



The American Art Therapy Association Ethics Committee provides this series of “best practice” papers as non-binding guidelines to help art therapists interpret and apply the *Ethical Principles for Art Therapists*.

Aspirational Values Underlying the Ethical Principles for Art Therapists

“In general, art therapists are guided in their decision-making by core values that affirm basic human rights. These values reflect aspirational ethical principles, which include:

***Autonomy...
Nonmaleficence...
Beneficence...
Fidelity...
Justice...
Creativity...”***

(Preamble, Ethical Principles for Art Therapists)

The standards included in the *Ethical Principles for Art Therapists* are intended as guidelines to help art therapists navigate a range of situations. Although the principles are periodically updated in light of new advances, they cannot cover every conceivable situation that an art therapist will face. The Preamble of the *Ethical Principles for Art Therapists* includes six aspirational values that are intended to:

- emphasize the foundation of ethical practice
- provide direction for how to interpret principles in specific contexts

In striving to incorporate these values in art therapy practice, Hinz (2011) suggested that art therapists adapt a positive approach to ethical decision-making. In contrast to the risk management attitude, which focuses on avoiding wrongdoing, the positive approach encourages attention to how ethics can:

- empower therapists and clients
- embrace limits
- enhance trust
- ensure excellence

When faced with an ethical dilemma, the aspirational values provide an important lens through which to take informed and intentional action. After identifying the relevant ethical principles at stake in a given situation, art therapists should also determine how their actions ensure and protect basic human rights.

References:

Hinz, L. D. (2011). Embracing excellence: A positive approach to ethical decision making. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 28 (4), 185-188.