Walking the Ethical Tightrope of Professional Boundaries: Therapeutic Relationships and Patient Centered Care

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Hope for Today:
Each of us will be leave better equipped to objectively understand how our own personal values and beliefs affect how we deal with potential ethical dilemmas. It is through introspection and acknowledging our own attitudes and principals that we are able to recognize our own potential bias’. By doing this, we are able to provide excellent care, maintain boundaries, and protect the patient and caregiver as well as ourselves.

The Golden Rule- Do Unto others..
Code of Ethics- National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization

• To meet the hospice and palliative care needs of patients and their families...
• To act honestly, truthfully and fairly to all concerned...
• To instruct both local and national communities in the tenets of hospice and palliative care philosophy...
• To continuously strive for the highest level of skill and expertise of the staff and volunteers in the delivery of care...
Fundamental Ethical Principals of Health Care

- **Autonomy** - Respect the choice of the patient
- **Beneficence** - Do What is best for the patient
- **Non-Maleficence** - Do no Harm
- **Justice** - fair to all - equal treatment
• All situations we encounter are not black and white. When two or more of these principals become entangled- an ethical dilemma is created...conflict of values occurs and there is no absolute right or wrong. We often find ourselves stuck between a rock and a hard place.
What is the right thing to do?
• Time to look for the piece that moves us towards understanding...the Paul Harvey Moment- the rest of the story!

It's QUESTION TIME!!
Start at home!

What are your own personal values and beliefs—what are most important to you?

- Acceptance
- Non-judgmental
- Expression of emotions
- Respect for client dignity
- Confidentiality
- Truth-telling
- Service to others
- Integrity
- Competence
- Social justice
- Importance of human relationships
- Non-discrimination
- Self determination
Baggage, Barriers and Hot Buttons

- What do I bring to the table?
- What makes me cringe?
- What makes my guard go up?
- The silent ones
- Unrealistic expectations
- Yes- but attitude
- Non-compliance
- Hostility
- Controlling behaviors
- Manipulative behaviors
- Attention –seeking

Many barriers are subtle, indirect and inadvertent-making it even more important to be aware.
Over-involvement vs. Under-involvement.

Pushing the Envelope or Crossing the Line???

• Do you share personal problems with your patients or families?
• Have you ever traded assignments so that you can care for a patient?
• Have you ever spent time with a patient off the clock?
• Do you keep secrets with your patient?
• Do you become defensive when someone questions your interactions?
• Have you given or received gifts from your patients?
• Do you feel possessive about your patient—thinking that only you can provide the care they need?
• Have you ever flirted with a patient or family member?
• Have you chosen sides with a patient or family member against that of your co-workers or supervisors?
• Do your patients worry about you and call to check on you?
• Do you make excuses as to why not to see a patient?
• Do you feel yourself disconnecting from a patient or family?
• Have you made your visits shorter than normal?
• Do you have preconceived ideas of what you are going to do in order to get out before you walk in?
• Do you experience physical or emotional changes when seeing a particular patient or family?
With the power to do great good - also comes the power to do great harm

The test of the 4 A’s

- Ask
- Assess
- Affirm
- Act
It’s a Risky Business - this balancing of boundaries

Seven-fold procedure to dealing with potential ethical dilemmas:

1. Identify the conflict- personal or professional
2. Identify the group, individuals and organizations who are involved and affected
3. Identify all possible courses of action –the benefits and risks associated with each
4. Examine reasons in favor of or opposed to each course of action
5. Consider laws, policies, procedures and operational issues
6. Make decision-DOCUMENT decision making process-careful documentation is the key
7. Monitor and evaluate the decision- be willing to revisit decision if needed
Wrapping it up!

Running on empty will not get you very far..
build in time to Reflect on your own beliefs, values and needs…
being Rigid is not always helpful- situations are not always cut and dried…
perception is Reality…
do not be hesitant to Recircle and/ or Recycle the wagon…
we alone are Responsible for our Reactions and behaviors…
keep your Radar on…
sometimes a Referee might be a good idea…
keep your Regrets to a minimal- you do the best you can…
look for the Rainbow after the Rain…you are a Reflection of God’s love to those you come in contact with
Remember often why you chose this field, the privilege you are given each day and the difference that you make…
Thank yourself…