



a holistic model for ethical practice

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DESCRIPTION:

This course discusses a holistic model for working with ethical dilemmas. The premise and model presented here are an expansion of information in *The Heart of Ethics* (1999) and *Conscious Ethics* (2003). These writings offered massage therapists an understanding of ethics and an approach to examining ethical dilemmas from a body-centered or somatic perspective. This course incorporates the concept of mindfulness, the practice of paying attention in a nonjudgmental way to the present moment. By embracing this concept of attention and deepening presence, this new “holistic approach” brings respect and honor to the knowledge of mind, body, psyche and soul in the exploration of ethics.

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

This course reviews the formation of ethics and provides a new holistic approach. This approach to ethics incorporates mindfulness and the knowledge of mind, body and soul into a 14-point model for working with ethical dilemmas. At the conclusion of this course, participants should be able to:

- * Define how mindfulness and Socratic thought inform ethical practices.
- * Describe how ethics are formed and altered in children and adults.
- * Define the benefit of an integrated ethical response.
- * Explain the importance of mind/body communication in ethics.
- * Describe eight key terms for standards of practice and codes of ethics.
- * Apply the 14-step model to an ethical dilemma.
- * Define the role of self-care in an ethical practice.

CONTACT HOURS: 2

Ethics: a system of moral principles.

a definition & understanding of ethics

YOUR ETHICS

Embodied within your being is a philosophy of living, a set of fundamental truths that shape your character and define who you are. These truths are comprised of principles, values and morals. They govern your decision-making process and behavioral choices. In the journey of life, these truths serve as the foundation for living. Like a compass, they provide orientation and direction. Like a map, they guide you onward. This philosophy of living is called ethics.

SOCRATES, THE FATHER OF ETHICS

The ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates, who lived in the fifth century B.C., is known as the founding father of ethics. His life was committed to the pursuit of truth and the knowledge of goodness. He believed that:

- * what one truly knows, guides one's consciousness;
- * happiness is achieved by "doing right;"
- * self-knowledge and the courage to do right are necessary conditions for a good life.

Seekers of truth came to the great philosopher and teacher. They would gather for hours in dialogue, exploring the meaning of virtue, truth, rightful behavior and the pursuit of happiness. Socrates' effort and intent was to help these seekers acquire knowledge and come to know the "self." The result was twofold—it was a means for living a good life and being a good citizen of the state.

SOCRATES' DIALECTIC AND THE INTERIOR MAN

Socrates developed a method for

pursuing truth and goodness known as the dialectic. Dialectic is "a practice of disciplined knowledge to attain reliable knowledge and a process for arriving at clear and fixed concepts."¹ In applying this practice, Socrates invited students to move into their bodies. He believed that "the interior of man is the seat of a unique activity, the activity of knowing which leads to the practical activity of doing."¹

Socrates' investigations into the "interior of man" led to his conceptual creation of the psyche and the soul. He used these terms interchangeably.

The structure of man's conscious personality is one with the soul. Soul, he believed, is the invisible center where the powers of intelligence and the great capacity for knowing are located. To access truth, the individual moves consciously into body and seeks the wisdom of soul. In this listening, individuals discover their personal truth, the substance of their character and an understanding of subsequent actions.

CONTEMPORARY ETHICS

Socrates' philosophy is the ground from which contemporary ethical thought evolved. As defined by the *Random House College Dictionary*, ethics is:

- * "a branch of philosophy dealing with values relating to human conduct with respect to the rightness and wrongness of certain actions and to the goodness and badness of the motives and ends of such actions"
- * "a system of moral principles."²

ETHICS AND DAILY LIFE

Ethics are at work in our everyday living. Pause for a moment, and consider how ethics and ethical behavior

show up in your life. Consider your home, work and community environments. Become aware of the tasks and responsibilities you have and how you choose to respond to them:

- * In the work environment, are you a person who shows up on time?
- * At home, do you share in the household duties?
- * When driving in the community, do you respect the rules of the road?

If you answered yes, you would be demonstrating ethical behaviors, acts of respect and virtue.

ETHICS AND FEELINGS

Now pause and revisit these situations and your responses, and recall the manner in which you responded to the situations:

- * Were you feeling open, friendly, willing, interested, enthusiastic, present or involved?
- * Or were you feeling agitated, uncomfortable, ambivalent, hesitant, irritated or cranky?
- * What was your feeling state, your attitude, as you engaged in the behavior? Was there a sense of congruence between your feelings, attitude and behavior?

There may be times when you engage in a behavior because it's "right," but feel resentment about it. This is not bad or wrong—it's just the moment of experience.

But it does present an opportunity to become curious about that resentment. As Socrates suggests, move into the interior, into your body and give the feeling space. As you stay with the process you may discover what is underneath the resentment, and a new feeling, sensation or thought will emerge.

The process of discovering gives

you more understanding of yourself and the situation. A seamlessly experienced integration of attitude and behavior cultivates a state of "ethical being." This integrated ethical response brings a peaceful and resounding sense of goodness and rightfulness.

the development of ethics

HOW EARLY CHILDHOOD AFFECTS SELF

How do you develop ethics, a set of truths and ethical principles to live by? Psychological theory points to your relationships with primary caretakers as a contributing factor in the shaping and forming of a child's character and personality.

In early development, children are unable to meet their needs and depend on their primary caretakers to satisfy needs and provide care. Caretakers' ability and capacity, as well as their way of responding to the child's needs, influence the child's development. From a somatic perspective, mind and body are affected by the response and the manner of the response.

If a child's needs are met promptly and with kindness, then the child is more likely to organize the "self" in a way that reflects the caregiver's response—namely a "self" of openness, fluidity, safety, trust and love. The corresponding thoughts that emerge are "I am safe;" "I can trust;" and "I am loved."

The converse is also true. If the meeting of the child's needs is delayed or neglected or if the caregiver's response is one of irritation or resentment, the child organizes the "self" around this experience—namely tightness, tension, a folding in or withholding of expression, and sadness. Corresponding thoughts may be just the opposite: "It's not safe;" "I cannot trust;" and "I am alone."

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”

— Oliver Wendell Holmes

**COMMUNICATION
NETWORK EXERCISE**
Universal Principles or Values

Truth	Connection
Love	Consciousness
Respect	Freedom
Safety	Virtue
Peace	Dignity
Honesty	Belonging
Integrity	Joy
Compassion	Happiness
Creativity	Goodness
Acceptance	Awareness

**THE GROUNDWORK FOR
ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Childhood experiences become patterned in the mind/body and influence the development of body structure, expression and movement. Character traits and core beliefs will be generated and set the ground for the development and formation of ethical principles, truths and values, and define corresponding behaviors. As the child ages and has more experiences, these principles can shift or solidify.

Moral development evolves in the pre-adolescent years when the child's cognitive development matures. In this age of reason, greater understanding of right conduct and virtuous behavior occurs.

CHANGING ETHICS IN ADULTS

Throughout the adult lifespan, the individual's character, personality and behavior are affected by:

- * meaningful experiences;
- * significant and transitory events;
- * relationships with others and with nature;
- * interactions with the world at-large.

These collective experiences offer the opportunity to re-evaluate core truths and incorporate new principles, values and morals into your philosophy of life. Additionally, intention to examine yourself through psychological and body therapies, self-care practices and self-help endeavors can create change and growth.

As Socrates' famous quote states, "The unexamined life is not worth living." The implication here is that change and growth are healthy; they add to the goodness of life. Psychological, educational and spiritual schools of thought often support the theory that the individual who

willingly, openly and consciously seeks change through a disciplined practice will change and grow. New growth may shift your ethical principles and change in behavior.

*discovering your
personal code of ethics*

PRACTICING MINDFULNESS

A way of discovering your fundamental truths is through mindfulness—the practice of paying attention moment to moment in a nonjudgmental way to what is. It's an integrated process of awareness in which body sensations, feelings, emotions and thoughts are noted. The focus of attention is on experiencing the "self" in the present moment and not moving to the past or future.

Mindfulness practices include formal sitting meditation, walking meditation, yoga and body scans. These practices enable you to connect to your body and facilitate a state of unconditional presence. Cultivating greater awareness during mindfulness practices, in time, extends one's awareness in everyday actions and everyday living. Mindfulness then becomes a way of being, relating and behaving in the world.

SOMATICS

Mindfulness is a concept and a tool in the field of somatics. Somatics is a Greek word meaning "of the body." It's a philosophy of education that recognizes the mind and body, and is a psychology of thought that actively honors and incorporates the body and mind into the understanding of the self-delivery of care.

Somatic theory maintains that the body is a source of knowledge. The key to understanding the "self" is to access the body's wisdom. As previously stated, mindfulness is a tool that helps you become present with, and connect to, body.

An active process of mindful, somatic inquiry will give you the opportunity to discover the principles and values you embody.

GUIDED VISUALIZATION

This is a guided, body-centered visualization. As you read the visualization, consciously move back and forth, between reading the visualization, and actively experiencing. Find space to pause between steps, setting the rhythm that works best for you. Have a notebook at your side to jot down your responses.

STEP 1 Find a quiet place to sit. Adjust your body position so that you feel comfortable. Become aware of your breath. Take a few moments to focus on your breath and connect to your self. Form the intention of discovering the principles and values you embody. Begin by letting your mind ask the question, “What are my principles and values?” Gently close your eyes. Let words spontaneously emerge. Be nonjudgmental. Let whatever comes forth in thought come. Avoid analysis and simply be with the experience. When words no longer appear, softly open your eyes and write down the principles.

STEP 2 Once again, gently close your eyes and pay attention to your breath. Notice how you are breathing. Adjust your breath in a way that feels comfortable for you. Now bring attention to your body. Begin by becoming aware of your face. Notice sensations and feelings. Breathe. Move your attention downward to your throat. Notice sensations and feelings. Breathe. Continue with this process, noticing the sensations and feelings in each body part. This is simply a process of bringing attention, moment to moment, without judgment, to your experience of your body. When you have attended to each body part, breathe and with the next breath, notice your entire body. Be with your experience.

STEP 3 Now bring your attention to the words you wrote down. Saying one word at a time, notice where and how you feel in your body. Perhaps you feel soft, open, fluffy, happy, tense, restricted, confused, etc. Notice when the word and feeling simply feel “right,” perhaps a sense of the word and the feeling melting into one another. When you have said all of the words, softly open your eyes and write down the words, the principles that emerged for you, in a way that felt truthful.

This somatic inquiry, an internal dialogue between mind and body and the responses that emerged, defines the principles/values that comprise your personal code of ethics. I invite you to apply your experience by completing this sentence:

The principles of my personal code of ethics are: _____

EXERCISE

Reflect on the principles and values in your personal code of ethics. Read or write them again. Consider a practice of reading them monthly and repeating the exercise to discover if principles have been changed in any way.

Cultivating mindfulness in the somatic experience promotes a deepening of mind/body/psyche awareness and facilitates the process of embodiment. The state of embodiment is often referred to as “coming home” and is an experience of knowing your true nature.

CODE OF COMMUNICATION

Angeles Arrien, PhD, anthropologist and educator, defines ethics as “a set of values, a code for translating the moral into daily life.”³ A code is “a system of communication; a set of messages; a collection of rules and regulations.”² Inferring from her definition, the collection of principles, values and morals that comprise your ethical stance is coded, systematically organized in the mind/body/psyche.

This premise is supported by the groundbreaking work of Candice Pert, PhD, neuroscientist and author of *The Molecules of Emotion: The Science Behind Mind-Body Medicine* (1997). Her research investigating the immune system concluded that there is a biochemical basis for interdependent communication between mind and body. This living network engages all the parts of the self in a dynamic conversation for the purpose of creating health, harmony and balance. The innate dialogue offers a type of checks and balances to the whole system—mind communicates with body when body is in or out of balance, and body communicates with mind when mind is in or out of balance.

ETHICS AS ENERGY

Therefore, your personal code of ethics is a living concept in your body. Principles of truth, compassion, and virtue are not just conceptual thoughts; they are pulsations, vibrations, sensations and feelings. Your

ethical principles and values are energy. They breathe; they move; they take up space.

For example, the living principle of compassion may be organized in the mind as a thought or a concept; in the body as a sensation, perhaps one of relaxed openness or warmth; and in the psyche as a feeling, perhaps one of care, understanding or kindness.

ETHICS AS A COMMUNICATION NETWORK

Your internal communication network keeps the system talking and responding in an effort to organize the total experience. When all the parts of the whole are organized and in harmony, then it can be said that the particular ethical principle being explored is in alignment; it's being authentically experienced.

Let's again examine the principle of compassion. If the mind has the thought of compassion yet the body experiences tension, and the feeling is one of indifference, the flow of internal conversation in the system is disharmonious. This disjointed experience signals that the principle and action of compassion is out of alignment; something is amiss in the individual's internal code and extending action. This warrants further investigation. Bringing conscious attention, or mindfulness, to this experience can invite understanding and deeper knowing of what really is.

INVESTIGATING THE COMMUNICATION NETWORK

Discovering the principles and values you embody and live by, which I coined, “your personal code of ethics” (Torrenzano/Nixon, 1999), is a process of integrating the concepts of inquiry, mindfulness and somatics. It's a method of investigation that requires:

- * being present;
- * moving into body;
- * becoming aware of mind and body;
- * listening to the experience of “self;”
- * trusting that which unfolds.

The functional living system that is you and determines your behavior is waiting to be awakened.

Understanding Professional Ethics

WORKING TOWARD BALANCE

According to Socrates, the desire to “be good” and “do right” is your basic nature. Your body functions and works toward health—a feeling of harmonious flow and balance, and an experience of “goodness” and “rightfulness.” Your mind engages in the same organic process, seeking a state of harmonious understanding, ease and peace. Goodness is at the seat of the soul, Socrates claimed, not evil. Your basic nature extends out from the body, with movements and actions of goodness towards others. Being aware of and living your basic nature, Socrates states, will promote happiness in all relations, and have a long-term effect on the soul.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

You can see the natural progression, the evolution of professional ethics from Socrates’ philosophy. Nearly all fields of work, and certainly all health-related professions, have a code of ethics and standards of practice that define principles of conduct and guidelines of behavior. Members are to adhere to the rules

of conduct and behavior. They are to “do good” and “do right” in professional service to the individual, colleagues and the community.

Professional associations are the primary organizations that develop codes and standards. A widely and broadly recognized code is from the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA). Those massage therapists nationally certified by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB) also adhere to a code of ethics.

Professionals trained and certified in other bodywork modalities, for example the Traeger® Approach, are members of that particular association (in this case Traeger International). If you are a member of several professional organizations, then you are required to know and follow the ethical codes and standards of practice of each organization. In fact, AMTA has a process in place to deal with violations of its code of ethics. Violators may lose their membership with the association.

CODES OF ETHICS

Each professional organization introduces its code of ethics and standards of practice with a statement or preamble, followed by specific statements defining duties, rights, responsibilities and behaviors of members. Below are some examples.

Members of AMTA must adhere to the following statement:

“The Code of Ethics is a summary statement of the standards by

For more online ethics courses, head over to www.amtaonlinetraining.org. You can read and take the exams for courses such as “Self-Evaluation for an Ethical Practice” and “Dealing with Ethical Gray Areas in Massage Therapy,” both by Jean Middleswarth, and “From the Client’s Perspective: Marketing, Policies and Ethics of Your Practice,” by Jean Ives.

which massage therapists agree to conduct their practices and is a declaration of the general principles of acceptable, ethical, professional behavior.”⁴

Those certified by the NCBTMB must follow the following statement:

“The Code of Ethics of the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork requires certificants to uphold professional standards that allow for the proper discharge of their responsibilities to those served, that protect the integrity of the profession, and that safeguard the interest of individual clients.”⁵

Specific statements in these codes of ethics clarify principles that characterize rightful and sound ethical behaviors:

- * professional and student members;
- * clients being served by the professionals;
- * allied and related health professionals;
- * legal professionals and bodies;
- * establishments employing members and serving clients.

These principles are organized in such a way as to define the responsibilities of members/certificants in

the delivery of respectful and quality care to clients, and in the delivery of good and sound business practices. Inherent in the ethical codes are the client’s rights in receiving care.

Additionally, an association’s code of ethics functions as the basis for processing ethical complaints and grievances against members. The code also defines how the principles apply to the professional establishment. Certifying bodies and licensure boards often include professional associations’ codes of ethics statements in law or licensing processes, making it a “legal” requirement to follow ethical guidelines.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

Professional associations also have standards of practice. These written standards define ethical behaviors. The codes of ethics and standards of practice work in conjunction with one another. The codes describe principles of practicing, or conduct guidelines, while the standards describe the actual behaviors related to those principles.

key terms in an ethical practice

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMON TERMS

In examining codes of ethics and standards of practice, defining key

terms is essential. The words and concepts contained in these documents may mean different things to each person. Definition brings understanding and comprehension, and helps to clarify “the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of practicing.” It also serves to unify members in a common language.

Some of these key terms include scope of practice, professionalism, informed consent, confidentiality, boundaries, power differential, dual relationships, transference and countertransference. Let’s explore each of these a bit more in-depth.

SCOPE OF PRACTICE

The nature of your service: approaches you’re specifically trained and competent to practice and use in the delivery of care; the “what” and “when” of health conditions you can work with; populations you can serve.

The nature of your practice: your legal credentials/licenses; focus of your work (e.g., health maintenance, sports performance and injury); the environment where you practice; the type of working affiliations with allied health professionals.

PROFESSIONALISM

- * A manner of behaving that demonstrates respect for the individual being served, colleagues and the profession as a whole;
- * A manner of professional demeanor with attention to physical appearance, odors, language, communication and with a way of behaving that conveys confidence;
- * Presenting your business in a manner that conveys honesty and integrity;
- * Adhering to the code of ethics and standards of practice.

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent is the oral or written act of providing accurate infor-

EXERCISE

Write down the ways you presently care for yourself. Positively acknowledge yourself. Consider ways you would like to increase your care of self. Write down your desires. Make a plan. Make it happen.

mation to the client regarding the nature of the professional and therapeutic services offered:

- * the intent and application of the massage therapy;
- * definition of the various massage therapies including the benefits, limitations, possible outcomes and contraindications;
- * permission and guidelines for touching;
- * client's rights and responsibilities, including a confidentiality statement;
- * the nature of a massage session, including appropriate disrobing and draping procedures;
- * the training and expertise of the massage therapist;
- * business practices, including the duration of a session, fees for services, insurance participation, cancellation and late policies, hours and availability, and collaboration policies with other health care professionals.

CONFIDENTIALITY

An agreement to keep the identity of the client, the contents of the session and all matters related to the client private.

BOUNDARIES

"A limit that separates one person from another with the function to protect the integrity of each person."⁶ By their nature, boundaries provide:

- * definition and respect to you and your clients;
- * definition and respect to the therapeutic relationship, the actual bodywork and the general session;
- * clarity as to what is acceptable and unacceptable in the relationship and the session;
- * a sense of safety and trust.

POWER DIFFERENTIAL

The power differential is due to the inherent difference of power between professionals and clients by virtue of their roles. The "provider" has the expertise and authority to deliver care, and the "receiver" has less knowledge and more vulnerability in the delivery of that care.

DUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Dual relationships occur when an established relationship between the professional and client extends beyond the therapeutic walls. This includes social and business relationships, as well as relationships in educational and religious institutions.

TRANSFERENCE AND COUNTERTRANSFERENCE

These are terms that originated in the field of psychology. They refer to the unconscious phenomenon of projecting thoughts, feelings or beliefs onto a person, as if they were another person or were behaving like that other person.

In transference, the client projects onto the massage therapist. In countertransference, the massage therapist projects onto the client. In either case, the "other person" is commonly an individual in one's life, past or present, about whom there are strong emotional feelings or thoughts.

understanding ethical dilemmas

A COMMON ETHICAL DILEMMA

Ethical dilemmas present themselves when there is a conflict of principles and a behavioral choice needs to be made. The following is a good example:

A massage therapy client arrives 20 minutes late for the session. She is clearly upset. The client apologizes to the therapist and states that she got stuck in traffic. The massage

therapist listens to the client and communicates understanding. The massage therapist then explains to the client her policy on late arrivals—she keeps to the scheduled appointment hour. The client is upset and asks the therapist to consider extending the session so she gets her full hour.

The conflict is clear: The massage therapist states her late arrival policy. As a result, a 60-minute massage would become a 40-minute massage. The client is apologetic and upset and wants the massage therapist to extend the session.

The conflict between the massage therapist and client is one of policies and boundaries. The therapist's behavioral choice is either to respect her own policy on late client arrivals and reduce the client's session time, or to negate her policy and extend the session.

GRAY AREAS OF ETHICAL DILEMMAS

Ethical dilemmas warrant respectful attention to the situation and conflict. Both you and your clients have rights and responsibilities. Most are outlined in the professional code of ethics and standards of practice, and others may be further outlined in a written office policy statement from your employer.

However, not all ethical dilemmas are clear-cut or quick and easy to process and resolve. Those that fall in the gray zone present challenges and require mindful attention to the details of the situation and the repercussions. Additionally, the human nature of conflict and the "who's who" of rights and responsibilities may become charged with feelings and emotions. To discern how to work with the conflict, it's best to have a system for resolving ethical dilemmas.

A 14-POINT MODEL FOR PROCESSING & RESOLVING ETHICAL DILEMMAS

Find a quiet, comfortable and safe place to explore this process.

This is a time to move internally and limit any external distractions.

1. REVIEW THE SITUATION VERBALLY OR, IF YOU PREFER, IN WRITING.

- * Who was present?
- * What happened?

2. SOMATIC EXPERIENCE: LISTENING TO YOUR BODY

- * Assume a comfortable position and breathe.
- * Scan your body and notice sensations and feelings.
- * Pay attention to your experience.

3. CLARIFY AND NAME THE ETHICAL DILEMMA.

- * Simply write down the dilemma.

4. CLARIFY YOUR PERSONAL CODE OF ETHICS. KNOW WHERE YOU PERSONALLY STAND.

- * Write the words of your code.
- * Write down any personal reactions.
- * Acknowledge what you think and feel right now.

5. SOMATIC EXERCISE: CENTER AT CORE.

- * Sit with eyes closed and breathe.
- * Center yourself bringing attention to your midline.
- * Consciously release any personal thoughts, beliefs, feelings or reactions.

6. REVIEW YOUR PROFESSIONAL CODES AND DETERMINE IF VIOLATION AND/OR HARM HAS OCCURRED

- * Read each principle.
- * Note any principle that applies to your situation.
- * Write it down.
- * Determine if a principle has been violated.
- * If yes, ask if harm has occurred.

7. REVIEW RELEVANT LAWS AND DETERMINE IF VIOLATION/AND OR HARM HAS OCCURRED.

- * Read the laws of your jurisdiction.
- * Note any law that applies to your situation.
- * Write it down.
- * Determine if a law has been broken.
- * If yes, ask if harm has occurred.

8. SOMATIC EXERCISE: CENTER AT CORE.

- * Sit with eyes closed and breathe.
- * Center yourself bringing attention to your midline.
- * Note and pay attention to any feelings and thoughts that are present.
- * Give them space.
- * In the right time, release them.

9. DETERMINE OPTIONS: APPROPRIATE COURSES OF ACTIONS.

- * Write down ways you can behave/act.

10. CONSULT WITH PEERS/SUPERVISORS/GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE

- * Contact colleagues for further discussion.
- * Contact other professionals as needed and necessary.

11. MAKE A DECISION AND TAKE ACTION.

- * Decide your course of action.
- * Be mindful.
- * Take action.
- * Pay attention to the other person involved.
- * Bring your action to closure.

12. DOCUMENT ALL YOUR ACTIONS.

- * Write down your action, the responses and the resolution.

13. SOMATIC EXERCISE: BREATHE AND REST IN SELF.

- * Sit with eyes closed, breathe and become aware of body.
- * Consciously be with any thoughts, beliefs, feelings or reactions.
- * Give these experiences space until they are ready to shift or release.
- * Give yourself permission to rest in self.

14. REVIEW WITH PEERS/SUPERVISORS.

- * Respecting your time frame, reconnect and review with other professionals.

OTHER COMMON ETHICAL ISSUES

There are hundreds of ethical issues that may surface in your practice. Common issues center around:

- * effective communication;
- * maintaining appropriate boundaries;
- * dual relationships;
- * confidentiality;
- * business policies and procedures;
- * the therapeutic relationship;
- * scope of practice;
- * sexual conduct;
- * training and expertise of the therapist;
- * relationships with peers and colleagues.

From time to time, you will encounter an ethical dilemma. In my experience working with colleagues and supervising students, most conflicts arise from lack of knowledge or from misunderstandings. Although conflicts can have varying degrees of severity, most are low to moderate. Lastly, most dilemmas are resolved amicably with the outcome acceptable to both parties.

There have been reported times when the dilemma arose from ill intent from one of the parties, but this is rarely the case. However, when this occurs, processing and resolving the conflict often requires witnessing or intervention by a third party. There are times when the conflict needs professional attention, perhaps by a supervisor or grievance committee, or legal intervention.

a 14-point model for processing ethical dilemmas

PURPOSE OF A WORKING MODEL

To ensure good practice and to safe-guard yourself, every bodyworker needs a working model for processing ethical situations or dilemmas. It needs to be a model that is use-

ful, easily integrated into your practice, and is written in a philosophy and style that resonates with you. A sound model provides structure and methodology for processing and resolving ethical dilemmas.

A 14-POINT MODEL

In the model on page 128, I have woven together the principles and concepts of inquiry, somatics and mindfulness. Processing and resolving ethical dilemmas are not “mind” experiences—they are “total mind/body” experiences. As has been shown, knowledge and wisdom are found in the “interior of man/woman.” This model has 14 points or steps. This may seem lengthy and tedious; however, the intent is to incorporate the whole self in the processing, decisionmaking and follow-through. In time and with use, this model can become a natural way of thinking and perceiving an ethical situation.

It’s also essential to acknowledge the personal voice in the professional arena. As we previously explored, individuals embody a personal code of ethics. As you explore a professional dilemma, naming your personal code can help you distinguish the personal from the professional.

To paraphrase Jon Kabat-Zinn’s book title, “No matter where you go, there you are” is fitting. We may enter into a situation with our professional hat on; however, the personal is always there. It’s best to be conscious of it. The guideline when faced with a dilemma is to be professional, not personal.

USING THE 14-STEP MODEL

EXERCISE

Think of an ethical dilemma that you have faced. Choose any one that comes to mind. Use the steps to the process with this dilemma in mind.

To ensure good practice and to safe-guard yourself, every bodyworker needs a working model for processing ethical situations.

Notice your experience:

- * What was it like to revisit it?
- * Notice if you gained more insight into the dilemma, more awareness of feelings.
- * Did you consider new options?
- * Was the outcome similar or different to the original outcome?
- * Do you feel confident that you acted with “rightness?”

self-care as a means to ethical practice

DO NO HARM

In the health care and medical profession, nearly all ethical codes utilize the phrase: “Do no harm.” This phrase originated with the Greek physician Hippocrates, the acknowledged father of modern medicine. Scholars, who have studied his texts, believe the exact translation to be: “As to diseases, make a habit of two things—to help, or at least to do no harm.”

We have focused on how to “do good” and “do right” which naturally implies, “Do no harm.” As we consider these significant phrases, it’s important to explore the role of self-care. It’s the essential first step in being ethical and practicing sound ethics.

KNOW THYSELF

“Know thyself,” states Socrates. The best way to care for the self is to know the self. Mindfulness thought refers to this concept and practice

as “waking up” to the self. Everyone falls into the trance of habit, doing things automatically, without fully noticing, thinking or feeling. You lose connection with yourself and connection with what is happening now. Your mind can run in circles and your body can become numb or emotional. You may be inclined to react to situations versus respond. When you lose presence, you lose perspective and lose focus with the moment. You put yourself in jeopardy and in harm’s way.

SELF-CARE THROUGH SELF-AWARENESS

You have an ethical responsibility to take care of yourself. One way of doing this is to engage in practices that focus on deepening self-awareness. The general aim is to enhance self-connection and self-awareness. A regular practice helps you to be present, know body, know mind, stay current with what is, and by its very nature, clear out the old, the past. It’s important to choose a practice that will work for you. Common self-awareness practices include meditation, yoga, tai chi, mindfulness and journaling.

SELF-CARE THROUGH PERSONAL HEALTH

Another form of self-care is in the area of personal health. You are in the health and wellness business, and caring for your body, your mind,

your psyche and your soul is vital. Some steps for that include:

- * Tending to your nutritional, exercise, rest, sleep and social needs.
- * Learning methods to minimize and cope with stress, as well as methods to increase relaxation.
- * Consulting professional health care providers to maintain and sustain health, or when you are ill.
- * Taking time off from work and taking vacations.

How you care for your own health will influence how you feel and think, and how you behave. It will influence how you “show up” in your relationships and at work.

SELF-CARE THROUGH PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

The third type of self-care is seeking support. Massage therapists can become isolated. Most professionals are working in the one-to-one relationship all day long. Being in a profession of caring for others can be physically and emotionally draining; in fact, it’s a common cause of burn-out among health care professionals. Find resources that connect you with peers and colleagues. Continue the theme of seeking knowledge by participating in classes and workshops. It will keep you connected and actually is an ethical requirement.

Lastly, seek professional support in the field of massage therapy. It’s common for health care professionals to have supervisors for regular consultations. Supervision is an excellent way to receive support and guidance in your practice, and it’s necessary when confronted with challenging ethical dilemmas. Peer supervision groups function as a safe, trusting and consistent environment to discuss professional ethics.

One form of self-care is in the area of personal health. You are in the health and wellness business, and caring for your body, your mind, your psyche and your soul is vital.

Compile a list of massage therapists and bodyworkers to whom you can refer clients. At times we need to refer out due to the needs of the client and our level of expertise. Or sometimes we need coverage due to illness or vacation. Having a list can be comforting as well as supportive.

CONCLUSION

In closing, there is a quote from Judith Gee that sums up the topic of personal and professional ethics well: “It seems to be a universal law that the level at which we perceive the depth and truth of another will be the same as the level at which we perceive the depth and truth about ourselves.”⁶

When you engage in mindful practices as a way of deepening your self-awareness, you connect with the ground of your truthfulness, your true nature. In that moment-to-moment experience, you’re “being ethical.” As you extend out into the world, with a heightened ability to be truth and see truth, you are “being ethical in relation.” This is the living art of ethical practice. ■

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