

**Care:**

**A Sustainable  
(or, at least, relevant)  
Ethic?**

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# Objectives

- Understand revisions to AOTA Code of Ethics (2010)
- Analyze the theoretical foundation of the AOTA Code of Ethics
- Understand fundamental aspects of ethics of care
- Evaluate AOTA Code of Ethics in light of ethics of care
- Apply ethics of care to OT workplace ethical dilemma

# Write It Down

List 5 things that are important to you...



...at work.

# AOTA Code of Ethics, 2010

- History
- Development
- Values
- Principles
- Philosophical base



# AOTA Code of Ethics - History

- First codified in 1977
- Revisions in 1979, 1988, 1994, and 2005
- Complimentary documents
  - Core Values and Attitudes (1993)
  - Guidelines to the AOTA Code of Ethics (1998)

# AOTA Code of Ethics - Development

- 2010 edition combines 3 previous documents
- Compiled review of:
  - Issues raised in OT ethics cases
  - Member questions related to ethics
  - Content of other professional codes of ethics
- Based on:
  - Ethical reasoning
  - Empathic reflection

# AOTA Code of Ethics - Values

- Justice
- Freedom
- Altruism
- Prudence
- Equality
- Truth
- Dignity



# Write It Down

List 5 things that make a difference in  
your life...



...at work.



# AOTA Code of Ethics - Principles

- Beneficence
- Nonmaleficence
- Autonomy and confidentiality
- Social justice
- Procedural justice
- Veracity
- Fidelity

# AOTA Code of Ethics – Theoretical Foundation



# Principlism

- Lack a unifying theoretical base:
  - Anthological, ad hoc origin
  - Which, if any, has priority?
  - How do they relate?
- Function as reminders of ethical value, but provide no action guide

(Clouser, 1995)

# In Search of an Ethical Framework for Occupational Therapy and Science

- ◉ Something more:
  - ◉ unified and systematic?
  - ◉ suitable than a biomedical perspective?
  - ◉ publicly understood and accepted?
  - ◉ daily, relevant, and practicable?
  - ◉ reliable and reasoned?
- ◉ Something allowing analysis?
- ◉ Something providing a guide for action?
- ◉ Something that articulates with the culture of OT?

(Clouser, 1995)

# Write It Down

List 5 things you identify yourself with...



...at work.

# Ethics of Care

- History
- Development
- Assumptions
- “Rules”



# Ethics of Care – History and Development



- Moral sentimentalism
- *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Gilligan, 1982)
- Education (Noddings)
- Philosophy (Frankfurt, Slote)
- Nursing (Benner, Gordon)
- Political Science (Tronto)

# Assumptions

- Humans are dependent for many years of their lives
- Those dependent on us have a moral claim on us
- Developing relationships of care is moral territory; caring relations are morally superior to other forms of relatedness
- Human progress hinges on the care that those needing it receive

(Held, 2006' Noddings, 2004)



# Rules of Common Morality

- Don't cause pain, harm, or death
- Don't deprive freedom
- Don't cheat
- Don't steal
- Don't lie
- Don't break promises

(Clouser, 1995)



# “Rules” of an Ethic of Care

- ◉ Go out of your way to be helpful
- ◉ Help who you can, when you can, to the extent your can
  - ◉ Pay attention, cultivate sensitivity
  - ◉ Weigh (think) the impulse (feel)
  - ◉ Enter in; empathize; connect
  - ◉ Respond; place the needs of others before your own
  - ◉ Assess the relationship
- ◉ Do your duty—persistently
- ◉ Have a vision



# Write It Down

List 5 things you are devoted to...



...at work.

# Analysis and Procedure:

## Guidance for Exceptions and Violations of Rules

- Would the action be justified for all people in the same morally relevant circumstance?
- Would the action be permissible if everyone knew it was permitted?
- Does the harm prevented outweigh the harm caused?

(Clouser, 1995)

# Occupational Justice...

- People have a right to participate in meaningful occupations
- Matters of health are matters of justice; we are a justice-driven profession
- Equitable distribution of access to occupations

(Wilcock, 1998)

...or, occupational *care*?

# Whoa, Whoa, Whoa!

- Caring is stressful
- Coping with the stress of caring without detaching:
  - Assume caring is primary
  - Assume a certain level of involvement provides insight
  - Acknowledge disability and dependence are real
  - Decide to offer help without dictating outcome
  - Recognize multiple contributions (Benner, 1988)

# Sustainable?



- “Just right” care:
  - the least possible contribution with the best chance of making a difference
  - doing a little beyond the ordinary
  - A series of small contributions that yield something substantial over time
- Burnout ≠ caring too much

# AOTA Code of Ethics & Ethics of Care

- Which strand of ethics seems to align best with the tenets of our profession and practice?
- Write Principle 8 and sample evidences from an ethics of care perspective.



# References

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