

Code of Ethics for Yoga Teachers

*Adopted December 2013 and Revised April 2016 by the Hanuman Fellowship,
Mount Madonna Center, Mount Madonna Institute, and Pacific Cultural Center*

Introduction

The Hanuman Fellowship, Mount Madonna Center, Mount Madonna Institute, and Pacific Cultural Center are inspired by the example and teachings of Baba Hari Dass (Babaji) and are dedicated to the principles and practices of yoga. By means of *sadhana* (spiritual practice), *karma yoga* (selfless service), and *satsang* (supportive community), we aspire to create an environment for the attainment of peace. To further this aspiration we have developed a code of ethics for yoga teachers trained by and associated with our Centers.

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 yoga teacher is vitally necessary to support the ultimate purpose of yoga study. It is essential that every teacher---regardless of how revered, renowned, or technically able the teacher may be---embrace and observe ethical and professional guidelines.

This Code of Ethics reflects Babaji's teachings and his personal example of disciplined life. This Code draws heavily from the Code of Ethics for Yoga Teachers by the California Yoga Teachers Association in language and orientation. The Code states our guiding principles, and articulates our commonly held universal ideals of conduct for yoga teachers, regardless of the system in which they practice. Finally, it expresses our commitment to the *yama* of *ahimsa*, or non-harming, which protects the student-teacher relationship in which the spirit of yoga is transmitted.

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

SECTION 1: Statement of Purpose

Those who teach at, are trained to teach by, or are affiliated with The Hanuman Fellowship, Mount Madonna Center, Mount Madonna Institute, and The Pacific Cultural Center intend to articulate, hold, and share ethical standards that support the aspiration of peace and create a foundation for the practice of *yoga*.

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

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

We “teach to learn” to cultivate the attitude of learner (*svadhyaya*) and to avoid the egoism of being a teacher. 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 in this potentially vulnerable relationship, and to uphold the highest professional standards for *yoga* teachers, each of us accept the following foundational principles:

1. To cultivate an attitude of humility in our teaching, and dedicate our work to something greater than ourselves.
2. To avoid discriminating against or refusing professional help to anyone on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, or age.
3. To manage our personal lives in a healthful fashion and to seek assistance for our own personal problems or conflicts.
4. To seek and engage in collegial relationships, recognizing that isolation can lead to a loss of perspective and judgment.
5. To engage in dialogue concerning professional and ethical issues with respected mentors.
6. To establish and maintain appropriate professional relationship boundaries.
7. To provide instruction only in those areas within the reasonable boundaries of our competence.
8. To stay abreast of new developments in the field of *yoga* through educational activities and studies, and by continuing to deepen our study of source texts.

SECTION 3: Professional Practices As a Yoga Teacher

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 may at times render service to individuals or groups in need without regard to financial remuneration.
4. We neither receive nor pay a commission for referral of a student.
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, 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 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 if there is any question as to our ability or agreements in regards to teaching specific practices or use of particular materials.

SECTION 4: Student Relationships

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

1. We do not abandon or neglect students. 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.
3. We show sensitive regard for the moral, social, and religious standards of students and groups. We avoid imposing our beliefs on others, although we may express them when appropriate in a yoga class.
4. We recognize the trust placed in and unique power of the student- teacher relationship. While acknowledging the complexity of some yoga relationships, we avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of students. We avoid those dual relationships with students (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 or former students.
6. All forms of sexual behavior or harassment with students 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. We recognize that the teacher-student relationship involves a power imbalance, the residual effects of which can remain after the student is no longer studying with the teacher. Therefore, we suggest extreme caution if a teacher 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 are stored or disposed of in a manner that assures security and confidentiality.
2. We treat all communications from students with strict professional confidence.
3. When supervising apprentices or consulting with other yoga teachers, we use only the first names of our students, except where the identity of the student 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 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 is a defendant; or to supervise or consult with another when written permission from the student (s) has been previously obtained. In situations involving more than one student, written permission must be obtained from all legally accountable persons who were present during the instruction at issue before any disclosure can be made.
4. We obtain written consent of students before audio and/or video recording or permitting third party observation of their sessions.
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 yoga teachers, we have an ethical concern for the integrity and welfare of our assistants, students, and employees. These relationships are maintained on a professional and confidential basis. We recognize our influential position regarding current and former assistants, students, 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, employees, or colleagues.
2. All forms of sexual behavior, as defined in Section 4.6, with our assistants, students, and employees are unethical.
3. We advise our assistants, students, 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 or other member of the public or another employee.

SECTION 7: Inter-professional Relationships

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

1. Knowingly soliciting another teacher's students is unethical.
2. Speaking of other teachers with disrespect is unethical.

SECTION 8: Advertising

Any advertising, including announcements, public statements, 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. Promotional material may be sent to individual members of professional groups, religious institutions, and other agencies, but will be sent to prospective individual students 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.