Professional Values Principles

Identify a personal–professional values tension you want to explore. Be sure to articulate clearly both the personal and professional values in the box below. You may find it useful to write a sentence explaining each value. A couple of examples have been provided. Please delete them to create space for your own work.

Example 1:

Professional value: Counsellors are expected to assume an anti-oppressive stance with all nondominant populations.

Personal value: Gay men should not be allowed to foster children, because they can't provide the kind of moral environment and or provide the role models that children need.

Example 2:

Professional value: Given the social determinants of health, counsellors should be prepared to advocate on behalf of their clients.

Personal value: As a counsellor, I cannot be responsible for changing the world in which my clients live. Clients are responsible for the choices they make, or don't make, to improve their lives.

Now think back to Core Competency 3 in the CRSJ counselling model, which emphasized the multiplicity and subjectivity of worldviews. Write 3–5 sentences that describe the roots of your personal value above. You might consider your upbringing or the current sociocultural contexts of your lived experiences, the links between this value and important aspects of your personal cultural identities, or the importance of this value to other aspects of your worldview. Remember that one of the assertions in this course is that values, like other parts of our identities aren't inherent or immutable; they are socially constructed aspects of our worldview.

Finally, work through each of the principles below. Consider how this principle might help you to resolve the personal–professional values tensions you identified above. You may find that some principles don't apply to your specific example. Feel free to leave those cells blank. Do your best to reflect honestly and openly on the implications of these principles. Try to avoid "yes, but" statements, which tend to reflect rationalizations rather than in-depth critical self-reflections.

A couple of cells have been completed, based on the examples of personal–professional values tensions provided above. Please delete these comments, once you review them, so you can use the blank template for your own values exploration.

Principles	Critical Self-Reflection
Constructivism Values, attitudes, and biases are social constructions rather than absolute or immutable *truths*; nonetheless, beliefs or practices that lead to social oppression of others are often deeply held. It is important to look for ways to reconstruct personal values to align with human rights, professional ethics, and to respect or reframe higher order core personal values to be inclusive of professional values (Mintz et al., 2009).	
Privilege Critical consciousness about privilege (e.g., White, male, Christian) forms a foundation for engaging in dialogue when conflicts between worldviews emerge. Religious privilege, for example, must be carefully examined in the context of historical and current social, economic, and political landscapes to illuminate the ways in which those dominant narratives support or create oppressive conditions for marginalized individuals or groups (Collins & Arthur, 2018; Watt, 2009).	Example 1: Although I am personally uncomfortable with the idea of gay men fostering children, I can see that this arises from my cultural and religious context. I have internalized these messages from my family and church without really examining them in terms of my position of privilege as a heterosexual and a Christian. I wonder if I would feel differently if this was my brother, or if I had personal exposure to healthy relationships between gay men and their kids. Thinking back to an earlier exercise in the course, if my position of privilege was reversed and heterosexuality became a nondominant experience in society, I would certainly feel marginalized if I was refused the right to raise children and to enjoy the meaning this contributes to my life. If I frame my values in terms of dominant discourses, then I can see how carrying those values into my practice with clients could result in further cultural oppression for them.
Critical reflection Mintz et al. (2009) referred to the ability and willingness of engaging in critical self-reflection as a *transcendent value* that undergirds professional competence and ethical practice. Being willing to engage openly in critical dialogue about values puts one on a developmental path towards professional competency; foreclosing on values analysis is a barrier to competency development.	
Cognitive complexity	

From *Culturally Responsive and Socially Just Counselling: Teaching and Learning Guide* (2nd ed.)*,* by S. Collins, 2022. Counseling Concepts.

Sometimes personal–professional values may appear to be incompatible or irreconcilable. Cognitive complexity invites one to embrace ambiguity and uncertainty, even when it's uncomfortable, and to shine a critical light on our own values, to create space for unsolvable tensions or paradoxes, and to embrace both loss and possibility (Arthur & Collins, 2015a; Owen & Lindley, 2010; Paré, 2013).	
Harmony "From this perspective, individual rights are considered in the context of needs of society at large. In other words, if an individual's desires ultimately serve to harm or limit the freedoms and needs of others, the individual is responsible for sublimating these desires in the interest of promoting a more harmonious environment that reflects respect for the common good" (Crethar, Rivera, & Nash, 2008, p. 272).	
Social Justice Personal–professional values tensions must be viewed in terms of the broader dominant and marginalized social narratives and social determinants of health. Recognize that, as health-care professionals, we have an ethical obligation to oppose oppressive systems, paradigms, and sociocultural narratives (Allan & Smylie, 2015; Watt, 2009).	
Do no harm The protection of, and benefit to, the client is the guiding motivation for reconciling conflicts and assessing competence for professional practice (Yarhouse & Johnson, 2013). In addition, our values find their way into therapy; value-neutrality is a myth (Collins & Arthur, 2018; Mintz et al., 2009). So, it is important to ask how holding particular values or beliefs may have the potential to harm clients.	
Competency	Example 2: Thinking about advocacy and my responsibility to engage in social change from a competency perspective shifts my thinking a bit. I

Perceived values clashes may be reframed in terms of a developmental process of attaining professional competency. There is an emergent consensus on foundational competencies for culturally responsive and socially just practice with all clients. The question then becomes: Which additional competencies must be developed to meet this emergent consensus on professional competency standards for practice? (Collins & Arthur, 2018).	realize now that my resistance doesn't really come from not actually believing that counsellors have a responsibility to support systemic change or that clients are not affected by the contexts of their lives. Rather it is about me being afraid and overwhelmed at the thought of engaging in advocacy on behalf of clients. At this point, I can barely imagine being alone in a room with a client, let alone feeling confident enough to engage in social justice activities. However, I can see that if I developed more competency in this area, then it might not feel so scary, and I would be more willing to accept this as part of my role. Maybe I would even like it.
Rights versus responsibilities Individuals have a right to determine their own values and beliefs. However, when they choose to enter a profession like counselling, their responsibility and accountability to professional ethics, standards, and values takes precedence over this personal right (Mintz et al., 2009).	

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