



YOU(TH)
EMPOWERMENT
WHERE NATURE INSPIRES

CODE OF CONDUCT

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Content

Content	2
Preface	3
1. 4	
2. 5	
3. 6	
4. 6	
4.1 The Highest Standards of Personal and Professional Conduct	6
4.2 Application of the 7 Golden Rules in Outdoor Activities	7
4.3 Leave No Trash Behind	7
4.4 Respect Wildlife	7
4.5 Responsible Consumption	8
4.6 Partnerships with Organic Stores	8
4.7 No Religious or Political Activities when representing YEP	8
4.8 No Discrimination	9
4.9 No Sexual Violence	9
4.10 Child Protection	9
4.11 Responsible for Health and Safety	9
4.12 Responsible Handling of Personal Data and Information	10
4.13 Photos and Videos	10
4.14 Responsible for the Usage of Resources	10
4.15 No Supporting of Terrorism or Money Laundering	11
4.16 No Corruption	11
4.17 Transparency About All Costs	11
4.18 Avoiding Conflicts of Interest	11
4.19 Prohibition of Alcohol and Drugs	11
4.20 No Carrying of Weapons	12
4.21 No Illegal Actions	12
4.22 Trainer and Co-Trainer Collaboration	12
5. 13	
6. 14	

7. 14

Preface

At the Youth Empowerment Academy, our vision to foster personal growth and sustainable living mindsets, revolves around people, nature, and all life-forms on this planet. We are active in Cambodia and Southeast-Asia, heading to more Asian countries and even Africa. Our training and camps navigate significantly in different environmental landscapes, always leading to an “ecological footprint”. To operate impactfully and sustainably in such varied contexts, clear and binding guidelines are essential for our daily work.

The Code of Conduct, one of YEP’s most crucial documents, establishes the foundation for our shared goal of empowering youth to foster personal growth and sustainable living. Achieving this vision depends on mutual trust among all people working with and for the YEP-Academy. This trust is built on the lawful and responsible actions of everyone involved. Thus, maintaining YEP’s credibility is a responsibility shared by every one of us.

This document consolidates the relevant laws, internal policies, and voluntary commitments that are significant for YEP’s entire organization. It outlines the principles and rules for our ethical, environmental, social, and legal conduct. It applies to all employees, freelancers, and volunteers, and serves as a binding foundation for our collaboration with our participants, like-minded partner organizations, suppliers, and service providers.

Such an important document must be implemented daily. All people working with and for YEP must lead by example, demonstrating integrity and full compliance with this Code of Conduct. This responsibility cannot be delegated. Any breaches of the Code of Conduct cannot be tolerated.

YEP will allocate the necessary resources to ensure that all people working with and for YEP are familiar with the Code of Conduct and understand its contents clearly. Everybody must support our principles and policies wholeheartedly and with complete conviction. It is not sufficient merely to read the text; we need to internalize the rules and, most importantly, live by them. The founders of the YEP-Academy, the employees of the YEP-Academy, and the Circle of Trainers personally endorse the Code of Conduct, and we request everyone else to do the same.

Dirk Reber
Founder, YEP-Academy

Souheang Ly
Founder, YEP-Academy

1. Our common understanding

The Youth Empowerment Academy (YEP) is dedicated to empowering young people to lead fulfilling, self-determined lives through personal growth and sustainable living mindsets. Our dream is a world in which youth and all humans are deeply connected to the natural world in all its forms, understanding their integral role within it. We envision young people who are not only aware of their connection to nature but are also equipped with the knowledge and skills to foster and protect it. By cultivating a mindset of sustainability and respect for the environment, we aim to empower youth to become leaders and advocates for a harmonious relationship between humanity and nature. In this world, young people actively engage in practices that support ecological balance, promote biodiversity, and ensure the well-being of future generations. Through our programs, we strive to nurture a generation that values and upholds the principles of sustainable living, recognizing that their actions today shape the world of tomorrow.

At YEP-Academy, we are using "Nature as a Learning Field," referring to the concept of using the natural environment as a setting for education and learning. We recognize that nature provides a rich and diverse learning environment where individuals can observe, explore, and engage with the natural world. Using adventure pedagogy, outdoor education, and nature pedagogy, we emphasize hands-on, experiential learning and encourage individuals to develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of themselves, while also promoting environmental awareness and stewardship.

Everything YEP does is guided by the principles of equality, respect for individual rights, respect for environmental rights, and the right of all life-forms to self-determination. We also recognize that all life forms have intrinsic rights, and that humanity has a responsibility to honor and protect these rights. We believe in living with deep gratitude towards nature, the universe, and even our ancestors. This gratitude inspires us to foster a profound connection with the natural world, acknowledging the wisdom and heritage passed down through generations. At YEP, we are committed to instilling these values in youth, helping them to appreciate their place within the greater web of life and encouraging them to act as stewards of the Earth, promoting harmony and sustainability for all beings.

2. Scope and Policies

The Code of Conduct and accompanying policies apply to:

- a) The Founders and Executive Management of the Youth Empowerment Academy (YEP),
- b) All employees of YEP, regardless of their type of contract (including full-time employees, temporary personnel, interns, consultants, freelance etc.), the scope of their responsibilities, and the location of employment.
- c) All facilitators, co-facilitators, guides, trainers, instructors working for YEP on a freelance contractual basis.

The Code of Conduct standards must be acknowledged as binding by:

- d) People and groups volunteering for YEP (e.g., guest speakers at community events).
- e) All participants of the YEP-Academy, regardless of the specific service/product (training, camps, community, tailor-made etc.)

The Code of Conduct sets minimum standards and can be downloaded at the webpage of YEP Academy, www.yep-academy.org.

3. Objectives of the Code of Conduct

Explicitly acknowledging that violations of the Code of Conduct Rules would create and perpetuate structures that undermine youth empowerment and sustainable living, YEP's Code of Conduct Rules provide clear guidance on how to act even in the most challenging situations to support our vision effectively and sustainably. As an organization active in outdoor, nature, and wilderness education, YEP has a significant obligation to its participants. Furthermore, we receive donations from private individuals, businesses, and foundations, as well as grants from public institutions domestically and internationally, making us accountable to these donors as well. The public, the media, and nature itself closely monitor how YEP fulfills both obligations, playing a decisive role in determining our reputation. For these reasons, YEP emphasizes the importance of proper conduct by each and everybody working or contributing for YEP.

The objectives of the Code of Conduct are therefore to:

- a) Express YEP's common understanding and values.
- b) Create a common understanding of YEP's fundamental rules of conduct among all employees of YEP-Academy and all freelance trainers working for YEP-Academy, thereby promoting consistent standards of behavior.
- c) Clearly define how employees and freelance trainers are expected to conduct themselves.
- d) Inform third parties, including participants, about the conduct they can expect from employees and trainers of YEP.
- e) Express existing contractual obligations in clear terms.

4. Rules of Conduct

Youth Empowerment Academy (YEP) expects its employees and trainers to adhere to this Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct must also be complied with outside the workplace and outside working hours if an unambiguous connection can be made to YEP.

By signing the Code of Conduct, employees and trainers commit to acting in accordance with YEP's common understanding and to observing the rules of conduct outlined below.

4.1 The Highest Standards of Personal and Professional Conduct

Employees and trainers of Youth Empowerment Academy (YEP) must act in accordance with the common understanding and objectives set out in YEP's vision and principles. YEP expects them to actively strengthen the organization through their work and their conduct. Employees and trainers must ensure that their professional conduct contributes to YEP's good name, and that outside working hours, their conduct does not damage the reputation of YEP. They must treat all people and all life forms in nature as equals, with respect and dignity.

They must conduct themselves in an appropriate, culturally sensitive, and especially environmentally sensitive manner and ensure that YEP publications portray people and nature respectfully.

4.2 Application of the 7 Golden Rules in Outdoor Activities

Employees and trainers of YEP are expected to apply the 7 Golden Rules during all outdoor activities. These rules serve as a guiding framework to ensure safety, respect for nature, and harmonious interactions. Compliance with these rules is mandatory to foster an environment of mutual respect, responsibility, and environmental stewardship.

- 1) **Plan Ahead and Prepare:** Proper planning helps minimize impact and ensures safety. This includes understanding regulations, weather conditions, and skill levels of participants.
- 2) **Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces:** Stick to established trails and campsites to avoid damaging vegetation and soil. Use durable surfaces like rock, gravel, or established campsites whenever possible.
- 3) **Dispose of Waste Properly:** Pack out all trash and litter, including food scraps, and dispose of waste in designated receptacles. Use bathroom facilities if available; if not, follow proper techniques for human waste disposal.
- 4) **Leave What You Find:** Preserve the natural environment by leaving rocks, plants, and other natural objects as you find them. Avoid damaging live trees and plants.
- 5) **Minimize Campfire Impacts:** Use a lightweight stove for cooking instead of making a campfire, especially in areas where fires are prohibited. If you must build a fire, use existing fire rings and keep it small. Always fully extinguish fires before leaving.
- 6) **Respect Wildlife:** Observe wildlife from a distance and do not approach, feed, or follow them. Store food securely to avoid attracting wildlife. Control pets and keep them on a leash where required.
- 7) **Be Considerate of Other Visitors:** Respect other visitors and their experience. Keep noise levels down, yield to others on the trail, and maintain a friendly attitude.

4.3 Leave No Trash Behind

Employees and trainers of YEP must adhere to a strict "leave no trace" policy during all outdoor activities. All trash – clustered in different bags according to plastic, glass, paper, and cans - must be taken back to the YEP office and especially to specific organizations, like Farm2Table, for proper disposal. Only organic waste may be composted at the activity location, in designated composting areas. This policy ensures the preservation of natural environments and promotes environmental responsibility.

4.4 Respect Wildlife

Refrain from feeding, chasing, or killing wildlife. Interactions with wildlife should be observational only, respecting their natural behaviors and habitats. Leave natural objects such as feathers, shells, and plants where you find them, taking nothing but photographs and leaving nothing but footprints.

4.5 Responsible Consumption

By adhering to the principles of responsible consumption, YEP promotes environmental conservation and sustainability while enjoying and preserving natural landscapes for future generations.

- 1) **Water:** Practice water conservation techniques such as using water sparingly during activities like cooking and cleaning. Contaminating water sources with soap, food waste, or human waste is strictly not allowed. Treat water from natural sources before consuming to prevent waterborne illnesses. Use filtration, boiling, or natural treatments as appropriate.
- 2) **Food:** Minimize waste, plan meals to minimize food waste. Pack foods in reusable containers and avoid single-use packaging. Choose locally sourced and sustainable foods. Support organic farming practices and minimize the carbon footprint associated with food transportation.
- 3) **Wood:** Use only locally sourced firewood to prevent the spread of invasive species and diseases. Use fallen branches and dead wood for campfires where permitted. Avoid cutting live trees or damaging vegetation for firewood. Use established fire rings or portable stoves for cooking.
- 4) **Transportation:** Choose transportation methods that minimize environmental impact, to reach outdoor destinations. Stay on designated trails to avoid trampling vegetation and causing soil erosion. The use of motorized vehicles in natural areas is not allowed.
- 5) **Sustainable Practices:** Educate participants and community members about sustainable consumption practices. Encourage responsible behavior to preserve natural resources for future generations. Collaborate with local communities and organizations to promote sustainable practices and environmental stewardship in outdoor activities.

4.6 Partnership with Organic Stores

YEP is committed to promoting health and sustainability through its partnerships. Whenever possible, YEP will partner with organic stores to provide nutritious and environmentally friendly food and non-food options during events and activities. This commitment supports local businesses and promotes a healthy lifestyle for all participants.

4.7 No Religious or Political Activities when representing YEP

YEP is politically independent and non-denominational. Employees and trainers must conduct themselves accordingly while engaging with YEP. This means they are not permitted to participate or implement political or religious activities in their capacity as employees or trainers of YEP unless approved in writing by YEP's Executive Management.

This does not affect private participation in such activities. If participating privately, employees and trainers are responsible for ensuring that third parties cannot perceive their participation as representing YEP but understand it to be in a private capacity.

4.8 No Discrimination

YEP does not tolerate any discrimination by its employees and trainers, be it on the basis of age, physical disability, nationality, ethnicity, gender, political views, union activity, religion, culture, language, sexual orientation, class/caste or other distinguishing characteristics. Employees and trainers must therefore abstain from all kinds of discrimination as well as mobbing and bullying. Directing inappropriate, violent, or insulting language at others, whether spoken or written, is prohibited. This also applies to social media.

4.9 No Sexualized Violence

Employees and trainers commit to maintaining an environment where the abuse of power is effectively prevented. Employees and trainers are therefore prohibited from engaging in any form of sexualized violence. This includes sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. Employees and trainers are forbidden from abusing their power or working relationships to solicit sexual favors. Additionally, YEP condemns any exchange of money, goods, services, or favors for sexual services. Actions or statements with sexual undertones or connotations that make someone feel attacked or ashamed are also forbidden. This includes suggestive remarks, unwelcome physical contact or proximity, the display or sharing of suggestive material (e.g. via email or social media), and sexist conversations or jokes, whether verbal, written, or non-verbal.

4.10 Child Protection

Children need special care and protection. Their well-being is YEP's utmost priority in all training and camps. Any conduct that could harm children is strictly forbidden. Employees and trainers must condemn all forms of child abuse and act accordingly to advocate for child protection.

4.11 Responsibility for Health and Safety

Employees and trainers of YEP are required to strictly adhere to YEP's comprehensive risk management in all work settings. Proper risk management ensures that all activities, particularly those conducted outdoors, are undertaken with utmost consideration for health, safety, and security. This includes avoiding unnecessary risks that could jeopardize the well-being of themselves, fellow employees, trainers, YEP participants, and any third parties involved.

As YEP operates in diverse outdoor environments, proper risk assessment and management protocols are mandatory. These protocols are designed to identify potential hazards and implement effective controls to mitigate risks. Employees and trainers must actively participate in these risk management processes to uphold safety standards during all activities, whether conducted in remote wilderness areas or local community settings.

For further details on YEP's approach to risk management, please refer to the comprehensive risk management document.

4.12 Responsible Handling of Personal Data and Information

YEP's proprietary information is an asset. Personal data of individuals, including photographs, must be collected, used, and processed only as permitted by law and as required for YEP's work (in line with the principle of data minimization). Processing of proprietary information and personal data must be conducted with great care and with adequate technical and organizational measures of protection from unauthorized access. When collecting personal data, employees and trainers must inform the individuals about their data protection rights. Personal data must be handled in accordance with applicable data protection laws. Confidential information of YEP must not be disseminated outside of the organization, neither verbally nor in writing, unless YEP has given its prior written consent. Legal regulations mandating the disclosure of information may provide grounds for exceptions to this rule. Every individual is entitled to information about the processing of their personal data by YEP. This information must be provided upon request at any time. Personal data that are no longer needed must be deleted in accordance with the right to be forgotten.

4.13 Photos and Videos

All photos and videos captured by employees and trainers during YEP camps and events are considered the property of YEP. These visual materials serve purposes of promotion, education, and archival documentation. It is imperative that employees and trainers handle all media captured during these activities responsibly and submit them to YEP for official use.

- 1) **Ownership and Usage:** Photos and videos taken by employees and trainers at YEP camps and events belong solely to YEP. They are intended for promotional, educational, and archival purposes within the scope of YEP's activities.
- 2) **Permission for Posting:** Employees and trainers must obtain permission from YEP before posting any photos or videos taken during YEP activities on personal or public platforms.
- 3) **Attribution and Naming:** When posted, all media must clearly attribute and name YEP. This ensures transparency and acknowledges YEP's involvement and ownership.
- 4) **Adherence to Code of Conduct:** Employees and trainers are strictly prohibited from publishing any media that contradicts or violates YEP's Code of Conduct.
- 5) **Participant Photos:** Photos taken by participants remain their property. Employees and trainers should encourage participants to only publish photos that align with YEP's Code of Conduct and to mention YEP when applicable.

4.14 Responsible Use of Resources

YEP expects its employees and trainers to deploy the organization's resources responsibly, considering criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The private use of work equipment and resources that YEP provides to its employees and trainers (e.g. tents, sleeping bags, compasses, maps, water filter, camera, GoPro, GPS

devices, laptops etc.) is only permitted with YEP's express consent. Work equipment provided by YEP must not be used for activities that contravene the law or the Code of Conduct. Employees and trainers are obligated to take special care of the resources provided to them by YEP. Misuse or misappropriation of, or grossly negligent damage to, the property of YEP or to any property directly connected to YEP's activities will not be tolerated.

4.15 No Supporting of Terrorism or Money Laundering

All employees and trainers must ensure that no resources are used for money laundering or to support terrorist activities directly or indirectly at any time.

4.16 No Corruption

Corruption undermines personal interests, breaks the rules of fair competition, entrenches structures of poverty, prevents sustainable project success, and fosters decisions that do not effectively address issues at hand. Corruption is contrary to YEP's common understanding. Employees and trainers of YEP are therefore prohibited from engaging in any form of corruption. YEP does not allow gifts, hospitality, or the remuneration of expenses to be offered or accepted if doing so actually does or may appear to inappropriately influence the recipient's freedom of choice in matters directly or indirectly concerning YEP. The appearance of such influence is particularly stark if expenditures exceed the boundaries of what is appropriate and justifiable.

4.17 Transparency About All Costs

YEP is dedicated to maintaining transparency in all financial matters. Employees and trainers must ensure that all costs are transparently documented and accounted for. Any form of corruption, including bribery and financial misconduct, is strictly prohibited. YEP's commitment to financial integrity is paramount to maintaining trust with donors, participants, and the public.

4.18 Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

Employees and trainers of YEP must not exploit their professional position and any concomitant privileges for personal gain or to benefit related parties. They must avoid any situation in which personal interests could be contrary to YEP's legitimate interests and ensure the unsolicited disclosure of potential personal conflicts of interest.

4.19 Prohibition of Alcohol and Drugs

Employees and trainers of YEP are not permitted to work under the influence of alcohol or drugs, including preparing and facilitating trainings and camps. This also applies to other narcotics that impair the ability of employees or trainers to perform their responsibilities for or on behalf of YEP. The possession, distribution, and consumption of illegal substances at

the workplace or on the job are prohibited. The workplace includes everything owned or rented by YEP as well as properties, buildings, and outdoor facilities used by YEP. Consumption of alcohol during trainings and camps organized by YEP is strictly prohibited. This policy ensures the safety, professionalism, and well-being of all participants. Employees and trainers must refrain from consuming alcohol during these events to maintain a productive and respectful environment.

4.20 No Carrying of Weapons

YEP is committed to achieving its goals through non-violent means. Therefore, YEP strictly prohibits the carrying of weapons by employees and trainers on any YEP property, including vehicles, buildings, and outdoor facilities. This prohibition extends to armed civilians or military personnel.

Outdoor tools such as knives and axes are allowed for specific activities, provided individuals are trained and competent in their safe and responsible use. These tools must be used exclusively for their intended purpose related to YEP activities and under supervision where necessary.

This policy ensures a safe environment conducive to outdoor learning and activities, emphasizing responsible tool use while maintaining a commitment to non-violence.

4.21 No Illegal Actions

YEP strictly prohibits any illegal actions by employees and trainers. All activities, both professional and personal, must comply with national and international laws. Engaging in illegal activities undermines the integrity of YEP and is grounds for immediate disciplinary action, including termination of the relationship with YEP.

4.22 Trainer and Co-Trainer Collaboration

Each training session or camp at YEP is facilitated by a team comprising a primary trainer/facilitator and a co-trainer/co-facilitator. Effective cooperation and communication between these roles are essential for the success of the program.

- 1) **Role and Responsibilities:** The primary trainer/facilitator is responsible for leading and delivering the training content or camp activities. The co-trainer/co-facilitator supports the primary trainer/facilitator, assisting in program delivery, logistics, and participant engagement.
- 2) **Clear Communication:** Both the primary trainer/facilitator and co-trainer/co-facilitator must maintain open communication channels. This includes regular updates on program planning, adjustments, and participant feedback. Any changes in responsibilities or tasks should be communicated promptly and clearly between both trainers.
- 3) **Teamwork and Support:** Collaboration ensures a cohesive approach to training or camp management. Trainers should support each other in maintaining a positive and

inclusive learning environment. Teamwork also extends to problem-solving and addressing challenges that may arise during the training or camp.

- 4) **Respect and Professionalism:** Mutual respect is crucial. Trainers should value each other's contributions and maintain a professional demeanor at all times. Differences in opinion should be discussed constructively and resolved in the best interest of the participants and the program.
- 5) **Feedback and Improvement:** After each training session or camp, trainers should provide constructive feedback to each other. This helps in refining future programs and enhancing overall effectiveness. Continuous improvement in collaboration and communication is encouraged to optimize participant experience and program outcomes.

5. Reporting Requirements and Consequences for Violations

At YEP, maintaining high standards of conduct is paramount. Clear reporting requirements and consequences for violations ensure accountability and uphold YEP's values and mission.

- 1) **Reporting Channels:** Employees, trainers, and participants are encouraged to report any violations of YEP's Code of Conduct or policies promptly and confidentially. Reporting can be made to designated supervisors, the YEP office, or through an anonymous reporting mechanism, ensuring confidentiality and protection against retaliation.
- 2) **Types of Violations:** Violations may include but are not limited to:
 - Breach of ethical standards or discriminatory behavior.
 - Non-compliance with safety protocols or environmental guidelines.
 - Misuse of resources or property.
 - Failure to adhere to reporting obligations or confidentiality agreements.
- 3) **Investigation Process:** Upon receipt of a report, YEP will initiate a thorough and impartial investigation. Investigations will be conducted by trained personnel to gather facts, interview relevant parties, and assess the situation fairly.
- 4) **Consequences:** Depending on the severity and nature of the violation, consequences may include
 - Verbal or written warnings.
 - Temporary suspension from duties or participation in YEP activities.
 - Termination of employment or training contract.
 - Legal action if the violation breaches local or international laws.
- 5) **Appeals Process:** Individuals accused of violations have the right to appeal decisions through a formal process outlined by YEP's policies. Appeals will be reviewed by an impartial body to ensure fairness and transparency.
- 6) **Protection Against Retaliation:** YEP prohibits retaliation against individuals who

report violations in good faith. Any form of retaliation will be treated as a separate violation and subject to disciplinary action.

- 7) Continuous Improvement: YEP regularly reviews and updates its reporting and disciplinary procedures to ensure effectiveness and alignment with best practices. Feedback from investigations and appeals informs ongoing improvements in policies and practices.

6. Circle of Trainers

The Circle of Trainers is YEP's central committee overseeing all aspects of the Code of Conduct. Composed of experienced trainers, its role is pivotal in maintaining and promoting ethical standards across YEP. They ensure policies are updated, provide guidance and training, monitor compliance, and advocate for a culture of integrity and accountability. Their commitment ensures YEP maintains its reputation as a trusted organization dedicated to empowering youth responsibly through outdoor education.

7. Obligation to Comply with the Code of Conduct

All employees and trainers of YEP must confirm in writing that they have read and understood the Code of Conduct and the accompanying policies. They must also pledge to comply with all the rules of conduct outlined herein. It is understood that adherence to this Code of Conduct and the associated policies (as amended from time to time) is a fundamental condition of their employment or engagement with YEP.

Furthermore, all trainers must confirm by signature that they have read and understood the Code of Conduct. They are required to ensure that their co-trainers, participants and any other personnel they engage with are familiarized with the Code of Conduct. Trainers acknowledge that compliance with this Code of Conduct by themselves and their team members is a material condition for their role at YEP.

This commitment ensures that all individuals associated with YEP uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct and contribute to a positive and respectful environment during all YEP activities and operations.

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