

# THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS ASSOCIATION

## ITAA CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

and

## ITAA ETHICS PROCEDURES MANUAL

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**The ITAA Ethics Committee acknowledges and thanks the European Association for Transactional Analysis (EATA) for allowing parts of their documentation to be adapted for this manual. The ITAA Ethics Committee also acknowledges and thanks the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists for allowing parts of their procedures to be adapted for this manual.**

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## ITAA CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

### Chapter 1: Introduction 1.1 Purpose

The ITAA is dedicated to promoting the highest caliber of conduct among members providing contractual services across the four fields of transactional analysis specialization: counseling, psychotherapy, organizational, and educational training and consulting services. As an organization, the ITAA recognizes its social responsibility to set the ethical standards for all members in order to advance the welfare of society through common values and moral principles of mutual respect and ethical actions. Accordingly, the overall aim of this Code of Ethical Conduct is intended to provide individual members of the ITAA with common moral principles, values, and a decision-making framework for identification and analysis of ethical dilemmas.

Members of the ITAA are required to commit to the values and ethical principles of transactional analysis as defined below. Moreover, all members are obliged to maintain safe, ethical, and effective contractual services, which earns public confidence and merits trust in transactional analysis through protection of the public's rights to dignity and respect, whether such conduct relates directly to professional practice or not.

It is the intent of this manual to ensure that processes that deal with infractions are fair and transparent and thereby maintain the public's confidence in the profession of transactional analysis.

### 1.2 Preamble

The ITAA Code of Ethical Conduct is mediated by the tensions between *comprehensiveness*, on the one hand, and *specificity and prescriptive detail*, on the other. In this context, the ITAA regards the comprehensive component - the statement of values and ethical principles outlined

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below - as an overarching orientation to the ethical application of transactional analysis relevant to *all* members. Being based on common values and ethical principles, the ITAA Code of Ethical Conduct aims to ensure compatibility at a global level while allowing for variations of culture, syntax, and presentation style.

### **1.3 Values**

#### **The following three articles (1.3 – 1.5) have largely been adapted from the EATA Ethics Manual and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights**

Values are the fundamental basis on which human beings promote their own personal development and fulfillment as well as that of others. Values include reference to natural law that informs how people behave respectfully toward self and others. The following identified values are related to human rights and are included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This frame of reference is also congruent with the existential and philosophical perspective of transactional analysis. Many values can be extrapolated, so the following list should not to be considered exhaustive by ITAA members.

Considering the range of activities involved, the fundamental values are:

#### *A. Dignity of human beings<sup>1</sup>*

Each human being is of worth, regardless of gender, social position, religious creed, ethnic origin, physical or mental health, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and ability.

#### *B. Self-determination<sup>2</sup>*

Each individual is free to decide his/her own future within the national laws of their country and with due consideration for the needs of self and others. Each person can learn from their experience to be in charge of himself/herself while taking into account the nature of the world and the freedom of others.

#### *C. Health<sup>3</sup>*

Physical and mental stability is a right of every individual and needs to be actively safeguarded.

#### *D. Security<sup>4</sup>*

Each person needs to be free to explore and grow in an environment that enables a sense of security.

#### *E. Mutuality<sup>5</sup>*

Each person, considering that he/she lives and grows in an interpersonal world, is mutually involved with the well-being of others and develops interdependency with others in order to build his/her own and others' security.

These values are directly related to each other and will influence those who provide contractual services in their own professional fields.

<sup>1</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Arts. 1 - 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Arts 18, 19.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Arts. 24, 25.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Arts. 22, 23. <sup>5</sup> Ibid. Arts. 29.

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## **1.4 Ethical Principles**

Because of the nature of values and their significance in human life, and in order to guarantee the respect and rights of each person, it is necessary to identify clear guidelines for behavior that are strictly linked to values. Ethical principles are derived from values and are intended as an indication of how to behave so as to promote the well-being, development, and growth of the individual. They are prescriptive and offer criteria for ethical behavior.

Using values as the starting point, it is possible to determine a set of ethical principles. The principal ones are:

- - Respect
- - Empowerment
- - Protection
- - Responsibility
- - Commitment in relationship

Within the helping professions, ethical principles need to address many target groups in order to influence ethical behavior. The main ones are:

- - Clients
- - Self as practitioner
- - Trainees
- - Colleagues
- - Human environment/community

ITAA members will consider each value and the ethical principles that derive from it and self-reflect in order to decide what attitude to take and how to behave as a member of the group to which they belong. They will analyse a given situation, consider the influence of ethical principles on their practice, and choose behaviors that take into account a wide variety of factors, including client, self, and environment.

After a brief definition of each ethical principle, the points that need to be taken into consideration for that principle are listed. This enables members to evaluate a situation and take responsibility for their choices.

First, there are examples of good practice developed in response to that ethical principle. The list cites criteria that need to be assumed in transactional analysis contractual services. The purpose of this list is to stimulate practitioners to question themselves in order to translate principles into

practice. It is not an exhaustive list, and each practitioner will find his/her own response while looking at the five target groups. This process will enable practitioners to clarify the reasons for their behavior.

1. *Respect* for each person as a human being, aside from any specific characteristic or quality

- *Toward clients:*

The practitioner will fully consider and seek to understand the personal perspectives of every individual. The practitioner will help the individual to be congruent with the individual's own perspective.

The practitioner will provide his/her best possible services to the client based on the mutual goal of benefit to the client through contract fulfillment.

The practitioner will provide a safe and professional environment. Being aware of the power of his/her position, the practitioner will be careful to create a trustworthy environment and avoid any situation that is exploitive.

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- - *Toward self:*

The practitioner will take into account his/her own perspective/difficulties/preferences/skills, referring clients or situations that he/she is not willing or able to handle.

- - *Toward trainees:*

The trainer, aware of the level of learning of trainees, will give adequate support, provide all necessary learning resources, and be open to addressing his/her own teaching style in order to attune to the learning needs of trainees.

- - *Toward colleagues:*

The practitioner will maintain awareness of the professionalism of colleagues, and when there are concerns, will directly address them with the colleague. After listening to the response, the practitioner will make an independent judgment on the issue.

- - *Toward the community:*

The practitioner will take into account the specific culture of his/her community and will seek to foster respectful beliefs within that community.

2. *Empowerment* that emphasizes the importance of enhancing the growth of each person

- - *Toward clients:*

The practitioner will commit himself/herself to working on developing clients' awareness of their dignity, responsibility, and rights.

- - *Toward self:*

The practitioner will maintain ongoing education in his/her field of specialization in order to expand his/her knowledge and sustain his/her professional and personal growth.

- - *Toward trainees:*

The trainer will evaluate the competency of his/her trainees and enable them to develop their potential, growth, and well-being.

- - *Toward colleagues:*

The practitioner will respect a colleague's contributions and create occasions to expand his/her professionalism while aiming to share competencies.

- - *Toward the community:*

The practitioner will think in terms of the wider well-being of the community as well as that of the individual.

3. *Protection* implies taking care of both self and others (physically and psychologically), bearing in mind the uniqueness and worth of each individual.

- - *Toward clients:*  
The practitioner will offer adequate services to his/her clients, provide a safe working environment (e.g. confidentiality, physical safety, informed consent for high-risk procedures), and hold an awareness of a client's destructive tendencies. He/she will not enter into or maintain a professional contract in which other activities or relationships might jeopardize the professional contract and will maintain confidentiality even when the therapeutic relationship has ended.
- - *Toward self:*  
The practitioner will take care of his/her own values and learning process. He/she will take care of his/her own safety and decide to terminate the relationship with a client if the practitioner experiences any physical or mental condition that impairs his/her ability to work effectively and competently with the client.

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- - *Toward trainees:*  
The trainer will encourage trainees to recognize their own preferences and limits in order to protect himself/herself and clients from inadequate or harmful interventions. He/she will stimulate trainees to take care of their personal and professional growth and to look at their personal styles to address personal issues that interfere with their own or others' safety.
- - *Toward colleagues:*  
The practitioner will promote the well-being of colleagues and model respectful treatment of colleagues through demonstrating caring and acknowledgement and providing information.
- - *Toward the community:*  
The practitioner will provide contractual services to clients in recognition of existing laws of the country and abide by them where they are consistent with the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

4. *Responsibility* implies taking into account the consequences of our own actions as clients, trainers, therapists, supervisors, counselors, consultants, and teachers.

- - *Toward clients:*  
The practitioner will make clear contracts and conduct the professional relationship in such a way as to bring no harm to the client when that individual is unable or unwilling to function autonomously and responsibly because of mental impairment or intentional reckless behavior. The practitioner will not exploit the client in any manner or act in a way that causes intentional harm to the client. The practitioner will adhere to the principle of fidelity, keeping promises and commitments made to clients.
- - *Toward self:*  
The practitioner will consider the impact on the client of his/her position as an authority figure and take care in how he/she responds to clients in order to promote well-being and prevent the misuse of his/her power in relation to clients.
- - *Toward trainees:*  
The trainer will be aware of the learning needs of his/her trainees and provide them with full awareness of ethical practices and principles, including delineating ethical issues in training and practice. Trainers will confront trainees regarding unethical behavior and decide on a specific and ethical course of action if the trainee is not willing to change his/her behavior.
- - *Toward colleagues:*  
The practitioner will accept responsibility for acknowledging his/her concerns about colleagues' ethical behavior and will take appropriate steps to effect a resolution.
- - *Toward the community:*  
The practitioner will hold as a professional responsibility the need to be concerned with the psychological and physical health of his/her community.

5. *Commitment in relationship* means members are mindful of the social and interpersonal contexts of relationships and endeavor to uphold agreements with others..

- - *Toward clients:*  
The practitioner will be careful to take into consideration the interpersonal world of the client and to consider its impact on the individual.
- - *Toward trainees:*  
The trainer will teach trainees to consider the interpersonal world of their clients.

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- - *Toward colleagues:*  
The practitioner will foster the professional social system by engaging in professional development.
- - *Toward the community:*  
The practitioner will be aware and active in the life of his/her community.

In order to make an ethical decision, practitioners are supported by ethical principles that enable them to evaluate various situations so that their choice of action can be a considered one. However, in some instances, practitioners may be involved in situations in which it is not possible to reconcile all the applicable principles. Despite this difficulty, the practitioner will still need to look at the specific situation, consider the different perspectives, and be accountable for his/her decision.

### **1.5 Guidelines for the Application of Values and Ethical Principles**

Principles such as those above provide a useful framework for understanding conflicts but do not provide answers for handling particular situations. This section is designed to be a bridge to ethical contractual services. A graphic is provided to help practitioners visualize the complexity required in applying the code to practice.

Ethical Principles

Respect Empowerment

Protection

Responsibility

Commitment in relationship

Clients

Self as practitioner

Trainees

Colleagues

Human environment/ community

***A Grid for Ethical Assessment***

- • Dignity of human beings
- • Self-determination
- • Health
- • Security
- • Mutuality

Basic values

Target group(s) to be addressed







This grid should be viewed as a potentially useful visual aid for thinking about prospective ethical dilemmas. It encourages practitioners to consider the values implicit in each principle in relation to a particular context. However, it should not be regarded as a formulaic, tick-box method of decision making.

Ethical decisions that are strongly supported by one or more of the above ethical principles, without any contradiction from other principles, may be regarded as reasonably well founded. In addition to these principles and values, members are expected to consider legal, contractual, or

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However, practitioners, educators, and consultants are bound to encounter circumstances in which it is impossible to reconcile all the applicable principles, and thus, choosing between principles may be required. In many cases, practitioners may need to balance the relevance of one principle against one or more of the others. Likewise, a decision or course of action does not necessarily become unethical merely because it is contentious in the eyes of other practitioners, educators, and/or consultants who would have reached different conclusions in similar circumstances. Even for experienced practitioners, educators, and consultants, supervision and/or consultation is highly recommended.

### **1.6 ITAA Code of Ethical Conduct**

We recognize that through our Code of Ethical Conduct, the ITAA establishes a social contract that invites the public to trust that all members of the ITAA will conduct themselves in accordance with the above ethical principles.

We also recognize that these ethical principles are not always reflected in the behavior of members and, therefore, that confrontation of a member is sometimes desirable and/or necessary.

We further recognize that should an individual's behavior show a lack of integration of or consistency with these principles, his/her membership may be suspended by the ITAA until such time as that integration is assured.

The following clauses imply or explicitly state what practitioners must do and/or not do. The aim is to ensure that the process of framing, investigating, and adjudicating complaints is fair and transparent.

1. ITAA members acknowledge the dignity of all humans, regardless of their physiological, psychological, sociological, or economic status.
2. It is the primary protective responsibility of ITAA members who are providing contractual services to offer their best possible services to clients, trainees, and supervisees and to act in such a way as to cause no intentional or deliberate harm to any client, trainee, or supervisee.
3. ITAA members who use transactional analysis should strive to develop their clients' awareness of and functioning from a position of dignity, autonomy, and personal responsibility.
4. The ethical application of transactional analysis involves entering into an informed contractual relationship that the ITAA member and the client should have the competence and intent to fulfill. When a client is unable or unwilling to function autonomously and responsibly within this contractual relationship because of mental impairment or intentional reckless behavior, the ITAA member must resolve this relationship in such a way as to bring no harm to the client.

<sup>6</sup> McGrath, G. (1994). Ethics, boundaries, and contracts: Applying moral principles. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 24, 6- 14.

clinical issues and ethical concerns in relation to the ethical dilemma under consideration.

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5. ITAA members who are providing contractual services will not exploit a client in any manner, including, but not limited to, financial and sexual matters. Sexual relationships between an ITAA member and his/her clients, trainees, or supervisees are prohibited.
6. An ITAA member will not enter into or maintain a professional contract whereby other activities or relationships between that member and a client might jeopardize the professional contract. ITAA members are expected to minimize dual roles and to seek consultation from trusted colleagues and respected supervisors when faced with potential dual roles.
7. The professional relationship between an ITAA member and a client is defined by the contract, and that professional relationship ends with the termination of the contract. However, certain professional responsibilities continue beyond the termination of the contract. They include, but are not limited to: (a) maintenance of agreed-on confidentiality; (b) avoidance of any exploitation of the former relationship; and (c) provision for any needed follow-up care.
8. ITAA members will operate and conduct services to clients with full responsibility to existing laws of the state and/or country in which they reside, provided such laws are not in conflict with the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the ethical principles of the ITAA.
9. In establishing a professional relationship, ITAA members assume responsibility for providing a suitable environment, including such things as specifying the nature of confidentiality observed, providing for physical safety appropriate to the form of activity involved, and obtaining informed consent for high-risk procedures that could possibly have harmful effects. Informed consent includes informing the client of his/her right to refuse to participate in any procedures and/or to end the professional contract at any time. ITAA members will also seek to ensure the protection of clients' confidentiality regarding personal information conveyed through electronic transmission.
10. ITAA members will, in their written and/or verbal public statements, refrain from derogatory comments, inferences, and/or innuendoes that disparage the standing, qualifications, or character of other people, bearing in mind their responsibility as representatives of the ITAA and of transactional analysis. On the other hand, direct personal and objective feedback is welcomed.
11. If ITAA members become aware that personal conflicts or medical problems might interfere with their ability to carry out a contractual relationship, they must either terminate the contract in a professionally responsible manner or ensure that the client has the full information needed to make a decision about remaining in the contractual relationship.
12. ITAA members accept responsibility for confronting any colleague whom they have reasonable cause to believe is acting in an unethical manner and, failing resolution, may report that colleague to the ITAA Ethics Committee or Board of Trustees. On occasions when members have concerns about potential cultural, professional, or personal consequences of confronting a colleague's behavior, they are advised to seek consultation with respected supervisors to find ethical solutions in accordance with these values and principles.

We affirm these principles and conduct as common to the practice of ITAA members unless a member explicitly states in writing his/her differences from these positions. In such an instance, the client's attention to any such differences must also be noted in writing as part of his/her contract-setting process.

## **Appendix**

**Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights related to basic values:** Article 1:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed

with reason and conscience and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional, or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it is independent, trust, non-self-governing, or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3:

Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person.

Article 18:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his/her religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his/her religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.

Article 19:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 22:

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each state, of the economic, social, and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his/her personality.

Article 23:

(1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work, and to protection against unemployment. (2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. (3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself/herself and his/her family an existence worthy of human dignity and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. (4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his/her interests.

Article 24:

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25:

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself/herself and of his/her family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his/her control. (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 29:

(1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his/her personality is possible. (2) In the exercise of his/her rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order, and the general welfare in a democratic society. (3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.