



Seeker Handbook

WELCOME

You are engaging in a proactive, healing experience combining inner transformative work with outer practical activities which will serve you in many ways. The Day Program experience will be part of your healing process or one could say, your rebalancing on a deeper soul level. You will be part of a small, intentional community focused around a specific program aimed at nurturing your soul and empowering you. The work program and specific proactive therapies will help you to reconnect with who you really are becoming. Essentially, proactivity leads to empowerment which in turn leads to a renewed enthusiasm for life. At the same time, we would like to acknowledge that to inwardly shift from the experience of a victim to that of a creator can be both frightening and exciting.

As a community, we are committed through insight and understanding, love and patience, and perseverance to facilitate the beginning of your healing process. You have come to Inner Fire, Inc. because either you want to avoid medications or you would like the support to come off your medication while participating in the detox program with the oversight of the very supportive psychiatrist, therapists and Guides. We take very seriously the withdrawal of your medications and timing is essential. Once you have settled into the program at Inner Fire, Inc. and engaged in the rhythm, then, with the support of Dr. Jesper Brickley and the Inner Fire, Inc. Guides, a tapering plan will be created and you may begin to come off your medications. All medications will be kept at Grace Brook Farm ("GBF") and will be taken when a designated Guide is present.

After reading the following material, we urge you to discuss any questions, thoughts and comments you may have with us. We strongly believe in an open communication consistent with policies and decisions on confidentiality.

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook shares our policies and procedures for you to better understand how we work together. The information contained in this Handbook applies to all Seekers of Inner Fire uniformly and supersedes all prior policies and procedures. All Seekers are subject to the policies outlined in this Handbook. Inner Fire reserves the right to suspend, modify, or amend any policy or procedure at any time.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Inner Fire Grace Brook Farm 26 Parker Rd, Brookline, VT 05345 802-221-8051
Inner Fire East Wing 26 Parker Rd, Brookline, VT 05345 802-221-8050
Email info@innerfire.us **Website** www.innerfire.us

Staff

Admin

Co-Founder, Executive Director Beatrice Birch beatrice.innerfire@gmail.com 802-221-8051
Chief Operating Officer Tomasz Jankowski tomasz@innerfire.us 802-451-0125
Business and HR Director Laura Young laura.innerfire@gmail.com 802-451-0125

Guides

Day Guide - Forester Zach Holmes zach.innerfire@gmail.com
Evening and Overnight Guide Ted Tronsen ted.innerfire@gmail.com
Evening, Overnight/Weekend Guide David Naughton david.innerfire@gmail.com
Seeker Care Manager and Guide Victoria Moyer victoriam.innerfire@gmail.com
Evening, Overnight/Weekend Guide Mona Hall mona.innerfire@gmail.com

Therapists

Hauschka Artistic Therapy & Counseling Beatrice Birch
Massage Tracy Berchi
Somatic Breath-Work Kaiilama Morris
Speech Therapist Christa Macbeth
Movement - Eurythmy Polly Saltet and Katherine Stewart
Movement - Spatial Dynamics Laurie Portocarrero
Movement - T'ai Chi Leslie Lassetter
Movement - Yoga Jen Frey
Psychosynthesis Ami Ji Schmid

Health Care Practitioners - Contracted Professionals

Classical Homeopathy Dr. Sandy Reider
Homeopathic Doctor and Nurse Dr. Tamara Potselueva
Physician Dr. Jesper Brickley

Artisans

Stained Glass Edel Byrne
Art Jan Kees Saltet
Handcrafts Victoria Mansuri

ABOUT INNER FIRE

INNER FIRE MISSION

Inner Fire is a proactive healing community offering a choice for people to recover from debilitating and traumatic life situations (which typically lead to addiction or mental / soul health challenges) without the use of mind altering psychotropic medications. We seek deep and lasting healing through an intensive program that first stabilizes a person in crisis, gradually replacing medication with holistic healing practices, addressing the core issues precipitating emotional pain, and then developing skills for growing beyond these issues and becoming an enthusiastic and vital member of their community.

WHO WE ARE

Inspired by initiatives in Europe, Inner Fire is a new therapeutic community in Vermont specializing in responsible medication withdrawal support and deep healing from life's challenges using complementary and holistic healing practices. Inner Fire offers an alternative to the pharmaceutical-intensive treatment protocols that are now the norm. Widely-dispensed psychotropic medications can be as debilitating as the illnesses they purport to heal. The harmful side-effects of these addictive and powerful drugs can be severe and even lead toward suicide.

INNER FIRE'S HOLISTIC THERAPIES, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Psychotherapy	Once weekly
Movement: Eurythmy, Spatial Dynamics, T'ai Chi, Yoga	In 7 week blocks 3 x weekly as available
Hauschka Artistic Therapy	Three times weekly
Music Therapy	In 7 week blocks 3 x weekly as available
Rhythmical Massage	In 7 week blocks 3 x weekly as available
Speech Arts & Drama	In 7 week blocks 3 x weekly as available
Liver Compress	Two to three times weekly
Detoxification and Medication Withdrawal	Ongoing
Work Therapy Program (garden, forest, house and kitchen)	Monday to Friday
Peer-to-peer, cultural activities and Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes Program	
Family education and support	Throughout the year
Family Counseling	Final Three months of a full years stay
Organic food and nutrition program	Daily
Mentoring, life skills and life coaching	Weekly

SCHEDULE

Weekdays

6:45 am	Arrive at Grace Brook for supplements / medications
7:00 am	Breakfast, all Seekers present
7:30 am	Breakfast clean up
8:00 am	Morning Walk or Group Arts
8:30 am	Morning Circle
9:00 am	Morning practical work – kitchen, cleaning and outdoor
12:00 pm	Lunch
12:30	Lunch cleanup
12:45 pm	Liver Compresses and Rest - up to three days a week
2 to 6 pm	Movement (Eurythmy, Spacial Dynamics, Thai Chi or Yoga), Somatic Breath-Work, Massage, Speech Arts, Hauschka Art Therapy, Outdoor work, Woods Wandering, Saunas, Knitting
5:30 pm	Supper Preparation
6:00 pm	Dinner and clean up
6:30 pm	Dinner Cleanup
7:00 pm	Evening program for Group and Community Building Monday - Appreciations Tuesday - Crafts/Games Wednesday - Self and personal space care Thursday - Singing, Drumming Friday - "Sharing a Question" Miscellaneous - Knitting, talking, reading, biographical story
7:50 pm	Snack
8:00 pm	Head to East Wing for epsom salt bath or footbaths and sleep preparation
10:00 pm	Lights out

Weekends - Weekends, which still maintain a supportive structure are a time for hiking, swimming, outdoors fun as well as cleaning rooms and houses and resting. Evenings are spontaneous, occasionally with a community cultural event. Meals are planned by the chef and designed to be cooked by the Seekers to practice what they have learned in the kitchen during the week, supported by Guides.

Staff Workshops - Guides and Therapists participate in a monthly morning meeting. These workshops are an opportunity to learn together, to nourish themselves, build community and bring clarity to important issues. Seekers may occasionally participate in staff workshops to connect and dialogue about information or opportunities we believe would be beneficial for Seekers. Other times, we have artists or specialists come in and work with Seekers on unique projects.

WHAT TO BRING

The seasons here in Vermont bring different needs, and most suggestions are perhaps obvious. Work clothes will be worn more than any dress clothes. Underlined items are not necessarily needed during the three-day visit. Be sure to bring all other items listed for your three-day visit. If you are accepted into the program, you will need to shop for the additional items BEFORE you begin. Please limit clothing to the amounts suggested as storage space is limited. LABEL all items with your name. We do have a lost and found to retrieve missing items.

For Autumn and Winter

- Long johns - 2-3
- Pants 3 pairs
- Warm Shirts 3
- Silk/warm undershirts 3
- Wool Socks 7 pair
- Underwear 4 sets
- Microspikes* - 1 set
- Mittens - 1 or 2 pair
- Scarf - 1
- Snow boots - insulated - 1 pair
- Snowshoes* - 1 set
- Hiking Boots 1 pair
- Wool hat - 2
- Insulated Work gloves - 2 pair

For Spring and Summer

- Crocs - 1 pair
- Light clothing to layer (numbers as above)
- Rain boots - 1 pair
- Rain hat - 1
- Rain jacket - 1
- Sandals - 1 pair
- Sun hat - 1
- Sunscreen - 1 tube
- Swimsuit - 1 set
- Umbrella - 1
- Water shoes - 1 pair
- Work gloves - 2 pair

*As winter sets in, these are essential and enable us to get into the snowy woods which are so silent, beautiful and interlaced with wildlife tracks.

Additionally, please bring the following:

- Alarm clock (battery run without radio) - 1
 - An up-to-date photo of yourself that includes your name and birthdate
 - A musical instrument you enjoy playing
 - Backpack
 - Enough wool yarn to knit a scarf
 - Bed linens for twin size bed (pillow cases, sheets, blankets, comforter) 2 sets
 - Books, songs and poems to share
 - Credit Card for personal expenses
 - First Aid Supplies for Self
 - Flashlight - 1
 - Head lamp - 1
 - Hot water bottle for liver compresses
 - Journal(s)
 - Laundry basket - 1
 - Laundry soap, unscented, biodegradable
 - Nail clippers
 - Night light if needed
 - Personal toiletries (natural w/out fragrance)
 - The book, *Why on Earth* by Signe Schaeffer
 - Hot and Cold Thermos to take hiking - 2
 - Tick remover / key - 2
 - Towels and washcloths - 2 sets
 - Water bottles - 2
- Writing and art materials: crayons and colored pencils, paper

GUIDELINES

WALKING

To allow time to get to know you, and you, us, Seekers must walk with someone in the first six weeks of their stay here. During these six weeks, if a Seeker would like to go for a walk in their free time, they must find a walking partner, tell a Guide and sign out on the board. After the first six weeks, if all has gone well, a Seeker may walk alone in their free time so long as they tell a Guide where they are walking, when they plan to return and they must sign out on the board.

WATER SAFETY

If Seekers swim alone, then they are explicitly carrying full responsibility for the risk they put themselves in. A Seeker must always notify a Guide when they are swimming and we strongly encourage Seekers to never swim alone.

FIRE SAFETY

No matches are allowed in the East Wing. This means no candles or smudging or anything that would cause smoke or fire. Only Seekers who have been taught and approved by a designated Guide may start the wood stove fire, or smudge the Grace Brook House.

TICKS AND LYME DISEASE PREVENTION POLICY

Ticks, especially as carriers of Lyme disease, have increasingly become a concern. It is important to do daily tick checks after morning outdoor work, after afternoon outdoor work and at showertime in the evening with soap, your hand and a full length mirror. We encourage Seekers to find a Guide (men for men and women for women) or another Seeker (men for men and women for women) to assist with checks as needed.

If a tick is found and unattached, secure it in tape and throw it away.

If a tick is found attached, follow these steps:

1. Remove with the tick key you brought with you to Inner Fire.
2. Use a piece of tape to secure tick and throw away
3. Have a Guide complete a tick incident form right away and notify the Business and HR Director or Executive Director in the Main Office.
4. Treat the bite
5. Take our tick tincture hourly 3 times daily for the first three days, then 3 times daily for three week.
6. Monitor your skin and general health over the following weeks. If any symptoms of Lyme are present (bull's-eye, drastic drop in energy, flu, rash), please notify the Business and HR Director or Executive Director immediately.

See Appendix 1 - Lyme Tick Prevention and Care for more information

USE OF VEHICLES FOR TRANSPORTATION

Due to the nature of Inner Fire's program, it is not necessary for Seekers to have transportation while engaged in our program. However, due to unusual circumstances, Seekers must have the explicit permission and prior approval from the Council in order to have a vehicle at Inner Fire as well as to have use of their vehicle. In such a case, a Seeker's car keys will be kept in the Office Safe and only made available upon agreement of the Council. Seekers should not request rides or ride with staff in staff cars up to the East Wing unless given explicit and clear instruction from administration to everyone so everyone is aware.

PERSONAL DRESS AND APPEARANCE

Inner Fire Inc. expects all Seekers to dress and groom themselves in accordance with accepted social standards. A neat, modest appearance contributes to one's self-respect and, of course, one's self-care affects people around you. Ensure you have proper attire and gear for the various activities during your day at Inner Fire Inc. Bath robes are encouraged when using the bathrooms during the night and early morning hours.

Personal hygiene and washing of hands is of utmost importance. Because we bless our meals by joining hands at the beginning and end of sharing food together, out of respect for each other, ensure your hands are clean. Washing hands after using the toilet is expected with socially close contact and in preparing meals.

NEIGHBORLY RELATIONS

We are very fortunate to have wonderful neighbors who support Inner Fire. In order to maintain these relationships, boundaries are very important. Certainly be friendly in passing however, their homes and property are not part of the Inner Fire program and therefore please do not trespass or visit with them for any reason, even if invited. Breaking this rule could lead to your withdrawal from the program.

SHOUTING

There is no question but that shouting as well as crying may be part of the healing process and we honor such ways of breathing-out. However, we must insist for the sake of the Community and feelings of safety, that all shouting happens outside any enclosed space and further up Parker Rd to the car park by the Grace Brook away from neighbors.

EXPECTED BEHAVIOR and SAFETY

It is important for Seekers to feel safe at Inner Fire and to not be distracted from the work on themselves which includes developing a community awareness that they intend to do by coming to Inner Fire. Because of this, it is imperative that there are no sexual relationships of any kind between Seekers, or between a Seeker and a Guide, volunteer or staff, even if initiated by the Seeker. Out of respect for each others' privacy, and individual healing process, Seekers may not enter into another Seeker's bedroom for any reason. The Community Room is a safe

space for Seekers to use. If a Seeker attempts to initiate anything that would violate this policy, you should contact either the Director or Business and HR Director. Resolution of any potential issues will be treated as confidentially as possible and should not be discussed among Seekers and/or Guides unless such a discussion is initiated and directed by the Director.

The Seeker agrees that he or she will refrain from any and all disruptive or inappropriate acts or behaviors, including but not limited to: physical violence and/or threats toward themselves or others, bullying, harassment, hazing, any sexual acts, or sexual advances. The use of alcohol, cigarettes, candy, illegal drugs or other harmful or mood-altering substances, including stimulants such as coffee is prohibited, except as appropriately prescribed by our physician, while enrolled and participating in the Inner Fire program, or during any Inner Fire sponsored activity, regardless of its location, including visits away from Inner Fire. There are many reasons for this abstinence, which include but are not limited to: interference with appropriately prescribed medications, sensitivity to other Seekers who struggle with addiction issues, and the possibility of any resulting disruptive or offensive behavior. Seekers agree to be 30 days free of any substance (for example: heroin, alcohol, etc.), with the exception of nicotine before joining the Inner Fire community.

No Seeker is allowed to have in his or her possession any item which could be considered a weapon. This includes knives of any size. Upon arrival, each Seeker will be designated a Guide who will search the Seeker's belongings (in the presence of the Seeker) to ensure they have no alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, candy or razors or weapon-like objects. If such items are found, the Guide will discuss this with the Seeker. Those item(s) will be removed, held in the office and possibly returned to the Seeker upon completion of their time at Inner Fire. The Guide will be the judge of whether or not questionable objects are weapon-like.

Violation of these or any other rules or regulations of Inner Fire can result in immediate or other termination from Inner Fire and/or any of its programs. The Seeker agrees that he or she will follow any and all posted notices, warnings, advice, and/or cautionary or other instructions, and to obey all rules and regulations as may be amended from time to time. The Seeker and the Seeker's family understand and agree that decisions or definitions as to what constitutes disruptive or inappropriate acts or behaviors shall be made by the Inner Fire Council in its sole discretion.

EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

If a Seeker has extra needs, there is a possibility that our Business and HR Director can arrange for these additional needs. In such cases, a Seeker would be expected to leave a credit card on hand for these purchases. Inner Fire is not able to use IF funds to make purchases on behalf of Seekers.

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

Please notify a Guide.

ASSISTANCE WITH MEDICATION DISPENSING

Each Seeker handles their own medication with a Guide's oversight.

LIGHTS OUT / QUIET TIME

As the days are so full and digestion of experiences is essential, we strongly encourage Seekers to turn their lights out by 10:00 pm in order to be ready to rise by 6:00 and be at Grace Brook by 6:45 for medication/supplements so as to have breakfast promptly at 7:00 am.

BEING ON TIME

It is expected that Seekers will be at Grace Brook Farm from 6:45 am to 7:50 pm, Mondays through Fridays. Seekers are not allowed to leave the Grace Brook Farm premises without prior permission. If you are not feeling well, you may request to rest in your room at the East Wing. In some circumstances, we may ask that you rest at Grace Brook Farm. The effort to be on time is a way of guiding and strengthening our individual will which is compromised through the use of medication, alcohol and drugs. One can see this discipline as part of our healing process. Therefore, we expect and appreciate Seekers' efforts to be sitting down and ready to eat and to be at their sessions on time during the day. We have breakfast at 7:00 am (weekends at 8:30 am), lunch at 12:00 pm, and supper at 6:00 pm.

MEALS

Our philosophy around eating and meals is to eat like a king at breakfast, like a prince at lunch, and like a pauper at dinner. Inner Fire follows a hearty diet which builds gut health, is high in fats and protein, contains no sugar, and has a little honey here and there. All meals are balanced. Breakfast is healthy, lunch is a colorful meal, offering a vegetarian or meat option, a grain, and plenty of vegetables. Supper is a lighter meal of soup and salad which supports sleep.

SEEKER PRIVILEGES

TELEPHONE USE and SENDING and RECEIVING SNAIL MAIL

By enrolling in the Inner Fire Program, Seekers agree to refrain from sending and receiving letters (snail mail - remember this?) and from using the phone to call family and friends for the first three weeks. This encourages them to turn to their new community for needed support and encouragement.

After a Seeker has been at Inner Fire for 3 weeks, they may begin writing and receiving letters as well as using the phone for up to 30 minutes on one weekend day during free time so as not to distract from the rhythm of the weekday. If a Seeker is considering calling a helpline, we strongly encourage Seekers to approach the Admin or a Guide to share their concerns before doing so. Seekers do not use email while at Inner Fire and cell phones are not permitted and are kept with Seekers belongings in our office area.

COMPUTER, EMAIL, INTERNET AND TELEVISION USE

Inner Fire, Inc. is a media-free and wifi free environment with no internet, cell phone, television and/or radio use for Seekers. This is to allow Seekers to tap into their creativity and imagination and afford them the opportunity to re-align with themselves, the earth and to connect with those within the Inner Fire Community. In case of emergency or special circumstances Seekers may use the internet with a Guide present.

Photocopying is an exception; if there is no other means, a Seeker may check in with our Business and HR Director in the main office.

Once a month, a light movie or inspiring documentary is watched. Seekers can make suggestions of what to watch. Selected documentaries or movies will be vetted prior to Seekers viewing.

FREE TIME

On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, Seekers typically have 3 therapies in the afternoon between 2 and 6 pm. During winter months when there is not a lot of practical activity / work needed, Seekers are given the option to use that hour as free time OR to assist the guide with practical work. If a Seeker has only two therapies, they would use the third hour doing practical work and then have the option to use the additional hour for free time, or to continue practical work.

On Sunday's, Seekers have the afternoon after the hike and before dinner at 6 pm to use as free time. If a Seeker wishes to have more guided time, they may request this of the guides working at the time.

VISITORS

After 6 weeks, Seekers may have visitors on Sundays from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm, once a month. Arrangements may be made through our Business and HR Director or Beatrice. Please recognize that such visits and outings with loved ones aren't considered "time out" from the program but rather an opportunity to practice self-control and saying "no" to unsupportive foods and other temptations which one might previously said "yes" to. If eating out with your visitors, keep in mind that the GAPS informed diet is an intentional part of the detox process and sugar, starches and processed foods are strongly discouraged. Of course cigarettes and alcohol are totally out of the question during your visit as well. No food or drinks of any kind should be brought back to Inner Fire or to your bedrooms. Inspections will follow in order to protect all Seekers and for the sake of the community. For the sake of the community, inspections will follow such an outing.

6-WEEK CHECK IN

Every 6 weeks, Seekers meet with Guides, Seeker Care Manager, and Admin to reflect on how things are going at I.F. We will follow the format below.

At the first 6-week check in:

- Welcome
- Review aims Seeker has submitted in their application
- Seeker offers feedback about whether these aims are still true or need adjustment.
- Guides share feedback connected to aims and examples
- Seeker shares and reflects
- Seeker reflects on “What’s Working” and “What’s Not Working” at Inner Fire
- Seeker sets new goals for upcoming 6 weeks (or continues with previous aims).
- Seeker Care Manager summarizes any important information related to medications and tapering process, possibly including withdrawal effects if Seeker consents
- Staff asks any clarifying questions to better understand how to support Seeker
- Gratitudes and Affirmations

At subsequent 6-week check in meetings:

- Welcome
- Seeker is given an opportunity to recall goals and describe their current relationship to it, progress and challenges
- Guides share feedback connected to aims and examples
- Seeker reflects on “What’s Working” and “What’s Not Working” at Inner Fire
- Seeker sets new goals for upcoming 6 weeks (or continues with previous aims).
- Seeker Care Manager summarizes any important information related to medications and tapering process, possibly including withdrawal effects if Seeker consents
- Staff asks any clarifying questions to better understand how to support Seeker
- Gratitudes and Affirmations

Grocery Shopping

After 1.5 months, a Seeker will be considered for helping our chef with grocery shopping on Tuesdays for a month as part of their weekly kitchen day duties, depending on how they are engaging in the program and their ability to manage this. The intentions behind this are to develop the life skills of meal planning and grocery shopping, get acquainted with vendors and shopping our local community, and support our chef in their work. If approved, the Seekers kitchen day would be Tuesday for the month. The next month, their kitchen day would rotate to a different day of the week. Guidelines around this privilege including the following:

1. Staying with the chef throughout the shopping time
2. Not requesting to go or going out on one's own to other places
3. One Seeker supporting chef at a time
4. Assisting no more than once a month
5. No wallet or ability to spend one's own money

FEES

Financial matters are personal and we strongly discourage Seekers inquiring or discussing other people's financial situation. When Inner Fire is able to offer financial aid, it will be done so trusting that the Seeker will keep this information confidential. This is another opportunity to practice respecting each other's boundaries.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Insurance must be in place BEFORE arriving, including disability insurance.

INCIDENT REPORTING

Once again, communication is so important. As striving individuals begin to taper off their medication, there are typically withdrawal symptoms. Some of these side effects can trigger atypical responses with which the Guides at Inner Fire are prepared to work. We prefer not to call the authorities, 911 or the hospital, however, we will not hesitate to do so, if we feel anyone's wellbeing is in danger.

For example:

If a Seeker is missing.

If a Seeker has an accident or other event that requires immediate medical treatment.

We have zero tolerance for any physical abuse.

COMMUNITY SERVICE OR VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS

During the last 3 months of the program, Seekers are encouraged to engage in the broader community with community service or a vocational training course which would be relevant for their transition. Some options include Restorative Justice, volunteering at soup kitchens, or taking a stonewalling course.

INNER FIRE GRADUATES

Graduates of Inner Fire must make arrangements with the Executive Director or Business and HR Manager before visiting.

SEEKER FUNDS

Tuition covers all needs other than medical, toiletries, and consults with the psychiatrist or other medical appointments. As there is no need for Seekers to have money at Inner Fire, Seekers should not have cash with them. Payments to outside healthcare providers (aside from our homeopathic doctor whose expenses and recommended products will be invoiced separately) will need to be arranged between the financially responsible party and the provider, once our office establishes care for the Seeker through the outside provider. Seekers should bring a debit or credit card or prepaid gift card to keep on file to order personal products

through the office. Cards are kept in a safe, enclosed and locked basket, along with the other Seekers stored belongings. Seekers or their financially responsible party must approve any items before purchases are made on their behalf.

STORAGE AND LOSS OF SEEKERS PERSONAL PROPERTY

Inner Fire is not responsible for personal items that are lost or damaged. Each Seeker has a box where personal items may be stored at Inner Fire, Inc.

BEDROOMS AND BEDROOM CARE

A Seekers bedroom is their own private space. Seekers may not enter into another Seeker's bedroom. Seekers may lock their bedroom door, but should respond when a Guide knocks, ensuring safety for all.

The way we care for our bedroom is a reflection of how we care for ourselves. Though initially it might not come naturally, we expect every Seeker to make their bed and pick up their clothes before leaving their room in the morning for the day. Food is not allowed in the East Wing. Bedrooms may be inspected and searched by Guides at any time if deemed necessary.

SEEKER NUDITY

While we want Seekers to be comfortable with their bodies, our Guides encourage Seekers to be aware of how they present themselves and affect those around them. If a Seeker wishes to be naked, they may do so in their own room with the door closed and no one else present. If a Guide needs to enter a Seekers room for any reason, they will knock first and ask if Seeker is clothed and covered. If a Seeker is not clothed, the Guide will ask Seeker to clothe or cover themselves before the Guide enters. Upon entering, the Guide should leave the door open.

Seekers should wear clothing at all times in public settings. If a Seeker walks to the bathroom, they should cover themselves with a bathrobe or clothes. While we honor people's comfort level with their bodies, we Guide Seekers into an awareness of how they present themselves in public and to dress appropriately for social and public settings.

RELEASE OF INFORMATION

Confidential treatment of all information contained in the Seeker's record will be ensured and records will only be released with written consent, except when the release is required by law. All Release of Records will go through Laura, our Business and HR Director in the main office. Copies will be made at the expense of the Seeker and sent within 7 days of the request. Inner Fire, Inc. will retain records for at least 4 years after the Seeker leaves Inner Fire, Inc.

POLICY ON SEEKERS BREAKING OF CONTRACT

Please see the Seeker Service Agreement. If a Seeker breaks their contract by smoking or using alcohol and/or drugs, leaving the grounds without prior permission from Beatrice Birch or Laura Young, they will first meet with a designated Guide to discuss the event and if the behavior continues, the Seeker would meet with the Circle of Guides in order to better understand why the Seeker is doing what he/she is doing. It is likely that if the agreement formed at the Circle meeting is broken, the Seeker would be asked to leave.

POLICY AGAINST HARASSMENT

Inner Fire expects that all Seekers and Guides will treat everybody with fairness and respect. Harassment on the basis of race, religion, color, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability or national origin, or as provided under state or local law, will not be tolerated and is strictly prohibited. All Inner Fire Seekers and Guides have a responsibility for keeping the environment free of harassment. Seekers who become aware of an incident of harassment, whether by witnessing the incident or being told of it, must report it to Beatrice Birch or Laura Young, ideally, or a Guide.

Harassment means unlawful harassment, which constitutes a form of discrimination. It means verbal or physical conduct based on a person's actual or perceived race, religion (creed), color, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation or disability and which had the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with a person's work or educational performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment (Vermont Statutes, Title 16 Section 11(a)(26)).

Harassment can include any unwelcome verbal, written or physical conduct which offends, denigrates or belittles any individual because of any of the characteristics described above. Such conduct includes but is not limited to, unsolicited derogatory remarks, jokes, demeaning comments or behavior, slurs, mimicking, name calling, graffiti, innuendo, gestures, physical contact, stalking, threatening, bullying, extorting, or the display or circulation of written materials or pictures. These apply to all of the characteristics listed above.

Inner Fire will conduct a prompt and thorough investigation of all the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident in a confidential manner. If the investigation discloses that an individual has committed an act of discrimination, that individual will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Retaliation in any form against a Guide or Seeker who, in good faith, complains of discrimination or harassment is strictly prohibited and will result in appropriate disciplinary action. Corrective action will be put in place for any Guide or Seeker, to whom a Guide or Seeker brings a complaint of harassment but fails to take appropriate action to resolve it.

Inner Fire has a zero-tolerance harassment policy, and therefore accepts no liability for harassment of one Guide or Seeker by another Guide or Seeker or harassment by a Guide or Seeker of any member of the Inner Fire community. The individual who makes unwelcome

advances, threatens or in any way harasses another Guide or Seeker is personally liable for such actions and their consequences.

POLICY AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment as well as gender-based and sexual orientation discrimination is illegal and contrary to the policy of Inner Fire. Inner Fire fosters a work environment free of sexual harassment, gender-based discrimination, sexual orientation, intimidation, and insult. Inner Fire prohibits any Guide or Seeker from making sexual advances, unwelcome, offensive, or inappropriate comments regarding another person's gender or engaging in other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual or gender-offensive nature, when an individual's submission to that conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of that individual's employment, or when that conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. Harassment based on gender is a form of misconduct that undermines both personal and professional relationships in the workplace. Every Guide must be assured that he or she can work in an environment that is free from unwanted and unwelcome harassment and discrimination.

Sexual harassment creates unacceptable stress for the entire organization, adversely affecting morale, demeans the individual so treated, and could cause potentially devastating costs to Inner Fire. Inner Fire believes that courteous, mutually respectful, pleasant, non-coercive interactions between Guides and Seekers will best serve the wellbeing of each individual and Inner Fire.

All Guides and Seekers, both male and female, are strictly prohibited from sexually harassing or making improper advances toward other Guides and Seekers or harassing other Guides or Seekers as a result of their gender. Sexual harassment is a form of unlawful harassment and means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to that conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a Seeker's education or Guide's employment;
- Submission to or refractor of such conduct by a person is used as a component of the basis for decisions affecting a Seeker's education or Guide's employment.

The conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with a Seeker's education or Guide's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment (Vermont Statutes, Title 16, Section 11(a)(26)). This applies whether the harassment is between people of the same or different gender. Sexual harassment can include unwelcome, written or physical conduct, directed at or related to a person's gender, such as sexual gossip or personal comments of a sexual nature, sexually suggestive or foul language, sexual jokes, whistling, spreading rumors or lies of a sexual nature about someone, demanding sexual favors, forcing sexual activity by threat or punishment or offer of educational reward, obscene kissing or hugging, or restraining someone's movement in a sexual way.

Any person who believes that he/she is a victim of any type of discriminatory conduct, including sexual harassment, should bring that conduct to the immediate attention of a Council member. Inner Fire will conduct a prompt and thorough investigation of all the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident in a confidential manner. If the investigation discloses that an individual has committed an act of discrimination, that individual will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Retaliation in any form against a Guide or Seeker who complains of discrimination or harassment is strictly prohibited and will result in appropriate disciplinary action. Any Guide to whom a Guide brings a complaint of sexual harassment but who fails to take appropriate action to resolve it will also be disciplined.

The provisions of this section also apply to any sexual interaction, whether consensual or otherwise, with a Seeker.

ANGER IS OK, VIOLENCE IS UNACCEPTABLE

Transparency is essential in our mutual intention to support the SSeeker in their healing journey. In order to more consciously work with the striving individual, it is essential for us to know whether violence has been part of the Seeker's history. Included in the application packet are documents for the applicant and parent/guardian to fully disclose all known violent episodes in detail. Signatures indicate full disclosure of all known violent circumstances in which the applicant has been involved. As tapering can be traumatic, and individuals may not always be in control of their feelings, we understand there is the possibility of expressing anger and violent situations. Full disclosure of any past violent episodes enables us to provide proper support and be fully prepared to work through incidents that may arise in a manner that is safe for all.

POLICY

Inner Fire continuously seeks to ensure a safe environment for all Seekers, staff, and visitors. Acts of violence will be assessed on a case by case basis, resulting in appropriate, immediate interventions. All cases of violence will be assessed by thorough investigation and evaluation of the circumstances surrounding the violent event. Inner Fire reserves the right to contact parents/guardians of the offender in the event of a violent episode. This process is intended to help Inner Fire determine what can be done to prevent the same, or similar events from reoccurring and maintaining a safe environment for all.

REPORTING A VIOLENT EVENT

Any witnessed violent events will be immediately reported verbally by phone or in person to an Inner Fire Council member. A complete incident report will be drawn up as soon as is safely possible, within the same shift of the violent incident. An in-person review of the incident with the Council will be scheduled as soon as is possible to process and determine next steps.

Inner Fire maintains a no retaliation policy ensuring all Seekers, Guides, and visitors in no way will be retaliated upon for reporting violent actions. Inner Fire will initiate steps to begin a restorative plan to recover property damage resulting from violent episodes. We will also

initiate restorative justice as a way to reestablish safe and healthy community relationships that may have been damaged by a violent episode. Any expenses incurred due to property damage are the responsibility of the Seeker (parents/guardians) for full reimbursement.

GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Seeker and Seeker's family should understand that mental soul health care is not an exact science. No guarantees are made as to the results of providing such care, services or programs associated therewith, nor should such guarantees be expected. However, our wish is to ensure that any complaint or grievance by a Seeker or the Seeker's family is addressed, no matter how large or small, in a respectful and timely manner. We will give a meaningful response to the person or persons issuing the complaint or grievance and there will be no compromise to the quality of care due to any complaint or grievance issued either verbally or in writing.

DEFINITION OF TERMS:

Complaint: A "complaint" is an oral/verbal expression of displeasure or dissatisfaction voiced by a Seeker or Seeker's family that can be resolved quickly by staff who are present at the time of the complaint or who can quickly be present to resolve the complaint.

Grievance: A "grievance" is a written or oral concern which has not been resolved at the time it was raised or was postponed or referred to other staff for later resolution, requires investigation, and/or requires further actions for resolution, then the complaint is a grievance. A concern or complaint expressed in writing is always considered a grievance. An email or fax is considered written.

PROCEDURE:

- Upon admission, each Seeker is provided with a copy of the Seeker Handbook which includes Inner Fire's Grievance Procedure.
- Seekers are encouraged to discuss concerns directly with a Guide. Many concerns can be resolved in this manner.
- If the Guide present cannot resolve the complaint to the Seeker's satisfaction, or if the Seeker chooses not to pursue a complaint with the Guide, the Seeker may initiate a formal grievance to the Council.
- A Seeker or the Seeker's Family may initiate a grievance at any time by providing a statement that explains the problem and any relief requested to any Inner Fire employee. A Seeker may receive assistance in transcribing an oral grievance from anyone, including Inner Fire staff.
- Inner Fire will accept grievances in any written form or format.
- When an Inner Fire employee receives a written grievance, the employee shall provide the Seeker or Seeker's family with a copy of their grievance. The Executive Director of Inner Fire will be informed and provided with the name of the Seeker or Seeker's family initiating the grievance and the nature of the grievance. The Inner Fire employee will then forward the original copy of the written grievance to the Executive Director.

- Upon receipt of the grievance, a committee will be formed with two or more Inner Fire staff to investigate the grievance, which may or may not include the Executive Director.
- If a grievance is with the Executive Director of Inner Fire, we request you put your grievance in writing and give to a Council Member. The Council will discuss. If there is no resolution, then the grievance will be taken to a Board of Directors representative.
- If the grievance includes any allegation of abuse or neglect, staff will also follow the Inner Fire’s mandated reporting policy.
- All grievances will be investigated and responded to in writing within a reasonable timeframe, usually within five (5) working days and no longer than 10 working days.
- The Seeker or Seeker’s family member may appeal the response to their grievance if they are dissatisfied with their response.
- Upon conclusion of the investigation into a grievance, the Executive Director of Inner Fire, or designated Inner Fire staff member, shall ensure that a written response to the grievance is provided to the Seeker or Seeker’s family.

APPEAL PROCESS: The Executive Director and additional staff shall form a committee and:

1. Review the grievance decision and take such other action to investigate the matter as the Committee deems appropriate.
2. Provide Seeker or Seeker’s family with a written notice of decision, including steps taken to investigate the appeal and the reason for the decision. The Committee’s decision will be final.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES FOR COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES:

Commissioner
 Vermont Department of Mental Health
 26 Terrace Street, Redstone Building
 Montpelier, VT 05602
 802-828-3867

Green Mountain Care Board
 89 Main Street, Third Floor, City Center
 Montpelier, Vermont 05620
 802-828-2177

Department of Disabilities, Aging &
 Independent Living,
 Division of Licensing and Protection
 280 State Drive
 Waterbury, VT 05671-2060
 802-871-3333 or toll-free at
 1-800-564-1612

Vermont Board of Medical Practice
 P.O. Box 70, Burlington, VT 05402-0070
 1-800-745-7371 (toll free in Vermont)
 802-657-4220

Disability Rights Vermont
 141 Main St., Suite 7, Montpelier, VT 05602
 802-229-1355

Vermont Department of Health
 108 Cherry Street, Burlington, VT 05402
 1-800-464-4343 (toll free in Vermont)
 802-863-7200
 Medical Practice & Hospital Licensing Board
 Vermont Department of Health
 P.O. Box 70
 Burlington, VT 05402-0070
 802-657-4220, 800-745-7371

The Joint Commission
 One Renaissance Blvd., Oakbrook Terrace, IL
 60181
 630-792-5000

Department of Financial Regulation
 89 Main Street, Montpelier, VT 05620
 802-828-33

Resident Rights

As per Inner Fire's Seeker Handbook, application, forms and other documents, you will see that our program is designed in such a way that voluntarily adjusts some of the below rights as a resident of a therapeutic community in Vermont during some periods of time (i.e. initial limited outside contact and telephone / computer access). While we cannot, nor do we wish to ask you to waive your rights, your decision to engage in the program at Inner Fire affirms that you are voluntarily choosing to participate in the program as it has been designed. We believe that over time and affording it the opportunity, you will embrace the value of this program's design and its benefit to you.

In the State of VERMONT, your rights as a resident of a Therapeutic Community Residence as required by the State are as follows (these may change, as these are state regulations subject to change by appropriate action by the state):

6.1 Every resident shall be treated with consideration, respect and full recognition of the resident's dignity, individuality, and privacy. A residence may not ask a resident to waive the resident's rights. A resident has the right to exercise any rights without reprisal.

6.2 Each residence shall establish and adhere to a written policy, consistent with these regulations, regarding the rights and responsibilities of residents, which shall be explained to residents at the time of admission. Receipt of the rights by the resident shall be indicated by a signature and date by the resident on a line for that purpose on the admission agreement.

6.3 Residents may retain personal clothing and possessions as space permits, unless to do so would infringe on the rights of others, would create a danger to others, would create a security risk or would create a fire, health or safety hazard.

6.4 A resident shall not be required to perform work for the licensee. If a resident chooses to perform specific tasks for the licensee the resident shall receive reasonable compensation which shall be specified in a written agreement with the resident.

6.5 Each resident shall be allowed to associate, communicate and meet privately with persons of the resident's own choice, including family members, unless such access has been restricted by a court. Residences shall allow visiting hours from at least 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., or longer. Visiting hours shall be posted in a prominent public place.

6.6 Each resident may send and receive personal mail unopened, unless such access has been restricted by a court.

6.7 Residents have the right to reasonable access to a telephone for private conversations unless such access has been restricted by a court. Residents shall have reasonable access to the residence's telephone except when restricted because of excessive unpaid toll charges or misuse. Restrictions as to telephone use shall be in writing. Any resident may, at the resident's own expense, maintain a personal telephone or other electronic equipment in his or her own room, unless such access has been restricted by a court.

6.8 A resident may file a complaint or voice a grievance without interference, coercion or reprisal. Each residence shall establish an accessible written grievance procedure for resolving residents' concerns or complaints that is explained to residents at the time of admission and posted in a prominent, public place on each floor of the residence. The grievance procedure shall include at a minimum, time frames, a process for responding to residents in writing within ten (10) days, and a method by which each resident filing a complaint or grievance will be made aware of the designated Vermont protection and advocacy organization as an alternative or in addition to the residence's grievance mechanism.

6.9 Residents may manage their own personal finances unless a representative payee or financial guardian has been appointed. The residence or licensee shall not manage a resident's finances unless requested in writing by the resident and then in accordance with the resident's wishes. The residence or licensee shall keep a record of all transactions and make the record available, upon request, to the resident or legal representative, and shall provide the resident with an accounting of all transactions at least quarterly. Resident funds must be kept separate from other accounts or funds of the residence.

6.10 The resident's right to privacy extends to all records and personal information. Personal information about a resident shall not be discussed with anyone not directly involved in the resident's care, treatment or supervision. Release of any record, excerpts from or information contained in such records shall be subject to the resident's written approval, except as requested by representatives of the licensing agency to carry out its responsibilities or as otherwise provided by law.

6.11 The resident has the right to review the resident's medical or financial records upon request. The resident has the right to provide written comments about the medical or financial record and the comments shall be made part of the resident's record at the request of the resident.

6.12 Residents shall be free from mental, verbal or physical abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Residents shall also be free from seclusion or restraints. All residents have the right to be free from corporal punishment. All residents have the right to be free from restraint or seclusion, of

any form, imposed as a means of coercion, discipline, convenience, or retaliation by staff. Psychoactive drugs shall not be administered involuntarily.

6.13 When a resident is adjudicated mentally disabled, such powers as have been delegated by the Probate or Family Court to the resident's guardian shall be exercised by the guardian.

6.14 Residents notified about a pending discharge from the residence under Section 5.4 of these regulations, absent an emergency, shall:

(a) Be allowed to participate in the decision-making process of the residence concerning the selection of an alternative placement; and

(b) Receive adequate notice of a pending transfer.

6.15 Residents have the right to refuse care to the extent allowed by law.

(a) Except for residents who are prohibited from doing so by a court order, this right includes the right to discharge himself or herself from the residence.

(b) The residence must fully inform the resident of the consequences of refusing care. If the resident makes a fully informed decision to refuse care, the residence must respect that decision and is absolved of further responsibility, unless the resident is in a secure residential recovery facility and has been court-ordered to take medication or receive care.

(c) If the refusal of care will result in a resident's needs increasing beyond what the residence is licensed to provide, or will result in the residence being in violation of these regulations, the residence may issue the resident notice of discharge.

6.16 Residents have the right to fill out a document called an "advance directive" in accordance with Title 18, chapter 231 and to have the residence follow the residents' wishes, unless such wishes are contrary to a court order. The residence shall provide residents with information about advance directives and, upon request, may support a resident's efforts to complete the documents.

6.17 Residents shall have help in assuming as much responsibility for themselves and others as possible, and in participating in residence activities.

6.18 Residents shall have explained to them the reasons and risks associated with the use of any prescribed medication they are taking.

6.19 Residents shall be free to terminate their relationship to the residence.

6.20 The enumeration of residents' rights shall not be construed to limit, modify, abridge, restrict or reduce in any way any rights that a resident otherwise enjoys as a human being or citizen, unless those rights have been limited by a court.

6.21 The obligations of the residence to its residents shall be written in clear language, large print, given to residents on admission, and posted in an accessible, prominent and public place on each floor of the residence. Such notice shall also state the residence's grievance procedure and directions for contacting the designated Vermont protection and advocacy organization.

6.22 If a resident has a chronic condition, he or she has the right to receive competent and compassionate medical assistance to manage the physical and emotional symptoms of that condition.

6.23 Residents have the right to have a family member or another person of the resident's choice be notified of the admission to the residence. Residents also have the right to decline to have anyone notified of the admission. A facility may not disclose information about a resident's admission without obtaining the resident's authorization. The decision by the resident regarding notice shall be documented at the time of admission to the residence.

6.24 Residents have the right to obtain the opinion of a consultant at the resident's own expense.

6.25 Residents have the right to vote.

6.26 Residents with limited English proficiency have the right to have oral or written translation or interpretive services and cannot be required to pay for such services.

6.27 Residents have the right to have accommodations made to a disability (or disabilities) to ensure that there are no barriers to their receipt of services and that they understand the care and treatment being provided. Such accommodations shall include, but are not limited to, sign language interpretation and having documents provided in accessible formats, as applicable. The resident shall not be required to pay for these services.

6.28 Residents have the right to receive services without discrimination based on race, religion, color, gender (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or age. By signing here, you indicate you have read and understand your rights as a resident of a Therapeutic Community in Vermont. You understand that your rights regarding phone use, meeting with family & friends, writing letters and having access to computers and other electronics are not being removed, but that you are simply choosing to follow and work

within Inner Fire's program for your benefit. Your rights still exist. You may choose to exercise them or not.

For your reference and access, these rights are also displayed at Grace Brook Farm in our front door entryway and in the East Wing in the common area.

If you do wish to exercise your rights and to stray from our intentional program design, we will follow a protocol as follows:

- *The Seeker shall bring their request to the Seeker Care Manager, explaining which right they want to exercise and why. The Seeker Care Manager will ask more clarifying questions, to help both parties better understand the presented wants or needs.*
- *The Seeker Care Manager will invite the Seeker to wait for a period of time (minimum 24 hours), to assess whether the request is truly urgent, or if sticking to the Inner Fire design will ultimately be the most beneficial approach.*
- *The Seeker may approach the Seeker Care Manager a second time. After the 2nd request, the Seeker Care Manager brings it to the Admin to make them aware and receive feedback / support to know how to support the Seeker.*
- *If the issue still feels urgent, Seeker asks a third time. After these three inquiries, the Seeker will be given the means to exercise their desired right.*
- *The admin team and Seeker will then schedule a meeting to discuss whether the Inner Fire program design continues to be a good fit for the Seeker, generally, or whether the Seeker might better thrive in a different environment.*

APPENDIX 1 - Lyme Tick Prevention and Care

Maintaining good health, a strong immune system, and a positive attitude are the key ingredients to coping with any assault on one's health that may arise. Healthy diet which promotes positive digestive microbiology, plenty of fresh air, exercise, meaningful work/activity, and creative social and personal life all contribute to one's overall well-being and capacity to maintain health even when confronted with challenges such as tick bites.

Of course, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, so...

- ★ The most important thing is checking the body every day/evening for ticks. This can be done easily during a shower, while washing, feeling the skin for any small bumps. Especially check the hairline and scalp, underarms and groin, and the back with a buddy or a mirror. Doing a once over the entire skin of one's body is the best way to discover an attached tick.
- ★ Ticks are more often found in forest cover and tall grasses because they are moisture dependent and can't survive in dry places. Extra awareness when hiking or working in the woods is needed. Tucking pant legs into socks, and shirts into pant waist can prevent ticks from crawling up under clothing. Light coloured clothing can make it easier to see ticks on clothing.
- ★ If a tick is found, immediate removal, by a careful assistant, is the first step. See below: "How to remove a tick". A "tick key" or other device may be used, but a pair of fine tweezers is all that is needed. Tamara has a source of a soft-tipped tweezer that could be recommended.
- ★ Clean the area with alcohol or other antiseptic.
- ★ Apply homeopathic ledum, in the form of "Sting Stop", or tea tree oil.
- ★ A drawing paste of green clay or activated charcoal, bentonite clay or castor oil can be applied to draw out anything the tick may have transmitted.
- ★ Cover, clean and re-apply antiseptic and drawing paste daily.
- ★ Monitor the site daily for the first week, watching for the bulls-eye rash.
- ★ If fever, rash, fatigue, or pain develop see a doctor.
- ★ Tick Comp Tincture: a homeopathic combination of herbs created by Tamara Potselueva, our homeopathic/naturopathic physician. This tincture helps to kill off any bacteria, virus or other pathogens potentially transmitted by ticks. Only 5% of ticks carry Lyme disease, but anytime someone has a tick, we have them take this prophylactically, 15 drops/ hour for the first day, then 3x/day for the first week. Tick Comp contains: Teasel, Cat's Claw bark, Samento, Banderol,

Ceanothus, Geranium Robertianum, Andrographis, Astragalus, Smilax, Astragalus Arnica, Thuja Thymus comp, Lachesis Belladonna, PhytoLymex, Lyme nosode drops, Tick Pathogen Nosode, Lyme Balance, Lyme and Co-infection Nosode, LymePlex.

- ★ Most importantly, in the event of finding an attached tick, stay calm; don't panic. Be proactive with immune support and follow the above protocols.
- ★ If immunity is strong enough you can live the entire life w/o symptoms
- ★ Be aware that things can happen and that fear can knock you down.
- ★ Do the best you can, there is no universal protocol.
- ★ Use common sense; keep a healthy outlook
- ★ Maintain good hygiene and nutrition because...
- ★ It all depends on the health condition of the host.

Below are some clear and common sense medical research/facts and advice about dealing with ticks.

<https://www.uptodate.com/contents/what-to-do-after-a-tick-bite-to-prevent-lyme-disease-beyond-the-basics>

Patient education: What to do after a tick bite to prevent Lyme disease (Beyond the Basics)

Author:

[Linden Hu, MD](#)

Section Editor:

[Allen C Steere, MD](#)

Deputy Editor:

[Jennifer Mitty, MD, MPH](#)

[Contributor Disclosures](#)

All topics are updated as new evidence becomes available and our [peer review process](#) is complete.

Literature review current through: Apr 2018. | **This topic last updated:** Jul 24, 2017.

TICK BITE OVERVIEW There are many different types of ticks in the United States, some of which are capable of transmitting infections. The risk of developing these infections depends upon the geographic location, season of the year, type of tick, and, for Lyme disease, how long the tick was attached to the skin.

While many people are concerned after being bitten by a tick, the risk of acquiring a tick-borne infection is quite low, even if the tick has been attached, fed, and is actually carrying an infectious agent. Ticks transmit infection only after they have attached and then taken a blood meal from their new host. A tick that has not attached (and therefore has not yet become engorged from its blood meal) has not passed any infection. Since the deer tick that transmits Lyme disease typically feeds for >36 hours before

transmission of the spirochete, the risk of acquiring Lyme disease from an observed tick bite, for example, is only 1.2 to 1.4 percent, even in an area where the disease is common.

The organism that causes Lyme disease, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, lies dormant in the inner aspect of the tick's midgut. The organism becomes active only after exposure to the warm blood meal entering the tick's gut. Once active, the organism enters the tick's salivary glands. As the tick feeds, it must get rid of excess water through the salivary glands. Thus, the tick will literally salivate organisms into the wound, thereby passing the infection to the host.

If a person is bitten by a deer tick (the type of tick that carries Lyme disease), a healthcare provider will likely advise one of two approaches:

- Observe and treat if signs or symptoms of infection develop
- Treat with a preventive antibiotic immediately

There is no benefit of blood testing for Lyme disease at the time of the tick bite; even people who become infected will not have a positive blood test until approximately two to six weeks after the infection develops (post-tick bite).

The history of the tick bite will largely determine which of these options is chosen. Before seeking medical attention, the affected person or household member should carefully remove the tick and make a note of its appearance. Only the *Ixodes* species of tick, also known as the deer tick, causes Lyme disease.



Deer Tick

HOW TO REMOVE A TICK

The proper way to remove a tick is to use a set of fine tweezers and grip the tick as close to the skin as is possible. Do not use a smoldering match or cigarette, nail polish, petroleum jelly (eg, Vaseline), liquid soap, or kerosene because they may irritate the tick and cause it to behave like a syringe, injecting bodily fluids into the wound.

The proper technique for tick removal includes the following:

- Use fine tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin surface as possible.
- Pull backwards gently but firmly, using an even, steady pressure. Do not jerk or twist.
- Do not squeeze, crush, or puncture the body of the tick, since its bodily fluids may contain infection-causing organisms.
- After removing the tick, wash the skin and hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- If any mouth parts of the tick remain in the skin, these should be left alone; they will be expelled on their own. Attempts to remove these parts may result in significant skin trauma.

AFTER THE TICK IS REMOVED

Tick characteristics — It is helpful if the person can provide information about the size and color of the tick ([figure 1](#)), whether it was actually attached to the skin, if it was engorged (that is, full of blood), and how long it was attached.

Engorged Deer Tick

- Ticks that are brown and approximately the size of a poppy seed or pencil point are deer ticks; however, the size can change with feeding. See above



picture of engorged tick. These ticks can transmit *B. burgdorferi* (the bacterium that causes Lyme disease) and a number of other tick-borne infections, including babesiosis and anaplasmosis. *B. burgdorferi*-infected deer ticks live primarily in the northeast and mid-Atlantic region (Maine to Virginia) and in the midwest region (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio) of the United States, and less commonly in the western US (northern California).

Dog Tick below

- Ticks that are brown with a white collar and about the size of a pencil eraser are more likely to be dog ticks (*Dermacentor* species). These ticks do not carry Lyme disease, but can rarely carry another tick-borne infection called Rocky Mountain spotted fever that can be serious or even fatal.
- A brown to black tick with a white splotch on its back is likely a female *Amblyomma americanum* (Lone Star tick; named after the white splotch) (picture 2). This species of tick has been reported to spread an illness called southern tick-associated rash illness (STARI). STARI causes a rash that is similar to the erythema migrans rash, but without the other features of Lyme disease. Although this rash is thought to be caused by an infection, a cause for the infection has not yet been identified. This type of tick can also carry and transmit another infection called human monocytic ehrlichiosis.
- A tick that was not attached, was easy to remove or just walking on the skin, and was still flat and tiny and not full of blood when it was removed could not have transmitted Lyme disease or any other infection since it had not yet taken a blood meal.
- Only ticks that are attached and have finished feeding or are near the end of their meal can transmit Lyme disease. After arriving on the skin, the tick that spreads Lyme disease usually takes 24 hours before feeding begins.
- Even if a tick is attached, it must have taken a blood meal to transmit Lyme disease. At least 36 to 48 hours of feeding is typically required for a tick to have fed and then transmit the bacterium that causes Lyme disease. After this amount of time, the tick will be engorged (full of blood). An engorged tick has a globular shape and is larger than an unengorged one.
- It is not clear how long a tick needs to be attached to transmit organisms other than *B. burgdorferi*.



Need for treatment — The clinician will review the description of the tick, along with any physical symptoms, to decide upon a course of action. The Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) recommends preventive treatment with antibiotics only in people who meet **ALL** of the following criteria:

- Attached tick identified as an adult or nymphal *Ixodes scapularis* (deer) tick
- Tick is estimated to have been attached for ≥ 36 hours (based upon how engorged the tick appears or the amount of time since outdoor exposure)
- The antibiotic can be given within 72 hours of tick removal
- The local rate of tick infection with *B. burgdorferi* is ≥ 20 percent (known to occur in parts of New England, parts of the mid-Atlantic states, and parts of Minnesota and Wisconsin)
- The person can take doxycycline (eg, the person is not pregnant or breastfeeding or a child < 8 years of age)

If the person meets ALL of the above criteria, the recommended dose of doxycycline is a single dose of 200 mg for adults and 4 mg/kg, up to a maximum dose of 200 mg, in children ≥ 8 years.

If the person cannot take doxycycline, the IDSA does not recommend preventive treatment with an alternate antibiotic for several reasons: there are no data to support a short course of another antibiotic, a longer course of antibiotics may have side effects, antibiotic treatment is highly effective if Lyme disease were to develop, and the risk of developing a serious complication of Lyme disease after a recognized bite is extremely low.

MONITORING FOR LYME DISEASE

Many people have incorrect information about Lyme disease. For example, some people are concerned that Lyme disease is untreatable if antibiotics are not given early (this is untrue; even later features of Lyme disease can be effectively treated with appropriate antibiotics). Many local Lyme disease networks and national organizations disseminate unproven information and should not be the sole source of education about Lyme disease. Reputable sources are listed below (see ['Where to get more information'](#) below).

Signs of Lyme disease — Whether or not a clinician is consulted after a tick bite, the person who was bitten (or the parents, if a child was bitten) should observe the area of the bite for expanding redness, which would suggest erythema migrans (EM), the characteristic bulls eye rash of Lyme disease. Approximately 80 percent of people with Lyme disease develop EM; 10 to 20 percent of people have multiple lesions. (See ["Patient education: Lyme disease symptoms and diagnosis \(Beyond the Basics\)"](#).)



The EM rash is usually a salmon color although, rarely, it can be an intense red, sometimes resembling a skin infection. The color may be almost uniform. The lesion typically expands over a few days or weeks and can reach over 20 cm (8 inches) in diameter. As the rash expands, it can become clear (skin-colored) in the center. The center of the rash can then appear a lighter color than its edges or the rash can develop into a series of concentric rings giving it a "bull's eye" appearance. The rash usually causes no symptoms, although burning or itching has been reported.

In people with early localized Lyme disease, EM occurs within one month of the tick bite, typically within a week of the tick bite, although only one-third of people recall the tick bite that gave them Lyme disease. Components of tick saliva can also cause a rash; however, this rash should not be confused with EM. The rash caused by tick saliva typically occurs while the tick is still feeding or just after the tick detaches, and usually does not expand to a size larger than a dime.

If EM or other signs or symptoms suggestive of Lyme disease develop (see chart below), the person should see a healthcare provider for proper diagnosis and treatment. (See ["Patient education: Lyme disease treatment \(Beyond the Basics\)"](#).)

https://www.uptodate.com/contents/lyme-disease-treatment-beyond-the-basics?topicRef=4017&source=see_link

<https://www.livescience.com/46160-how-to-avoid-tick-bites.html>

Early localized disease, occurring a few days to one month after the tick bite*

Erythema migrans - occurs in approximately 80 percent of patients

Associated symptoms and signs may include: fatigue, malaise, lethargy, mild headache, mild neck stiffness, myalgias, arthralgias, regional lymphadenopathy

Early disseminated disease¶, occurring weeks to months after the tick bite*Δ

Carditis - about 1 percent of patients reported to the CDC◇

Manifestations include AV nodal block, mild cardiomyopathy or myopericarditis

Neurologic disease - occurs in approximately 15 percent of untreated patients◇

Manifestations include lymphocytic meningitis, cranial neuropathy (most often facial, can be bilateral), peripheral neuropathy; rarely myelitis or encephalitis

Musculoskeletal involvement - occurs in approximately 60 percent of untreated patients◇

Manifestations include migratory arthralgias

Skin involvement - multiple erythema migrans lesionsΔ, borrelial lymphocytoma (in Europe)

Lymphadenopathy - regional or generalized

Eye involvements§ - conjunctivitis, iritis, choroiditis, vitritis, retinitis

Liver disease - liver function test abnormalities, hepatitis

Kidney disease - microhematuria, asymptomatic proteinuria

Late disease¶, occurring months to years after the tick bite*

Musculoskeletal symptoms - approximately 60 percent of untreated patients develop intermittent monoarticular or oligoarticular arthritis; approximately 10 percent of untreated patients develop persistent monoarthritis, usually affecting the knee

Neurologic disease - incidence has not been established

Peripheral neuropathy or encephalomyelitis (both rare)

Cutaneous involvement - acrodermatitis chronica atrophicans, morphea/localized scleroderma-like lesions (both described only in Europe)