

The
ETHICS
of
TOUCH



Third Edition

WORKBOOK

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**The Hands-on Practitioner's Guide To Creating
a Professional, Safe, and Enduring Practice**

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Chapter Highlights

- The study of ethics is the study of right and wrong conduct and always depends on the context.
- A grasp of ethical principles helps practitioners understand the impact of their behavior on clients, and provides knowledge and tools to act appropriately within the therapeutic relationship.
- Ethical behavior involves striving to bring the highest values into one's work and aspiring to do one's best in all interactions: doing the right thing in the right manner for the right reasons and with the right attitude.
- Therapeutic relationships involve several key elements that differentiate them from other human relationships: client-centeredness; safety; privacy; a clear structure; and a power differential.
- In therapeutic relationships, the practitioner is in the role of a fiduciary, a professional in whom the client places his trust.
- In client-centered relationships, the practitioner has two duties: do no harm (nonmaleficence) and do positive good (beneficence).
- In client-centered relationships, the client is viewed as a partner who shares decision-making power with the therapist, and the client always has the right to direct what happens to their body.
- In a therapeutic relationship, the client has the right to a safe therapeutic environment and to have their personal information kept confidential.
- A power differential always exists in a therapeutic relationship, where the authority figure whose actions directly affect the wellbeing of the client, automatically has more power.
- The psychological concepts of transference and countertransference have a powerful influence on hands-on therapeutic relationships.
- Transference is a normal, unconscious psychological phenomenon in which the client's unresolved needs, feelings, and issues from childhood are transferred onto the practitioner.
- Countertransference occurs when the practitioner unconsciously transfers his unresolved needs, feelings, and issues onto a client.
- Universal ethical principles that are of great relevance to healthcare practitioners are justice, honesty, reverence for life, and adherence to the law.

- Justice entails providing equal treatment to all individuals. The four main areas that can cause problems are prejudice, stereotyping, racism, and discrimination.
- Laws are codified rules of conduct set forth by society and are generally based on shared ethical or moral principles.
- Codes of Ethics are guidelines for practitioner behavior, established by the various provider professional organizations.
- Policies and procedures are often established by individual companies or organizations, to guide the behavior of their employees.
- All ethical behavior is influenced by internal factors including personal morals, values, and principles, as well as a sense of self-accountability.
- Morals are standards by which we judge behaviors and character traits as right or wrong.
- Values are beliefs about what is intrinsically worthwhile or desirable, rather than what is right and correct.
- Principles are the rules or laws of behavior that enable an individual to behave with integrity.
- Self-accountability is the cornerstone of ethics. It's about who you are and what you do when no one's watching you.
- Personal ethics is the precursor to professional ethics: you are not likely to be more ethical in your professional life than you are in your personal life.
- In practicing self-accountability, we strive for ethical congruence: making decisions that are congruent with the ethical values that apply to each situation.
- An ethical dilemma occurs when a combination of duties and rights are in conflict. These dilemmas are by their nature complex, troubling, and difficult to resolve.
- The Six-Step Resolution Model for resolving ethical dilemmas is:
 1. Identify the problem;
 2. Identify the potential issues involved;
 3. Review your profession's code of ethics and relevant laws;
 4. Evaluate potential courses of action;
 5. Obtain consultation; and
 6. Determine the best course of action.

Textbook Activities

These activities assist you in integrating the chapter's material and provide personal and professional insight. Many of the questions can be done on your own as writing explorations, although ideally, you would also discuss them with colleagues. Some of these questions and activities are best done in a classroom setting or in a peer supervision group.



Evaluating Power Differentials

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What types of relationships do not inherently have power differentials?

Why is a power differential inherent in any therapeutic relationship?

What conditions make for a greater or lesser power differential?

What conditions might contribute to an inappropriate power differential?

Describe the positive and negative experiences you have had in relationships where there is a power differential.



Describe one example of transference that you have experienced.

Describe one example of countertransference that you have experienced.

What are the positive and negative effects of transference and countertransference?



Do you have a personal story of how a breach of ethics impacted you as a client?

How did you feel?

What were the lasting implications?

Do you have a personal story of how a breach of ethics impacted you as a practitioner?

How did you feel?

What were the lasting implications for you and the client?

How was this different from your personal experience as a client?



Make a list of behaviors you deem unethical.

What are some behaviors, while unethical in your profession, that might be fine in others?

What unethical behaviors by your colleagues would you feel compelled to report?