



CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

CERTIFIED FOREST BATHING GUIDES

CERTIFIED FOREST THERAPY PRACTITIONERS

FOREST THERAPY INSTITUTE

Copyright information

This *Code of Ethics and Professional Standards for Certified Forest Bathing Guides and Certified Forest Therapy Practitioners* has been developed by the Forest Therapy Institute (FTI) in 2019.

FTI is a leading provider of Forest Bathing and Forest Therapy Guide training in Europe and beyond. It is a “profit for purpose” organisation with a strong mission to achieve social, community and environmental benefits. FTI reinvests in social programmes and offers stipends to those who may not afford the training to ensure diversity and inclusion amongst guides and Practitioners.

Using the *Ethical Framework*

You should read and understand the *Ethical Framework* before guiding walks, experiences, workshops, retreats or interventions as an FTI Certified Forest Bathing Guide or Certified Forest Therapy Guide.

This framework is designed to help you provide your customers/clients with a safe and competent guided experience. It is good practice to integrate the *Ethical Framework* into your work and to use it as a resource to help you face any challenges and issues as they arise during your time in nature.

Key Terms

A **Certified Forest Bathing Guide** is a trained professional who guides others to a sensory nature connection, for an enhanced relationship with the natural world, relaxation, wellness and preventative health. As Forest Bathing is a wellness practice, it can be used in combination with other complementary practices, spa activity, and ecotourism or health tourism.

A **Certified Forest Therapy Practitioner** is a trained professional who works in partnership with the natural world, in the areas of preventative health, health treatment and rehabilitation with specific populations. They facilitate forest therapy walks, experiences, retreats, workshops and interventions to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities and groups. A forest therapy guide is not a therapist. The focus of their work is therapeutic.

Forest Bathing and **Forest Therapy** incorporates science, theories and practices that may be drawn from a wide academic and professional base, including psychology and ecopsychology, social sciences, biology, forestry, ecology, mindfulness, neuroscience, landscape architecture, health promotion, the expressive arts, ancient wisdom traditions and other disciplines.

Our commitment to customers/clients

This requires customers/clients to be able to trust their guides and practitioners with their wellbeing. Therefore, as guides and practitioners trained by FTI, we take being trustworthy as a serious ethical commitment.

We work to professional standards by:

- Working within our area of competence and scope of practice.
- Keeping our skills and knowledge up to date.
- Collaborating with nature connection colleagues internationally to improve the quality of our practice.

Maintain integrity by:

- Communicating our qualifications, experience and working methods accurately.
- Working ethically and with careful consideration of how we fulfil our legal obligations.

Demonstrate accountability by:

- Being willing to discuss with customers/clients openly and honestly any known risks involved in the experiences or interventions and how best to communicate to customers/clients what they may reasonably expect.

Our Commitment to the Natural World

We demonstrate our commitment to the natural world by:

- Working in partnership with the natural world, without exploitation.
- Seeking permission and getting the appropriate land permits for any experiences or interventions being facilitated.
- Being sensitive to the overuse of any particular natural area.
- Not taking anything from the natural world that would cause harm to the ecosystems.
- Ethically foraging wild tea plants.
- Respecting the rules and by-laws of any nature reserves, national parks, local parks or forests where we work.
- Respecting the indigenous wisdom of the elders, the landscape and the different cultures that we work in.
- Encouraging pro environmental behaviours through enhancing a deeper connection with the natural world that is based on reciprocity.

Values

Our **fundamental values** include a commitment to:

- Respecting human and more than human rights and dignity.
- Enhancing people's wellbeing and capabilities.
- Improving the quality of relationships between people and the natural world.
- Enhancing personal and natural resilience.
- Appreciating the variety of human experience and culture.
- Protecting the safety of customers/clients.
- Enhancing the quality of professional knowledge and practice wisdom.

Principles

Our core principles are:

- **Being trustworthy:** honouring the trust placed in the guide.
- **Beneficence:** a commitment to promoting the customer/client's wellbeing and the wellbeing of the ecosystems in which we work.
- **Non-maleficence:** a commitment to avoiding harm to the client and the natural world.
- **Environmental Justice:** advocating for equality of access to nature for disadvantaged groups.
- **Respect:** demonstrating a deep respect for the people we work with and the natural world.
- **Wisdom:** possession of sound judgement that informs practice.

Good practice

Working to professional standards

We must be competent to deliver the services being offered to at least fundamental professional standards or better. We will keep skills and knowledge up to date by:

- Reading journals, books and/or reliable electronic resources.
- Keeping ourselves informed of any relevant research and evidence-based guidance.
- Regular continuing professional development to update knowledge and skills.
- Keeping up to date with the law, regulations and any other requirements, relevant to our work.

Respect

- Endeavour to demonstrate equality, value diversity and ensure inclusion for all clients.
- Avoid unfairly discriminating against clients or colleagues.
- Challenge assumptions that any sexual orientation or gender identity is inherently preferable to any other.
- Make adjustments to overcome barriers to physical accessibility, so far as is reasonably possible, for clients of any ability wishing to engage with an experience or intervention.
- We will take the law concerning equality, diversity and inclusion into careful consideration and strive for a higher standard than the legal minimum.

Careful consideration will be given to working with **children and young people**:

- Demonstrating knowledge and skills about ways of working that are appropriate to the young person's development.
- Demonstrating a sound knowledge of the law relevant to working with children and young people and their human rights.
- Adhering to any Garda vetting/police checks that are required when working with children.
- Reporting any child protection or safeguarding issues that may arise as a result of your work to the appropriate authorities in your country.

When working with **vulnerable adults** we will give careful consideration to obtaining and respecting their consent, wherever they have the capacity to give consent, or involving anyone who provides care for these customers/clients when appropriate.

Confidentiality

We will protect the confidentiality and privacy of customers/clients by:

- Actively protecting information about customers/clients from unauthorised access or disclosure.

Working with colleagues and organisations

- Professional relationships will be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect. We will endeavour to build good working relationships.
- Guides and practitioners will treat colleagues fairly and foster their capability and equality of opportunity.

Mentoring

Mentoring is essential to how trainee guides and practitioners sustain good practice throughout their practicum. Mentoring provides guides and practitioners with regular and ongoing opportunities to reflect in depth about all aspects of their practice in order to work as effectively, safely and ethically as possible. Continued mentoring is available by request post certification.

- All mentoring will model high levels of good practice to the mentees; to stand by the above guidelines of ethical conduct and behaviour.

Training and education

- All trainers will have the skills, attitudes and knowledge required to be competent trainers and facilitators of learning for what is being provided.
- Trainers and educators will model high levels of good practice in their work, particularly with regard to expected levels of competence and professionalism, demonstrating a deep respect for the natural world, relationship building and ensuring the safety of customers/clients.
- Trainers will encourage mentees to raise any concerns at the earliest opportunity and have processes for addressing any trainee's concerns.
- Guides' and practitioners' post-certification will engage in CPD or further training will be guided by any applicable training requirements.

All mentees will:

- Ensure that they deliver experiences or interventions that satisfy the minimum professional standards when working as a guide with members of the public.
- Collaborate with their mentors, to ensure that professional standards are being undertaken with reasonable care and skill.

Research

We value research by guides and practitioners as enhancing our professional knowledge and providing an evidence base for practice in ways that benefit both our customers/clients and the natural world.

- We will support and provide opportunities for research to develop the field of forest bathing and forest therapy further.
- When undertaking research, we will be rigorously attentive to the quality and integrity of the research process, the knowledge claims arising from the research and how the results are disseminated.
- All participants in research will do so on the basis of explicit informed consent.
- When required, we will consult our advisors for guidance, who are experts in this field.
- The research methods used will comply with standards of good practice in any services being delivered and will not adversely affect customers/clients.

Safety and Risk

- All FTI certified guides, practitioners and mentees will endeavour to work in a way that does not cause harm to the natural world or endanger the lives of others.
- FTI certified guides and practitioners are required to undertake wilderness first aid training and keep this up to date.
- FTI guides and practitioners will work within their scope of practice. Unless a licenced and trained health professional or accredited therapist, a guide will not work with vulnerable populations without the support of an appropriately trained health or social care professional.
- Risk assessments will be carried out in relation to all forest bathing or forest therapy trails that guides and practitioners use.
- Risk assessments will also be carried out for any specific populations or vulnerable groups that you will be working with.
- Medical history forms will be collected by guides and practitioners prior to any walks/experiences or interventions to ensure the safety of participants.
- Tea plants will be foraged ethically and with 100% certainty of the plant's identity before given to any participant.
- Tea from foraged plants will not be given to any participant where there are contraindications.
- Appropriate assistants will be used for larger groups or work with specific populations.
- Possible risks will be pointed out to participants for awareness purposes.
- Guides and practitioners will carry a first aid kit on trails.
- All FTI guides and practitioners will have appropriate personal liability and professional indemnity insurance.

General Data Protection Legislation (GDPR)

- FTI will endeavour to collect, process and store data and personal information in a way that is lawful, fair and transparent.
- FTI will only use data for the purpose that it was collected for and will not pass this data onto third parties unless with the explicit consent of its owner.
- FTI will keep up to date with any changes to data protection legislation.

Copyright

- Guides, Practitioners and partners will respect the copyright laws and not share, make copies of, make available to the general public or adapt the mentoring manuals in any way.
- Guides, Practitioners and partners will respect the intellectual property rights of FTI.
- FTI will respect the intellectual property rights of other organisations.