



RIGPA

Shared Values and Guidelines of the Rigpa Community

The Rigpa community is committed to the highest standards of care and ethical conduct, and expects its members to abide by the Rigpa Code of Conduct and the laws of their particular country.

In 2017-18, the international Rigpa community took part in a series of workshops and discussions, and was able to submit feedback on a number of areas. Their combined input was distilled into the following set of *Shared Values and Guidelines*, which are all anchored in the wisdom and compassion of the Buddhist path.

These Shared Values and Guidelines apply to the Rigpa community at large, and include Rigpa members and anyone with a role in the activities associated with Rigpa—such as employees, contractors, volunteers, instructors, teachers and visiting teachers from other organisations.

The Shared Values and Guidelines inform, but do not override the Code of Conduct.

This document includes 1) general guidelines for the whole Rigpa community, 2) specific guidelines for those representing Rigpa, and 3) guidelines specific to instructors, to teachers and to boards and management teams.

Besides these guidelines, practitioners are naturally encouraged to honour the Buddhist vows they may have taken, whether vows of individual liberation, bodhisattva precepts or vajrayana commitments.

For the whole Rigpa community

Commit not a single unwholesome action,

Cultivate a wealth of virtue,

To tame this mind of ours,

This is the teaching of all the buddhas.

—The Buddha

Refraining from Harm

Based on the view of interdependence and an understanding of karma—the law of cause and effect—we recognize that all our actions, words and thoughts have their corresponding consequences, and we strive to avoid harm of any kind. This means:

- We aim to provide an environment that is safe and supportive for everyone. Therefore, we avoid any action done with an intention to harm, or that could cause physical, emotional or psychological harm.
- Our goal is an environment free of discrimination of any kind, whether based on race, age, ethnicity or national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability.
- We respect others' personal limits and boundaries, and take care of ourselves by communicating our own.
- Any instances of upsetting behaviour, intimidation, bullying or physical or psychological harassment need to be identified so they can be stopped immediately.
- We take special care to safeguard those who are particularly vulnerable, including children and vulnerable/dependent adults. Safeguarding policies are maintained by the Rigpa national boards as required in each member country.
- We refrain from: taking anything that is not freely given; taking advantage of anyone or cheating them financially; and being careless with sangha resources or using them for personal gain. This includes using Rigpa materials or data without permission, and so violating copyright or breaching confidentiality.

- As practitioners on the path, we take great care to conduct relationships with awareness and kindness. Sexual harassment of any kind, unwanted sexual advances or improper behaviour will not be tolerated within our community.
- Mindful of the damage caused by lies, hurtful words, divisive communication, and thoughtless gossip, we make a point of speaking truthfully, with kindness, awareness and attention to the impact of our speech.
- Recognizing that intoxication can jeopardize our ability to act with awareness and compassion, we refrain from becoming intoxicated by drugs or alcohol while involved in any Rigpa activity.
- The Rigpa community endeavours to reduce our harmful impact upon the environment.

Working for the Welfare of All

At the heart of everything we do lies *bodhichitta*: the compassionate wish and commitment to bring ourselves and others to complete awakening—a state of lasting peace and happiness, and freedom from all suffering. This we do by training the mind in love and compassion, by understanding our common humanity, putting ourselves in other people’s place and minimizing self-centredness.

- Always keeping in mind this common purpose, in all our interactions, we relate to other people with respect, friendliness and kindness. We make an effort to benefit others.
- We strive to create an atmosphere of trust and cooperation, where every individual feels valued, has a way to participate, and feels a sense of responsibility for each other’s welfare.
- Whatever happens in life, whether happiness or misfortune, we seek to transform it into the path toward awakening and into an opportunity for deepening compassion, for ourselves and others.
- In recognition of the fundamental goodness of all beings, we treat ourselves and others with dignity and respect. This means being patient, courteous and encouraging with others who make suggestions or express viewpoints other than our own.

- We care for our community, and we support each other on the path, and in our study and practice of the Buddhist teachings.

Training the Mind

We recognize our freedom to work skillfully with thoughts, emotions and perceptions through meditation and reflection, so as to clarify confusion and give rise to wisdom.

- We examine our motivation deeply, looking at the consequences of what we think, say and do.
- In order to tame, train and transform our minds, we set aside time to study and practice the teachings of Buddha.
- As often as we can, we examine our minds, to undermine habits of clinging, hostility and indifference, and enhance qualities of faith, self-discipline, generosity, study, decency, self-control and wisdom.

Entering the Vajrayana Path

- Individuals who choose to follow the vajrayana path, and be guided by a master as set out in the vajrayana and Dzogchen teachings can only do so by making a formal request for this level of spiritual guidance. They will receive teachings on the ethics and commitments specific to vajrayana and Dzogchen.
- Making such a formal request is a serious step, which should come only after discussion with experienced instructors about the nature of the teachings and what it means to receive this guidance. It should be based on a strong foundation of study, practice, investigation and contemplation by the student, developed over a period of time. It is the responsibility of the vajrayana master to prepare the student for the master-disciple relationship.
- Such formal requests are completely optional and voluntary, and when made by a student, constitute consent to this level of spiritual guidance.

For those representing Rigpa at every level

In addition, while representing Rigpa, in any position, we are representing the Dharma, and we not only avoid acting unethically, but also avoid any suspicion or appearance of misconduct.

That means we will avoid:

- Soliciting sponsorship or accepting gifts and hospitality inappropriately.
- Acting in order to gain financial or other material benefits.
- Concealing any conflicts of interest, which we need to declare.
- Misrepresenting our qualifications or position, or taking advantage of others because of our role and any authority it entails. This includes, for example, never entering into an intimate relationship with a participant during an event, retreat, course, or any situation during which we are perceived to be in a position of authority or power. In other circumstances, any intimate relationships are expected to be based on mutual respect and openly acknowledged, meaning non-secretive.

We will also:

- Be accountable for our decisions and actions to the Rigpa Vision Board, to the National Team, and to Rigpa students, in accordance with the processes established.
- Swiftly and carefully bring any conflict we may have with Rigpa's vision and mission to our national team.

For Instructors

This section is specific to instructors.

Instructors support Rigpa's vision and mission, and it is the task of Rigpa instructors to take it upon ourselves to be as knowledgeable as required, to be self-disciplined and to be kind and warm-hearted. We honour the trust placed in us, carrying out our responsibilities to the best of our abilities and with the aim of maintaining the authenticity of the Dharma. In so doing, we strive to practise transcendent generosity, discipline, patience, enthusiasm, meditation and wisdom, while at the same time pursuing qualities of selflessness, integrity, accountability, openness, honesty, trustworthiness, and leadership.

We will:

- Reflect deeply on and cultivate our intention of *bodhichitta*.
- Maintain our study and practice, instruct only what we have personally studied and practised, and participate in ongoing instructor training where possible.
- Respect appropriate boundaries between our role as a Dharma instructor and other competing professional roles that we are qualified to hold (such as consultant, health professional, therapist, psychologist or psychiatrist).
- Accept the decisions made by the relevant instructor teams in our country, including decisions regarding the appropriateness of any aspect of our role as instructor.
- Disclose to the instructor team any elements of our personal history or current life situation that may have a negative impact on our role as instructor.
- Handle our personal interactions with students with confidentiality, and where appropriate and agreed with the student, communicate any decisions taken.
- Ensure that confidential material, for example material about individuals, is handled with care and sensitivity.

For Teachers

This section is specific to qualified Vajrayana and Dzogchen masters.

In the case of qualified vajrayana and Dzogchen masters, there are requirements and commitments specific to the tantras, and based entirely on bodhichitta, with which they will be very familiar. Each connection between a student and a teacher is unique and based on mutual consent. We highlight the following:

- It is the responsibility of the teacher to prepare the student for the disciple-master relationship. This must be entered into consciously and through the student making a formal request. But the student needs first to create a strong foundation of study, practice, investigation and contemplation and also discuss with experienced instructors about the nature of the teachings and what it means to receive this level of spiritual guidance.
- In the context of the disciple-master relationship, it is perfectly acceptable for both the student and the teacher to make their boundaries known, and for the student to seek clarifications from the teacher, with the support of senior students, or instructors or teachers.

For Boards and management teams

This section is specific to boards and management teams.

We are committed to the highest standards of charity governance, to adhere to the requirements of statutory regulators, and to maintain the highest standards of financial transparency.

Clarification or reporting any misconduct is done through the Grievance Procedure. The first step is to contact a member of the local team or an instructor or the national council. There is also a recourse process with an international council. More details are provided under the Grievance Procedure.

This is a living document that will be reviewed periodically.