

February 20, 2019

Spirit Rock Meditation Center's Ethics and Reconciliation Council Statement Regarding Noah Levine

Noah Levine was authorized in 2006 by Spirit Rock Meditation Center and Jack Kornfield as a fully empowered *Theravada* Buddhist teacher "to teach the Dharma of Liberation, in the Lineage of the Elders." Although Noah Levine has never been on the Spirit Rock Teachers Council, Mr. Levine has taught at Spirit Rock and Jack Kornfield led Mr. Levine's teacher training and is his authorizing teacher.

Today, we, Spirit Rock's Ethics and Reconciliation (EAR) Council, in consultation with other Senior Teachers and the Guiding Teachers Committee (GTC), have unanimously, indefinitely withdrawn Noah Levine's authorization to teach.

Separately, Dr. Kornfield has withdrawn his authorization for Mr. Levine to teach, and, following the Buddhist tradition of *Sanghadisesa*, will allow this to be revisited in years ahead, should Mr. Levine demonstrate a significant transformation.

In March 2018, we learned of allegations of rape, sexual harassment and other misconduct against Mr. Levine. Although he had not been scheduled to teach at Spirit Rock, we indefinitely suspended Mr. Levine from any potential teaching at Spirit Rock, pending an investigation by Against the Stream Buddhist Meditation Society (ATS), the organization founded by Mr. Levine and on whose Board he sat.

On August 25, 2018, ATS publicly reported on the outcome of their investigation, finding that the preponderance of evidence showed Mr. Levine likely violated the Third Precept, 'to avoid creating harm through sexuality.' Based on these and other findings, the ATS Board, its Grievance Council, and its Teachers Council announced that Mr. Levine was permanently removed from teaching under the auspices of ATS. In addition, the ATS Board announced that ATS would close and cease to exist as an organization.

The Spirit Rock EAR Council thereafter conducted its own investigation, a long and careful process of collecting information from numerous sources in order to determine Mr. Levine's fitness for teaching. The sources of information included meetings with Mr. Levine, interviews of witnesses and a review of extensive documents. We interviewed several women who have alleged harm, staff members of ATS and another organization Mr. Levine founded, Refuge Recovery (RR). We watched Mr. Levine's public talks and read his statements. The EAR Council also reviewed the federal court lawsuit by the Board of RR against Mr. Levine and the responsive lawsuit filed by Mr. Levine. The EAR Council shared the information gathered with the Guiding Teachers Committee, the President of Spirit Rock's Board, and Dr. Kornfield.

The interviews and extensive reports we reviewed are gravely disturbing, detailed, and similar in nature. They show a pattern of behavior that raise critical concerns regarding Mr. Levine's adherence to the [Spirit Rock Teacher Code of Ethics](#). The EAR Council investigation revealed repeated breaches of the precepts of non-harming by Mr. Levine; delusion about the accumulation of harms caused; a lack of willingness to accept responsibility for his actions; confusion regarding the ways his actions reflect cultural and systemic conditioning; and a failure to honor the explicit instructions of his respected mentors. Mr. Levine's misapprehensions and delusion have led him away from the wisdom and compassion necessary to be a teacher of the Dharma.

It is important to note that the EAR Council followed the EAR Council Grievance process (outlined [here](#)), including meeting directly with Mr. Levine twice to provide him with a full opportunity to offer information to dispute the allegations. The second meeting convened the GTC, Dr. Kornfield, and the EAR Council to provide Mr. Levine an opportunity to be heard and respond to questions from a group of senior Spirit Rock teachers.

The meetings furthered our view that Mr. Levine could not perceive the harm he has caused or was purposely deceptive. Either possibility is deeply troubling and led us to conclude that Mr. Levine cannot be trusted to uphold the minimal requirement of a Dharma teacher – to do no harm. Even in the absence of the initial allegations of sexual assault, Mr. Levine’s behavior has otherwise been so troubling that we would have reached this same conclusion.

It is the unanimous view of the EAR Council, Senior Teachers, and the GTC that Mr. Levine is no longer part of the Spirit Rock teaching lineage, no longer enjoys the support of its teachers, and may no longer claim any association or connection with Spirit Rock or Dr. Kornfield. We further recommend that Mr. Levine cease all Buddhist or meditation teaching and dedicate his energy to the rehabilitation of his own heart. Mr. Levine’s repetitive and continued behavior, outlined by multiple sources, would be completely inappropriate for anyone, let alone an individual privileged to be an authorized Spirit Rock teacher. The EAR Council was established precisely to interrupt and prevent Spirit Rock teachers from causing such harm.

These findings coexist with our knowledge that Mr. Levine has been of substantial benefit to tens of thousands of students, particularly those recovering from addiction. Many practitioners have only experienced benefit from Mr. Levine’s teaching, and we know a deep sense of dissonance can arise given the force of our conclusions. For some, valuing what they have received from Mr. Levine may lead them to dismiss the concerns enumerated here. We certainly do not wish to erase the benefit that many have received, and indeed, the value of the Dharma endures beyond individual personality—but that benefit cannot blind us to the fact that Mr. Levine has become deeply alienated from bedrock values of the Buddhist path: self-reflection, accountability, compassion, and wisdom. Spirit Rock remains committed to serving the larger addiction recovery community, and helping all those impacted by Mr. Levine, positively and negatively, to find refuge in the teachings of the Buddha and at Spirit Rock.

If after a period of years in which Mr. Levine demonstrates a profound spiritual and psychological transformation – and a clear commitment to humility and non-harming in all spheres of life – we might consider revisiting this decision. The Buddha offered the possibility of radical transformation to all who practice his teachings, without exceptions. This radical transformation, however, depends on wise view, wise action and a clear recognition that the forces of greed, hatred and delusion have been transmuted. May Mr. Levine find his way towards this transformation....

We acknowledge the pain, suffering, and profound impact for all directly and indirectly involved. We offer our deepest care to everyone whom Mr. Levine has harmed. Spirit Rock’s withdrawal of Mr. Levine’s teaching authorization expresses our concern and sorrow at the widespread harm that has been created.

Should you have any information you wish to share with Spirit Rock’s Ethics and Reconciliation Council, please contact us at EARCouncil@spiritrock.org.

For general questions, please contact Communications@spiritrock.org

May the *Buddha, Dharma* and *Sangha* remain our refuge.
