

ETHICS HANDBOOK FOR ENERGY HEALING PRACTITIONERS

by David Feinstein with Donna Eden
Fulton, CA: Energy Psychology Press, 2011. www.EnergyMedicineEthics.com

TOOLKIT FOR ENERGY HEALING PRACTITIONERS

edited by David Feinstein
Ashland, OR: Innersource, 2011. <http://toolkit.innersource.net>

Review Midge Murphy, JD, PhD (energy medicine)

Like other healing modalities within the broad field of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), the practice of energy based therapies, including energy medicine and energy psychology, is growing exponentially. However, there are no agreed upon ethical standards that encompass the entire field which creates a significant dilemma because ethical conduct is vital to the integrity, authenticity, and acceptance of energy healing methods in the health care industry. Since the field is unregulated anyone can proclaim they are an energy healer without any credentialing that provides evidence to the client that the practitioner is competent and has training in ethics and legal issues in the practice of energy therapies. Since energy healing methods, for the most part, still lack acceptance by main stream health care, an energy healer that violates ethical standards not only harms the client but also taints the entire field. The lack of an ethical, legal, and regulatory framework in the field hinders the integration of energy healing methods into an integrative health care system. Being a risk management consultant and teacher of the ethical, legal, and regulatory issues in the practice of energy therapies and also an energy healing practitioner, I am acutely aware of this lack of framework.

Since licensure is not currently available for energy healers, the most viable option for demonstrating competency in a healing method is through a certification or formal training program. Unfortunately many of the training and certification programs for various energy healing methods do little or no training in ethics and even fewer include legal and regulatory issues. David Feinstein and Donna Eden have made an important contribution to the lack of ethics training by making available a book called *Ethics Handbook for Energy Healing Practitioners: A Guide for the Professional Practice of Energy Medicine and Energy Psychology* and the online *Toolkit for Energy Healing Practitioners*.

The *Ethics Handbook* has a unique approach for providing energy healers with an understanding about ethical conduct within a therapeutic relationship. While it does not specifically address ethical principles

or the core psychological concepts in ethics, the *Ethics Handbook* teaches them by presenting 50 case vignettes involving ethical dilemmas. In Chapter 2 the book lists 31 ethical principles as its foundation for examining ethical issues that arise in a clinical energy healing practice. These ethical principles have been summarized/excerpted from the “Ethics Code for Energy Healing Practitioners” which is part of the Eden Energy Medicine Certification Program. This certification program includes substantial training in ethics and should be considered a role model for all energy healing certification and training programs.

What I especially like about this approach is that the case studies present common ethical issues that all clinicians face, however, they are geared towards the energy healing practitioner who may not have any or little formal training in ethics. The scenarios cover crucial topics such as confidentiality, scope of practice, boundaries, dual relationships, when to refer to a physician or mental health professional, selling products, bartering for services, and much more. Even though some of the case studies may seem repetitive, they provide the reader with the opportunity to learn how to discern what ethical principles are operating when a situation arises with a client or a colleague.

The *Ethics Handbook* guides the practitioner through the ethical issues presented in the case studies by continually referring back to the core ethical principles. Further, the discussion addresses how best to handle the situation and apply these ethical principles. While the ethical issues are fully explored and the writing is straight forward and practical, what is missing is that energy healing practitioners need to know ethical violations can lead to legal liability. For example, a practitioner who practices outside her scope of practice can be charged with practicing medicine without a license; making unsubstantiated claims on a website may violate FTC regulations; lack of a proper informed consent process and document can lead to a claim of negligence or a violation of applicable statutes or regulations. Therefore, not only does an energy healing practitioner need to be ethical but his practice needs to be legally sound. When energy healing practitioners

understand the value of implementing risk management tools, it protects their clients, their practices and it empowers them to do their healing work in the world.

Along with the *Ethics Handbook* is the online *Toolkit for Energy Healing Practitioners*, a compilation of a number of important topics and suggestions for the business of running a clinical practice. A group of dedicated Eden-trained energy practitioners compiled the information designed to help practitioners set up and maintain a successful energy medicine or energy psychology practice. The *Toolkit* is multimedia, with audio and video clips available on-line to illustrate particular situations. While much of the information is geared towards participants in the Eden Energy Medicine Certification Program, it also has applicability to other innovative energy healing practitioners.

In providing risk management consulting services to a significant number of energy healing practitioners and teachers for almost a decade, I have seen firsthand how much hype and misinformation is published on the internet about various energy healing methods. Unsubstantiated claims and exaggerated testimonials are unethical and can create significant legal liability. Energy healing practitioners will find the *Toolkit* to be a valuable resource in guiding them to market their services with integrity.

My main concern with the *Toolkit* is the sample informed consent documents that are provided for readers to use and modify for their practices. Because many state laws require specific and sometimes different information to be included in an informed consent agreement a generic or “borrowed” form will likely not comply with the laws applicable to the practitioner. Also an inadequate informed consent document or coaching agreement can lead to a claim of negligence. So the legal stakes are high and practitioners need to seek professional advice rather than rely on a sample form. Notwithstanding my concern, the *Toolkit* provides valuable information and resources which help clarify and improve standards of care and practice guidelines throughout the field. With Dr. Oz proclaiming on national television that the future of medicine is energy medicine both the *Ethics Handbook* and the *Toolkit* are significant contributions helping to bring legitimacy and acceptance of energy healing methods to mainstream health care.

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