

Sakyadhita Workshop — How to Avoid Abuse in Buddhism

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Kinds of abuse — physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, spiritual, financial

physical

any deliberate act that causes physical pain/harm

e.g. a slap, a punch that knocks the wind out of you; anything that draws blood

sexual

any contact with the sexual parts of your or their body

asking you to show private parts of your body

asking you to perform intimate acts with another

groping

kissing/slobbering

sexual words or gestures

CONSENT — we would argue does not exist in a student-teacher, unless it's in an established long-term relationship between the student and teacher which the organisation they are a part of knows about and sanctions.

emotional/psychological

yelling

threats

victim blaming

belittling and public humiliation

excusing abuse — “it’s your fault” or our situation is “special” and the usual rules don’t apply.

Moral injury — e.g. watching abuse or being forced to do harmful or illegal things that is against your personal moral integrity

Gas lighting - manipulation so you doubt your own perception and judgement.

Brain-washing — e.g. being convinced something harmful is beneficial.

Treatment of whistle-blowers: marginalisation; gas-lighting; convincing others that the person is crazy and turning the whole community against the person

spiritual

Misusing Buddhist concepts and terms in order to justify, victim-blame, coerce, brain-wash

Use of the term “crazy wisdom”, “pure perception”, “guru devotion”, “samaya vows” to excuse abuse and silence criticism from both victims and observers.

Marginalised or excluded from group or higher teachings because you criticise, or question, or don't show sufficient devotion.

Coercion - “You're special”, you're a dakini or a reincarnation of a special person, if you do this your family will go to a pure realm, a divination has said you have to do this for the good of the dharma

Threats - A family member will die, threats of black magic

Mis-use of karmamudra - Role of the spiritual 'consort' / Bliss yoga / Getting enlightened from sex. According to Dr. Nida very few people know genuine karmamudra and such requests are almost always manipulative; genuine karmamudra is an equal relationship with one consort for a long period of time which yields tangible spiritual transformation

Anyone can be taken advantage of but attractive young women should be wary.

financial and material

Misuse of donations, typically funding extravagant lifestyle for upper echelons;

Asking for only cash donations which can't be traced

Being asked to transport large amounts of cash between countries

Withholding resources from monastics; over-work and under-pay or no pay.

Using funds raised for one project for a different project.

For more information see Newland, Tahlia (2019) *Fallout: Recovering from abuse in Tibetan Buddhism*.