

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

CHAPTER PREVIEW

- Conflicts that occur between therapists and clients, other therapists, employers, and other health care professionals
- Conflicts that occur when needs change
- Resolving conflicts step by step

KEY TERMS

Conflict: a condition that occurs when two or more people have different attitudes or ideas about how something should be done or when a person has to choose between two inconsistent actions

Resolution: a solution found or formulated to end a conflict

Conflicts and differences of opinion are inevitable when working with or providing services to others. The expectations of others involved in a practice are not always the same. Clients, other therapists, employers, and employees frequently change their expectations, and a therapist needs to be open and flexible enough to allow changes to happen. Clients can change their expectations from session to session or even within a session. Growth involves change, and working toward a positive **resolution** for conflicts is an important step for those in any service industry. Conflicts can happen when there is a difference of opinion between two parties on an ethical issue. The resolution of a conflict can help a business be more productive and in some cases helps ensure that the public is being treated ethically. This chapter explains areas where conflict can happen and why, and describes steps that can be taken to help resolve conflicts.

WHY CONFLICTS HAPPEN

Almost everyone resolves conflicts on a daily basis in their personal and business lives. Because many conflicts are easily resolved, they may not involve

much thought or stress. For example, when arriving at a four-way-stop intersection, three drivers may be unsure who arrived first, and usually for a few moments everyone is trying to decide who goes next. Eventually someone moves first and then everyone moves along. It would be great if all conflicts were this easily handled, but in many cases the conflict takes considerable time and effort to resolve.

Conflicts can also occur when a difference of opinion occurs regarding an ethical issue. For example, one therapist in a business may believe that it is unethical to share a client's records with another therapist, while others may not see an ethical dilemma here. Another example arises when a client wants to socialize with a therapist. There are often many different opinions about this situation.

People often justify their actions when explaining why they did something. If a therapist is questioned about an action, it may mean that another party believes the action was not the most effective or appropriate. Certain actions have ethical implications. Because there are a variety of opinions about most ethical issues, therapists must consider what they are willing to take ownership of in their own code of ethics or have agreed to follow in a group or professional association.

CASE STUDY

A seminar was held on ethics with more than 50 therapists attending. The age and experience of the therapists varied widely and represented a good cross section of therapists in the bodywork profession. There were teachers, new graduates, and therapists who had been in the field for many years.

One of the graduates asked a good question during the seminar: “Is it okay to accept social invitations from your clients?” She explained that one of her clients frequently offered her tickets to a sporting event. She did not feel right accepting them, but other therapists in her spa said that she should accept them. She did not feel good about the offers, and the client seemed a little too friendly.

This question led to a great deal of discussion and variety of opinions. Several therapists said it was okay to accept social invitations, while others believed it was clearly a boundary issue. An intense debate followed. Finally, near the end after a number of people expressed some very strong opinions on the matter, an older experienced therapist stood up and said, “If you feel strongly enough about anything, you can easily justify it in your own mind. What is important to note is that if you are having to justify your behavior to several people, maybe you should take a second look at that behavior.”

Often people will perceive what they want about another’s actions or behavior. Many therapists go through their entire careers without ever being questioned about their behavior or actions. Obviously they are very aware of the impressions they give others and choose not to behave in any way that would lead to ethical questions.

Justifying and explaining one’s behavior may be necessary in certain professions and fields of work. But therapists who are frequently questioned about their actions should take a close look at what they are doing and adjust their behavior accordingly.

UNCLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Many times a conflict arises when one or both parties have unclear expectations regarding the other party. For example, in a practice with several therapists, one therapist may expect the other therapists to always be neat and clean up after themselves after each day’s work. Although this may sound like common sense to many, some therapists prefer instead to clean up before they start in the morning.

Unclear expectations can arise when a person’s own guidelines and habits are not the same as those of others around them. Often a person will

assume that others should have the same work habits and guidelines, but the variety of backgrounds and situations in which people are raised lead to a variety of work habits and behaviors. Previous chapters discussed policy and procedures, which can help give individuals guidelines to follow. Unfortunately, even the best policies and procedures sometimes still involve individual interpretation, and the expectations of one person may be very different from another’s. An owner of a facility may assume, for example, that all the therapists will follow the same ethical guidelines, only to be surprised when a complaint is filed against a therapist charging unethical behavior. Policies and procedures can help in many ways but often are still somewhat open to interpretation.

Expectations frequently change, and it can be frustrating to have conflicts develop even when a policy has been in place for a considerable period of time. Sometimes there are no policies for a given situation because a problem has never occurred with it in the past, allowing a conflict to suddenly develop.

CASE STUDY

Lawrence has run an office with three other therapists in a great location for the last 3 years. Their business was in the heart of a successful business district, and their advertising budget was low because they had good exposure to the public. In the past, Lawrence and the other therapists had verbally agreed to an advertising budget. Now Lawrence received word that the major street where they were located was being re-routed and their street in the future would have only walking traffic. Lawrence realized that this would be a problem because direct parking by the building would no longer be available and the office sign would be hard to see.

Lawrence decided that they were going to have to spend a lot more money on an advertising budget to keep up the business. Lawrence expected the other therapists to agree with what he had decided.

During a meeting with the therapists, Lawrence announced the new budget and what he expected each of them to contribute. His therapists were independent contractors who rented space from him. One of the therapists thought the plan was good, but the other two disagreed with his new budget. Lawrence had calculated the budget and divided it four ways for all to share equally in the expenses. Since the therapists were independent contractors, however, he could not require them to pay the new expenses. Lawrence had just expected them to want to advertise and spend the money to help maintain their businesses.

Several business and ethical dilemmas are evident here. If the other therapists signed a rental/lease agreement, Lawrence may have the option to raise the rent to cover the new expenses. Is it ethical for Lawrence to raise the rent for this type of situation, or should he allow them to be released from their lease? If the therapists do not like what is happening, is it ethical for them to vacate suddenly and leave Lawrence in the lurch for these expenses?

All the parties entered into their original agreement with certain expectations, but due to unforeseen circumstances, the expectations changed. When a situation occurs that may cause conflict, resolution and compromise should be sought.

Unclear expectations can often be avoided by careful planning and communication. It is not a good idea to assume that other therapists or your employer will know your expectations unless they are clearly outlined and stated.

Clients can also have unclear expectations about the therapy they are going to receive and the therapeutic relationship. For example, a client may assume that the therapeutic relationship means that a therapist can treat any kind of ailment. Massage therapists should not work on many conditions, however, but should explain to clients why their condition does not warrant bodywork. A recent neck trauma such as whiplash, for example, often requires medical assessment before bodywork is performed. It is unethical and beyond the scope of practice for a bodyworker to work on clients who could potentially be harmed or whose conditions contraindicate massage. Explaining the scope of massage therapy can help a client understand that a massage therapist or bodyworker has parameters they must practice within. Referring the client appropriately would be the ethical thing to do.

Clients can also have expectations for the therapy session itself. A client may expect the therapist to make them 100% better in just one session. Experienced therapists know to educate their clients about the long-term process of working on a chronic or established condition. Years of problems and pain cannot magically disappear in a 1-hour session. Conditions such as arthritis, injuries, and long-term overuse are frequent maladies that clients suffer. Clients often tell the therapist that they want to get rid of the pain in their shoulder, for example. Therapists can educate clients about how long it took the condition to develop and explain that it may take a series of sessions to make a long-term improvement. Clients may also expect a therapist to be an expert in other matters that

pertain to health. Often clients ask a therapist to diagnose what is wrong with them. Because therapists are trained in pathologies, clients expect a therapist to know what is wrong with them. Clients often list all types of symptoms and then ask the therapist what is wrong with them. Therapists are trained in pathologies to help them recognize when it is not appropriate to work on a person or area to prevent harming a client. Diagnosing is beyond the scope of practice for a bodyworker; yet clients frequently ask a therapist what is wrong with them. Therapists should be careful how they word their answers to such questions. In cases such as these, referring the client to another health care professional for a diagnosis is the proper thing to do. Clients may also expect a therapist to have knowledge about medications and supplements. Again, it is beyond the scope of practice for a bodyworker to advise a client to take or not take medications and supplements (Fig. 12-1). Even a client who simply asks if taking a certain vitamin will help with a condition is asking the therapist to answer beyond a therapist's scope of practice. Referring such clients to their physician or another health care professional is appropriate because nutrition and medications are beyond the scope of practice for bodyworkers.



FIGURE 12-1 ■ Advising clients about supplements and medications is outside the scope of practice of massage therapy.

Key Points

- Unclear expectations can cause conflict.
- Planning and communication can help avoid conflict.
- Expectations should be stated or expressed by all parties involved.

CROSSING BOUNDARIES

Therapists should be knowledgeable of the boundaries of their profession. Laws, rules, regulations, and the codes of ethics of professional associations or groups must be followed. Problems can arise when an individual either is not aware of such boundaries or chooses not to accept them. For example, a therapist may not be aware of a state rule requiring a client to give informed consent to receive bodywork. Informed consent, as discussed previously, means that a client is given information about a treatment prior to the treatment and consents to it after receiving all pertinent information. If a therapist does not tell a client that a certain technique may cause side effects, for example, a client may become upset when the side effects happen. Ignorance of the law or rules is not an acceptable defense. It is the responsibility of all therapists to know what is required of them by rules and laws. Knowing the expectations can prevent potential conflicts. Otherwise, a client or another therapist might report the therapist for a rule violation, and a state board may send an inspector or letter concerning the violation.

A therapist who deliberately chooses to cross legal or ethical boundaries certainly raises an ethical issue. The National Certification Board of Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork has increased the required number of continuing education hours in ethics from 2 to 6 hours. Many other professional organizations also now require more hours in ethics as a consequence of the increasing number of violations. Ethical violations can result in a report sent to a state agency or a professional organization. In some cases, violations involve a therapist not following a rule, but in other cases a conflict occurs between a therapist and a client. For example, what happens if a client feels that a therapist did not provide full information regarding a treatment? Is the client doing the right thing to file a complaint? Or should this situation be resolved at the client–therapist level? Conflicts can develop between a client and a therapist when expectations are not clearly defined between them or when information is not provided that would help both parties know what to expect or to provide. For example, if a client chooses not to tell a therapist

about a certain medical condition and the bodywork makes the client’s condition worse as a result, who should be held accountable?

Often violations result from boundaries being crossed. Although some boundaries may be crossed inadvertently, it is the responsibility of therapists to know what the legal and ethical boundaries are and to explain them to their clients. Clients can innocently ask that something be done that would require a therapist to cross boundaries, such as diagnosing. But what if the therapist gives a client an opinion concerning what is wrong with the client? This could lead to some serious problems and consequences for both the client and the therapist.

Clients look to a therapist as being educated in many areas concerning their health and well-being. Because bodyworkers understand the human body, it is natural that some clients might assume that a therapist can help them with their health problems. Therapists have to be careful not to overstep the boundaries of their scope of practice. If a therapist tells clients that they may have a certain medical condition, this is not only a scope of practice issue but an ethical issue as well. For example, if these clients tell their doctor that their massage therapist told them they have a skin cancer, the doctor would question the ethics of that therapist. Conflicts could easily develop between different health care providers, with the client potentially caught in the middle.

CASE STUDY

Addison had begun working on a client who had several health issues. During her sessions, the client would consistently talk about her health problems in the last week and was frustrated with not feeling very well. Addison heard her mention a number of symptoms that Addison’s own sister had recently experienced before being diagnosed with diabetes. Then the client asked her if she had heard of anything that could help her with her condition and symptoms. Without thinking, Addison said that it sounded like she may have diabetes, because she had the same symptoms her sister had. The client got very upset and asked Addison what to do. Addison recommended that she see her health care provider. During a session a few weeks later, the client told Addison that she had been tested for diabetes and that the test was negative, but she had been diagnosed with a hormone problem that required medication.

Although Addison was correct in referring the client, she would have been wiser not to mention diabetes but to suggest only that the symptoms she was experiencing could be clarified by a qualified health care provider.

Boundaries help to protect clients and therapists. When a therapist or client crosses over a boundary, the potential is set for conflicts to happen. For example, if a client later learns that a therapist was supposed to have all clients fill out a health history form but did not do so, a conflict may arise. The therapist may not accurately understand the client's condition and might perform a therapy that could harm the client. This client may file a complaint or simply not return as a client. Addressing issues such as these helps prevent the conflict and the potential for clients not being happy with their therapist.

Key Points

- Therapists should know the boundaries of their profession.
- Conflicts and ethical dilemmas often involve boundary issues.
- Boundaries protect both clients and therapists.

POOR COMMUNICATION

Effective communication between a therapist and clients, other therapists, and an employer is important to help prevent conflicts. Expectations and boundaries can be verbalized or written to help prevent anyone from having incorrect expectations.

Written communication includes statements, rules, or policies presented to a client and signed by the client before treatment is rendered. Intake forms often state what a therapist is able and not able to do. The forms may state that a therapist does not diagnose or perform spinal manipulations, for example, to make it clear to clients that this is beyond the massage therapy scope of practice. Clients may still ask for these things, but a written and signed form helps make this policy clearer for clients and helps prevent a conflict with a client asking for something that should not be done.

Verbal communication happens continuously in a therapeutic relationship. After the initial intake interview, a therapist should seek feedback often from the client. A client's expectations cannot be met if the therapist does not have a clear picture of them. For example, if a client regularly has a relaxation massage, the therapist might naturally assume that their next session would be for relaxation. But what if the client has hurt his or her shoulder and wants the therapist's help to reduce the pain and lack of movement in that shoulder? Talking with the client would clarify that goal. You might assume that clients will always tell you what they want or expect, but unfortunately many do



FIGURE 12-2 ■ Seek feedback often from the client during a session.

not feel comfortable talking to a therapist about their needs. For example, clients commonly complain to other people about how much pressure a therapist applies—but do not say anything to the massage therapist. Too often such a client says very little but does not return for another appointment and may never want to receive a massage again. Again, simply asking clients how they feel and if the pressure is comfortable helps prevent such problems (Fig. 12-2).

When a client does communicate a need, such as for less pressure, therapists should listen and follow what the client is telling them. If the therapist tries to convince a client that the client needs something else, a potential for conflict rises. For example, if the client tells the therapist that the pressure being used hurts, it is inappropriate for the therapist to answer that the client really needs this type of pressure. **When clients communicate their needs, it is important for the therapist to listen carefully.** If a client is not communicating, it is important for the therapist to ask for feedback to ensure the client's needs are being met.

Good communication involves constantly checking in with clients, fellow therapists, and employers to help prevent conflicts from developing. When a conflict does occur, using the process described later in this chapter helps to resolve issues.

Key Points

- Communication between the client and therapist can help prevent conflicts.
- A therapist should focus on both verbal and nonverbal communication from a client.
- If a client does not communicate, the therapist should ask for feedback.

TYPES OF CONFLICTS

Conflict is likely in any type of business that provides service to others or that involves more than one person. Conflicts over policies, procedures, or working conditions are common and can usually be easily resolved. Conflicts that occur over objective questions and issues are generally more easily resolved than those involving subjective feelings and beliefs. Ethical principles, although obvious at times, often involve subjective issues that can lead to conflicts if not addressed. Communicating when problems arise is a key part of resolution, but unfortunately effective communication does not always occur.

CONFLICTS WITH CLIENTS

Conflicts between a therapist and client usually result from unclear expectations by one or both of the parties. When clients book an appointment for bodywork, they generally have a certain expectation, often the same as when they book an appointment with a doctor. They usually expect the doctor to tell them what is wrong and prescribe a treatment or medication to make them better. The same is true of people who book a bodywork session. They may expect pain relief or simple relaxation from stress.

It is important for a therapist to try to learn the client's expectations through verbal and physical communication. In the initial intake process, ideally the client form requests clients to write their goals for the session. The therapist should then discuss this with the client and come to an agreement about what the client wants from the session. A client with a neck or shoulder injury may expect a therapist to fix this condition in one session. The client should be educated about the work to be performed along with the outcomes before a session begins. A client could be very disappointed with the session if told at the end of a session that a session can only accomplish so much and that the client needs to return for a long series of sessions. Clients may think that this is just a way to

keep them coming back. Telling a client about how long it took a condition to develop and how massage works best when done slowly and not aggressively will help the client understand and heal more effectively.

Clients' needs frequently change, and it is important for a therapist to address these before each session begins. Asking clients about their goals before each session helps the therapist know what they expect. Restating their goals helps to clarify the need and also allows the therapist to explain what type of work they may be doing that day. Entering the session with clear goals and expectations helps both the client and therapist know what to do and expect (Fig. 12-3).

Conflicts arise when the expectations are not clearly defined or not discussed at all. Unfortunately, a client who is not happy with a session may simply just go away and not return for future sessions. The client may not express his or her dissatisfaction to the therapist or receptionist. For example, if a client expects a deep tissue massage but receives a Swedish massage, what might the client do? Talking to the manager is a possible first step, and that may lead to a good solution. But what if the therapist feels the client did receive a deep tissue massage? Many therapists work directly with clients without others involved who can help resolve a



FIGURE 12-3 ■ Starting every session with clear goals helps both the client and therapist know what to do and expect.

conflict, and if a client is unhappy with the work, what can be done? The therapist may provide another session or refer the client to another therapist to resolve the problem.

Obtaining feedback from a client during and after a session helps the therapist address the client's needs and expectations. During the session the therapist should check in with the client about pressure and comfort three or four times. Each time a different area of the body is being worked, a therapist should simply ask if the pressure is okay. Signs of discomfort such as a client tightening up or pulling away are indications that something needs to be changed or addressed. Make sure the client is warm enough, because a client who has been cold during the entire session is not going to feel relaxed at the end.

After a session, check in with the client again to ask how he or she feels and if there are any questions about the session or the expected outcomes. This is a good time to review what the client's expectations were for the session and talk about future sessions when applicable. Communicating with the client after the session is over helps the therapist gain valuable feedback and can help plan future sessions if the client is returning.

If a conflict does arise, such as clients feeling like their needs were not met or they did not receive the type of therapy they asked for, the conflict should be resolved as quickly as possible. Ask the client what expectations were not met and what solution the client would be happy with. This may mean that the client does not pay for a session or next time asks for another therapist. Unfortunately, a therapist may not always be a perfect match for every client. For example, a client who likes really deep work will not be satisfied with a therapist who only does light work. Therefore, the therapist should talk with the potential client when the appointment is booked and ask the client what type of work he or she is seeking. In facilities where a receptionist books appointments, the problem is more likely to happen if the receptionist is not educated about the types of treatments each therapist performs. Educating staff is important in such a facility.

Resolving the conflict helps show clients that their well-being is important. Refer the client to another therapist who will perform the type of work the client is looking for, and the client will respect you for doing so. Ethics involves putting a client's well-being foremost. Massage therapy is a service industry and therapists should strive to meet clients' needs. If a therapist is simply just doing the job and has no concern for the client's expectations and outcomes, satisfactory services are not being provided. Most ethical codes, therefore, address the well-being of clients.

CASE STUDY

Brett booked an appointment at the Blue Nile Day Spa for a deep tissue massage. Brett had begun jogging a few months previously and found that a deep tissue massage once a month really helped him feel better. He asked the receptionist about the deep tissue massage and asked for a therapist who could do this deep work. She told him that all five therapists did deep tissue work.

Brett had the massage on Saturday and was surprised when he was escorted to the room without first even meeting his therapist. Olivia, the therapist, entered the room and simply asked him how he was doing and proceeded to work. Brett felt the work he was receiving was too light and several times asked Olivia to work deeper. Each time she would work slightly harder, but never to the pressure that he expected from a deep tissue massage. When the session was over, Olivia left the room without saying much at all.

When Brett paid for his session, the receptionist asked if everything went well. Brett told her that he felt he had received a Swedish massage and not deep tissue work. The receptionist asked Olivia about this, and she admitted she had not looked at the appointment book before beginning and had indeed performed a relaxation massage. The manager overheard this and offered Brett a free session the next time he came in.

Situations like these can be avoided when the expectations of both parties are discussed prior to the massage rather than assumed.

CONFLICTS WITH OTHER THERAPISTS

Practices involving more than one person can have, and usually do have, many differing perspectives and ethical standards. Group practices also have the potential for a variety of conflicts because of different beliefs in policies and procedures, skills, techniques, advertising, dress, fees, and general office environment. Groups often face the challenge of working through various conflicts that can occur. Successful group practices often have regular office meetings to discuss issues before they have a chance to get out of hand. Groups such as these usually have developed ways to resolve conflicts to keep the focus on the clients and not the issues in the office.

Conflicts in a group setting also include conflicts between therapists. When they occur, it is best to try to resolve the issue between these two people and not involve other staff who may take

sides and allow the problem to grow. People often seek out the advice of others, but this may allow a simple problem to grow into something larger. For example, if two therapists share a room and there is a problem with scheduling or cleaning the room, this problem should be resolved between the two parties and not the rest of the staff. If a problem arises that does involve the entire staff, meeting together would be the best approach to find a resolution. For example, if a landlord plans to increase maintenance fees in a way that affects everyone in the office, a meeting should be called to discuss the change. Otherwise, business and ethical conflicts can divert much productive energy away from the therapeutic aspect of a bodywork business.

CASE STUDY

Massage Connection opened with five therapists on staff. Careful planning by the five therapists made them all feel this would be a great place to work. Several months after opening, four of the therapists had pretty full schedules. The other therapist was still struggling to get clients. This therapist began to gossip about the other therapists. Some of the things she said got back to the other therapists in the practice. Initially, they ignored the talk, but eventually it got out of hand. Clients frequently told them things they had heard, even that some sexual improprieties had occurred in cross-gender massages. The four therapists decided to try to resolve the issue. Meeting with the therapist who was gossiping, they learned that she felt like something like this must be going on because they were getting clients and she was not. The four therapists explained that they were not doing these things and that her gossip was hurting everyone, including herself. They explained that her own unethical actions, such as gossiping, were hurting her own practice. After all, how can a client trust a therapist who is constantly gossiping about everyone else? The four therapists felt strongly that if this therapist did not stop behaving this way, they would have to ask her to leave the practice. They also offered to mentor her in ways to improve her own skills to help build a successful practice. She agreed and, a year later, was busy with her practice.

Group dynamics play an important role in conflicts and resolution. Carefully selecting other therapists with whom to practice can help prevent conflicts from occurring.

CASE STUDY

Massage Associates had six therapists who shared space in an office. During the last 5 years, several therapists had come and gone. Four of the six therapists had been together since the beginning, and they found that it was important for all four to agree on any new therapists who would join their office. They had seen that hasty decisions had brought about problems involving scheduling, advertising, and the atmosphere of the office. The last therapist who left had wanted to change the entire structure of the office and had constantly talked with all of the therapists privately to get her way. That eventually led to the four therapists asking her to leave the office because it took too much time and energy to deal with her.

The four therapists then decided to individually interview any potential therapist who wanted to practice in their facility. They felt it was important for everyone to feel comfortable with any therapist who wanted to join their office. This allowed four different perspectives and gave each individual a say in the makeup of their office.

Group practices can present challenges different from those in an employer/employee situation. When a conflict occurs in an employer/employee facility, often the employer has the final say in what happens. In a group practice, a community decision is often needed. This may involve more effort because all parties' opinions should be taken into consideration and a compromise may be needed.

A therapist who is considering joining a group situation should talk with everyone involved. It requires a large investment of time, money, and energy to start a practice, either with a group or individually. Researching the practice location and getting to know everyone there helps prevent problems later. Meeting with the staff and getting a general sense of the office's atmosphere, guidelines, and expectations for everyone helps lead to an informed decision. How busy the practice is

CASE STUDY

Tia had recently relocated to Chicago from Dallas when her husband's company transferred him. She had practiced in a chiropractic office in Dallas, but had been exploring the thought of joining in a group practice. She felt out of touch with her profession and thought this might be a way to network more effectively. She saw several promising ads in the newspaper and set up appointments to meet with several groups.

Her first appointment left her discouraged and disappointed. The therapist who acted as office manager quickly showed her the office and rooms, told her the rent, and basically said everyone was on their own. When Tia tried to ask her questions about office policies and guidelines, the therapist told her that they all did their own thing.

Tia had a better experience at the second location. One of the therapists took the time to give her a tour, showed her the office policy manual, and explained a great deal about the practice. She introduced her to several of the therapists who were between sessions and told Tia that she would need to meet with all of the therapists in the office. They would discuss the fit and let her know how they felt about her joining their office. The therapist explained that this was to help avoid conflicts. She also suggested that Tia receive a massage from several of the therapists in the office to get to know what the office felt like and what type of work everyone did. The entire staff liked to be able to offer a variety of different types of therapies to help attract more clients.

Tia booked several sessions over the following weeks and found that she really liked the atmosphere and professional image of the office. She met with each of the staff, and even though it took over a month to go through the process, Tia felt the effort was worth it. She opened her practice in the location a few weeks later and found that her practice grew quickly. She attributed her success to doing research and finding the right fit with the other therapists at the facility. She easily fit into the area, and the networking opportunities were great.

should not be the only factor for choosing a practice.

CONFLICTS WITH EMPLOYERS

When one works as an employee, the ethical standards of the employer are generally the accepted standard that all employees are expected to follow. Problems are more common in workplaces when the employer does not have set standards or the standards are too tight or too loose. For example, some therapists might feel a spa's guidelines are too restrictive if they cannot work on the gluteal area. Or if a spa has no guidelines when it comes to draping, does that mean that anything goes? Do therapists look then to state laws and rules for their standards? What if the state does not have these guidelines? What will make the clients feel safe and comfortable? In such situations bodyworkers

and therapists frequently have questions about what to do. Employers who want to assure the safety and comfort of their clients should take the time to address these issues that a client and therapist could face. If not, clients may inadvertently or purposely test a therapist to see what will happen. Employers should support the therapists who work for them to ensure that when they are alone with a

CASE STUDY

Howard was pleased to be able to take his first vacation from *Massage-On-The-Go* in 3 years. He had worked hard to build up a good reputation for his business and had worked consistently with local authorities to help provide a safe environment for his therapists to go on out-calls. He worked with each therapist to assure that the services for the clients were reputable.

While out of town, he got a call that one of his therapists had been arrested for illicit behavior. He was shocked because he had done everything he could to hire people he knew he could trust. The male therapist had a complaint filed against him by a woman's husband. The husband had come home while his wife was receiving a massage and was upset that the therapist was working on his wife's gluteal area. The therapist had carefully draped the client and had asked her if she felt comfortable. The husband felt it was not appropriate, however, and ordered the therapist to leave and then called the police. Howard wanted to help the therapist with this problem, and he hired a lawyer to defend the therapist. Although the therapist had followed state guidelines and local regulations, the client's husband felt he had cause to file a complaint. Later in court, the therapist was proved innocent, but it was a valuable lesson for everyone to recognize that even when rules and regulations are followed, others often have different perceptions of ethical behavior. In this case, the employer supported and worked with the therapist to resolve the conflict that could affect them both.

client in a therapy room, there is little room for anything inappropriate to happen.

When working for another person, it is important to understand that person's expectations. Putting expectations in writing can help all parties involved know what is and is not tolerated. Because ethics can be very subjective, it is important to be specific in any areas that might be unclear. Employers should be open to listen to the needs and concerns



FIGURE 12-4 ■ An employer's expectations should be based on ethical behavior and be clarified in written policies.

of their employees as well as to address clients' well-being (Fig. 12-4).

CONFLICTS WITH OTHER HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

It is becoming increasingly common for therapists to work with a variety of other health care providers in the community. As the need for massage grows, more health care providers use massage therapists and bodyworkers to help address many health issues for their clients and patients. Some use bodywork as an adjunct therapy to enhance the effects of what they are doing, while others refer a client or patient specifically for a massage for a particular condition. Many therapists actively seek out referrals from other health care providers. For example, a neuromuscular therapist may seek referrals from an orthopedic specialist because this type of therapy is known to help many conditions treated by this medical specialty.

When a massage therapist develops a relationship with other health care providers, it is important for both parties to know the other party's expectations (Box 12-1). For example, a doctor may expect the therapist to work on a patient for six sessions and only six. The therapist may expect to work on the patient until the patient feels better. This could easily lead to a conflict between the two parties, and referrals may stop. Simple ground rules

BOX 12-1

Guidelines When Working With Health Care Providers

- **Know the expectations.** Establish ground rules both parties agree to. This may include what types of therapy, timeframes, billing, costs, and communication.
- **Put the client/patient first.** The client's well-being should always be in the forefront. If a therapist does not agree with a diagnosis or treatment, it should be discussed with the other health care provider, not the patient.
- **Communication.** Good communication between the two providers can build a strong professional relationship and provide good service to patients/clients.

can be established between the two referring parties to prevent conflict and maintain a good working relationship to benefit patients or clients.

Conflicts can and will happen between clients and their therapists, between two therapists, between employers and employees, and with other health care providers. Often these conflicts involve ethical issues. Communicating with and understanding the expectations of all parties helps prevent conflicts from occurring. When conflicts do occur, steps

Key Points

- It is important to know both parties' expectations.
- Expectations can frequently change.
- Group dynamics play an important role in conflicts and resolution.
- Policies and procedures can help prevent conflicts.
- Conflicts between a therapist and client can be prevented with good communication.

should be taken as quickly as possible to resolve the conflict. The complexity of ethical issues, along with their importance, makes careful resolution necessary.

STEPS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflicts can happen in any profession, and professionals generally agree that resolution is needed if the business is to succeed and grow. For example, a company that frequently receives complaints about its services could quickly go out of business if it did not act to resolve the complaints. The time and energy that conflict takes away from a business can be overwhelming.

BOX 12-2 *Steps for Conflict Resolution*

1. Identify the person(s) involved.
2. Identify the problem(s).
3. Research the facts.
4. Consider possible solutions and outcomes.
5. Discuss solutions with all parties involved.
6. Compromise and resolve.

Box 12-2 lists steps that can be taken to help resolve conflict. These steps can be used to resolve all types of conflicts between massage therapists and clients, other therapists, employers, and other health care professionals. Follow through the steps in the order listed to reach a positive outcome.

IDENTIFY THE PERSON(S) INVOLVED

Often a conflict is between just two people, but other people may get involved in the problem or process. Problems can easily get out of hand as more people get involved. A variety of opinions may be offered, and some people may even enjoy watching the chaos that may result from conflict. It is best to quickly identify the key people involved in the conflict. Look back to the beginning of the conflict and identify the people who were taking part. Eliminate anyone else from the discussion except for the key figures in the problem. Otherwise, many people often want to get involved in the drama of a situation and offer their opinion about it.

IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM(S)

When a conflict arises it is important to take the time to write down what the problem is. Often a conflict involves strong emotions, such as frustration or anger. Being objective can be challenging when emotions are involved. Writing down a problem can help one be more objective and less emotional. Try to stay objective and list just the facts of the conflict. As well, try to see the situation from the other person's perspective. Think about how they may feel about the actions taken by other parties involved.

RESEARCH THE FACTS

It is important to put emotions aside and look strictly at the facts. For example, if your office is having scheduling conflicts, it is important to determine who is involved and look at the appointment book and time cards to help determine the facts of the scheduling problem. Write down just the facts of the situation. When researching the facts, keep opinions—both your own and others—out of this process.

CONSIDER POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS AND OUTCOMES

For every problem there is usually more than one possible solution. It is human nature, however, to see only one answer to a problem and then focus on that. But when you are dealing with one or more other people, the range of resolutions can be as different as night and day. Have all the parties involved write down their possible solutions to the problem. Try to explore all possible options. For example, for the scheduling conflict, the solution may be something as simple as a schedule readjustment. But it could also require a major overhaul of the entire staff's schedule to repair the situation. Try to find as many solutions to the problem as you can, and then write down the likely outcome from each. It is obvious that the conflict should be resolved, but it is important to determine how the different outcomes will affect other parties.

This may be a good time to ask for assistance from a mentor. Ask the mentor to read what you have written to this point, and ask for additional input and possible solutions. A mentor who has worked in the bodywork field may have valuable insights related to conflicts in a practice. If the conflict involves another area such as a financial or legal issue, you may look for a mentor who is experienced in that field. Remember that the mentor is only offering advice, and try not to use it in an inappropriate way toward the other party when trying to resolve the conflict. Additional information could also be obtained from other resources such as books, professional associations and trade magazines, and the Internet.

DISCUSS SOLUTIONS WITH ALL PARTIES INVOLVED

Set a time and place to meet with others involved in the conflict. Be sure to allow plenty of time for the meeting. A minimum of 45 minutes to an hour is usually needed. If only a few minutes were allowed, the conflict may not be resolved and the parties would likely walk away frustrated. It may be a good idea to hold the meeting outside the office. Choose a comfortable, relaxed location to set the mood for a more relaxed conversation. The choice of a public or private place may depend on the subject matter to be discussed. If private or confidential information is going to be discussed, a private location is better.

One of the parties may become emotional during the meeting. If one or more parties are angry, it may be appropriate to let them vent about what they feel has happened or why they are frustrated. It is also important to let everyone involved speak

on the matter. Encourage others to go through the same process you already have and identify the problem, consider the facts, and consider all solutions and outcomes. You have done your homework, and it is important to allow the other person(s) involved to also go through these same steps. Often while going through this process, one of the parties realizes that its perception of the problem or the facts is inaccurate or limited. This is a good time to clarify the situation and a good step working toward a resolution. This is a good time to clarify the situation and can be an important step in working towards resolving a problem.

Talking about possible solutions and outcomes with all of the parties involved is a good way to validate that everyone is part of the process. If only one party makes decisions, generally others feel frustrated and left out of the process of resolving the problem.

COMPROMISE AND RESOLVE

Compromising in a small or large way allows everyone to seek a solution that will work for all. Being part of this process helps all parties make a conscious decision about what they can find acceptable (Fig. 12-5).

Once a resolution has been chosen, it is important to restate the decision. It may be a good idea to write down the decision to ensure that everyone comprehends the decision in the same way. This is also a

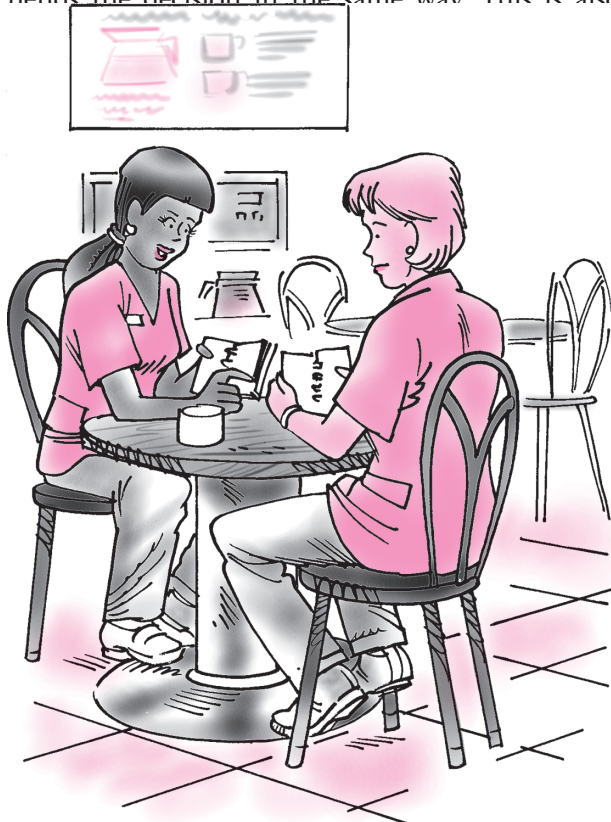


FIGURE 12-5 ■ Resolving a conflict may require a compromise from both parties.

CASE STUDY

Arlington Massage Works opened its office 2 years ago with five therapists who all graduated from the same massage school. All the therapists decided to develop their skills in different areas of massage and bodywork so they would not be competing against each other. Cynthia initially decided to become certified in NMT (neuromuscular technique) and Emily moved toward MFR (myofascial release) work. Cynthia later thought that combining NMT and MFR would help her clients get better results and took some classes in MFR. When Emily learned about this, she complained at an office meeting that they had all agreed not to compete against each other and now Cynthia was doing the same type of work that she was. She felt this would hurt her business and take away referrals from some of the doctors in town. Cynthia pointed out that she was seeking further education to help her clients and build her business. She felt that they all should accept learning new modalities and accept that sometimes therapies would overlap another's practice. She also pointed out that although they had orally agreed to this in principle when they opened the office, there was nothing stated in their written office policies about this issue. She apologized for creating a problem but felt that everyone in the office needed to think about this issue as it would probably come up again.

The five therapists each decided to write down areas that they wanted to train further in and bring their lists to the next meeting. They also decided to write down problems that might result from this cross-over and some solutions that could be sought.

The office found that working toward a positive resolution would keep the client focus of massage in the forefront of their work.

ETHICAL CONFLICTS

Sometimes a conflict situation involves an ethical conflict. While conflicts involving policies and procedures generally can be discussed in more objective terms, the ethics involved in a conflict may be more subjective and depend on a person's own beliefs. The ethical standards embraced by associations or groups are usually fairly well defined, but often there is room within these ethical standards for individual interpretations that may vary from person to person. In such cases, an existing policy may not necessarily resolve a conflict with an ethical solution. For example, if a facility does not require much draping, and in this state no laws regulate this aspect of massage, a

therapist may have a personal belief or ethical standard that more draping should be provided for the client. Another example is a facility that does not use a health history form, but a therapist believes it is an ethical requirement to know about a client's health before performing a massage. The facility's schedule, however, may not allow enough time to do an intake interview. Here again, following the steps for conflict resolution can help solve this problem. Both parties should consider what is needed to ensure the client's well-being while still working within business parameters and the schedule.

Ethical solutions should not involve compromising ethical principles. The conflict resolution process should never contradict ethical or legal guidelines at the national, state, or local level.

EXERCISE 12-1

With a group of three or four students, take one of the cases listed below and, using the "Steps to Resolve Conflict," develop a solution for the problem. Each group should choose one person to write down the steps and associated actions. Then each group presents its case to the class, which can offer other possible solutions or compromises.

Case 1. Five therapists are practicing together. One therapist's friends frequently stop by the office and just hang out. Clients have mentioned these friends to the other therapists because they take up most of the space in the waiting room and often talk in unacceptable ways about massage. When this was mentioned to the therapist, he just laughed it off. What do you do?

Case 2. An employer receives a complaint from a client that her therapist had exposed her chest area during her massage. The client felt she had to hold onto the sheet to avoid further exposure. The client told the employer that when she said something to the therapist, the therapist seemed unconcerned. What should the employer do?

Case 3. Three therapists practice in an office together. One therapist decides to sell supplements and displays them in the waiting area without first discussing it with the other two therapists. Clients are now asking them about the supplements. What should the two therapists do?

Case 4. A client has received four sessions of bodywork for a work injury. The client was referred by a physician who requested only four sessions. The client tells the therapist that he is sure they can talk the doctor into more sessions, if the therapist would just say so. What should the therapist do?

SUMMARY

Conflicts are common in businesses that provide services for the public. Clients may find that they are unhappy with a service. More frequently, conflicts happen between employees, independent contractors, and employers. Policies and procedures can help prevent conflicts, but many areas are subjective in nature. Conflicts occur because expectations between two parties are not clear or communicated. It is important to resolve conflicts quickly so a therapist can concentrate on clients and their well-being. A practice that maintains ethical relationships with clients, other therapists, employers, employees, and other health care providers can focus more effectively on bodywork and massage.

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

CHAPTER PREVIEW

- Importance of learning about ethics
- Ethical behavior as one of the key elements of success
- Making ethical behavior part of who you are
- Explanations by successful therapists of how ethics are important in their profession and in their lives

Ethical behavior has become one of the most frequently discussed subjects in the massage and bodywork community, along with the question of appropriate education for therapists entering this exciting profession. Students just enrolling in a massage therapy program typically do not think much about the role ethics will soon play in their lives and profession. Yet many educators have been talking for years about the importance of ethical behavior and the need for new students to understand and grow in this diverse and sometimes controversial area. In this chapter you will explore the journey that you have made thus far in this book in preparation for, in the last chapter, developing your own code of ethics for living and practicing in your new career. In this chapter successful therapists from the massage profession also offer their advice based on the influence of ethics on their careers.

SUCCESS IN THE MASSAGE AND BODYWORK PROFESSION

Many therapists and students are awed by individuals who seem always to do the right thing, whose schedules are full with satisfied clients, and who love their work. Many massage and bodywork professionals make a very good living, are happy with the work and services they provide for their clients, and are truly successful in their careers. On the opposite side, some other therapists train in bodywork, start to develop their career, falter, and then

leave the profession, disappointed that they seemingly could not be successful in the massage field. It is important to understand why some individuals are successful while some are not.

KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

Three characteristics have a major role in determining a massage therapist's success:

1. Mind-set
2. Connection
3. Focus

The first important key to success is one's *mind-set*. The frame of mind of a new therapist entering the profession is important. Wanting to help others, having compassion, and being nurturing are important keys. Someone who enters this field motivated solely by the thought of making \$60 or \$70 an hour will likely be disappointed. As you will discover, much of that \$70 an hour goes to overhead, purchases of supplies and equipment, and the advertising needed to start a business. As well, a therapist will not make \$70 every hour of the day. For example, if you are working from 9 to 6, or 9 hours a day, you most likely give only five or six massages during that time. Most therapists schedule time to take a break or change over the room between clients.

The mind-set of a successful therapist goes beyond just wanting to help people while making a living. Successful therapists also enjoy the challenge of working with clients who need assistance to regain and maintain their health.

Simply performing a good massage is not enough. Understanding the dynamics of the human body, knowing how to work with those dynamics, and educating clients about physical changes are key elements of successful bodywork. Each massage client is unique and presents new challenges that the therapist and client confront together as a team. Even though massage therapy is a service industry, this teamwork approach must involve clients in the healing process. Clients want to understand why they have pain and do not always feel good. Explaining these matters and educating clients helps them be part of the process and connects the therapist and client in a unique one-to-one relationship.

A therapist's mind-set embracing professional ethics is also crucial for the client's safety and well-being. A client should never have to question a therapist's ethical foundation. As a student entering the field of bodywork and massage, you need to think about the ethical image you portray to clients. As you gain experience in the field, this mind-set will become second nature and part of who you are.

Connection with clients is the second key element in a successful practice. The first connection may begin on the telephone when a client makes an appointment or in person when the client first enters your office to receive a massage. When you first meet a client, during the first few moments the connection between the two of you is already developing. When two strangers meet the first time, they may instantly feel comfortable with each other or either or both may put their guard up. Clients are aware of how comfortable they feel with you during the intake interview. Their comfort level is affected even by your body language and the office atmosphere. The first few minutes with a client is a crucial time that strongly influences the development of the client-therapist relationship.

Therapists should make eye contact immediately with a client, shake the client's hand, and introduce themselves. A client who is filling out an intake form should be left alone for a reasonable time because having someone watching over you while filling out personal information can be intimidating. Clients are also likely to be more thorough when not feeling rushed. The intake interview should be done in a comfortable, quiet setting where you can truly focus on what the client is saying. Ask open-ended questions to learn more about what the client has written. An open-ended question is one that enables the client to give you more than just a yes or no answer. For example, therapists can ask clients to tell them about their headaches rather than asking if their headaches were caused by stress. The open-ended

BOX 13-1

Secrets for Success: Fred Engel, Springfield, MO



Here is a summary of my mind-set for my business from its inception: Integrity is everything. I don't want to be just like every other therapist in town. I want to be the one the other therapists call for treatment. When someone walks through my door looking for hope, I must do everything in my power to fulfill that need. I don't have any special powers. I'm just a regular

person who facilitates the body's natural healing process. Advanced schooling is not an option—it is an absolute necessity. I must continually force myself out of my comfort zone. My very best marketing tools are my hands. The more often they are helping someone, the better the chances for referrals. Let every person know they are important. I listen with my heart. There is no room for jealousy. I try to motivate others to be successful by my example. Be professional, but make my clients feel comfortable. Be passionate about my profession. Let my clients know that I really do appreciate them. Know that I'm not going to be able to meet everyone's expectations. Spend quality time with my family and friends.

BIO

Fred Engel has been an entrepreneur for more than 20 years, with three other successful businesses in his past. He started his massage therapy business at the age of 52 and went into full-time practice in 6 months. His goal now is to expand his business to include wellness and nutrition.

question encourages clients to talk about how bad their headaches are or the location or frequency. If a therapist needs more information, he or she can then ask specific questions. A closed question, in contrast, usually elicits only a yes or no answer.

Jot down quick notes, which you can expand upon later after the session. Ask clients if they have any questions or concerns. You should be totally focused on the client's health and needs during the intake interview. Otherwise, the client will begin to feel a disconnect, which can begin even during the interview and then may set the stage for the rest of the session. A therapist who is interested only in doing the massage and not paying attention to the needs of the client will begin to alienate the client even during the initial interview. Clients expect a therapist to listen and connect with what they want to achieve from the massage session. It is not ethical for therapists to project their own thoughts or feelings for what a client should receive during a session.

CASE STUDY

Mr. Roberts was a frequent client at the massage therapy clinic in a training school. Students spent 6 weeks at the end of their program working in the clinic, and each performed at least 50 massages. Mr. Roberts was an honest client and often told the clinical supervisor what he thought of the student's work.

This week he received a massage from a female student who generally preferred to perform light work. Mr. Roberts liked heavier work, and the clinical supervisor wanted this student to get some practice in heavier work. This student was resistant to heavier work but did the massage.

After the massage, Mr. Roberts told the clinical supervisor that he did not like the massage. He said the student seemed really disconnected and just went through the motions. She never asked what he felt about the pressure, and whenever he told her he wanted deeper work in an area, she would get a bit heavier for just a minute or two and then go back to lighter work. He requested other students for his massages in the future.

When the clinical supervisor talked with the student about Mr. Roberts requesting other students in the future, she said she thought it didn't really matter since she probably would not be working on him again. The clinical supervisor told her that therapists are often challenged in the work they do. There is no such thing as a generic client. All clients come to their appointments with their own expectations, and if the massage does not meet their expectation, or their needs are not being met, they probably would not return. Connecting with clients involves talking with them about their expectations and working throughout the session to meet their expectations while educating them during the process.

Connecting with a client takes work. It is a continuous process that therapists should always be thinking about. Pay attention to both verbal and physical feedback from the client. If a therapist mentally disconnects from a client, the client will consciously or subconsciously feel it. The client may think, and may tell others, thoughts such as "The therapist didn't seem with it today" or "I don't feel like the therapist was paying attention to me or my needs." These are important comments. They show the client felt disconnected from the therapist and the client's needs were not met. Some clients may not consciously feel this but will leave the massage not sure why they did not like it, just knowing something was not quite right, and they will probably not return. The main goal of all client sessions should be to meet the

client's needs, requiring the therapist to stay focused on the client.

To stay connected, therapists should constantly process the client's physical feedback and answers to the therapist's questions about the client's comfort or the area being worked on. Clients will understand the value of the therapist checking with them once in a while for some feedback. When a client comes for frequent sessions, it becomes easier to obtain feedback because the client usually feels more comfortable talking about things such as asking for lighter or heavier pressure. In addition, you can better interpret physical feedback, knowing how the client usually reacts.

A therapist can also become disconnected from a client by not listening to what the client is saying or not respecting the client's wishes. A therapist may do one type of work even though the client requested something else. If you feel a client would be better served by another type of work, discuss this with the client before beginning the session. For example, if a client wanted a deep tissue massage and the therapist failed to discuss this but performed only lighter work, the client will be disappointed. It is important that the therapist and client agree on the work to be done and the goal for the session before the work begins. Each client and each session can be uniquely different. It is unethical to perform work that a client is not expecting to receive. Educating each client about the work being done is an important component of bodywork.

Countertransference can also cause a therapist to disconnect from a client. Issues may begin to surface if the therapist begins to transfer thoughts and emotions to a client. As discussed in an earlier chapter, it is important for therapists to recognize the signs that this may be happening and to work to resolve the matter. A client should never be the target for a therapist's personal issues. Countertransference can cause significant disconnection, especially when a negative emotion is transferred.

Staying connected with clients takes practice and patience. Initially, new therapists are often more concerned with their techniques, pressure, body mechanics, and office issues. It can be challenging to keep the connection strong with each client or patient.

The third key element is *focus*. The mind-set and connection that therapists have with clients require focus. Clients expect the therapist to focus on them during a session. Clients generally do not want to hear about problems the therapist is having or the therapist's personal life. What clients do want to hear is information related to their condition or techniques that could be helpful for them.

Most clients are genuinely concerned about feeling better, and some are concerned about getting their money's worth from a session. Massage is not inexpensive, and many clients have to budget for an hour of massage or bodywork. A client who comes in with the expectation of feeling great after a stress-free hour will not be happy with a therapist who complains about his or her own problems during the client's time. It would not be ethical to charge a client to listen to your personal problems during their massage session.

Massage is considered a service profession. During the client's scheduled session, the therapist should set aside everything else and focus on the client. In the initial few minutes, explore the client's complaints and preferences and learn the client's goals for the session. Discussing options to help a client reach these goals helps the client see that you are seeking further information in order to best meet the client's needs. Restating in your own words what the client has said about his or her goals helps ensure that you both have the same thing in mind.

After you have escorted the client to the treatment room, you will have a few moments to collect your thoughts and plan what you will be doing during the session. You may think out a general plan, leaving room for some flexibility during the session as you physically connect with the client and let your intuition play a part in the treatment. Just before entering the room, take a moment to bring your awareness and focus to the client and let go of everything else related to your personal life and the business. During the session, if you feel your thoughts are beginning to stray, take a deep breath and bring the focus back to the client.

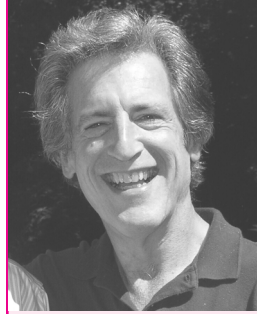
At times clients can distract the therapist from the massage. Some clients talk during a session out of nervousness, while others may simply be curious about the treatment or just like to talk. Many therapists say that it can be hard to focus when the client keeps asking questions. It is much like having two trains of thought at the same time: neither is given complete attention. Therapists report that they can even forget what body areas they have and have not worked on.

Box 13-3 describes some of the many subtle ways you bring the focus back to the treatment and get the feedback necessary for performing good bodywork.

When a client seems insistent on having a conversation, it may be best to stop the bodywork for a few moments and answer the client's questions. This lets clients know that you want to answer their questions but that your focus is lost on the work you are doing. When you are ready to return to the bodywork, suggest that the client focus on

BOX 13-2

Secrets for Success: Elliot Greene, Silver Spring, MD



One of the most compelling questions researchers have asked about the therapeutic process is what makes it work? What is the key to success? Investigating this question while preparing my book *The Psychology of the Body*, I found that research studies done by a number of the helping professions show that the single most powerful predictor of

therapeutic outcome is the quality of the therapeutic relationship. I have also found this to be true in my own experience as a therapist. My ability to connect with my clients can be as important as—sometimes even more important than—the technique or method used. Furthermore, the more often a client comes for sessions, the more this comes into play. Therefore, it stands to reason that massage therapists need to focus on this aspect of their work as much as they do on acquiring and sharpening their hands-on techniques. The same is true, I would add, about massage therapy training.

Indeed, ethics and the therapeutic relationship are deeply linked. The purpose of ethics in massage therapy is commonly thought primarily to protect the interests and well-being of the client. However, ethics is more than a list of rights and wrongs. Upon digging deeper, one could say that much of the ethical framework is designed to protect and preserve the therapeutic relationship.

BIO

Elliot Greene, MA, NCTMB, has been a massage therapist for more than 33 years. He is the co-author of the book *The Psychology of the Body*; Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins; Baltimore, MD; 2004. Which explores the intricate connections between the mind and body and the underlying psychological factors and issues that influence the massage therapist-client relationship and the outcome of the therapeutic encounter. He is currently the president of the U.S. Association for Body Psychotherapy and a past national president of the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA). He has received numerous awards honoring his contributions to the massage therapy field, including the AMTA Distinguished Service award, AMTA President's award, NCBTMB Founders award, and Massage Therapy Foundation Founders award.

the area where you are working and concentrate on relaxing that part. If all else fails, you may need to say something like this: "It is hard for me to focus on what I am doing if I'm talking. Can I answer your questions in a few minutes?" This lets the client know that you truly want to focus on the work and yet still want to answer the client's questions. Clients are generally not offended by such suggestions.

BOX 13-3 *Focusing and the Client*

- Before the session begins, tell the clients it is their time and they simply need to relax. Let clients know that you will be checking with them for comfort levels, but they should feel free to let you know what they are feeling about the pressure and how comfortable they are.
- If a client seems nervous, beginning each new part of the body with very simple touch such as gentle rocking and soothing strokes can help the client to relax.
- If clients start talking too much, ask them to focus on the part of the body you are working on. Ask them to try to help the area to relax by focusing on that part of the body and taking slow deep breaths to relax.
- Ask clients to take some deep cleansing breaths. You may actually have to breathe in and out with them to help slow down their breathing.
- During the breath work, suggest that clients try to let that part of the body go and relax into the table.
- Ask clients to visualize their favorite place, such as the beach or a cool meadow.

WHY THERAPISTS ARE SUCCESSFUL

Massage therapists and bodyworkers are successful when they know the expectations of their clients and work to meet those needs. Bodyworkers frequently receive work themselves, and as consumers they know what they expect when they receive bodywork. Those expectations are not much different from those of the general public who receive massage.

After doing Exercise 13-1, you will likely see that most or even all students have very similar expectations. Paying attention to the client’s expectations is one of the key elements to success. Throughout this chapter, successful therapists offer some of

EXERCISE 13-1

Write down five words that describe what you expect when you receive a massage or bodywork.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Group discussion: After all the members of the class tell their five words and these are written on the board, the class then discusses similarities and differences among the answers.

BOX 13-4 *Secrets for Success: Chris Voltarel, Los Angeles, CA*



FOCUS AND INTENTION

Your session with your client is generally more successful and rewarding when you both are focused and your intentions are clear. You should ask your clients what they would like to take away from the session (state their intention) or what their expectations are. Then, establish and

state how you plan to meet their expectations during the session (state your intention). At that time, both therapist and client should focus on what has been established as the goal.

For instance, if the clients’ expectation is to feel more relaxed after the session, they can focus on a calm environment while you provide that calm environment through the atmosphere you provide and your touch.

Determining expectations, setting goals, and naming intentions helps assure a satisfying experience for both the therapist and the client. This leads to repeat bookings, client references, and increased business.

BIO

Chris Voltarel has more than 1,000 hours of massage education, in addition to her BA in Business Administration. She has been in practice since 1993 and an AMTA member since 1995. She has served in many volunteer positions with the AMTA, including Chapter President of the California Chapter and currently as Chair of the National AMTA Chapter Relations Committee.

their secrets about what they do and why it works. Massage techniques are very important, but having good hands is only one of the key ingredients for being successful.

Here’s an important question to help you understand how important are the keys we have been discussing: If you were paying \$75 for an hour of massage, what would you expect? Technique, skill, sanitation, and professionalism are all important, but focus, connection, and mind-set should be foremost. Take note, in the following sections, of what other professionals say are the important keys to their success.

Key Points

- Each client is unique and presents a new challenge for the therapist.
- Clients will feel or not feel connected to the therapist.
- Clients expect a therapist to focus only on them during their bodywork session.

ETHICS AND SUCCESS

Have you ever heard of an unethical massage therapist being successful? Most would define success in the bodywork profession as having clients who receive quality services and regain their health. Can you deliver quality services while being unethical? This is a very subjective question, and some may try to argue that quality services can be provided while being unethical. But more importantly, would you want to do this?

While in school, students learn a great deal about anatomy, techniques, pathologies, and applications. While all of these are important, so is ethics. A therapist who acts unethically will not keep clients even if he or she has excellent skills. For example, if a therapist performs great sports massage but gets new clients by telling people lies about other therapists, is this behavior ethical even in a world of cut-throat competition? Although a person may seem to get away with such behavior for a time, many believe such behavior will turn back on the person, and eventually this person will not be successful. The knowledge therapists need also includes understanding the importance of ethics and ethical behavior for a successful practice.

Knowing right and wrong is part of the self-exploration therapists should do throughout their training. Clients need to know that they can trust the therapist who is providing their treatment. Clients want to know that they do not need to worry about improprieties that could affect their session negatively. For example, if a client heard that his or her therapist had been accused of inappropriate behavior with another client, wouldn't this client think twice about returning to that therapist?

ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Ethical behavior for bodyworkers means that the professional knows what is right and wrong when working with clients. Clients expect professionals always to treat them properly, even though some clients may purposely or inadvertently challenge a therapist. Opinions may sometimes vary, however, about what exactly is appropriate in certain circumstances. For example, one client may feel that it is right to expect a full hour treatment even if the client is 15 minutes late for the appointment. The client may feel that this is justified by paying full price for the session. The ethical argument on the other side, however, is that it is not appropriate to make the therapist late for other clients the rest of the day just because one client was late. Different people will naturally have differences of opinion on some aspects of ethics and behavior. Remember

BOX 13-5

Secrets for Success: Carolyn Talley-Porter, Greenville, SC



Having worked in an orthopedic office for thirty years, I learned that ethics are not only important but are expected. I have been a massage therapist since 1992, when I began my business based on ethics and professionalism. Living in South Carolina, an area sometimes considered in “the Bible belt,” we were already dealing with the old connota-

tion of “massage parlors.” The goals I set for my business were based on high standards, ethics, and professionalism. Ethical conduct has been important for my business as a massage therapist as well as teaching it as an instructor in our community college. Most all of my clients were referred to me because of my high standards of ethical practice and conduct. Because of this, my practice grew and became highly successful.

The public needs to feel safe and secure while receiving a massage from someone who is ethical and professional. I can't imagine a business surviving without these two characteristics.

BIO

Carolyn Talley-Porter's educational background is in business administration and management. She was an administrator for an orthopedic sports medicine clinic for 25 years. She attended the Fuller School of Massage in Virginia Beach from 1992 to 1994. Carolyn spearheaded legislation in South Carolina, which passed in 1996. She has been an active member of the AMTA, serving at the state and national levels, including National President from 2001 to 2002. She has been a volunteer with the AMTA Research Foundation helping to raise funds. Carolyn implemented the Massage Therapy Program at the Greer Campus of the Greenville Technical College in 1997 and owns Greenville Myotherapeutic and Sport Massage in Greenville, SC.

too that individuals were raised with different beliefs and backgrounds and have different life experiences. Ethical issues will therefore likely always involve differences of opinion in the massage profession.

Certain aspects of ethics in the bodywork profession *are* fairly clear, however, such as the principles of having no sexual contact with clients and maintaining confidentiality. These are easy to understand, and violations can often be proved. Other ethical areas such as those involving referrals and scope of practice involve more subjective issues, and practicing professionals often have a variety of opinions.

In all cases, however, therapists should be aware that their behavior will be constantly judged and analyzed by others, including their present clients and the general public. The public includes individuals who may be thinking about receiving bodywork and who might be skeptical and need assurance that the therapist is knowledgeable, trustworthy, and ethical. Clients generally have already developed a therapeutic relationship with a therapist and may think about ethics only if they are treated in a way they feel is inappropriate. All therapists should keep in the forefront the proper treatment of clients.

MAKING ETHICAL BEHAVIOR PART OF WHO YOU ARE

Chapters thus far in this book have contained much information and many ideas for new therapists to think about as they enter practice. By thinking about how their practice can be perceived by clients and the public, new therapists are better equipped to start their new careers.

Ethics and ethical behavior can easily and should become part of who you are. Once you have taken ownership of a code of ethics, it will become part of your behavior and everyday activities. Many ethical principles and guidelines will soon seem common sense in your practice. For example, if a client comes to see you with an illness that contraindicates massage, you will immediately understand the importance of referring that client to another health care provider. Similarly, if someone asks for information about one of your clients, ethically you will know that you cannot give any information regarding a client to another person without the client's permission. Simply saying that this is against your policies or code of ethics will become second nature.

When beginning a career in bodywork, it is often a good idea to find a mentor from whom to seek advice and counsel when you have questions regarding ethics as well as about business practices, treatment plans, conditions, or techniques. Your mentor may have experienced the same situation you are facing and can be a resource for information. Picking a mentor with a good reputation and experience in the field is important for your career. The mentor could be someone you are working for or who has his or her own practice. Many therapists begin by working in a facility where other therapists also work. These others can also be a good source of information.

In a practice with others, you may also see some things that you do not like, such as ways clients are treated or even ethical violations. It can be challenging to observe unethical behavior by others

BOX 13-6

Secrets for Success: Cheryl Siniakin, Pittsburgh, PA



To me, ethics, which is derived from the ancient Greek word *ethos* meaning *character*, is not so much what I do as who I am, manifested in what I do. Ethics has been the cornerstone in my foundation as a human being as well as a massage therapist in private practice since 1977.

“Doing the next right thing” is a principle that has directed, guided, and continues to build my character. I am continually personally evolving with the help and care of people who share their wisdom to help me foster my growth. I am constantly working with myself—emotionally, physically, and spiritually—to become more of who I am, and in that I find greater inner wisdom. In my own personal development, I strive to always be the student in my life and remain teachable, and to the best of my ability to know myself. My belief is that a key to my success as a massage therapist is knowing myself, as I have found that the clearer I am about who I am, the more available I am to help another.

One way that my character manifests in a massage therapy session is in deciding whether or not to work with a client. At the beginning of every appointment all clients shares with me their goals for the session. If I believe that they may benefit from the work I am able to offer, I work with them; and if I do not believe that my work can help them get to where they expressed wanting to go, I do not work with them. It is not my position to impose my sense of balance/health on my clients, but rather to accept them for who they are at each moment in time. Everyone has inner wisdom, and my clients do come to me for my skills, but that does not negate the inner wisdom that they possess.

“When ‘do no evil’ has been understood, then learn the harder, braver rule, ‘Do good.’”

—Arthur Gutterman (1871–1943)

My clients appreciate the honor that I hold for their process. Each person has their own personal thumbprint in life. Magic happens during every massage session . . . and I am humbled and grateful to bear witness. Without a strong ethical foundation, none of this would be possible.

BIO

Cheryl L. Siniakin is a licensed Massage Therapy Instructor (LMTI) with a BS in Psychology and a PhD in Education and is Nationally Certified in Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork. Dr. Siniakin is National Bylaws Chair of the AMTA and past president of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the AMTA. Dr. Siniakin has been in private practice since 1977. She has trained and certified massage therapists since 1980. Dr. Siniakin is a certified Reiki Master, Reflexologist, and Bioenergetic Therapist. She is trained in On-Site Massage, Sports Massage, and Hypnotherapy. Dr. Siniakin is currently Associate Professor and Director of an Associate in Science Degree Program in Massage Therapy at the Community College of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh, PA. She is also the founder and director of the Pittsburgh Center for Health.

where you work. You may face a decision whether to say something to the manager or to move to another facility. It is important, in any case, not to give in to others' unethical behavior or let it affect your career and practice. Ethical behavior should become part of who you are, and staying committed to that behavior will help lead to a successful and safe career in massage.

Key Points

- Clients should expect to be treated ethically.
- Therapists' behavior is judged by their clients and the public.
- Working with a mentor will help with challenges and feedback.
- Ethical behavior will become part of who you are.

BOX 13-7

Secrets for Success: Brenda Griffith, Richmond, VA



Your personal boundaries are one of the most important cornerstones for building your career as a professional massage therapist. Ethical boundaries have kept me grounded, and have allowed me to focus on building responsible professional relationships in all aspects of my career. Those areas include working with clients, association work with the AMTA, community

education activities, teaching, mentoring, and local and state legislative projects.

Being true to your word and the commitments you make, keeping confidences, and being part of the solution and not the problem are all attributes derived from having a sound ethical foundation. When your ethical basis is firmly established, you have the tools to deal successfully with any situation you may face throughout your career; you will know what is acceptable and what is not, and you will be able to choose the correct course of action.

BIO

Brenda has been in private practice as a full-time massage therapist for 18 years. She has served at both the chapter and national levels of the AMTA since 1990 and was AMTA president from 2002 through 2004. Brenda volunteers as an on-site team member for the Commission for Massage Therapy Accreditation. She taught for 5 years at a local massage school and currently teaches continuing education courses on a limited basis.

WHAT SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE SAY

This chapter includes much insight from trained and experienced professionals in massage and bodywork. Most successful practitioners will tell you that ethical behavior is one of the key attributes of their success. Read carefully the words of the therapists in this chapter who have successful careers and offer their advice to you as a beginning therapist. These individuals have mentored many students and practitioners in this profession. Their success alone speaks highly for their ethical background and behavior.

SUMMARY

Ethics and ethical behavior are and should become part of who you are as a therapist. Throughout this text you have explored your own ethics and how your principles have developed, and you now clearly understand the importance of ethical behavior in your career. Successful therapists have shared insights that have helped them in their careers and that will help you realize the importance of ethics. Following your beliefs on what is right and wrong and building a strong ethical foundation will help you develop your own career.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Make a list of contacts you may call upon when needing advice in the following areas:
 - a. Business and legal issues
 - b. Marketing
 - c. Specific techniques that you wish to specialize in
 - d. Psychological issues
 - e. Support
2. List three resources besides a mentor to whom you can turn for information about ethics and standards of practice in the massage profession.
3. Write a paragraph about each of the following keys to success. List what you feel is important about each and some possible areas that you as an individual may need to work on or develop.
 - a. Mind-set
 - b. Connection
 - c. Focus
4. List two ethical standards that you feel will be easy for you to follow. Then list two areas in which you feel you may still need some work. List actions that you can take to help you achieve those standards.

WRITING YOUR OWN CODE OF ETHICS

14

CHAPTER PREVIEW

- Understanding ethical issues by researching the ethical codes of other professions
- Gaining ownership of ethical behavior by writing your own code
- Need for thorough knowledge to achieve success in a profession

All individuals have their own personal code of behavior that they generally follow. Personal codes are generally unwritten and usually not communicated in full to others except when special needs arise. A code of ethics, in contrast, is a written document that a group, business, association, or individual presents to others, stating beliefs about appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Many massage and bodywork therapists belong to a group or association that has a code of ethics. When you join, you agree to follow that code. Some codes are written in general terms, while others may list very specific behaviors. In addition to these professional codes, all therapists should have their own personal code in order to feel personally safe and take ownership of what they do.

BUILDING ON EXISTING CODES

After reading previous chapters in this book, you should recognize the importance of having and following a code of ethics. Because published codes of ethics may seem too abstract or general, or may not feel personalized for your own beliefs and situation, it is a good idea to write your own code of ethics. Doing so gives you ownership of your code and your behavior in following it.

But it is not necessary to develop an ethical code entirely on your own—this would be a difficult and unnecessary endeavor. Many other massage therapists and other health care professionals have worked countless hours to develop the codes that exist today. Instead, building on those codes, you can develop a personal code of ethics that you can

call your own. The exercise in this chapter will help you clarify your beliefs, standards, and goals for your massage therapy practice. When you have completed your code, you can display it in your practice setting and include key parts in your marketing and advertising materials. Your code will help potential clients better understand your intentions as a therapist.

A personal code of ethics is a living document that you may change in the future as you see fit. Certain areas may be too rigid or confining, and others may need more definition or refinement. Every few years you should look closely at your code and decide if any changes are needed.

DEVELOPING YOUR OWN CODE

Writing your own code gives you, as a new therapist, a beginning foundation for your practice. It is challenging to begin a new career, but your code provides standards to which you can refer when needed. For example, if a client asks about another client, you can refer to a confidentiality standard that you have written. Exercise 14-1 requests that you include at least ten items in your code. This is a good number to start with, but feel free to expand your code to as many items as you feel are needed.

RESEARCHING PRACTICE ISSUES

Before you begin your practice, in addition to having a code of ethics, you should do some research to ensure that you have all the information you need affecting all areas of practice. This is true even

EXERCISE 14-1

Following the steps below, write your own code of ethics.

1. Read again the codes of ethics included earlier in this book and highlight or otherwise note statements in them that you like, feel comfortable with, and believe strongly in.
2. Look up other codes of ethics used by health care providers (psychologists, nurses, chiropractors, etc.) and highlight any parts that you feel are important. These ethical codes are commonly available on the Web sites of professional associations.
3. Write down any areas that are not included in these codes that you feel are important.
4. Go back through the items you have highlighted and write your own version of what you believe in. Carefully use your own words.
5. Write at least 10 individual items for your code.
6. Under each item in your code, write down two standards of practice for how you are going to achieve this item, in other words, an action step. For example:
Code: Always protect the confidentiality of every client.
Standards:
 - a. Always keep client files in a secure, locked file.
 - b. Never release a client's file without the client's signed permission.
7. Exchange your first draft of your code and standards with another student, and ask for suggestions for any changes in wording, punctuation, formatting, and so on.
8. Prepare a final document that you are comfortable sharing in your workplace. Your personal code of ethics can be displayed with other important documents in your practice and included in your brochure or advertising pieces.

if you are going to work for someone else in an established business. Unfortunately, some therapists have started practice and, only later on after having problems, learned about legal or ethical issues affecting them. Sandra's case is just one example of something that can happen to a new therapist starting practice without having thoroughly researched all practice and business issues.

CASE STUDY

Sandra was thrilled to find a location where she could begin to practice right after graduation from massage school. An established salon just a few miles from her house was looking for a massage therapist to work as an independent contractor in the salon. The salon needed someone right away because its former therapist had moved away and the salon had many requests for massages. Sandra had taken her national test and applied for her license as the state required. She felt ready to begin her practice.

Sandra was busy right away but soon felt uneasy about requests from some new clients. Several clients asked not to be draped. Because the previous therapist had not followed the state guidelines for draping, these clients felt Sandra should do the same thing. She spoke with the salon owner to see if this had previously had been an issue. He told her not to worry because no one would be checking. This did not make Sandra feel very comfortable because violating the draping guidelines could put her license in jeopardy and she did not feel it was ethical to do what the clients were asking. Sandra explained to her clients that she must follow the state guidelines.

A few weeks into her practice, the state inspector made a visit to the salon. He asked to see Sandra's license, which was in order, and also asked the salon owner to see his massage business license. The owner told the inspector that the massage therapist was practicing under his cosmetology license. The inspector informed them that this was not allowed and that he would have to apply for a massage therapy establishment license. The owner was not happy to learn about this regulation and decided he would not pay the \$200 for the license. If Sandra wanted to continue to work there, she would have to pay this additional amount herself. Sandra then had to apply for and pay for the massage business license in order to continue to work at the salon. Sandra wished she had checked a little closer to make sure that all rules and regulations were being followed before she had started her practice.

Researching requirements for massage therapy practice is the responsibility of every therapist. It is not safe to rely on the word of a potential employer, who may not understand what is needed for a safe, ethical, and legal practice. In some cases a therapist may even have to educate a potential employer about meeting requirements to ensure that everyone avoids legal trouble. The research questionnaire included in Box 14-1 can help guide your research

BOX 14-1 *Research Questionnaire***LAWS AND ORDINANCES**

1. What are the requirements in your state to practice as a massage therapist?

2. Do you need to take a test before applying for a state license?

3. What is the normal time period for testing and licensure? For example, the National Certification Exam application process usually takes about 4 weeks. You cannot apply until you have graduated and have the correct documents (transcript, diploma). Once you have been approved, you can set your test date within a 3-month period. You need to research the time needed to get the necessary documents from your school.

4. Is there a provision in your state law that allows you to practice while waiting to take the national test?

5. If the national test is required, once you pass the test, how long does it take to get the state license?

6. What local ordinances apply to a massage therapy practice? Check into ordinances such as home businesses, zoning, occupational licenses, and advertising.

7. Do you need to apply for a city or county business license?

PRACTICE ISSUES

Will you be working as an employee or independent contractor? (This is a very important issue when it comes to taxes and other issues affected by the delineation between a contractor and an employee. For more information, go to the IRS Web site and look under independent contractors.)

Independent Contractor

1. Will you be paying rent or working on a commission?

2. How often will you settle your accounts or be paid for your work?

3. Will you handle your own money or will someone else in the facility take care of it?

4. What expenses will you be responsible for (laundry, advertising, supplies, etc.)?

5. If discounts or specials are offered, who absorbs the cost?

6. Who books appointments? If it is someone else, who trains that person in the types of work offered, schedules, etc.?

7. What types of massage will be offered?

8. Who sets the schedule for therapists and session length?

9. In a business with multiple therapists, how are appointments handled? (For example, is there a rotating system if a client does not request a specific therapist?)

10. What company policies will apply to you?

Employee

1. Is the pay rate hourly or by session? Will you be paid during the times you are not performing massage?

2. How often will you be paid?

3. If discounts or specials are offered, who absorbs the costs?

4. Are there responsibilities other than massage? (For example, cleaning, laundry, receptionist, etc.)

5. Are you expected to assist in marketing, such as giving chair massages?

6. Who will be booking your appointments? If it is another person, who is responsible for training that person in what types of massage you offer and scheduling?

7. Working apparel: Are you required to wear a uniform and, if so, who pays for the clothing?

8. What types of massage or other treatments are you expected to do? If additional training is required, how is that done?

9. How long do the sessions last, and how much time is allowed between sessions?

10. What is the chain of command in the business? (For example, to whom should you go if a problem arises?)

11. If there are multiple therapists, how are the appointments handled if a client does not request a specific therapist? Is there a rotation system that makes it fair for all the therapists?

12. Do you have a copy of company policies?

13. Who pays for licensing or additional training?

before you invest time or money in a situation where problems could arise. For example, if a local ordinance states that a massage therapy business cannot be located in a certain area, you either have to look elsewhere for a location or work to have the ordinance changed.

Research your state and local laws and ordinances. Don't be afraid to go directly to sources such as state agencies or boards or local government offices; call these offices and ask for the information that you need. Obtain a copy of any ordinances

and laws that will apply to you. It is important that you obtain the information you base your practice on directly from the agencies or governments you will be dealing with. Obtaining information from other therapists or individuals can be dangerous because their information may be wrong or outdated.

RESOURCES

Without planning ahead, a new massage therapist could easily feel overwhelmed by the amount of paperwork and information needed to begin a practice. Yet it is not ethical to start a practice without the proper licensing and permits (Fig. 14-1). Many resources are available for therapists opening a business or working for someone else. One can easily be confused about what it means to practice as an independent contractor, for example. Researching IRS requirements will help you know the expectations for a therapist and business owner.

The Internet is a valuable resource, but don't be afraid also to go to your city hall or county office to ask for copies of ordinances or laws that apply to your massage therapy practice. In some states, a therapist is required to pass a test, apply for a state license as a massage therapist, apply for a state massage business license, and apply for a local city business license. It is important to know the requirements and plan for the



FIGURE 14-1 ■ Plan ahead to open your practice with all licensing in place and local conditions met.

time and expenses involved. Knowing the needed steps also helps you plan when and where to begin practice as a massage therapist.

S U M M A R Y

One step at a time, educate yourself on the requirements for practice in your area. Talking with a mentor or instructor who can help guide you will make these

tasks easier. When all the proper documentation is in place and you understand what is required of you, you can begin your rewarding career as a massage therapist. Knowing that you did things the right way will give you confidence to begin your practice with a strong foundation and the information you need to be successful. Be proud of your accomplishments and always stand on your ethical foundation. It will serve you well. Congratulations on your new career!

GLOSSARY

- Accountability:** showing the responsibility or proof of performing a task or duty
- Beliefs:** what you personally feel is true
- Boundaries:** limits between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors
- Civil law:** system of law involving relationships or disputes between two parties
- Code of ethics:** a document stating an individual's or group's beliefs, standards, and ethical expectations
- Conflict:** a condition that occurs when two or more people have different attitudes or ideas about how something should be done or when a person has to choose between two inconsistent actions
- Consultation:** the process of obtaining advice from another professional in the same or related field
- Countertransference:** a therapist attributing thoughts or feelings about another person to the client
- Criminal law:** system of law regarding actions that are harmful to the public
- Culture:** the customary beliefs, habits, and traits of a racial, religious, or social group, often depending on one's country and language
- Defense mechanisms:** behaviors that unconsciously protect a person from feelings or awareness
- Disclosure:** revealing information to another person about oneself or another person.
- Dual relationship:** a situation that occurs when two roles or relationships overlap or interact
- Emotional boundaries:** limits for keeping therapeutic sessions focused on the client's body rather than on emotions
- Ethics:** an individual's or group's standards of behavior
- Independent contractor:** a non-employee who provides services within a business
- Informed consent:** a client's right to all pertinent information about a treatment and the granting of permission for a treatment based on that knowledge
- Intake form:** a form used in most practices in which clients provide information about their health, contact information, and other information that a therapist or other health care provider deems pertinent
- Laws:** rules established and enforced by governing bodies that protect or restrict actions by all citizens or specific parties
- Morals:** beliefs about what is right and wrong or good and bad
- Ordinances:** rules and regulations established at the local level
- Physical boundaries:** the physical lines or limitations in relation to a client's body that a therapist should not cross
- Policies:** rules and guidelines established for a particular group or population, such as a business
- Power differential:** the shift of authority that can exist in the client-therapist relationship
- Procedures:** processes by which policies and guidelines are carried out
- Professional boundaries:** the limits of acceptable professional behavior
- Professional courtesy:** a professional doing a favor for another professional
- Professional ethics:** a consensus of a group or association about its expectations concerning ethical principles and behavior
- Referral:** the process of sending a client to another professional for care
- Regulations:** rules of conduct that are often associated with laws, involving an expansion or explanation of the laws
- Resolution:** a solution found or formulated to end a conflict
- Safety zone:** the client's physical areas that a therapist may touch without provoking anxiety; also referred to as the client's "comfort zone"
- Scope of practice:** a definition or set of parameters for activities a professional is or is not allowed to perform as defined by the professional's competency, training, and/or laws and regulations
- Self-regulation:** process by which a group, association, or profession sets guidelines, expectations, and repercussions for inappropriate behavior
- Sensuality:** a feeling of pleasure gained from the stimulation of one or more of the senses
- Sexual boundaries:** limits to prevent ever sexualizing any aspect of bodywork
- Sexuality:** the emotional, physical, cultural, or spiritual actions or reactions related to sexual arousal

Social boundaries: limits for keeping the relationship with clients professional rather than social

Sole proprietor: a person who owns and operates his or her own business and often works alone

Standards of practice: accepted way in which ethical behavior is performed

Supervision: working under the direction of another professional

Third-party disclosure: giving information about a client to an outside person or entity

Transference: a client attributing thoughts or feelings about another person to the therapist

Values: something of worth or held in esteem

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