

Western Chan Fellowship Ethical Statement/ Guidance for Teachers, Leaders and Participants in WCF activities.

Objects of the WCF

The Western Chan Fellowship (WCF) exists to advance the education of the public in the principles of Buddhism by providing training in Buddhist meditation, Buddhist philosophical insight and Buddhist precepts by means of the teaching, practice and transmission of the Chinese Linji and Tsao tung traditions of Chan, as transmitted through Master Sheng Yen,

and as a supplement to such training:

- i. to provide training in Buddhist meditation as developed in Tibet and elsewhere and
- ii. to provide facilities for the investigation and study of Buddhist theory psychology and practice, and its relation to contemporary Western thought.

Statement of Ethics

This ethical statement is adapted from an Open Letter formulated by Western Buddhist Leaders in discussion with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1993

http://www.anandainfo.com/buddhist_ethics.html

1. Our first responsibility as Chan Buddhists is to work towards creating a better world for all forms of life. Kindness and compassion, the furthering of peace and harmony, as well as tolerance and respect for the views and beliefs of other people should be the three guiding principles of our actions. In pursuing the objects of the Western Chan Fellowship we hope to make a contribution to this wider responsibility.
2. We affirm the fundamental equality between all people, irrespective of any differences, in all aspects of Buddhist theory, teaching and practice within the Western Chan Fellowship.
3. In the West, where so many different Buddhist traditions exist side by side, we are aware of the danger of sectarianism. Such a divisive attitude is often the result of failing to understand or appreciate other Buddhist traditions. We encourage members of the Western Chan Fellowship to study and gain some practical experience of the teachings of other traditions in order to guard against this danger. The Western Chan Fellowship is a member of the Network of Buddhist Organisations (NBO) and supports the NBO in their work of seeking common ground and cooperation between the different schools of Buddhism within the UK. We are also members of the European Buddhist Union (EBU) which aims to encourage cooperation between the Buddhists in Europe; our senior teachers attend EBU teachers meetings.
4. We are aware of the beneficial influences from secular and other religious traditions. For example, the insights and techniques of contemporary psychotherapy can be of great value in reducing suffering experienced by retreat participants. All WCF retreat leaders are required to undergo some

training in psychotherapy or counselling so that they are able to apply some of these insights and techniques. We are members of the Interfaith Network and support their aim of promoting good relations between people of different faiths in the United Kingdom.

5. The WCF is careful to appoint suitable teachers and leaders. The appointment of WCF Teacher is a lifetime appointment, unless the Teacher chooses to retire or effectively retires, or is unable to continue due to incapacity, or in exceptional circumstances were to be dismissed by the WCF on the grounds of gross misconduct. Appointments of all other teachers and leaders is for five years at a time, with the expectation that their authorisation will be renewed at the end of five years, but only after scrutiny.

6. An individual's position as a teacher or leader also depends on the support of people who participate in WCF activities, not simply on being appointed as such. Great care must therefore be exercised by participants in selecting an appropriate teacher or putting trust in a local group leader. Sufficient time must be given to making this choice, which should be based on personal investigation, reason and experience. Participants are warned against the dangers of falling prey to charisma, charlatanism or exoticism.

7. There have been examples around the world of Buddhist teachers and leaders who have been involved in scandals concerning sexual misconduct with their students, abuse of alcohol and drugs, misappropriation of funds, and misuse of power. This has resulted in widespread damage to the Buddhist community and to the individuals involved. No matter what level of spiritual attainment a WCF teacher or leader has, or claims to have reached, no person can stand above the norms of ethical conduct. In order for the Buddhadharma not to be brought into disrepute and to avoid harm to participants in WCF activities and to our teachers and leaders, it is necessary that all teachers and leaders at least aspire to live by the Bodhisattva Precepts for lay people.

8. We support teachers and leaders through mentoring in which more senior leaders are a resource to less experienced leaders and to each other. This provides an avenue for any leader or teacher to discuss ethical dilemmas that they may face in some aspect of their teaching or leadership role and they are expected to make appropriate use of mentoring for this and other purposes.

9. We will always challenge unethical conduct by any Western Chan Fellowship leader or teacher and will take the requisite action to prevent any continuation. In cases where ethical standards have been infringed, compassion and care will be shown towards both teacher/leader and participant.

10. Anyone who participates in any of our activities is encouraged to take responsible measures to confront teachers or leaders with unethical aspects of their conduct and/or where necessary to use the WCF complaints procedure to draw this to the attention of the Western Chan Fellowship Trustees. Anyone who has concerns about the actions of a leader or teacher can raise these concerns informally with any of the WCF Trustees (i.e. Committee Members) in order to talk over any action they wish to take. Depending on what is disclosed, Trustees who are confided in may have a responsibility to take the matter forward even if the participant is hesitant to do so.