

Ethical or Unethical

By Loretta Bradley, PhD

Directions: Using the *2014 ACA Code of Ethics*, please determine whether each scenario is (a) ethical or unethical and then (b) explain your answer based on the *2014 ACA Code of Ethics*.

- I. Although the *ACA Code of Ethics* has a preamble, I, as a counselor, do not have to be familiar with the preamble because I will just go directly to the actual code statements.
 - a. Ethical or Unethical
 - b. Explain

- II. Although six moral principles form the foundation for the *ACA Code of Ethics*, I, as a counselor, will only focus on nonmaleficence for I think it is the most important principle.
 - a. Ethical or Unethical
 - b. Explain

- III. As a counselor specializing in couple and family counseling, my goal is to keep the couple together for I do not believe in divorce. If the couple refuses to work on staying together, then I will refer them.
 - a. Ethical or Unethical
 - b. Explain

- IV. As a counselor in private practice, I pay rent to the counselor who owns the practice. My rent is based on a percentage of the client fees that I collect. The counselor who owns the practice helps me by referring clients to me.
 - a. Ethical or Unethical
 - b. Explain

- V. As a school counselor and LPC, I supervise two counselors in our district to help them obtain their LPC. In addition to my career as a school counselor, I am enrolled at the local university to obtain my PhD degree. The two counselors that I supervise are also enrolled in the same PhD program. This works well for us as we can carpool together and discuss supervision cases as well as class assignments and client cases discussed in our practicum class.
 - a. Ethical or Unethical
 - b. Explain

- VI. As a counselor in a school or private setting, I am often faced with cases in which the *ACA Code of Ethics* does not address the issue. I have decided that I will make my own decisions.
 - a. Ethical or Unethical
 - b. Explain

ETHICS AT RISK TEST FOR THERAPISTS

Ever wonder how close you are to blundering over the ethics edge and possibly harming your clients, yourself, and/or the profession? This At Risk Test may tell you. Of course, you must answer honestly. Add up your score and compare the total with the key at the end of the test. (Circle your answers.

1. Is it true that you have never taken an academic course on ethics?	No=0	Yes=1
2. Honestly, are you unfamiliar with some parts of the latest version of the Ethics Code?	No=0	Yes=1
3. Do you think the Ethics Code interferes somewhat with the quality of your therapy or research?	No=0	Yes=1
4. Have you ever sent a false bill for therapy to an insurance carrier?	No=0	Yes=1
5. Do you feel sexually attracted to any of your present clients?	No=0	Yes=1
6. Do you fantasize about kissing or touching a present client?	No=0	Yes=1
7. Do you comment to a present client how attractive he or she is or make positive remarks about his or her body?	No=0	Yes=1
8. Are you tempted to ask out an ex-client even though less than five years have passed since termination?	No=0	Yes=1
9. Do you commonly take off your jewelry, remove shoes, loosen your tie, or become more informal during therapy sessions?	No=0	Yes=1
10. Presently, do you meet a client for coffee or meals or for socializing outside of therapy?	No=0	Yes=1
11. Has a present client given you an expensive gift or frequently given you inexpensive gifts?	No=0	Yes=1
12. Are you stimulated by a current client's description of sexual behavior or thoughts?	No=0	Yes=1
13. Are you in the midst of a difficult personal or family crisis yourself?	No=0	Yes=1
14. During the past two months, have you seen clients while you were hungover or under the influence of drugs, even if only a little?	No=0	Yes=1
15. Does your personal financial situation cross your mind when considering whether to terminate therapy or to refer a client?	No=0	Yes=1
16. Do you feel manipulated by a current client such that you are wary of him/her or are angry and frustrated by him/her?	No=0	Yes=1
17. Do you provide therapy to a current student, supervisee, or employee?	No=0	Yes=1
18. Have you wanted to talk to a colleague about a current case but feared doing so would show your lack of skill or lead to an ethics case against you?	No=0	Yes=1
19. Are you behind on case notes?	No=0	Yes=1
20. Do you talk about clients with other clients or gossip about clients with colleagues?	No=0	Yes=1

Total Score

- 0 Excellent. You are nearly risk free.
- 1-2 Review your practice. Read and follow the Ethics Code.
- 3-4 Review your practice for problem areas. Consider needed changes.
- 5-7 Consult a supervisor. You are engaging in high-risk behavior.
- 8+ You are probably harming your clients and/or yourself. Seek therapy and supervision. Come to terms with your situation by making immediate changes

Source: Gregory W. Brock, Ph.D., Department of Family Studies, University of Kentucky.

RELATIONAL ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING MODEL

Figure 4.1 Relational Ethical Decision-Making Model

1. Continually examine the role that ethics play within the therapeutic relationship.
 2. Identify the ethical dilemma or problem, including various contextual layers, cultural considerations, and ethical ambiguity, seeking consultation and supervision as warranted.
 3. Discuss with the client the professional ethical obligations of counselors and the ethical dilemma, and address how the dilemma impacts the counseling relationship.
 4. Working with the client, examine the core ethical principles that are most prominent within this ethical dilemma.
 5. Consider the ethical dilemma, including perceptions, values, biases, and beliefs from both the counselor's and client's points of view.
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6. Examine how boundaries within the therapeutic relationship are impacted as a result of the ethical conundrum, including the counselor's and client's affective and cognitive domains.
 7. Look into applicable laws; campus, agency, or department regulations; policies; procedures; handbooks; Web sites; and so on that may inform your decision.
 8. Consult professional literature, as well as professional colleagues and experts (with client consent), regarding best practices in similar ethical dilemmas.
 9. Collaborate with the client in brainstorming potential resolutions to the dilemma, and evaluate possible consequences and outcomes of action or inaction.
 10. Choose a course of action, working through any challenges that may exist within the therapeutic relationship about the ethical issue.
 11. Implement a selected course of action, addressing client concerns in a mutually supportive environment.
 12. Evaluate how the ethical decision will impact the counseling relationship currently, as well as in the future.

Source: ©2013 Michael M. Kocet, PhD.

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