

Counseling Dispositions

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Dispositions within Counseling

In the context of counseling, a professional disposition refers to the enduring values, commitments, attitudes, interpersonal behaviors, and ethical orientations that influence how a counselor-in-training or licensed professional interacts with clients, colleagues, families, and the broader community.

These dispositions shape not only a counselor's technical competencies but also their professional identity, decision-making, cultural responsiveness, self-awareness, and capacity to engage sincerely and ethically with those they serve (Christensen, Dickerman, & Dorn-Medeiros, 2018).

Disposition 1:

Professional Practice & Work Ethic

As a counseling candidate, maintaining professionalism and a strong work ethic is foundational to ethical and effective practice. This disposition reflects not only our academic discipline but also our readiness to serve clients with integrity and reliability (Spurgeon, Thomas, & Clement, 2012).

Upholding these qualities ensures that we maintain the standards outlined by the American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics, which emphasizes competence, responsibility, and integrity as central to professional identity (ACA, 2014, Section C.2.a).

While working towards my master's, I've demonstrated professional practice by consistently meeting coursework deadlines, seeking supervision to strengthen clinical skills, and approaching client interactions with professionalism and care. These habits reflect a commitment to ethical excellence and lifelong learning in the counseling field.

Disposition 1:

Professional Practice & Work Ethic

Key Components:

- **Timeliness:** Meeting deadlines and being punctual for sessions, supervision, and coursework demonstrates respect for clients, colleagues, and the counseling process (Spurgeon et al., 2012).
- **Initiative:** Actively seeking feedback from professors, supervisors, and peers enhances self-awareness and professional growth. Taking initiative also means offering help to others and continuously seeking learning opportunities. Taking initiative reflects the counselor's commitment to lifelong learning and aligns with ethical expectations for continuous professional development (ACA, 2014, Section C.2.f).
- **Attention to Detail:** Ethical practice requires precision, from accurate documentation and treatment planning to following confidentiality procedures. Effective time management ensures high-quality, well-prepared work. Attention to detail upholds ethical standards for record keeping and client privacy (ACA, 2014, Sections A.1.b & B.6.a).
- **Professional Appearance and Conduct:** Presenting oneself professionally in demeanor, communication, and dress models trustworthiness and sets a standard for client engagement and community collaboration. The ACA Code of Ethics underscores the importance of integrity and respect in all professional relationships (ACA, 2014, Section C.1.a).

Disposition 2:

Professional Qualities

As counseling candidates, embodying professional qualities such as integrity, flexibility, and respect for diversity is essential to developing ethical and effective relationships with clients and colleagues. These qualities reflect a counselor's capacity to promote:

1) inclusivity, 2) collaboration, and 3) success within diverse environments, aligning with the counselor's role as an advocate and ethical practitioner (Christensen, Dickerman, & Dorn-Medeiros, 2018).

The ACA Code of Ethics further reinforces these principles, emphasizing respect for diversity, integrity in relationships, and professional responsibility (ACA, 2014, Sections A.4.b & C.1.a).

In my LPC training, I have demonstrated professional qualities by adapting my communication styles to meet diverse client needs, supporting peer growth through collaboration, and maintaining transparency in all academic and professional interactions. These qualities ensure that I build relationships rooted in trust, integrity, and mutual respect.

Disposition 2:

Professional Qualities

Key Components:



- **Values Diversity:** Demonstrating an inclusive attitude in all interactions reflects the counselor's ethical duty to honor multicultural competence and respect clients' cultural identities (ACA, 2014, Section E.5.b). Counselors who value diversity help foster trust, safety, and belonging in both academic and clinical settings.
- **Promotes Success:** Encouraging growth and success in students, clients, and colleagues reflects a commitment to empowerment and wellness. The ACA Code of Ethics reminds counselors to act in ways that enhance human development and reduce barriers to success (ACA, 2014, Section A.1.a).
- **Demonstrates Flexibility:** Adjusting strategies, materials, and approaches as needed demonstrates adaptability and client-centered responsiveness. Ethical counseling requires openness to client feedback and situational demands while maintaining professional boundaries (ACA, 2014, Section A.4.b).
- **Demonstrates Honesty and Integrity:** Upholding truthfulness and accountability is foundational to professional trust. Accepting responsibility for mistakes and maintaining integrity in communication and documentation are explicitly tied to ethical standards of competence and honesty (ACA, 2014, Section C.4.a). (Lawson, 2016)

Disposition 3:

Professional Relationships

Establishing and maintaining professional relationships is central to effective counseling practice. This disposition reflects the counselor's ability to:

- 1) communicate respectfully,
- 2) collaborate with colleagues, and
- 3) respond to clients and community members in ways that foster trust and mutual understanding.

The **ACA Code of Ethics** emphasizes that professional relationships should be grounded in respect, collaboration, and a commitment to client welfare (ACA, 2014, Sections A.1.a & C.2.d). Developing these relational competencies helps counselors model ethical interaction and contribute positively to the broader professional community (Sharma, Yukhymenko-Lescroart, & Bernal-Arevalo, 2023).

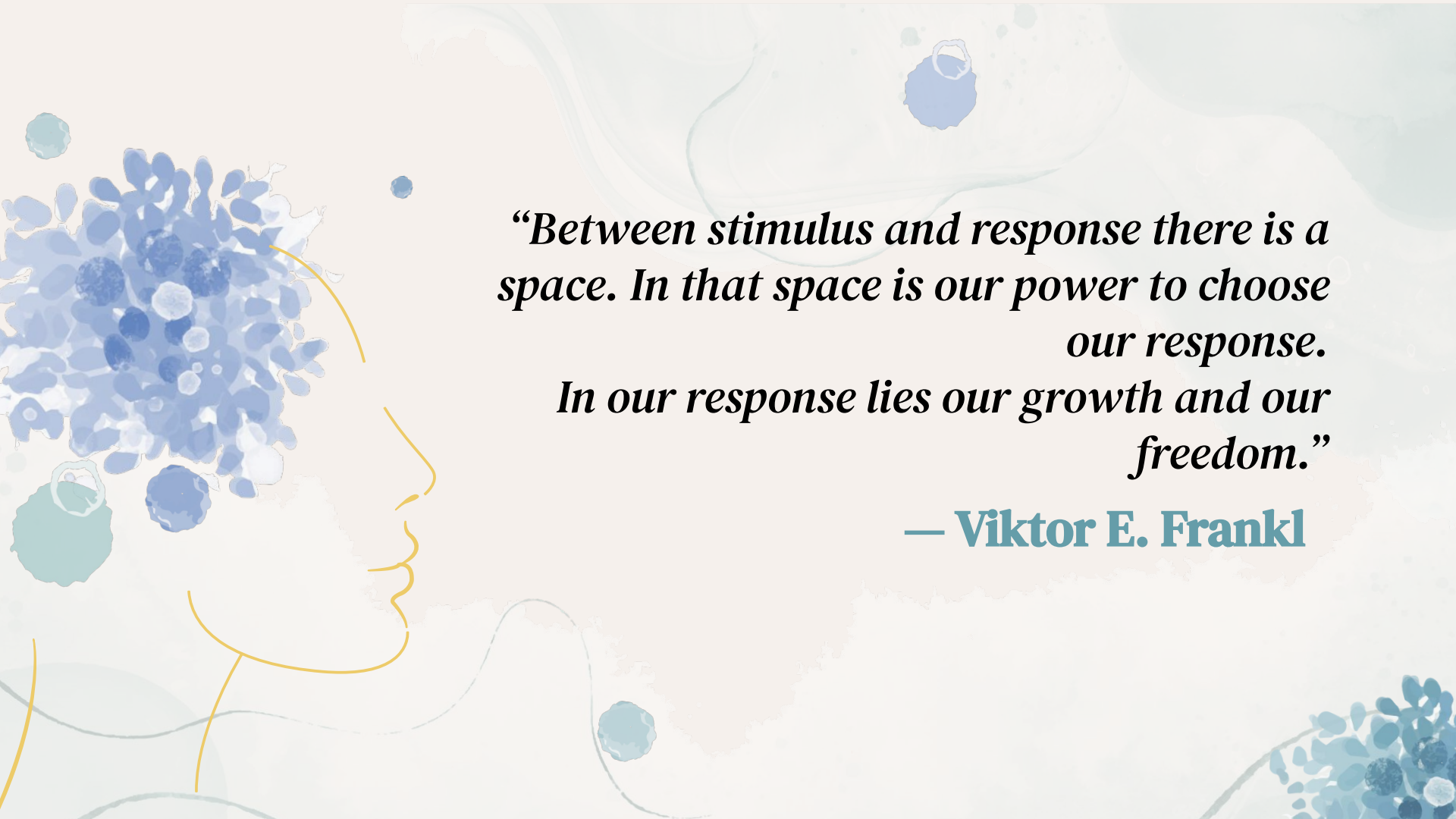
In my LPC training, I have demonstrated professional relationship skills by communicating promptly with supervisors, collaborating on case discussions with peers, and maintaining a cooperative attitude in group supervision. These experiences have strengthened my ability to engage in ethical, respectful, and effective professional relationships.

Disposition 3:

Professional Relationships

Key Components:

- **Responds:** Demonstrates professionalism by replying to correspondence respectfully and in a timely manner. Timely and considerate communication reflects reliability and accountability within a professional counseling setting (ACA, 2014, Section F.11.b).
- **Cooperates:** Works effectively and respectfully with colleagues to build consensus and promote positive, solution-focused interactions. Cooperation supports teamwork and models the collaborative spirit of the counseling profession(ACA, 2014, Section C.6.a).
- **Collaborates:** Effective collaboration with colleagues, supervisors, and interdisciplinary teams ensures continuity of care and shared understanding. Ethical collaboration involves maintaining clear communication and working jointly to advocate for client well-being (ACA, 2014, Section D.1.c). Collaboration ensures the delivery of consistent, high-quality support for clients and students.



*“Between stimulus and response there is a
space. In that space is our power to choose
our response.
In our response lies our growth and our
freedom.”*

— Viktor E. Frankl

Disposition 4:

Professional Development

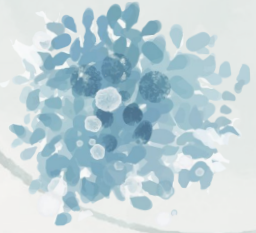
Professional development is an essential component of ethical counseling practice. It reflects a counselor's dedication to continual self-reflection, lifelong learning, and intentional skill growth. By engaging in reflective practice and seeking ongoing education, counseling candidates ensure their effectiveness, self-awareness, and adherence to evolving professional standards (Sharma, Yukhymenko-Lescroart, & Bernal-Arevalo, 2023).

The ACA Code of Ethics reinforces this expectation by emphasizing counselors' responsibility to continually monitor and enhance their professional competence (ACA, 2014, Section C.2.f).

In my LPC training, I have consistently engaged in reflective journaling, sought supervision feedback, and participated in professional development workshops to strengthen my counseling skills. These practices have deepened my self-awareness and reinforced my commitment to lifelong learning as a counselor.

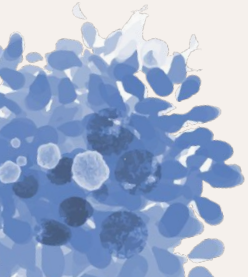
Disposition 4:

Professional Development



Key Components:

- **Reflects:** Engaging in self-reflection helps counselors evaluate their biases, emotional responses, and decision-making processes. The ACA Code of Ethics emphasizes self-monitoring as vital to maintaining professional objectivity and effectiveness (ACA, 2014, Section C.2.d).
- **Learns:** Accepting feedback from supervisors, colleagues, and clients allows counselors to identify areas for growth. Lifelong learning ensures that counselors remain competent, culturally sensitive, and aligned with best practices (ACA, 2014, Section C.2.f).
- **Lifelong Learning:** Pursuing professional development through continuing education, research, and supervision ensures that counselors maintain a high level of knowledge and ethical awareness (ACA, 2014, Section C.2.g). Continuous learning supports the development of advanced skills and deepens counselors' understanding of diverse client needs.



Personal Disposition:

Compassionate Accountability



As a future Licensed Professional Counselor, Compassionate Accountability represents the integration of empathy, integrity, and ethical responsibility. This disposition emphasizes the importance of balancing compassion for clients with a commitment to uphold professional boundaries, ethical standards, and personal well-being.

It reflects a counselor's ability to connect deeply while remaining grounded in evidence-based practice and ethical care (ACA, 2014). Compassionate accountability ensures that empathy is expressed responsibly, supporting clients without compromising professional competence or self-care.

Personal Disposition:

Compassionate Accountability

In my LPC training and counseling practice, I strive to embody compassionate accountability by maintaining empathy while upholding ethical boundaries. Whether managing client crises or addressing sensitive issues, I aim to respond with both heart and structure, offering support while preserving professionalism and ensuring client welfare.

Key Components:

- **Empathy with Boundaries:** Counselors demonstrate genuine care and understanding for clients while maintaining appropriate emotional and professional boundaries. This aligns with **ACA Code A.1.a. (Primary Responsibility)** , which prioritizes client welfare while preserving counselor objectivity.
- **Integrity in Practice:** Practicing transparency and honesty fosters trust in the counseling relationship. Ethical integrity includes accurately representing qualifications, maintaining confidentiality, and engaging in practices that reflect respect for clients' autonomy (**ACA Code C.2.a.**).
- **Accountability and Self-Regulation:** Effective counselors monitor their personal wellness and emotional responses to prevent impairment. Compassionate accountability requires recognizing one's limits, seeking supervision, and practicing self-care as outlined in **ACA Code C.2.g.** and **C.2.f. (Continuing Education)** .
- **Ethical Compassion in Decision-Making:** Compassionate accountability guides ethical choices by combining empathy with sound professional judgment. Counselors use empathy not to rescue, but to empower clients, promoting growth and self-efficacy consistent with **ACA Code A.4.b. (Personal Values)** .

The Importance of Professional Dispositions & Standards in Counseling

Professional dispositions and ethical standards are the foundation of trust and credibility in the counseling relationship. They safeguard both the counselor and the client by ensuring that every interaction is grounded in respect, competence, and authenticity.

In My Aspiring Role as an LPC:

- Dispositions like integrity, reflection, and compassionate accountability guide ethical decision-making.
- Adhering to the **ACA Code of Ethics** strengthens client trust, promotes justice and equity, and protects client welfare.
- Continuous reflection and professional growth align with **Section C.2.f. (Continuing Education)**, emphasizing lifelong learning as an ethical responsibility.

As I move toward becoming a Licensed Professional Counselor, I view dispositions not as checkboxes, but as living values that shape every decision, relationship, and moment of care. Ethics give structure to compassion and compassion gives purpose to ethics. Together, they form the heart of my professional identity.



Resources

PERSONAL DISPOSITIONS

Professional Practice & Work Ethic

- Timeliness
- Initiative
- Attention to detail
- Professional appearance and conduct

Professional Qualities

- Values diversity
- Promotes success
- Demonstrates flexibility
- Demonstrates honesty and integrity



Professional Development

- Reflects
- Learns
- Lifelong learning

Compassionate Accountability

- Empathy with boundaries
- Integrity with boundaries
- Accountability and self-regulation

Professional Relationships

- Respond
- Collaborate
- Cooperates

The Core of a Counselor



<https://tinyurl.com/4522zb7m>

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