

Foundations of Ethical Spiritual Leadership

Participant Takeaway

"The question isn't 'What am I allowed to do?' but 'Who am I being?'"

Ethical leadership in spiritual community isn't primarily about avoiding misconduct — it's about **embodiment**. How we lead is an expression of who we are. And every one of us is already a leader in some capacity, whether or not we hold a title.

The Big Picture

Tenets give us the *ground*

Values give us the *compass*

Integrity is the walk matching the
talk

None of the three works alone. This is lifelong practice, not a credential earned once.

1. Basic Tenets of Ethical Spiritual Leadership

The philosophical ground beneath any code of conduct, from a Science of Mind / New Thought perspective:

- **Oneness is the ethical ground.** If we are all expressions of one Universal Mind, harm to another is never fully separate from harm to self.
- **The Law of Mind creates *through* us.** Leaders shape a community's atmosphere through consciousness as much as action. Ethical leadership begins with our own inner work.

- **Freedom and responsibility are paired.** Autonomy without accountability isn't spiritual freedom — it's spiritual bypass.
- **Power is held in trust.** Spiritual authority is entrusted, not owned, and exists for the wellbeing of those served.

2. The CSL Code of Ethics: Six Core Principles

The tenets above, made practical in a living document:

Principle	What it asks of us
Accountability	Own impact, not just intentions. Accountability shows most clearly <i>after</i> a misstep.
Confidentiality	Protect the vulnerability people entrust to us. Discern when disclosure protects someone versus when "context" is gossip in disguise. Privacy is never cover for concealment.
Equitable Treatment	Equitable isn't identical — meet each person's real needs. Everyone's worth is equal, regardless of status or contribution.
Honesty in Communication	Don't create false impressions through omission, selective framing, or technically-true statements. Honesty isn't bluntness — it's not distorting what's true.
Responsible Use of Power and Influence	Applies to formal <i>power</i> (role, title) and informal <i>influence</i> (trust, charisma). Ask: does this serve those I lead, or my own comfort, ego, or control?
Commitment to Do No Harm	A standard of care: never cause harm carelessly; when it's unavoidable, minimize it and name it honestly. Stay actively aware of where harm is likely.

3. Values-Based Leadership

Rules are a floor. Values are a compass.

- Rule-based leadership asks: *"What's permitted?"*
- Values-based leadership asks: *"What's congruent with who we say we are?"*

A leader who only avoids breaking rules can still fail a community. A leader guided by values naturally exceeds the rules.

Three practices:

1. **Name values explicitly.** Unspoken values tend to surface only in conflict. Make naming them an ongoing practice, not a one-time mission statement.
2. **Use values as a decision filter.** In a hard call, ask: *"Which of our stated values does each option serve — or betray?"*
3. **Be consistent across visibility.** Show up the same way whether or not anyone is watching. Inconsistency is where trust erodes fastest.

4. Integrity: The Heart of the Matter

Integrity shares its root with *integer* — **wholeness, undividedness**. Integrity is the absence of a gap between the private self and the public self, between stated belief and lived action.

Three dimensions:

- **Congruence** — Do my actions match my teaching?
- **Transparency with appropriate boundaries** — Not disclosing everything, but never creating false impressions. Healthy privacy is different from self-protective concealment.
- **Willingness to be accountable** — How I respond after a misstep matters. Defensiveness breaks integrity as much as the original error; repair and openness to correction *are* integrity in action.

Questions for Reflection

- Where have I seen these tenets honored — or violated — in a community I've been part of?
- What is one value my community claims to hold, and where does it get tested hardest in practice?
- Where might there be a gap between what I teach and how I live?
- How do I typically respond when I've made a mistake as a leader?

My Commitment

One area I want to bring more integrity to in my own leadership and life is:

Leadership is an expression of our highest knowing — not a performance for others.