

# Ethics in Behavioral Telehealth

Week 2

# Digital Etiquette

## Remember to...

- ✓ Turn off phones
- ✓ Clear area of distractions
- ✓ Check for good lighting
- ✓ Check equipment – i.e. microphone, webcam, internet
- ✓ Center self with head/shoulders in camera view
- ✓ Be ready to connect with folks
- ✓ Allow more time for responses, there can be a delay due to the technology
- ✓ Have fun, actively engage, and participate!

# Ethics

George Stricker, former head of APA Ethics Committee, discussed “Psychotherapy in Cyberspace” in 1996:

- Therapeutic relationship and responsibilities
- Identity of the client
- In case of emergency
- Consider in-office care
- Privacy of online communication
- Limits of text-based communications
- Dispute resolutions

# Learning Activity

## Code of Ethics for online services

- Social Work
- Mental Health Counseling
- Psychology
- Marriage and Family Therapy
- Others

# Activity Highlights

## Marriage and Family Therapy

Standard VI 1-6

Straight forward not great detail

# Social Work

Santhiveeran (2009) reviewed the compliance of social workers' online therapy Websites according to the *NASW Code of Ethics* standards and found that:

- Less than half of the sites studied (44%) provided information to clients about how to safeguard their privacy while engaging in the online mental health services
- Barely half (49%) provided statements about the duty to maintain confidentiality
- Only one-third (32%) included specific emergency protocols (beyond a bare reference to 911)

# Mental Health Counseling

## Section H - Distance Counseling, Technology and Social Media

**H.2.a. Informed Consent and Disclosure**-*distance counseling credentials, physical location of practice, and contact information*

**H.3. Client Verification**

**H.5.d. Multicultural and Disability Considerations**

**H.6. Social Media**

**H.6.a. Virtual Professional Presence**

**H.6.c. Client Virtual Presence**

# Psychology

## Guidelines for the practice of Telepsychology

Guidelines 1-8 Rationale and Application

Task Force

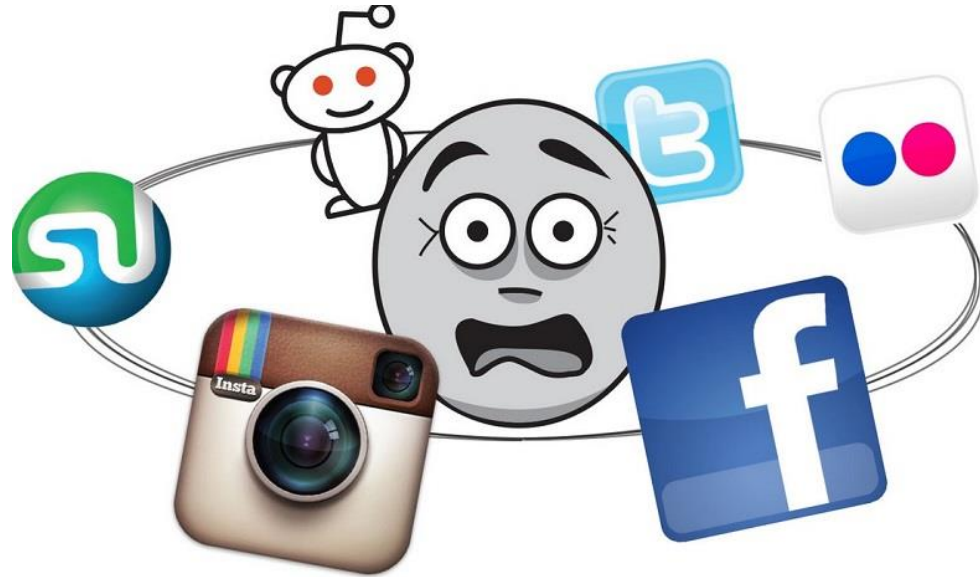


# Telemedicine

June 2016 approved a set of guidelines for the ethical practice of telemedicine.

*“Chief among these guidelines is a directive that the clinician understands that technology doesn’t trump medical ethics”*

# Having a Social Networking Policy as part of ones informed consent



# Social Networking Policy

Cyber/Digital Natives One American teenager was reported to have sent and received 6,473 text messages in one month (St. George, 2009).

Cyber/Digital immigrants

Online life questions for assessments

- Video conferencing
- Text
- E-mail
- Phone

# Ethical Dilemmas

You finish a behavioral Tele-health session and thought you logged off. You hear your client and partner in what could be a Domestic Violence incident.

What do you do?



## Ethical Dilemmas (2)

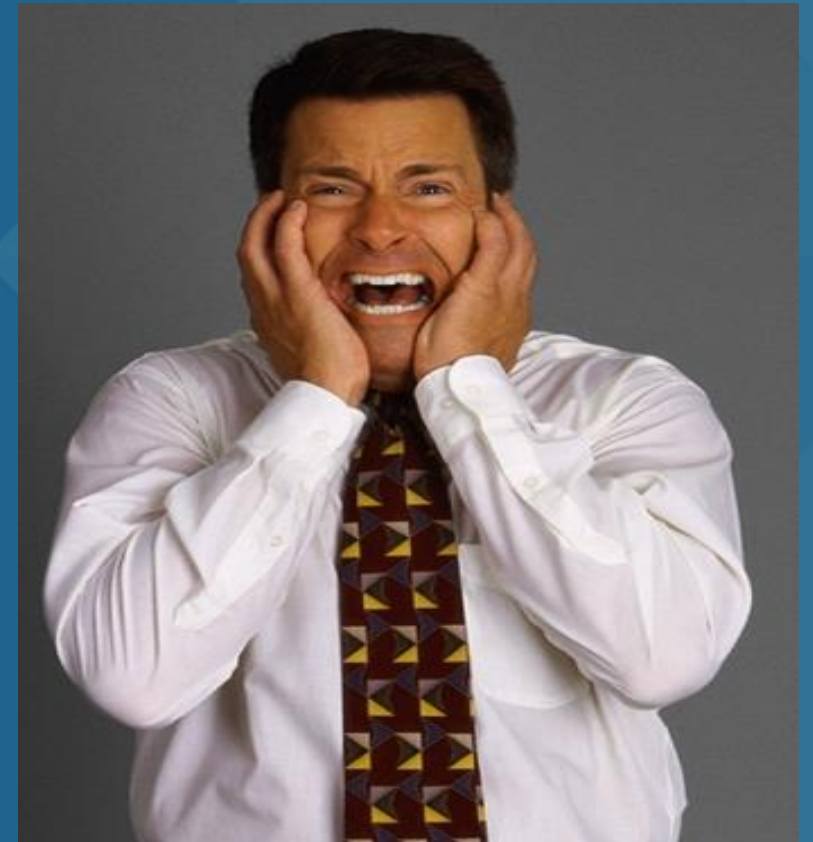
Your client logs on for their videoconferencing clinical session and states,

“I didn’t know you had kids. Saw their picture on your Facebook picture.”



## Ethical Dilemmas (3)

You finish a behavioral Tele-health session and thought you logged off. You hear your client making sounds like a drug deal. What do you do?



## Ethical Dilemmas (4)

You are assigned or referred a new client and decide to Google them as well as look them up on FB to determine if they are a good fit for behavioral Tele-health.

What are the ethical considerations?



# Yet Another Dilemma...

Two therapists, Ann and Marie, who work at the same treatment center have befriended one another on their Facebook pages. Ann “friends” an ex-client, Sam, who left their treatment center 2 ½ years ago and this concerns Marie.

What should Marie do?



# Ethical Dilemma with Social Media

Agnes works as a clinical therapist as part of an outpatient treatment team at a community mental health center. She has had a pattern of spreading gossip and negativity amongst her peers. The gossip and negativity has been addressed with her in several supervisions and she had a prior corrective action regarding these issues. She decided it was her “right” and “duty” to post allegations that the clinical work being done at her facility was sub par in comments on the facility’s Facebook page for public viewing.

The agency does not have any formal or written social media policy. What is the essence of this dilemma and how should it be addressed ?

# Ethics – Industry Self-Regulation

- [Guidelines for Mental Health and Healthcare Practice online](#)
- [International Society for Mental Health Online](#)
- [Internet Healthcare Coalition](#)
- [American Medical Association](#)
- “Hi-Ethics Alliance” (Health-Internet Ethics Alliance)- several online health providers - such as WebMD - created consensus on code of ethics for the medical e-health sector. (2000)

# In Conclusion

- Follow all requirements for ethical conduct from your profession's code of ethics.
- Assess for client appropriateness (will cover next week)
- Utilize HIPAA compliant videoconferencing platforms

# In Conclusion

- Practice within your scope of practice
- Document all services as you would F to F services
- Confirm your malpractice insurance covers Behavioral Tele-health

# Sneak Peek at next week....

## Focus: Legal Issues

Expectation and Learning Activity:

To research your own state laws on telehealth or telemedicine; as well as rules, policies, regulations by your state licensing board.

Be ready to discuss at length next week!

