

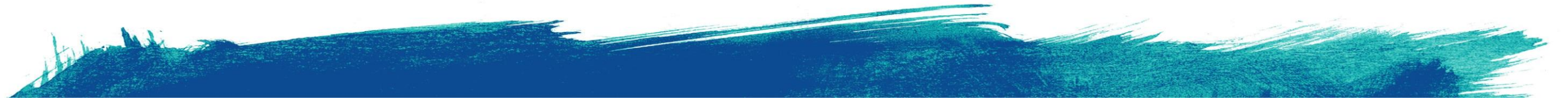
Ethics in Social Work



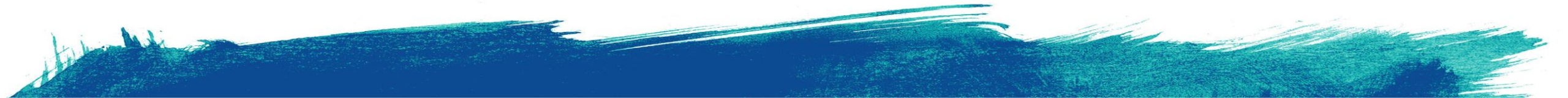
Context and relationships are important factors in how we make ethical decisions.

Without context and relationships words and actions have no meaning

Ethics

- Not only for philosophers/scholars
 - Not simply legal commitments (Law)
 - Not just absolute rules
 - Not just a matter of opinion (Relativism)
 - Cultural differences regarding ethical behavior
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Ethics

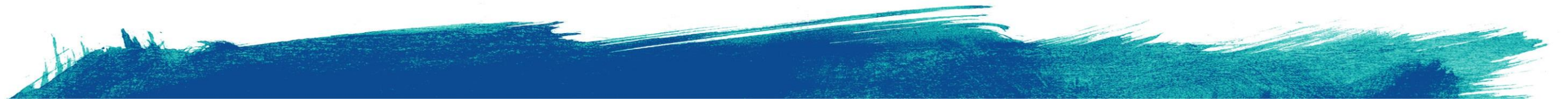
- Distinguishes appropriate behavior from inappropriate behavior
 - Reflected in codes, policies and practice guidelines for professional conduct
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Ethical theories

- Virtue
 - Principles
 - Consequentialism
 - Utilitarian
 - Deontology
 - Relational
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Relational Ethics

- Links great moral traditions of the past with new emphasis on human interaction
- Not in opposition to current dominant theories, but inclusive with them
- Values the human experience

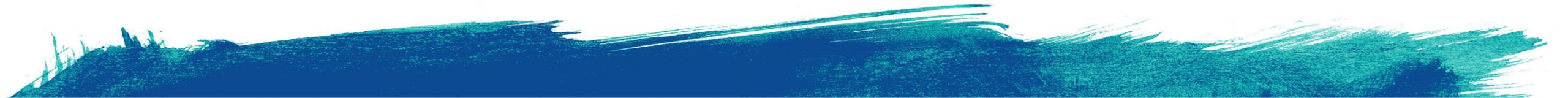


No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care

ETHICS OF CARE

- Establishes trust
- Involves **thinking and feeling**
- Focused on wants and needs of **one another**
- Positive, friendly, helpful, nurturing

Providing Social Work is a Moral Endeavor

- Rooted in our commitment to others
 - Our decisions impacts client's lives in meaningful ways
 - Act as gatekeepers to social programs
 - Need to work collaboratively
 - Foster relationships of mutual respect
 - Client Centered – welcoming/respect diversity
 - Enhance clients' capacity for change
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Societal Expectations

- “Agents of trust” – Expected to act in a morally responsible manner
- Clients have a moral claim to receive the best available services
 - **Everyday we re-earn or lose the public’s trust**
 - What kind of social worker should I be?
 - What kind of person should I be?
 - Do I have the capacity to know when to step aside for another?

Values in Social Work

Value 1 – Respect for Dignity of all people. Uphold client’s right to self-determination.

Value 2 – Advocate for fair and equitable access to public services. Advocate for equal treatment. Challenge injustices

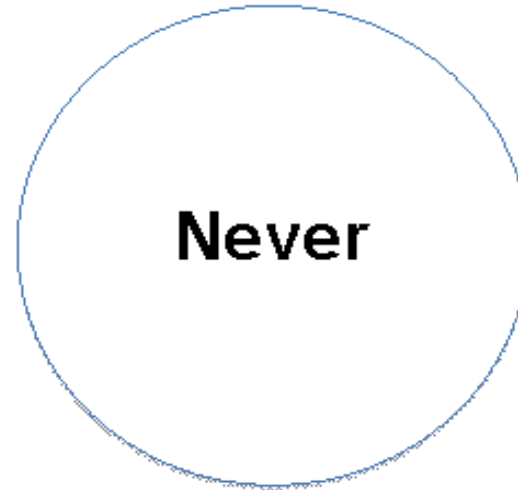
Value 3 – Use knowledge and skills to promote individual development and fair resolutions to conflict

Value 4 – Demonstrate honesty, reliability, impartiality, and diligence in practice. Establish appropriate boundaries

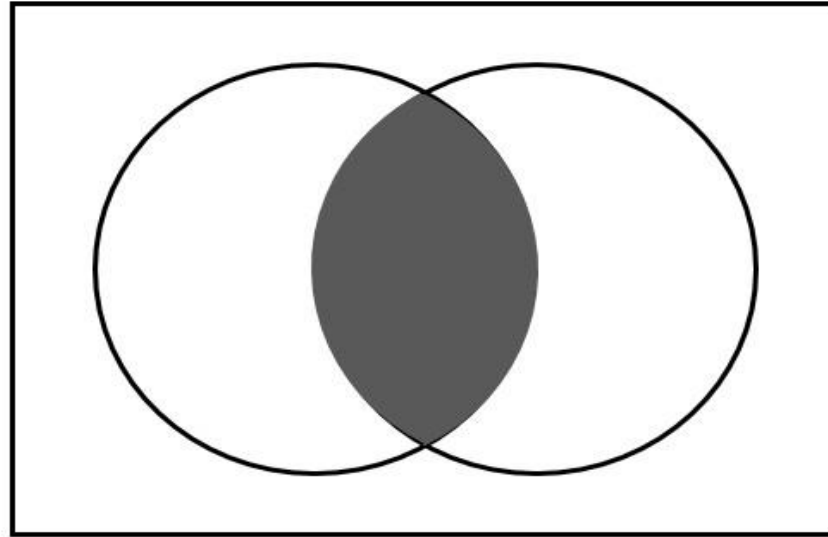
Value 5 – Can be trusted to respect the confidentiality of client information.

Value 6 – Expected to maintain competence, professional knowledge and skill in practice





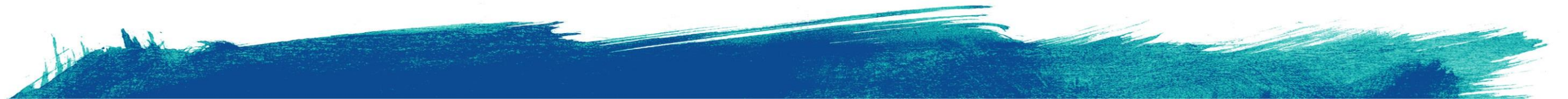
We don't always agree with others, but in our hearts, many of us can say with certainty that there are things we would always or never do.



Most ethical solutions problems are somewhere in the gray area. The space between always and never is uncertainty.

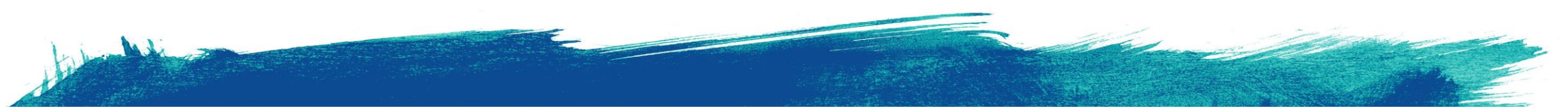
Technology

“These new computer programs are designed for ease of computer matrix & recording. The SW interview is virtually electronic. I have to type everything into this program. Why would I even talk to anyone?... I always sit with my new Social Workers to observe how they’re doing and they’re all terrified to enter the wrong information into the system ... gone are the days where we actually look up and say “well how are you doing today? What is happening in your life today?”



Technology

My assessments are focused on asking a computer-generated checklist. You go on your screenshot checking income, expenses, assets, accommodations... all these buttons on the side, and you input the information, so at the end you press the button to see how much they're eligible for... You enter all this information, click a button, ok they're eligible, or they're not eligible, and that's it. When I was hired we were told not to tell clients whether they're eligible or not. Now that's all it's about.



Computer based systems

- Take away from client self-determination
- Dichotomous thinking leads to black and white decisions and misses out on rich data
- Impacts clients lives and sense of self-worth
- Technology limits SW ability to listen to and respond to client needs and inhibits the development of a trusting relationship



Electronic
information

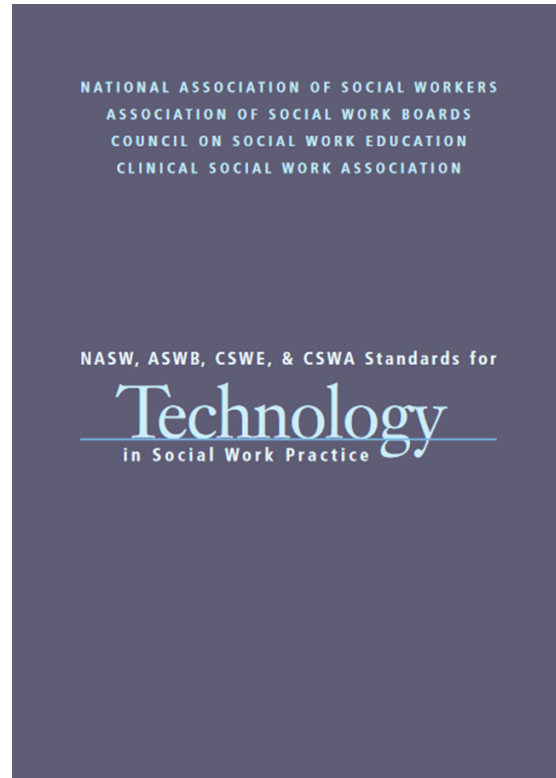
How Do You Know That?

Are Your Recommendations Based on Accurate Information?

By Roger Hankey, ACI



Standards for Technology in Social Work



Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice

The use of technology has become a key component of social work practice. In order to provide guidance and support to Social Workers in this area, the Manitoba College of Social Workers has adopted the newly released 2017 Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice. Members are encouraged to become familiar with these standards as a reference for their professional practice and conduct.

[Read More](#)

Code of Ethics

Guideline 1 – To clients

Guideline 2 – In Professional Relationships

Guideline 3 – To Colleagues

Guideline 4 – To the workplace

Guideline 5 – In Private Practice

Guideline 6 – In research

Guideline 7 – To the Profession

Guideline 8 – to Society



Don't tell my Parents

A Social Worker provides therapy for a 15-year-old boy with depression. One day he arrives at the session with blurred eyes and slurred speech. The boy admitted that he was under the influence and that his new friends have introduced him to ecstasy and crystal meth.

The boy is worried about his drug use and the social worker offers to enroll him in a provincial program for adolescents with mental illness and substance abuse issues.

The boy agreed to participate but refused to let the social worker tell his parents about his drug problem. The social worker was unsure whether she is allowed to provide the boy with drug therapy without obtaining his parents' consent.

Guideline 1.5 Protect Privacy and Confidentiality

1.5.5 - When Social Workers provide services to children, they outline for the child and the child's parents (where appropriate) their practices with respect to confidentiality and children. Social Workers may wish to reserve the right to disclose some information provided by a young child to parents when such disclosure is in the best interest of the child. This should be declared prior to the first session with a child (see section 1.3.3. regarding consent and capacity).

1.6.3 - Social Workers who have reason to believe that a client intends to harm him/herself are expected to exercise professional judgment regarding their need to take action consistent with their provincial/territorial legislation, standards of practice and workplace policies. Social Workers may in this instance take action to prevent client self-harm without the informed consent of the client. In deciding whether to break confidentiality, Social Workers are guided by the imminence of self-harm, the presence of a mental health condition and prevailing professional standards and practices.



Barriers

- I have the moral character and integrity that will guide me to make good ethical decisions
- I looked through all the information and it supports what I was thinking
- I was just doing my job
- Takes courage to stand up to our enemies, equally so to disagree with friends/colleagues

Barriers to ethical decision- making

- Overconfidence bias
- Self serving bias
- Conformity bias
- Role morality
- Framing
- Moral equilibrium

Ethics Unwrapped, University of Texas



Organizational Values

Accountable
Integrative
Collaborative

Professional Values and Principals

Respect and dignity of persons
Pursuit of social justice
Service to Humanity
Integrity of Professional Practice
Confidentiality in Professional Practice
Competence in Professional practice

Personal

Beliefs, values & assumptions

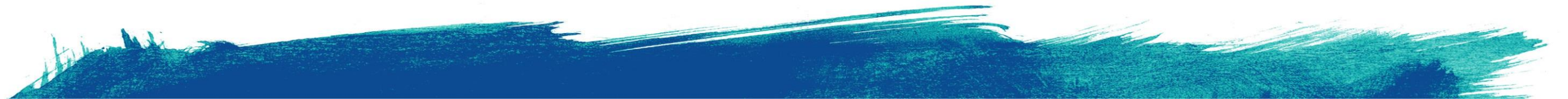
Societal Values

*e.g., as expressed in the Canada
Health Act or the Charter of
Rights and Freedoms*

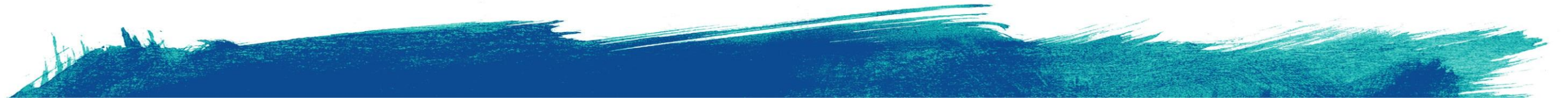
But what happens when values conflict?

Moral Distress

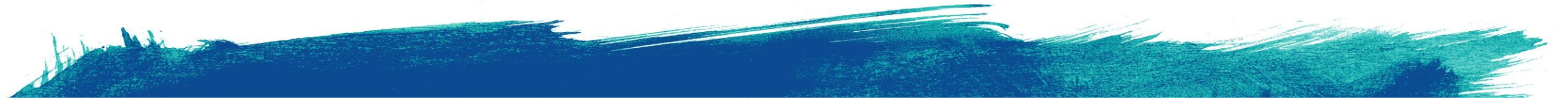
Pain or anguish affecting the mind, body and relationships in response to a situation in which a person is aware of a moral problem, acknowledges responsibility to it, makes a moral judgement about the correct action but as a result of real or perceived constraints, participates in or allows the moral wrongdoing to occur.



External Factors

- **Time constraints**
 - **Lack of resources**
 - **Powerlessness** (my opinion is not valued)
 - **Lying to or deceiving clients** (informed consent)
 - **Inappropriate use of resources**
 - **Compromised services due to pressure to reduce costs**
 - **Co-worker issues or differing professional perspectives**
- 

Internal Factors

- **Lack of understanding of full situation**
 - **Underdeveloped moral awareness**
 - **Perceived Powerlessness**
 - **Lack of knowledge**
 - **Personal/professional value conflict**
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Moral Residue

That which each of us carries from those times in our lives when in the face of moral distress we have seriously compromised ourselves or allowed ourselves to be seriously compromised.

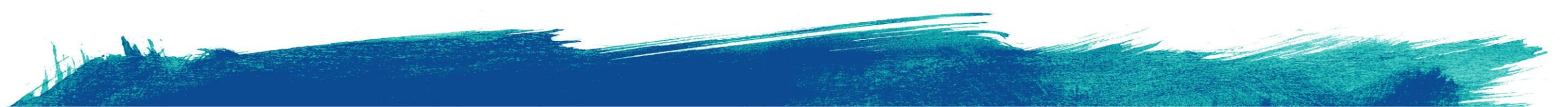
These times are very painful because they threaten or sometimes betray deeply held and cherished beliefs and values.

(George Webster & Francois Baylis)

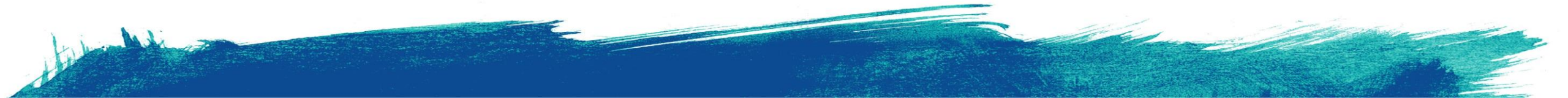


Cannot eliminate moral distress

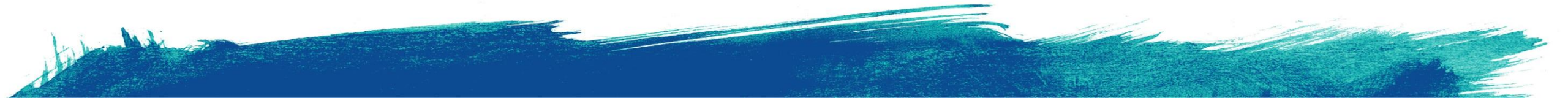
But we can learn to reduce the impact it has on our lives



Building Resilience

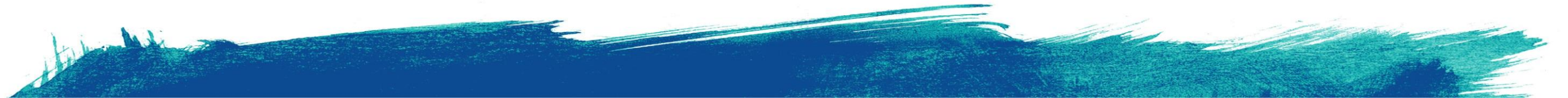
- Know yourself
 - Moral Sensitivity - aware of ethically justified options
 - Self- care
 - Mindfulness - emotional regulation enhances your capacity to respond in an emotionally balanced, ethically grounded and compassionate manner
 - Support network
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Questions to Consider?

1. How does your organization handle ethical issues?
 2. How can you ensure your clients feel “safe” in raising an ethical concern?
 3. What works for you?
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Reality

Many social workers facing an ethical dilemma often do not know how or where to access support



Resources in Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics

Increased **knowledge** of systematic approaches to ethical decision-making.

Increased **sensitivity** to decision points when additional or more specialized resources are needed to assist.

Increased **awareness** of standards and expectation of competent ethical social work.

