Code of Ethics for Spiritual Guides

[Preamble] People have long sought to enrich their lives and to awaken to their full natures through spiritual practices including prayer, meditation, mind-body disciplines, service, ritual, community liturgy, holy-day and seasonal observances, and rites of passage. "Primary religious practices" are those intended, or especially likely, to bring about exceptional states of consciousness such as the direct experience of the divine, of cosmic unity, or of boundless awareness.

In any community, there are some who feel called to assist others along spiritual paths, and who are known as ministers, rabbis, pastors, curanderas, shamans, priests, or other titles. We call such people 'guides': those experienced in some practice, familiar with the terrain, and who act to facilitate the spiritual practices of others. A guide need not claim exclusive or definitive knowledge of the terrain.

Spiritual practices, and especially primary religious practices, carry risks. Therefore, when an individual chooses to practice with the assistance of a guide, both take on special responsibilities. The Council on Spiritual Practices proposes the following Code of Ethics for those who serve as spiritual guides.

1. **[Intention]** Spiritual guides are to practice and serve in ways that cultivate awareness, empathy, and wisdom.
2. **[Serving Society]** Spiritual practices are to be designed and conducted in ways that respect the common good, with due regard for public safety, health, and order. Because the increased awareness gained from spiritual practices can catalyze desire for personal and social change, guides shall use special care to help direct the energies of those they serve, as well as their own, in responsible ways that reflect a loving regard for all life.
3. **[Serving Individuals]** Spiritual guides shall respect and seek to preserve the autonomy and dignity of each person. Participation in any primary religious practice must be voluntary and based on prior disclosure and consent given individually by each participant while in an ordinary state of consciousness. Disclosure shall include, at a minimum, discussion of any elements of the practice that could reasonably be seen as

presenting physical or psychological risks. In particular, participants must be warned that primary religious experience can be difficult and dramatically transformative. Guides shall make reasonable preparations to protect each participant's health and safety during spiritual practices and in the periods of vulnerability that may follow. Limits on the behaviors of participants and facilitators are to be made clear and agreed upon in advance of any session. Appropriate customs of confidentiality are to be established and honored.

4. **[Competence]** Spiritual guides shall assist with only those practices for which they are qualified by personal experience and by training or education.
5. **[Integrity]** Spiritual guides shall strive to be aware of how their own belief systems, values, needs, and limitations affect their work. During primary religious practices, participants may be especially open to suggestion, manipulation, and exploitation; therefore, guides pledge to protect participants and not to allow anyone to use that vulnerability in ways that harm participants or others.
6. **[Quiet Presence]** To help safeguard against the harmful consequences of personal and organizational ambition, spiritual communities are usually better allowed to grow through attraction rather than active promotion.
7. **[Not for Profit]** Spiritual practices are to be conducted in the spirit of service. Spiritual guides shall strive to accommodate participants without regard to their ability to pay or make donations.
8. **[Tolerance]** Spiritual guides shall practice openness and respect towards people whose beliefs are in apparent contradiction to their own.
9. **[Peer Review]** Each guide shall seek the counsel of other guides to help ensure the wholesomeness of his or her practices and shall offer counsel when there is need.

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