

## **Ontario Expressive Arts Therapy Association Code of Ethics**

### **Care and Respect for the Rights and Dignity of Persons**

In view of the growing complexity and intersectionality of modern lives, the Expressive Arts Therapist (EXAT) is against all forms of discrimination, bias or prejudice and believes in the practice of equity. This includes discrimination based on race, class, size, gender, sex, orientation, age, ability, religion and legal status. The EXAT proactively considers the needs of those we serve by supporting clients and their best interests, by honouring our commitments to them, and by refraining from any actions which risk harm. We recognize our individual and collective responsibilities to society, to the Expressive Arts Therapy field and, especially, to those we serve.

### **Continuing Education**

The EXAT is committed to providing service of the highest quality. To this end the EXAT continues to engage in satisfying the professional requirements of competency through ongoing therapy, supervision, contribution to the field, studio and clinical practice. We continually inform ourselves and expand our skills in therapy, the arts, and community service. We practice in accordance with the best practices of our profession, and continually expand our professional competence through professional development.

### **Autonomy**

The EXAT provides the client or legal decision-maker, accurate and thorough information upon which they can make informed decisions according to their own needs, beliefs and values with regard to our services, processes, and interventions. Inherent benefits and risks are communicated clearly, as well as options and alternatives. We respect client choices and decisions.

### **Confidentiality**

The EXAT believes that clients have the right to confidentiality. The Expressive Arts Therapist safeguards and maintains confidential personal, family and community information obtained in the context of the professional-client contract and relationship in compliance with the Ontario Privacy Act.

### **Integrity in Relationships**

We believe that therapeutic relationships and their benefits rely on trust and empathy. Trust is dependent on the demonstrated integrity of the Expressive Arts Therapist. The EXAT is self-aware and truthful. The EXAT maintains an implicit and explicit commitment to the client and client groups, to themselves, to each other, to our profession, to other professionals and to the larger world. We exercise healthy boundaries and evaluate all contact and relationships with clients for their risk or benefit to client health and well-being according to the highest standards of ethical behaviour as outlined in the code of ethics and standards of practice.

### **Aesthetic Responsibility**

Aesthetic responsibility is the ability to use self-awareness of bodily sensory experience and imagination as vehicles for creativity, inter-modal artistic expression and phenomenological exploration of the insights offered by images and the shaping thereof. The EXAT believes that attunement to sensory experience and the imagination are ways to access creative capacity and a way to understand relationships with the worlds we inhabit. The EXAT does not reduce artistic expressions to expressions of self that can be analyzed for psychological content. Rather, the EXAT views artistic expressions as expressing worlds

and relationships. We explore these worlds and relationships through a specialization termed “aesthetic responsibility”.

### **Accountability**

The Expressive Arts Therapist recognizes that as a member of a self-regulated profession, we have a responsibility to hold our selves, and each other, accountable for our actions, accountable to the people we serve and to the larger community. The EXAT exercises her, or his, best professional judgment as guided by the values and responsibilities outlined in the OEATA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, as well as being bound by law and the regulations of the Ontario College of Psychotherapists. The Expressive Arts Therapist makes every reasonable effort to resolve ethical dilemmas through self-reflection and consultation. Where there is breach of ethics, the EXAT makes every effort to repair loss of trust and accept responsibility for errors in judgment.

### **Social Justice**

The EXAT believes that as health care professionals, (and educators, researchers etc.), we have an extended responsibility to advocate for the individual and collective rights and social determinants of health of our clients and communities. The EXAT believes in the basic human capacity to shape and create our worlds according to our individual and collective needs which necessitates that we empower clients to identify and access their resources with regard to self-advocacy.