

The five (or eight) precepts

An ethical life is founded on these standards of conduct:

1. To practice compassionate action – to refrain from harming any living, sentient beings.
2. To practice contentment – to refrain from taking what is not freely given. To not steal or 'borrow' without the consent of the giver; to accept what is offered and not try to change it or get more.
3. To practice responsibility in all our relationships – including refraining from misusing sexual energy. (While on retreat, yogis take the precept to abstain from sexual activity.)
4. To refrain from harmful speech – not to lie, gossip or use harsh or hurtful language.
5. To care for ourselves – to refrain from clouding the mind and harming the body through the misuse of alcohol, drugs and other intoxicants.

During most IMS retreats offered by monastic teachers, retreatants are asked to abide by the eight precepts. The additional three precepts are:

6. To refrain from eating after noon.
7. To refrain from dancing, singing, music, shows; from the use of garlands, perfumes, cosmetics and adornments.
8. To refrain from using high and luxurious seats and beds.