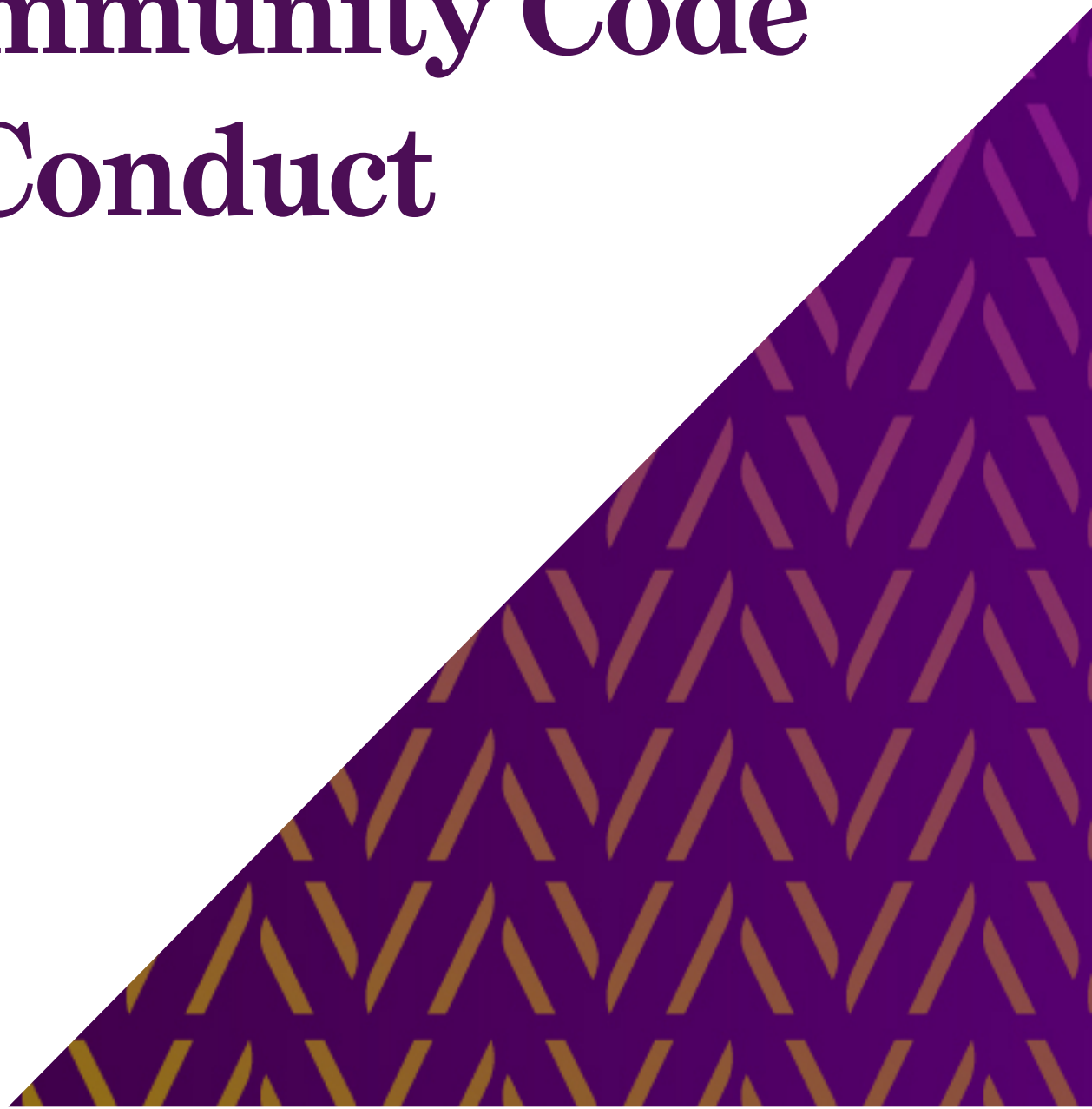# Community Code of Conduct

Community Code of Conduct

The VITA™ team is committed to fostering a safe, open, conscious, and welcoming community. We require all those who participate in our community - including students, course participants, teachers, staff, consultants, employees, and anyone else that interacts with our community (community members) - to agree and adhere to this Code of Conduct in order to help us create a safe and positive community experience for all people. Our community only exists as a beautiful, safe, loving container for growth and thriving if all community members make conscious choices to keep it that way.

We'd like to say that, in general, our community is full of empowering, loving, heart-and-pussy-centered individuals that deeply care about one another. We also recognize that we've grown up in a traumatized and traumatizing world with bias, racism, homophobia and all other variety of harmful systems of oppression and beliefs. Even as kind, heart-centered individuals, we can still inherit and unconsciously carry these systems within us. Therefore, part of creating a safe community is to collectively recognize the imprinting of those systems on us and our behavior, and to actively work to remove them in self-responsible ways. We also recognize that part of creating a safe community is to take full responsibility for our impact on others regardless of our intent.

This is part of the evolving question we are leaning into: how do we create safety for everyone in our community, especially any traditionally marginalized groups in society, while also holding a compassionate, open space for the transformation and integration of socialized conditioning that unconsciously causes harm and perpetuates injustice and oppression?

This is a big question we are asking ourselves. So, please don't feel like you need to always have the answer. These are our guidelines for community safety, and we'll actively work with you to increase your safety throughout the program should you need it. Should you harm or violate someone else's safety, we'll work with you to address it and integrate the underlying cause of the harm. In this way, we can all grow into a reality increasingly free of our harmful and traumatizing history on this planet.

These guidelines aim to support a community where all people feel safe to participate, regardless of:

- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Race/Ethnicity
- National Origin/Ancestry
- Color
- Age
- Gender Identity or Expression
- Personal Appearance
- Different Abilities in Body or Nervous System
- Height/Weight
- Marital Status
- Religion/Faith
- Veteran Status
- Level of Experience or Education
- Background
- Socio-Economic Status
- Vocation
- Geographic Location
- Any Other Dimension of Diversity

Where This Code Applies

These guidelines outline our behavior expectations as members of our community in any of our activities, both offline and online, including but not limited to:

- On VITA™ property
- In VITA™ or VITA™-sponsored or recognized programs or activities
- Working with other members of the VITA™ community virtually or co-located
- Representing VITA™ at public events
- Representing VITA™ on social media (official accounts, staff accounts, personal accounts, Facebook pages)
- Participating in VITA™ retreats, off-sites, and training
- Participating in VITA™ mailing lists, websites, chat channels, online groups, social media, group or person-to-person meetings, and VITA™-related correspondence

While this code of conduct is specifically aimed at VITA™ community members, we recognize that it is possible for actions taken outside of VITA™ online or in-person spaces to have a deep impact on community health. For example, an online post outside of VITA™ online groups aimed at harassing a VITA™ community member would still be something that we would address.

Our Standards

Expected Behavior:
- Show up authentically
- Use welcoming and inclusive language
- Exercise consideration and respect in your speech and actions
- Value others' ideas, styles, viewpoints, and experiences - we may not always agree, but disagreement is no excuse for poor manners
- Be open to different possibilities and to being wrong
- Be aware of your impact and how intense interactions may be affecting people
- Take responsibility for your impact and your mistakes — if someone says they have been harmed through your words or actions, listen carefully, apologize sincerely, and correct the behavior going forward
- Show empathy towards other community members
- Take responsibility for your words and actions
- Focus on what is best for the community
- Gracefully accept constructive criticism

Problematic Behavior:
- Repeated unwelcome sexual attention or advances
- Public or private harassment
- Offensive comments related to gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, mental illness, neuro(a)typicality, physical appearance, pregnancy status, veteran status, political affiliation, marital status, body size, age, race, national origin, ethnic origin, nationality, immigration status, language, religion or lack thereof, or other identity marker. This includes anti-Indigenous/Nativeness and anti-Blackness

- Trolling, insulting/derogatory comments, and personal or political attacks
- Insults, slurs, epithets, negative stereotyping, or other similar conduct
- Publishing others' private information, such as a physical or electronic address, images/photos and/or private conversations, without explicit permission
- Verbal or nonverbal threats of violence
- Any form of physical violence
- Deliberate intimidation or bullying
- Deliberate "outing" of any aspect of a person's identity without their consent except as necessary to protect vulnerable people from intentional abuse
- Questioning or challenging someone's stated self-identity or chosen labels, even if they conflict with your own views
- Other conduct which could reasonably be considered inappropriate in a professional setting

Building Awareness

Bias

Many of us grew up with socialized messaging around these topics. That messaging created unconscious/implicit as well as conscious/explicit bias. For example, consider your first thought/feeling/sensation in response to the following:

- An uninhibited, sexually expressive woman
- A loud, outrageous person
- Someone who consciously chooses to be a sex worker

The thought/emotion/sensation that arises is socialized - we weren't born thinking these things. These beliefs were important in feeling loved, accepted and safe in our original community. By bringing curiosity and noticing the thought/feeling/sensation that arises, you begin to bring socialized beliefs that were unconscious into consciousness, which gives you new information to make empowered choices and create greater safety and inclusivity for everyone.

From unconscious beliefs, we can unknowingly express microaggressions: everyday verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights, snubs or insults - regardless of intention - that

communicate discriminatory messages that target people based on marginalized groupings (like sexuality, religious beliefs and race).

Here are some examples of microaggressions (click through links below for examples):
- Towards women
- Towards LGBTQIAP+
- Towards People of Color

Bias isn't all bad or something to be ashamed of … in fact, it makes our brain incredibly efficient, filtering out information we don't need to attend to. Our brain receives about 11 million bits of information every moment but can only process 40 bits. Our unconscious bias helps to sort through all that - it judges what needs attention and what doesn't.

Community members are expected to work with existing beliefs and patterns of behavior, to consider what biases they hold and use when communicating with others.

Projections
Projections are a defense mechanism where you attribute something you find unacceptable/ uncomfortable in yourself (your shadow) onto another person. Your primal brain is trying to protect you from something you're struggling to accept in yourself. This is usually unconscious and can distort reality and create ungrounded story. If you don't have awareness around it, projections create ongoing suffering for you because you can't integrate and work with something that you're pushing onto others and/or into the shadow.

Examples of projections:
- Believing a community member doesn't like you, seeking evidence to validate that belief, when it's you that doesn't like that person or, it's you that you don't like
- Making negative comments about another person's physical appearance when you aren't able to love and accept your body
- Believing a teacher is in love with you when you aren't able to accept that your sexuality may be fluid
- Creating drama with community members, wanting to flee a situation or hanging out in overwhelm in order to avoid working on what's coming up for you

Just like bias, projections are generally unconscious until you bring awareness to them. It's important to be open to receiving feedback in our community about projections you may carry.

Enforcement

Reporting

If you are being harassed by a community member, notice that someone else is being harassed, or have any other concerns, please contact:

- Our Community Manager, Elizabeth: elizabeth@laylamartin.com
- Should Elizabeth ever be the source of the issue, then email our Director of Operations, Stacy: stacy@laylamartin.com

If your complaint is in relation to any of our team members, they will recuse themselves from handling your complaint. We will respond as promptly as we can.

We will respect confidential requests for the purpose of protecting complainants. At our discretion, we may publicly name a person about whom we've received harassment complaints, or privately warn third parties about them, if we believe that doing so will increase the safety of community members or the general public. We will not name harassment complainants without their affirmative consent.

You may also submit an anonymous complaint here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VITACommunityConduct

Please note that we may be limited in our investigation if you desire to maintain confidentiality or submit a complaint anonymously.

Consequences of Problematic Behavior

Team VITA™ may take any action deemed appropriate in response to any instances of problematic behavior, including:

- Give feedback to community members on their behavior, including what's required to stay in this community and any repair that may be needed with other community members
- Remove, edit, or reject any written material (including posts on social media) that are not aligned with this Code of Conduct
- Temporarily ban or permanently remove a community member from the community without warning (and without refund in the case of a paid event).

Anyone asked to stop problematic behavior is expected to comply immediately.

Appeals

If you feel you have been falsely or unfairly accused of violating this Code of Conduct, you should notify the VITA™ Community Manager (elizabeth@laylamartin.com) with a concise description of your grievance. Your grievance will be handled in accordance with our existing governing policies.

Attribution

This code has been adapted with modifications from Mozilla Community Participation Guidelines, Stumptown Syndicate's Citizen Code of Conduct, the LGBTQ in Technology Code of Conduct.