

Statement of Professional Standards

By The California Yoga Teachers Association¹

Section 1: Statement of Purpose

The members of the California Yoga Teachers Association recognize the sensitive nature of the student-teacher relationship.

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. In order to protect the student in this potentially vulnerable relationship, as well as to uphold the highest professional standards for yoga teachers, we agree to accept the following principles:

Section 2: Principles

In order to uphold our Standards, we agree to act in the following manner:

1. To avoid discriminating against or refusing professional help to anyone on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion or national origin.

2. To stay abreast of new developments in the field of yoga through educational activities and study.

3. To seek out and engage in collegial relationships, recognizing that isolation can lead to a loss of perspective and judgment.

4. To manage our personal lives in a healthful fashion and to seek appropriate assistance for our own personal problems or conflicts.

5. To provide rehabilitative instruction only for those problems or issues that are within the reasonable boundaries of our competence.

6. To establish and maintain appropriate professional relationship boundaries.

Section 3: Professional Practices

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 and are established in a straightforward, professional manner.
3. We will 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 or affiliations.
7. We do not malign colleagues or other professionals.

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 the 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) which could impair our professional 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 or 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 is defined as, 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 you choose 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 course of 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 professional confidence.

3. When supervising apprentices or consulting with other yoga teachers, we use only the first names of our students, except in those situations where the identity of the student is necessary to the understanding of the case. It is our responsibility to convey the importance of confidentiality to the apprentice or consultant.

4. We do not disclose student confidences to anyone, except: as mandated by law; to prevent a clear and immediate danger to someone; in the course of a civil, criminal or disciplinary action arising from the instruction where the teacher is a defendant; for purposes of supervision or consultation; or by previously obtained written permission. In cases involving more than one person (as student) written permission must be obtained from all legally accountable persons who have been present during the instruction before any disclosure can be made.

5. We obtain written consent of students before audio and/or video tape recording or permitting third-party observation of their sessions.

6. 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 with regard to both current and former assistants, students and employees, and avoid exploiting their trust and dependency. We make every effort 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 (except in employee situations involving domestic partners) are unethical.

3. We advise our assistants, students and employees against offering or engaging in, or holding themselves out as competent to engage in, professional 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, a student or other member of the public or another employee.

Section 7: Interprofessional Relationships

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

1. Soliciting another teacher's students is unethical.

2. Speaking of other teachers with disrespect, either publicly or privately, is unethical.

Section 8: Advertising

Any advertising, including announcements, public statements and promotional activities, done by us or for us, is undertaken with the purpose of helping 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 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 effect of yoga. We may send them to professional persons, religious institutions and other agencies, but to prospective individual students only in response to inquiries.

3. We do not make public statements which contain any of the following:

a. A false, fraudulent, misleading, deceptive or unfair 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(s) involved are to be appropriately specified.

' Editor's note. We wish to thank the California Yoga Teacher Association and the Yoga Journal for their work in preparing these standards. We publish them as a service to our readers. We wish to create an ongoing dialogue for the establishment of appropriate ethical standards for yoga teachers and therapists. IAYT is in the process of developing ethical standards for our membership. Please contact IAYT if you are interested in participating in this process. If you would like more information on CYTA please contact the organization c/o the Yoga Journal, 2054 University Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94704. Tel. 510-841-9200.