

Seattle Buddhist Center

Ethical Guidelines

The Seattle Buddhist Center, as part of the Triratna Buddhist Community, aims to support the awakening of the individual in an atmosphere of kindness, safety, and positive spiritual support.

These guidelines are a re-statement of the Buddhist ethical precepts with a view to how those precepts may be practiced in the context of public classes and events at the Seattle Buddhist Center. Therefore, they are of particular relevance to all those who are engaged in teaching, leading, supporting or administering Buddhist activities at the Center, although we hope and recommend that they are observed by anyone attending the Center as well.

1. *I undertake to abstain from harming living beings.
With deeds of loving-kindness, I purify my body.*

We welcome all individuals at the Seattle Buddhist Center, regardless of race, color, national or ethnic origin, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, or disability.

We aspire to behave in a spirit of kindness; expressing *kalyana mitrata* (spiritual friendship).

We affirm that physical violence and strong displays of anger cause harm and have no place among us. We aim to resolve conflicts through discussion and, if necessary, through mediation.

While healthy disagreements are part of any thriving community, we value consensus and use a method of modified consensus as much as possible to make decisions impacting the Center.

We serve only vegetarian food at the Center and Center events, and also recycle and compost as much as possible in order to minimize the harm we do to the natural world.

2. *I undertake to abstain from taking the not-given.
With open-handed generosity, I purify my body.*

We offer the Buddha's teachings in the spirit of generosity, making them accessible to all, regardless of financial circumstances. As an all-volunteer organization, members of the Seattle Buddhist Center Sangha give of their financial resources as well as of their time, energy, and expertise.

We value openness, transparency and accountability. Those with responsibility for collecting and/or administering the Seattle Buddhist Center's financial or material resources will do so with the utmost care and respect for the generosity of donors who support the Center financially. Appropriate safeguards are in place to assure that accurate records are kept.

3. *I undertake to abstain from sexual misconduct.*
With stillness, simplicity, and contentment, I purify my body.

We aspire to create an atmosphere of stillness, simplicity, and contentment through our individual and collective practice.

We encourage everyone in the Seattle Buddhist Center Sangha to conduct their sexual relationships ethically, with awareness and kindness. People in teaching roles, or otherwise helping to lead Center activities, have a particular responsibility and are expected to be especially diligent in the area of sexual ethics.

Partnerships may develop between members of the sangha, including relationships between leaders/teachers and those for whom they were formerly teachers. While we recognize that such relationships can be healthy and beneficial, we also know that this is a matter requiring careful consideration. With this in mind, we have agreed to the following guidelines:

- 1) When someone in a teaching/leadership position is another person's main point of contact with the Dharma, they are expected to refrain from becoming involved in a sexual relationship with that person. This is particularly important in the early stages of a person's involvement with the Seattle Buddhist Center, before they have established additional connections or friendships with other leaders/teachers.
- 2) If a mutual interest in a relationship does develop over time between a leader/teacher and someone they have taught, there should be no further development of that relationship until the leader/ teacher is no longer that person's main point of connection with the Dharma; that is, until that person has established *kalyana mitrata* relationships with other leaders/teachers. Because strength of feeling for the teachings can easily be confused with feelings for the teacher, a gap of at least six months is recommended between the time when the leader/teacher is no longer the person's main teacher, and mutually entering into a sexual relationship.
- 3) Anyone in a formal role or position of influence who begins to consider a sexual relationship with someone they have taught, should consult with their chapter, *kalyana mitras*, preceptors, and local Order Members as applicable.

4. *I undertake to abstain from false speech.*
With truthful communication, I purify my speech.

We aspire to truthful, meaningful, and harmonious speech which encourages spiritual growth and creates community in all our dealings with one another. Through skillful communication, we seek to create an atmosphere of friendliness, cooperation, and trust. Recognizing that these values may be expressed very differently, depending on an individual's cultural background, we aspire to practice the speech precepts with sensitivity for different cultural norms.

We affirm that harsh language has no place among us.

Much is confided in us as spiritual friends. We aspire to have an environment where individuals feel they can explore the Dharma and their personal lives with leaders and each other in an atmosphere of trust. We agree that leaders will share others' personal information only where they have permission to do so as spiritual friends, for example as part of formal *kalyana mitrata* and, where necessary, in the process of ordination training.

5. *I undertake to abstain from intoxication.*
With mindfulness clear and radiant, I purify my mind.

The Seattle Buddhist Center aims to provide the context for the development of wisdom and compassion through deepening awareness. We undertake to engage with our practice and with each other with as much mindfulness as possible and to support those who are attempting to live without intoxicants. To these ends, we will not serve alcohol or other intoxicants at the Seattle Buddhist Center or Center events.