

Appropriate CE Content & 3 Categories of Therapists
Robert Wootton 2/14

Discussing Nancy's questions 1 & 2 about CE content and the purpose of it, I suggest we distinguish 3 categories of therapists. The problem comes in defining CE in a one-kind-fits-all way and making one restrictive list of courses and content for everyone.

1. New therapists out of school. School only prepares one to get started; it doesn't make one fully competent. CE is more important for new therapists than long time therapists. It makes sense to require new therapist for a couple licensing periods to take CE that is hands on practical skills. The Federation has proposed identifying what it calls "core competencies". But it proposes that this type of CE be the ONLY CE and that it be required of everyone forever. That treats everyone like beginners.
2. Experienced therapist after maybe 3 licensing periods should be allowed to take a broad range of CE of their choosing.
3. Long-time therapists continually practicing for 10 or 15 years who have already taken a lot of CE should not be required to keep taking CE for relicensing. Perhaps after a certain number of CE they can be exempted. Currently this exemption is not possible under the Practice Act. Everyone must continue to take CE forever for relicensing. So until the Practice Act is changed to allow an exemption, long-time therapists should be completely free to take whatever they want and even count things like service for their CE.

Rather than argue about what is or is not legitimate CE, let's not restrict the total pool of CE courses but instead identify certain kinds of CE that are most appropriate for new therapists. What is useful for beginners may be a waste of time for experienced therapists. What's ok for long-time therapists may not be appropriate for beginners. We should not define CE for everyone in terms of what beginners need. So the most useful discussion is about what kind of CE is appropriate for new therapists, while leaving the CE field open for experienced therapists.

The ethics requirement should also be redefined according to the 3 categories of therapists. It is cruel to make long-time therapists sit through the same ethics classes over and over. So again, narrowly focused ethics CE can be required for new therapists, while broader leeway can be given to long-time therapists to maybe even take for example self-care classes (maybe it will help keep us from getting cranky and unethical!)

The Distance learning question can also be answered by distinguishing the 3 types of therapists. New therapists should not be allowed to take them in my opinion, and only do hands-on classes. But we can trust long-time therapists to be able to get what they need from on-line courses, if that's what they want to do. The 'experienced' category may be allowed to do half their CE in distance learning. But there is still a question in my mind whether a hands on modality can be adequately learned without a hands on teacher.

Implementation. An easy first step is for the Board to approve a list of acceptable CE courses for therapists in their first couple licensing periods. This list can come from current CE courses. The rest of us can continue to be allowed to take any course currently approved by NCBTMB.