

*THE  
SIGNIFICANCE  
OF ETHICS IN  
GROUP  
COUNSELING*


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# *TODAY'S OBJECTIVES*

You will be able to demonstrate comprehension about significant ethical issues in group counseling.

You will be able to effectively apply ethics in group counseling.



*QUESTION: “WHAT IS  
ETHICS?”*

- Fill in the blank.
- Ethics is \_\_\_\_\_.

# *ETHICS...*

- Recommended standards or criteria of behavior as determined by a set of professional values. As it pertains to counseling, these professional values are attributed to best practices, as well as to best-decision making (Gladding, 2016).

# *A CODE OF ETHICS...*



Assists in promoting moral sensitivity



Assists in the education, as well as socialization, of professionals



Creates a benchmark or standard for professionals' ethical conduct (Zeanah et al., 2023).



*SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT  
VALUES ALIGNED WITH ETHICS  
ARE AS FOLLOWS:*

- **Beneficence,**
- **Justice,**
- **Veracity,**
- **Fidelity,**
- **Nonmaleficence, &**
- **Autonomy**



# *BENEVOLENCE...*

Considering the welfare of others

*JUSTICE...*

Treating everyone the same





*VERACITY...*

**BEING TRUTHFUL**



*FIDELITY...*

**Loyalty and duty**

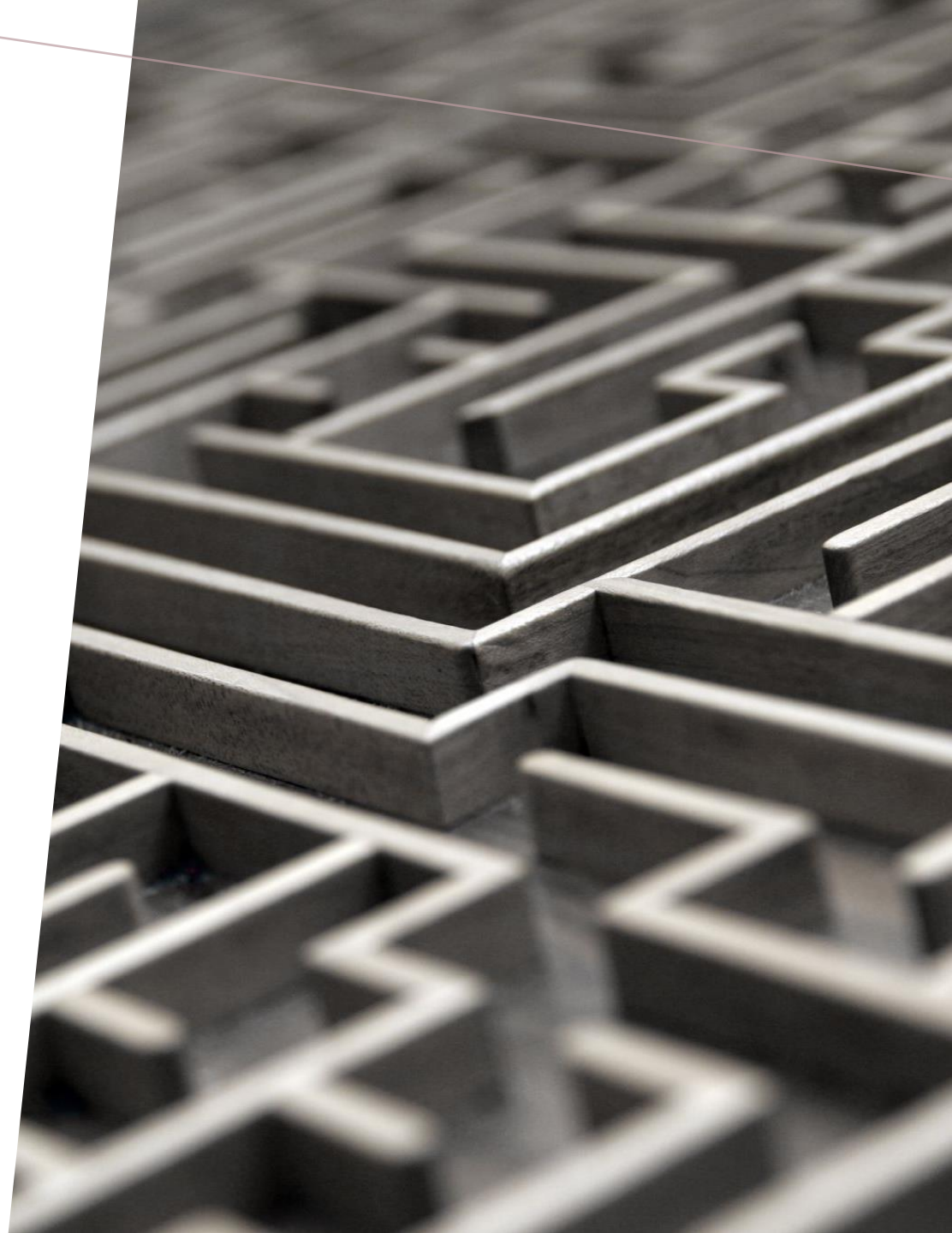


*NONMALEFICENCE...*

**STAYING AWAY FROM CAUSING  
HARM**

# *AUTONOMY...*

Encouraging the client's right and ability to decide about his/her therapeutic choices



# *QUESTION:*

“What is the importance of a code of ethics in group work?”



# *THE AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATION (ACA)*

The 2014 ACA Code of Ethics was approved by The American Counseling Association Governing Council. Its focus is comprised around the following aspects:

- the counseling relationship;
- confidentiality and privacy;
- professional responsibility;
- relationships with other professionals;
- evaluation, assessment, and interpretation;
- supervision, training, and teaching;
- research and publication;
- distance counseling, technology, and social media;
- and resolving ethical issues (American Counseling Association, 2014).



*FILL IN THE BLANK.*



“Professional education programs are held accountable for effectively developing group leaders by \_\_\_\_\_.”



# Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP)

**It is critical that group leaders understand the ACA codes, guidelines and standards, even those in other disciplines (social work and psychology) (Gladding, 2016).**

**This is crucial because some ethical issues might occur in group counseling.**



# *GROUP LEADERS' TRAINING*

Group leaders must have the following:

specialized equipping through selected course work,

experience in group counseling as a participant,  
leader, & co-leader, and

an understanding of their limitations.

It is unethical for group leaders to work outside of their area of expertise and experience. If this is done, it will cause harm to the participant.

# *THE SCREENING OF POSSIBLE GROUP MEMBERS*

This consists of the group leader doing the following:

developing a group based on his/her level of experience, carefully going through the process of recruiting people, & meeting with the possible group member individually to assess if the individual is a good fit for the group (Gladding, 2016).

This process is essential in also finding out more about the mental history of the client. It is important to understand the ACA Code section A.8 Group Work (A.8.a. Screening & A.8.b. Protecting Clients).



# *ACA CODE OF ETHICS (2014)*

## **A.9. Group Work**

**(See B.4.a.)**

### **A.9.a. Screening**

- Counselors screen prospective group counseling/therapy participants. To the extent possible, counselors select members whose needs and goals are compatible with goals of the group, who will not impede the group process, and whose well-being will not be jeopardized by the group experience.

### **A.9.b. Protecting Clients**

- In a group setting, counselors take reasonable precautions to protect clients from physical, emotional, or psychological trauma.

# *ACA CODE OF ETHICS (2014)*

## **B.4.a. Group Work**

- In group work, counselors clearly explain the importance and parameters of confidentiality for the specific group.

# *THE RIGHTS OF GROUP MEMBERS*

Group participants have rights, which must be discussed with them and protected. They deserve to know that they have the right to leave whenever they would like; however, they must be informed about the consequences of their actions. They must also know the limitations of the group leader, as well as the group members. Furthermore, they must know about the risks associated with being in the group.





# *CONFIDENTIALITY*

Confidentiality is the right of the group member to discuss personal information with the group leader and other group members with the expectation that the information will remain within the group (Gladding, 2016). If not respected, it ruins the trust within the group and will be dealt with accordingly. This must be discussed during the screening process.

# *DUAL/MULTIPLE RELATIONSHIPS...*

- a relationship with a group member that is both professional and personal &
- can become harmful for the client, especially due to the counselor/client imbalance of power (Gladding, 2016).

It is best to avoid if possible. If not, it is best to have someone who can monitor that relationship continuously (Gladding 2016).



# *CASE STUDY*

John attended group and complained to his group leader about a female, who had made consistent, unwanted sexual advances. The group leader, who happened to be a new counselor, did not know what to do and did nothing about John's complaint. A few weeks passed, and the female participant continued to make unwanted passes at John. John then stopped attending group.

“What are the ethical implications in this case study?”

# *TODAY'S OBJECTIVES REVIEW*

You are better able to demonstrate comprehension about significant ethical issues in group counseling.

You are better able to effectively apply ethics in group counseling.

# *REFERENCES*

American Counseling Association (2014). *2014 ACA code of ethics*.

Gladding, S. T. (2016). *Groups: A counseling specialty* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Merrill Counseling Series.

Zeanah, P. D., Steier, A., Lim, I., Korfmacher, J., & Zeanah, C. H. (2023). Current approaches and future directions for addressing ethics in infant and early childhood mental health. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 44, 625–637. <https://doi.org/10.1002/imhj.22077>