The Importance of Having a Code of Ethics

Laura Pennington

As a professional working with people on a daily basis your word and your approach towards clients is critically important. Your business is built on the principles and values that you wish to present consistently to your clients. Part of establishing your business and continuing to make an impact on your community as an energy healing practitioner should be a code of ethics that is referred to regularly. A code of ethics is about what you do when serving your clients and when no one is looking. Having a code of ethics gets everyone in your business and practice on the same page about what is expected both with clients and behind the scenes.

Why You Need a Code of Ethics

Now more than ever, customers and potential customers seek to feel trust with the businesses they work with. It's of critical importance that you are able to establish relationships built on trust with your clients and community members, and it will be this professional nature that spurs your referrals and encourages clients to keep coming back.

What Does Having a Code of Ethics Say To Clients?

Perhaps understanding the need for a code of ethics can best be understood by thinking about some of the negative discussions surrounding ethics at this time, when fewer and fewer customers feel as though they can trust corporations after scandals and mismanagement demonstrate clear evidence of a lack of ethics. Your own commitment to ethics helps you to stand out amongst the crowd.

Commitment is an essential part of your code of ethics. It signals that you have spent the time to consider critical principles of business and customer service, and a level of dedication to ensuring that all staff and partners are on board with those principles too. You want your business to make its own mark and you can do that by establishing a code of ethics that gives clarity, common understanding, and a commitment to sound business practices that will benefit you and your clients for years to come.

What Can Happen If You Don't Have a Code of Ethics?

First of all, clients might question your integrity if you haven't taken the time to set up some guidelines. Doing this doesn't take too much time and it's a really beneficial exercise for you to think about how everyone in the practice should act. Not having a code of ethics signals to clients that either you're not concerned enough about ethics or that you don't have the time to take it seriously. Either way, the presumption of impropriety in any way can have negative impacts on your ability to keep the doors open and to manage a successful, long-term business.

Second, a code of ethics is a matter of protection and responsibility for the owner and manager of the practice. It creates an image of utmost professionalism, attracting high quality professionals and clients to work with you. Just like having professional liability insurance, having a code of ethics demonstrates that you've fully evaluated the needs of your business and the concerns of your clients to generate a comprehensive code of expectations. Skipping over the process of putting in place a code of ethics can have consequences down the road should a situation arise regarding a potential ethical breach.

Third, partner practitioners must be clear on the existence and enforcement of a code of ethics too. Working together in your practice is working as a team, and that team should be clear about their responsibilities and the image they are presenting as your business grows. Your business is defined more by the staff who make the day to day tasks happen than by your logo, website, or marketing materials. The people make your business come alive and the best customer service and adherence to ethical guidelines is what will keep the clients coming back.

Finally, creating and implementing a code of ethics gives you a clear resource to return to if some kind of ethical breach is made. If a practitioner crosses the line and you don't have an existing code of ethics, the practitioner may argue that it was never made clear that such behavior was intolerable. In short, using your code of ethics can help you prevent unethical behavior and also take a responsible stand when you identify breaches of that protocol. Eliminating confusion about behavior and ethics is essential for your practice and business.

Developing Your Code of Ethics

If you are practicing a modality you can easily refer to your specific modality for a code of ethics. It should be readily available on their website for easy access to all practitioners. This will take the work, and uncertainty, out of forming a code of ethics yourself. It also helps all practitioners within the modality to adhere to the same overall standards set forth by the modality founder.

What It Says To Others If You Don't Have a Code of Ethics

It's not enough to just have a yearly discussion among your team about ethics. Your code of ethics is a foundational part of your business, and without it you can invite criticism or questions about your credibility.

As a practitioner, business owner, and/or manager, you have enough on your plate attempting to grow that business as it is. Your clients are vital for your success and that means you have to make it clear from the moment they enter the door that you have made a commitment to professionalism for your entire practice. Without establishing the guidelines for your code of ethics you invite a host of problems.

You also open yourself to some awkward conversations about ethics with clients. Without an established set of standards, what would you say if a client

asked to see your code of ethics? Would all practitioners be able to respond in a concise and appropriate manner? Avoiding the subject means that you could have multiple understandings of professionalism in the practice, some of which may be shared with clients. You're much better off spending the time to develop a comprehensive code of ethics.