ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA
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Social Networking Tools and Processes:
Ethically-Proscribed Warnings and Ethically-Prescribed Opportunities
• “Any jackass can kick down a barn but it takes a good carpenter to build one.”

Lyndon B. Johnson
Introduction to the Topic

• “Since society as whole is actively using social media, it only makes sense to connect with my community through these means.”

• “A new trend is emerging with social networks created to help its members with various physical and mental ailments.”

• “Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.”
• “In most cases, the risks of interacting with patients on online social forums appear to outweigh any current benefits.”
• “When participating in electronic professional consultation or consultation groups (e.g., social networks, listservs, blogs, online courses, supervision, interdisciplinary teams), rehabilitation counselors: 1) establish and/or adhere to the group’s norms promoting behavior that is consistent with ethical standards, and 2) limit disclosure of confidential information.”
• What are we to deduce from these thoughts?
• OMG!!!

• AGKWE!!!
The journos compete in a race
To file columns and fill blogging space.
So nonsense abounds
In ill-informed mounds
Of opinions and factoids off base.
It seems Facebook does not give a damn
What it labels as unwanted SPAM.
My lim-off announcements
Are getting me bouncements.
Community? This ones a sham.
I’m addicted to Facebook, it’s true,
And Twitter and weblogging too.
I’m despr’ately hooked.
All my hours are booked
On my quest to be fed something new.
Feeling lonesome? Don’t have enough friends? You can try out this latest of trends:
Buy pals by the litter
At Facebook and Twitter.
Pay cash and your loneliness ends.
The field is all quite abuzz
Is it right? Is it wrong? Call the “fuzz”!
But the trick in all this
Is to assuredly not miss
The good, with the bad, just because.
We’ve gathered today to discuss
Why the fervor, the clamor, the fuss?
But we do have our brains
And professional blood in our veins,
So dig in, give it thought, don’t just muss!
Objectives

• 1. To explore various social networking tools and processes;
• 2. To consider *ethically-proscribed* warnings regarding social networking tools (No! No!)
• 3. To consider *ethically-prescribed* opportunities regarding social networking tools (Yes! Yes!)
• 4. To gain skills in the use of social media as participants continue to aspire to best ethical practices in accord with the 2014 ACA Code of Ethics
Consider a Few Numbers

* 200  
* 500 million  
* 13  
* 2/3  
* 8.9  
* 1.0  

* 73  
* 61  
* 55  
* 50 million  
* 2 billion
Tools, Tools, Tools

• Email
• Facebook
• MySpace
• Twitter
• LISTSERV
• Blog
• YouTube
• Daft Doggy
• LinkedIn ...
The Code of Ethics as a Lens
Code Basics

*Principle Ethics: Autonomy; Beneficence; Fidelity; Justice; Nonmaleficence; Veracity
*Virtue Ethics

- Integrity
- Discernment
- Acceptance of Emotion
- Self-Awareness
- Interdependence with the Community
*Reading the Code of Ethics as Literature! Remember????

- Each Enforceable Standard is not meant to be interpreted in isolation. Instead, it is important for rehabilitation counselors to interpret standards in conjunction with other related standards in various sections of the Code. (Preamble)
• Why is that important for this subject?

• Hint: H.6 concerns are also addressed elsewhere in ACA Code of Ethics, for example, A.5.e. What does this pattern tell us about properly/thoroughly reading the Code on any given issue (including this one)?
*mandatory nature
*aspirational nature
**Decision-Making Models – A “Must”!**

- **L.2. APPLICATION OF STANDARDS**
  
  a. **DECISION-MAKING MODELS AND SKILLS.** Rehabilitation counselors must be prepared to recognize underlying ethical principles and conflicts among competing interests, as well as to apply appropriate decision-making models and skills to resolve dilemmas and act ethically.

  **ACA Code of Ethics Preamble:** “When counselors are faced with ethical dilemmas that are difficult to resolve, they are expected to engage in a carefully considered ethical decision-making process...”
The decisions you make just abound
The best practice you seek must be found
You must look high and low
You must think fast, yet be slow
Or your practice will plunge to the ground!
A balanced approach to such things
Sets the tone for the potential it brings
We can see where we’re at
Even don the green hat
Prep best practice then let it take wing!
H.6. Social Media

H.6.a. Virtual Professional Presence
In cases where counselors wish to maintain a professional and personal presence for social media use, separate professional and personal web pages and profiles are created to clearly distinguish between the two kinds of virtual presence.

H.6.b. Social Media as Part of Informed Consent
Counselors clearly explain to their clients, as part of the informed consent procedure, the benefits, limitations, and boundaries of the use of social media.
H.6.c. Client Virtual Presence
Counselors respect the privacy of their clients’ presence on social media unless given consent to view such information.

H.6.d. Use of Public Social Media
Counselors take precautions to avoid disclosing confidential information through public social media.
Parsing the Code: H.6

- “social media”
- “virtual relationships”
- “virtual professional presence”
- “virtual personal presence”
- “informed consent”: information, capacity, voluntariness
- “clients’ presence”

Safety Tip: See “Glossary of Terms”
Proscriptions

- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Dual Relationships, Potentially Harmful Relationships
- Competence
- Disparaging Remarks toward Others (Relationships with Other Professionals)
• Unproven Methods
• Unavailability
• Accessibility
• Screening for Group Work
• Client Harm
• ...
• ...
Sample Code References

Privacy and Confidentiality

• “Confidential Settings. Rehabilitation counselors discuss confidential information only in offices or settings in which they can reasonably ensure the privacy of clients.” B.3.e.

• “Respect for Confidentiality: Counselors protect the confidential information... Counselors disclose information only with appropriate consent or with sound legal or ethical justification.” (ACA, B.1.c.)
• “Confidentiality of Records. Rehabilitation counselors ensure that records are kept in a secure location and that only authorized persons have access to records.” B.6.b. (ACA, B.6)
Dual Relationships; Potentially Harmful Relationships.

- “Roles and Relationships with Clients. Nonprofessional Interactions or Relationships Other Than Sexual or Romantic Interactions or Relationships. Rehabilitation counselors avoid nonprofessional relationships with clients, former clients, their romantic partners, or their immediate family members, except when such interactions are potentially beneficial to clients... In cases... potentially beneficial... must document... prior to interactions... the rationale... potential benefits... anticipated consequences...” A.5.d. (ACA, A.5 and A.6)
“Rehabilitation Counselor Forensic Competency and Conduct. Avoid Potentially Harmful Relationships. ... avoid potentially harmful professional and personal relationships... There may be circumstances however where not entering into professional or personal relationships is potentially more detrimental than providing services. When such is the case, rehabilitation counselors perform and document a risk assessment via use of an ethical decision-making model in order to arrive at an informed decision” F.2.c. (ACA, A.6.c.)
Competence

- “Boundaries of Competence... practice only within the boundaries of their competence, based on... New Specialty Areas of Practice... only after having obtained appropriate education... While developing skills... take steps to ensure the competence of their work and to protect clients from possible harm... Monitor Effectiveness... Continuing Education... They take steps to maintain competence... are open to new procedures... keep current with diverse populations...” D.1.a,b,d,e (ACA, C.2)
Technology and Distance Counseling

- Application and Competence
- Problematic Use of the Internet
- Potential Misunderstandings
- Determining Client Capabilities
- Confidentiality and Informed Consent
- Transmitting Confidential Information
- Security
- Imposters
- Records Management
- Ethical/Legal Review
- Veracity of Electronic Information
- Unavailability
- Benefits and Limitations
- Inappropriate Applications
- Boundaries

“J. (ACA, H.)
Unproven Methods

- D.6. SCIENTIFIC BASES FOR INTERVENTIONS
- a. TECHNIQUES/PROCEDURES/MODALITIES.

Rehabilitation counselors use techniques/procedures/modalities that are grounded in theory and/or have an empirical or scientific foundation. When using techniques/procedures/modalities that are not grounded in theory and/or do not have an empirical or scientific foundation, rehabilitation counselors define the techniques/procedures/modalities as unproven or developing. They explain the potential risks and ethical considerations of using such techniques/procedures/modalities and take steps to protect clients from possible harm. (see ACA, C.7.b.)
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Lions, Tigers, and Bears – Oh, No!
BWTCM!!!
Prescriptions

• “Grantees’ Limited Engagement with Foundations’ Social Media” (2012)
• “Mentoring Dental Hygiene Students for the Future”
• “Jimmy Lynch’s Handyman for Day Business”
• “LSUHSC Social Media Policy” (2014)
Prescriptions

• Continuing Education/Professional Growth
• Collaboration, Consultation Groups
• Ethical Decision-Making
• Advertising
• Interprofessional Research and Growth
• Distance Counseling
• Student Growth Experiences
Sample Code References

- **Professional Responsibility**
- “Continuing Education. Rehabilitation counselors recognize the need for continuing education to acquire and maintain a reasonable level of awareness of current scientific and professional information in their fields of activity... are open to new procedures... keep current with diverse populations...” D.1.e. (ACA, C.2.b., C.2.f.)
• Collaboration

“Interdisciplinary Teamwork. Rehabilitation counselors who are members of interdisciplinary teams delivering multifaceted services... must keep focus on how to serve... best... They participate in and contribute to decisions that affect the well-being of clients by drawing on the perspectives, values, and experiences of the counseling profession and those colleagues from other disciplines.” E.3.b (ACA, D.1.c.)
• “Consultation Groups. When participating in electronic professional consultation or consultation groups (e.g., social networks, listservs, blogs, online courses, supervision, interdisciplinary teams)…” J.5. (ACA, H.)
• Ethical Decision-Making

• “…it is impossible to address every possible ethical dilemma that rehabilitation counselors may face... engage in a carefully considered ethical decision-making process... be familiar with and apply a credible model that can bear public scrutiny... seeking consultation and/or supervision is an important part...” Preamble (ACA, Preamble, I.1.b.)
“Rehabilitation Counselor Forensic Competency and Conduct... rehabilitation counselors perform and document a risk assessment via use of an ethical decision-making model in order to arrive at an informed decision.” F.2.c. (see ACA, I.1.b.)
Possible “Settings”

- Counselor - Client(s)
- Evaluator - Evaluatee(s)
- Client - Client
- Evaluatee - Evaluatee
- Counselor-Counselor (intra-agency; inter-agency)
- Multiple Disciplines (e.g., RC and ...)
- Counselor - Counselor Faculty
- Counselor - Counseling Students
- Counseling Specialists – Counselors who are “other kinds of specialists”
- Participation in non-counseling learning communities
- ...
- ...
- ...
“Safety Tips”

- Set Objectives.
- Match Tool(s) to Objectives.
- Time-Limited
- Define Terms of Use.
- Screen Users.
- Monitor
- Evaluate
- Don’t bite off more than you can chew!
- Get a small success under your belt.
- “Safe Topics”
- ... see School of Medicine Guidelines, too!
- ...
Possible Applications

• Learning Community
• Interprofessional Education
• Educating “the public”
• Nurturing Vocational Interests of Others
• Developing Staff
• Locating/Growing/Mentoring Prospective Staff
• Developing Current/Prospective Faculty
• …
“Stump the Stars”
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But the trick in all this
Is to assuredly not miss
The good, with the bad, just because.
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But we do have our brains
And professional blood in our veins,
So dig in, give it thought, don’t just muss!
Time for: “Unscramble the Limericks”
Solutions
ADBB!!!
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Helpful References