

TOPIC ONE: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The aims and objectives of this topic are to:

- Discuss the attributes of a professional person
- Introduce the ethical bases of good practice
- Conduct a reflective analysis on own professional S-W-O-T
- Conduct a personal skills audit as a baseline for professional development
- Explore the value and benefits of membership of professional associations
- Outline sources of professional development activities
- Develop a Life Plan to provide goals for future professional development

Suggested reading:

Weir, Michael Complementary Medicine: Ethics and Law, Brisbane: Prometheus Publications, 2000.



Most good bookstores and many libraries have self-help and career planning sections. You should aim to read widely in order to find helpful tips on life planning.

Life planning tools are also freely available on the Internet.

Research assigned:

The Internet contains a number of useful sources on career planning. Many Universities put out no-nonsense guides for graduates and there are several private sites who specialise in career assistance.



Assignment:

Conduct an honest self-evaluation as the basis for career or educational planning.



Assessment:

When you have read the material in this Topic go to page 1 of your Assessment Manual and complete the assessments.



You may submit your assessments one Topic at a time or when you have completed all assignments.

WHAT MAKES A PERSON A PROFESSIONAL

I have spoken to literally thousands of employers and professionals over the course of a long career in developing training.

A professional person has a whole-hearted commitment to the principles and conduct of the profession:

Has a Duty of Care to promote the ethos of the profession and to ensure the good name and standing of the profession, modality and the complementary health sector

Will work co-operatively with other health professionals for the greatest good of the client and their families

Can communicate effectively in interpersonal and written exchanges

Keeps accurate and confidential client and professional records

Will actively participate in professional networks and professional development activities

Is prepared to promote safe working conditions at all times and to supervise others in workplace safety

Is interested in following a course of lifetime learning to keep developing professional skills and personal attributes

Will use effective time management techniques and monitor own productivity levels

Is willing to take constructive criticism on board and to 'lift their game'

Will self-monitor their own work standard and self-correct their mistakes or potential mistakes when proficient at the job

Is willing to train or mentor the others to provide for skills and business succession



If you want to be a 'professional':

Treat the business with as much seriousness as if you had paid a million dollars for it (whether it is yours or owned by another)

Treat your skills with as much care as if they were uncut diamonds that you have to shape and polish to gain more value

Treat your time as being so precious that you are being paid a thousand dollars an hour for it

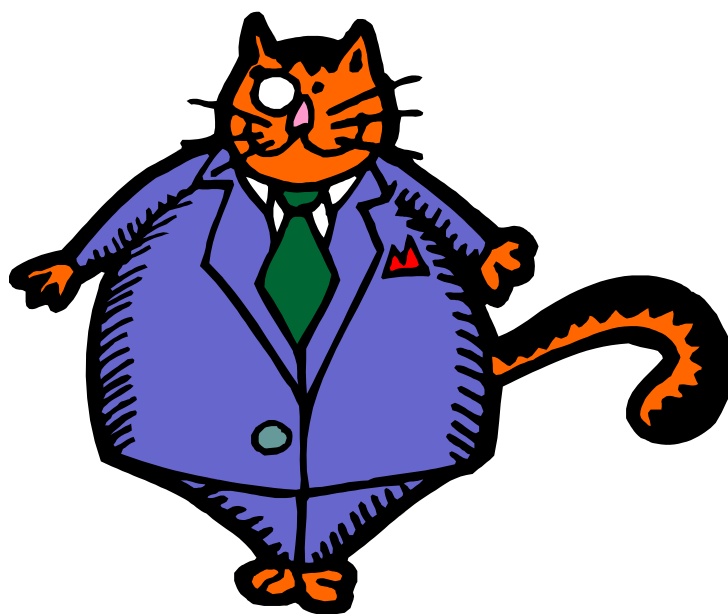
Treat your boss or colleagues and network associates as teachers to whom you have paid your life savings to become their apprentice

Treat your colleagues and professional contacts with as much respect as you would if they were 'customers' paying you a hundred dollars for fifteen minutes of your time

Treat your clients as though they are priceless and irreplaceable (they are the reason for your being in the profession in the first place)

Now, many of you are destined to become your own employer. In some ways you will have the hardest boss of all, because we all tend to be highly self-critical and forget that we also have many good things going for us. When the going gets tough – remember to be:

“Hard on the problem; soft on the person.” – Especially if that person is you!



THE ETHICAL PRACTITIONER

There are two things that make an outstanding practitioner:

- Working from Best Practice (the industry standards or Codes of Practice)
- Working from a sound basis of ethics (the professional standards or Codes of Conduct)

Training and professional development will ensure that you meet the first criteria.

The professional associations you belong to will give you guidance on Codes of Practice and Codes of Conduct. These have been negotiated over time by members and point to the highest ideals of professionalism.

The whole purpose of both criteria is to ensure that you are protected from malpractice, misconduct and other unwanted complaints which would bring you and your profession into disrepute.

Some professionals like to develop their own clinic guidelines on Codes of Conduct. This is particularly important if you provide services to culturally diverse groups who will differ from you with regard to what is ethical and proper conduct.

Your starting point should be to think about what can go wrong and why. This is not negativism, but sound common analysis and control of risks.

What kind of mistakes can a therapist or health worker make that would leave them so vulnerable?

Do they forget that:

- professional and massage associations set Codes of Conduct to help therapists avoid such dangers
- while a therapist may see the human body only as a set of presenting conditions to be assisted, to the client this is nudity and vulnerability
- there are certain muscle groups in the body (such as the psoas) which end up in places that the client considers to be 'no go' areas
- what is a standard therapeutic touch to a therapist may be interpreted as an indecent assault, especially by a client of the opposite gender
- for many years the term 'massage' has been a euphemism for sexual services, and that this has left a mark in the minds of the public
- for some cultures it is improper for a therapist to treat a person of the opposite gender or to see a female client without a chaperone present
- that provision of services to minors exclusively to minors requires police checks and authorisation in most States and Territories
- people will look for what is 'wrong' with what a practitioner does before they look for what is 'right'

When touch may be deemed to be inappropriate

For the client, there may be very strong issues about the appropriateness of any touch, even therapeutic techniques.

One of the reasons for this is the nature of touch itself, in reassuring or reinforcing beliefs held by the person about their identity and sexuality. It is also not common to encounter transference in relation to sexuality.

All therapists need to remain acutely aware that even the most innocent of touches can be open to misinterpretation. What is considered entirely appropriate by one person is considered to be 'no go' by another.

- One client may be quite happy to strip to the minimal clothing of bra and briefs, while the next may not be happy with anything less than full draping of all parts not currently being worked on.
- It is not just breasts and genitals that represent 'no go' areas.
 - the psoas muscle and the solar plexus area both hold critical emotions related to self, identity, emotional history and psychological abuse – treat with extreme caution.
 - Men who have been in prison have issues relating to being touched on the shoulders.
 - Men who have been raped have issues about being touched near the kidneys.
 - Women who have experienced sexual abuse are very vulnerable to touch on the inner thigh, even when not close to the genital area.

Be sensitive:

- Explain the therapy to the client and gain their written consent to the treatment.
- Always use full draping during a session. If the client asks you to dispense with the draping, note this on their treatment notes and have them initial and date it.
- Tell your client in advance of the where and how of each therapeutic action that requires touching and ask them if they have any sensitivities relating to being touched in specific areas. Note their responses on their treatment notes and have them initial it.
- Request feedback constantly during the administration of treatment to ensure that they feel comfortable and happy with the level and intensity of touch applied.
- Build a rapport with the client so that they are reassured of your intent and integrity.
- Watch for the signals of transference or co-dependency that may lead to misinterpretation of touch signals.
- Always gain the consent of the client before giving them reassuring touches: hugs, holding the elbow, touching the knee in counselling, and so on.

Protecting your reputation:

We would all like to operate in a climate of mutual trust. Unfortunately, we work in a general climate of fear, mistrust and general suspicion where any therapist is open to charges of unethical conduct or sexual misconduct at any time.

There are some things you need to do to protect yourself from charges of unethical or unlawful conduct:

- Never work with a child or a minor unless the parent or guardian is present. Seek the advice of the State or Territory child protection agency as to whether you are required to undergo a police check and hold a 'blue car' or similar..
- Always have the parent or guardian sign a consent form on behalf of the child.
- Consider the use of a chaperone if you feel there is any danger of your therapeutic touch being misrepresented as a sexual advance.
- Always obtain client consent (use a consent form) after explaining the therapy in detail and asking if the client has any objections to touch in certain areas
- Allow clients privacy in dressing and undressing. You may be comfortable with states of undress, they may not.
- Use draping procedures at all times, which is recommended by all professional associations to keep therapist-client relationship on a professional basis.
- Be particularly sensitive to cultural mores regarding touch and modesty.
- Never perform a therapy after using alcohol or any other form of drug. They dull your awareness and you may miss or misinterpret signals from the client.
- Keep detailed treatment notes and have your client initial or sign them at each visit.

Many therapists who have been threatened with litigation have been able to have the charges or case quashed before it became published by producing their clinic records in legal disclosure.

The more meticulous you are in record keeping, the more you can protect yourself against fraudulent or spurious charges.

Always carry Professional Liability insurance. The cost of defending yourself against misconduct charges is very expensive. Even if you are totally innocent, the costs can consume your business, your home and wreck your family.

Use the Codes of Conduct from your professional association as a basis for any practice specific Codes you may develop.

ASSESSMENT RECORD

Student Name:	
Student Number:	
e-mail:	
Assessor/Trainer :	
Telephone:	
e-mail:	

Topic:	Assessments	Date	CA
One: Personal Professional Development	Skills inventory and S.W.O.T analysis		
	Study pathway or career plan		
	Features and benefits of 3 Professional Associations and Codes of Practice		
	Networking groups research		
	Learning journal		
<p>Marking criteria: All questions must be fully completed as indicated on pages 3-19.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills audit and S.W.O.T to propose strategies for self-improvement or further professional education. • Career or Study Plan to give clear indication of set goals and strategies to achieve them. • 3 Professional Associations must be surveyed and analysed. Analysis of Code of Practice/Conduct must relate regulations to own clinic or practice. • Learning journal entry must include an analysis of own learning style, accompanied by a brain map and a summary of how this information can assist professional development. 			

Assessor's comments:

Assessor Signature: _____

ASSESSMENT 1A: TAKING A SKILLS INVENTORY

Taking stock of your skills gives you a benchmark against which to assess yourself in the future and allows you to plan professional training to help you reach your skill goals. Ask your training provider to give you the full Units of Competency or download them from www.ntis.gov.au.

<i>Unit Code</i>	How do you rate your skills against these elements of competency?	Need to improve	Average	Good	Strong	What kind of professional training do you feel will be valuable to you?
HLTHIR501A	Promote ethical work practices					
	Support culture of effective communication					
	Maintain a positive approach to health in the workplace					
	Monitor professional work standards					
	Work in the health industry context					
	Take opportunities to develop own competence					
BSBCFLM303B	Seek, receive and communicate information and ideas					
	Encourage trust and confidence					
	Identify and use networks and relationships					
	Contribute to positive outcomes					
HLTCOM502B	Seek out and apply traditional, alternative and scientific information					
	Implement reflective learning practices					
	Contribute to the development of professional practices					
	Critically evaluate specific research					
HLTCOM503B	Establish the practice					
	Implement financial management procedures					
	Implement practice management strategies					
	Implement personnel management strategies					

Extract from 'Professional Development'

<i>Unit Code</i>	How do you rate your skills against these elements of competency?	Need to improve	Average	Good	Strong	What kind of professional training do you feel will be valuable to you?
CHCORG28A	Reflect upon own practice					
	Ensure continuing self-support and supervision					
	Operate within an agreed ethical code of practice/ethics					
HLTCOM404B	Establish professional relationship with the client					
	Provide effective response to client enquiries					
	Respond to difficult or challenging behaviour					
	Use basic counselling skills as required to facilitate treatment					
HLTOHS300A	Plan and conduct work safely					
	Support others in working safely					
	Contribute to OHS participative processes					
	Contribute to hazard identification, OHS <i>risk assessment</i> and <i>risk control</i> activities					
	Participate in the control of emergency situations					
HLTIN4A	Ensure potential infectious material is removed in accordance with clinic guidelines					
	Ensure equipment and surfaces are clean and sanitised					
	Ensure personal hygiene is maintained in the workplace					
	Establish and monitor guidelines for hazard identification and control					

ASSESSMENT 1B: PERSONAL STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS (SWOT)

It is now time for you to appraise yourself against your skills analysis. From this you can work out a strategy to improve your skills, because you will have a true picture of who you are and what you can do already. This will help you focus your energy on self-improvement.

My strengths are:	
My weaknesses are:	
My skills allow me to look for the following opportunities:	
My weak points pose a threat to my skill development because...	

I can capitalise on my strengths by contributing to professional discussions by:	
I can overcome my weaknesses in performance by:	
I can actively seek out opportunities to improve my skills by:	
I can minimise the threats to my value as respected professional by:	

So, you see that you have found a way to view everything as a chance for improvement, even your worst characteristics.