

## **Polish EMDR Therapy Association - Code of Ethics**

The provisions contained in the Code of Ethics of the Polish EMDR Therapy Association have been developed with respect to the EMDR Europe Code of Ethics and are based on generally accepted ethical norms, values and standards of the profession of a therapist. In order to prevent abuse, it is necessary to define the ethical responsibility of the EMDR therapist towards the people participating in the therapy process, since the wellbeing of another person is the primary value of the EMDR therapist.

This Code is intended to help EMDR therapists make ethical decisions.

The Code does not constitute mandatory legislation.

### **I**

Through the Code of Ethics, PTT EMDR takes a stand on the following issues:

- protection of public health;
- establishing clear ethical principles, values and standards;
- education, consultation and supervision;
- developing and implementing methods to help EMDR therapists monitor their behaviour and ethical attitudes;
- creating opportunities for discussion on the above-mentioned topics.

The existence of this Code means that any violations of the rules may be investigated by PTT EMDR and corrective action may be taken with respect to PTT EMDR members.

The code was created with reference to a number of existing ethical codes, since EMDR therapists are professionals in different therapeutic paradigms. This document is not in conflict with the existing codes, EMDR therapists working in other paradigms may also have their own codes.

The PTT EMDR Code of Ethics is an integral part of the accreditation process and therefore acceptance into the ranks of an accredited EMDR member, consultant or practitioner requires the EMDR therapist to adhere to the ethical principles contained therein.

EMDR therapists should work closely with the PTT EMDR and with their professional organisations, promptly responding and providing comprehensive feedback to queries from and requirements of these organisations. By accepting the PTT EMDR Code of Ethics, PTT EMDR must acknowledge that this Code operates under and within the law applicable in Poland.

## **II**

### **Decision making**

1. Ethical considerations must be taken into account in all professional activities.

Ethics may be defined as the science of morality or principles of behaviour. Before commencing professional work, it is important to acknowledge that ethical implications are part of the context of EMDR therapist's occupation in the same way as the law.

2. The areas of ethical concern that have been identified include:
  - complex relationships - when the EMDR therapist has commitments to several different affiliated entities;

- personal relationships - when the EMDR therapist breaks or violates the trust of the client/patient;
- ambiguous or inappropriate professional standards - when the EMDR therapist is unfamiliar with or disregards current standards;
- violation of trust - when rules and restrictions have been breached or not agreed upon in advance with those involved;
- competence - when the EMDR therapist passes on exaggerated or misleading information about their own knowledge and competence;
- research issues - fabrication of data, failure to obtain consent from respondents to participate in research, plagiarism or failure to take into account the contribution of others involved in the research work;
- health problems - which impact the effectiveness or behaviour of the EMDR therapist; taking care of mental and physical hygiene;
- damaging the professional reputation of the EMDR therapist or the therapy through unethical behaviour.

The EMDR therapist is a profession of public trust, therefore the occupational practice of the EMDR therapist is to be characterised by reflection and transparency of occupational activity.

### **III**

#### **Structure of the Code**

1. This Code is founded on four ethical principles which form the main areas of responsibility wherein ethical issues are considered. These are:

1.1. Respect

1.2. Competences

### 1.3. Responsibility

### 1.4. Honesty

2. Each ethical principle is described in a statement of values, reflecting fundamental beliefs that relate to ethics in decision-making and behaviour.
3. Each described principle is then defined by a set of standards outlining the ethical conduct that PTT EMDR requires of its members.

## IV

### **Ethical Principles**

#### **1. Ethical principle: Respect**

Statement of values - EMDR therapists treat other people with dignity and respect, they are aware of being seen as an authority and take into account the resulting potential influence on the client. EMDR therapists take special regard for human rights, including the rights to privacy and self-determination.

##### 1.1. Standard of general respect

EMDR therapists should:

- respect individual, cultural and role differences, including those relating to age, disability, education, ethnicity, gender, language, country of origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, marital or family status. EMDR therapists should avoid any action that violates or belittles human rights, the provisions of applicable law and the civil rights of clients/patients or other persons who could be harmed;

- respect the knowledge, experience and opinions of other members of their profession;
- avoid unfair or prejudicial practices;
- be able to explain the ethical grounds of the decision-making process.

## 1.2. Standard of privacy and confidentiality

EMDR therapists should:

- keep records;
- for each disclosure of confidential information, obtain consent from clients/patients with legal capacity or, in the case of persons without legal capacity, from their legal representative;
- limit the scope of disclosure to that consistent with the therapeutic purposes, with particular regard to asking about specific information or events and with particular regard to the client's rights to the extent required by applicable law in relation to health and life;
- record, process and store confidential information in an appropriate manner to avoid unintentional disclosure;
- ensure from the very first contact that clients are aware of the limitations of confidentiality, in particular:
  - potentially conflicting or unexpected legal or ethical commitments;
  - the likely possibility of supervision to enhance the effectiveness of the services provided;

- the possibility of the therapist meeting with the client's/patient's relatives, upon his/ her consent in order to ensure adequate communication that could support the therapy.

Confidentiality may only be breached in exceptional circumstances when the information gathered by the therapist makes him/her concerned and anxious about:

- client's/ patient's safety;
- safety of others endangered by the client/patient's behaviour.

The option of breaching confidentiality should be discussed with an experienced colleague or supervisor unless there is no time to arrange such consultation and immediate disclosure of confidential information is required.

- Any breach of confidentiality must be documented along with the reasons for disclosure;
- when disclosing confidential information to clients/patients, maintain the confidentiality of information relating to other individuals and provide explanation of the implications of the information;
- make audio, video recordings or take photographs of the client/patient only upon his/her explicit consent, or upon the consent of his/her legal representative;
- The EMDR therapist must ensure that the people he/she works with, i.e. colleagues, staff, trainees and supervisees, understand and respect the provisions of this Code with regard to the handling of confidential information.

### 1.3. Standard of informed consent

EMDR therapists should:

- make sure that clients, especially children and adults who for whatever reason are particularly vulnerable to injury, have the opportunity to understand the purpose and consequences of therapeutic interventions. This includes understanding the purpose of participation in a research, so that they can give informed consent within their capacity;
- seek the informed consent of all clients to whom they offer their professional services, including participation in a research;
- keep adequate records detailing when, how and from whom the consent has been obtained;
- be aware that people that they wish to assist professionally or who are willing to take part in a research may lack legal capacity to give informed consent;
- where it is advisable to provide professional assistance to a client as a matter of urgency, and it is not possible to obtain the client's informed consent or to identify a legal representative, if feasible consult with someone (e.g.: a family member or current carer) who is best placed to anticipate the client's potential reactions and to help identify what may be in the client's best interest;
- where the specific nature of the therapeutic intervention or scientific research makes it impossible to obtain the informed consent of clients or their legal representatives, the approval of the relevant ethics body must be obtained before proceeding further. If no such body exists, other professionals in the field of psychotherapy should be consulted;

- exercise particular care when obtaining informed consent from detainees, as conditions of detention may affect the ability of such clients to give free consent;
- obtain additional informed consent when professional services or a research take longer than previously agreed, or when there is a significant change in the nature or purpose of the research;
- in exceptional circumstances, have the possibility not to disclose information to the client, except in the following situations:
  - when it is necessary to preserve the integrity of the research,
  - when it is necessary to ensure the effectiveness of professional services,
  - or to protect the public interest.

Any additional measures to protect the client/patient's wellbeing should then be considered thoroughly.

- EMDR therapist should avoid intentional misleading of clients unless:
  - such misleading in exceptional circumstances is essential to preserve the integrity of research or the effectiveness of professional services;
  - all additional specific protective measures are considered for maintaining client's wellbeing;
  - the nature of the misleading is disclosed to clients as promptly as possible.

#### 1.4. Standards of self-determination

EMDR therapists should:

- strive to support clients' self-determination, but at the same time remain alert to potential constraints arising from personal characteristics or externally imposed circumstances;
- make sure from the very first contact that clients are aware of their right to withdraw at any time from receiving professional services or participating in a research;
- respect the wishes of clients who, when withdrawing from a survey, request that all data that could identify them, including recordings, be destroyed.

## **2. Ethical principle: Competences**

Statement of values - EMDR therapists are committed to continuous development and maintaining high standards of competence in their occupation.

Therapists assume responsibility for the consequences of their actions and make an effort to ensure the highest quality of their services.

#### 2.1. Standard of awareness of professional ethics

EMDR therapists should:

- be aware of professional ethics, including being familiar with this Code;
- integrate ethical considerations into their practice as part of their professional development.

## 2.2. Standard for ethical decision-making

EMDR therapists should:

- acknowledge that ethical dilemmas are unavoidable in occupational practice;
- take responsibility for the attempts to resolve such dilemmas through supervision and consultation;
- abide by the requirements of this Code;
- engage in an ethical decision-making process that includes:
  - identifying essential issues;
  - reflections on established principles, values and standards;
  - use of supervision;
  - applying Code of Ethics;
  - developing different solutions for the benefit of those concerned, while taking into account different perspectives, cultural and religious differences;
- be able to justify their actions on ethical grounds;
- realise that the decision-making process must take into account time constraints;
- while taking into account the presence of legal obligations which may sometimes appear to contradict certain provisions of this Code, be able to examine the contradictions with particular care and attempt to comply, as far as possible, with the ethical principles of the Code.

### 2.3. Standard for recognising the limits of competence

EMDR therapists should:

- recognise the limits of their competence and act so as not to exceed them, and be aware of the limitations of the techniques used. Therapists provide services and only use those techniques in which they are qualified through training and experience. In domains with not yet recognised standards, EMDR therapists take every precaution to protect wellbeing of their clients;
- continuously develop as professionals and remain open to new procedures and changes while keeping up with the times;
- keep up with scientific, ethical and legal developments while remaining sensitive to the wider social, political and organisational contexts;
- engage in new areas of professional activity only after acquiring the knowledge, skills, education and experience necessary to function in a competent manner;
- fulfil their obligations thoroughly prepared and in such a manner that their practice is of the highest standard and their communication is accurate, timely and comprehensible to the client;
- endeavour to ensure that the people we work with act in accordance with the requirements of these standards.

### 2.4. Standard of recognising deterioration or loss of occupational competence

EMDR therapists should:

- take care of personal and occupational development and be alert to signs of its decline;

- be aware that compliance with social standards (or lack thereof) as well as public behaviour can affect the performance of professional duties as a therapist by themselves but also by their colleagues;
- report the need for professional consultation or support if they identify health or other personal problems that could adversely affect their occupational competence;
- refrain from practising their profession where their occupational competence is seriously impaired;
- encourage colleagues whose health or other personal problems may affect their occupational competence to seek professional advice or support, consider informing other intervention providers when such colleagues are unable to identify a problem. EMDR therapists are required to notify intervention providers when it is necessary to protect the general public.

### **3. Ethical principle: Responsibility**

Declaration of values - EMDR therapists are aware of the responsibilities of their profession. They do not harm and they prevent abuse.

#### 3.1. Standards of general responsibility

EMDR therapists should:

- protect wellbeing of the clients and avoid harming them, but at the same time take account of the fact that the interests of different clients may be in conflict. EMDR therapist should analyse those interests and potential harm caused by either action or omission;

- apologise for any negative consequences, should they arise. Many formal complaints are made by clients just to have their discomfort noticed. Apologising does not automatically mean taking responsibility;
- avoid inappropriate behaviour that could endanger the reputation of the Polish EMDR Therapy Association, EMDR Europe or the profession they practice. In particular, it concerns convictions for criminal offences which affect one's ability to carry out professional practice;
- have knowledge of the academic and professional activities of others with whom they collaborate, paying particular attention to the ethical behaviour of employees, assistants, supervisees and students;
- EMDR therapists must be alert to any potential threats to their own person.

### 3.2. Standards for discontinuation and continuation of therapy

EMDR therapists should:

- during the first session (or at the earliest convenient moment), clearly define the rules of the therapeutic work, including the conditions for its termination;
- seek advice when there are doubts about continuing the therapeutic process;
- terminate the therapy process if there are no positive effects for the client and there are no indications that such effects will occur;

- as per clients' needs, refer them to appropriate specialists, ensuring continuity of treatment through proper collaboration with these specialists.

### 3.3. Standard of protection of research participants

EMDR therapists should:

- ensure safety as well as psychological and physical wellbeing of participants, including:
  - obtain information on the presence of factors that may reasonably cause a risk of harm as a result of participation in the research, and take steps (and/or inform participants of the steps to be taken) to minimise such risks;
  - refrain from offering research participants financial compensation and other incentives to encourage them to accept greater risks of possible harm than they would normally incur;
  - inform the participant if the data obtained reveal a physical or psychological problem of which the participant is unaware and when failure to do so may jeopardise the participant's present or future wellbeing;
  - ensure that the dignity and personal values of participants are respected.
- Carefully consider, consulting relevant experts as necessary, the possible effects of research due to sensitive issues such as: age, disability, education, ethnicity, gender, language, nationality, race, religion, marital and family status, sexual orientation;
- in case it is found that the examination may lead to

negative consequences for the participants, obtain the approval of independent counsellors/experts, and obtain additional informed consent from the participants on this issue;

- inform participants of their rights, including their right to refuse to answer and to withdraw from the research;
- take particular care when responding to research participants' requests for advice on psychological or other problems, and offer to refer for appropriate assistance if it seems advisable.

### 3.4. Standard of instructing research participants

EMDR therapists should:

- once the research has been completed, inform the participants of its results and nature, identify any damage and provide support where necessary.

## **4. Ethical principle: Honesty**

Declaration of values – EMDR therapists value honesty, accuracy, clarity and integrity in their dealings with all individuals and strive to promote honesty in all aspects of their academic and professional activities.

### 4.1. Standard of honesty and accuracy

EMDR therapists should:

- be honest and accurate in presenting their affiliations and professional qualifications, including such details as knowledge, skills, trainings, education and experience;
- acknowledge as evidence of professional EMDR training, qualifications and accreditation only those recognised by EMDR Europe, PTT EMDR; EMDRIA;

- take reasonable steps to ensure that their qualifications and competencies are not misrepresented by others and correct any misrepresentations in this regard; when announcing or promoting professional services or publications, do not misrepresent their affiliation with any organisation in a way that falsely suggests funding or certification of specialist competencies and qualifications by that organisation;
- be fair and accurate in communicating conclusions, opinions and findings as well as in recognising potential limitations;
- remain fair and accurate in presenting financial and other requirements and obligations arising from supervision, trainings, employment and other contractual relationships;
- make sure that clients are aware from the very beginning of the costs and payment methods for the services they receive;
- be honest in identifying their ownership of or contributions to researches, publications or other merit in the scientific and professional fields, and ensure that due recognition is given to the contributions of others in collective works;
- be fair and accurate in promoting their professional services and products in order to avoid raising unrealistic expectations or otherwise mislead their audience;
- present EMDR practice and offer (EMDR) services, products and publications fairly and accurately while avoiding sensationalism, exaggeration or superficial presentation of the issues;
- as trainers, EMDR therapists ensure that the instructions in the training guidelines are accurate, free of errors and adequately reflect education,

training and experience of the EMDR therapists presenting the programmes, as well as any fees included.

#### 4.2. Standard for avoiding malpractices and conflicts of interest

EMDR therapists should:

- be aware of the problems that may occur due to multiple and varied relationships, e.g. supervising a junior therapist who is a spouse; training people the therapist has a family relationship with, or providing therapeutic services to a friend;
- avoid engaging in relationships that might impair professional objectivity or otherwise lead to client exploitation or conflicts of interest;
- explain to clients and other interested parties the professional roles they currently fulfil and potential conflicts of interest;
- prevent the abuse of professional relationships to meet their other needs (e.g. sexual, personal, financial);
- accept that even after professional relationship is formally terminated, conflicts of interest and inequality of status may still exist to the extent that occupational liability may still apply.

When a conflict of interest arises between clients and the institution employing the EMDR therapist, the therapist shall clarify the nature and direction of his/her loyalty and obligations, and inform all parties of his/her commitments.

#### 4.3. Standard for maintaining personal boundaries.

EMDR therapists should:

- refrain from entering into any sexual or

romantic relationships with people to whom they: provide therapeutic services, are obliged to ensure ongoing care, or with whom they have a trust-based relationship. This could also mean former patients, students, trainees or a subordinate member of staff;

- avoid harassing behaviour and ensure that sexual harassment does not occur at the workplace;
- consider as harassment any verbal or physical conduct, including sexual advances, when:
  - such conduct interferes with another person's work or creates the atmosphere of intimidation, hostility or aggression;
  - submission to such conduct is implicitly or explicitly made a condition of the person's training, employment and access to resources; or
  - submission to or rejection of such behaviour is used as grounds for decisions affecting the person's education and employment prospects.
- Acknowledge that harassment can include a single serious incident or multiple persistent or escalating incidents, and that it also comprises behaviour which ridicules, discredits or insults a given individual;
- develop awareness of the structure of powers and tensions within groups or teams.

#### 4.4. Standard for addressing unethical behaviour

EMDR therapists should:

- reprimand colleagues who appear to be acting unethically and/or consider reporting the incident to the appropriate persons/bodies, including PTT EMDR, especially in situations where someone has been or may be harmed by the questioned behaviour;
- when making an allegation of colleague's misconduct, do so without ill will and without breaching confidentiality, except to the extent necessary for the proper conduct of the investigation procedure;
- cooperate fully with the persons/bodies responsible for investigating allegations of misconduct when such allegations concern them personally.