

# **Irish Association of Holistic Psychotherapy**

## **Code of Standards & Practice**

### **Definition of holistic counselling and psychotherapy**

Holistic Counselling and Psychotherapy is a professional service involving a counsellor/psychotherapist offering a therapeutic service, and a client who seeks this service. It is an impartial, formal professional service where both parties agree a contract about participation and process. To ensure that their service remains effective, appropriate and ethical, holistic counsellors/ psychotherapists accept and adhere to a set of guiding principles which form the basis of a code of practice.

### **Guiding Principles**

#### ***Principle 1: Acceptance of inner self or essence of life.***

In line with the philosophy of holistic medicine, holistic counsellors/psychotherapists accept that each person has an inner self or essence of life that is in itself perfect and that health, fulfillment, success and self-realisation are enjoyed in the measure that this essence of life is expressed.

#### ***Principle 2: The mind can be trained to enhance expression of inner self.***

While the potential for fullest expression of this inner self is as yet not fully charted the person's mind can be trained in a therapeutic process to create the conditions of such expression.

#### ***Principle 3: Holistic counselling/psychotherapy is a therapeutic process that assists greater expression of inner self and achievement of goals.***

Proper training or therapy is *necessary* because a person may at present fail to achieve such expression and *beneficial* in assisting even the most competent people find greater expression and move in the direction of their goal.

***Principle 4: Respect for the rights and dignity of the client.***

Holistic counsellors/psychotherapists are required to treat their clients with dignity and respect and with due regard to their beliefs and culture. Counsellors/Psychotherapists take appropriate steps to respect their client's privacy and treat information disclosed as confidential.

***Principle 5: Competence and expertise/Right to Practice.***

Holistic counselling and psychotherapy that aims to draw out the inner essence succeeds only in the measure that the therapist has personally achieved such expression.

Counsellors/psychotherapists are required to monitor and maintain their self-expression, professional skills and ethical awareness and take care not to exceed their capacity for work or expertise. They should also take steps to maintain their own health and well-being.

***Principle 6: Responsibility***

In their professional work with their clients and colleagues holistic counsellors/psychotherapists are required to ensure that they offer the best service possible to their clients, refer clients to other professionals where appropriate and act proactively to resolve conflicts of interest and ethical problems.

***Principle 7: Honesty and integrity***

Holistic psychotherapists ensure that they act at all times with honesty and integrity when describing their expertise, qualifications and effectiveness of their services. They also do not use their professional relationship to exploit clients or colleagues financially, sexually or otherwise.

Principles 4, 5, 6 and 7 above are based on the structure of the Meta-Code of Ethics of the European Federation of Professional Psychologists' Association (1995) The Meta-Code proposes four overall Standards:

1. Respect for the rights and dignity of the client
2. Competence and expertise
3. Responsibility
4. Honesty and Integrity

# **IRISH ASSOCIATION OF HOLISTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY (IAHP)**

## **CODE OF STANDARDS AND PRACTICE**

### **1. RIGHT TO PRACTICE**

#### **1.1**

In order to practice as an holistic counsellor and psychotherapist you must

- Complete an approved training course
- Be a member of the Association - IAHP
- Have professional indemnity insurance to cover your practice
- Sign your adherence to this Code of Practice.

You will then be admitted to the register of IAHP members and will have the right to call yourself a' holistic counsellor and psychotherapist, and to practice as one.

In order to be able to use the terms “Accredited members of the IAHP” you have to fulfill all of the conditions above and in addition have received a Certificate of Accreditation from the Association which is normally awarded on completion of 450 hours of ‘supervised practice’ post training.

#### **1.2**

You are accountable for the way in which you conduct your professional practice. Your acceptance of this Code implies that you will represent yourself as a person who has demonstrated the ability to practice to the standards set by the Association and willingness to adhere to its standards.

#### **1.3**

These codes and standards, and your obligations, are outlined in this Code of Practice which is intended to provide a framework for best practice. You must always be prepared to explain and justify your professional decisions and actions.

#### **1.4**

Your on-going right to remain on the register either as a member or as an accredited member is dependent upon;

- Continuing personal and professional development
- Up-to-date insurance
- Full adherence to this Code
- Payment of membership fees

If you wish to practice abroad, you should first check the legal position in the relevant location.

Amendments to this Code may be made from time to time and as members you will be notified.

## **STANDARDS OF PRACTICE AND CARE**

### **2. Respect for the rights and dignity of the client - Principle 4.**

As a psychotherapist, you must:

- 2.1 Foster and maintain trust between you and your client
- 2.2 Listen to the client and respect her/his views regarding cultural, religious, personal values, beliefs and life-style. Your own beliefs and attitudes must not come before the over-riding interest of the client consulting you.
- 2.3 Ensure the client understands the boundaries of the therapeutic relationship. Where a client makes unreasonable demands, you should explain politely that you have to balance the needs of more than one client and divide your time fairly between them.
- 2.4 ensure that you act in the best interest of your client at all times, bearing in mind the position of trust in which they have placed you.
- 2.5 respect the skills of other health care professionals and work in co-operation with them.
- 2.6 when deciding what information to give a client err on the side of generosity and communicate with clients using non-technical, gender-neutral terms and language, encouraging the client to ask questions and to feel empowered by the whole therapy.
- 2.7 respond promptly and constructively to criticism and complaints.
- 2.8 be scrupulous in all financial dealing which may affect your client.

### **3. TRUST ABOVE ALL**

#### 3.1

Trust is at the heart of the relationship between client and psychotherapist. The need for that trust is sometimes reinforced by a legal obligation. More often it rests on your professionalism and your observance of ethical standards.

3.2

Clients must be put first. Those seeking help are often anxious and vulnerable. They lack your professional knowledge and experience and can easily be led to have unrealistic expectations.

3.3 Part of your responsibility is to take all reasonable steps to ensure that clients suffer no harm during therapy.

3.4

The guidance in this Code flows from the principle that psychotherapy practice, like all health care, is founded on the trust:

- Between psychotherapists and their clients who trust you with their mental health and well-being
- Between psychotherapists, their professional colleagues and other health care professionals
- That you be proactive to the highest standards.

#### **4. YOUR CONTRACT WITH THE CLIENT (A client means seeing someone on a one-to-one basis)**

4.1 When you and the other person specifically agree to enter into a therapeutic relationship, the contract begins. At that time the terms and conditions, e.g. fees, arrangements regarding cancelled appointments, etc. must be understood and accepted on both sides. To ensure this it is advisable to have a client sign a 'statement of understanding'.

4.2 It is your duty to ensure that the client understands what you can and cannot offer.

4.3 As psychotherapy is a collaborative process between therapist and client it is good practice to review the process at regular intervals.

4.4 Clients under your care will rightly expect you, within reasonable limits, to make yourself available to them. You should ensure your clients have clear information about your practice arrangements.

4.5 If you work in association with other psychotherapists, or share the care of clients with other health-care professionals, you should ensure that there is clear communication between you and your colleagues and that effective hand-over procedures are in place.

4.6 You would not normally act on behalf of your client but if you do so it must be with clients prior agreement.

## **5. RECORD KEEPING/CONFIDENTIALITY**

5.1 If records of counselling sessions are kept, clients should be made aware of this. At the client's request, information should be given about access to these records, their availability to other people and the degree of security with which they are kept.

5.2 You should be aware that computer-based records are subject to statutory regulations under the Irish Data Protection Act.

5.3 It is important to ensure that the confidential information for which you are responsible is securely protected against improper disclosure when you receive it, store it, transmit it or dispose of it.

5.4 Confidentiality conditions continue after a client ceases therapy with you and after his/her death unless there are over-riding legal or ethical reasons why this should not apply.

5.5 It may be necessary to allow the Inspector of Taxes to see the financial records for your practice. To protect clients' confidentiality, financial information should be kept separate from clinical notes.

5.6 It should be noted that the legal requirement is for records to be kept for a period of seven years.

## **6. DISCLOSURE**

6.1 Whenever you disclose confidential information you must be prepared to explain and justify your decision.

6.2 When a client allows you to disclose information about them you should release no more than is necessary for the purpose.

6.3 All information is confidential and may only be disclosed to a third party without the client's permission in exceptional circumstances - see below.

## **7. PRACTICE INFORMATION**

7.1 You should provide clients, colleagues and other health professionals with good-quality, factual information about your professional qualifications, your practice arrangements and the services you provide. You should do this in a way that puts clients first and preserves their trust.

7.2 If you work in association with other psychotherapists, or share the care of clients with other healthcare professionals, you should ensure that there is clear communication between you and your colleagues and that effective hand-over procedures are in place.

7.3 All published material, public statements and advertising must be legal, decent, honest and truthful. Your professional advertising may indicate your special interests but must not make claims of superiority or disparage your professional colleagues or other professionals. Information must not be designed to mislead or deceive, or make unrealistic or extravagant claims. Neither the content nor the way you distribute it must put prospective clients under pressure.

## **8. CLIENTS' RIGHTS IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH**

8.1 If you are involved in teaching or research involving clients you should first seek the approval of a research ethics committee wherever possible.

8.2 You must seek the clients' consent before involving them in research and they have the right to refuse to take part if they wish.

8.3 Whether or not a person takes part in your research, you must ensure client care is not compromised.

8.4 You must record your research results truthfully, keeping adequate records and making no claims which cannot be substantiated.

8.5 Any records used for teaching or research should be given a code and data should be published in an aggregated form which does not allow individuals to be identified.

## **PRINCIPLE 5 - Competence and Expertise//Right to Practice**

### **9. LEGAL LIMITATIONS TO WHAT A PSYCHOTHERAPIST MAY DO**

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- 9.1 You may practice as a member of another health-care profession only if you are recognised as competent to do so by the appropriate authority.
- 9.2 The law also prohibits you from certain actions:
- 9.2.1 Diagnosing the medical/physical condition of a client
  - 9.2.2 Advertising treatments for specified medical conditions
  - 9.2.3 Prescribing “prescription only” or “controlled” drugs
  - 9.2.4 Signing certificates which require the signature of a registered medical practitioner.

### **10. MAINTAINING YOUR STANDARDS**

10.1 It is your duty to maintain and develop your professional knowledge, skills and standards by regularly and systematically reviewing your practice in the light of:

- This Code of Standards and Practice
- Pursuing an active programme of continuing professional development
- Practice within your professional competence

### **11. SUPERVISION**

- 11.1 An important part of the maintenance of standards is ensuring you attend for supervision.
- 11.2 Members are expected to engage in supervision, either with a more experienced supervisor and/or consultative support with peers.
- 11.3 For members pursuing accreditation the IAHP requires 1 hour of supervision for every 10 hours of client contact.
- 11.4 The discussion of cases within supervision/consultation should not reveal the identity of the client.
- 11.5 Issues about disclosure without consent should be discussed in supervision where possible.

## **12. FEES - Principle 6 Responsibility**

- 12.1 Psychotherapists should charge fees responsibly and in a way which avoids bringing the profession and the Association into disrepute.
- 12.2 If you make other financial arrangements, e.g. to charge on the basis of ability to pay, you are still subject to all of the provisions of this Code
- 12.3 Subsequent revisions of fees and/or other terms of the contract must be agreed in advance with the client.
- 12.4 Any advertisement or document quoting your fees should state charges for both initial and subsequent sessions if there is a difference.

## **13 DISCLOSURE WITHOUT CONSENT**

- 13.1 You may sometimes judge it essential, in the interests of a client's health and well-being, to share confidential information with the client's medical adviser, legal guardian or close relatives.
- 13.2 Disclosure without consent may be necessary in exceptional circumstances, e.g. if the client is incapable of giving consent, or where his/her personal safety or the safety of others is at risk, or if illegal activities are mentioned, or if something they say caused the therapist concern, or if it is undesirable on medical grounds to seek consent. If it is deemed necessary to do this it is important to try to persuade the client to agree. It should be later noted in the client's file the information disclosed and the reasons why.
- 13.3 A Court may order you to disclose information without the consent of the client. If this happens, you should disclose only information which is relevant to the proceedings, and you should not disclose information unless you are ordered to do so by the court. You may wish to take advice in these circumstances.

## **Principle 7 - Honesty & Integrity**

### **14. CONFLICT OF INTERESTS AND EXPLOITATION**

14.1 Not exploit any professional relationship to further your own personal, political or business interests. Examples include - taking advantage of trust or dependency to frighten clients into receiving services; pressuring a client to give or lend you money or other benefits; putting pressure on a client to purchase a product or service which will bring you financial reward.

14.2 The Therapist remains accountable for relationships with former clients and must exercise caution in regard to entering into friendships, business relationships, training and other relationships after the therapy is over, for a period of two years.

14.3 If you find yourself becoming emotionally or sexually interested in a client you should end the professional relationship, finding the clients an alternative psychotherapist. Similarly, if a client shows signs of becoming interested in you, you should discourage this and, if necessary, end the professional relationship, giving reasonable notice and making reasonably certain that discontinuation will cause no harm to the client.

14.4 Under no circumstances is any sexual relationship between a therapist and client permissible. Sexual relationships with former clients is not advised for a minimum period of five years after ending of the therapy.

14.5 Be acutely aware of the problematic nature of dual relationships (with, for example, students, employees or clients), and recognise that it is not always possible to avoid them (e.g. when offering services in a small community, or engaging in person-centered teaching or training.) Where it is possible psychotherapists should avoid such relationships; where it is not, they should take active steps to safeguard the students', employees' or clients' interests.

### **15. FINANCIAL & COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY**

15.1 In all financial and commercial activities you must be honest and reliable. There must be no suspicion that your business affairs influence your attitude towards clients or compromise the care you provide.

## **Incapacity for Practice**

**Psychotherapists** should refrain from practice when their professional judgment or ability to benefit and not harm others is seriously impaired by a physical or psychological condition. When they become aware of problems that may affect their competence, they shall seek competent professional assistance to determine whether they should limit, suspend or terminate their professional activity.