

Code of Ethics for Students and Community Members in the Shadhiliyya Sufi Community of Sidi Muhammad al-Jamal

This Code of Ethics was adapted from the “Student Guidelines” from the Association for Spiritual Integrity, with their permission and encouragement. We plan to continually reassess it and periodically revise. Many of the below guidelines touch upon very complex and nuanced issues. Additional documents and resources may also be created to reflect new insight and analysis. We welcome honest feedback, open discussion, diverse perspectives, and discerning analysis.

The purpose of this ethical code is to help empower students and members in our spiritual community to examine how they personally relate to leaders, teachers, healers, and mentors, and the teachings of our way. In the core of our beings, we are all connected to Allah and are all capable of realizing our existence in Allah. At the same time we are all human and subject to an unfolding journey of growth and maturation.

As students we can greatly benefit from our spiritual teachers and healers, especially those who are psychologically mature, competent and supportive. Yet we must understand that teachers and healers are also on a journey of spiritual development. They may be particularly more developed than us in some ways such as their capacity of awareness, or depth of spiritual experience and realization. This does not always translate to being psychologically mature or, for example, knowing how to solve the complex human relationship questions that we may bring to them.

Sometimes, unresolved psychological issues come out as a confused or unhelpful teaching. If students and members, as individuals, have the education and clarity to discern when this is happening, we are less likely to become confused or harmed by the blind spots of a spiritual teacher or healer. This document is an attempt to shed light on the student-teacher and healee-healer relationship so that our members in any of these roles are more educated and less likely to cause harm or be harmed. This document is meant to be read in tandem with the SSC Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Teachers, Leaders, Healers and Community Mentors.

In the points below, the word “teachers” represents all the professional capacities in which our members might serve including teacher, healer, leader, or mentor, and the word “students” represents all of our members who may be in the role of student, healee, or community member.

These guidelines seek to:

- help students to know what behavior is healthy and helpful for their own growth along the path so that healthy student-teacher relationships can flourish
- offer understanding that teachers and students alike are human and therefore evolving beings
- encourage students to examine the health and integrity of their relationship with their teachers and teachings
- safeguard the integrity of the student-teacher relationship

Guidelines

1. Students are invited to understand that teachers and students alike are human and therefore always subject to growth, both personally and professionally. Growth has no end and is a characteristic of our humanity.
2. Students and teachers should have open channels of communication so that misunderstandings and miscommunication can be worked out. If and when ethical grievances arise between a student and teacher or within the community, great care should be taken to ensure open and clear communication, so that all parties learn, grow, heal and evolve in a mature manner.
3. If major ethical violations of abuse have occurred, boundaries must be set and the appropriate administrative or legal actions should be implemented so that such abuse does not continue. Ethical grievances are not taboo topics and can and should be openly discussed in a way which is appropriate and healing.
4. Everyone has blind spots in their personalities. Misperceptions that form in our childhoods and beyond can create habits, patterns and veils that last into adulthood. Some of these can remain after years of spiritual work, and take time to heal, even for advanced teachers. Students and teachers alike are encouraged to hold an openness to our humanity, and to growth, love and compassion.
5. Spiritual teachers can have professional limitations. Sometimes additional support systems are needed to help students progress. Students are encouraged to consider what other support systems might be needed to best supplement and support their spiritual path. Spiritual development, psychological development and physical healing can all be mutually supportive. For example, certain therapies that help to heal trauma, physical practices that engage the body, and medical systems that support physical healing can sometimes be useful alongside spiritual practice.
6. Students acknowledge that they should not seek financial or relationship advice from spiritual teachers unless the teacher is trained in those areas.
7. Students will refrain from gossiping about teachers and belittling teachers or spiritual traditions.
8. Healthy student attitudes include humility, honesty, integrity, open-heartedness, kindness, compassion, sincerity, morality, and objectivity.
9. Students are encouraged to develop an awareness and responsibility for any projections, in particular projecting God or celebrity status onto their teacher. Students should also develop an awareness and responsibility to not project their personal pain onto a teacher, or friends and family.
10. It is wise for the student to develop a healthy sense of individuality and autonomy along the path. If a student becomes infatuated with a teacher, it is also wise to let time pass, and allow the dynamic to normalize.

11. Students will not make sexual advances towards or flirt with a teacher.
12. Students will not donate more than they can afford to their spiritual teacher. All donations must be given from the heart, with no expectation of favoritism or special treatment from the teacher. Otherwise it is advised not to donate.
13. Students will not neglect their families, children and/or dependents as a consequence of seeking spiritual experiences.
14. Students and teachers will keep confidential the processes and experience of other students shared during classes or gatherings that are explicitly confidential. Teachers are obliged to make it known to students when meetings are audio and or video recorded.
15. Students have the right to know and understand the confidentiality policies of the teacher or the organization that their teacher works with.
16. Students are allowed to leave a retreat or group at any time. Students should not surrender their personal authority.
17. Students are encouraged to engage with the teachings that they receive in an active way and to discover the truth of the teachings within themselves.
18. Students are encouraged to become more autonomous (not less) throughout their journey on the path.
19. It is wise for students to respect each other and to honor that no two paths are the same.
20. No one individual or teacher has the right to force their opinion on a student. No student should be coerced into acting against their own inner wisdom. Each must ultimately choose how to live one's own life. Students choose to take full responsibility for their own path, choices, behaviors and outward expression.

This code of ethics is a trust and a prayer that we make to Allah, asking that our community be given all that we need to uphold these commitments, along with the kindness and mercy to help each other grow and walk when we err. We know that when we err, it will only be so that we have a chance to go deeper in our walking, and we welcome the opportunity to support each other in this ongoing journey.