

### **Preamble**

The Code of Ethics of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists reflects the values and principles that are integral to the practice of psychotherapy. This code outlines guidelines that establish minimum standards of ethical practice and conduct for psychotherapists, supervisors and trainers. In their professional capacity members and associate members of ANZAP are required to abide by this code. This code of ethics will continually be informed by new information and experience and will be formally reviewed and revised as necessary for the ongoing development and growth of the organisation.

### **Ethical Principles**

#### **Psychotherapists:**

1. Respect the essential humanity, worth and dignity of all peoples and promote this value in their work.
2. Recognise and respect diversity among people and oppose discrimination and oppressive behaviour. For example special recognition is given to the specific suffering and historical disadvantage experienced by the indigenous people of Australia.
3. Recognise that they are in a position of privilege and trust in relation to their clients.
4. Protect the rights of their clients in relation to the conduct of psychotherapy. For example, the right to informed consent.
5. Are responsible to maintain and develop their competence throughout their professional lives by engaging in activities such as continuing professional education, supervision and psychotherapy.

### **Ethical Responsibilities**

#### **General Responsibilities**

1. Psychotherapists take all reasonable steps to avoid harm to their clients as a result of the therapy process.
2. Psychotherapists are responsible to obtain adequate supervision of their work. This may take the form of one to one supervision or being part of a peer supervision group.
3. Psychotherapists are responsible to assess and monitor their own level of competence and to seek appropriate supervision and/or consider referral for appropriate specialist opinion.
4. Members are responsible to inform clients that they belong to The Australian and New Zealand Association of Psychotherapy.
5. In the event of harm resulting from psychotherapy, psychotherapists take appropriate responsibility for restitution. Professional indemnity should be considered in this context.

6. Psychotherapists are responsible for setting and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries
7. Psychotherapists are responsible to monitor their own physical and emotional capacities and functioning and to seek supervisory help or refer on when their functioning is impaired to the degree that it significantly affects the ongoing welfare of the client.
8. It is unethical for psychotherapists to misrepresent their training or qualifications.
9. Psychotherapists are responsible to explain the nature of treatment when contracting with clients. Clients should be advised of alternate treatment choices where deemed appropriate.
10. Psychotherapists are responsible to keep adequate records.
11. If a psychotherapist is obliged for personal or professional reasons to discontinue treatment, she/he will seek to advise clients of the termination and if possible organise referral to another psychotherapist.

## **Boundaries**

1. Psychotherapists should not use their position of privilege and trust to financially, sexually or emotionally exploit past or present clients, supervisees or trainees.
2. Psychotherapists will not accept or offer payment for referrals or engage in any financial transaction apart from negotiating a fee within the ordinary fee scale set for professional services.
3. Sexual relations between psychotherapist and client, trainer and trainee, supervisor and supervisee constitutes unethical behaviour. It is always the responsibility of the psychotherapist to set and maintain appropriate professional boundaries to minimise the risk of exploitation or harm.
4. Psychotherapists are responsible to monitor themselves and the therapy process and to seek supervisory help if there is a danger of boundaries being violated.
5. Psychotherapists should be mindful that even a considerable time after the termination of therapy the influence of unresolved transference and countertransference dynamics may remain substantial. Furthermore, the structural dynamics of power within the therapy dyad may continue to exist well beyond termination of therapy and so too, the capacity for exploitation remains beyond the end of therapy.

Therefore any psychotherapist contemplating the development of a sexual relationship with a former client is required to consult the Ethics Committee and take account of their advice, bearing in mind that at all times the psychotherapist may be called upon to defend his/her conduct in a judicial context.

## **Confidentiality**

1. Psychotherapists are responsible to maintain confidentiality in relation to information obtained about clients. This applies to verbal, written or recorded material.
2. Client sessions must not be observed by anyone other than their psychotherapist without the client having given informed consent. This applies to direct observation and to any form of audio-visual recording.

3. Psychotherapists should store all records (written, audio and video) in a secure and confidential place.
4. Exceptional circumstances may arise which give the psychotherapist grounds for believing the client is at risk of harming themselves or others. In such circumstances, breaking of confidentiality may be required, preferably with the client's permission or after consultation with a supervisor or colleague.
5. It is reasonable that clinical information may need to be shared with colleagues and other health professionals in order to provide optimal care. In these contexts the rules of confidentiality should be established.
6. Confidences may be revealed without consent when compelling ethical or legal reasons prevail. If this is the case all care should be taken to discuss the issues with a supervisor or colleague.
7. Agreements about confidentiality continue after the client's death unless there are overriding legal considerations.
8. Psychotherapists will ensure the anonymity of their clients when using information for case presentation, teaching, research or publication. If there is any possibility of the client being identified the psychotherapist should obtain informed consent from the client.

### **Training and Supervision**

1. Supervisors are to be guided by the principle of confidentiality within the supervisory relationship. However there may be situations where information needs to be shared with colleagues. For example matters pertaining to progress in the training programme and matters relating to safety.
2. Supervisors and trainers are responsible to relate in a respectful manner to trainees and supervisees.
3. Trainers and supervisors will seek to ensure that their professional relationships are non-exploitative.
4. Supervisors shall not also engage their supervisees in personal psychotherapy.
5. Supervisors and trainers are responsible to inform and educate trainees and supervisees about their ethical responsibilities to clients. They have a responsibility to model and promote an awareness of and an adherence to the provisions of this Code of Ethics.
6. Supervisors and trainers are responsible to engage in ongoing professional development and education.
7. Psychotherapists of trainees shall not exercise direct administrative responsibility over them.
8. Psychotherapists of trainees need to be alert to any conflict of interests that may arise in a training context and be mindful of their primary ethical responsibilities to protect the therapy relationship.

### **Responsibility to Colleagues and the Association**

1. Constructive dialogue and debate about theory and practice is highly valued within ANZAP. Psychotherapists are responsible to engage in such dialogue in a professional

and respectful manner.

2. It is unethical for a psychotherapist to actively promote his/her services directly to someone who is in psychotherapy with another practitioner.
3. Where a client alleges sexual or other misconduct by another therapist, it is the psychotherapist's duty to ensure that the client is fully informed of the appropriate steps to take the complaint to the relevant professional body.
4. If a psychotherapist suspects or obtains information about professional misconduct by a member of the association, she/he is responsible to approach the Ethics Committee of the association to investigate according to the association's procedural guidelines for complaints against members.
5. Psychotherapists have a responsibility to treat any colleague who transgresses this Code of Ethics in a humanitarian manner.
6. Committees within ANZAP are responsible to the membership to function in a way that demonstrates transparent processes.
7. Members and associate members of ANZAP are committed to abiding by the Code of Ethics and Conduct of the Association and the procedures for investigation into ethical complaints. As part of this commitment they agree to cooperate into investigations of complaints against themselves or other psychotherapists.
8. ANZAP as an organisation will consider and respond to public concern relating to either a member of ANZAP or to the organisation as a whole.