

Ethical Principles for Online Applications in Coaching, Therapy, Supervision and Consulting

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The digital world comes with its own wealth of challenges – and digital coaching offers are no exception! To make sure you can always count on the best experience, we base our online offers on the following principles and guidelines:

1. Introduction

The following ethical principles represent minimum requirements for a self-commitment of professionally working coaches, therapists, supervisors and consultants who offer their services through online applications. They are included in the further training courses of the Karlsruher Institut and form the basis of the certifications and offers made there.

They are based on the following ethical guidelines:

- Ethical guidelines of the Karlsruher Institut (KI)
- Guidelines for the recognition of online counselors of the German Society for Online Counseling (DGOB)
- Ethical Principles of the International Coach Federation (ICF)
- Guidelines of the German Federal Coaching Association (Deutscher Bundesverband Coaching - DBVC)
- Media guidelines of the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA)
- Professional Ethics of the Professional Association for Coaching, Supervision and Organizational Consulting (bso)
- Ethics guidelines of the German Society for Systemic Therapy, Counseling and Family Therapy (DGST)

2. Basic Approach

Professional service providers in coaching, therapy, supervision and consulting treat their clients in an appreciative, empathetic, attentive and respectful manner, regardless of origin, gender, sexual orientation, skin color, world view, ethnicity, national origin, age, religion, language, culture, lifestyle and status. They consider their clients as independent, autonomous personalities who are capable of learning and developing, as well as making autonomous decisions and acting on their own responsibility. They respect and observe the inviolable dignity of their clients. Professional service providers in coaching, therapy, supervision and counseling create a trusting, protected and supportive relationship that recognizes and strengthens resources and potentials, increases the client's self-direction and personal responsibility in a way that is coherent for the client and leads to a solution-oriented transfer into the personal context. They strive to use their knowledge and skills to improve the lives of individuals and society. They respect and protect the rights of all participants, especially the right to informational self-determination. They distance themselves from fundamentalist and/or sectarian positions. Professional service providers in coaching, therapy, supervision and consulting practice their professional conduct in a way that serves the reputation of the entire profession.

3. Content Competence

Depending on the focus of the service, the range of services is based on scientifically founded concepts (e.g. of psychology, counseling and economic sciences, educational sciences, media research, neurosciences, medicine, communication sciences, avatar research, etc.). The type of process support, the understanding of the role, the approach and the methods used are derived from them. For this purpose, professional, personal, communicative, social, emotional, technical and economic competences are used. This knowledge and ability has been acquired in verifiable qualifications. This applies to competencies in both face-to-face and online settings, their commonalities and differences, e.g. in listening-reading and writing competencies adapted to the respective medium. Limits of one's own competence are recognized and not exceeded. The individual accompanying processes are evaluated. Scientific research is supported. One's own knowledge and skills are regularly further developed, e.g. through advanced training, supervision and intervention.

4. Technical competence

Basic knowledge of various online usage options is regularly updated.

In-depth knowledge of media-based forms of communication and their impact on interpersonal communication and the shaping of relationships - as well as their targeted use in guiding helpful support processes - is available for working with media. In order to be able to carry out online offers sensibly and professionally, sufficient technical equipment is available - as well as the ability to advise clients on the required equipment. Clients are professionally supported and, if necessary, instructed in the use of the media required for the professional encounter. A fallback scenario is established at the beginning of an online session, e.g., by clarifying the desired and possible communication channels that can be used in case of technical problems. Knowledge of the legal and ethical requirements for data privacy and data security is available and is constantly updated, both technically and organizationally. The necessary technical requirements for the use of secure media, devices and communication channels are created.

5. Confidentiality

The applicable data protection standards and the technical requirements of various media for data management and data transmission (encryption, firewalls, passwords, virus protection) are known and taken into account. The data protection regulations regarding confidentiality and data backup are observed. Information is only passed on with the express permission of the client and in the form requested by the client. It is ensured that personal data, material developed in terms of content and passwords are kept inaccessible to third parties and destroyed after a given period of time. This applies to both digital and analog storage. Data material can be used anonymously for research purposes, for further education and publications. For this purpose, the written consent of the client is obtained in advance.

6. Transparency and integrity

Clients are informed about the procedure for providing the service, about the procedures and media used, their effects - as well as about the data backup carried out. They expressly agree to the corresponding data protection declarations. The information about own qualifications, certifications, experiences, competences and memberships is correct. The clarification of the assignment, the type of communication, the determination of financial framework conditions, the choice of media, the form of contract and other agreements are made honestly and appropriately. Professional competencies are used for the benefit of the client, avoiding dependency and manipulation (e.g. by satisfying sexual, economic, social and spiritual needs). The cooperation is regulated by a service contract, which contains, for example, the objectives, the working method, the time frame, fee agreements and statements on the preservation of professional secrecy and data protection.