

Ethical Principles for Psychoanalysts

I. Professional Competence. The psychoanalyst is committed to provide competent professional service. The psychoanalyst should continually strive to improve his or her knowledge and practical skills. Illnesses and personal problems that significantly impair the psychoanalyst's performance of professional responsibilities should be acknowledged and addressed in appropriate fashion as soon as recognized.

II. Respect for Persons. The psychoanalyst is expected to treat patients and their families, students and colleagues with respect and care. Discrimination on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status is ethically unacceptable.

III. Mutuality and Informed Consent. The treatment relationship between the patient and the psychoanalyst is founded upon trust and informed mutual agreement or consent. At the outset of treatment, the patient should be made aware of the nature of psychoanalysis and relevant alternative therapies. The psychoanalyst should make agreements pertaining to scheduling, fees, and other rules and obligations of treatment tactfully and humanely, with adequate regard for the realistic and therapeutic aspects of the relationship. Promises made should be honored.

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When the patient is a minor these same general principles pertain but the patient's age and stage of development should guide how specific arrangements will be handled and with whom.

IV. Confidentiality. Confidentiality of the patient's communications is a basic patient's right and an essential condition for effective psychoanalytic treatment and research. A psychoanalyst must take all measures necessary to not reveal present or former patient confidences without permission, nor discuss the particularities observed or inferred about patients outside consultative, educational or scientific contexts. If a psychoanalyst uses case material in exchanges with colleagues for consultative, educational or scientific purposes, the identity of the patient must be sufficiently disguised to prevent identification of the individual, or the patient's authorization must be obtained after frank discussion of the purpose(s) of the presentation, other options, the probable risks and benefits to the patient, and the patient's right to refuse or withdraw consent.

V. Truthfulness. The psychoanalytic treatment relationship is founded on thoroughgoing truthfulness. The psychoanalyst should deal honestly and forthrightly with patients, patient's families in the case of those who are minors, students, and colleagues. Being aware of the ambiguities and complexities of human relationships and communications, the psychoanalyst should engage in an active process of self-monitoring in pursuit of truthful therapeutic and professional exchanges.

VI. Avoidance of Exploitation. In light of the vulnerability of patients and the inequality of the psychoanalyst-patient dyad, the psychoanalyst should scrupulously avoid any and all forms of exploitation of patients and their families, current or former, and limit, as much as possible the role of self-interest and personal desires. Sexual relations between psychoanalyst and patient or family member, current or former, are potentially harmful to both parties, and unethical. Financial dealings other than reimbursement for therapy are unethical.

VII. Scientific Responsibility. The psychoanalyst is expected to be committed to advancing scientific knowledge and to the education of colleagues and students. Psychoanalytic research should conform to generally accepted scientific principles and research integrity and should be based on a thorough knowledge of relevant scientific literature. Every precaution should be taken in research with human subjects, and in using clinical material, to respect the patient's rights especially the right to confidentiality, and to minimize potentially harmful effects.

VIII. Protection of the Public and the Profession. The psychoanalyst should strive to protect the patients of colleagues and persons seeking treatment from psychoanalysts observed to be deficient in competence or known to be engaged in behavior with the potential of affecting such patients adversely. S/he should urge such colleagues to seek help. Information about unethical or impaired conduct by any member of the profession should be reported to the appropriate committee at local or national levels.

IX. Social Responsibility. A psychoanalyst should comply with the law and with social policies that serve the interests of patients and the public. The Principles recognize that there are times when conscientious refusal to obey a law or policy constitutes the most ethical action. If a third-party or patient or in the case of minor patients, the parent(s) or guardian(s) demands actions contrary to ethical principles or scientific knowledge, the psychoanalyst should refuse. A psychoanalyst is encouraged to contribute a portion of his or her time and talents to activities that serve the interests of patients and the public good.

X. Personal Integrity. The psychoanalyst should be thoughtful, considerate, and fair in all professional relationships, uphold the dignity and honor of the profession, and accept its self-imposed disciplines. He or she should accord members of allied professions the respect due their competence.