

## Ethics<sup>1</sup>

Most ethical dilemmas involve situations where you are unclear what is the best or right course of action. At times you may find that you have several viable options, each with merit and are not clear as to the most appropriate choice. You may also find yourself in a position where your values are in conflict. One method of resolving an ethical dilemma is the following four-part process.

### Resolving Ethical Dilemmas ≈ ≈

1. **Identify the problem.** This is the point where you would determine whether it's truly an ethical problem.
2. **Clarify the problem:** gather relevant information; talk to the parties involved; define the specific type of ethical breach (e.g., personal, professional, business); consider the consequences if someone doesn't intervene; and ascertain the potential dangers to the individual or the profession.
3. **Describe what action should be taken.** Map out the best way to resolve the problem (e.g., who should be contacted first if multiple parties are involved? Do you need outside support?). Then consider who, if anyone should know about the problem (such as a supervisor, friend, client, doctor, police, professional association, school or colleague).
4. **Identify who should take action.** Sometimes a breach of conduct is difficult to discern. It takes diligent personal reflection to run an ethical practice. Discussing this topic with your colleagues and engaging in peer supervision are two excellent methods for clarifying your feelings and identifying questionable behaviors.

Let's analyze the following scenario using the above resolution model:

### Ethics Scenario

*On Monday your session with Sally was very intense. She was experiencing significant pain in her legs and lower back. During the session she also released a lot of emotions and briefly shared about the issues she was confronting. Sally's partner, Terry, shows up for his weekly treatment n Tuesday afternoon. He mentions that Sally was exhausted and a bit withdrawn after her session. He jokingly makes a comment about how powerful it must have been and asks you what happened.*

1. **Identify the problem.** This is a common occurrence when working with clients who know each other. They often ask how the other person is doing, how the session went. This is usually done out of genuine concern and not a need for gossip. Yet, even just saying, "Oh, it was a good session," is not appropriate and most likely feels awkward. You determine this is an ethical problem.