

## **CODE OF ETHICS FOR REGISTERED EXPRESSIVE ARTS THERAPIST**

The IEATA community has established the title of Registered Expressive Arts Therapists (REAT) for qualified members because the registered members demonstrate to the larger community the highest standards of professional practice. Each community creates this "way of the community," what the Greeks called "ethos." In the modern world, this is called ethics; a code of values and goals that help us define our behavior as a professional community. The following guidelines are IEATA suggestions for creating our own ethos, our own ethical code of professional behavior for REAT.

### **I. Responsibility**

In providing expressive arts therapy, registered members maintain the highest standards of the profession and accept responsibility for the consequence of their acts. Services are to clients who are provided with statements of informed consent and voluntary participation. There is a specific contract, which includes method of treatment, frequency of sessions and costs. This is provided to the person before participation.

REATs act with care and responsibility because their methods and recommendations affect the lives of others. They avoid personal, social and financial situations and pressures that might lead to misuse of one's influence.

Special consideration must be undertaken to preserve the boundaries between personal psychotherapeutic process, and supervision and training of a candidate. It is recommended that one avoid dual relationships, such as therapist and teacher or supervisor and therapist.

### **II. Competence**

The maintenance of high standards of competence is the responsibility shared by all REATs in the interest of the community and professions as a whole. REATs are responsible for the realization of the boundaries of their own competence and the limitations for their own techniques. They employ only techniques for which they are qualified by training and supervision.

When innovative techniques are used for which there are no established standards, Expressive Arts Therapists must take whatever precautions necessary to protect the welfare of their clients. REATs must recognize that personal problems may interfere with professional effectiveness. If personal problems do interfere, the REAT must seek competent professional assistance either in terms of supervision and/or personal therapy.

### **III. Moral and Legal Standards**

REATs must be sensitive to the possible impact of their professional and public behavior upon the community's trust in the profession. All members are obligated to be in compliance with all state and federal laws that govern their profession. They must respect the civil, human, and legal rights of all clients, supervisees, students or colleagues.

REATs shall be aware that personal values affect their conduct in therapeutic work, supervision and teaching. They must recognize and respect the diverse attitudes which others bring to work and remain sensitive to those attitudes when dealing with topics which have the potential to cause offense.

### **IV. Public Statements**

When making public statements about one's professional work, REATs must utilize the most current relevant material and must exercise the highest level of professional judgment. They must distinguish their private opinions from those generally held in the profession when appropriate. They must also clarify that their personal opinions do not represent the official position of IEATA.

Members must be accurate about the efficacy of their work and their educational and training backgrounds when discussing their work in a public forum.

### **V. Confidentiality**

REATs have a primary obligation to respect the confidentiality of information that is relevant to the treatment of a client, supervisee and student in the course of their professional activities. Clients are entitled to know the limits of confidentiality.

Before using private information, the REAT must obtain written consent from the person or persons involved and must adequately disguise all identifying information. Confidential information can only be released by written consent, unless there is imminent danger to the client or the community. At all times, the right of the client to confidentiality must be weighed, and by extension, the right to unimpaired treatment, the right of the community to protect its own welfare and the right of the profession to preserve its ethical standards must be equally weighed.

The REAT shall make provisions for maintaining confidentiality in the storage and disposal of records.

## **VI. Welfare of the Client**

REATs have the continuing duty to respect the integrity and protect the welfare of their clients. Due to the influential position that we hold for those in our care, REATs shall make every reasonable effort to avoid dual relationships that could impair professional judgment.

REATs shall evaluate their work with each individual, group and training to ensure that they are conducting their work within the scope of their practice and training. The parameters of their practice and training must be accurately represented to their clients.

Registered members shall not use their professional relationship to give or receive personal gifts or services to further their business, political or religious interests.

Sexual intimacies and sexual harassment are considered unethical behavior. If one is engaged in sexual behavior with a client, supervisee, or student, s/he must terminate this professional relationship and seek professional consultation and personal therapeutic assistance to resolve these personal issues.

Nonsexual touch must be approached with great sensitivity. The guidelines for somatic therapists can act as an aid here. Be sure to avoid touching erotic areas. When considering touch, be sure to assess the nature and intent of the touch and the transference-countertransference implications. Be sure to assess that the touch will continue to promote the therapeutic aspects of the work and does not lead to any other type of relationship. Be sure the client agrees to the touch in the context of your work together.

If the registered member feels the client is not benefiting or the work is developing into an area in which they do not feel adequately trained, s/he must consider professional consultation and referral to another professional. This will best serve the client.

## **VII. Collegial Relationships**

Registered members of IEATA bear responsibility to assure that appropriate standards of competence, honesty and integrity are maintained within IEATA. REATs shall seek continuing training or assistance from colleagues to best serve their clients. They will also offer that assistance to IEATA members and other professionals.

Members shall assign credit to those who have contributed to or directly influenced their writing, presentations or research.

REATs respect the tradition and practices of their colleagues and of other professionals within the psychotherapeutic field. If a client seeks your services and has an existing professional relationship, it is important to work in collaboration with the other professional for the welfare of the client.

If a member knows of an ethical violation by another member, and it seems appropriate, s/he first shall informally attempt to resolve the issue by bringing the behavior to the attention of the member in question. If the misconduct is minor, an informal solution is preferable. If the violation is not minor and cannot be solved by the informal procedure, the member shall discuss this with one of the executive co-chairs. The member then can follow the guidelines for filing an ethical grievance. The procedure is to write a formal notification to the professional standards co-chairs requesting that they review this registered member's actions.

### **VIII. Special Considerations for Expressive Arts Therapy Work in Non-ordinary States of Consciousness**

When working in expressive arts therapy, the REAT must help the client move between and understand the power of the various states of consciousness, e.g., the literal, emotional and imaginal realms. It is very important that the therapist be sensitive to this and aid each client in appropriately using the metaphoric world in the literal aspects of their lives.

As REATs who value images and symbols, we must be sensitive to the various levels that the image evokes and not reduce them or pathologize them without understanding their symbolic meaning and essence.

As a registered member, one must provide adequate provisions to ensure a client's safety as s/he enter these non-ordinary states.

In order to keep the highest standards of professional practice, each registered member shall hold and practice this "ethos," following the ways of the IEATA community, and our code of ethics. If you have questions or concerns about any aspect of this code of ethics, please contact the professional standards co-chairs. Thank you for your support in maintaining the integrity of IEATA.

**IEATA Professional Standards Committee for Expressive Arts Therapist**

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