wide variety of settings, including around monastics in relation to a spiritual teacher and in Dharma settings such as inside temples and meditation centres. A summary of Dharma etiquette can be found on the Society's website and in the *Daily Practices & Prayers* text used in the Dharma centre. All Society Members are expected to learn and follow Dharma etiquette in order to serve as a good example for others.

## **3. Philosophical Sources**

- 3.1 The 5 precepts are explained in great detail in the foundational text of our lineage – *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment (The Lam Rim Chen Mo)*. The Spiritual Director gives detailed commentary on this text each week. Society Members and visitors who wish to better understand these ethical standards are encouraged to attend these teachings.
- 3.2 Dharma etiquette is drawn from a variety of sources including the Spiritual Director's teachings and texts such as *The Fifty Stanzas on Guru Devotion*, *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, and *The Siksasamuccaya (Training Anthology)*. These texts are all available in English translation for Society Members and visitors who wish to undertake personal study. The Spiritual Director also offers commentary several times each year. Society Members and visitors are encouraged to attend these teachings to deepen their understanding of Dharma etiquette.

## **4. Procedure for Addressing a Breach of Ethics**

- 4.1 Self-Awareness
  - 4.1.1 A Dharma student's conduct is most often guided by their own good judgment, understanding of the Buddhist philosophies and ethical guidelines, and advice from the Spiritual Director. Ideally, through applying mindfulness and conscientiousness an individual will be able to recognize when their actions have harmed others or the Society, and take appropriate steps to make amends. Such steps can include offering apologies directly to those harmed, committing to not repeat the action, and adjusting behaviour to ensure the commitment is met.
  - 4.1.2 However, there are times when individuals may be unable to see their own faults and others may need to gently correct them when their actions are causing harm to themselves, others, or to the Society itself.

## 4.2 Effective Conflict Resolution

- 4.2.1 Society Members and visitors are encouraged to resolve conflicts with compassion and patience. It is important in this process that a mutually respectful approach is followed and that privacy is preserved for both parties. Society Members and visitors are asked to avoid gossiping and speaking divisive or harsh words when resolving conflict.
- 4.2.2 If any Society Member or visitor has concerns about how they are being treated by another or has concerns about any individual's ethical conduct within the Dharma community, they are encouraged to have a direct conversation with that individual to address the concerns, provide feedback, and reach an agreement about needed changes.
- 4.2.3 However, if the concerned Society Member or visitor does not feel safe to speak directly with the source of concern, or if they have spoken with that individual and do not believe the concerns have been addressed, they are encouraged to contact the **President** or **Vice-President** for advice and assistance. The President or Vice-President may seek counsel from the Spiritual Director before speaking with the involved parties or arranging a meeting to discuss the issues.
- 4.2.4 Following a meeting with the President or Vice-President, if the conflict remains unresolved, the President or Vice-President may refer the matter to the Spiritual Director for advice or resolution or both. If the Spiritual Director chooses to give direction on the issue, the Spiritual Director's advice is final and binding on all parties involved.

## 4.3 Informally Addressing Ethical Breaches

- 4.3.1 Ethical breaches that are impacting the Society, Society Members and visitors may be noticed by the Spiritual Director or brought to his attention by a Director. The Spiritual Director initially tries to resolve issues on a one-on-one basis with the Society Members directly involved. This approach is taken to preserve the privacy and dignity of individuals while giving them direct advice on how to take positive steps to prevent reoccurrences. This informal approach is almost always effective as most take the Spiritual Director's advice to heart.
- 4.3.2 In the case of verbal or physical violence, or consuming intoxicants the Society has a zero tolerance policy for abuse. Society Members verbally abusing others will be asked to immediately leave the Society's facilities and grounds or any Dharma program offered at an external facility. When physical violence is involved, the police will be called immediately. Any individual considered by a Director or the individual in charge of an external event to be under the influence of intoxicants will be asked to immediately leave. Society Members involved in verbal or physical violence or under the influence of intoxicants may also be prohibited from attending future Society programs.

#### 4.4 Formally Addressing Serious Misconduct

- 4.4.1 In the rare event that a Society Member chooses not to implement the Spiritual Director's advice to address the ethical breach and continues to repeatedly violate this **Code of Conduct and Discipline**, the Spiritual Director may choose to take additional steps to prevent further harm to the Society, Society Members, or visitors.
- 4.4.2 The Spiritual Director may advise the **Board** of his concerns to engage the Board in monitoring the Society Member's conduct. The Board will hold this information in confidence and only report any concerns back to the Spiritual Director.
- 4.4.3 If ongoing violations of this Code of Conduct and Discipline occur, Society Members will be provided an opportunity to atone for this behaviour and establish a more positive connection with the Society. The Spiritual Director and President will meet with the Society Member and advise them that they are being suspended from the Society. During the period of suspension, the Society Member is expected to take positive steps to correct their behaviour and engage in purification practices or other activities as advised by the Spiritual Director. During a suspension, the Society Member loses all membership privileges the date the suspension takes effect, is not allowed to attend Society programs, and is required to return any keys they may hold to the Society's facilities.
- 4.4.4 When the Society Member feels that they have made progress in addressing the issue, they may request a meeting with the Spiritual Director and President to discuss a possible return. If the Spiritual Director is satisfied that the Society Member has modified their conduct, the Society Member may request a probationary period, the length of which is determined by the Board, during which they may attend the Society's programs, but will not have membership privileges. At the conclusion of the probationary period, if the Society Member has avoided Code of Conduct and Discipline violations they may apply for annual membership. However, if during the probation period the Society Member violates the Code of Conduct and Discipline they will immediately be expelled from the Society.
- 4.4.5 In keeping with Tibetan Buddhist tradition, serious misconduct may be treated by complete expulsion from the Society as allowing a Society Member to repeatedly break rules results in the accumulation of significant negative karma. If a serious violation of this Code of Conduct and Discipline occurs, or if a Society Member refuses to abide by the terms of a suspension, it is within the rights of the Spiritual Director to expel that individual from the Society. An expelled individual loses all membership privileges the date the expulsion takes effect, is no longer allowed to attend Society programs, and is required to return

any keys they may hold to the Society's facilities. An expelled individual is not eligible to apply for membership in the future.

**DEFINITIONS:**

“Alcohol” means alcohol not intended for Society approved Tibetan Buddhist ceremonies or service. During certain ritual ceremonies Alcohol is offered to deities, and in small amounts to participants. This offering Alcohol is seen as being transformed into nectar and offered to oneself as the deity, and is not consumed with an ordinary craving mind. Alcohol may also be present on the altar after being offered to deities.

“Board” (as defined in the Bylaws) means the Board of Directors of the Society.

“Code of Conduct and Discipline” means the Code of Conduct and Discipline set out in *Policy 12.2 Society Members' Code of Conduct and Discipline*.

“Dharma” means the teachings of the Buddha.

"Dharma Community" includes Society Members, program participants, Volunteers, and Donors.

“Director” (as defined in the Bylaws) includes both a Director holding the office of President, Vice-President, Secretary, or Treasurer, and a Director holding the position of Director at Large.

“Jewel Member” means a Society Member belonging to the Jewel category of membership as set out in *Policy 12.1 Membership Eligibility, Privileges, and Responsibilities*.

“Lotus Member” means a Society Member belonging to the Lotus category of membership as set out in *Policy 12.1 Membership Eligibility, Privileges, and Responsibilities*.

“Policy” means a specific policy approved by the Board as provided in Bylaw 3.2 and *Policy 2.1 Policy Development*.

“President” means the individual occupying the office of President on the Board.

“Register of Society Members” means the register of Society Members required to be kept by the Society further to section 36 of the *Societies Act* (Alberta).

“Society” (as defined in the Bylaws) means Gaden Samten Ling Tibetan Buddhist Meditation Society.

“Society Member” means an individual whose name appears in the Register of Society Members (includes Lotus, Jewel, and Vajra members).

“Spiritual Director” means the current Spiritual Director of the Society unless otherwise noted.

“Vajra Member” means a Society Member belonging to the Vajra category of membership as set out in *Policy 12.1 Membership Eligibility, Privileges, and Responsibilities*.

“Vice-President” means the individual occupying the office of Vice-President on the Board.

**REFERENCES:**

*Daily Practices & Prayers*

*The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment (The Lam Rim Chen Mo)*

*The Fifty Stanzas on Guru Devotion*

*The Way of the Bodhisattva*

*The Siksasamuccaya (Training Anthology)*

*Policy 1.1 Vision and Mission*

*Policy 1.2 Organizational Values*

*Policy 12.1 Membership Eligibility, Privileges, and Responsibilities*

**EFFECTIVE DATE OF INITIAL POLICY:** October 18, 2016

**EFFECTIVE DATE OF REVISED POLICY:** June 10, 2017

**NEXT REVIEW:** January 2020