

Ethics

For Personal Care Providers (PSWs
and DSWs)



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Ethics for PSWs and DSWs

- There are essentially 3 main directions from all codes of ethics in personal care:
 - First, do no harm – the road to hell is paved with good intentions!
 - Second, do good – that’s the job!
 - Third, improve continuously – the foundation of knowledge-based economies is to use knowledge, and knowledge comes from training and experience! Change is inevitable!



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How one does harm:

- physical harm by commission
- physical harm by omission
- psycho-social harm by commission
- psycho-social harm by omission
- spiritual harm by commission
- spiritual harm by omission



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How one does good:

- Physical aid to personal self-care
- Psycho-social aid to self-actualization
- Spiritual aid to meaning and well-being



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How does one continuously improve one's practice:

- ❑ Reflect, invite and consider feedback, from consumers, family, supervisors, and peers
- ❑ Seek training in areas of importance or areas of low skill or experience – and know yourself!
(Refer to the Johari Window graphic)
- ❑ Seek mentors, advisors, knowledge

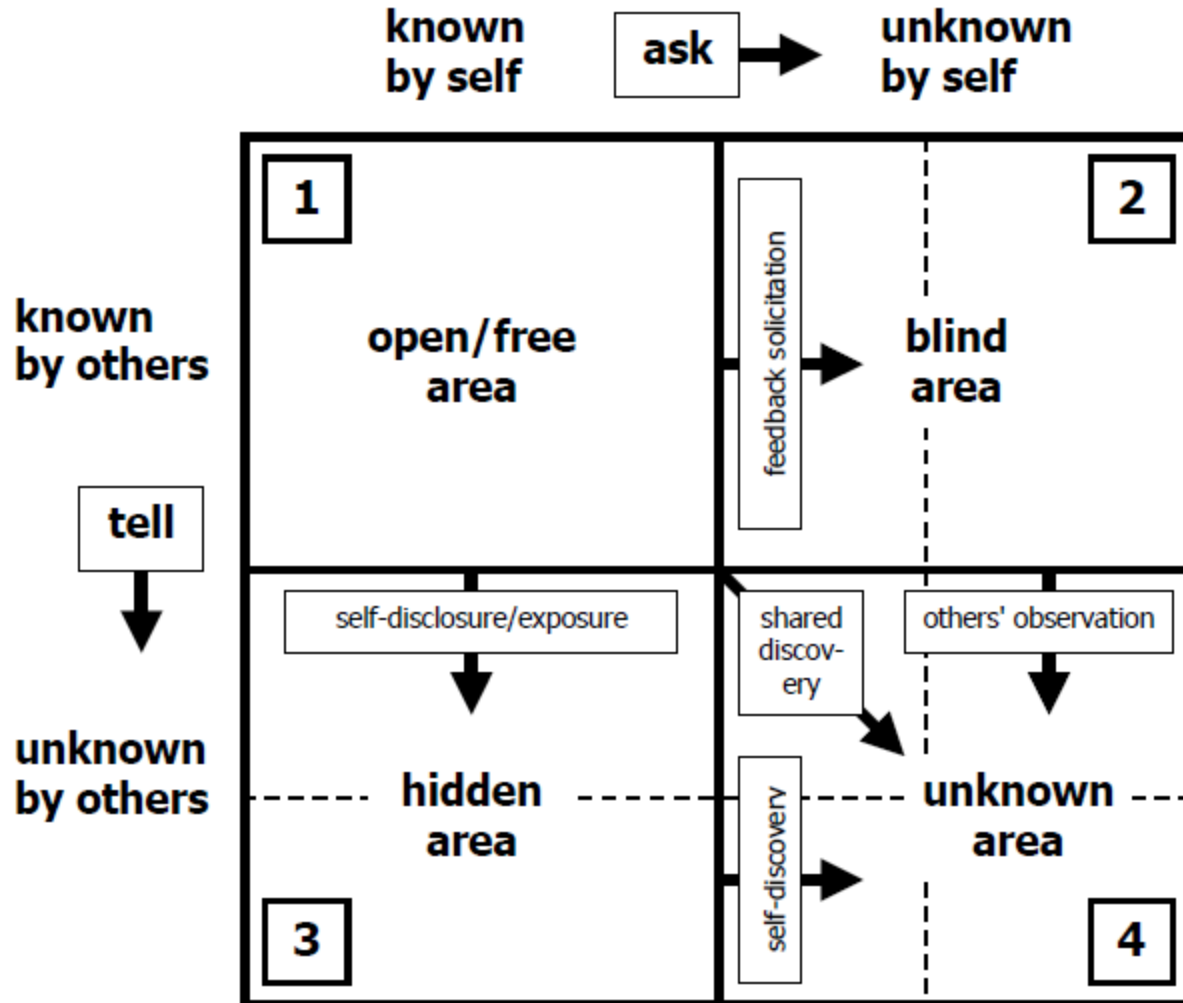


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The Johari Window



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Psychological Harm by Omission or Commission:

- ❑ Exclusion, Distantiation, Marginalization
- ❑ Labeling, Dehumanizing, Objectification
- ❑ Denying, Rejecting, Minimizing, Trivializing
- ❑ Terrorizing, Infantilizing, Demonizing, “Gaslighting”
- ❑ Abusive expectations, chaotic responsiveness
- ❑ Exploiting, manipulating, coercing, dominating, deceiving, extorting, blackmailing



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The “Road Map” to Abuse and Maltreatment

- Difference perceived, perceived as significant, then difference valued negatively
- Other negative associations added, stereotyping and symbolism
- Exclusion
- Neglect
- Abuse and “Death-making”



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Some ethical principles that help to prevent or inhibit the potential of harm:

- Least dangerous assumption
- Least intrusive principle
- (Truly Informed) Consent
- Knowledge is power, knowledge is protective
- Transparency



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Least dangerous assumption:

Whenever possible, faced with two or more competing assumptions, pick the one that is “least dangerous”. Especially relevant to competence, consent and treatment/intervention decisions



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Least intrusive principle means that:

One should make interventions in a person's life that is the least intrusive to their privacy, autonomy and personal security (freedom) to achieve the best overall results.



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The best defense for alleged unethical treatment is (truly) informed consent. This means options have been given, pluses and minuses (consequences of the treatment – both positive and negative) described fully, the person's capacity to fully give informed consent is considered, and even substitute consent has been added to ensure a go-ahead is given to treatment BEFORE it is given.



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Clear documentation is an essential professional standard and is a potential defense for allegations of unethical treatment

Involvement of family or valid substitute consent givers should be obvious if there is any doubt about the person's capacity to give informed consent

Don't act in an ethical dilemma, unilaterally, if at all possible – at least get a second opinion.

Transparency is helpful



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You can't act ethically by following a code – there is too much to read, and too many “what ifs” to consider. You can only act ethically by considering your actions, consulting others as appropriate, listening to others with more and different experience, and focusing on the priorities in the situation at hand. A code, however, can help to form the basis of evaluation of actions, and to help to focus the discussion on principles that may be involved.



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The sample code that is available from PSNO has been developed from great materials supplied by the Ontario Psychological Association, the Canadian Association of Speech Pathologists, the Ontario Association of Professional Social Workers, and other professional caregiving associations. I recommend it as a “starter” document to begin to formulate a code for Personal Care Workers, including PSWs and DSWs



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Ethics for PSWs and DSWs

Discussion and Examples from the Audience:
Ethical Dilemmas



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