

Integrity Charter for Yoga Teachers

January 6, 2021

As a teacher of *Kundalini Yoga as taught by Yogi Bhajan* in Belgium, I believe that everyone is entitled to a wholesome and beneficial yoga experience.

That's why I endorse the following **Eight Golden Principles**.

1. SAFETY

I provide a pleasant, positive, safe, and serene yoga surrounding and atmosphere.

2. PROFESSIONAL

I prioritise the wellbeing of participants at all times.

3. EQUALITY

I consider all students equal regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, skin colour, political affiliation, status, age or religion.

4. RESPECT

I respect all students.

5. MONITORING INTEGRITY

I do not tolerate transgressive behaviour. I name it and discuss it.

6. SELF-MANAGEMENT

I am not infallible.

7. PURITY

I am aware of the authority that comes with the role of teacher and the sexual attraction that this can evoke. I don't take advantage of this position of authority.

8. HUMILITY

I am a yoga teacher but also a student.

1. SAFETY

I provide a pleasant, positive, safe and serene yoga surrounding and atmosphere.

- Yoga students should feel comfortable as they turn inwards for an optimal yoga experience. I therefore endeavour to ensure that they feel safe so that they can focus on the practice.
- I invite students to talk to me when they feel uncomfortable physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually. If necessary, we can look for solutions together.

2. PROFESSIONAL

I prioritise the wellbeing of participants at all times.

- I teach yoga without imposing anything or obliging anyone. I encourage students to listen to their bodies and respect their limits. Yoga is not a competition.

- I regularly reiterate the specific guidelines that apply during pregnancy or during menstruation. I remind participants that yoga is not compatible with drugs and alcohol. I ask students with a physical or mental vulnerability to provide a medical certificate.
- I am honest in my communication and do not create false expectations.

3. EQUALITY

I consider all students equal regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, skin colour, political affiliation, status, age or religion.

- I ensure that we treat each other with respect and tolerance. I will not accept harassment, discrimination, racism, violence, exploitation, deception or blackmail.
- I don't act like a superior and I remind students that we are all equal.
- I do not favour participants who are more flexible, prettier, richer or more influential than others. They are all equal and receive the same attention.

4. RESPECT

I respect all students.

- I do this regardless of their yoga experience, their different physical and mental capacities or the different rhythm with which they learn new practices.
- I respect everyone's privacy and life choices.
- I respect students' personal processes and how they deal with them.
- When someone shows their vulnerability, I handle it with care. I offer support as far as my role as a yoga teacher allows it. I refer them to adequate professional assistance for all other questions which do not fall within the framework of yoga.

5. MONITORING INTEGRITY

I do not tolerate transgressive behaviour. I name it and discuss it.

- Boundaries can be crossed in multiple ways: insults, inappropriate touching or staring, sexual and racist comments, etc. I am alert to signals such as complaints, questions or tensions that may indicate underlying problems.
- When an incident occurs in the yoga context I react thoughtfully and appropriately. If possible, I will do what is necessary to allow the damage to be repaired and take measures to avoid similar occurrences in the future. In difficult situations I consult other yoga teachers or the Integrity hotline.
- I am not afraid to discuss the theme of transgressive behaviour individually or in a group, before or after the yoga class. I invite students to talk about physical or sexual situations that do not seem right to them. I inform them about the Integrity guidelines and the Integrity hotline. I promote nonviolent communication.
- In *Kundalini Yoga as taught by Yogi Bhanjan*, the yoga teacher does not offer hands-on assists. Sometimes, for example in the Venus kriyas, physical contact between students is part of the exercise. Participation must always be a choice and it is only possible with the full consent of the participants. Respecting each other's boundaries is essential at all times.
- Before and after class, it may be customary to greet each other with a handshake, a pat on the back, or a hug. This is fine as long as no one feels obligated and everything is done with respect for the physical, mental and emotional integrity of the other.
- When students threaten to cross my personal boundaries, I respond immediately and appropriately.

6. SELF-MANAGEMENT

I am not infallible.

- As a yoga teacher, I am not untouchable or infallible. I can be hurt, confused, or overwhelmed for many reasons. It may happen that I threaten to cross or have exceeded limits myself. For example, I might fall in love with a student. Or I might lose my temper in class. In such cases I will not hesitate to seek help from other yoga teachers, my own teachers, the Integrity hotline or anyone else who can help me.
- I am aware of the messages and signals that I send out myself and of the situations or people that are a trigger for me.
- I take responsibility for my own growth in consciousness.

7. PURITY

I am aware of the authority that comes with the role of teacher and the sexual attraction that this can evoke. I don't take advantage of this position of authority.

- Sexuality is an integral part of being human, but in the yoga context sexual interactions have no place. I recognise signals in myself and students that indicate sexual attraction. I respond quickly and appropriately so that a misplaced flow of sexual energy does not destroy the purity of the yoga experience. I will not tolerate inappropriate requests or attention, unnecessary touching, or sexual comments.
- I know that students might look up to me, especially when they are seeking or have low self-esteem. They may see me as a role model. I acknowledge their vulnerability and attend to it with attention, respect and sensitivity. Students in a private class might become more easily dependent on me. I don't take advantage of such situations. I take every opportunity to remind students of our equality and how important it is for them to look for and listen to the teacher within themselves.
- I recognise that power can trigger sexual energy but that only a consensual sexual relationship between equals is wholesome. When a teacher and student fall in love and want to begin a relationship, they must first sever the student-teacher relationship for at least three months so that the power dynamic implicit in the student-teacher relationship can be extinguished.

8. HUMILITY

I am a yoga teacher but also a student.

- I am open to and actively encourage feedback from colleagues and students.
- I am aware that the spiritual ego is a pitfall for yoga teachers. I am willing to keep looking at myself through training, personal enquiry and peer supervision in order to keep growing.
- I am honest and collegial in my dealings with other yoga teachers. We offer one another mutual support and learn from each other. Competition and jealousy have no place in yoga.

***When yoga teachers are accused of transgressive behaviour,
they will be summoned for a discussion
by the Board of the Belgian Kundalini Yoga Federation and the Integrity Hotline.
It may be that a sanction will follow for the perpetrator. For example: a withdrawal of the
membership of the Belgian and International Kundalini Yoga Teachers Association.
If necessary, legal action will be taken.***