

Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Practice

March 11, 2013

STANDARDS OF CARE STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE RESOLUTION OF PRACTICE DILEMMAS

PREFACE

ACEP Mission:

The Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology is a nonprofit international professional organization dedicated to serving humanity for its highest good through research, education and promotion of energy psychology among health professionals and the public throughout the world by collaboration among practitioners, researchers, and licensing bodies.

ACEP Purpose: ACEP provides a forum for integration of the diverse methods used in the pioneering field of energy psychology through the use of:

- Clinically demonstrated treatments for a wide range of emotional distresses
- Informational resources for the ongoing development and research of energy psychology
- Educational opportunities through conferences, newsletters, websites, and links to various trainings and workshops
- Professional development through certification programs for licensed mental health professionals and for other energy health practitioners
- Support and guidance regarding standards of care and ethical practice

ACEP is a self-governing association that desires to inform and educate its members about the ethical practice of energy psychology. Compliance with its Code of Ethics is an obligation of ACEP membership. The Code of Ethics is designed to ensure that the evolving multidisciplinary practice of energy psychology is guided by appropriate ethical boundaries and follows the standards of care that will cause no physical or emotional harm to clients/patients. As an international organization with members from a growing number of countries with standards of practice that may vary between nationalities and cultures, ACEP seeks to accommodate a wide range of needs. This code of ethics is intended to complement and not supersede the authority of licensing boards that govern members under their jurisdiction.

Comprehensive Energy Psychology

Energy psychology is a family of mind/body techniques that are clinically observed to consistently help with a wide range of psychological conditions. It is at the leading edge of interventions designed to reduce human suffering and promote peak functioning. These interventions address the human vibrational matrix, which consists of these major interacting systems.

- Energy pathways (meridians and related acupoints)
- Energy centers (chakras)
- Human biofield (systems of energy that envelop the body)

STANDARDS OF CARE

Standards of care are intended to guide responsibilities specific to an individual's scope of practice and level of professional training. Practitioners are expected to observe all laws established by their respective licensing boards, and to uphold and honor the standards of their primary professional discipline. ACEP members agree to abide by the following standards:

Competence:

- Competently provide services to clients/patients and maintain and further the necessary knowledge and skills to continue to do so.

- Exercise reasonable and prudent professional judgment in providing professional services.
- Keep informed of developments in his/her area of practice and participate in continuing education throughout his/her professional career.
- Satisfy all continuing education requirements established by his/her licensing authority.
- Recognize and discharge one's responsibility to uphold all laws and regulations relating to one's licensure and scope of practice.

Confidentiality:

- Protect the privacy of clients/patients and others with whom he or she has a professional relationship or on whose behalf he or she has reason to possess confidential information - unless the client has specifically released the practitioner from such duty or such information is required to be divulged in response to proper legal process.
- Not reveal to any third party or use for his/her benefit, without the client/patient's consent, any personally identifiable information relating to the client relationship or the affairs of the client.
- Inform the client/patient in advance about the obligation to disclose personal information such as request by a court, or to prevent imminent danger to client/patient or to others.
- Release a copy of a client/patient's original records in a timely manner when the client requests them unless in the practitioner's judgment it would be harmful for the patient to view the records.

Professionalism:

- Maintain status in good standing with any professional organization with which they are affiliated, or with any regulatory or licensing body (i.e., national ministry of health, state, province, or region) under whose jurisdiction they are subject. Members shall notify ACEP within 30 days of any disciplinary action taken by a professional organization or licensing body, and shall consent to the release of such information to ACEP by the body.
- Serve the public, clients/patients, and employers with the highest professionalism, integrity, impartiality, objectivity and ethical behavior.
- Use only legal and ethical means in all treatment situations.
- Promote and encourage the highest level of ethics within the practice of energy psychology.
- Cooperate in every reasonable and proper way with other licensed mental health professionals and other energy health practitioners, and work with them in the advancement of the practice of energy psychology.
- Respect the divergence of viewpoints represented by the many disciplines and professions engaging in energy psychology modalities.
- Use every opportunity to improve public understanding of the role of energy psychology as an efficacious group of treatment modalities.

Fairness:

- Perform professional services in a manner that is fair and reasonable to clients, prospective clients, colleagues, and employers.
- Disclose any conflicts of interest associated with providing such services.
- Refuse to engage in, or countenance, activities for personal gain at the expense of one's patients or clients.
- Show respect for other professionals and related professional groups by engaging in fair and honorable competitive practices.
- Refuse to engage in or countenance discrimination on the basis of race, sex, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability.

Integrity:

- Maintain the highest standard of personal conduct.
- Conduct oneself with honor and dignity.
- Uphold the need for self-care on the part of energy psychology practitioners.
- Relate to each individual in one's care with the conscious awareness that all patients or clients are deserving of the utmost compassion, respect, and regard for their needs.

Honesty:

- Refrain from soliciting clients/patients through false or misleading communications or advertisements,

either written or oral.

- Refrain from conduct that involves dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation.
- Refrain from knowingly making a false or misleading statement to a client, employer, employee, professional colleague, governmental or other regulatory body or official or any other person or entity.
- Refrain from guaranteeing any cure or making any such claims using energy psychology treatment modalities.
- Refrain from unauthorized or misleading use of ACEP approved credentials.
- Communicate internal and external advertising statements in a truthful and accurate manner.
- Disclose all material relevant to the professional relationship, including but not limited to conflicts of interest, changes in practice affiliation, contact information, credentials, qualifications, licenses, privileges, and scope of practice.
- Disclose resumes of principals and employees of the practice who are expected to provide services to clients/patients.
- Disclose fee schedules as well as a description of the services to clients/patients or third party administrators.

Diligence:

- Act with timeliness and consistency in the fulfillment of professional duties.
- Carefully evaluate a client/patient's circumstances prior to making a recommendation, and make and/or implement only those recommendations that are appropriate for the client.
- Properly supervise subordinates with regard to their delivery of services to the client/patient and not accept or otherwise condone any subordinate's conduct that is in violation of this code.
- Personally contact a suspected offending member to resolve a perceived violation. If that is unsuccessful, then promptly inform the chair of the ACEP Ethics Committee when one becomes aware with no substantial doubt of an ACEP member engaging in a violation of this code.
- Promptly inform the appropriate regulatory or professional disciplinary body as well as the chair of the ACEP Ethics Committee when one becomes aware with no substantial doubt of an ACEP member engaging in unprofessional, fraudulent, or illegal conduct.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

Energy Psychology Trainers and Presenters

Energy psychology trainers and presenters are expected to:

- Give credit to those whose theories, methods, research, and other contributions are being taught.
- Shoulder the responsibility to assess the capabilities and limitations of trainees, and to provide feedback to trainees concerning these issues.
- Attempt diligently to restrain over-eager, impulsive, immature, or otherwise unwise trainees from going outside established guidelines for practice in the modalities in which they are training.
- Encourage mature, seasoned trainees to innovate and to receive training in multiple energy diagnostic and treatment approaches.
- Create consultation mechanisms for their students to use.
- Evaluate the proficiency of trainees before any formal certification they may choose to offer in the method they teach.
- Place the welfare of volunteers for demonstration above the presentation itself.
- Screen and evaluate volunteers who are selected for demonstrations to minimize the potential of harm resulting from the demonstration.
- Obtain from demonstration volunteers a signed waiver and consent prior to work begun and which describes the potential risk of volunteering as a demonstration-volunteer, including loss of confidentiality and the possibility of issues and emotions arising unexpectedly.
- Provide care for any volunteers who may not have completed processing initiated by a live demonstration.
- Provide first aid for any immediate distress that arises during or as a consequence of a demonstration and to offer an appropriate referral.
- Refrain from charging for first aid treatment in this circumstance. If a deeper issue is uncovered during a demonstration, or if what is uncovered goes beyond the scope of the demonstration the presenter is obligated to provide ongoing therapy to resolve that issue, unless a waiver was signed indicating the release of this responsibility.
- Obtain the client/patients' informed consent for creating and using a video (or other media) as a

representation of one's work. Trainers and presenters who use such material are responsible for ensuring that their client/patient understands the limits of confidentiality of these materials and the potential that the individuals represented in such materials may be identified. Whenever trainers and presenters do live or media demonstrations, they must remind the audience to maintain confidentiality concerning the identity of the volunteer and any personal information that may arise.

- Refrain from using a live demonstration or audio, video or other media that highlights a patient or client's particular vulnerability for the purposes of exploitation.
- Refrain from using as demonstration volunteers, any clients or patients with especially vulnerable diagnoses, such as dissociative identity disorders without consultation from a licensed mental health practitioner whose scope of practice includes treatment of such disorders.

Energy Psychology Researchers

Researchers must comply with the specific codes of ethics set forth by their professional organizations, such as the American Holistic Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Association of Social Workers, the American Medical Association, or those organizations appropriate to one's country.

Energy Psychology Trainees

Energy psychology trainees are expected to:

- Thoroughly learn and practice a particular intervention before using it with clients/patients.
- Refrain from use of complicated or potent energy diagnostic or treatment methods that they have only read about or seen demonstrated.
- Seek ongoing consultation while learning new methods.
- Credit those who generated the diagnostic approaches, intervention methods, research and theories they use or mention in treatments.

Non-Licensed Practitioners Among ACEP Members

ACEP understands that non-licensed, non-mental health trained practitioners play an important role in promoting healing and reducing suffering among the public. It also acknowledges the fact that mental health care in some countries is not regulated, resulting in non-licensed practitioners being the major providers of such care. Although most non-licensed practitioners have not had formal coursework and supervision in the areas of ethics and scope of practice, it should be noted that all practitioners of energy therapy methods take on considerable ethical obligations when they choose to provide services or products related to energy diagnosis or treatment.

In order to encourage the highest standards of practice among its members, ACEP offers a certification program tailored to meet the needs of its members - licensed as well as unlicensed mental health practitioners.

- All non-licensed, non-mental health trained energy health practitioners are strongly encouraged to seek certification as an energy health practitioner (CEHP), a designation that requires continued education on ongoing basis, to consistently upgrade their knowledge and skills in this complex and ever growing field of energy psychology.
- Energy health practitioners are required as a condition of ACEP membership to educate themselves with the basic concepts and expectations of the ACEP Code of Ethics.
- Energy health practitioners are encouraged to pay attention on a consistent basis to their own energetic self-care.

Practitioners Working with Children

Parents, caregivers and children pose multiple ethical challenges to practitioners. Consent for treatment requires the agreement of both the caregiver and the child. Children are more sensitive and vulnerable to adult inputs and the practitioner is therefore obligated to work with extra sensitivity and caution with young clients. Children, especially the very young may not be able to identify or articulate their problems; thus the practitioner relies on reports from caregivers, schools and social agencies to determine the nature, severity and extent of the problem. Children are often the antennas for family tensions.

Practitioners must take into account local laws pertaining to age of consent as well as other cultural factors.

- During assessment and treatment practitioners must be aware of system theory, family dynamics and

family therapy in order to properly address the needs of children presented by their parents, schools, or social agencies.

- Practitioners need to be sufficiently trained to recognize that often the child is not the problem but rather the family, school, or agency may be the actual source of tensions that are expressed by the child's symptoms or behavior.
- Practitioners must be able to provide a safe environment in which a child can address his/her problems. This may require advising, confronting, or challenging caregivers, or even reporting situations of verified or suspected child abuse to social agencies.
- The child's caregivers must be made aware of the limits of confidentiality regarding the child's issues as part of the informed consent process before commencing treatment; practitioners must explain the limits of confidentiality to a child as well.
- Practitioners must advise a child that in the event issues arise where, in the practitioner's best judgment and in a child's best interest, the issues ought to be discussed with the caregivers or agency, a child will be informed of such an event before the issue is brought up to the adults.
- The child should be given the choice of whether he/she wishes to participate during the sharing of information to adults. To make this decision, practitioners will use their best judgment and consider the child's condition, vulnerability, age and development.

Practitioners Providing Care Following Natural Disasters and Other Crises

- It is recommended that in case of a natural disaster that practitioners seek advice from ACEP leadership such as the chair of the Humanitarian Aid Committee for guidance regarding optimal time of intervention prior to providing crisis intervention on their own initiative.
- Special consideration needs to be given by relief workers when working with clients/patients of different cultures, language, etc. during a crisis.
- Relief workers must proceed with caution, and demonstrate respect, tolerance of different cultural and religious background, and sensitivity to the highly vulnerable state during a crisis.
- Practitioners should seek consent to intervention from both children and the adults acting as caregivers before starting an intervention. Consent to treatment becomes most important during a crisis in order to avoid adding stress and long-term consequences.

RESOLUTION OF ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND VIOLATIONS

ACEP encourages its members to ask ethical questions or raise concerns about ethical issues that may arise within their clinical practice, trainings or research work. The goal is to provide practitioners, trainers, trainees, and clients with a forum to raise questions and to resolve complaints regarding members on a prompt, fair and objective basis.

Responsibility for this process resides with the ACEP Ethics Committee. Members are welcome to contact any member of the Ethics Committee for informal discussion of ethical matters. More formal queries can be addressed in writing by mail or E-mail to the Director or Chair of Ethics.

Complaints

Peer to peer professional courtesy is expected of ACEP members who perceive that a colleague may be engaging in practices that are out of conformity with the Code of Ethics. As a first step, it is advisable to contact directly and personally a suspected offending member to resolve a perceived violation. If that is unsuccessful, or if there are valid reasons why such an approach might seem inappropriate, then the Director of Ethics or the Chair, or any other member of the ACEP Ethics Committee may be approached. Contacting the Ethics Committee for advice does not necessarily commit the enquirer to pursuing a formal complaint.

The ACEP Ethics Committee will consider complaints against a member and help to resolve these through mediation, education, and or corrective actions. However, ACEP is primarily an organization for the discussion and dissemination of information regarding energy psychology, and is not in essence a regulatory professional body. Many of its members belong to other professional bodies that do have regulatory functions, and this is encouraged by ACEP.

ACEP will consider only those complaints regarding regular members in good standing, and relating to a specific provision of this Code of Ethics.

In no case will ACEP accept anonymous complaints for consideration. ACEP does not attempt to resolve complaints regarding non-members.

Complaints regarding an ACEP member should be submitted in writing by E-mail or by certified or international registered mail to the Director of Ethics c/o the office of the executive director. The Director of Ethics will conduct a preliminary review of the matter, which may be in consultation with the Chair of Ethics or any other member of the Ethics Committee. If the Director determines that (1) the matter lacks sufficient merit, (2) the complaint contains unreliable or insufficient information, or (3) the matter is outside the scope of the ACEP Code of Ethics or its jurisdiction, then no further actions shall be taken and the complaint will be dismissed.

If the information reviewed is determined to be within the scope of the Code of Ethics, the Director of Ethics will liaise with the Chair of the Ethics Committee, to appoint additional members of the Ethics Committee, to form a Panel, which will proceed with further investigation of the complaint.

Procedure for investigating a complaint

The Panel would undertake the following tasks:

- Clarify the complaint and consider what features, if any, of the ACEP code may have been violated.
- Formulate the complaint in a succinct statement.
- Clarify what facts (as opposed to general opinion or description) have been stated - and what evidence, if any, has been indicated.
- Clarify, for the complainant, ACEP's responsibility. ACEP's ethical goals are primarily concerned with education of its members. In some cases mediation and reconciliation between complainant and member may be facilitated. If necessary, it is explained that in no case and under no circumstances will financial or any other compensation be awarded to any parties for perceived damages. A decision to pursue legal recourse in any venue is beyond the purview of ACEP.
- Determine appropriate corrective actions if a breach of the code has occurred.

Specific steps in investigating a complaint will be as follows:

1. The complainant will be sent a form, on which to outline the nature of the complaint, the sequence of events, and his or her expectations and desired outcome of the complaint. This written account is required in order for ACEP to investigate the complaint. The form also provides for the complainant to give permission for the ACEP member to disclose clinical records and relevant details of the therapeutic work undertaken. Without this permission, the Ethics Committee cannot proceed with an investigation, although may be willing to consider the complainant's concerns and offer advice if appropriate.

Written communication with ACEP can be either by registered mail or by E-mail. In the case of E-mail, it is the responsibility of the sender to confirm the receipt of the E-mail by the recipient. Once received, it is the responsibility of the Recipient to confirm receipt of the E-mail by return E-mail. E-mails should be considered confidential and are not to be forwarded to uninvolved parties. E-mails to ACEP may be shared within the Ethics committee and the executive director. If necessary they may also be shared with the board of directors.

2. On receipt of the completed form from the complainant, the Panel will contact the ACEP member and disclose the details of the complaint. Initial contact with the member could be by telephone.

3. The ACEP member will be asked to respond within 30 days, providing a written account outlining her/his intervention with the complainant, the sequence of events, his/her interpretation of the conflict and desired outcome at the end of a process of mediation.

4. The Panel will review the evidence provided by both the complainant and the member, and would endeavor to determine whether there had been a clear indication of a breach of the ethics code.

5. If it appeared that a breach of the ethics code may have occurred, the member will be informed of the particular feature of the code that is relevant to the complaint, and would be invited to respond specifically to this.

6. The complainant will be informed of the member's response and invited to comment.

7. The Panel will inform the member of their initial conclusions, endeavoring to be specific in relating particular behaviors to particular items in the ethics code.
8. The member will be invited to respond to the Panel's initial conclusions.
9. If the final conclusion of the panel, following a careful consideration of the available facts, is that a breach of ethics had occurred, consideration will be given to appropriate mediation, or remediation, seeking a satisfactory resolution of the matter by the two parties, or the application of corrective actions in relation to the member.
10. In keeping with the emphasis upon ACEP's educational role, consideration will be given to whether additional consultation, or training might be required of the member who had breached the ethics code, and what form this might take. This would apply in those instances where the offence is not so severe that immediate expulsion is required. Different levels of educational work might be required according to the circumstances. A relatively minor breach (such as misleadingly 'enthusiastic' advertising) might require, for example, 1-4 hours of consultation around ethical issues. Misrepresentation of credentials would be an example of a more serious breach, since this might involve fraud if such dishonesty is intended to promote the member's business. Behaviors that involve potential harm to a client, trainee, or research participant (for example, discouraging a client from seeking appropriate medical care, or providing misleading information about the client's condition), would evoke particular concern. For these, regular consultation over 6-12 months might be indicated. Participation in an approved ethics course (or webinars) might also be required for any of these levels.[1] Consultation would be with a consultant approved by the Panel. The consultant would report to the Panel regarding the member's progress.
11. The member might be required to initiate modifications in practice, procedures, websites, or client materials to bring these in accord with the ACEP code. These might include (but are not limited to), for example, [i] re-writing advertising leaflets or websites in ways that avoid making or implying unrealistic claims, or which suggest a greater scientific basis for the therapeutic work than does in fact exist, [ii] avoiding implications of treating psychiatric or medical conditions if the practitioner is not licensed to do so, [iii] refraining from verbal or written communications that could be experienced as coercing the client to commit to an extended number of sessions.
12. A persistent failure to cooperate with the Panel and agree to the proposed corrective actions, or willful failure to carry out required consultations, or modification of practice, may result in a recommendation to the Board of Directors that the person be removed from membership, pursuant to the bylaws of the organization. A 'failure to cooperate with the Panel' might, for example, include not responding to enquiries, refusing to discuss the complaint, or blatantly continuing with practices that the panel had requested should cease. The Panel will not resort to expulsion of the member from ACEP without first giving due warning that this final step was under consideration.
13. In cases where breaches of the code are considered sufficiently serious, and in the opinion of the panel proven beyond reasonable doubt, the Panel may decide that the appropriate response is a recommendation to the Board of Directors that the person be removed from membership, pursuant to the bylaws of the organization[2]. Examples that might elicit this ultimate sanction would include (but are not limited to) grossly exploitative, criminal, or in other ways knowingly dishonest behavior. Sexual assault, deliberate misrepresentation of qualifications, or discouraging a client from seeking appropriate medical treatment would be examples of this.
14. The Panel's deliberations will be guided by the assumption that, in most cases, members who fall short of ethical standards are not knowingly intending to harm, exploit, or deceive clients - and that an essentially educational response is often ACEP's preferred option. This stance must be balanced by concern for protection of the public in general, and the specific complainant in particular. The Panel will scrupulously endeavor to maintain a position of unprejudiced consideration of the facts of the case, refraining from premature conclusion or judgment.

Appeal Process

A complainant or ACEP member wishing to appeal against the Panel's findings and decisions may submit a letter stating the reasons for appeal. The Panel's deliberations would then be reviewed by the entire Ethics Committee. The grounds for appeal would be limited to questions of fact and procedure. A fee may be

charged to cover the costs involved in an appeal. The bylaws permit that if removed from membership, the practitioner may appeal the decision of the board to the annual membership meeting of ACEP, providing that notice of intent to appeal is provided to the executive director at least thirty (30) days in advance of the meeting.

[1] These examples are intended as illustrative and suggestive, rather than prescriptive.

[2] The bylaws state that this would require a two thirds affirmative vote by the members of the Board of Directors present at the meeting.