

Religion, Spirituality, and Ethics in Child Care Work

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In memory and in honor of Dr.
Leonard Gibbs,

Esteemed colleague and friend



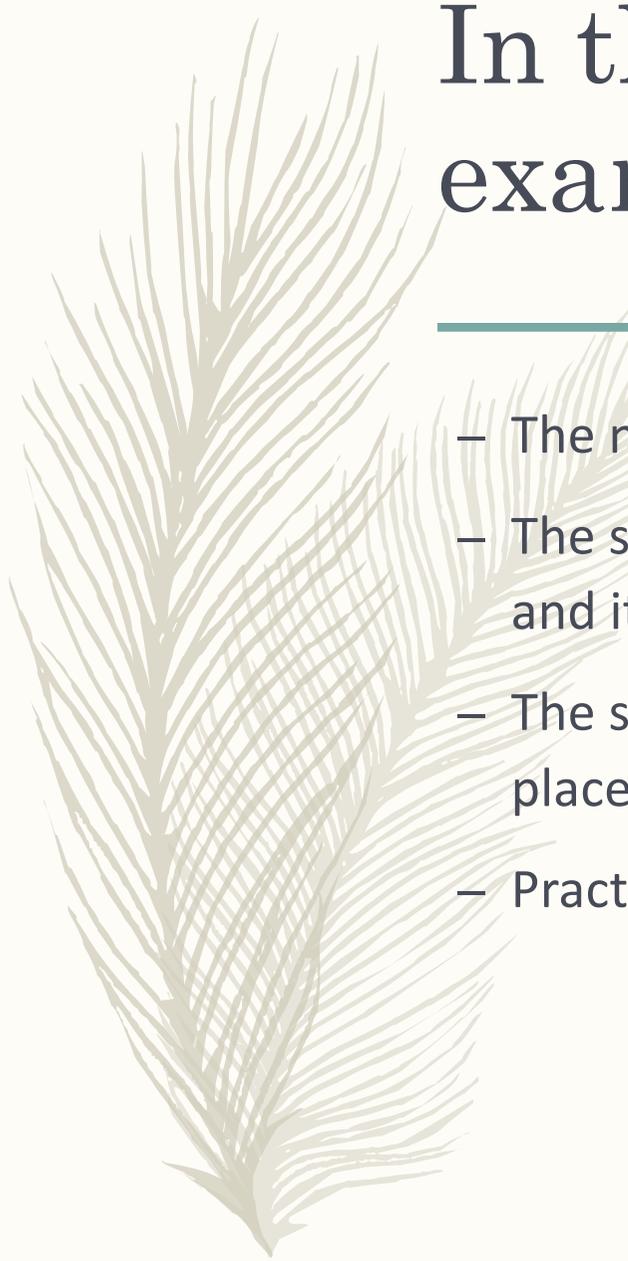
Background



- One of the historical roots of child care work in South Africa is the missionary work of evangelical Protestant Christianity in the nineteenth century.
- By the late 1800's, a number of church-sponsored orphanages and children's homes had been established, especially for white children.
- By the late twentieth century, social work and child care work essentially ignored religion and spirituality as powerful factors in clients' lives and, at times, distrusted religion and spirituality because of the assumptions about negative effects of especially organized religion or overemphasized particular religious traditions and practices. It avoided discussions of client religion or spirituality as too private and personal.

Why be concerned about spirituality and religion in child care work practice?

- Growing recognition of the importance of the influence of spirituality, faith, and religion in the lives of children and their families, of the importance of inclusion of religion/spirituality for assessment and strengths-based supports, and of the harm which arises from boundary violations.
- There are ethical obligations in three dimensions: client, professional, and practice setting
- Currently, it is becoming common practice to perform a spiritual assessment as part of the total assessment.



In this workshop, we will examine...

- The nature of religion and of spirituality
- The spirituality/religion (or lack of) of the child care worker and its connection with ethical practice;
- The spirituality/religion (or lack of) of the client(s) and its place in a strengths-based approach to practice.
- Practice settings with a religious/spiritual orientation.

But, first, as food for
thought...



Scenarios



Scenario 1

A children's home in a small, rural town, operating under the auspices of a local church, does not have a Jewish professional staff member but has recently admitted a handful of children whose families are practicing Orthodox Jews. The home's budget is very limited, the administrator does not anticipate finding funds to hire Jewish staff, and he does not expect any staff vacancies in the near future. There is also no plan to train or educate staff regarding Jewish beliefs and practices, especially the dietary needs of the Jewish clients. "They chose to come here, knowing that this is a Christian organization," says the Director.



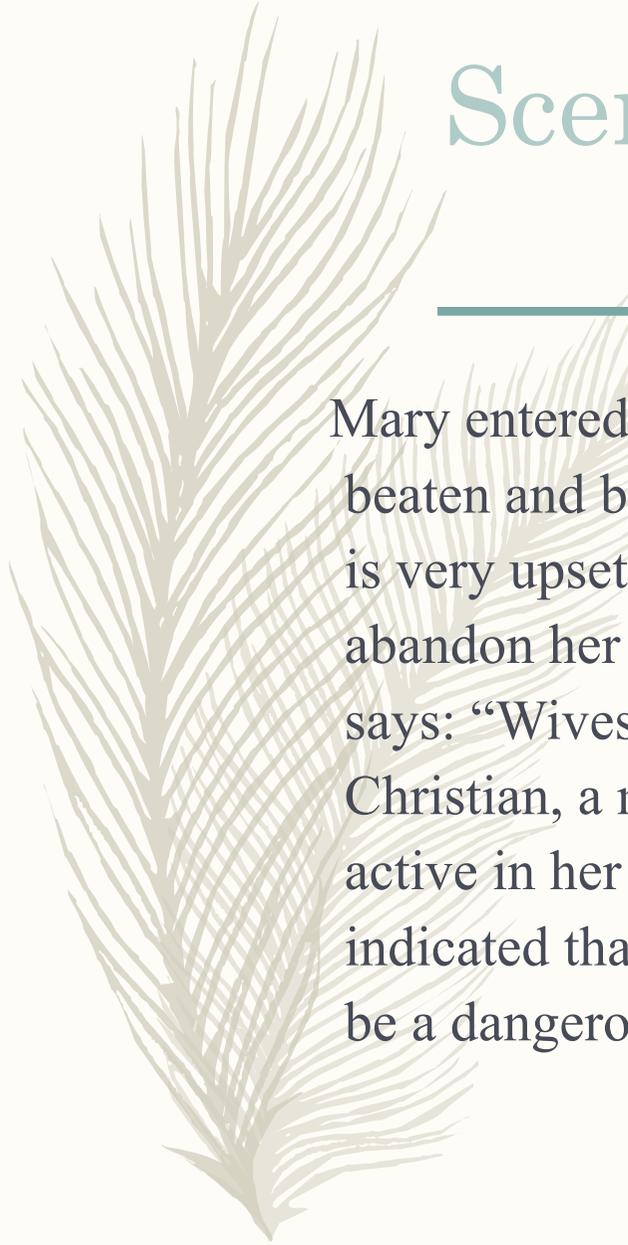
Scenario 2

Child care worker to supervisor: “Well, you put this teen in my unit, and he is gay. My church says that homosexuality is a sin, and I must reject that sin, even if I do not reject the sinner. So, I cannot work with this teen if he persists in this sin, and you cannot force me to act against my religious conscience by requiring that I do so. I have worked with him once, and that is how I discovered this about him. I cannot work with him again. He must go.”

Scenario 3



A child care worker employed in a well-respected sectarian child welfare agency met with his supervisor to an HIV-positive adolescent's disclosure that he has anonymous sex with adult males. The following week, the supervisor, espousing agency policy, whether formal or informal, advised him that this teen must be removed because he poses a safety risk to the other youth in the program and because the agency's reputation could be tarnished for serving gay youth with AIDS.



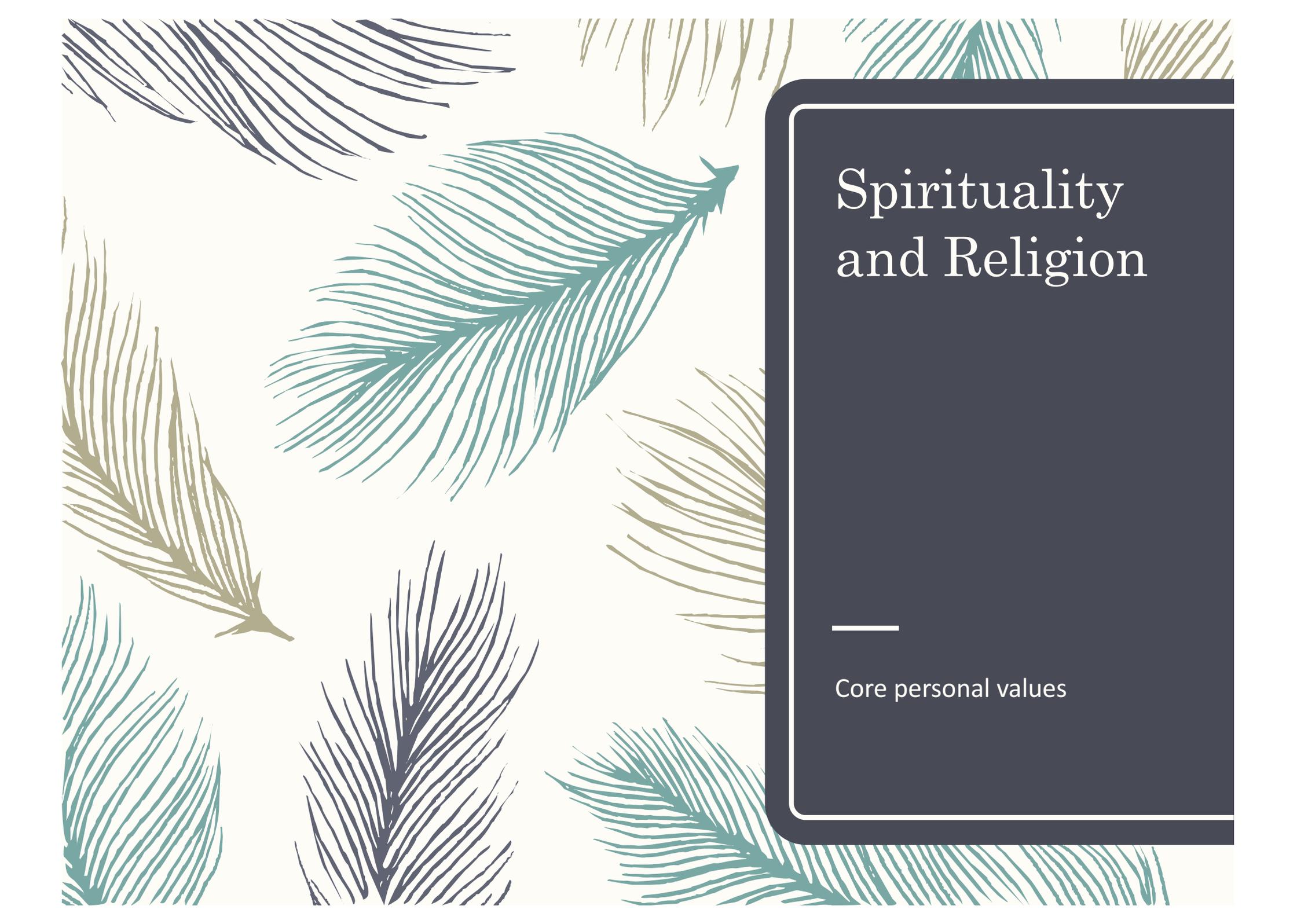
Scenario 4

Mary entered your domestic violence shelter this morning terribly beaten and battered, accompanied by her three small children. She is very upset because her pastor had said that she ought not to abandon her husband and should respect him because Scripture says: “Wives, obey your husbands in all things.” Mary is a devout Christian, a member of a non-denominational bible church, very active in her church community, as are her children. She has indicated that she feels compelled to return to what she knows will be a dangerous situation for her and her children.



Common and Current Ethical Issues

- *Boundary violations and crossings, including conflicts of personal/religious and professional values and obligations*
- *Cultural competence and culturally sensitive practice [culture includes religion and spirituality]*
- *Obligation of service to clients, without discrimination.*
- *Proper termination and transfer of clients.*
- Confidentiality, personal privacy, privileged communication, and the law
- Informed consent and managed care
- Access to client records, esp. within an umbrella agency with separate units
- Whistle-blowing and responsibilities to both the client and the practice setting
- Incompetent practice
- Impaired practitioner
- Ethics and managed care
- Child care worker and the law



Spirituality and Religion

Core personal values

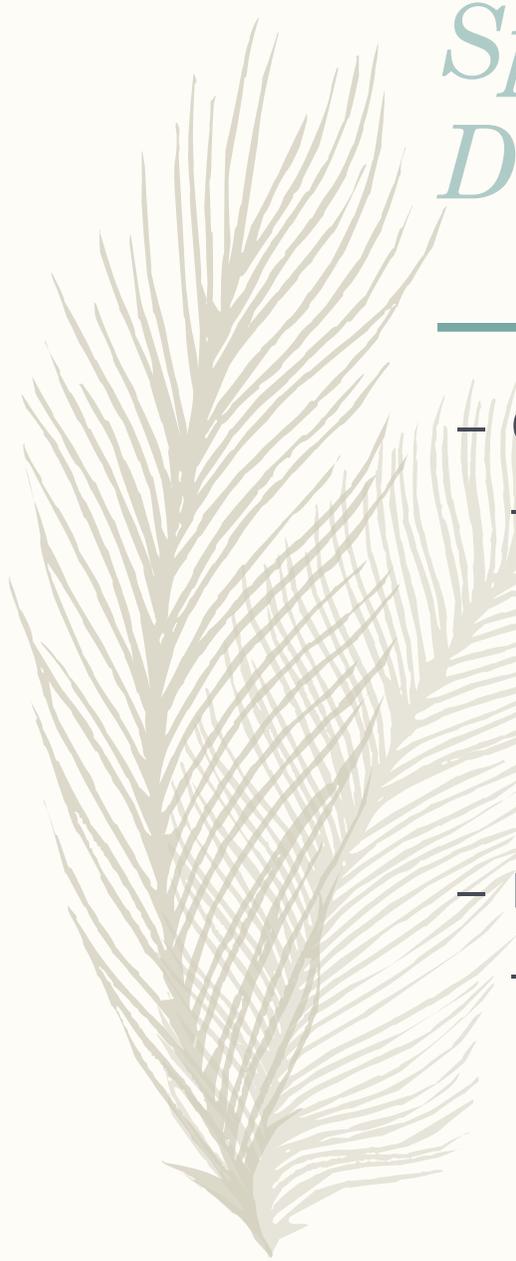
Spirituality [Internal]

Different definitions...

- “An inner sense of something greater than oneself. Recognition of a meaning to existence that transcends one's immediate circumstances.” [www.nature.com]
- “Spirituality refers to a universal and fundamental human quality involving the search for a sense of meaning, purpose, morality, well-being, and profundity in relationships with ourselves, others, and ultimate reality, however understood ...spirituality may express through religious forms or it may be independent of them.” [Canda & Furman, p. 59]

The spiritual dimension...





Spirituality and Human Development

- Cognitive development
 - Jean Piaget
 - *Sensorimotor/practice intelligence stage*
 - *Preoperational/intuitive intelligence*
 - *Concrete operational stage*
 - *Formal operational stage*
- Faith development
 - Progression of religious understanding, parallel of Piaget's schemata



Religion [External]

- “Religion is an institutionalized (i.e., systematic) pattern of values, beliefs, symbols, behaviors, and experiences that are oriented toward spiritual concerns, shared by a community, and transmitted over time in traditions.” [Canda & Furman, p. 59]
- “A sincerely held set of beliefs, values and attitudes; beliefs and opinions concerning the existence, nature and worship of a Supreme Being, supernatural force or god(s).” [www.admin@utep.edu].
- Truth is held by leaders, institutions, sacred texts, etc.; “structuring power”
- Religions are “cumulative traditions” which include “texts of scripture, oral traditions, music, theologies,” etc. [Wilfrid Smith]



Functions of Religion

– Positive

- Socially integrative function
- Fostering order, discipline, and authority
- Providing emotional support
- Confers a sense of identity
- Source of positive physical and mental health

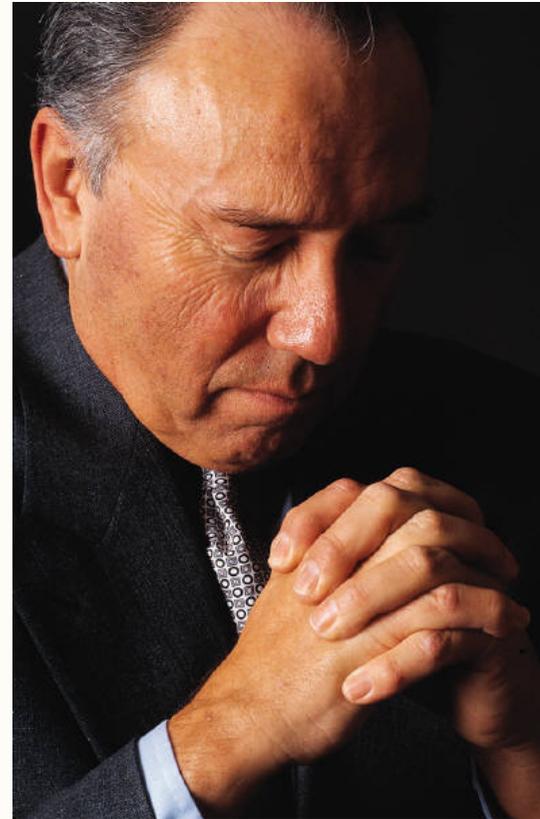
– Negative

- Promotes fanaticism, intolerance, and prejudice
- May become a socially disruptive force
- Supports status quo by directing attention away from social injustices

[Lowenberg, 1988]

Faith

- “...an alignment of the will...in accordance with a vision of transcendent values and power, one’s ultimate concern” [Fowler 1981]
- **Centers of value**
- **Images of power**
- **Master stories**



Compassion and Ethics

- Because of its emphasis on service, humanity, and compassion, child care work may be considered a spiritual profession.
- Child care workers often link their spiritual-religious values to their professional work, such as charity (for the Christian), zakat and sadaqa (alms, for the Muslim), karuna (compassion, in Sanskrit, from Hinduism and Buddhism), benevolence (in Buddhism), and harmony among people, the earth, and the creator (indigenous religions).
- Consider the five core values of child care work [from the CCW Code of Ethics]: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence.
- Reciprocity among social justice, freedom and opportunity for choice, and unconditional love and respect (Constable).

Compassion and Ethics: Reminders of our humanity

Umuntu ngumuntu nga bantu. [A person is a person through other persons].

Xhosa proverb

Ren - One of the oldest pictogram characters from earliest written Chinese. It's been simplified down from a picture of a man with two arms and legs down to two simple strokes.



Kuan Yin (also spelled Kwan Yin or Quan Yin and known as Kuan Shih Yin), is known as the Goddess of Compassion & Healing. She is one of the most popular deities in all of Asia. Her name in Chinese roughly translates as "The One who Hears the Cries of the World".

Three ethical principles

-
- Client self-determination
 - Culturally-sensitive work practice
 - Ethical practice





The Professional

Some definitions....



- **Ethics** – standards regarding the “rightness” or “wrongness” of an action; may be personal, professional, organizational. Based on core values, connected to standards of action.
- **Code of Ethics** – a formal and codified statement of core values of a profession, connected to standards of action, as a guide for evaluation of one’s own actions first, and then of the actions of other professionals; a hallmark of a profession and part of the agreement between a profession and society: “reasonable expectations by the public.”

Further thoughts...



- Think of the Code of Ethics as the *reasonable expectations by the public* of behavior of the professional, based on the professional's profession of core values to the public...
- ...and so, the Code of Ethics is not a set of externally derived and applied rules (prohibitions) but an internally developed guideline which forms the agreement between the profession/professional and society and to which each professional **explicitly** subscribes.

Ethics and Law



- Ethics – social justice: what is right or fair.
 - NASW Code of Ethics
 - ACA Code of Ethics
 - AAMFT Code of Ethics
- Law – legal justice: following the rules of the court
 - Chapter 457 [**law**]
 - MPSW 20 [**regulation**]

Applicability of Codes of Ethics

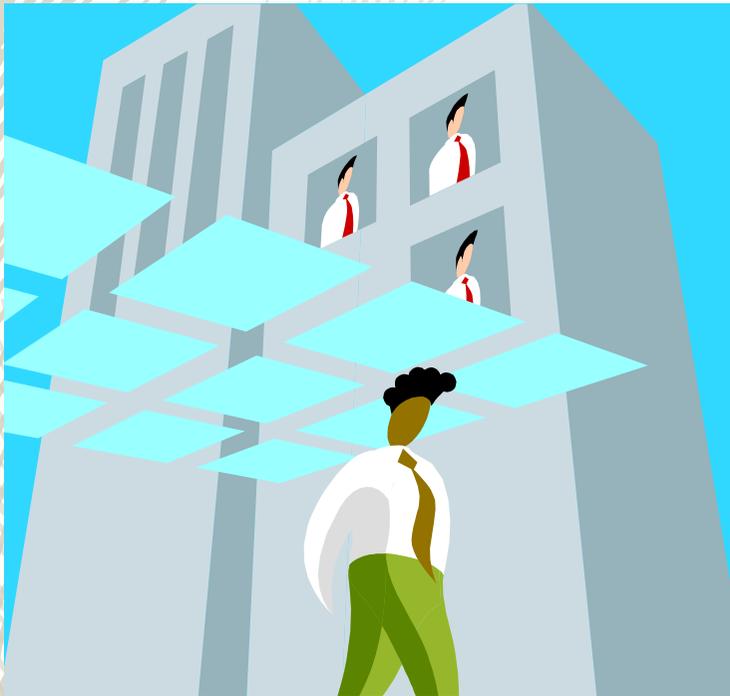


- Rule of the court: In legal matters regarding ethical practice, the code of ethics of the largest professional organization in the field shall apply, as accepted standards of practice.
- In social work: **NASW** (150,000 members).

Unprofessional Conduct

- *Unqualified practice*
- Violation of the law
- *Incompetent practice*
- Fraud or deception in application
- Making false statements
- *Discrimination*
- Practice while impaired
- Violating confidentiality
- Sexual contact, conduct, etc.
- *Harmful dual relationship*
- False research practices
- Gross negligence

From the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa:



- “...may not discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, **religion, conscience, belief,** culture, language and birth.”
- Chapter 2, Bill of Rights, Equality (9), 3 & 4

The Professional



Dual or multiple relationships occur when child care workers relate to clients in more than one relationship, whether professional, social, or business.

Conflicts of Interest

Child care workers should be alert to and avoid ***conflicts of interest*** that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment.

Child care workers should not take unfair advantage of any professional relationship or exploit others to further their personal, ***religious***, political, or business interests.

Child care workers should not engage in ***dual or multiple relationships*** with clients or former clients in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client.

Boundaries

- A systems concept:
social boundaries
- Within personal
boundaries, we enact
our roles (sets of
expected behaviors)
- Dual relationships:
entering into a
relationship in addition
to worker-client



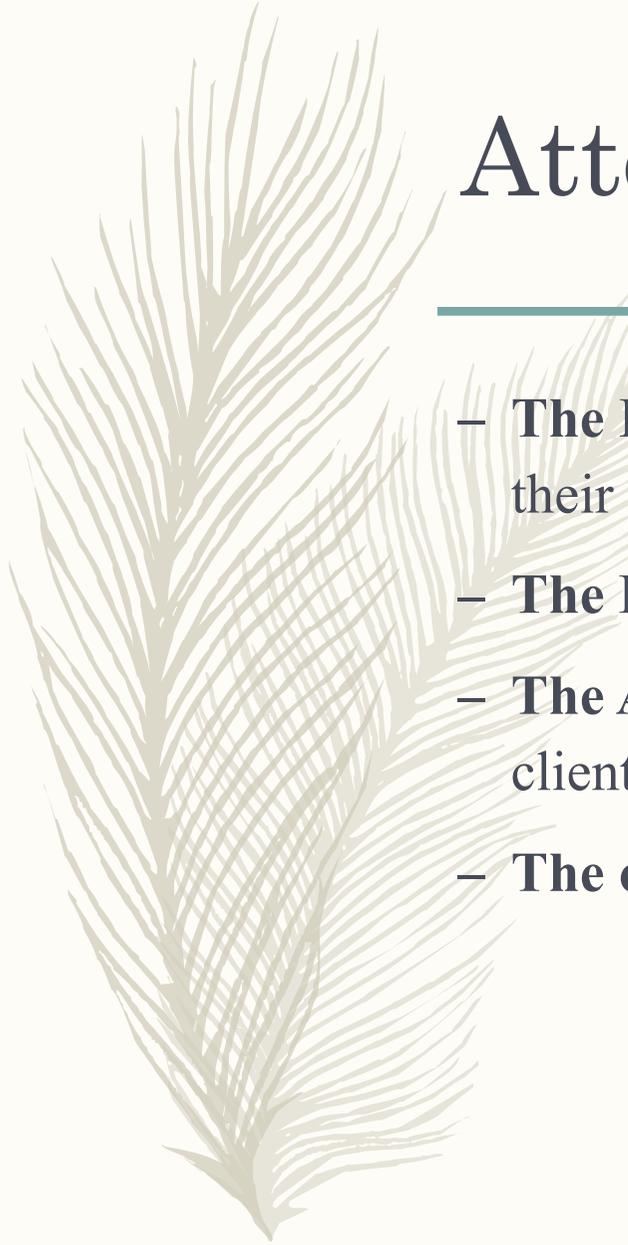
Distinguish:

Boundary Violation

- Deliberate, constructed
- Providing benefits for the professional
- Crosses the line of ethical practice
- Ethical obligation: avoid the violation to begin with

Boundary Crossing

- Inadvertent, unintended
- Neutral in regard to any benefits
- Creates ethical quandaries which can be resolved.
- Ethical obligation: attend to the ethical issue.

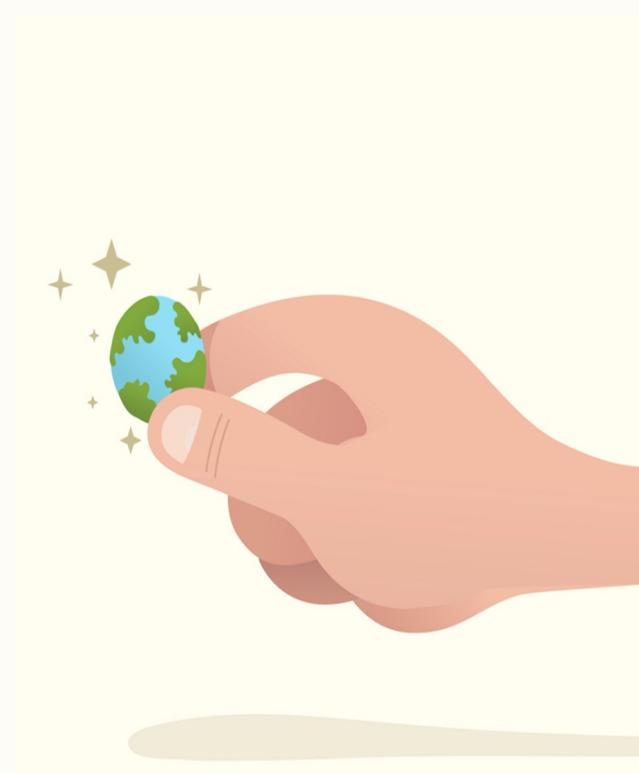


Attend to:

- **The Before:** clients you have reason to believe will make their way to you.
- **The During:** Attend to the lines which are not to be crossed
- **The After:** Basic consideration: potential of harm to the client
- **The concentric circles**

Boundary Violations

- In the context of spirituality and religion, what would be examples of boundary violations by a child care worker?
- What would be examples of boundary crossings?
- What is the professional expected to do with her or his spirituality, religion, or unbelief?



Confidentiality



- Essential to the full and satisfactory completion of the work
- Basis of the fiduciary relationship
- Shared:
 - With informed consent
 - Compliance with law
 - Prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm



Ethics in Practice

- Surveys of practitioners indicate that there is a wide range of spiritual activities which are considered appropriate, most probably because they involve , for example:
 - *Helping clients discern and reflect on their beliefs about what happens after death;*
 - *Helping clients consider ways their religious/spiritual support systems are helpful;*
 - *Referring a client to a clergy person or other religious/spiritual helpers;*
 - *Using non-sectarian spiritual language or concepts*



Ethics and Practice

- However, there are four activities which the surveys indicate would be the least desirable among practitioners:
 - *praying with a client;*
 - *meditating with a client;*
 - *touching clients for healing purposes;*
 - *participating in a client's religious/spiritual rituals as a practice intervention.*
- ...probably because all four involve possible crossing of boundaries and entry into the client's life space.*



What the child care worker may do...

- engage in private, spiritually-based activities by the worker, as preparation for the work [**Caution** regarding influence of prayer and informed consent].
- engaging in an implicit, spiritually sensitive relationship, context, and helping activities [**Note:** genuine respect, rapport, compassion, empathy, alertness, incorporation of inspiring persons, places, and symbols, etc., including agency practices];
- brief explicit spiritual assessment;
- referring the client to an outside spiritually based support system;
- cooperation with an outside, spiritually based support system
- direct use of spiritually based activities by the client's request, in the social service setting;
- **Most controversial and risky:** direct use of spiritually based activities by the worker's invitation; best when the activity is non-religious. [Canda & Furman, pp. 291-297]



The Client

Self-determination

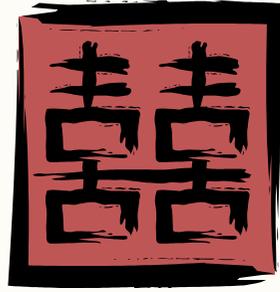
Ethical Dimensions

- Child care workers also should be aware of the impact on ethical decision making of **their clients'** and **their own** personal values and cultural and **religious beliefs and practices**. They should be aware of any conflicts between personal and professional values and deal with them responsibly.
- **Cultural Competence and Social Diversity**
- Child care workers should **understand culture** and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.
- Child care workers should have a **knowledge base** of their clients' cultures and be able to demonstrate **competence in the provision of services that are sensitive** to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups.
- Child care workers should **obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression** with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, **religion**, immigration status, and mental or physical disability.

Religion in South Africa

- African traditional religions among the Khoi San and the Bantu speaking peoples
- The Calvinist Dutch Reformed traditions of the Boer settlers and Afrikaaners
- Protestantism: Pentecostal, Methodist, Anglican
- Roman Catholicism
- Indigenous Christian churches: Zion Christian Church and others
- Islam among the Malay slaves
- Hinduism among the indentured Indian servants
- Judaism among settlers, beginning in the 1820's
- Baha'i

Diversity



- The varieties of spiritual/religious experiences and the blends of both spirituality and religion, and even within religions and religious traditions

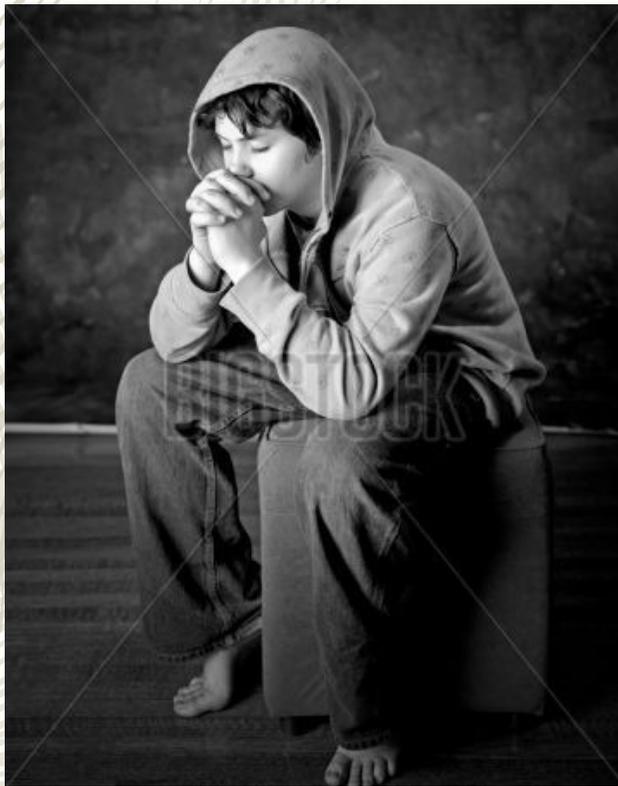


Some questions...



- What are the implications of diversity in religion for the child care worker?
- What obligation does the child care worker have in regard to preparation for diversity in work with his/her clients?
- How is diversity in spirituality/faith/religion accommodated in the child care worker's practice?

The Child/Youth



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- Assessing the presence and importance of spirituality and religion for the youth in her/his development [the whole person]
- Assessment: FICA
 - Faith or beliefs
 - Importance and influence
 - Community
 - Address these factors

Employing a strengths-based approach and either building on what is there or exploring alternatives with the youth [**NOT** preferences].

Employing a “transperspectival approach” [Canda & Furman, p. 61]



The Context/ Setting

Ethical Practice

The Context [Agency/Service]



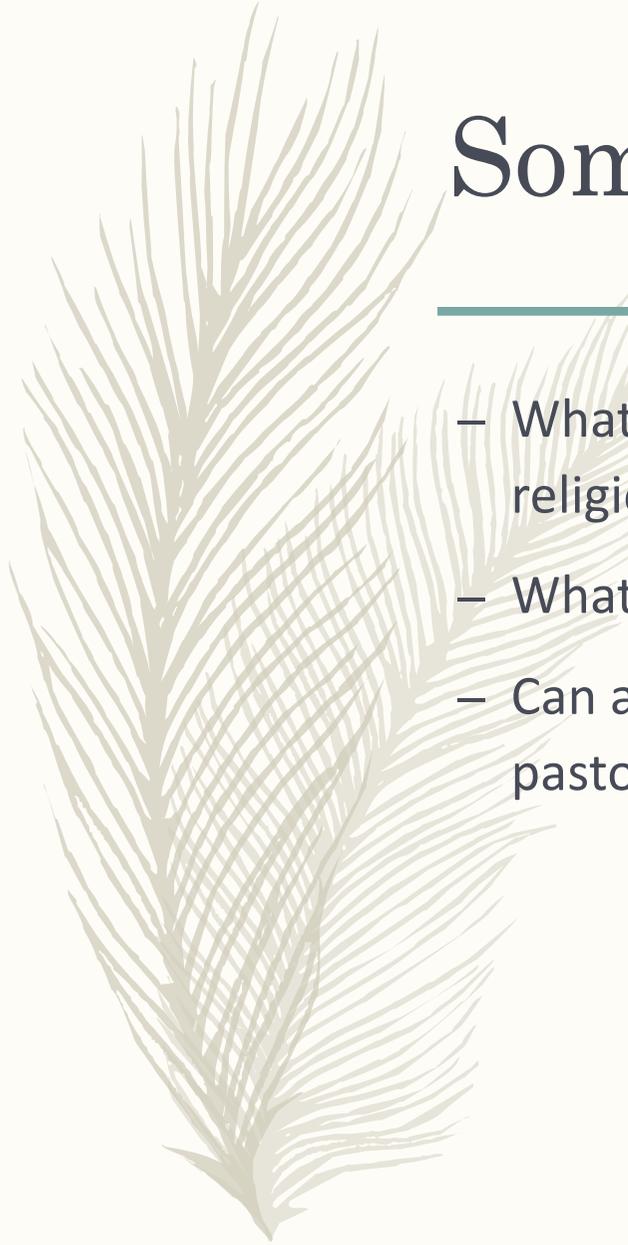


Ethical Obligations in Regard to the Practice Setting

Commitments to Employers

Child care workers should not allow an employing organization's policies, procedures, regulations, or administrative orders to interfere with their ethical practice of child care work. Child care workers should take reasonable steps to ensure that their employing organizations' practices are consistent with the *CCW Code of Ethics*.

Child care workers should act to prevent and eliminate discrimination in the employing organization's work assignments and in its employment policies and practices.



Some Questions...

- What role might the child care worker's spirituality, faith, or religion have in her/his professional practice?
- What is the priority of these beliefs?
- Can a child care worker be both a child care worker and a pastoral counselor at the same time?

Ethical Decision Making



Process and Procedure

First, some questions...

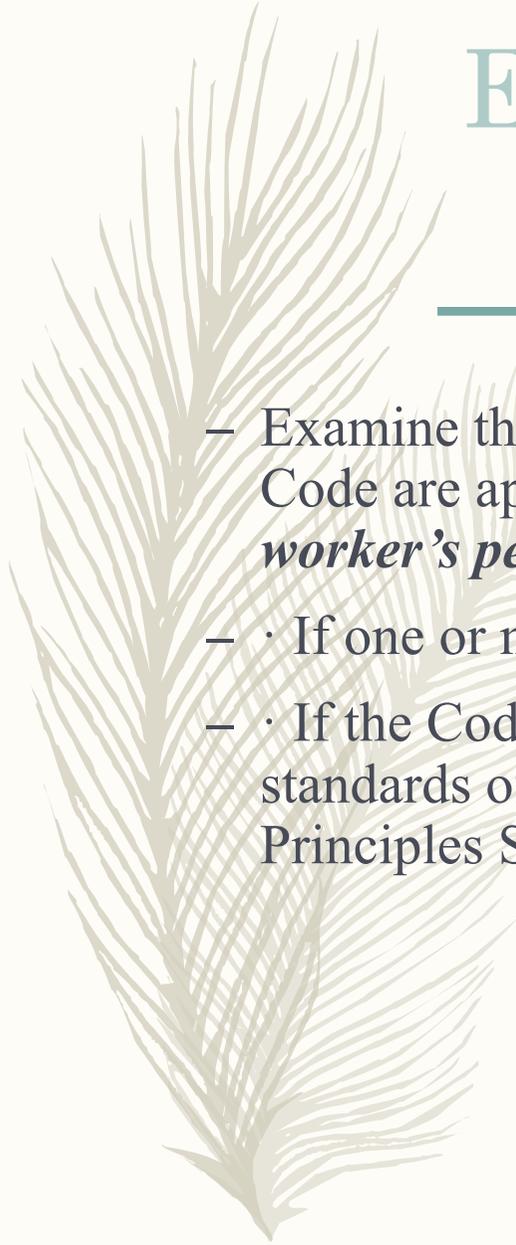
- What role will my personal and religious values play in my professional life and especially in decision making in ethical dilemmas?
- Is it legitimate to take into account my personal/religious values as a factor in decision making?
- If there is, in fact, a conflict between my personal/religious values and my ethical obligations, how is that conflict to be resolved?





Ethical Decision Making...

- Ethical Rules Screen
- Ethical Principles Screen
- Access to Ethical Decision Making
- Decision Making Model



Ethical Rules Screen

- Examine the Code of Ethics to determine if any of the standards of the Code are applicable. *These standards take precedence over the worker's personal value system.*
- · If one or more standards apply, follow these.
- · If the Code does not address itself to the specific problem, or if several standards of the Code provide conflicting guidance, use the Ethical Principles Screen

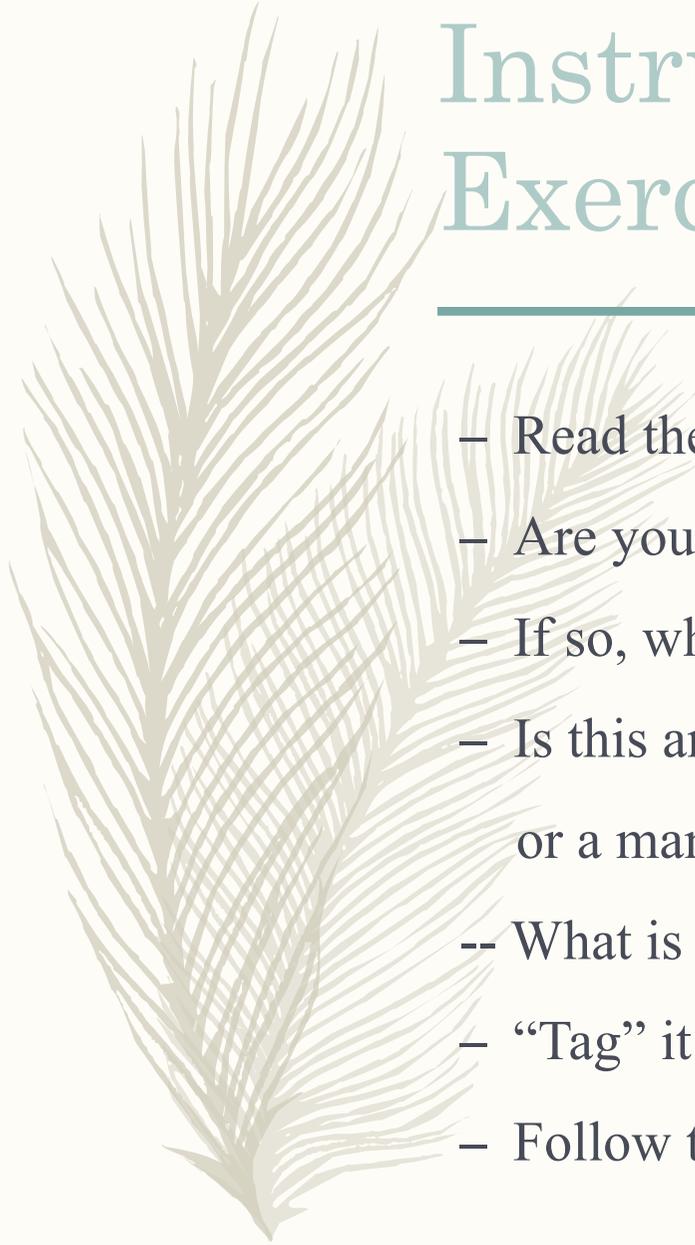


Ethical Principles Screen

- Protection of Life
- Equality and inequality
- Autonomy and freedom
- Least Harm
- Quality of Life
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Truthfulness and full disclosure

Ethical Decision Making

- **Determine:** an ethical issue or an ethical dilemma? [conflicts of values, rights, responsibilities].
- **Identify key values and principles;** rank them. [Go deep into the Code]
- **Identify key persons, groups, organizations** with a stake in the issue/dilemma
- **Identify all possible courses of action**
- **Examine** reasons for & against each action
- **Consult** with colleagues, supervisor, ethics board; do not do this alone.
- **Select** the strategy, implement it, document it.
- **Reflect** on outcomes: **Monitor, evaluate, document**



Instructions for the Exercise:

- Read the scenario carefully.
- Are you concerned about anything here?
- If so, what?
- Is this an ethical issue or an ethical dilemma...
or a management or practice issue?
- What is the issue or dilemma?
- “Tag” it into the Code.
- Follow the rest of the model for decision making.