ETHICS: PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

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ETHICS DEFINED.... WHAT ARE ETHICS?

• I think the term “ethics” means....
A Definition of Ethics

• “The explicit, philosophical reflection on moral beliefs and practices.”

• ETHICS is the reflection on...

• CODE OF ETHICS is a summary of, .... and

• MORAL BEHAVIOR is putting these beliefs into skillful practice.
A Definition of Ethics

• “The explicit, philosophical reflection on moral beliefs and practices.”

• The difference between ethics and morality is similar to the difference between musicology and music.

• Ethics is a conscience stepping back and reflecting on morality, just musicology is a conscious reflection on music.
A Definition of Ethics

• How we make decisions and interact with our clients is the “music” they experience.
“Professional Boundaries”… they:

- Mark the emotional space that allows the client to focus on their own healing and not on the provider.
- Create the distance the provider needs to stay as objective as possible.
- Are limits placed on the provider’s power so clients aren’t hurt physically, emotionally, or spiritually.
- Term: Power Differential
  Ex. teacher/student; doctor/patient; pastor/church member; counselor/client
Professional Boundaries con’t.

• Are flexible guidelines that change depending on the clients vulnerability and the role the provider plays in the client’s treatment / recovery.

• Describe the relationship between client and provider so that they can work together in an environment of mutual trust and respect.
Five areas in which the dependent patient is vulnerable to exploitation.

- Finances
- Publicity
- Sexual relationships
- A. A. relationships
- Social drinking
Physical Boundary Transgressions

• You are in meeting and a co-worker comes in, sits down and starts processing an issue.
• You ask a client to wait for you in your office and when you come in you see them looking through your papers on your desk.
• Your boss hugs you without permission after a negative performance review.
Emotional Boundary Transgressions

• A client shares her memory of sexual abuse with the members of the support staff in a crowded lobby.
• A fellow employee shares the intimate details of a divorce during a staff meeting.
• Your supervisor interacts more like your therapist in a meeting with you.
Psychological Boundary Transgressions

- A white client calls a black client a racist name.
- One staff shames another by stating “your clients relapse a lot. What does that say about you?”
- Your supervisor answers the phone three times during a supervision session you requested.
Spiritual Boundary Transgressions

- Using scripture out of context and inappropriately: “An abused wife must submit to her husband.”
- Using religion to control or shame
- While a client expresses and shows intense, sobbing pain over an abusive situation, you begin to pray out loud for the “binding of demons,” without previously disclosing this possible option of care.
Sexual Boundary Transgressions

• A client winks at you seductively during a therapy group.

• A co-worker makes comments about your body and says it reminds them about a particularly wild weekend and begins to tell you about it.

• A supervisor wants to know the details of the sexual lives of your clients. When you try to discuss other issues, the topic is always steered back to sex.
Transference & Countertransference

- When the client projects their personal issues onto their counselor
- TRANSFERENCE

- When the counselor projects their personal issues onto the client
- COUNTERTRANSFERENCE
Transference:

- When the client projects their personal issues onto their counselor.
- Their family of origin issues
- Gender –specific conflicts
- Unresolved authority/caregiver conflicts
- Judgments/prejudices: ethnicity, religious
Counter-Transference:

- When the provider projects their personal issues onto their clients.
- Seduction
- Aversion
Counter-transference: Seduction

- A strong need to have the client like or approve of you.
- A desire for them to succeed beyond what you have for other clients.
Seduction con’t.

• The beginning of the blurring of the boundaries between professional and friend.

• Improper spiritual disclosure and spiritual adultery
Counter-transference: Aversion

- A strong negative reaction to a client
- Loss of objectivity with the client
- May be evidenced by being too hard on the client: expecting more from them than you would from other clients.
Aversion con’t.

• Delivering consequences more quickly and more severely than with other clients
• Relief when they miss appointments
What are three typical problems associated with addiction professionals and their relationship with A. A.?

- **Understanding anonymity**
- **Requesting reporting from the AA group**
- **Thoughtless referral practices**
Boundaries with Co-workers

• Expect a range of approaches & methods

• Accept that differences will always exist

• Respect and Positive Regard for others who are different in philosophy & lifestyle

• Be a positive influence to colleagues & staff