

## Section 15: Ethics and Best Practices

### 15.2. Multiple Relationships between a Trainer and Trainee

The APA code of ethics, section 3.05 reads:

*A multiple relationship occurs when a psychologist is in a professional role with a person and (1) at the same time is in another role with the same person, (2) at the same time is in a relationship with a person closely associated with or related to the person with whom the psychologist has the professional relationship, or (3) promises to enter into another relationship in the future with the person or a person closely associated with or related to the person.*

*A psychologist refrains from entering into a multiple relationship if the multiple relationship could reasonably be expected to impair the psychologist's objectivity, competence, or effectiveness in performing his or her functions as a psychologist, or otherwise risks exploitation or harm to the person with whom the professional relationship exists.*

*Multiple relationships that would not reasonably be expected to cause impairment or risk exploitation or harm are not unethical.*

IRI's interpretation of this code is:

When a Clinical Instructor is in a therapist-client relationship with a trainee during training they are in a multiple relationship. We are concerned that a multiple relationship of this type involves a power imbalance and can lead to harm and/or impairment of objectivity. Therefore, we strongly urge all Imago Clinical Instructors to adopt the highest possible ethical standards by ensuring that they do not provide training to therapists who are also their clients for psychotherapy, either individually, in group, or as a couple.

We recognize that occasionally it may be extremely difficult for an Imago trainee to find a Certified Imago Therapist who is conveniently located. Their only access to Imago Therapy as a couple may be the person who is also providing their clinical training. In these circumstances we recommend that the trainer and trainee may enter into therapeutic relationship, but under a clear contractual arrangement which outlines the dual nature of the relationship. In our view this exception should only be made when no other alternative is available.

Steps which may be taken to mitigate the risk include seeking consultation from a colleague, and/or having a clear written contract with the client/trainee.

Note that under provision 3) of the first paragraph of APA code section 3.05, care also needs to be taken when ending one relationship to start another, for example ending therapy to start training, or ending training and then starting therapy.