

ETHICS IN THERAPEUTIC PRACTICE

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What are Ethics

Ethics are a set of moral principles or rules of conduct. Ethics determine choices made. Therapists and others in helping professions are expected to behave in an ethical manner. Ethics deals with the action's professionals ought to take in relations to each other, to those who seek their services and to the public.

The origins of ethics relate to moral behaviour. The application of concepts such as 'right' and 'wrong', and the definition of these concepts in different environments, induced the need for a formal approach to social behaviour – an attempt to create commonality and organisation in a society. In this context, codes of behaviour were created, and different forms of behaviour enforcement adopted.

As societies developed, and increasing importance was placed in structural thinking – such as the advent of sciences – meta-ethics became an eminent topic of discussion. Meta-ethics refers to the investigation of ethical statements, an actual analysis of ethics itself. Names such as Hobbes, Kant and Nietzsche were prominent in this period.

Ethics remains a main topic of discussion within therapy as in many other industries. As societies evolve, the relationships between individuals become more complex, and so do the etiquettes and codes of conduct. The development of business relationships has raised many ethical dilemmas, and ethical counselling is one of them.

Ethics are the principles of autonomy, justice, kindness, morality, and fidelity are each is vital in and of themselves to a healthy counselling / therapeutic relationship. Exploring an ethical dilemma with regard to these principles, a therapist may come to a better understanding of the conflicting issues.

Some common ethical issues experienced can include:

- Maintaining Boundaries.
- Questioning Your Professional Ability.
- Sharing Personal Problems.
- Maintaining Confidentiality.
- Respecting Client Differences.
- Getting the Authorities Involved.
- Maintaining Therapy.
- Bias
- Judgement
- Triggers

Morality is the differentiation of intentions, decisions made, and actions taken. Morality can be a body of standards or principles derived from a code of conduct or derived from a standard that a person believes should be universal. Ethics provide the moral framework for therapeutic practice by providing normative standards of conduct or actions. Ethical values seek to promote the well-being and self-determination of the client to avoid harming the client or others, and to maintain the competence of the therapist.



Ethical Principles

1. Members respect the essential humanity, worth and dignity of all people and promote this value in their work.
2. Members recognise and respect diversity among people and oppose discrimination and oppressive behaviour.
3. Members respect the privacy of their clients and preserve the confidentiality of information acquired in the course of their work.
4. Members protect the rights of their clients, including the right to informed consent.
5. Members take steps to maintain and develop the highest standard of professional competence and integrity in the application of hypnotherapeutic knowledge and techniques throughout their professional careers.
6. Members abide by the laws of the society in which they practise.

Ethical Responsibilities

Responsibilities to the Client include taking all reasonable steps to avoid harm to the client, encourage clients to make responsible decisions on their own behalf, setting and maintaining professional boundaries within the therapeutic relationship and not having any relationships with clients during and for a period of 2 years after therapy. These standards provide conduct guidelines for professionals and are an effective way support to therapists. It is expected that all therapists

- Offer a non-judgemental professional service, free from discrimination while honouring the individuality of the client
- Establish a helping and supportive relationship in order to maintain the integrity and empowerment of the client without offering direct advice
- Demonstrate commitment to ongoing personal and professional development. There is a wide range of issues comprising the field of ethical therapy – which are also part of common guidelines for the practice of therapy. The main ethical framework of therapy is based on the concepts of autonomy, fidelity, justice, beneficence, non-corruption and self-interest.

Law and Therapy

The need for professionalisation has created a common link between ethical behaviour and legal conduct in the therapy fields. Legislation was provided to primarily protect clients from misguidance, and ultimately to provide guidelines for the profession. Use your insurance company, your Association or your Supervisor if you have any issues you feel may cause issues for you. These are the people that can guide you and give advice to help protect you from any suggestion of legality or ethical issues.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is about keeping the issues of the client private. This means what is discussed within the therapy room remains between the client and therapist. The exception is when the therapist deidentifies the client to discuss any therapeutic issues with the supervision or in a supervision meeting.

This area is closely linked with the legal issues in therapy. Confidentiality plays a major role in defining the communication between a therapist and a client, bearing in mind that trust is one of the backbones of a therapeutic relationship.



Situations which may put the client in danger usually require the therapist to make difficult decisions in regard to breaching confidentiality. In some instances, the actual breach is a legal requirement as it may incur the prevention of a crime against the state, or another person.

The issues of privacy and power in a therapeutic session can be prejudicial in terms of unethical practice. There can be an augmented differential of the power relationship between client and therapist, in which the therapist could take advantage of their position of power to practice unethical behaviour.

Other predominant issues such as consultancy with supervisors or colleagues, and session record-keeping, must be considered by therapists when practicing.

- Therapists treat with confidence any personal information about clients, whether obtained directly or by inference. This applies to all verbal, written or recorded material produced as a result of the relationship. All records, whether in written or any other form, need to be protected with the strictest of confidence
- The client must not be observed by anyone other than their therapist without having given informed consent. This applies both to direct observation and to any form of audio or visual transmission or recording
- Exceptional circumstances may arise which give the therapist good grounds for believing that the client will cause serious physical harm to others or themselves. In such circumstances, the breaking of confidentiality may be required, preferably with the client's permission, or after consultation with the therapist's supervisor
- Any breaking of confidentiality should be minimised both by restricting the information conveyed to that which is pertinent to the immediate situation and by limiting it to those persons who can provide the help required by the client
- Agreements about confidentiality continue after the client's leave unless there are overriding legal considerations
- Members and supervisors are responsible for protecting the client's rights of confidentiality and any shared information should be disguised where appropriate
- Permission is to be provided in writing from a client before the therapist can contact an Allied Health or medical practitioner

Supervision

It is accepted that a therapist can discuss a case matter with their supervisor as this relationship is confidential and used as guidance for the therapist. Deidentifying the client is essential. Discussing client and therapeutic matters, issues of boundaries, therapy used, disclosures made, and bias felt are all part of supervision.

Supervision is required by Associations to enable the therapist to remain registered. The reason therapists need supervision is to discuss any issues that may prompt concern for the therapist including things such as therapeutic interventions, bias, past trauma that has triggered an issue for the therapist. 24 points of supervision are required yearly Half individual (6 hours) and half (12 hours) group or peer.

CPD's

All therapists must comply with Association rules on **Continuing Professional Development** (CPD). There are 20 hours of CPD required.