Discussion Questions for *Essential Ethics for Psychologists*
Thomas F. Nagy, Ph.D.

CHAPTER 1:

1. What are the three attributes of ethical actions?
2. Explain the basic difference between an ethics code that is based upon teleological justification and one based upon deontological justification and give an example of an ethical standard for each.
3. What is the difference between the aspirational principles and the mandatory standards? Must a psychologist comply with both?
4. If a psychologist is not a member of the American Psychological Association is he free to disregard the Code of Ethics of that association?
5. What actions might a patient take against a psychologist if she thinks he has behaved unethically? Or illegally?
6. What might the APA ethics committee require of a psychologist found to be in violation of an ethical standard?
7. What are the four sanctions that the APA ethics committee might issue when imposing a punitive order against a psychologist who has violated an ethical standard?

CHAPTER 2:

1. Did the Committee on Scientific and Professional Ethics accept ethics compaints for adjudication before an ethics code had ever been created by the APA?
2. What was a major part of the impetus for increased psychological services at the end of World War II?
3. Describe the method by which the first ethics code was created.
4. How many times has the Code been revised since 1953?
5. What process did the ad hoc Committee on Ethical Standards in Psychological Research use to develop the Ethical Principles in the *Conduct of Research with Human Participants?*
6. Give an example of multiple relationships involving a) business, b) personal, and c) professional roles.
7. How did the 1992 revision of the Code address the topic of sexuality?
8. Why do you think a psychologist must not ask his or her patient for a testimonial to be used in an advertisement for clinical services?
9. Discuss the emerging use of the internet by psychologists and some of the emerging problems, from an ethical standpoint.
10. Why was the 1992 revision of the Ethics Code considered to be a “major overhaul” concerning a) structure, and b) content areas?

CHAPTER 3:

1. Are psychologists obliged to comply with the *General Principles*?
2. Which psychologists are obliged to observe the Ethics Code? (more than 1 is correct)
    a. every licensed psychologist

   b. every member of the American Psychological Association
   c. every APA member practicing in a State that incorporates the APA Code of Ethics into State law
3. Describe the central meaning of *Beneficence and Nonmaleficence*.
4. Why does *Fidelity and Responsibility* include providing informed consent at the outset of treatment?
5. Give an example in clinical practice and in research where *Integrity* would be the dominant principle (either an example of maintained or failed integrity).
6. What are some of the steps that a psychotherapist working in a lower socio-economic setting might take, to honoring the General Principle *Justice*?
7. Give an example of a professor of psychology who fails to observe the values espoused in *Respect for People's Rights and Dignity.*

CHAPTER 4:

1. What are the four areas of competence that are considered in this chapter?
2. What is evidence-based practice, and why is it important?
3. List the 8 areas of "clinical expertise" spelled out in the APA Presidential Task Force Report on evidence-based practice, and give an example of each.
4. How might a straight male therapist providing treatment to a lesbian adolescent girl with anorexia benefit from reading certain APA practice guidelines, and which ones should he review?
5. If a therapist is researching the efficiency of her innovative treatment with her own patients what isues should she be concerned about?
6. Under what circumstances must a psychologist comply with the ethics code of a professional association other than the APA?
7. Give an example of a psychotherapist who is practicing outside of his boundaries.
8. What risks does the internet and telephone pose for the competent practice of psychology?
9. What test factors should a psychologist carrying out assessment be aware of in order to maximize the chances of producing a competent evaluation?
10. Give an example of two ethical violations that a professor of psychology might commit
11. How might a clinical supervisor risk violating her own professional ethics, and who might be harmed in the process?
12. How is the forensic area substantially different than clinical or academic work?
13. Choose an area of human diversity that could significantly impact on psychotherapy, research, and psychological assessment, and describe what its effects might be on the outcome in each of these three activities.

CHAPTER 5

1. Approximately what percent of the ethical standards pertain to informed consent?
   a. 10%
   b. 20%
   c. 30%
   d. 40%
2. What are four components of the informed consent process for treatment?

3. Explain how therapists should think of informed consent as an “ongoing process”.
4. Which of the following is NOT a patient right:
    a. to review and request a copy of their clinical record
    b. to be informed about interventions prior to experiencing them
    c. to bring a grievance
    d. to require their therapist to provide a certain intervention
    e. to know in advance the cost of treatment
    f. to be asked about audio taping or video taping in advance
5. Discuss some of the issues in providing informed consent with children who begin therapy.
6. What does the acronym “HIPAA” stand for, and why was this law enacted?
7. Describe the three rules of HIPAA.
8. How must informed consent in research be obtained? (more than 1 right answer)
    a. orally
    b. in writing
    c. with notarization
    d. with parental consent (for minors)
9. If NIMH funds the research it requires six specific informed consent items; what are they?
10. What are the nine problems inherent in conducing online research addressed by NIMH?
11. What are teachers generally required to inform students about in advance of taking the course?
12. Why would payment to a clinical supervisor by the supervisee possibly be considered a multiple role relationship?

CHAPTER 6:

1. State the main focus of each: privacy, confidentiality, and privileged communication.
2. What are two aspects of privacy in research settings that go beyond protecting the identity of the research participant?
3. What are some of the negative results of breaches to confidentiality for children, for employees, or for a spouse?
4. What are the ethical expectations of privacy in teaching situations?
5. What must psychologists observe when offering psychotherapy, assessment, or consulting services:
    a. All California laws pertaining to mental health providers
    b. APA Code of Ethics (if the practitioner is a member of APA)
    c. State Laws
    d. The Hippocratic Oath
    e. HIPAA
    f. All relevant Federal Laws
    g. Recommendations of online bloggers who are current or former patients
    h. Policies of the clinic or hospital
6. What does PHI stand for, and what are examples of specific information might be included therein?

7. Give an example of an ill-advised breach of confidentiality in each of the following situations:
    a. marital therapy with a divorcing couple
    b. therapy for an eleven year-old boy who has been abused by his father
    c. therapy with a seventeen year old girl who has begun normal experimentation sexually with a same-aged student
8. What does the Tarasoff ruling allow or require of treating psychologists?
9. What are the patient rights described in HIPAA?
10. State some of the more important exceptions to confidentiality in psychotherapy settings.
11. What threats does the use of technology pose to psychologists and their clients?

CHAPTER 7:

1. What is the difference between "harming a patient" and "exploiting" him? Give an example of each.
2. What are Kitchener's three guidelines for determining when professional relationships have an elevated probability for leading to harm?
3. What is meant by a third-party request for psychological services and what are psychologists obliged to do at the beginning of treatment in these situations?
4. What are Glen Gabbard's four categories of psychoanalysts who become sexually involved with patients?
5. Give an example of a therapist who harms or exploits a client or patient in each of the following ethical areas (in addition to the examples provided in the chapter)
    a. Competence
    b. Human relations
    c. Privacy and confidentiality
    d. Advertising
    e. Other public statements
    f. Financial arrangements
    g. Education and Training
    h. Research
    i. Publication
    j. Assessment
    k. Therapy
6. Is the rule forbidding sexual involvement with current clients, patients, supervisees, and students based on a deontological justification or a teleological one? Explain.

Chapter 8:

1. Give an example of a violation or matters to be informed about in each of the 13 areas listed for recognizing ethical dilemmas in psychological work. Choose a setting of work in which you are interested or may consider exploring in your own training.
2. Create a possible multiple role about to happen in a therapy setting and then analyze it using Younggren's and Gottlieb's nine questions.
3. What do the decision making models of Keith-Spiegel and Koocher have in common with the Canadian Psychological Association's model?

4. What does the acronym IDEAL stand for?
5. Gottlieb's three factors to consider when contemplating entering a multiple role relationship are: power, duration, and clarity of termination. Explain how these would help you as a therapist to arrive at a sound ethical decision when faced with the possibility of beginning such a relationship.
6. What does Sonne's model of ethical decision making add that is unstated in other models?
7. Which model do you prefer to use if you were faced with the temptation to enter a second role with a patient?
8. As a psychotherapist you have been approached by a local cable TV producer to appear on camera in a panel presentation with your patient who has obsessive compulsive personality disorder. You must choose which course of action to take— a) accept the producer's invitation, b) reject it, or some third or fourth choice. It might be useful to review the Ethics Code and find the standards you think might pertain to this case before proceeding ahead with a decision making model. Be sure to include a review of the *General Principles* as well.

Chapter 9:

1. Why are the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* a useful resource for psychologists performing assessment?
2. What are the four common uses of psychological tests?
3. What are the five categories of psychological tests?
4. How are computers used in psychological assessment?
5. What are the important issues to consider when testing a young adult from Iraq who has a poor command of English?
6. How should informed consent be carried out before performing psychological assessment? Does the APA Science Directorate have any suggestions on this matter?
7. Are there any situations when informed consent would not be required?
8. Define "test data".
9. Do clients and patients have access to their own test data?
10. Under what circumstances, according to HIPAA, could a psychologist deny a patient access to her own test data?
11. Give several examples of assessment by unqualified persons.
12. What are some of the important issues in discussing a specific psychological test with a journalist for MSNBC?
13. What must a psychologist take into account when constructing a psychological test?

Chapter 10:

1. List some of the basic components of "psychotherapy".
2. How does the APA Task Force on Evidence Based Practice discuss therapy outcomes?
3. What should new patients be informed of before beginning treatment?
4. Are there different issues in family and group therapy concerning informed consent? What are they?

5. If a therapist falls in love with a patient is he allowed to then terminate treatment and develop a sexual relationship with her?
6. How does sex with current patients impact on them?
7. What are the seven conditions that a therapist of a former patient bears the burden of proving *before* initiating a sexual relationship?
8. What should therapists inform clients and patients about of at the outset of treatment concerning interruptions in the therapy?
9. When should treatment be terminated?
10. What do you think a therapist do if the patient wishes to continue in treatment but the therapist judges that he or she no longer needs it or is benefitting from it?
11. What are some of the risks of attempting to offer psychological services online?
12. What are some of the benefits of attempting to offer psychological services online?

Chapter 11:

1. What is the purpose of the IRB?
2. If you were planning to do research with a population about which you were quite naïve what steps might you take before initiating your data gathering?
3. What are the 8 basic elements of informed consent that investigators must consider in informing prospective participants about the study?
4. If you were conducting research with patients who had symptoms of compulsive hoarding what five informed consent matters must you disclose to your participants at the outset?
5. Under what circumstances may researchers dispense with providing informed consent?
6. Define the term “minimal risk” as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services does in the *Code of Federal Regulations*.
7. Under what circumstances might an inducement to participate in research be considered “coercive”?
8. Under what four circumstances could you use deception when conducting research?
9. Why is debriefing research participants important?
10. What are the seven ethical rules for animal research?
11. What is the most important rule in reporting your research results?
12. What is “duplicate publication of data” and is it ethical?
13. How should one determine the order of listing authors, in a journal article, book, or other publication?

Chapter 12:

1. Give one example each of how each of the following has a bearing upon teaching. You may want to consult the text of these *General Principles* from Chapter three.
    a. Beneficence and Nonmaleficence
    b. Fidelity and Responsibility
    c. Respect for people’s Rights and Dignity
    d. Integrity
2. What does “accuracy in teaching” require of a professor teaching a survey course in theories of psychotherapy?

3. What problems might emerge if a professor agreed to provide individual psychotherapy to one of his current students?
4. List some of the qualities of competent supervisors.
5. In what ways might a supervisor demonstrate substandard competence, or even be harmful to supervisees?
6. What concerns might you have if your clinical supervisor asked you to provide childcare at home for her 2 year old on various occasions?
7. How can you learn more about the requirements and opportunities for placement in internship settings?