

Council for Psychoanalysis and Jungian Analysis (CPJA)

Statement of Psychoanalytic/Psychodynamic Ethics

This statement sets out the ethical position held by psychoanalytic and psychodynamic psychotherapists and psychoanalysts who are members of the CPJA. The term 'analytic psychotherapist' is used throughout to denote all therapists belonging to CPJA. It does not in any way seek to homogenize the rich diversity of theoretical orientations within the CPJA. The term client is interchangeable with patient.

Psychoanalytic work is based on the recognition that not all our thoughts, feelings and motives for our actions are transparent to ourselves, and that the unconscious aspects of our minds can disrupt our conscious intentions and contribute to subjective suffering. Analytic psychotherapists would therefore endeavor to pay close attention to the emergence of unconscious processes and attempt to help their clients to consider those unacknowledged aspects of themselves and possibly find a new attitude in relation to them. This process, which is not necessarily directly aimed at the elimination of symptoms, may help to considerably reduce conflict and personal suffering. Given the divided nature of the mind, however, the therapeutic process may not always be in line with the conscious intentions, or indeed the moral commitments, of the person engaging in this type of work. Equally, the effects of the therapeutic process and their outcomes cannot be predicted in advance by either the client or the therapist.

The ethical commitment of the analytic psychotherapist is to this process of exploration and to the possibility of psychic change. The nature of the psychoanalytic process often entails tensions or conflicts in the relationship between the client and the therapist. It is the responsibility of the therapist to be thoughtful about the impact of this work on the patient and on themselves, and to act in what they reasonably believe to be in the best interest of their client. For this relationship to be therapeutic, the analyst commits to paying close attention to maintaining the bounded space within which the analytic process takes place.

Psychoanalytic ethics, as we understand it, implies a deep respect for the individuality of the person and their right to determine the course of their own lives. This holds true across all aspects of diversity. This entails, on the part of the therapist, a suspension of any notions of what might be right for their clients, ruling out the pursuit of any preconceived notion of a successful outcome to the therapeutic work.

To maintain this ethical position in their clinical practice, CPJA analytic psychotherapists have a responsibility to regularly reflect on the unconscious dynamics of the therapeutic work and to consult with colleagues when the need arises. CPJA analytic psychotherapists are committed to engaging in professional development as a continual and creative process.

These are the ethical principles which all analytic psychotherapists within CPJA hold in common. Given the diversity within the CPJA, member organizations will also have their own Ethical Codes and Codes of Practice which will contain detailed information about the ways in which particular orientations will translate these principles into practice.

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