

# Code of Ethics for Teachers and Health Practitioners

*Adopted initially for MM Yoga Teachers December 2013  
And subsequently adopted by  
the Hanuman Fellowship, Mount Madonna Center,  
Mount Madonna Institute, Pacific Cultural Center, Sri Ram Foundation*

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## Introduction

The Mount Madonna Institute (MMI) is dedicated to the highest principles and professional practices that will contribute to wellness and positive transformation in individuals and society through education in yoga, Ayurveda and Community Studies. To further this aspiration MMI has developed a code of ethics for all teachers, health practitioners, students and staff associated with MMI. This Code is shared and also adopted by Hanuman Fellowship, Mount Madonna Center, Pacific Cultural Center, and Sri Ram Foundation.

In the philosophy of Ashtanga Yoga there are 10 major points of ethics. These are the five *yamas* and the five *niyamas*, which can be found in the second chapter of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Essentially the *yamas* guide us in actions to be restrained in order to attain peace and the *niyamas* guide us in actions to be cultivated in order to attain peace. The *yamas* are non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, non-lust, and non-possessiveness. The *niyamas* are purity, contentment, austerity, self-study, and surrender.

Interpreting these ancient, universal precepts for the modern person is vitally necessary to support the ultimate purpose of personal wellbeing and positive transformation. It is essential that every member of the MMI community---regardless of how revered, renowned, or technically able they may be---embrace and observe ethical and professional guidelines.

This Code of Ethics states our guiding principles and articulates our commonly held universal ideals of conduct. It draws heavily from the Hanuman Fellowship Code of Ethics. Finally, it expresses our commitment to the *yama* of *ahimsa*, or non-harming, which protects the student-teacher-client-practitioner relationship in which the spirit of yoga and Ayurveda are transmitted.

It is hoped that with the acceptance and practice of this set of ethical and professional standards, clarity and compassion will be incorporated into all teaching and clinical behavior and this will protect and inspire students and clients.

## **SECTION 1: Statement of Purpose**

Those who teach and/or practice as a healthcare practitioner at, are trained to teach and/or practice as a healthcare practitioner or are affiliated with Mount Madonna Institute intend to articulate, hold, and share ethical standards that support the aspiration of wellness and create a foundation for the practice of yoga, Ayurveda and/or other healthcare modalities being provided.

We recognize the sensitive nature of the student-teacher-client-practitioner relationship and the principled responsibility of the teacher/practitioner. We believe that it is the responsibility of the teacher/practitioner to ensure a safe and protected environment in which a student and/or client can grow physically, mentally, and spiritually. The close cooperation of the student and teacher and client and practitioner in the process of learning and healing, and the subtle opening and unfolding that may occur, demand the highest levels of integrity, honesty, self-awareness, and compassion by the teacher/practitioner.

We honor *ahimsa*, or non-violence, as our highest ethical aspiration. Non-harming applies to the physical, emotional and spiritual level. It begins with acceptance, kindness, and dispassion; it results in serenity and peace. (Yoga Sutra I: 33; II: 35)

We “teach/practice to learn” to cultivate the attitude of learner (*svadhyaya*) and to avoid the egoism of being a teacher/practitioner. As reverential faith (*shraddha*) is required for spiritual unfoldment the Ultimate Teacher is the Self within all.

We model “regular *sadhana* (spiritual practice)” as a method for attaining peace. The methods may vary, but the goal is the same.

We regard *yoga* as a universal philosophy and spiritual practice rather than a religion. The principles of *yoga* can be found in all religions. By practicing *yoga* we can see the truth in each religion.

This Code of Ethics is accepted as a support for these purposes.

## SECTION 2: Principles

To protect the student/client in this potentially vulnerable relationship, and to uphold the highest professional standards for *all* teachers and practitioners, each of us accept the following foundational principles:

1. To cultivate an attitude of humility in our teaching and in our healthcare practice and dedicate our work to something greater than ourselves.
2. To welcome all and proactively create an environment that respects and honors everyone regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, culture, ability, or age.
3. To examine and strive to address barriers to participation for individuals or communities that have been impacted by systemic racism and other forms of marginalization or oppression.
4. To commit to uncover and remedy our own implicit biases, acknowledging the impact they have on equity and inclusion.
5. To manage our personal lives in a healthful fashion and to seek assistance for our own personal problems or conflicts.
6. To seek and engage in collegial and professional relationships, recognizing that isolation can lead to a loss of perspective and judgment.
7. To engage in dialogue concerning professional and ethical issues with respected mentors.
8. To establish and maintain appropriate professional relationship boundaries.
9. To provide instruction and health recommendations only in those areas within the reasonable boundaries of our competence and within our defined professional scope of practice.
10. To stay abreast of new developments in the field of *our professional subjects and clinical practice and expertise* through educational activities and studies, and by continuing to deepen our study of source texts.

### **SECTION 3: Professional Practices as a Teacher and/or Health Practitioner**

In all professional matters, we maintain practices and teaching procedures that protect the public and advance the profession:

1. We use our knowledge and professional associations for the benefit of the people we serve and not to secure unfair personal advantage.
2. Fees and financial arrangements, as with all contractual matters, are always discussed without hesitation or equivocation at the onset of the professional relationship and are established in a straightforward, professional manner.
3. We commit to be proactive in creating opportunities and access to the teachings for those who have been impacted by systemic racism or other forms of marginalization or oppression.
4. We may at times offer services and opportunities to individuals or groups in need without regard to financial remuneration.
5. We conduct our fiscal affairs with due regard to recognized business and accounting procedures.
6. We are careful to represent facts truthfully to students and clients, referral sources, and third-party payers regarding credentials and services rendered. We will correct any misrepresentation of our professional qualifications.
7. We do not malign colleagues or other professionals.
8. We do not plagiarize or claim others work for our own. We ask for permission to utilize the work of others. We do not publish, reproduce, sell, or otherwise distribute any portion of other's materials or Hanuman Fellowship/Mount Madonna Center/Mount Madonna Institute/Sri Ram Foundation/Pacific Cultural Center/AYI materials without written permission or allow others to do so.
9. We recognize that the teachings of Yoga and Ayurveda are grounded in ancient classical scriptures. We also understand that they constantly evolve and adapt to changing times and audiences and reflect the qualities of the teacher in these changing contexts. It is important to make clear what of the teachings presented is of the classical tradition and what is a teacher's personal adaptation or interpretation of such teachings.
10. We consult with designated senior teachers and practitioners if there is any question as to our ability or agreements in regard to teaching, offering or providing specific practices or use of particular materials.

## **SECTION 4: Student/Client Relationships**

It is our responsibility to maintain relationships with students and clients on a professional basis.

1. We do not abandon or neglect students or clients. If we are unable, or unwilling for appropriate reasons, to provide professional help or continue a professional relationship, every reasonable effort is made to arrange for continuation of instruction with another teacher.
2. We make only realistic statements regarding the benefits of yoga, Ayurveda and other healing modalities being offered.
3. We show sensitive regard for the moral, social, and religious standards of students, clients and groups. We avoid imposing our beliefs on others, although we may express them when appropriate in a class or clinical context.
4. We recognize the trust placed in and unique power of the student- teacher - client relationship. While acknowledging the complexity of some relationships, we avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of students and/or clients. We avoid those dual relationships with students and clients (e.g., business, close personal, or sexual relationships) that could impair our judgment, compromise the integrity of our instruction, and/or use the relationship for our own gain.
5. We do not engage in harassment, abusive words or actions, or exploitative coercion of students and clients, or former students and clients.
6. All forms of sexual behavior or harassment with students and clients are unethical, even when a student invites or consents to such behavior involvement. Sexual behavior is defined as, but not limited to all forms of overt and covert seductive speech, gestures, and behavior as well as physical contact of a sexual nature. Harassment includes, but not limited to, repeated comments, gestures, or physical contacts of a sexual nature.
7. Out of respect for individuals' physical privacy, expressed verbal or written consent to touch will be obtained prior to touching a student or client for any purpose.
8. We recognize that the teacher-student-client relationship involves a power imbalance, the residual effects of which can remain after the student is no longer studying or consulting with the teacher or practitioner. Therefore, we suggest extreme caution if a teacher or practitioner chooses to enter into a personal relationship with a former student.

## **SECTION 5: Confidentiality**

We respect the integrity and protect the welfare of all persons with whom we are working and have an obligation to safeguard information about them that has been obtained in the instruction process.

1. All records kept on a student and client are stored or disposed of in a manner that assures security and confidentiality.
2. We treat all communications from students and clients with strict professional confidence.
3. When supervising apprentices or consulting with other teachers and/or practitioners, we do not name students/clients, except where the identity of the student/client is necessary to the understanding of the situation. It is our responsibility to convey the importance of confidentiality to the apprentice or consultant. We do not disclose student/client confidences to anyone, except as mandated by law; to prevent a clear and immediate danger to someone; when required in the course of a civil, criminal, or disciplinary action arising from the instruction where the teacher/practitioner is a defendant; or to supervise or consult with another when written permission from the student/client (s) has been previously obtained. In situations involving more than one student/client, written permission must be obtained from all legally accountable persons who were present during the instruction or in a clinical context at issue before any disclosure can be made.
4. We obtain written consent of students and clients before audio and/or video recording or permitting third party observation of their sessions or posting on social media.
5. When current or former students are referred to in a publication, while teaching, or in a public presentation, their identity is thoroughly disguised.

## **SECTION 6: Assistant, Student, and Employee Relationships**

As teachers and practitioners, we have an ethical concern for the integrity and welfare of our assistants, students, clients and employees. These relationships are maintained on a professional and confidential basis. We recognize our influential position regarding current and former assistants, students, clients and employees, and avoid exploiting their trust and dependency. We strive to avoid dual relationships with such persons that could impair our judgment or increase the risk of personal and/or financial exploitation.

1. We do not engage in sexual or other harassment of current assistants, students, clients, employees, or colleagues.
2. All forms of sexual behavior, as defined in Section 4.6, with our assistants, students, clients and employees are unethical.
3. We advise our assistants, students, clients and employees against offering or engaging in, or holding themselves out as competent to engage in any services beyond their training, level of experience, and competence.
4. We do not harass or dismiss an assistant or employee who has acted in a reasonable, responsible, and ethical manner to protect, or intervene on behalf of any student, client or other member of the public or another employee.

## **SECTION 7: Inter-professional Relationships**

As teachers and practitioners, we relate to and cooperate with other persons in our immediate community and beyond. We are part of a network of teaching and clinical professionals and are expected to develop and maintain interdisciplinary and inter-professional relationships.

1. Knowingly soliciting another teacher's students or another practitioner's clients without their consent is unethical.
2. Speaking of other teachers and practitioners with disrespect is unethical.

## **SECTION 8: Advertising**

Any advertising, including announcements, public statements, social media, and promotional activities, done by us or for us is undertaken to help the public make informed judgments and choices.

1. We do not misrepresent our professional qualifications, affiliations, and functions, or falsely imply sponsorship, or certification by any person or organization.
2. Announcements and brochures promoting our services describe them with accuracy and dignity. These promotional materials should be devoid of exaggerated claims about the effects of yoga and/or Ayurveda. Promotional material may be sent to individual members of professional groups, religious institutions, and other agencies, but will be sent to prospective individual students and clients only in response to inquiries or as long as that promotional material is sent to a reasonable audience in a non-invasive way.
3. We do not make public statements that contain any of the following:
  - a. A false, fraudulent, misleading, or deceptive statement.
  - b. A misrepresentation of fact or a statement likely to mislead or deceive because in context it makes only a partial disclosure of relevant facts.
  - c. A statement implying unusual, unique, or one-of-a-kind abilities, including misrepresentation through sensationalism, exaggeration, or superficiality.
  - d. A statement intended or likely to exploit a student's fears, anxieties or emotions.
  - e. A statement concerning the comparative desirability of offered services.
4. Advertisements or announcements by us of workshops, clinics, seminars, growth groups, or similar services or endeavors, are to give a clear statement of purpose and a clear description of the experiences to be provided. The education, training, and experience of the provider involved are to be appropriately specified.

## Code of Ethics Receipt

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have received, read, and understand the Mount Madonna Institute adopted December 2013 and revised September 2020. I will make my best effort to act according to this Code.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_