



Land of Joy

Buddhist Retreat Community

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY/GUIDELINES

About this policy

Purpose

Land of Joy is committed to supporting good mental health and wellbeing for all who are connected with the centre. We believe that good mental health and the wellbeing of our staff, retreatants and visitors is key to caring for others.

The purpose of Land of Joy is to offer service to others, by offering peaceful and harmonious surroundings where visitors are able to undertake personal or group retreats in order to work on their mind. This work is an inner process of reflection and becoming familiar with the habits and patterns of the mind, which should not be confused with psychotherapeutic treatments or counselling for specific mental health issues.

This policy aims to provide guidance on how to support individuals with mental health needs; how to recognise when someone might be experiencing severe mental health problems and how to respond in those circumstances.

Scope

This policy applies to all team members of Land of Joy including board members, teachers, facilitators and on and off-site team. This policy should be understood to apply to board members, visiting teachers and retreat leaders, be they Sangha or lay and also to all volunteers and helpers, regardless of the planned length of stay or offer of help.

Goals

Land of Joy aims:

- To build and maintain an environment and culture that supports good mental health and wellbeing and prevents discrimination (including bullying and harassment)
- To increase team members' knowledge and awareness of mental health and wellbeing issues and behaviours
- To reduce stigma around mental health issues

Responsibility

All team members have a responsibility to:

- take reasonable care of their own mental health and wellbeing, including physical health
- take reasonable care that their actions do not affect the physical or mental health and safety of other people in the centre

Land of Joy has a responsibility to:

- ensure that all team members are made aware of this policy
- actively support and contribute to the implementation of this policy, including its goals
- manage the implementation and review of this policy

All team members are encouraged to:

- understand this policy and seek clarification where required
- consider this policy while completing duties related to the running of Land of Joy and at any time while representing Land of Joy
- support fellow team members in their awareness of this policy
- support and contribute to Land of Joy's aim of providing a mentally healthy and supportive environment for all

How to Respond to Someone Presenting with Mental Health Issues

Many people using the centre might be successfully managing mental health issues and able to participate fully in teachings or retreats without concerns. Land of Joy requests that all team and guests disclose any mental health issues, but we cannot assume that we are fully informed at all times.

Land of Joy understands that mental health issues are subject to fluctuation, often over periods of years and are different for each person. Land of Joy will endeavour to support each person to manage their situation. However, it should be clear to the team and guests that there will be limitations of time, resources and skills when discussing how any individual's situation or needs might be best supported, managed or met.

Land of Joy requires all team members and guests to make Land of Joy aware of their emergency contacts and the details of a support person/s who can be approached if a person needs any support additional to what can be provided at Land of Joy.

Good practice is to notice if any person is consistently or frequently seeking contact or privacy with any individual or team member, or confiding or sharing private information which is outside the bounds of the role or expertise of that individual or team member. It should be understood that in offering our service, confidentiality remains within the Land of Joy organisation or team (please see confidentiality policy for further clarification of this point.) If it is noticed that a person is seeking inappropriate contact or disclosing private information, Land of Joy may discuss with relevant individual and/or support people, how best to manage the situation. Whilst doing this, Land of Joy will take care to only share with those who have a reason to know particular information within the organisation and the decision making will be based on protecting the safety and wellbeing of the person concerned and others who may be affected.

Clear and open communication is key when helping the Land of Joy team or guests to manage mental health situations. However, if we are not told, we may not notice the subtle signs that someone is struggling to maintain good mental health until their behaviour or conversation might cause concerns. Any concerns should be mentioned/discussed with relevant others – for example the director and/or members of the designated safeguarding team – and a suitable plan put into place. However, there may be occasions when a person's mental health deteriorates to the point where they are beyond our help and need more professional, skilled intervention. The Safeguarding Team can only support within available resources and can signpost to therapeutic help.

Indications that some intervention may be necessary

Some things to look for which may indicate that a person is experiencing severe mental health issues which will impair their day-to-day functioning and ability to continue their retreat or stay at Land of Joy:

- A pattern over time of extreme highs and lows which are often accompanied by insomnia, memory impairment, and sharp changes in mood
- Poor memory, poor concentration, too much or too little sleep, changes in appetite, failure to meet commitments, lateness, absences, moodiness, angry outbursts
- The above combined with bizarre or eccentric appearance, lack of hygiene, a high level of suspiciousness, rapid thoughts and speech that are not necessarily connected or directed
- Making strong connections then turning against the person they were idealizing before; a complete absorption with the self; a strong and unrelenting pattern of passive-aggressiveness (everything's fine but there are lots of side comments or behind the back remarks)
- A pronounced pattern of the person not remembering chunks of time, losing time, even calling themselves different names at different times; a pronounced startle response
- Responding to non-apparent stimuli, e.g., hearing voices, experiencing hallucinations
- Active self-harm
- Expressed suicidal thoughts

NB People taking intoxicating substances can present in any of the above ways. However, being under the influence of intoxicating substances at the centre is against the centre's expressed rules and values.

Next steps

- If someone is presenting as extremely mentally unwell or unstable, they need to be encouraged to seek medical/therapeutic help.
- Contact the person's named supporter to try to decide a plan of action.
- Further information or advice can be obtained by dialling 111 if circumstances require.
- There is a duty to act if an individual is posing an imminent risk, either to themselves or to others. If this is the case, contact the police on 999 and ask for emergency assistance. Inform the director if they are not on site and the safeguarding team as soon as possible.

Allegations of Abuse by Someone with Mental Health Issues

It is important to be aware that people with mental health issues can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. This is most likely to happen when a person's mental health has deteriorated to the point that they are struggling and their behaviours and responses are different from when they are well. The response to any disclosure or allegation of concern should be to follow Land of Joy's processes for receiving, recording and reporting concerns which are laid out in the Safeguarding Policy. Due process must be followed regardless of any opinion about the reporting person's mental state. Having mental health difficulties is not a basis in itself to disbelieve or discredit allegations. All such incidents should be carefully documented.

Communication

Land of Joy will ensure that:

- all team members receive a copy of this policy during the induction process
- this policy is easily accessible by all members of the organisation
- all team members are empowered to actively contribute and provide feedback to this policy

Monitoring and review

Land of Joy will review this policy twelve months after implementation and annually thereafter.

Effectiveness of the policy will be assessed through:

- learning from the management of situations that have occurred
- feedback from team members and management
- review of the policy by management and board to determine if objectives have been met and to identify barriers and enablers to ongoing policy implementation.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually. This policy was last reviewed on: **6th September 2021**

Signed:

Date of next review: September 2022