

ParaYoga Listening Circle Themes
Compiled by Right Use of Power Institute (11-2-2021)

The following is a summary of feedback from Listening Circles conducted over the last week of October 2021 with four facilitators from the Right Use of Power Institute. There were approximately 65 participants from the worldwide ParaYoga community.

1. What do you understand happened?

a. Violation of Code of Ethics

Rod initiated an affair with a student and didn't end it. This violated the Code of Ethics that he co-authored.

b. Lack of Transparency

Rod was not transparent with the ethics committee about this transgression until it became public. In the students' experience, he initially tried to cover up the transgression, which got blown up over social media. The account of what happened according to Rod conflicts with the account of the student. Students also felt that he was not present for them and not transparent on Sanctuary.

c. Lack of Vulnerability/Remorse

Students reported that Rod was defensive on the 40-person call. They felt the teachable moment was being squandered. As well, they reported that he exhibited bullying behavior at other times over his years of teaching.

d. Some attempts at communication/reconciliation

Students felt there have been some attempts at communication and reconciliation in the letters to the community from Rod, Natalie and the ethics committee, as well as the initiation of listening circles.

e. Cultural differences in understanding

Some Europeans don't see this as a big deal (excluding Brits). Students expressed concern that the Himalayan Institute has reputational issues from the past.

2. What has the impact been on you?

a. Emotional Upheaval

Students reported a paradox of mixed emotions and confusion, including disgust, disappointment, embarrassment, heartbreak, shame, deep sadness, retriggering of past traumas and compounding of stress, along with defense of Rod, concern for Natalie and Rod's family, sorrow and forgiveness.

b. Loss of trust in Rod and the organization

Students reported a loss or diminishment of trust in Rod, with concern about whether he is truly remorseful and taking responsibility for learning from this. Some questioned what they can believe in now? ParaYoga has been tarnished by hollow promises and hypocrisy.

c. Loss of teachers and teaching path

Students voiced concern about level 3 teachers resigning and giving up their careers. There were questions about how to hold the teacher and the teachings separately, as well as not knowing how to proceed or who to study with now that the level 3 teachers are gone. Confidence in the teachings has been shaken with students not knowing where to go from here.

d. Loss of community

Students expressed concern about the loss of community, disappointed in the gossip and rumors over social media and members not living the teachings. Community belongs to the people and Rod kept it for himself, not empowering the community.

e. Loss of credibility and reputation of ParaYoga organization

Students expressed feeling betrayed by the years of time, energy, soul level commitment and financial investment they put into ParaYoga. They also expressed the significant (devastating) impact of this situation on Rod's reputation, the ParaYoga community, yoga as a whole, and the personal impact on practices, livelihoods, careers and personal psyches.

3. What are your needs/wants about this now?

a. Transparency/knowledge

Students generally want communication and transparency, and to be informed on how the healing will happen and how the situation is being handled. There are questions about what happened to all of the money students invested in ParaYoga, how this happened and why level 3 teachers left.

b. Vulnerability/Remorse/Accountability from Rod

Students voiced a strong desire to see Rod demonstrate authentic humility and further acknowledgment of the harm that was done in this situation as well as for bullying in years past. Students also expressed the need for Rod to take at least 6 months, if not longer, away from teaching for healing, therapy and repair.

c. Redefine the organization and its hierarchy

Students voiced that the structure of the organization needs to be re-evaluated and transformed from a “top down” guru model to a more inclusive model that extricates the teachings from the teacher and includes senior teachers and more female teachers. There is a desire to learn from mistakes and have better guidelines and clarity around the use and misuse of power. There was also a repeated theme around wanting a statement from Pandit Rajmani Tigunait and other lineage holders regarding the impact of abuses of power.

d. Reconciliation

Students feel that there is an opportunity for both the ParaYoga community and the greater yoga community to come together, heal and see the “Phoenix rise from the ashes.” There is hope for a positive outcome, and a willingness for community healing after repair.

e. Support and community

Students questioned whether it was time to move on to another community or stay, as well as a desire to stay connected with peers with the hope that relationships will not be jeopardized over differing perspectives. They expressed a desire for support in how to move forward with security, responsibility and learning. Some students are concerned about completing certification, and about getting refunds if they so desire.