

**Ethical Boundaries:**  
*Sacred Trust, Dual  
Relationships and Social  
Media – Part B*

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in cooperation with

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# Objectives:

- ▶ Assess the function of healthy ethical boundaries in the world of social media.
- ▶ Consider some Case Scenarios to apply these ethics.

# Definitions:

- ▶ **Boundary**: Something that indicates a border or limit; To divide one entity from another; Confines.
- ▶ **Ethical Boundary**: Allow for safe connections between individuals; mutually understood, unspoken; physical and emotional limits of the relationship between pt. and caregiver.
- ▶ **Sacred**: Worthy of reverence, awe, or respect.
- ▶ **Trust**: Reliance on the character, ability, strength or truth of someone or something.

# Types of Ethical Boundaries:

- ▶ **Clinical Practice Boundaries:**
  - Those defined by our respective discipline
- ▶ **Professional Practice Boundaries:**
  - Those defined by Corporate Ethics/Policies
- ▶ **Self-Care & Self-Development Boundaries:**
  - Those that maintain our quality of care, competence and fitness for duty

# Ethical Scenario:

An oncology client with a terminal diagnosis, widowed six months earlier, is unemployed and has a 5-year-old daughter for whom she feels incapable of providing good care. She has no next of kin, so she has decided to relinquish her daughter for adoption. The client notices that her social worker is good with her child. The client also overhears the social worker talking about her plans to try to adopt a child. The client asks her if she would consider being the adoptive parent for her daughter. Should She?

# Ethics in Social Media:

- ▶ Does contact through social media websites short-circuit the professional distance between caregiver and patient?
- ▶ Attorney Robert Wilson of the Turley Law Firm cautions users not to place personal info (i.e. date of birth & phone numbers) on their Facebook site, and moreover warns users not to expect that anything posted on social media sites will remain private for long.
- ▶ How do you show regard for **Moral Spaces**?

# Ethics in Social Media:

- ▶ The American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics reminds professional counselors that they have a responsibility to “take precautions to ensure the confidentiality of [client] information transmitted through the use of computers, etc.” (ACA, 2005).
- ▶ The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics cautions clinical social workers they are prohibited from “discuss[ing] confidential information in any setting unless privacy can be ensured” (NASW, 2008).

# To Skype or not to Skype...

## ▶ Arguments AGAINST Skype:

- Still not HIPAA compliant b/c it doesn't state it is, and doesn't offer Bus'n. Assoc. contracts to Therapists.
- Noncompliant with HITECH Act b/c it doesn't notify users if a data breach (Hackers).
- Doesn't comply with DHHS by conducting periodic audits of Providers & Bus'n. Assoc.s to ensure they're HIPAA compliant.
- Skype's option to share contact information with others or within its networks.



# To Skype or not to Skype...

## ▶ Arguments FOR Skype:

- Skype now uses encryption protocols which meet FIPS for e-Transmission under HIPAA.
- It uses a series of technical, physical and admin. safeguards designed to ensure confidentiality and security.
- Its harder to hack into than phone lines.
- Its easier to steal contact info via phones.
- Skype conversations are usually not recorded, so no record of content.

# Ethics in Social Media:

- ▶ The ACA Code of Ethics joins with the NASW in warning against a nonprofessional counselor–client relationship, and reminds practitioners that such relationships “should be avoided except when the interaction is potentially beneficial to the client” (ACA,2005).
- ▶ Furthermore, the ACA mandates that counselors who do engage in non–professional relationships “must document in case records...the rationale for such an interaction” (ACA, 2005).



# Ethics in Social Media:

- ▶ A caregiver who posts his or her address, phone number and personal e-mail on electronic social media may be at risk for “cyber stalking” by unstable or potentially volatile patients who may threaten the caregiver’s physical safety.
- ▶ What ethical questions or dilemmas have you encountered or concerned about regarding the role of computer technologies as a healthcare provider?

# Ethics in Social Media:

- ▶ The ANA stated that social networks provide unparalleled opportunities for rapid knowledge exchange and dissemination among many people.
- ▶ However, the issues of confidentiality and privacy create legal dilemmas for all involved, that are labeled as unclear, gray, complicated and uncertain.

# Ethics in Social Media:

- ▶ A resource you may be interested in was published recently in TILT magazine (Therapeutic Innovations in Light of Technology, Vol.1, Issue 3)—see:
- ▶ <http://www.onlinetherapymagazine.com/2011/01/06/tilt-magazine-issue-3> (pages 20-29)
- ▶ The Online Therapy Institute has a Framework for the Use of Social Media for Health Professionals

# In Summary:

- ▶ Social Media is EVERYWHERE, and PRIVACY is DEAD! Use Social Media wisely.
- ▶ Safeguard the “Moral Space” of yourself and those you serve. Be intentional.



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