

Ethics and Healthy Boundaries

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The topic of ethical behavior is potentially bigger in the field of colon hydrotherapy than perhaps any other profession of body workers. The only other time a person will voluntarily expose their genitals is either with a gynecologist, proctologist or sex partner.

In my view, this personal and intimate exposure requires an immense level of trust on the part of our client. How do we earn this trust? One of the ways is to take extra time with the client on their first visit to our office. I normally book a two-hour session on my first appointment with someone. This allows the first hour to serve as a time to complete an extensive health intake, get to know the person and most importantly, listen to their story. Everyone has a story. How one describes themselves in relation to their body is a very individual style. If I truly listen, I will hear about how they relate to their functioning body, emotional body and even their spiritual body.

Most of the stories I've heard recently have to do with people not being heard by other health care practitioners. It is not common for most medical doctors to spend even 15 minutes with a patient. By giving people this gift of time, we develop listening, understanding and insight. We gain insight into where they've been and how they got to our door and most importantly, they find out more about themselves. It seems the more they talk, the more they are illumined around their personal process. I also notice that the more they talk during the actual treatment, the more they detox. So, it is not our job to give advice, only to become excellent listeners in this practice.

The other obvious issue concerns our professional conduct. I once had a male client put his arm around my waist as I was massaging his abdomen and call me his "girlfriend." I promptly removed his arm. I told him, "I was NOT his girlfriend and if he didn't behave, I would ask him to leave." Of course, his erection was obvious while this was all happening. I ended the abdominal massage, completed the session and yes, he did behave himself. He has never returned to my office and that's OKAY.

We may encounter situations where we will be challenged by covert and overt sexual innuendo and behavior. This is true in any profession but its particularly problematic in the colon hydrotherapy field. We are fully clothed and they are not. They are to be considered more vulnerable than we are and as the experts in the field, we assume a position of authority. What we are talking about here are boundaries. How can we set a healthy boundary between our clients and ourselves and still maintain proper intimacy in the relationship?

One of my most valuable tools in this regard is my gut. If I get a gut feeling that isn't comfortable when I am with someone, I need to examine this relationship. I need to get clear on the roles we are each taking on and I strive to be very open and honest with the person about my feelings.

Chances are that they are feeling something too. It may be necessary to terminate the relationship. I feel better talking it over with them first.

The other way to respect boundary formation is to always ask the client before I touch their body. This is a common courtesy and in our field needs to be honored. I always give them a choice about inserting the speculum. I always ask if it's OKAY for me to massage their abdomen. Asking for permission is another way we give them the space they need and earn that important trust.

In closing, I want to confirm what I read in my husband Michael's dissertation. He talks about modesty, privacy and anonymity. This relates to proper draping, not using phones during a treatment (either client or practitioner) and certainly never telling another person that "so-n'-so comes to me for treatments too!" I suppose that would be the greatest sin of this profession. It is incumbent upon us to maintain confidentiality. This is especially true when treating family members. I have a mother and daughter that come to me and I make it very clear to both of them when they ask "how's the other one doing?" that they will have to discuss that with them. I do not talk about my clients to ANYONE, especially another family member.

Please remember that we are the keepers of the secrets. We will hear things that our clients will tell no other. It is an honor to be entrusted in this way and must be held in high regard.

I feel that this work is a spiritual calling and each moment that I am in the treatment room is in the spirit of prayer and meditation. We have been given an opportunity to heal this planet and to clean it up in a way no others will do!