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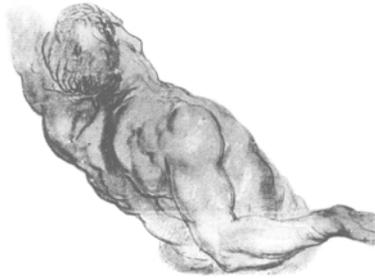


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USABP Mission Statement

The USABP believes that integration of the body and mind is essential to effective psychotherapy, and to that end, its mission is to develop and advance the art, science, and practice of body psychotherapy in a professional, ethical, and caring manner in order to promote the health and welfare of humanity. (revised October 1999).

Right Use of Power: The Heart of Ethics,

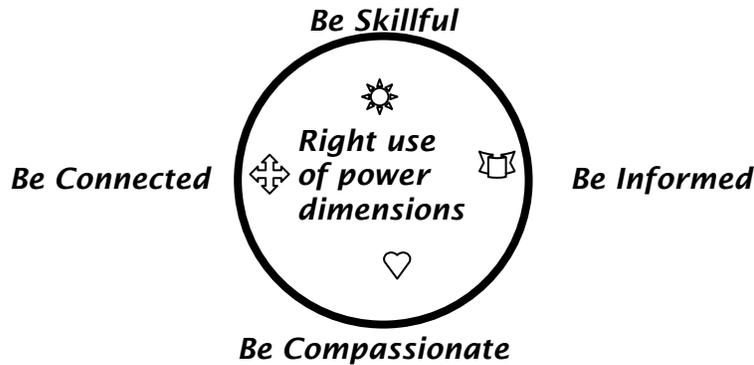
Cedar Barstow, M.Ed., CHT

Abstract

This paper is a theoretical and practical call to reframe professional ethics toward a larger scope. The focus is on envisioning and grounding an ethic that merges power and heart. Foundational values and four dimensions of right use of power as the heart of ethics are described. Right use of power is described as an ethical and relational use of professional and personal power that is informed, compassionate, connected, and skillful. As body psychotherapists we are in an ideal position to be influential leaders in the evolution of an ethic of power and heart. This paper outlines the proposal of such an ethic. An extensive dialogue with the explicit and implicit assumptions of other ethical approaches is the subject of another paper

Keywords

Compassion - Conflict resolution – Ethics – Experienced based education - Power differential – Power with heart – Right use of power.



The greatest revolutions science has presented to us across history point to others, yet more fundamental waiting in the wings, hinged to a revolution of human spirit and ethic equally profound.

Joseph P. Firmage¹

We need an ethic of compassion more desperately than ever before.

Karen Armstrong²

Continuing education in ethics is a required and important part of our training and ethical awareness and accountability are essential to our work. As body psychotherapists, one can, through the quality and depth of our attention to ethics, be a vital influence in the revolution of human spirit and ethic that many see as timely and needed. This ethic of compassion is of ultimate importance in sustaining life and resolving conflicts. It is hinged to ownership and use of our personal and professional power to promote well-being as well as to prevent and repair harm. This use of power involves increasing our skillfulness in engaging our compassion and staying related through conflict. At the core, right use of power--the heart of ethics—links power and heart. This combination constitutes a revolution of human spirit and ethic.

Ethics has traditionally been understood and taught as a set of behavioral rules. Compliance with these rules protects our clients from harm. These rules set a standard for which we, in our profession, can be held legally accountable. Ethical codes provide an essential, clear, and solid base for ethical awareness and behavior.

In my passion for ethics education and accountability over the past 10 years, I have talked with people who love ethics and teach ethics in very innovative and effective ways. As a member of the USABP Ethics Committee, I was honored to be part of a team which spent untold hours to create an up-to-date USABP code of ethics³ written in language that encourages, inspires, and guides both attitudes and behaviors. This code also includes much needed, thorough and innovative sections on therapeutic use of touch, multiple role relationships, peer accountability, teaching, and research. Working with other members of the Ethics Committee of the Hakomi Institute, we have developed a Grievance Process⁴ that focuses on conflict resolution, relationship repair, and education, rather than an ethic of justice through litigation. These and many other examples represent a significant movement toward bringing more depth and engagement to ethical awareness than rules alone.

Alongside these evolutionary developments, I have also found that many of us have limited and disengaging experiences with ethics. Students come to class with a book to read, expecting to be bored. One student said, “Oh, I already

¹ Joseph P. Firmage, *Institute for Noetic Sciences Journal*

² Karen Armstrong, AARP Magazine, March & April, 2005, (author of *The Spiral Staircase: My Climb Out of Darkness*, Knopf, 2004, p. 64)

³ *USABP Code of Ethics*, 2002

⁴ Hakomi Institute, *Code of Ethics and Ethical Grievance Process*, revised 2004

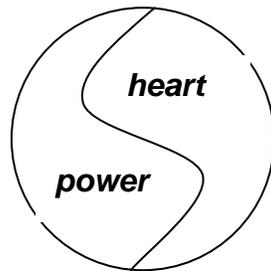
know about ethics: Don't sleep with your clients, don't sleep with your clients, don't sleep with your clients." Another said, "Oh, ethics is just another arm of the law." "Ethics is just rules imposed from the outside." Associations with the word "ethics," include: boredom, disassociation, shame, dread, self-righteousness. We need to unpack this "excess baggage," before we can re-engage with ethics in a more relational, restorative, and inspiring way.

I had many of these associations with ethics myself. Ten years ago, in a group leadership training, my colleagues Amina Knowlan and David Patterson⁵ referred to ethics as "right use of power and influence." Immediately my energy shifted. Ethics as right use of power—this was an idea with which I could engage. It was an idea that had heart. This concept began to transform ethics from a list of good behaviors to ethics as being in right relationship. It connected with my deep desire to use my power effectively, consciously, and compassionately. This was ethics that could be learned from the inside out instead of from the outside in.

In working with the idea of right use of power, I found that many of us, as body psychotherapists and as human beings, also have extra baggage in the form of beliefs, habits, and expectations. These beliefs and wounds interfere with our ability to understand, own, and use the increased relationship power that accompanies our role as therapists that also serves our clients. When asked about their automatic and felt sense associations with the word "power," people frequently have responses such as: fear, exploitation, force, intimidation, vulnerability, anger. Most of us have experienced personal wounds through misuses of power. Because of these wounds and other negative associations with power, we, as body psychotherapists are very wary of the idea that we have increased power and influence as professionals. Through avoiding recognizing the strength and subtlety of this power differential, caregivers may misuse power by under using it. Kindness and compassion without owned, engaged power and influence reduces effectiveness and may cause harm.

Often we think that we need to choose between power and heart—between kindness and strength, between compassion and truth, between love and boundaries, between acceptance and taking charge. We need to revise our ideas about power and about ethics in order to use both benevolently and synchronistically. Right use of power and heart focuses on gaining the dynamic, relational understandings and the skills that will enable us to be both compassionate and firm. In their true natures, power is guided by compassion, and the heart is guided by strength and truth.

The practice of using power and influence benevolently calls us to own and engage our personal and professional power as an ongoing process of using power not only to prevent harm, but to repair harm, and to promote well-being. Linking right use of power with heart calls us to do the internal work of developing a personal and professional ethic of compassion.



Definitions

Here are a few working definitions that help us bridge into an expanded conception of power and heart.

Ethics— a dictionary definition says that ethics is the study of what is right and wrong and of duty and moral obligation. For our purpose, ethics is a set of values, attitudes, and skills intended to have benevolent effects when applied through professional behavioral guidelines, decision-making processes, and the practice of compassion.

Power—most simply, is the ability to act or to have an effect—to accomplish what we intend. **Influence** is how we interact with others to make changes and have an effect. **Role Power** is the increased power that accompanies a professional role. This is called the **power differential**. **Personal power** is the generative capacity to use our gifts and make real our intentions.

Compassion—resonating concern, an ability to see and respond to the connection between everyone and everything⁶.

Power Spiral—a visual model for practicing right use of power in a multi-layered continuum.

Right Use of Power—the use of personal and role power to prevent, reduce, and repair harm. In addition, to promote sustainable well-being for all. (In this context 'right' implies that power is neutral, meaning that it can be used with integrity for the good of all. The use of the word 'right' is not meant to imply a black and white concept of right vs. wrong or good vs. evil.)

Foundational Values

In affirming Right Use of Power as the heart of ethics, we are framing ethics and power in a more comprehensive way. The following values form the foundation for the Right Use of Power approach.

⁵ Amina Knowlan, David Patterson, Group Leadership Trainings, lecture, 1990

⁶ Marc Ian Barasch, *Field Notes on the Compassionate Life: A Search for the Soul of Kindness*, Rodale, 2005"

Aspirational

We begin by acknowledging our desire and capacity for magnificence in the use of our personal and professional power. Supporting and engaging this desire accesses the “social engagement system.” According to the work of Stephen Porges,⁷ this third nervous system is the most recently understood and highly evolved. The social engagement system has a capacity for self-correcting, complex problem-solving, expressing a large range of emotion, and staying in relationship even in conflict. When motivated by fear, shame, or lack of recognition of our capacity for goodness, we tend to disengage from this evolved system, and default to the older fight, flight, or freeze responses.

Relational

Ethics and power are all about how we treat others by our attitudes and our behavior. Relationships are what make ethics necessary. In a conversation, a colleague challenged: “This isn’t an ethics course, this is ‘Relationship 101’.” Being sensitive to our impact and staying connected even in conflict is, however, the core of ethical relationships. Relationships are most effective and grievances are avoided when we are able to resolve problems and repair connections as they occur.

Heartful

Right use of power is the heart of ethics. Empathy and compassion can inform often complex and challenging situations, so that both caregivers and clients will be empowered to self-correct and grow into more sensitivity. The development of compassion, “as being an ability to imagine [and feel] the connection between everyone and everything, everywhere”⁸ is the salve for wounds and separation, and the inspiration and motivation for those who are in positions of power and trust. We can source our power with heart.

Reparational

We all make mistakes. Our impact is often different than our intention. We carry projections from past hurts and wounds. There are difficulties that arise in the course of care giving relationships. Often we automatically and habitually link present conflict with past trauma. When conflict triggers old trauma, we may disengage from relationships, dissociate, lose touch with our resources, and/or blame others. But by approaching ethics and power reparationally, we can put our attention toward skillful resolution, relationship repair, and self-correction. This approach supports us in discussion about ethical issues and concerns with colleagues, and attending to conflicts within a relationship, instead of feeling ashamed, accused, or out of touch with our impact on others.

Pro-active

Responses to issues of power and ethics can be unconscious and history-based, littered with automatic behavior and outdated beliefs. By actively exploring our ethical edges, taking care of ourselves, asking for and using feedback constructively, we become more sensitive. We can increase our skills, change ineffective habits, and use learnings from our history to grow. Focusing on pro-active right use of power takes ethics to a deeply refined level.

Experiential

Having a felt sense of the impact of the power differential is the key to understanding professional ethical issues. Experiential study is the most effective method of learning. Studies show that we remember 90% of what we say and do, compared to 10% of what we read.⁹ Ethics, power dynamics, and compassion are best embodied through personal, practical, and engaging experience.

Dimensions and Themes

⁷ Stephen Porges, *Orienting in a defensive world: Mammalian Modifications of Our Evolutionary Heritage. A Polyvagal Theory.* “Psychophysiology” 32, 1995

⁸ Marc Barasch, *Ibid.*

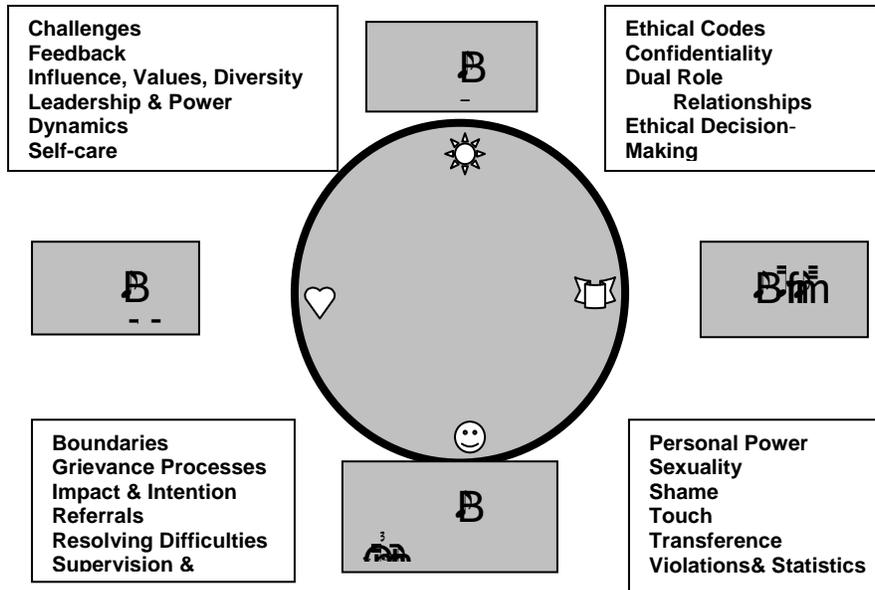
⁹ www.drdan.org/handout%2020.htm

Human beings are capable of magnificent acts of wisdom, compassion, and courage in using their power for healing, for connecting, and for peacemaking. Body psychotherapists speak of their yearning for the pleasure and satisfaction of finding and owning their personal power, and using it to make real their intentions, be in right relationship, and be of service.

Ethical behavior is not just the result of good intentions, but is indeed more complex and fascinating--more like a life-long process of empowerment and refinement. Leading from and building on the values described, I have identified four dimensions of understanding and learning how to use our power and influence that seem to encompass the inherent processes and themes. There are a number of topics that are not included in the usual ethics realm, but are relevant and timely.

Here is a visual map of the set of topics associated with each dimension. I have long been drawn to understanding and growth as a cycle rather than as a linear process. The map, therefore, takes the shape of a circle, or a spiral with many layers, organized by the cardinal directions beginning in the east, or the right of the chart.

Right use of power is informed. Being informed leads to increased consciousness. Increased self-awareness and empathy lead to deeper caring and accountability. Taking responsibility and staying related leads to more skillfulness and empowerment. The spiral continues with more empowerment leading to more information and confidence and so on.



Here is a description of the territory of each dimension.

**Dimension One:
The Informed Use of Power**

- *Be informed.*
- *Own your power and influence.*
- *Understand your ethical guidelines.*

BE INFORMED

This dimension is about **information** of many kinds:

- owning and having a felt sense of the impact of the power differential role—its potential, its responsibilities, its distortions, and its vulnerability for clients—as the basis for all ethical guidelines;
- understanding and being resourced by information contained in ethical codes as wisdom culled from the lived history of our professions;
- gathering and effectively using information from clients;
- paying attention to inner guidance;
- making informed ethical decisions in complex or challenging circumstances and in everyday attitudes and interactions.

**Dimension Two:
The Conscious Use of Power**

- *Be curious.*
- *Use your history.*

BE COMPASSIONATE

This dimension is about **Self**:

- understanding and learning from our attitudes, beliefs, wounds, and habits in relation to issues of power and authority;
- engaging curiosity about ourselves and our clients as a non-threatening skill and attitude;
- exploring our empowered and disempowered selves and

- **Practice compassion.**

how our use of power and influence affects others;

- reflecting on examples of misuses of professional power;
- working with shame as a power issue because it isolates and de-resources;
- practicing compassion as a resonating concern for all.

**Dimension Three:
The Caring Use of Power**

BE CONNECTED

- **Be related.**
- **Track your impact**
- **Resolve and repair.**

In this dimension the focus is on **relationship**:

- acknowledging the complexity and power of connection;
- increasing skillfulness in tracking for difficulties and staying current in care-giving relationships;
- recognizing that our impact is often different from our intention;
- being accountable as an expression of caring;
- recognizing that we all make mistakes; understanding how relationship difficulties, when either ignored or dismissed, can escalate to grievance processes;
- practicing staying connected even in conflict and using conflict to clarify and resolve difficulties;
- attending to relationship repair and self-correcting;

**Dimension Four:
The Skillful Use of Power**

BE SKILLFUL

- **Be pro-active.**
- **Attend to self-care.**
- **Self-correct and let go.**

This dimension is about the development of **wisdom**.

- understanding that doing the right thing is more effective when it's done wisely;
- deepening skill in identifying tendencies, beliefs, and barriers that may make us vulnerable to specific misuses of power;
- understanding good self-care as vital for wise use of power;
- increasing our understanding of power dynamics and diversity issues;
- practicing the refining and resourcing skill of asking for, receiving, giving, and using feedback;
- becoming more skillful at knowing when and how to persist and when and how to let go;
- being nourished by wise and skillful uses of power as a social force for good.

Power with Heart

Power is the generative capacity to bring change. Influence is the realized potential for change. The spiraling journey to mastery in the use of power and influence is numinous and potent. It brings together personal development and soul work (being) with creation and accomplishment (doing). Love and creativity yearn to be expressed in form. Heartful and full use of personal and role power and influence is both a right and a responsibility.

Embodying compassionate power is this way, we become familiar with our profession's code of ethics and with contemporary ethical issues. We undertake personal restorative work with our power history and beliefs. We are willing to be held responsible for our behavior and can self-correct. We know how to track for and resolve difficulties within relationships of trust. We understand dynamics around power, and proactively assess our ethical challenges. We are actively engaged in the empowered and empowering use of our power for the mutual well-being of all.

As body psychotherapists, we are in an ideal position to be influential leaders in the evocation and evolution of an ethic of power and heart because of our commitment to body awareness and inclusivity, therapeutic use of touch, compassionate presence, and experiential learning

Spiral by spiral we can reach out our hands, not to deny or defend, but to compassionately relate. Our power and influence will be felt as peace and mutual well-being. This ethic synergizes power with the resonating concern of compassion. Right use power is power with heart, activated from the inside out. Be informed, Be compassionate, Be connected, Be skillful. These are dimensions we can continue to explore and expand in the service of a more comprehensive and satisfying approach to ethical issues of power and influence.

Biography

Cedar Barstow, M.Ed., Certified Hakomi Therapist and Trainer, is the author of "The Right Use of Power: Ethics in the Helping Professions", a member of the USABP Ethics Committee and the Hakomi Institute National Ethics Committee, and an ethics consultant. The right use of power approach is currently being taught by Cedar and others trained as facilitators across the United States and internationally. Home-study CEUS and workshops are available using the program. Dialogue with other approaches to ethics is invited. Cedar@RightUseofPower.com

USA BODY PSYCHOTHERAPY JOURNAL

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How does material in this manuscript inform the field and add to the body of knowledge? If it is a description of what we already know, is there some unique nugget or gem the reader can store away or hold onto? If it is a case study, is there a balance among the elements, i.e., back ground information, description of prescribed interventions and how they work, outcomes that add to our body of knowledge? If this is a reflective piece, does it tie together elements in the field to create a new perspective? Given that the field does not easily lend itself to controlled studies and statistics, if the manuscript submitted presents such, is the analysis forced or is it something other than it purports to be?

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