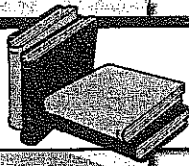


READING



1

Ethics in Psychology

Directions: Read the following selection, then answer the questions that follow.

Psychology, like most professions, has a code of professional conduct that governs the actions of members of the profession. Would the ethical conduct of a psychologist be an important factor in your decision to seek advice from him or her? It should be. Psychologists who operate unethically may do you more harm than good.

What does it mean to be ethical? People who are ethical use a set of moral values to guide their decision making. Ethical psychologists use the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* developed by the American Psychological Association (APA) as a basis for their professional conduct. Although this document does not address every possible ethical and unethical action, it does provide a framework in which psychologists can make decisions about their conduct. According to Gerald Koocher and Patricia Keith-Spiegel, the main principles that should guide a psychologist's ethical behavior include the following:

1. *Doing no harm* (nonmaleficence). Through commission or omission, psychologists strive to benefit those with whom they work, at the same time taking care to ensure that the potential for damage is eliminated or minimized to the greatest extent possible.
2. *Respecting autonomy*. The rights of individuals to decide how to live their lives as long as their actions do not interfere with the welfare of others is accepted by psychologists as an ultimate goal of clients, students, research participants, and others with whom psychologists work. Members of our profession are often in the business of moving those with whom we work toward greater independence and self-reliance.
3. *Benefiting others*. All decisions that psychologists make should have the potential for a positive effect on others. Often, this principle must be balanced against doing no harm, respect for autonomy, available resources, and utility.
4. *Being just*. Actions should be fair and equitable. Others should be treated as psychologists would want to be treated under similar circumstances.
5. *Being faithful*. Issues of fidelity, loyalty, truthfulness, and respect for those with whom psychologists work converge to form the delicate standards necessary in fiduciary [based on trust] relationships. When psychologists are straightforward, sincere, candid, and without intent to mislead or deceive anyone, ethical action is more likely.
6. *According dignity*. Psychologists view others as worthy of respect. This enhances the probability that decisions will be ethical.
7. *Treating others with caring and compassion*. Psychologists should be considerate and kind to those with whom they work, yet maintain professional boundaries.
8. *Pursuit of excellence*. Maintaining competence, doing one's best, and taking pride in one's work are important in ensuring high-quality professional services, as well as providing hedges against unprofessional and unethical actions.
9. *Accepting accountability*. Psychologist who act with a consideration of possible consequences, who accept responsibility for actions and inactions, and who avoid shifting blame or making excuses are acting with integrity. Putting principles over expediency is sometimes the longer and more arduous [difficult] route, but in the long run it is the one that ensures self-respect.

Source: Koocher, G., & Keith-Spiegel, P. (1998). *Ethics in Psychology*. London: Oxford University Press, 4-5.

Understanding the Reading

Directions: Answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. What do psychologists use to identify ethical and unethical behavior?

2. What is ethical behavior?

3. In what two ways do the principles say psychologists could do harm?

Thinking Critically

Directions: Answer the following questions in the space provided.

4. Which of the items on the list could be viewed as general ethical principles that could apply to everyone, not just psychologists?

5. What factors may cause a psychologist to act unethically?

6. Psychologists who disregard moral values in their personal lives can still maintain the ethical standards required by the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct*. Do you agree with this statement? Explain.

7. According to the nine items on the list, what is an ultimate goal of psychologists regarding clients, students, or experiment participants?
