

LET'S TALK ABOUT...

→ *Ethics and Self-Accountability*

Ethical Principles

The topic of ethics can often be confusing, difficult, and at times downright baffling! Somatic practitioners encounter ethical issues and dilemmas that don't always have simple, apparent solutions. Expanding one's grasp of ethical principles helps practitioners understand the impact of their behavior on clients and provides the knowledge and tools to act accordingly. Not all ethical breaches are gross violations of conduct; much unethical behavior is subtle. In many cases practitioners may inadvertently act unethically because they haven't considered the relevant issues.

The purpose of ethics is to guide us so that the client's welfare is our first priority. Being ethical isn't limited simply to knowing and following ethical codes, laws and regulations. Ethical behavior also involves striving to bring our highest values into our work and aspiring to do our best in all interactions. It is doing the right thing in the right manner for the right reasons and with the right attitude.

Self-Accountability

As individuals, it's our capacity for self-accountability that keeps us functioning ethically and responsibly. Self-accountability is a more exacting form of accountability since it goes one step further: while a person may be accountable to others, s/he may not be as accountable to him or herself when there's no one else to observe, monitor, or hold him or her responsible.

In essence, self-accountability is the cornerstone of ethics. It is about who you are and what you do when no one's watching you. When you have a well-developed sense of self-accountability, you're honest with yourself, answerable, and fully responsible for what you say and do at all times. You have the ability to look beyond the immediate moment to consider all the consequences and know if you're willing to pay them. You have personal ethics.

Personal ethics is the precursor to professional ethics, for we aren't likely to be more ethical in our professional life than we are in our personal life. As the saying goes, "No matter where you go, there you are." In other words, we're most likely dishonest in our business affairs if we're dishonest in our personal life. Likewise, if we can't keep the secret of a friend, our client's confidentiality is at risk.

Excerpted and adapted from, The Ethics of Touch: The Hands-on Practitioners Guide To Creating a Professional Safe and Enduring Practice by Ben Benjamin and Cherie Sohnen-Moe