



AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR TRAINERS AND COACHES

Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

ASTC-COE-01 • Binding on all Members, Accredited Trainers and Accredited Coaches

1. Application

- 1.1** This Code binds every ASTC member, every holder of an ASTC trainer or coaching credential, and every applicant for either, from the date of application until recognition ends. It continues to apply to conduct that occurred while recognised.
- 1.2** Section 3 binds everyone. Section 4 binds accredited trainers in addition. Section 5 binds accredited coaches in addition. A person practising in both capacities is bound by all three.
- 1.3** Acceptance of this Code is a condition of membership and of holding any credential. Breach may result in sanction up to expulsion and withdrawal of credentials.
- 1.4** Where obligations conflict, precedence is: (a) applicable law; (b) the safety of any person; (c) this Code; (d) client or employer contract. Market custom is never a defence. No provision may be waived by agreement with a client.

2. Principles

Integrity	Be truthful about who you are, what you can do, and what you have achieved.
Competence	Work only within your assessed and demonstrable capability, and maintain it.
Respect for Persons	Treat every learner and client as an autonomous adult entitled to dignity, safety and self-determination.
Responsibility	Act so as to strengthen, not exploit, the standing of the profession and of the Society.
Accountability	Accept scrutiny of your conduct, cooperate with the Society, and correct harm you cause.

Where this Code is silent, these principles govern. Silence is not permission.

3. All Members and Credential Holders

- 3.1** Describe your qualifications, credentials, experience and standing accurately. Correct any misdescription by a client, employer or agent as soon as you become aware of it.
- 3.2** Membership carries no post-nominal letters at any grade and must be stated in words only. Credential post-nominals may be used only by the holder, only while current, and only in the published form.
- 3.3** Do not state or imply that you are ASTC-certified, ASTC-accredited or ASTC-qualified on the basis of membership alone, and do not apply a personal grade or credential to a company, programme, course or product.
- 3.4** Do not alter, partially reproduce or co-brand the ASTC name, mark or badge, and do not place them on certificates you issue. Cease all use within 14 days of membership or a credential ending.



- 3.5** Accept only work within your competence. Decline or refer work requiring expertise you do not hold. Extend into new areas openly, under supervision or in partnership, never by concealment.
- 3.6** Do not practise while impaired. Withdraw where illness or personal circumstance materially reduces your fitness to practise, and say so honestly.
- 3.7** Agree scope, fees, deliverables, cancellation terms and confidentiality in writing before work begins.
- 3.8** Treat all non-public information as confidential, indefinitely. Disclose only with consent, where law requires, or where there is a serious and imminent risk to any person's safety — and then only so far as necessary.
- 3.9** Anonymise case material fully before using it for teaching, marketing, publication or supervision.
- 3.10** Disclose in writing, before accepting work, any interest that could be seen to affect your objectivity, including referral commissions and competing engagements. Withdraw where disclosure alone cannot manage it.
- 3.11** Do not accept undisclosed commissions or rebates, design work so as to create dependence, or use an engagement principally to sell further services.
- 3.12** Do not discriminate on any characteristic irrelevant to the professional relationship. Make reasonable adjustments to enable participation. Remove demeaning material from your own and inherited content.
- 3.13** Do not harass, bully, intimidate or retaliate. Do not enter a sexual or romantic relationship with a coaching client, or with a learner over whom you hold an assessing or supervisory role. This obligation cannot be waived by consent.
- 3.14** Do not use your position for personal, financial, sexual or reputational advantage over a learner or client.
- 3.15** Take reasonable care for the physical and psychological safety of participants. Give a genuine, unpenalised right to decline any activity.
- 3.16** Use only material you own or are licensed to use. Attribute models and instruments to their originators. Do not rebuild a licensed instrument in modified form to avoid a fee.
- 3.17** Collect only necessary personal data, store it securely, retain it only as long as justified, and obtain written consent before recording any session.
- 3.18** Provide truthful and complete information to the Society, keep your register details current, cooperate fully with any investigation, and comply with any sanction imposed.
- 3.19** Notify the Society in writing within 30 days of: a criminal conviction or caution (other than minor traffic matters); a charge involving dishonesty, violence, sexual conduct or offences against children or vulnerable adults; a misconduct finding by another professional body; a civil judgment involving fraud or dishonesty; or any health condition persistently impairing fitness to practise.
- 3.20** Do not bring the Society into disrepute, and do not make knowingly false or malicious allegations against another member or credential holder.

4. Accredited Trainers — Additional Obligations

- 4.1** Conduct or obtain a needs analysis proportionate to the intervention before designing or accepting it.

- 4.2** Tell the client honestly where training will not solve the presenting problem — including where the cause is structural, managerial or systemic — even where this reduces or ends the commission. Do not inflate duration, headcount or price beyond what the diagnosis supports.
- 4.3** Base design on defensible learning principles and be able to explain your method choices. Do not present contested or discredited models as established fact; disclose their status where used.
- 4.4** Deliver the programme contracted. Disclose in advance any material change of content, duration, method or facilitator.
- 4.5** Use experiential, confrontational or personally revealing methods only where qualified, only where a lower-risk method will not achieve the objective, and only with informed advance briefing, a visible right to withdraw, and full debrief.
- 4.6** Administer, interpret and feed back psychometric instruments only where certified for that instrument and in accordance with the publisher's conditions. Do not use an instrument for selection or assessment where its validation does not support that use.
- 4.7** Do not deliver clinical, therapeutic or trauma-processing intervention under the description of training.
- 4.8** Assess against published criteria without regard to the commercial relationship. Do not award, adjust or withhold a result under pressure from a sponsor, employer or candidate. Do not assess anyone with whom you have a personal or financial relationship.
- 4.9** Issue certificates only where the stated requirement has been met, and state accurately whether they record attendance, completion or assessed achievement. Do not issue certificates bearing the ASTC name or mark.
- 4.10** Report evaluation findings completely, including those unfavourable to you or to your recommendation. Do not selectively present or re-weight data to create a more favourable impression. Distinguish reaction, learning, behaviour and business impact, and do not present one as another.
- 4.11** Do not sign or author an evaluation report you believe creates a false impression. Declining authorship is the required response to a sponsor who insists.
- 4.12** Agree roles, fees, intellectual property and client ownership in writing when co-facilitating or sub-contracting, and give fair credit to contributors.

5. Accredited Coaches — Additional Obligations

- 5.1** Agree purpose, number and duration of sessions, fees, cancellation terms, method of working and grounds for ending the engagement in writing before the first session.
- 5.2** Explain what coaching is and is not. Correct any expectation of therapy, consultancy, advocacy or a guaranteed outcome. Do not guarantee promotion, income, retention or performance improvement.
- 5.3** Where an organisation commissions and pays for coaching, establish a written three-party agreement covering the purpose, what will and will not be reported to the sponsor, the form and frequency of reporting, and who may end the engagement.
- 5.4** Report to the sponsor only at the agreed level of generality. Do not disclose session content without the coachee's express agreement, however informally the question is put.



- 5.5** Do not accept a private briefing about the coachee that the coachee is not told of, and decline any instruction to use the coaching relationship to gather evidence for a performance, disciplinary or exit process. Disclose any such attempt to the coachee.
- 5.6** State the limits of confidentiality in writing at the outset. Break confidentiality only where law requires or where there is a serious and imminent risk of harm — and wherever it is safe to do so, tell the coachee first.
- 5.7** Recognise presentations that fall outside coaching — including suicidal ideation, self-harm, disordered eating, substance dependence, acute trauma response, psychosis, and anxiety or depressive presentations impairing daily functioning. Raise the concern directly, provide information on appropriate professional support, and suspend or end the coaching where continuing would delay care. Maintain a current referral list.
- 5.8** Where a coachee discloses a serious and imminent risk to life, act on it. Confidentiality does not survive it.
- 5.9** Work so as to increase the coachee's independence. Review the continuing value of the engagement at agreed intervals and raise termination when the coachee is ready, including when commercially unwelcome.
- 5.10** Do not impose your own values, beliefs or life choices on the coachee, and do not use techniques that induce dependence or discourage the coachee from seeking other views.
- 5.11** Do not coach a person over whom you hold line-management, assessment or disciplinary authority. Disclose and manage any pre-existing relationship before contracting, and decline where objectivity cannot be preserved. Do not enter a business or investment relationship with a current coachee.
- 5.12** Maintain regular professional supervision at the frequency specified for your designation, present cases in anonymised form, and tell coachees at contracting that anonymised supervision takes place.
- 5.13** Keep session notes factual and proportionate, on the assumption that they may be read by the coachee or required by a court. Do not store identifiable notes on unsecured devices or consumer messaging platforms.
- 5.14** Do not use client testimonials or named references without written consent, and do not solicit one during a live engagement.

6. The Five Gates — Test Before Acting

A proposed course of action must pass every gate. Failure at any gate stops the action. There is no offsetting.

1	Lawful?	Does it comply with applicable law and regulation? Never assume the client has checked.
2	Competent?	Do I have the assessed capability, current experience and fitness to do this, for this client?
3	Consented?	Has everyone affected agreed, on accurate information, free to refuse without penalty?
4	Disclosed?	Have I put every interest, limitation and risk in front of them? If disclosure would lose the work, it was necessary.



5	Defensible?	Would I volunteer the reasoning — unprompted — to the client, the Ethics Committee and a journalist? Discomfort here is reliable data.
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The Ethics Committee gives confidential advisory guidance in advance. Advice sought in good faith before acting is a mitigating factor; advice sought afterwards is not.

7. Breach and Sanction

Category	Nature	Sanctions available
1 Grave	Serious harm caused or risked; conduct incompatible with continued recognition — sexual misconduct, harassment, fabricated credentials or results, failure to act on a disclosed risk to life, criminal dishonesty	Withdrawal of credential; expulsion; publication on the register; notification of affected parties
2 Serious	Material breach of a core obligation — misrepresentation of standing, practising outside competence, unearned certificates, falsified evaluation data, undisclosed conflict affecting a client decision	Suspension; conditions on practice; withdrawal of credential; publication
3 Substantive	Defined breach without serious harm, or repeated minor breach — no written contracting, inadequate confidentiality limits, unlicensed instrument use, lapsed supervision or CPD	Formal censure; conditions on practice; suspension for repetition
4 Administrative	Procedural or record-keeping failure corrected on notice	Advice; written notice to correct within 14 days

Complaints are acknowledged within 10 working days; the practitioner is notified of the substance and has 21 days to respond; investigation normally concludes within 60 days; determination is by a panel of three on the balance of probabilities, with written reasons. Appeal lies within 21 days on four grounds only: procedural unfairness, a finding not reasonably open on the evidence, manifestly disproportionate sanction, or material new evidence. Where an allegation would place any person at risk, the Chair may impose interim suspension, reviewed every 30 days; interim suspension is protective and is not a finding.

Prompt admission, cooperation and voluntary correction of harm are mitigating. Concealment, obstruction, retaliation against a complainant, and repetition after warning are aggravating. A complaint brought in bad faith is itself a Category 2 breach; an unsuccessful complaint is not for that reason vexatious.

8. Declaration

Made on application, on the award of any credential, and on every renewal.



I have read and understood this Code in full and agree to be bound by it in all my professional practice.

The information I have given the Society is true and complete, and there is no matter requiring disclosure under clause 3.19 that I have not disclosed.

I understand that membership carries no post-nominal letters, and that I am responsible for the accuracy of every representation I make about my standing.

Name in full	Grade / credential held	Date
Signature		