



MOOC 1

Learning Unit 1

Ethics in Crisis Intervention – importance of ethical principles

Ethics of helping professions refers to making reasonable and fair moral decisions by professionals in their professional services based on their personal philosophical ideas and values and professional ethical guidelines. Ethics of giving help is based also on rules and regulations of professional organizations, patient/clients' wellbeing, as well as social rules and norms. Ethical conduct is also the cornerstone of psychological early intervention.

Ethical theories, principles and values help professionals to consider different professional elements embedded in the context of intervention. By setting up professional ethical standards we maximize the chance of competent professional services provided by interveners for their clients.

An example of good practice is a model of ethical decision making for crisis counselors developed by American Counseling Association (Jordan, 2016). It consists of ten steps: (1) identify the ethical concern within the context of the disaster, (2) consider personal (crisis counselor's) beliefs and values, skills and knowledge, (3) identify the code(s) of ethics involved, (4) determine possible ethical traps, (5) frame a preliminary response, (6) consider the consequences, (7) prepare an ethical resolution, (8) get feedback/consultation from other crisis counselors, (9) take action, and (10) review the outcome.

Another example of good practice are ethical rules for psychological first aid according to WHO (2016). According to them, ethical responsibility of the intervener requires to respect:

Safety: don't expose people to further harm, ensure (as best you can) they are safe and protected from further physical or psychological harm.

Dignity: treat people with respect and according to their cultural and social norms.

Rights: act only in people's best interest, ensure access to impartial assistance without discrimination, assist people to claim their rights and access available support.

WHO (2016) gives simple ethical guidelines for helpers:

Do's

- Be honest and trustworthy.
- Respect a person's right to make their own decisions.
- Be aware of and set aside your own biases and prejudices.
- Make it clear to people that even if they refuse help now, they can still access help in the future.
- Respect privacy and keep the person's story confidential, as appropriate.
- Behave appropriately according to the person's culture, age and gender.

Don'ts

- Don't exploit your relationship as a helper.
- Don't ask the person for any money or favor for helping them.
- Don't make false promises or give false information.
- Don't exaggerate your skills.
- Don't force help on people, and don't be intrusive or pushy.
- Don't pressure people to tell you their story.
- Don't share the person's story with others.
- Don't judge the person for their actions or feelings.

References:

Jordan, K. (2010). An ethical decision making model for crisis counselors.
http://counselingoutfitters.com/vistas/vistas10/Article_89.pdf

WHO (2016). Psychological First Aid For All. Supporting People in the Aftermath of Crisis Events.
https://www.who.int/mental_health/world-mental-health-day/ppt.pdf