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MAKING THE TOUGH CALL

# THE 4 BASIC ETHICAL PRINCIPLES: BENEFICENCE, NONMALEFICENCE, AUTONOMY, & JUSTICE

## BENEFICENCE

- Professional's primary purpose is to "do good."
- Grounded in helping clients and making their lives better.

### EXAMPLE

Sarah, a mental health professional, is working with Alex, who has severe anxiety and trauma. Applying beneficence:

- Sarah develops a tailored treatment plan using evidence-based practices.
- She monitors Alex's progress, adjusting interventions for maximum benefit.
- Collaborating with other professionals, Sarah ensures a comprehensive approach.
- Empowering Alex in decision-making, she minimizes potential harm and assesses overall well-being.

In this short scenario, beneficence guides Sarah to prioritize Alex's welfare, using effective and tailored interventions to promote mental health and well-being.

## NONMALEFICENCE

- Obligation to minimize harm to clients.
- Acknowledge risks of interventions.
- Address the misconception that intention to help eliminates responsibility for harm.

### EXAMPLE

Sarah, a mental health professional, works with Alex, experiencing severe anxiety and trauma. Demonstrating nonmaleficence:

- Sarah carefully selects interventions to minimize harm to Alex during therapy.
- Constant monitoring allows her to promptly address distress or potential harm.
- Collaboration with other professionals ensures a comprehensive approach without unnecessary risks.
- Empowering Alex in decision-making, Sarah actively avoids actions that could cause harm.

In this brief scenario, nonmaleficence guides Sarah to prioritize avoiding harm, ensuring interventions are safe, and promptly addressing any potential distress or harm to Alex during the therapeutic process.

## AUTONOMY

- Support clients' right to make decisions.
- Explain options for informed consent.
- Highlight professionals' right to autonomy and making recommendations.

### EXAMPLE

Sarah, a mental health professional, supports Alex, who faces severe anxiety and trauma. Embracing autonomy:

- Sarah involves Alex in decision-making, respecting their right to choose their treatment path.
- Informed consent is prioritized, ensuring Alex understands and agrees to the proposed interventions.
- Empowering Alex in the therapeutic process, Sarah respects their autonomy while offering professional expertise.
- Collaboration with other professionals considers Alex's preferences and autonomy in the overall treatment plan.

In this concise scenario, autonomy guides Sarah to prioritize Alex's right to make decisions about their care, fostering a collaborative and empowering therapeutic relationship.

## JUSTICE

- Relates to equity and fairness.
- Discuss after introducing other principles.
- Identify injustice when principles are not accessible to certain groups.

### EXAMPLE

Sarah, a mental health professional, addresses justice in her work with Alex, who grapples with severe anxiety and trauma. Demonstrating justice:

- Sarah ensures equitable access to mental health principles for all clients, including Alex.
- Identifying potential disparities, Sarah actively works to eliminate any unjust treatment.
- Collaboration with diverse professionals helps create a fair and inclusive approach to mental health care.
- In scenarios like mandated reporting, Sarah advocates for fairness and considers the potential impact on marginalized communities.

In this brief scenario, justice guides Sarah to promote fairness, eliminate disparities, and advocate for equitable access to mental health principles for all clients, contributing to a just and inclusive mental health practice.