

# CODE OF ETHICS FOR SOCIAL CIRCUS INSTRUCTORS *CIRQUE DU SOLEIL*

Adopted by *Cirque du Soleil* in 2001, *Code of Ethics for Social Circus Instructors* is used by the *Cirque du Monde* network. It is also used as a content model for the training program designed by *Cirque du Soleil* for social circus instructors and community workers.

## PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

The objective of any code of ethics is to provide a common frame of reference. This code sets guidelines for those assuming the role of social circus instructor. It guides their conduct during training practice and also indicates proper behaviour for the cultural context in which they'll be working.

Social circus instructors work with at-risk youth who have often been betrayed and hurt in the past. As a result, these young people place an enormous amount of faith in the efforts they make and seek to develop trust-based relationships with their instructors.

Consequently, the instructor-youth relationship goes beyond the mere teaching of circus skills. These interactions must be infused with compassionate sensitivity and obey certain guidelines in order to prevent any instance of abuse or neglect, or any awkward situation that could negatively impact young participants or the social circus program.

Instructors are not required to be psychologists, social workers or street workers. Their involvement, however, does entail certain responsibilities and tasks that will keep their interventions grounded in the utmost respect for the young people, colleagues and partners participating in the program.

Instructors must be aware that their attitude and behaviour will serve as models for young participants, and that this aspect of the relationship is just as meaningful as the skills that will be taught.

In this spirit, this text outlines the principles and actions that should guide the attitudes and behaviours of social circus instructors during the circus workshops and, in certain circumstances, outside the workshops as well.

These principles and standards of conduct are what instructors must strive to achieve as they carry out their duties according to the highest performance criteria.

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

This code of ethics for social circus instructors grew out of existing codes developed by various sports and professional associations with a social and educational bent. It is in keeping with the definition of social circus instructor; in other words, it integrates the artistic, social and sports aspects into one single training approach.

The code is founded on the following key principles:

1. Competence
2. Integrity
3. Personal responsibility
4. Dignity and respect for the culture
5. Social responsibility
6. Physical and emotional safety



7. Teamwork
8. Relationship with employer

The statement of each of these principles is followed by a definition and list of standards of conduct describing how the principle applies to the instructor's actions. These standards of conduct are an important aspect of each principle.

### **1. Competence**

Instructors will teach techniques that they have mastered or are capable of teaching, according to recognized standards, in a safe manner. Furthermore, instructors shall acknowledge and respect their limits and agree to act according to these limits, all the while seeking to improve and increase their overall abilities.

- 1.1 Instructors must have completed the basic training necessary to assume the role of social circus instructor.
- 1.2 Instructors must be aware that what they do impacts the lives of the individuals and groups with whom they work.
- 1.3 Instructors must respect the limits of their knowledge and abilities while performing their duties.
- 1.4 Instructors must refrain from working in an inadequate environment that presents excessive risks and dangers to the health of participants.
- 1.5 Instructors must provide activities that are suitable to the age, experience and abilities, as well as the physical and psychological state, of participants.
- 1.6 Instructors must train participants gradually and systematically.
- 1.7 Instructors must transform circus workshops into positive life experiences.

### **2. Integrity**

Instructors shall be committed to maintaining integrity throughout their teaching and assisting activities, and they must do so in a sincere manner that shows respect for others. They shall not falsely represent their qualifications, experience or power, or otherwise inaccurately portray themselves so as to derive personal benefits.

- 2.1 Instructors must be aware of how their beliefs, values, needs and limits, as well as other aspects, could impact their role.
- 2.2 Instructors must clearly define their role and fulfill the requirements of that role with regards to those with whom they are working.
- 2.3 Instructors must understand that they can disagree with some of a participant's behaviours, without acting in ways that will be alienating to that individual.
- 2.4 Instructors must personally abstain from accepting any emotional, economic or sexual advantages offered to them during the course of their work, other than the remuneration they receive for fulfilling their role.
- 2.5 Instructors must not engage in any form of sexual intimacy with participants.
- 2.6 Instructors must refrain from all forms of sexual or psychological harassment.
- 2.7 Instructors must not commit any wrongful acts.
- 2.8 Instructors must acknowledge the use of any items of intellectual, artistic or other property that does not belong to them.

### **3. Personal responsibility**

Instructors will accept responsibility for their actions and strive, to the best of their ability, to adapt their methods to the needs and potential of the individuals with whom they work.

- 3.1 Instructors must consult with their colleagues to avoid posing a danger to participants and to prevent behaviours that run counter to the instructor's code of conduct.



- 3.2 Instructors must respect the commitments they have made by ensuring that they perform their duties according to the determined schedules and objectives, and to the resources made available to them.
- 3.3 Instructors must keep their private lives strictly private, unless it is likely to compromise the instructor's practice or the workshop being run.

#### **4. Dignity and respect for the culture**

Instructors will be respectful of the fundamental rights, dignity and culture of all individuals. This means respecting the privacy, confidentiality, self-determination and autonomy of each individual.

- 4.1 Instructors must not use confidential information that could harm the work-shop participants for the sake of personal gain or for the gain of others.
- 4.2 Instructors must be discreet, showing tact and good judgment when it concerns the private lives of trainees.
- 4.3 When participating in a research project, instructors must ensure that those participating in the project have wilfully and knowingly consented to do so, and that they have not been led to believe that a refusal to participate would lead to reprisal or sanctions.

#### **5. Social responsibility**

While leading circus workshops, instructors will be open and responsible to the communities in which they are working.

- 5.1 Instructors must take steps to ensure that actions planned for individuals and groups help them gain the greatest possible autonomy and independence. This excludes actions that aim to exert control or domination.
- 5.2 Instructors must promote social justice, acceptance, autonomy, self-determination and respect for all persons. They must also encourage trainees to take an active role in developing a mutual support and assistance network in their community.
- 5.3 Instructors must intervene if another instructor behaves in a way that does not conform to the code of ethics.
- 5.4 Instructors must never, under any circumstances, use their position for propaganda purposes, nor to procure – or attempt to procure – unjust or illicit benefits for themselves or for anyone else.

#### **6. Physical and emotional safety**

Instructors are responsible for physical safety on their training sites. They will ensure that training equipment is safe and properly used. They must also be ever vigilant when assisting with a risky move or ensure that said moves are attempted in the presence of a competent person who can oversee the safety of trainees.

Instructors are also expected to create an emotionally safe space where mutual respect is a given. They must establish a state of trust among the participants and ensure that all of them can find their place in the group.

- 6.1 Instructors must ensure that participants take part in activities in a secure setting.
- 6.2 Instructors must teach participants to be responsible for their own safety by making them aware of the measures they must take to protect themselves and others.
- 6.3 Instructors must encourage participants to have fun and learn in a positive environment that encourages fairness and collaboration.
- 6.4 Instructors must enforce the right degree of rigour and discipline, all the while being flexible and adaptable to different situations.



## 7. Teamwork

Instructors are committed to collaborate actively and voluntarily with other team members, including other instructors, community workers, partner representatives and employers.

- 7.1 Instructors must commit to work actively as a team when preparing, running and evaluating circus workshops, and to do so in an atmosphere conducive to reaching a certain degree of trust likely to generate honest, genuine exchanges.
- 7.2 If pending decisions lead to conflicts over technical, administrative or political choices, instructors must always focus on their top priorities: running a smooth workshop and helping participants in their development.
- 7.3 Instructors must promote an atmosphere of cooperation and support among workshop participants.
- 7.4 Instructors must cooperate with other partners who wish to lend additional support to the program.
- 7.5 Instructors must use discretion when resolving any disputes with colleagues. Differences of opinion must be settled in a constructive manner, with more serious conflicts dealt with through the appropriate channels.

## 8. Employment relationship

Instructors promise to respect their hiring conditions and account for their activities to their employer.

- 8.1 Instructors must provide their employer with any and all information likely to contribute to the smooth running of the program.

## REFERENCES

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