

Counselor Code of Ethics: Interview Response

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During the preparation phase of this assignment, I had the opportunity to interview Amiee Marr, a licensed professional counselor with extensive experience in the field. My personal interest in pursuing a career as a licensed professional counselor prompted me to seek her insights. Amiee shared valuable perspectives on the journey to becoming a counselor, emphasizing the ethical considerations and her own professional experiences.

Amiee Marr earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from Texas Wesleyan University in 2007. Subsequently, after navigating career challenges, she returned to Texas Wesleyan University to obtain her master's degree in professional counseling in 2010, marking the beginning of her career in licensed professional counseling. She is an active member of the Texas Counseling Association and the American Mental Health Counselors Association.

Currently, Amiee is affiliated with Family Matters Counseling Center, where she exclusively conducts online appointments from her office in Fort Worth, Texas. With 14 years of professional experience, she specializes in working with adolescents, adults, and couples. Her clinical expertise includes treating conditions such as OCD, stress, anxiety, trauma, depression, and assisting clients in coping with life changes. Amiee Marr is particularly skilled in exposure response prevention (ERP), an evidence-based form of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) renowned for its effectiveness in treating anxiety disorders, phobias, and OCD.

My discussion with Amiee Marr provided me with a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and rewards associated with a career in counseling, reinforcing my commitment to pursuing this profession. Her insights into counseling ethics and practical experiences have greatly enriched my perspective on the field.

Intro to Counseling Ethics

Amiee Marr is deeply committed to assisting individuals facing challenges, drawing from her own difficult upbringing marred by violence and domestic abuse. Recognizing the detrimental impact of her family environment at a young age, she embarked on a personal journey to educate herself about healthy relationships and mental health awareness.

During this process, Amiee discovered that she scored a 9 out of 10 on the ACE scale, which further fueled her determination to pursue a career where she could support others, particularly those grappling with OCD. Having personally dealt with obsessive-compulsive disorder since her youth, Amiee channels her experiences into empathetic and effective counseling practices. Her journey from adversity to advocacy underscores her dedication to transforming hardship into positive outcomes. Amiee finds immense fulfillment in providing support to individuals navigating profound challenges, emphasizing the importance of seeking treatment for OCD and promoting positive cultural attitudes towards mental health care.

Her unwavering commitment to helping others, combined with her personal resilience and professional expertise, positions Amiee as a compassionate and effective counselor dedicated to making a meaningful difference in the lives of her clients. The ACA highlights the importance of advocating for personal or client needs, either individually or, ideally, through involvement with your ACA branch or division. By actively participating in decision-making processes, counselors can contribute to positive changes that directly benefit the lives of their clients (ACA, 2020).

Rules of Practice

Aimee mentioned that many of her friends are therapists, reflecting her extensive experience of over 14 years in the field. She values the opportunity to discuss cases and collaborate with other licensed professional counselors. Regarding legal protection, Aimee highlighted a key benefit of working in a group practice: all necessary documents are provided and reviewed by legal counsel employed by the group. She adheres rigorously to guidelines and recognizes that if she were to establish her own practice in the future, she would need to further expand her legal knowledge.

Understanding of informed consent is a fundamental legal and ethical principle applicable to in this case, psychotherapeutic procedures and approaches. It mandates that clients fully understand pertinent details, such as risks, benefits, and alternatives, before consenting to proceed. This understanding must be documented in compliance with legal standards across all states. The concept of informed consent upholds individuals' rights, ensuring these rights are upheld irrespective of their mental health status or condition (Zur, 2020).

According to Van Hoose and Paradise (1979), counselors demonstrate ethical responsibility towards clients by maintaining personal and professional honesty, prioritizing the client's best interests without malice or personal gain. Their actions should be justifiable as the most appropriate judgment based on current professional standards (p. 58). As a member of the ACA, Aimee benefits from access to their ethical guidelines and resources. She has maintained her membership since becoming a licensed professional counselor, emphasizing the importance of staying informed about the latest ethical practices for the benefit of her clients. Aimee also prioritizes continuous professional growth, dedicating significant time to earning Continuing Education Units (CEUs) across various areas of professional development.

Counselor Code of Ethics

Aimee faced a challenging ethical dilemma when asked to provide counseling to both a father and son without disclosing their treatment to each other. Specializing in OCD treatment, which often runs in families, Aimee typically works with individuals who seek her help knowing that their family members may also benefit. However, in this instance, the son's girlfriend approached Aimee requesting confidential treatment for both men, fearing they would refuse treatment if they knew about each other's involvement due to their intense privacy concerns surrounding their OCD symptoms.

Seeking ethical guidance, Aimee consulted with several peers. They collectively determined that since both the father and son were adults, lived separately, and were seeking treatment independently for their OCD without involving each other directly, it could be ethically appropriate for Aimee to work with both clients under strict confidentiality measures. However, they emphasized the critical importance of safeguarding and segregating information carefully, exercising discretion in communication and documentation to maintain each client's privacy and trust.

When treating multiple family members, practitioners must be vigilant to prevent conflicts that can undermine treatment effectiveness. Such conflicts could necessitate terminating therapy for one or more participants, or even all. Additionally, conflicts may prompt complaints to the licensing board or lead to civil lawsuits seeking monetary damages. Therefore, careful management of potential conflicts is crucial in family therapy to maintain therapeutic progress and professional integrity (CPA Insurance, 2021).

Aimee effectively manages burnout by prioritizing physical exercise as her primary strategy. Her weekly routine includes diverse activities such as walking her two large dogs, practicing yoga, engaging in belly dancing sessions, and attending the gym. Additionally, she

values social connections and dedicates time to spend with friends. After completing client sessions each day, Aimee ensures uninterrupted personal time by turning off phone notifications. She also cultivates a habit of continuous learning through regular reading. Throughout her career, Aimee has learned the importance of incorporating daily self-care activities, even if brief, to maintain well-being and prevent burnout.

Business/Family Law and Professional Practice

Aimee maintains a strict confidentiality policy with her clients, ensuring all discussions remain private unless there is a risk of harm to themselves or others. This boundary is crucial for fostering a safe environment conducive to open communication. Drawing from her personal experience with OCD, Aimee is acutely aware of the stigma surrounding intrusive thoughts and behaviors, which can hinder clients from sharing openly.

When Aimee suspects a client is struggling, she approaches the situation with sensitivity, mindful of its complexities. She carefully evaluates whether breaching confidentiality would mitigate potential harm or exacerbate the client's distress, particularly when distinguishing between intrusive thoughts and genuine plans, a critical assessment given that some clients with OCD may engage in self-harm. Throughout these ethical deliberations, Aimee prioritizes her clients' well-being while upholding professional standards of confidentiality and ethical practice.

According to Aimee, maintaining effectiveness as a counselor hinge on not internalizing clients' words or actions personally. She underscores the frequent occurrence of therapy cancellations and acknowledges that sometimes the therapeutic relationship may no longer align well with the client's needs. Aimee advocates for authenticity, emphasizing that clients can discern when a counselor is not genuine. Reflecting on her early career experiences, Aimee

initially felt pressured to conform to a perceived professional image that didn't resonate with her true self. She found greater success and fulfillment in her career when she embraced authenticity and allowed herself to be genuine with her clients.

Records Management and Advocacy

Aimee maintains meticulous record management by assigning separate files to each client. During a period when she worked at two different practices simultaneously, she implemented a system to distinguish clients between the practices, such as using star stickers on files for one practice and omitting them for the other. She dedicates significant weekly hours to entering documentation into electronic health records and ensures all paper files are securely locked. To uphold client privacy, Aimee strictly limits the inclusion of identifying details in her notes, using only first names and avoiding any personal addresses or other identifying information. This conscientious approach reflects her commitment to maintaining confidentiality and adhering to professional standards in record keeping.

Professional advocacy within the counseling profession can be effectively advanced through education. Leadership and advocacy education can take various forms, each aimed at equipping counselors with the necessary tools and knowledge. One crucial approach involves enhancing accessibility to existing leadership and advocacy resources. By ensuring these resources are readily available, counselors can be better prepared to engage in advocacy efforts (ACA, 2020).

Amiee exemplifies a dedicated commitment to advocating for herself, the counseling profession, and individuals managing obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). She underscores the pivotal role of resources provided through her ACA membership, which form a cornerstone

of her advocacy efforts. These initiatives enable resource dissemination, foster counselor networking, and bolster advocacy efforts, ultimately empowering counselors to advocate effectively in their professional capacities (ACA, 2020).

Conclusion

During the interview process, I gained valuable insights into real-life scenarios of ethical decision-making through discussions with Amiee. Her patience and meticulous approach in detailing various situations shed light on the complexities involved in ethical decision-making processes. I found Amiee's willingness to share her personal beliefs and unwavering commitment to ethical standards within the counseling profession particularly enlightening. Her insights into confidentiality, particularly in her work with adults dealing with shame and hesitation, provided me with a deeper perspective.

Our discussion underscored the importance of continuous learning in enhancing our proficiency in navigating ethical complexities within counseling practice. It highlighted the significance of actively seeking diverse resources and staying abreast of new developments, emphasizing the value of never settling with current knowledge alone.

While I had previously recognized the importance of building a robust collaborative network, Amiee reinforced the pivotal role such networks play in seeking unbiased opinions from experts in the field. Their perspectives can offer invaluable insights, particularly in ethical dilemmas or when considering alternative treatment approaches. This exchange reminded me of the critical junctures where it may be necessary to reevaluate the therapeutic relationship or consider new therapeutic strategies, guided by informed input from peers. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and look forward to talking with her again in the future.

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