



## Code of Ethics & Code of Conduct of the Association of Certified Sexological Bodyworkers (ACSB)

*Please note: everything written in green text is either revised from the previous code, re-arranged or a new addition.*

We have separated out “Ethics” from “Conduct” below. Most of the bullet points were previously contained in, and may still be contained in, the Conduct Preamble and Introduction below.

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# Codes of Ethics of the Association of Certified Sexological Bodyworkers (ACSB)

Professional members of the ACSB agree that:

- The practitioner's chief focus and primary ethical responsibility is for our students' wellbeing.
- The practitioner works to establish a relationship which the student experiences as safe, consensual and fully engaged.
- The practitioner intends to practice in a way that brings awareness to and reduces the harm to the student from self-serving gratifications such as authority, power, sexual pleasure and admiration.
- The practitioner works to support the student into their experience of embodiment. When consensual touch is included it is solely for the purposes of the student's learning and growth and as much as possible is guided by the student in great respect for their boundaries.
- The practitioner commits to their own personal growth, self care and continuous professional development (CPD) including on-going peer and professional supervision.
- Members understand they have a duty of care to the community at large. This includes students and potential students who engage us as practitioners, as well as students of sexological modalities, workshop participants, peers within the profession and those engaging in the work in informal ways.

Members working as Certified Sexological Bodyworkers also agree to the Code of Professional Conduct for Certified Sexological Bodyworkers.

## Code of Professional Conduct for Certified Sexological Bodyworkers

### Introduction

This Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct sets forth ethical standards and rules of conduct for Certified Sexological Bodyworkers (CSB) engaged in the profession of Sexological Bodywork® and Somatic Sex Education.

These ethical standards are not exhaustive. The fact that a given conduct is not specifically addressed by the Code does not mean that it is necessarily either ethical or unethical. In the process of making decisions regarding their professional behavior, CSBs must consider this Code, in addition to their own personal Ethical Standards.

Working in an official capacity as a CSB practitioner, trainer, teacher, assistant, or organizer commits individuals to adhere to the ACSB Ethics Code and the rules and procedures used to implement it. This Ethics Code applies to CSB work-related professional activities including somatic sex education, individual or group work, teaching, training, assisting, supervision, consulting, and organizing. These work-related activities can be distinguished from the CSB's private conduct and non-CSB related work, which is not within the scope of this Code.

In the process of making decisions regarding their professional behavior, CSBs must consider this Code, in addition to laws and licensing boards' regulations. When the Code establishes a higher standard than codes of law, CSBs must meet the higher ethical standard. If the Code's standards appear to conflict with requirements of law, CSBs are to uphold the applicable laws.

The actions the ACSB may take for violation of the Ethics Code and Codes of Conduct include reprimand, censure, and termination of membership in the ACSB. [More detailed definitions of these actions and contexts within which they are warranted can be found in the ACSB Grievance Council Grievance Process.](#)

## Preamble

The work we do as Sexological Bodyworkers/Somatic Sex Educators takes various forms that may include but are not limited to: bodyworker, practitioner, teacher, trainer, coach, assistant, organizer, consultant, and supervisor. They work with a common goal of providing education and improving the quality of life for an individual and the world. The Sexological Bodyworker Code of Conduct provides a common set of values upon which CSBs continually build their professional work.

This code is intended to provide both the general principles and the rules covering most situations encountered by CSBs. It has as its primary goal the welfare and respect of the individuals and groups with whom CSBs work. It is the individual responsibility of each Sexological Bodyworker to aspire to the highest possible standards of conduct. CSBs respect and value human, civil and sexual rights, and do not knowingly participate in or condone unfair discriminatory practices.

The development of a dynamic set of ethical standards for CSB's work-related conduct requires a personal commitment to a lifelong effort to act ethically; to encourage ethical behavior by students, supervisors, supervisees, employees, and colleagues, as appropriate; and to consult with others as needed concerning ethical problems. Each Sexological Bodyworker supplements, but does not violate, the Code's values and rules on the basis of guidance drawn from personal values, culture, context, and experience.

## Duties and Obligations Towards our Students

**References to "student" in the Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct should be assumed to include individual clients, workshop participants, online course students, mentees, and students or intending students of sexological modalities. References to 'session' in the Codes should also be assumed to include workshops, where it would be sensible and ethical to make that assumption.**

1. CSBs are professional in attitude and conduct, responsible in relations with our students, reliable in agreements and timely in appointment schedules.

2. CSBs recognize the importance of consent, agency and choice in all somatic sex education with groups and individuals. CSBs provide a range of options from which the student can actively select which will serve their own education. At no time shall a student be required or coerced to participate in any activity, event or exercise. CSBs include education about consent and choice and actively create learning environments where students are empowered to exercise these skills.
3. CSBs introduce prospective students to the techniques of somatic sex education, including the use of touch so they can make informed decisions about entering into educational sessions. CSBs agree to obtain informed verbal and ongoing consent from our students before engaging in any form of touch or bodywork. In workshop contexts CSBs emphasize participant choice and personal responsibility to engage according to their boundaries and consent. Participants should be advised that they are free to disengage from any workshop activities at any time.
4. CSBs may use physical touch in an educational context. If touch is used, it is used consciously and with the intention of serving the wellbeing of the student, within the parameters of pre-established agreements. CSBs agree to obtain students' consent and to act with concern for their safety, growth, and awareness of boundaries. In workshop contexts CSBs work to create a framework in which participants are fully informed and empowered about consent. CSBs understand that consent is on-going rather than a one-time endeavor. As such, CSBs incorporate regular consent check-ins with students and participants, modeling for everyone that consent is fluid and can/might change in any given moment, from moment to moment.
5. When CSBs are in the role of practice volunteers for students of sexological modalities, CSBs agree to act solely in a volunteer role, and do not attempt to provide teaching or training. Feedback given to students will be constructive, compassionate, and non-instructional. Feedback is given from the personal perspective, not on behalf of the modalities. When a CSB is acting as a volunteer for a student of a sexological modality, erotic touch may be received or given by the CSB, depending on the training requirement and erotic touch must remain unidirectional within a practice session.
6. Professional conduct for CSBs regarding physical touch and conduct with students
  - a. CSBs acknowledge the importance of maintaining agreed boundaries. Boundaries are agreed at the beginning of the session and will not be expanded in that session. This also includes pausing or stopping touch when our students request it.
  - b. CSBs agree not to use Sexological Bodywork sessions and/or programs, and the endogenous altered states sometimes created during them, to coerce or manipulate students or workshop participants into a relationship, sex or any more interaction than was agreed upon before the session began.

The container and boundaries of the sessions or program must be discussed and agreed upon before the sessions/program takes place. It is the practitioner's responsibility to protect student/participant vulnerabilities when it comes to the altered states of consciousness within arousal and erotic practice. It is inappropriate to invite the student/participant into conversations around further sessions, enrollment in future programs or up-selling of any kind during or just after the altered states of arousal and orgasm. Any further upselling of services must be deferred to a time when both the practitioner and student are in regulated, grounded and present states of body and mind.
  - c. CSBs understand the inherent power they hold in their role and will not use this power dynamic to sexually or relationally exploit their students.

d. CSBs are conscious that, and make their students conscious that, Sexological Bodywork sessions will neither fulfil the CSB's, nor their students' desire for sexual connection. When attraction occurs within the professional relationship (either CSB towards student, or student towards CSB) CSBs agree to discuss the attraction at professional supervision with the aim of maintaining clear professional boundaries and protecting the student's ability to access the work.

e. In individual sessions CSBs remain clothed when touching their students and sexual touch is uni-directional, practitioner to student. 'Sexual touch' in this context means touch which is genital and/or whose specific intention is to sexually arouse. For example, when guiding people into experiencing the quadrants of the Wheel of Consent®, to cover it fully the practitioner and student would spend time in all 4 quadrants, which could involve the practitioner being touched (in the Accept & Allow quadrants). When students wish to learn interpersonal sexual skills, CSBs request that students bring their partners or invite them to share and learn with other students. When appropriate and available, CSBs work in a triadic model with other practitioners whose scope of practice includes working in a sexually intimate capacity with their students/clients.

f. In workshop contexts, practitioners exercise appropriate judgment on working partially or completely unclothed where removing their clothes may help to model and guide students/participants more fully into the exercise, to demonstrate the practice, or to normalize and model a healthy relationship with their bodies. If CSBs choose to remove their clothes it is incumbent upon them to maintain boundaries, safety and care of the container, by anticipating and attending to whatever may arise for the student/participants because of CSBs nudity.

g. CSBs agree not to begin any other form of sexual contact or romantic intimacy with their students for a minimum of one (1) year after any professional Sexological Bodywork services (hands-on or otherwise) have terminated. This includes persons from previous sexual relationships who wish to now engage with CSBs as a student. These restrictions also apply to workshop participants, except where there is a pre-existing romantic or sexual relationship, or a professional peer-level relationship, between the practitioner and attendee.

h. Regarding current relationships: Any student who is in an active pre-existing sexual relationship is exempt from point 6(g). In scenarios of this kind, the wellbeing of the students and the safety of the larger container must be upheld according to the values inherent within this Code of Ethics and the Code of Conduct.

Should a situation arise in which a CSB is co-teaching with an intimate partner, great care must be taken to be transparent with students about their relationship and to pay special attention when the existing relationship appears to be interfering with or undermining the integrity of the learning container. Should CSBs step into a situation of this sort, they are strongly encouraged to engage in rigorous professional and peer supervision to support managing the inherent complex power dynamics.

7. CSBs acknowledge the importance of the wellbeing of the whole person, including all aspects of mind, body and spirit. CSB's proactively minimize any physical or emotional harm in active collaboration with our students. CSBs assume the responsibility as leaders and role models to continue to develop and refine our understanding of risk-reduction and professional protocol. For instance (the following list is not exhaustive):

a. CSBs recognize the need for risk-reduction and professional protocol in all individual and group sessions including, but not limited to, the use of medical-grade examination gloves when engaging in touch that includes any bodily fluids and/or genital or anal touch, quality lubricants and appropriate disinfecting methods.

b. All group classes include education about group hygiene protocol, with sufficient facilities / supplies provided to students to maintain appropriate hygiene. [Example hygiene protocol](#)

8. CSBs will refrain from providing bodywork, training sessions and / or presenting any instructional material while under the influence of substances which alter consciousness and/or inhibit their capacity to uphold their practitioner responsibilities.

9. CSBs will consider the limits of our skills, experience, and scope of practice before accepting requests for or providing educational or instructional services to potential students. Further CSBs will refuse professional work for which they are insufficiently prepared, and provide appropriate referrals or alternative resources for students.

10. CSBs seek the advice of colleagues, continuous professional development and ongoing supervision as a routine part of our practice and training. In such consultations, confidential information that reasonably could lead to the identification of the student is not shared without prior written consent of the student. Formal supervision is to be undertaken at least twice a year, and after any event where a concern of ethics or boundaries arises during practice.

11. CSBs terminate professional services to, and professional relationships with, students when such services are no longer required or no longer serve the needs and interests of the students.

12. CSBs may unilaterally terminate our professional services with a student, after careful consideration of all situational factors and any possible adverse effects. CSBs are responsible to make appropriate referrals and to provide support to students during this transition.

13. CSBs will refrain from the exploitation of professional relationships with their students for personal gain, whether financial, professional, or for research purposes.

14. CSBs recognize the complex power dynamics that can exist within dual relationships. If dual or multiple relationships with a potential student is unavoidable, for example in a small community, CSBs take responsibility for clarifying with them whether a professional relationship can transpire in an ethical and safe way. Where agreement is reached to do so, CSBs pay special attention to differentiating roles, managing boundaries, protecting confidentiality and providing opportunities for students to share any concerns that may arise. CSBs engage in professional supervision to support practices which include dual relationships.

## Duties and Obligations Regarding the Preservation of Confidentiality

17. CSBs respect, defend, and preserve the privacy of all information gained during instructional sessions.

18. CSBs will release professional obligations for confidentiality by statutory requirement or court order or if the practitioner determines that they have a [duty of care](#) towards the client, i.e. a concern for the person's safety or the safety of others. The practitioner's first step in this process is to do all possible to communicate this concern with the client and reach agreement regarding safety. If this is not possible the practitioner will seek external support. This process will be shared with clients when beginning work together.

19. CSBs preserve the anonymity of students when using information for purposes of teaching, research, and supervision.

20. CSBs require that all persons attending classes reach written or spoken agreement that respect and maintain the confidentiality of information shared during such classes.

21. CSBs maintain appropriate professional records of all classes and sessions. **These records will be stored in a secure and confidential manner.**

22. CSBs obtain informed, dated and signed permission from students before recording (including video and/or audio recordings) any session, explaining the intended use of the recording and the limits of confidentiality.

## Duties and Obligations Towards the Profession

23. CSBs are co-creating the professions of Sexological Bodywork and Somatic Sex Education, which intend to meet the public need for accurate information and embodied learning opportunities. Any public representation by a CSB of these professions shall be respectful, in integrity with this Code and shall have the intention of furthering the profession.

24. CSBs represent with honesty and accuracy the scope of our training, qualifications, and experience with Sexological Bodywork in all spoken or written forms.

25. CSBs ensure that all oral and written statements used in the advertisement, description, or explanation of services and the principles of Sexological Bodywork, determining that those statements will not:

- a. create unjustified expectations regarding outcomes or benefits;
- b. make false claims about level of competence, training, or certification;
- c. state or imply superiority to other methods or educational opportunities;
- d. state or imply superiority to other Sexological Bodywork practitioners.

26. CSBs do not present themselves as therapists, diagnosticians, or healers, or suggest that they diagnose, treat or prevent any medical or psychological condition.

27. CSBs do not represent other modalities as Sexological Bodywork or Somatic Sex Education and must distinguish between these professions and other professional services they may offer.

28. CSBs understand and practice Sexological Bodywork and Somatic Sex Education within the spirit of the principles and letter of this Code. CSBs further agree to seek supervision and guidance when experiencing ambiguity or difficulty with interpretation of what constitutes ethical behavior.

29. CSBs directly contact, in a constructive and respectful manner, any CSB community member about whom they have ethical concerns, **and agree to be available for contact by their peers in the event of ethical concerns about their own practice. Alternatively, or additionally, a CSB may contact the ACSB Grievance Council Chair regarding concerns of possible violations of the Ethical Codes and Codes of Conduct.**

30. CSBs are required to aid the ACSB in upholding this Code and cooperate fully with the Ethics Committee and Grievance Council should an investigation of possible violations be warranted. **Should an**

attempt to investigate and attend to violations of this Ethical Code and Codes of Conduct be unsuccessful, the ACSB reserves the right to censure, reprimand and/or to terminate the CSBs ACSB membership. Censure and reprimand are both serious disciplinary actions short of termination. For details of the specific actions the ACSB may take, please see the [ACSB Grievance Procedure](#)

## Duties and Obligations to Colleagues

31. CSBs refrain from solicitation of colleagues' students.

32. CSBs make every attempt to work in a team model with students' therapists, doctors and other professionals where appropriate. CSBs support students to share their Sexological Bodywork and Somatic Sex Education sessions with other care-providers on their care teams, where appropriate.

33. Should conflict arise amongst CSB colleagues, whether within a professional or personal context, they agree to seek resolution to the conflict including but not limited to mediation, arbitration, and restorative justice. Further, CSBs agree to participate in all conflict-resolution processes in a way that does not adversely affect students' experiences or rupture the safety and integrity of the educational setting, or adversely affect the profession's reputation in the public sphere, including the use of social media.

With thanks to the Somatic Sex Educators' Association of Australasia ([SSEAA](#)) for their work on their [Code of Ethics & Conduct](#) which informed our reappraisal of the ACSB Codes.