



## ICSB Ethical Code of Conduct

### Definition:

Ethical codes are intended to protect consumers and provide professionals with guidance regarding the best action to take in challenging, confusing or novel situations. Rather than providing the “right answer”, ethical codes help guide responsible behavior and resolve ethical dilemmas.

Ethical codes can be looked at as guidelines of behavior; a behavior which is grounded in social rules and expanded to the professional field of activity. Most of them are common sense.

They were formulated when questions were arising, when a professional conduct was difficult, questioned or even abused.

It is really a set of guidelines, which are important to internalize, to avoid doing harm. These guidelines came out of experience and out of life. They are not rules without any background. They were created to have a safety net for the practitioner and the client in the therapeutic context.

### General ethical principles

Common ethical guidelines are:

Autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, justice, fidelity, veracity

- **Autonomy**
  - Personal independence and the capacity to make moral decisions and act on them.

Autonomy refers to the right of a person to make choices and take actions on the basis of their belief system, provided the results do not adversely affect others.
- **Beneficence**
  - generosity or charity
  - a good or charitable act, especially a generous gift
  - the beneficial nature or effect that something has

Beneficence refers to the intent “to do good” to others. Therapists who strive to provide the most comprehensive up-to-date service to their clients are embodying the principle of beneficence.
- **Nonmaleficence**

Can be described as the phrase: “Above all do no harm.”

Thus neglect (even unintentional) on the part of the therapist would be problematic.
- **Justice**
  - fairness or reasonableness, especially in the way people are treated or decisions are made

Justice can be defined as fairness or ensuring equality of opportunities and resources for all people.
- **Fidelity**
  - loyalty to an allegiance, promise, or vow
  - accuracy in describing or reporting facts or details

Fidelity refers to keeping promises and being trustworthy. The therapist’s ability to be faithful to such agreements is crucial for the development of trust and violations create damage in trust.
- **Veracity**
  - the truth, accuracy, or precision of something
  - the truthfulness or honesty of a person
  - a truth or true statement

Veracity refers to telling the truth. It is a powerful and necessary principle in therapy. Clients need honest feedback about their interactions in therapy. Often therapists can provide positive remarks in addition to honest feedback that might be difficult for the client to hear.



### **Ethical guidelines for relatively young (new, beginning) therapists**

These guidelines help the new therapist to orient and to find guidance in some gray areas.

- **Recognize your limits**  
It is critical that student therapists and newly trained therapists recognize and practice only within the areas for which they have been trained and are competent.  
Ethical behavior would involve telling the client, when you are in training and not fully qualified yet. Refer people on.  
Therapists need to consult with supervisors and promote ethical behaviors amongst peers.
- **Focus on the needs of the clients**  
If the best interest of the client conflicts with the needs of the therapist, focus on the needs of the client.
- **Confidentiality: attend to the client's right to privacy and confidentiality.** Information shared in the session should not be divulged, except in limited circumstances (ask permission to discuss sessions for your learning with your supervisor, if information is required by the law).
- **Information: the therapist has an obligation to provide information about the fees (when to pay, how to pay, sliding scale, insurance coverage etc.), the method used, his/her training background.**
  - Give information about the duration of the individual treatment and about re-evaluation of the treatment sequence as such after a series of sessions (after 4-6 sessions). The length of the therapeutic relationship needs to be negotiated.
  - End of treatment: The therapist is responsible to end the treatment when the client has reached the treatment goals. Be sure that there are enough resources available to function in a healthy way.
  - This is all about having a clear understanding and a contract, which gives a safe container for the therapeutic relationship.
- **Understand the role of culture**  
Do not assume that all therapeutic skills transfer across cultures. Be mindful of differences among individuals.  
An example is eye contact: in the western cultures we value eye contact. In the eastern cultures lack of eye contact can signify respect for an authority figure.
- **Be aware of your values**  
Therapists need to inquire deeply into their own prejudices, biases, preferences. Even non-verbal behavior like smiling or nodding the head can subtly influence the session in a certain direction.
- **Avoid harmful dual relationships**  
Therapist need to examine their relationships with clients to determine whether there is a possibility of a harmful dual relationships, whether there might be problems, which arise from a dual relationship. The area where the most harmful transgressions can happen is in the sexual contact between client and therapist.
- **Take care of yourself to ensure you can take care of others**  
Take care of your personal, inner hygiene. Therapy can be exhausting and health needs to be monitored and maintained.  
Therapists need support in personal and peer relationships.  
Further support can come from continuous education, supervision and personal process work.



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And above all ethics are the principles of

- love of truth
- openness
- honesty
- non-judgement
- warm and friendly compassion