



## EFAT CODE OF ETHICS for Art Therapists

### CORE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES of PROFESSIONAL ART THERAPY PRACTICE for EFAT MEMBERS

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The European Federation of Art Therapy (EFAT) **Code of Ethics (CoE)** for Art Therapists provides the ethical underpinnings of the federation's organisational mission. The Code's primary purpose is to function as a general guiding framework for the promotion of ethical Art Therapy practice in Europe and to protect the public and recipients of art therapy services from harm resulting from unethical professional conduct. At the same time, the CoE informs the public about what to expect in terms of the ethical conduct of EFAT members.

The ethical principles inform good clinical practice, which is based on sound reasoning and judgments that require self-reflection and clinical understanding. Therefore, ethical principles and conduct are maintained and developed through continuing education and supervision beyond the attainment of the professional art therapy diploma or degree.

In addition to this concise CoE, EFAT provides art therapists and art therapy service users with a detailed **Ethics Reference Guide (ERG)** for in-depth education and for consultation or investigation of any arising ethical issue. EFAT's members as well as art therapy recipients may furthermore consult with EFAT's Ethics Committee ([ethics@arttherapyfederation.eu](mailto:ethics@arttherapyfederation.eu)) when in doubt or confronted with an ethical issue.

EFAT's CoE and the ERG are live documents which evolve in collaboration with EFAT's full individual and organisational members.

The *EFAT Code of Ethics* for Art Therapists is defined according to

- a. the core values of the Universal Human Rights Charta whereby all human beings are treated with respect for their dignity, regardless of race, religion, gender or national/ethnic origin, concerning choice, autonomy and clinical transparency, equal and fair treatment for those who engage in art therapy practice and education;
- b. the mandate *to do no harm* in all professional interaction and clinical practice;
- c. the commitment to the practice of openness, honesty and integrity in all professional art therapy activities and communication;
- d. an awareness of the relationship between social justice and clinical practice.



## II. ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

### Article 1. Creativity

1.1 Art therapists use their creativity and clinical skills to remain attuned to the creative process of the client or patient.

1.2 Art therapists understand the capacity and limitations for art therapy to adapt to different settings and different populations.

1.3 Art therapists respect and take their cues from the personal expression of the client or patient, in terms of aesthetic, process and style.

1.4 Art therapists maintain personal art-making practices outside of their client/patient work in support of their art therapy practices psychologically and creatively.

### Article 2. Responsibility to Clients/Patients

2.1 Art therapists uphold the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality and choice.

2.2 Art therapists are aware that safeguards may be necessary to protect the rights and welfare of persons or communities whose vulnerabilities impair autonomous decision-making.

2.3 Art therapists make themselves aware of and are respectful of individual, cultural and role differences, as well as factors of age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status when working with any given individual or population. They strive to eliminate prejudicial biases and do not knowingly participate in or condone activities based on prejudice of any kind.

2.4 Art therapists realise that their professional judgement and actions influence power relations and are careful to not misuse their influence in any way.

2.5 Art therapists refrain from entering into relationships with their clients or patients that are outside of agreed art therapy practice.

2.6 Art therapists exercise their profession within the limits and boundaries of their competence as determined by their education, training, supervision and experience, as well as defined by current national laws.

2.7 Art therapists maintain and develop the quality of their professional practice through continuing education, specialized reading and/ or attending conferences.

2.8 Art therapists shall seek ongoing supervision and/or personal therapy in order to ensure the quality and accountability of their practice. Art therapists who are also supervisors are responsible for maintaining the quality of their supervision skills which may necessitate receiving consultation or supervision for their work as supervisors.

2.9 Art therapists cooperate with other professionals whenever clinically or administratively indicated or professionally appropriate, in order to better serve the client.

2.10 Art therapists refer a patient/client to another appropriate professional, if a conflict of interest or a prejudice arises, or if the required treatment exceeds the art therapist's competence and level of education.

2.11 Art therapists provide the best possible working environment and art materials with respect to safety, functionality, therapeutic considerations and budget.



### **Article 3. Confidentiality**

3.1 Art therapists respect the confidentiality of the client or patient in art therapy practice as appropriate to the context.

3.2 When consulting with colleagues, publishing, or presenting in professional meetings and/or trainings:

a) Art therapists do not disclose confidential information that could lead to the identification of a client/patient, a research participant, or other person or organization with which they have a confidential relationship. Only when art therapists obtain prior written consent of the person (or the legal guardian in the event that the person is unable to give informed consent) or organisation, or if the disclosure is mandated by law, can confidential information be disclosed.

b) Even when informed consent is obtained, information is disclosed only to the extent necessary to achieve the purposes of the consultation, presentation, publication, training, or the course of a legal action.

c) The image (see 4.2) is treated as a confidential document that requires consent from the client or patient (or the legal guardian in the event that the person is unable to give informed consent) for the purposes of publication or presentation in any format.

3.3 Art therapists maintain client treatment records for a reasonable amount of post-treatment time consistent with state and institutional laws, regulations and sound clinical practice. Records are stored and/or disposed of in ways that maintain confidentiality.

### **Article 4. Artwork in Art Therapy**

4.1 The artwork constitutes one component of a tripartite therapeutic system that includes client, art therapist and artwork created during the session.

4.2 The art process and art product together constitute the art image/artwork, and is a form of expression and communication by the client/patient.

4.3 Art therapists adopt a non-judgmental attitude toward the content and level of skill in client's art productions.

4.4 Art therapists embody an attitude of curiosity, openness and thoughtful reflection with respect to the client's artwork and during the therapeutic dialogue.

4.5 Art therapists regard client artwork as a form of protected information, a confidential file and ultimately as the property of the client.

4.6 Art therapists take appropriate measures for the protection of client/patient artwork in regards to storage and conservation, and all aspects of confidentiality.

4.7 Art therapists take appropriate measures in the event of showing client/patient artwork in an exhibition of (see Article 7).

### **Article 5. Responsibility to the Profession**

5.1 Art therapists embody personal integrity, which is essential to cultivating trust in all professional relationships. Therefore, art therapists practice honesty, truthfulness, and seek to promote accuracy in their theoretical and practical formulations, whether through teaching, supervising, writing, publication, and in clinical practice.



5.2 Art therapists respect the rights and responsibilities of professional colleagues and participate in activities to advance common goals.

5.3 Art therapists work within regulations and policies pertaining to the field of art therapy, and engage in developing policies and regulations for the betterment of the recipients of art therapy practice.

5.4 Art therapists strive to contribute to the advancement of the art therapy profession, as professionals and in a voluntary capacity.

5.5 Art therapists participate to assessment and research activities, in order to support the theoretical and methodological development of the profession.

5.6 Art therapists do not present misleading or false information about their level of training, skill, expertise or experience to clients/patients and/or the public.

5.7 Art therapists do not present misleading or false information about their membership status in EFAT to clients/patients and/or the public.

#### **Article 6. Diversity, Multicultural Art Therapy, and Art Therapy in Social Action**

6.1 Art therapists understand the nature of social diversity and power inequalities with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, colour, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, age, marital status, political belief, religion, mental or physical disability and adapt their practice to specific social and cultural needs.

6.2 Art therapists are aware of their own values and beliefs and how these may affect cross-cultural therapy interventions. They strive to learn about the culture and belief systems of their client population to provide relevant culturally sensitive treatment interventions.

6.3 In exceptional circumstances, for example where art therapists practice in a crisis, community context or complex social setting, it is understood that these principles may need to be adapted. Nonetheless, members strive to maintain the ethical principles that form the CoE and are able to offer an explanation where they are not able to uphold these principles.

#### **Article 7. Exhibition of Client Artwork**

7.1 Art therapists appropriately take into consideration the implications for confidentiality and the possible impact on the therapeutic process when exhibiting client artwork, and discuss these with their clients/patients or their legal guardians.

7.2 Art therapists make clients/patients or their legal guardians aware that confidentiality and anonymity during exhibitions may be compromised, in spite of best efforts to conceal identity and protect confidentiality. On the other hand, the client is entitled to be identified by name. If so, the art therapist informs the client of the possible implications of his/her choice.

7.3 Art therapists may assist clients in selecting artwork for exhibition based on several factors, including reason(s) for the display of artwork, the therapeutic value to the client, the degree of self-disclosure, and the ability to tolerate audience reactions.

7.4 Art therapists take appropriate measures to protect exhibited art from inadvertent destruction, vandalism or theft.

7.5 Art therapists ensure proper exhibition safeguards so that clients and their imagery are not exploited, misrepresented, or otherwise misused.



### **Article 8. Responsibility to Supervisees and Students**

8.1 Art therapists communicate scholarly and accurate information when instructing supervisees and/or students in education or on placements/practicum.

8.2 Art therapists are aware of their influential position with respect to supervisees and students, and avoid exploiting their trust and dependency.

8.3 Art therapists refrain from entering into personal, therapeutic or business relationships with their students or supervisees while they remain in supervision or training. They refrain from supervising former clients. They are careful about allowing a reasonable amount of time to go by before a former supervisee may seek therapy.

8.4 Art therapists take reasonable steps to ensure that students, employees, and supervisees do not offer professional services beyond their education, training, and level of experience.

8.5 Art therapists who provide training and/or supervision to non-art therapists ensure that trainees/supervisees understand the objectives, expectations, limitations and resulting qualifications as distinct from formal studies in art therapy.

### **Article 9. Research and Publication**

9.1 Art therapy researchers, first and foremost, respect the dignity and welfare of research participants and seek clearance by a research ethics committee when and where required.

9.2 Art therapy researchers are guided by and respect national laws, regulations, policies and specific codes of ethics governing the conduct of research, as pertaining to the requirements for the description of the project, its duration, its risks, and the disclosure of conflicts of interest, etc..

9.3 Art therapists obtain signed informed consent from research and publication participants before undertaking such research or writing, and respect the right of participants to withdraw their consent and/or from participation without adverse consequences.

9.4 Art therapists carefully conceal the identity of research participants.

9.5 Art therapists represent research findings accurately and avoid distortion.

9.6 Art therapists respect intellectual property and appropriately and correctly attribute publication and citation credits to their authors.

### **Article 10. Financial Arrangements pertaining to Independent (Private) Practice**

10.1 Art therapists do not financially exploit their clients, supervisees or others who seek their consultation services.

10.2 Art therapists make transparent financial arrangements with clients, third party payers, and supervisees that are understandable and conform to accepted professional practice, and present facts about services rendered and the respective charges truthfully.

10.3 Art therapists do not accept payment from other professionals for referrals of clients.

10.4 Art therapists aspire to offer equal access to art therapy services to those clients who are unable to pay the full fee, for example by offering sliding fee scales.



### III. PROCEDURES OF REGULATION

A. By becoming a member of EFAT, art therapists agree to abide by its *Code of Ethics*. EFAT members are informed that a breach of these ethical principles may lead to the revocation or suspension of their membership, according to the rules and procedures stipulated in EFAT's Statutes and the Rules of Internal Order (RIO).

B. Art therapists understand that through being a member of a national art therapy association they are, first and foremost, bound by the Code of Ethics established by that organisation and/or by the laws of the country where they practice. Art therapists keep informed about the respective national requirements.

C. Art therapists also make themselves acquainted with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) of the European Union (EU) or similar regulations for the protection of personal data that are in force in non-EU member countries.

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*by unanimous vote*

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*by majority vote of EFAT's General Assembly*