



## The Ethics of Touch Book Reviews

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## REVIEWS

### Shiatsu Therapy Association of British Columbia

Winter 2003

Reviewed by Vanessa Wiebel RST

Once in a while the STA receives books for review. I had the pleasure to browse through the book on the important topic of "*The Ethics of Touch*," covering over 309 pages with intriguing information about touch, and its effects on the client, all from the therapist's point of view. . . .

The book by Ben E. Benjamin and Cherie Sohnen-Moe covers all possible questions that might arise for a new or experienced practitioner. The authors invite the reader to reassess their ethics, their values around the topic of touch, how to handle ethical dilemmas and to understand the balance and importance of good and clear communication with our clients on a physical, psychological and verbal level!

The book invites self-exploration and evaluation of your own practice. It is a check-in tool filled with case studies, examples and questionnaires you can fill out either alone or with colleagues. You get to explore and understand your values and ideas about touch while receiving feedback doing self-supervision, a reality check! Answers on topics and issues that you are not sure whom to ask or are to embarrassed to ask, are addressed and guidance is offered. Cherie and Ben do not hesitate to face the uncomfortable issues of inappropriate touch.

To which level do I as a practitioner have to tolerate client behaviour or demands?

How to deal with falling in love/lust for a client or a client for you?

What can be done if the client or I am uncomfortable?

What to do if the touch is misunderstood by the client?

The authors show how the ethics of touch effects all areas of our practice:

- A) in-business
- B) communication
- C) what kind of dual relationship dynamics can emerge
- D) understanding touch boundaries, specifically of people with traumas
- E) how the trauma can effect the perception of touch
- F) how trauma experiences can change a persons sensation of touch and communication with a client or practitioner

I have not found in any other book an explicit chapter on how to do supervision effectively as a body-worker. Supervision is work a practitioner does to relieve themselves "of the issues and topics they find are burdening them" and topics that are not ethical to share at home or with friends, as doing so would breach confidentiality codes. Supervision is a great tool to prevent burn-out and to stay in touch with what is happening within us practitioners.

The book offers helpful, realistic tools. It is non-sexist [and] non-racial while addressing the topics with proactive

guidelines a practitioner can choose to apply in their practice. The authors do not say which choices are right or wrong. They indicate what results or consequences are possible with different choices you may make. The perspectives of the practitioner and the client are shown. The reader experiences making informed and conscious choices, rather than guesses and assumptions. Even though the book writes predominantly from a Massage Therapist perspective, I found, as a Shiatsu Therapist, I could relate to all the topics very well, finding the book to be a great, inspiring tool. I can recommend it to students and RST's.

### Massage Message

July/August 2003 Vol. 18, No. 4

Reviewed by Michael McGillicuddy, FSMTA State President

Having been in business for myself for the last thirty years and learning much about ethics through the school of hard knocks, I found *The Ethics of Touch*, written by Ben E. Benjamin, Ph.D. and Cherie Sohnen-Moe, to be a remarkable book. All business owners and employees want to behave in an ethical manner, but it is not always clear how to arrive at the proper behaviors. This book provides the tools to clarify ethical behavior.

The authors seem to always touch on the right subjects throughout the book, from the issues of boundaries between client and therapist to the topic of sex. Many of us can remember a few occasions before, during, or after a massage where you or the client instinctively felt uncomfortable about the interaction that took place. Chapter Two discusses the topic of boundaries, explaining what boundaries are, the types of boundaries, how they develop, what boundary crossings and violations are, and why they occur and how to establish, maintain and change boundaries. After reading Chapter Two, you may realize why things felt uncomfortable and how to correct the problem. Chapter Five discusses the topics of Sex, Touch, and Intimacy, subjects that lead to much of the confusion in society about the massage industry. By discussing each topic separately and at length, the book helps the therapist to discover and dispel much of that confusion. It is remarkably instructive on how to desexualize the touch experience and the topic of sexual misconduct. With chapter highlights, and discussion questions and activities at the end of each chapter, *The Ethics of Touch* is a great textbook for massage therapy schools and an excellent source of ethical behavior for practicing therapists no matter how long they have been in the industry.

The \$28 cost is a good investment to start you on the road to ethical practices, and a successful massage practice. I highly recommend that everyone take the time to read this book; if you are able to gain just one new idea from the book, it more than pays for itself. I give *The Ethics of Touch* two thumbs up!!!!

## Massage Today, Acupuncture Today, and Dynamic Chiropractic

June 2003

Reviewed by Larry Gray, PhD, LMT

*The Ethics of Touch* is, to my knowledge, the best and most thorough book on ethics available for the touch therapist. Both authors have tremendous experience and resumes in the field of ethics, and Ben Benjamin has written numerous articles on the subject. He was also the initiator of (and, for four years, chaired) the AMTA Council of Schools Professional and Sexual Ethics Task Force.

The book is divided into nine chapters: Ethical Principle; Boundaries; Dynamics of Effective Communication; Dual Relationships; Sex, Touch and Intimacy; Ethical Practice Management; Business Ethics; Special Considerations in Cases of Trauma; and Supervision. In addition, there are three appendices: Forms, Specialized Protocols, and Codes of Ethics, in which the codes of ethics of various professional organizations, including AMTA and NCBTMB, have been reprinted.

Any discussion of ethics, either in the abstract or applied to a particular question, is sure to elicit a variety of opinions and judgements; it would be most unusual if the reader, myself included, did not find something with which to disagree. However, the discussion of ethical principles and the particulars of case studies is even-handed, nondogmatic, logical and ultimately persuasive. Furthermore, the whole tenor of the book is aimed not at simply stating rules and regulations, but at guiding readers to make ethical decisions for themselves. There are even some helpful surveys and exercises aimed at discovering and developing an ethical sense.

To be truly useful, any book on ethics must avoid two pitfalls: being too abstract and philosophical, which could allow the reader to agree with everything, but not know how to apply it to practical ethical decisions and behavior; and being a list of do's and don'ts without a firm intellectual set of principles on which the advice is based. *The Ethics of Touch* avoids both of these potential pitfalls. It is plenty abstract and full of principles and values, but it also is eminently practical, discussing such issues as dual relationships with lots of anecdotes and case histories.

I have only one quibble with the book. I believe scope of practice is a subject that is full of ethical questions, problems and dilemmas—yet its discussion is limited to seven pages as part of the chapter, Ethical Practice Management. The central dilemma of the massage therapist who has primary access, and yet is forbidden to diagnose, is not adequately addressed, but simply dismissed with the facile distinction between assessment and diagnosis. This isn't enough. Ultimately, massage therapists need to have guidance with the ethical problem of a client presenting without a doctor's diagnosis, but with signs and symptoms of some common soft-tissue injury that is, in fact, within the therapist's scope of practice. There is also the ethical dilemma of what to do when your local laws are at odds with standard practice or ethical principles. How laws are made

are best not looked into too closely by the squeamish; we all know that various groups manage to get clauses into licensure laws for their own purposes (usually turf protection), and these clauses are hated, resented and often ignored. What is the ethical thing to do?

This "complaint" is not so much a serious criticism as evidence that *The Ethics of Touch* engaged me with its discussion and forced me to think about ethical questions. The bottom line is that this is a very good book both for an ethics course and for the individual touch therapist's library. I highly recommend it.

## Canadian Federation of Aromatherapists

May 2003

Reviewed by Fay C. Hiscocks

It was interesting that I received this book to review just before our Spring 2003 AGM. One of our speakers, Carol Kostiuk, gave a presentation on research work she was involved with which deals with abused women. I had done my initial first read of the book and realized how valuable it was not just for working with abused clients but with everyone involved in Touch Therapies. According to statistics Carol presented one in three women is abused sexually and in cult situations. That means that up to a third of our clients could be abused. The authors of *The Ethics of Touch* have used Stephen Hassan as a reference and he says "there are 5,000 destructive cults in America with approximately 15 million members." This makes this reference a very valuable tool for our member Aromatherapists.

This is a very large reference book (300 pages) with detailed information and references. Its purpose is to be "The Hands-on Practitioner's Guide to Creating a Professional, Safe and Enduring Practice."

The first major concept, which is the basis of working with our clients, is the understanding of boundaries. The authors do a very good job of describing [5] types of boundaries, how boundaries develop, boundary crossings and violations.

Benjamin and Sohnen-Moe give excellent examples of every concept they present and then go through exact examples of how to deal with every type of problem that can develop. They deal with almost any problem that might face the therapist from marketing, client relationships, even to receiving tips and what to do with clients that are late, cancel at the last minute and don't pay. They even give a script and exact wording to use when coping with all problems.

We as therapists can easily cross over some of the boundaries of our clients or may allow clients to over step our boundaries. This book is a very clear, concise text and workbook that we can all learn from. It will help to make us more professional and effective in communicating with and treating our clients.

## American Polarity Therapy Association

Energy

Spring 2003

Reviewed by John Chitty, RPP, RCST

This new textbook is a thorough summary of all aspects of training in ethics for body workers, custom-designed for classroom use. My first impression was that this is a match for Sohnen-Moe's *Business Mastery*, the well-established textbook for that curriculum topic area. That book fulfilled a real need in touch therapy schools. I expect this new book to take a comparable place in the educational setting.

Sohnen-Moe has a long history in the field of touch therapy education, and also a long history with APTA. She has presented at our conferences and provided articles and other support materials for at least a decade, so it is great to see this latest expansion of her work.

The book covers every conceivable angle in ethics training, and adopts a "high road" approach that avoids too-strict interpretations on such complex subjects as dual relationships. Case history vignettes, cross-references, great quotations, checklists and activities make the teacher's job easy by providing a built-in lesson plan that can be used in segments or all as one comprehensive training.

The chapter headings show how comprehensive this book is. Ethical Principle, Boundaries, Communication, Dual Relationships, Sex and Intimacy, Practice Management, Business, Special Considerations for Trauma and Supervision: every area gets its treatment with the same basic format. This approach is a boon for teachers and students. Learning is easier with standardized content such as this because we quickly know what to expect.

I thought the Appendices were a great resource as well. Forms are given for every conceivable purpose, plus protocols and sample codes of ethics (including APTA's).

I recommend *The Ethics of Touch* highly for all educators and students; this will provide everything you need to learn and develop in this all-important area of professional competence.

## Complementary Medicine Association

June 2003

Reviewed by Mary Wolken

This book is the perfect book to teach new aspiring practitioners how and when to reach out and touch someone. It lays out all aspects of the client/practitioner relationship with great clarity and precision. Seasoned practitioners, even office help could benefit from all of the positive methods this manual details.

Learn how to increase your success as a professional in personal, business management, finding the right location, buying a business, billing and client retention and networking to name a few of the voluminous chapters.

Five years in the making, the care and depth is apparent in every chapter. This book is a must have reference guide to building and maintaining a successful business.

## Nat'l Association of Nurse Massage Therapists

August 2003

Reviewed by Teresa Kirkpatrick Ramsey, BSN, LMT

Founder, Baby's First Massage Program

The authors have taken the primary ethical issues all touch therapists encounter and present overviews of the issues, very life-like scenarios that demonstrate the issues, questions to ask ourselves, and opportunities to explore positive responses. The text is very helpful to individuals and clearly, in the classroom.

The format of the book is enjoyable! I found it very readable, and inspiring to have a resource like this. The quotes in the margins are profound, sometimes humorous, always effective in putting ethical issues in the context of life in our families, our communities and world. There are prompts in the margins that guide us to information in the text that offers deeper, or expanded information on a topic.

As an actively practicing nurse massage therapists for 15 years, and the founder and trainer for the Baby's First Massage Program, I felt really grounded in ethics. But, this text has expanded my viewpoint in many ways. The authors have such depth of experiences that I haven't had, and I am very grateful they have presented us with these teachings. In particular, the information on touch with survivors of abuse, and sex, touch and intimacy issues was helpful. Also, after all the years of offering therapeutic massage, the reminders of roles we take as client and therapist was helpful.

As a labor and delivery nurse, and working in Obstetrics in a hospital setting, I was privileged to be part of the very intimate details of the lives of many people for a brief time. I became adept at creating safety and trust and providing boundaries when the patients weren't able to do so. What can be really interesting for me now, as a therapeutic massage practitioner, is to be present in my work, maintain friendliness and caring, yet keep the professional over-view with long term clients. I see this text as very helpful in expanding my capabilities as a therapeutic person.



## American Organization for Bodywork Therapies from Asia

Pulse News

August 2003

Reviewed by Debra Howard, Dipl. ABT (NCCAOM), LMT,  
AOBTA Certified Instructor, AOBTA President

Our profession can certainly benefit from a clear guide on ethics. At first glance, *The Ethics of Touch* is a lovely book to look at. As you make your way through, you begin to notice the efficiency involved as well. This is a delightful book, thorough and succinct, with many helpful features. There is even a certain amount of fun and humor thrown in!

*The Ethics of Touch* is well organized, and the chapters are set up to include discussion questions. This is an easy-to-read book on a complex subject, and includes an ethics resolution model as well as exercises for discovering self-issues (boundaries).

Each chapter ends with a summary, a list of highlights, and discussion questions and activities. Instructors and educators, students and experienced practitioners alike will find this book interesting and thought-provoking as well as a helpful guide to resolution of ethical dilemmas.

Other highlights of the book include: a risk factor questionnaire, HIPAA information clarified, a checklist for working with trauma survivors, a Client Bill of Rights, sample policies, Codes of Ethics from several sources reprinted, and specific techniques for working with self-disclosed survivors of trauma and abuse.

*The Ethics of Touch* is sure to be a treasure that generates many conversations and discussions about this important level of professionalism.

## Aquatic Therapy & Rehab Institute

AKWA Magazine

October/November 2003

Reviewed by Ruth Sova

Written for all professionals who touch (including doctors, nurses, massage therapists, bodyworkers, chiropractors, physical therapists, and other somatic practitioners). This book develops a theoretical foundation for the ethics of somatic professions, defines key terms, teaches methods for resolving ethical dilemmas, provides information of critical topics, and supplies specific methods and techniques for maintaining healthy boundaries, enhancing communication, fostering sense of safety, and managing an ethical practice.

This work directly addresses the difficult, confusing and seldom-discussed-but-often troubling dilemmas confronting touch therapy practitioners. It describes issues: identifying clear principles; naming specific resources; and using stories straight from the treatment room. It includes exercises and questions allowing the reader to personalize each chapter and outlines practical steps to meet high expectations. This book belongs in the office of every somatic practitioner.

## The Massage Doula Network

Reviewed by Judith Koch

Centering my massage practice in a "redneck" area of California, I've often been greeted with raised eyebrows at the mention of my career, which was a large factor in my specialization in women's care (pregnancy, fibromyalgia, spa, etc). Compounded just this month with a prostitution ring arrest in my city that was using massage as a front for their business, I'm afraid in my 13 years in this industry, I've seen little progress in the public perception of our career.

A recent book release, *The Ethics of Touch*, authored by Ben E. Benjamin and Cherie Sohnen-Moe, has filled a void in sharing concrete ethical boundaries for the massage industry. The book covers a range of ethical principles, including structure in establishing boundaries, communicating to avoid a violation of ethics, and dealing with clients in a social setting. The book also covers sexual and intimacy issues, as ethics in dealing with other professionals in our field.

Because experience is such a valuable learning tool, the book is peppered with actual stories, and each chapter has a summary that gives the reader exercises or thought questions to ponder to help them understand and/or establish their own ethical behavior. The book should be must-reading for all students of touch, as it will give them a solid basis for establishing a firm ethical basis for their business.

If I were going to make a suggestion for improvements in future editions, or for a companion edition, it would be to be written in such a way as to encourage the general public to read the book, because as it is, it will have little impact on the mentality of the general public. The public perception of ethics (or lack thereof) is not likely to be changed by this book without the collective effort of every touch practitioner living and sharing the concept of *The Ethics of Touch*. It clearly won't impact the prostitution mind-set that has long used our legitimate industry to cover its illegitimate industry.

While the text is ideal for students of massage, which is a great starting point, and as such the book has great value, we still have to keep searching toward solutions to our overall image in the community.

## Yoga Journal

September/October 2003

Reviewed by Phil Catalfo

EVERY YOGA TEACHER, student, bodyworker, client, health-care practitioner, and patient would do well to read this book. It examines the myriad ethical considerations in any professional relationship that involves touch, and goes a long way toward illuminating the necessary caution and appropriate methods to use in order to respect boundaries, communicate effectively, and generally proceed with integrity.

## Shiatsu Therapy Association of Ontario

Pressure Points

Summer 2003

Review by Nancy Van Der Poorten, CST

Any book with these two authors and this publisher is sure to be an excellent one and should be recommended enough to purchase it, but for those who do not know the reputation of these people, here's a review that I hope will make you run out and buy the book right away.

I can't say often enough that this book is excellent and should be in every bodyworkers' hands! (not to mention on the shelves of school libraries).

Ben Benjamin is the founder and president of the Muscular Therapy Institute in Cambridge MA and has been in private practice for 40 years. He has written many books including "Exercise without Injury" and numerous articles on topics ranging from treatment to ethics. He was the chairperson of the AMTA Council of Schools Professional and Sexual Ethics Task Force for 4 years.

Cherie Sohnen-Moe is the president of Sohnen-Moe Associates, a company that publishes business and practice management books and offers seminars on these topics for bodyworkers. She has been a massage therapist herself and is an author, business coach, and workshop leader. This is a formidable team! In addition, the book has an impressive list of contributing authors.

A quote from one of the book's reviewer, Elaine Calenda, Clinic Director at the Boulder College of Massage Therapy, expresses the essence well: "This compilation has had to age like fine wine in order to reach its full maturity. . . we needed this text 20 years ago, but the basic philosophy contained throughout this work was not in existence back then. Our society and the professionals that nurture it also had to mature. You have succeeded, beyond all expectations, to take this megacomplexity of human behaviour and contain it in a very comprehensible and practical manner.

What else can I say to encourage you to buy it? This book covers the full range of ethical issues - core psychological concepts, boundaries, the dynamics of effective communication, dual roles, sex, touch and intimacy, sexual misconduct, desexualizing the touch experience, ethical practice management, standards of practice, business ethics, special considerations for trauma cases and clinical and peer supervision. If you don't enjoy the more theoretical discussions of ethical issues, you'll be thrilled with the practical information that will help you to become a better and more successful therapist. This book contains forms such as a Client Bill of Rights, sample office policies, and a Trauma Survivor handout.

Each chapter has an introduction that neatly sets the stage for the information to follow, a full body and conclusions and chapter highlights that put it all together. There are questions and activities to stimulate thought and discussion and the text is sprinkled with thoughtful quotes.

There are also exercises that help you to assess your own thoughts about an issue and questionnaires that can help you to decide if you are having trouble in a particular area. For example, there is a Discover Your Boundary Issues questionnaire - a series of questions that can help you to determine whether or not you have boundary issues with a particular client, and a Boundary Indicator Exercise - a series of questions that help you to understand what your own boundary characteristics are. You can read a bit at a time or delve deeply into each chapter. You don't need to read the book from beginning to end but can jump in where it interests you.

The overall purpose of ethics, says the book, is to guide the practitioner so that the client's welfare remains the first priority. You need to understand basic ethical principles and core psychological concepts, each of which are richly illustrated with examples. What exactly does 'client-centered' mean? What are your defense mechanisms and how do they affect the client? It's likely that you have dual roles with a number of your clients - are they family? Colleagues? What is the difference between sex and intimacy - they are not the same though they do overlap.

The authors treat fully and frankly with issues that are often only skirted. As a therapist, do you have sexual feelings during a treatment session? How do they impact you and how do you deal with them? Do any of your clients (male or female) become sexually aroused during treatment and how do you handle it? When and how do you address this issue with the client? The authors deal fully with sexual misconduct and provide a Risk Factors Questionnaire that can help you to explore the issue. How do you desexualize the touch experience? Ben and Cherie offer suggestions.

And for the practical minded among you, this book is full of ideas on how to handle working with minors, dismissing a client, working with a new client, how to develop your own policy statement, how to determine your treatment fee, bartering and taking tips, taxes, referrals, marketing, dealing with insurance companies.

Have you ever thought about having a supervisor? I don't mean while you are in school, but once you've graduated. Having a supervisor is valuable for the therapist (and is required for some disciplines in some jurisdictions, such as psychological counseling) and this book explains how to go about finding someone and the benefits of such a relationship. Do you work with trauma survivors? This topic is dealt with fully and includes a Trauma Survivor handout.

At \$28 US this book (320 pages) is a very reasonable price - if you feel that you can't afford to buy one yourself, why not buy a copy with one of your colleagues and take turns reading it? Or borrow it from your school library? It should be in every bodyworkers' hands, well-thumbed.

## Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine Alliance

The Forum

Fall 2003

Reviewed by Ann Bailey, RN, MSN, M.Ac.

Finally a book on ethics written especially for us, health professionals who touch the body as a mean of delivering care. It is relevant, practical, and long overdue. This book is unique because the authors recognize that even the most skilled and careful practitioner can make errors in judgment. Benjamin and Sohnen-Moe address the ethical pitfalls that can occur and explore how to handle a given situation to avoid negative results.

The overall purpose of ethics, as stated by the authors, "is to guide professional practitioners so that clients' welfare remains the first priority." They succeed in keeping this principle foremost throughout the book, bringing conclusion to each example by asking us to consider what is in the best interest of the client.

But they don't preach or admonish us. They give us tools and resources for recognizing and sorting through ethical dilemmas. For example, we can take a self-assessment test to discover where our personal and professional boundaries are. Or, we can work through a personal ethical dilemma using their Six Stages of Clarification. They include a full discussion on how to set a healthy structure for fees and bartering. The authors also lead us through the maze of complex relationships where we try to juggle professional, social or family roles. They give us parameters and guidelines for navigating the risks inherent in dual relationships.

As acupuncturists, most of us did not receive adequate ethics training in school, and if we did, it usually focused on the legalities of unethical advertising and insurance billing. These authors go beyond the usual topics and have collected input from experts in their fields. The result is a refreshing and in-depth examination of topics ranging from "Sex, Touch, and Intimacy in the Client/Practitioner Relationship," "Understanding Trauma and Abuse," to the "Essential Elements of Clinical Supervision."

The book is practical. Each chapter closes with a summary, "Chapter Highlights," as well as a page or two of "Discussion Questions and Activities." The latter can be useful for personal reflection or for sparking a classroom or in-service discussion. (A Teacher's Manual is in the works for use with the book.)

Sidebars on each page refer to additional information elsewhere in the book. The margins also contain pertinent quotations from inspirational leaders, website resources, and special alerts to emphasize key points for the reader.

A HomeStudy course is available through the publisher's website and CEU's can be obtained for bodyworkers through the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork.

The book has an extensive Appendix that contains sample forms for Consent for Treatment and for Oriental Medicine Office Policies. Specialized protocols for working with survivors of trauma and abuse are also included as well as Codes of Ethics from thirteen professional organizations.

The authors know that ethical situations arise for all practitioners at one time or another. Fortunately for us, they have written a timely and thought-provoking guide that should be in every school library and every practitioner's office.

## AMTA Arizona

Autumn 2005

Reviewed by Lil Hackett, AMTA - AZ Education Committee Chair

A few months ago, I was asked to review *The Ethics of Touch* by Ben E. Benjamin and Cherie Sohnen-Moe and report my findings to the AMTA-AZ membership.

Let me state that I was absolutely amazed at the amount of insightful information these two authors have managed to 'stuff' into this book!

I found this book to be educational, entertaining and thought provoking. It is written in easy to read language and has everything from real life stories and anecdotes to role playing and mental exercises, lending a 'reality' to the chapters and the subjects presented. This is the ultimate book for information on how to better manage boundaries and set up and run ethical practices.

There is a tremendous amount of information in this book, from 'Ethical Principals, Boundaries, Ethical Practice Management, Special Considerations In Cases of Trauma, Sex, Touch and Intimacy,' and on and on. They even have a section on 'Policies' that has sample forms you can view to help you set up similar ones in your own practice such as 'Client Bill of Rights' or 'Massage Therapy Informed Consent.'

Frankly, I wish I had been given a book like this when I was in school. It gives great examples of day to day encounters and ways in which to better approach or respond to them.

I personally think this book should be mandatory reading material for both students and experienced practitioners. I prefer to call it a 'manual' rather than a book.

I keep mine on my desk at work and refer to it regularly. Thanks to Ben and Cherie for this excellent read.

## Long Beach Dance Conditioning

Summer/Fall 2003

Review by Marie-Jose' Blom-Lawrence, Founder and Director

This book is a must have for teachers-in-training and all other Pilates professionals. While it is not specifically geared to the PILATES professional, it is extremely relevant. The purpose of the book is to support hands-on professionals in expanding their knowledge about the field of ethics, better managing boundaries, and running ethical practices. The book was also written to facilitate exploration. In this book you will find thought-provoking examples, models and exercises that make this information personally relevant. As the instructor who teaches Ethics and business psychology for the teacher training program at LBDC, I must say this is a great book to have in your professional library.

## American Massage Therapy Association

Massage Therapy Journal

Winter 2004

Reviewed by Lisa Mertz

Ben Benjamin and Cherie Sohnen-Moe are well-known to *MTJ* readers. They both have contributed regular columns for many years, and both have taught workshops at AMTA National Conventions. Between them, the knowledge and experience is vast, and for this book, they also have incorporated the wisdom of 15 colleagues in massage therapy, chiropractic, law and psychotherapy, including *MTJ's* ethics columnist Dianne Polseno and authors Diana Thompson and Ruth Werner.

*The Ethics of Touch* is divided into nine chapters. Each concludes with discussion question and concludes with discussion questions and activities for self-reflection or group participation. Questions for journaling and discussion are included throughout the text. Wonderful quotations appear in the margins of most pages, as do notes indicating where to find follow-up information.

The first chapter, "Ethical Principles," clearly defines key terms and discusses psychological concepts. "Boundaries," Chapter 2, explores the challenges of personal space—physically, emotionally, intellectually, sexually and energetically. Next, "The Dynamics of Effective Communication" discusses setting boundaries, interactive and reflective listening, managing conflicts and self-evaluation, which is essential to understanding and applying any of the book's lessons. The fourth chapter delves into the range, risks and complexities of "Dual Relationships." The fifth chapter follows up with issues of "Sex, Touch and Intimacy," including guidelines for establishing sexually safe treatments.

The next two chapters, "Ethical Practice Management" and "Business Ethics," cover professionalism, informed consent, tips, bartering and taxes. The authors discuss appropriate ways to refuse to work with a potential client, if the situation deems it necessary. It would be inappropriate to state, "You really remind me of my former boyfriend. I'm working on my issues with him right now, so it's probably best if I refer you elsewhere." Instead say, "I think my ability to help you is limited. I would like to refer you to a very skilled, experienced and compassionate practitioner who can give you better care" (p. 168).

The eighth chapter is entitled "Special Considerations in Cases of Trauma." A client might live in denial or not recall abuse, or he or she might not disclose it to you. Anyway, as the authors say, "Traumas come with life" (p. 220). Understanding the emotional needs of people who have experienced unresolved trauma or lived through sexual, physical and emotional abuse is fundamental to a safe, ethical practice.

In the final chapter, "Supervision," the authors highlight this aspect of professional practice that has long been of primary importance to the mental health professions, and will become essential to massage therapy training and practice, as well.

The book concludes with appendices listing follow-up resources, including sample office policies, sample informed consent forms, specialized protocols for working with trauma and abuse survivors, and the code of ethics of 13 professional organizations. Each chapter is carefully documented with endnotes, which can be referenced for further reading. A helpful index also is included.

## BC Massage Practitioner

Spring 2004

Reviewed by James Bechard B.Sc., RMT

*The Ethics of Touch* goes beyond examining countless ethical situations that involve touch to include many implications of business practice. I was unable to find a topic of interest to me that was not included in this book. The authors, Cherie Sohnen-Moe and Ben E. Benjamin, and many other contributors provide clear definitions and examples in a very thought provoking and educational package.

*The Ethics of Touch* is easy and interesting to read—and will be a valuable reference book. Each chapter is clearly organized and indexed for easy access to specific topics, and includes a conclusion and highlights section. This is particularly beneficial when trying to recall that 'elusive concept'. The authors have provided 'Discussion Questions' and 'Activities' with each chapter, as well as numerous checklists and questionnaires.

Topics covered are Ethical Principles; Boundaries; Dynamics of Effective Communication; Relationships; Sex, Touch and Intimacy; Ethical Practice Management; Business Ethics; Special Considerations in Cases of Trauma; Supervision. Appendices contain examples of business forms, as well as Ethics Codes of the many professional bodywork associations—although I note that BC's extensive "*Code of Ethics*" is not included.

I wish this book had been available when I began my practice. There are many instances that I can think of over the last few years that would have been easier for me to have dealt with, had I been able to refer to this book.

## Midwifery Today

Autumn 2003

This is a thoughtful guidebook for somatic practitioners—anyone who in their work touches another human body. It discusses in-depth boundaries, communication, relationships, managing an ethical practice, trauma, obvious and subtle codes of behavior, and much more. Very applicable to the midwifery profession.

## Association of Massage Therapists and Wholistic Practitioners

Fall 2003

Reviewed by Antony Porcino, BSc, CHP.

As registrar, and now deputy Registrar, I have always been concerned with the issues of ethics in our field: an important subject that is rarely covered, often only superficially, in trainings. I have been searching for something encompassing that could provide a solid base of understanding. B.E. Benjamin, and C. Sohnen-Moe have come through with a strong text: *The Ethics of Touch*.

The book leads you through the basics of the field, from a touch-therapist's point of view (applicable to anyone in the healing industry): Ethical Principals, how to find, recognize, and evaluate our parameters that are used in making the ethical decisions that impact our business and our lives; Boundaries, how to recognize them, create them, and work with them; Communication, how it can be used to prevent or resolve ethical problems in the work place; Dual Relationships, how relationships with overlapping professional and social roles form, the ethical and moral problems that may arise, and how to watch for them; Sex and Intimacy, how these impact many aspects of our work; Ethical Practice Management, specific issues that need to be addressed and some suggestions on how to approach them; Business Ethics; Trauma issues; and Supervision.

Not just a dry text, there are many real-life examples, points to ponder, and self-quizzes throughout, as well as chapter summaries with more questions and activities. Take the time to work through the quizzes, questions and activities to consolidate your understanding. Five years in the making, with many contributors and reviewers, it covers a lot of ground effectively.

Did I have some quibbles? Yes. As someone who specialized in studying the somatic field, it grated that all touch therapists were reduced to "somatic" therapists, a very broad generalization, at the beginning of the book, that seemed inappropriate for a book on ethics. This made me scrutinize other key terms carefully. For example, in the description of ethics we find "upholding the dignity of the profession" which is more about style than substance. Why not "integrity of the profession"? I didn't like the (common) blurring of "Code of Ethics" and "Code of Conduct." It left me concerned that other crucial information lacked rigour in thought, but that I was accepting it for lack of better knowledge or understanding.

In general, the text assumes that 1: the reader desires to be ethical and 2: the reader has the strength, personal resources, and professional resources to explore and immediately implement ethics in their business dealings. In chapters with the reflective points, self-assessment questionnaires (I'd like an index to help re-find them), and self tests I felt more supported in owning these assumptions, and felt more adrift in the chapters in which they are lacking—I particularly felt this in the section

on gender issues that should have been developed further. And though we can learn from them, some terminology and legal issues are written specifically for American practitioners. I hope these issues will be addressed in later editions.

And that's an important point. There will be later editions. This is the first edition of the first in-depth book on ethics specifically focused on our profession. It reaches out to us to help us understand our ethical issues effectively, my quibbles notwithstanding. I would be remiss in not saying I believe this should be mandatory reading for our members. Better yet, enter into a dual relationship with a colleague: buy a copy and commit to exploring this book together. Help each other be rigorous in your explorations, and to recognize when you need an external professional opinion.

## National Association for Holistic Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy Journal

Spring 2004

Reviewed by Kelly Holland Azzaro

Finally a professional reference book and guide written for the "Touch" profession, although after reading the book I believe that the invaluable information shared within this book can be applied to many other professions as well. This book is predominately helpful for Massage & Bodywork professionals and should be a required text for students of massage.

This is such a wonderfully written book complete with real experiences and examples for how to handle difficult and challenging situations that many practitioners experience throughout their career.

Every massage therapist, massage student, massage school and state regulating boards should have a copy of this book for their professional library. There are quite a number of informative suggestions for acupuncturists, chiropractors and physical therapists.

Nothing can replace "real-life" experience, but knowing that there is now a book available for guidance and support on how to improve your communication skills, setting professional and personal boundaries as well as implementing ethics within your profession a "touch" practitioner now has another tool to work with. Students learning massage therapy will find this book very helpful in preparing themselves for a successful career as a massage therapist.

Being a Licensed Massage Therapist for eighteen years, I have been very fortunate to have received instruction in professional ethics, laws, regulations and boundary setting. Unfortunately many schools do not offer that much training or class work on this topic, leaving many graduates unaware and unprepared for the "real world". The massage profession has had to constantly work at presenting itself as a professional therapy to gain the confidence of the public and fellow health care providers. Here the authors of *The Ethics of Touch* offer a wealth of knowledge that can be a stepping stone for a successful future for the "Touch" professions. No professional should be without this book.

## Reflexology Association of California

Reflexology Digest

August 2003

Reviewed by Lisa Chan

This is just the sort of book that every body worker needs, a book whose time has come, and from the woman who gave us *Present Yourself Powerfully* and *Business Mastery* no less—Cherie Sohnen-Moe. She has teamed up with Ben E. Benjamin, author of *Exercise without injury* and *Listen to Your Pain, Are You Tense?*

*The Ethics of Touch* is a manual about boundaries, ethical principles, the dynamics of effective communication and dual relationships. The long title is *The Hands-on Practitioner's Guide To Creating a Professional, Safe and Enduring Practice*. It is about ethical practice management, business ethics, trauma, the role of clinical supervision and desexualizing touch.

It contains protocols on how to work with self-disclosed survivors of trauma and abuse, as well as discussions on prerequisites on how to work with such clients, body memories and flashbacks.

What the authors have gifted the body worker with is how to have neutrality in one's work, not to *fix* people or become involved with them, but to allow them to have their healing experience—or not.

In case you have any question, it contains 13 national and international codes of ethics for body workers, yoga teachers and oriental medicine doctors. It contains valuable information on how to dismiss a client, decline new clients and work with minors.

Trainings such as Polarity Therapy excel in teaching client-practitioner communication and boundaries, but this subject is only briefly discussed in most reflexology trainings, if at all. Boundaries are not taught in regular school, but as a reflexologist and polarity therapist, this reviewer has long ago equated good boundaries with good health.

We've all felt our boundaries violated. One feels sick, taken advantage of, violated—though sometimes without a specific reason. In general, all you have to do is visit with your birth family for a major holiday, or say “yes” to volunteering for something that you absolutely don't want to do. It's a sticky feeling, and brings up resistance and very personal issues. Needless to say, anyone working with other peoples' bodies and issues needs to be working on, processing and constantly questioning their own experiences.

“What can clinical supervision do to enhance my practice, you might ask. “ A skillful supervisor is like a guide in unfamiliar territory, enhancing understanding and helping direct the practitioner toward constructive solution, if necessary,” write the authors. “The most important aspect of supervision, however, is the opportunity to explore and work through a problem.” (page 250)

Included is a list of five supervision sources.

[Highly Recommended \*\*\*\*\*]

## New York State Reflexology Association

April 2004

Reviewed by Dorothy Culek

I'm glad I've had this opportunity to review the book *The Ethics of Touch* by Ben E. Benjamin and Cherie Sohnen-Moe. My reflexology training had included general comprehensive 'foot'-print for specific situations I have or may encounter(ed). *The Ethics of Touch* has afforded me an in-depth understanding of virtually any situation that might occur for me as a practitioner and/or complementary-care consumer.

The book is very well-organized with easy-to-reference chapters and index. I found the particular features of chapter summaries and 'Discussion Questions and Answers' very helpful and convenient. The summaries served to reinforce the information of the preceding chapter and the Q & A's gave focus for further study (i.e. colleague member study groups). The page margins included insightful and entertaining notes and highlights.

The author's lack of specifically referring to out modality of 'Reflexology' by name as they did for many of the other bodywork modalities was disappointing. They did state “For consistency, and when speaking of all providers, we have chosen to use the words practitioner, health-care provider, somatic practitioner, hands-on practitioner; and the manual practitioner instead of specific titles . . .” I feel that reflexologists are generally included under the author's umbrella terms but reflexology being listed specifically would have given recognition to the modality.

Many ethical areas of a somatic worker's practice are investigated in this book from boundaries to business; from relationships to communication. Also included are various conflict resolution techniques as well as possible psychological explanations of many of the behaviors we might encounter. This gives a richer understanding of our clients and our interactions with them and ourselves.

At the selling price of \$28 I recommend *The Ethics of Touch* as a worthwhile, dare I say, necessary investment to the professional reflexologist's reference library.

## Spirituality & Health: The Soul/Body Connection

July/August 2003

Complementary Medicine's Bill of Rights

. . . You can find a chapter on the subject [of Bill of Rights], as well as discussions of all areas of ethics, in the just-published, first-ever such text for somatic practitioners, *The Ethics of Touch: The Hands-on Practitioner's Guide to Creating a Professional, Safe and Enduring Practice* by Ben E. Benjamin, Ph.D., and Cherie Sohnen-Moe. This readable, comprehensive manual discusses every aspect of a practitioner-client relationship, including boundaries, communication, sex/touch/intimacy, trauma considerations, business, supervision, sample codes of ethics from various modalities, and much more.

## **International Myomassethics Federation**

Forum

Fall 2003

Reviewed by Beth Fordyce

*The Ethics of Touch* is a hands-on practitioner's guide to creating a professional, safe and enduring practice. The authors, Dr. Ben Benjamin and Ms. Cherie Sohnen-Moe, honestly describe the issues, identify clear principles, name specific resources and use stories straight from the treatment room. This book is to guide, support and inspire both students and seasoned practitioners.

Ethical situations can be difficult, confusing and seldom-discussed-but-often-troubling dilemmas confronting touch therapy practitioners, but the authors cover these issues forthrightly and effectively. The chapters provide reflective exercises and questions which allow the reader to personalize each chapter so as to help handle individual situations that may arise.

Especially impressive, from my viewpoint, is the fact that those wanting to extend their training can obtain Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for each chapter. Their courses are recognized by many organizations, and they are Category A providers for the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB). If this is your interest, you can call 800-786-4774 or visit their website, [www.TheEthicsOfTouch.com](http://www.TheEthicsOfTouch.com).

Chapter 1, Ethical Principles, deals with the book's key terms, codes of ethics, self accountability, ethical dilemmas and resolving them, and core psychological concepts.

Chapter 2, Boundaries, breaks down into professional, personal, physical, emotional, intellectual, sexual and energetic boundaries.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5, are Dynamics of Effective Communication, Dual Relationships and Sex, Touch and Intimacy. Every therapist has his/her own method of handling these subjects, but here is an open and frank discussion which gives fresh insight into managing sometimes extremely difficult situations.

Chapter 6, Ethical Practical Management, explains the difference between licensure, certification and registration, all of which are important to the practitioner when moving from one township, county or town to another, for each one has its own set of regulations. And you had better make the effort to find out what those regulations are. I personally knew of one massage therapist who decided to work out of another therapist's office in the next township, under the assumption she was covered in all respects by the other therapist's credentials. She was not, however, and needed to establish her own credentials with that township. It is wise to go to that township board yourself to get the facts.

Chapter 7, Business Ethics, covers legal issues, such as Copyrighted materials and their Fair Use Factors. It also covers fee structures, tips, barter, gift certificates, taxes, product sales, referrals, marketing materials and insurance issues.

Chapter 8, Special Considerations in Cases of Trauma, states that one of every five clients a practitioner sees has a history of some kind of trauma or abuse. This chapter will help the therapist with basic knowledge about trauma and abuse survivors, and gives a clear protocol for working with these particular clients.

Appendix A lists, among many other features, a Client Bill of Rights, which is an informational handout, that you may find useful. I highly recommend this book because of its sensible coverage of the many daily issues of therapists.

## **Rosen Method Professional Association**

February 2005

Reviewed by Carol Cober

Are you curious about how honor and integrity affect your bodywork practice? Have you encountered a situation where you were perplexed about what response would be the most professional one? Applying our professional code of ethics to practical behavior is not always easy without support and clarity from other professionals. Fortunately there are a few outstanding resources available to us.

Recently, I had the opportunity to use and review this book [*The Ethics of Touch*] as part of a continuing education study package. The book is designed for a number of hands-on professionals to use. It is clearly and concisely written and includes excellent real-world examples drawn from many hands-on practitioners such as massage therapists, chiropractors, physical therapists, Shiatsu practitioners and so on. The information is useful, applicable and thought provoking. I recommend this book as a reference for all levels of practitioners because the examples and reflective questions are designed for either beginning or highly experienced professionals.

The book addresses difficult subjects that are often perplexing to practitioners. It describes and defines issues, reviewing theoretical foundations and then names specific principles and strategies for addressing each concern. The information on resolving ethical dilemmas was very useful. Each chapter ends in a reflective exercise that the reader can use to draw personal insight and conclusions. Topics include information on ethical congruency, the impact of power differentials, transference and boundaries, to name a few. In addition, there are self-assessment tools to help practitioners discover their own boundary issues.

One entire chapter addresses business ethics. The authors posit that ethical dilemmas are unavoidable hence it is critical that practitioners take steps to protect those they intend to serve by educating themselves about business practices, laws that govern their profession and by setting clear ethical standards.

## Somatics Society

Spring/Summer 2003

Reviewed by Eleanor Criswell-Hanna

There are ethical codes—rules for appropriate behavior—for all professions. These codes are developed by different human services professional organizations, and are designed to protect both the client and the practitioner. The codes are similar, but they address some slightly different issues according to the nature of the profession or vocation.

The touch therapies bring in a particular set of ethical issues, because the touch experience involves deeper levels of many ethical issues, especially transference and counter-transference. Transference refers to the transferring of feelings, such as loving and other feelings for parental figures, from previous relationships to the present relationship. Freud's use of transference in psychotherapy was part of the process, and he felt it needed to be worked through in psychoanalysis. Transference particularly shows up in psychotherapy as the client transfers feelings to the therapist. Counter-transference refers to the feelings created in the therapist toward the client. Transference and counter-transference can be positive or negative, and boundary issues arise due to the intimacy of the therapeutic relationship.

The authors feel that ethics training is particularly needed by somatic practitioners. "These concepts are essential for all practitioners to understand. Practitioners must have a thorough understanding of the meaning of: the therapeutic relationship; power differential; transference; counter-transference; projection; repression; and denial. These concepts create the bedrock of ethical decision-making and responsible behavior in all professional and (as a bonus) personal relationships," say Benjamin and Sohnen-Moe.

The authors list the major elements in a therapeutic relationship, which include the client-centered orientation, fiduciary matters, structured time, a clear role for each party, a safe environment, and the power differential.

Chapters include "Ethical Principles," "Boundaries," "Dynamics of Effective Communication," "Dual Relationships," "Sex, Touch and Intimacy," "Ethical Practice Management," "Business Ethics," "Special Considerations in Cases of Trauma," and "Supervision." Appendices include "Forms," "Specialized Protocols," and "Codes of Ethics."

Written for somatic practitioners in all disciplines, *The Ethics of Touch* is a very comprehensive book. The fifteen contributing authors place a big emphasis on the issues of power differential and boundaries. Each chapter can be used for continuing education units (CEUs) from the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork. The key terms defined are ethics, values, principles, morals, laws, and professionalism. Each chapter ends with chapter highlights. The book includes charts, diagrams, checklists, and questionnaires. There are discussion questions and activities. The "Special Consideration in Cases of Trauma" chapter shows a deep understanding of trauma and abuse and how the somatic practitioner approaches them. There are forms, specialized protocols, and codes of

ethics from different disciplines. The authors include examples, models, and exercises. The book includes a "method for resolving ethical dilemmas." Ethical dilemmas are an ongoing presence in somatic practice and it is very helpful to have an approach to resolving them.

This is an incredibly valuable book for all somatic educators and practitioners. Not only is it a must-read, but the concepts need to be embodied by the educator and practitioner as well. Reading *The Ethics of Touch* provides a whole new sense of the ethical dimensions of somatics and how to relate to them effectively.

Ben Benjamin, Ph.D., is an authority on ethics and boundary issues in the body therapies. His Ph.D. is in education and sports medicine. He is the founder of the Muscular Therapy Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts and the initiator of the AMTA Council of Schools Professional and Sexual Ethics Task Force. His books include *Listen To Your Pain, Are You Tense?* and *Exercise Without Injury*. Since 1986, he has been a columnist for the *AMTA Massage Therapy Journal*.

Cherie Sohnen-Moe, a UCLA psychology graduate, founded Sohnen-Moe Associates, Inc., in 1978. She is a dynamic trainer, coach, and author. Sohnen-Moe is a healing arts practitioner, but her major focus is on writing and conducting workshops. Her book *Business Mastery* is in its third edition and is enormously popular among healing arts students and practitioners through the world.

## Kripalu Yoga Teachers Association

Fall 2003

Review by Deborah Orth

I am always on the lookout for new books on professional ethics. Recently I read *The Ethics of Touch* by Ben E. Benjamin Ph.D. and Cherie Sohnen-Moe. It clearly addresses some of the difficult and troubling dilemmas or situations that can confront us as massage therapists and yoga teachers.

Although the book is primarily written for massage therapists, it explores ethical principles with clarifications that are applicable to yoga teachers and especially for teachers offering private sessions. Ethics are discussed in relation to boundaries, business practices and money as well as dual relationships and sexuality. There are excellent examples and engaging questions for personal reflection. I also found the chapter on effective communication for professionals particularly valuable (actually the whole book) to enhance the respectful and enduring relationships we want to develop with our students.

As the yoga world moves toward professional standards and we work to create supportive yoga communities, it is important for us to continue to educate ourselves on professional ethics and standards.

## International Association of Yoga Therapists

International Journal of Yoga Therapy

2004

Reviewed by Kimberly Gavin, R.Y.T.

Managing ethical conflicts is challenging for anyone, but it is particularly so for wellness practitioners who make their living by touching others, whether they practice massage, acupuncture, chiropractic, physical, Yoga, or some other therapy. Too often, ethical training is not covered in formal education.

The authors of *The Ethics of Touch*, Ben Benjamin, Ph.D., and Cherie Sohnen-Moe, believe this oversight causes confusion at best and sets up touch practitioners and/or their clients for harm at worst. Their textbook is an exhaustive resource for helping touch therapists expand their knowledge of ethics, better manage client-practitioner boundaries, and in general run ethical practices.

Benjamin and Sohnen-Moe wisely begin by defining ethical principles in the first chapter. For example, ethics are defined as the study of moral principles and appropriate conduct, while values are defined as tangible and intangible convictions an individual considers of worth. This chapter includes a discussion of ethical dilemmas—when two or more principles are in conflict—and offers a model for conflict resolution. Here the authors also lay the groundwork for core psychological concepts they will apply throughout the book.

Chapter Two continues to build the foundation by defining boundaries and exploring the types and extent of borders that we use to separate ourselves from others and the environment. The practitioner and client ideally meet boundary to boundary, but when boundaries are crossed or violated problems can result. This chapter includes boundary clarification and indicator exercises to help practitioners explore their own attitudes. This chapter, like others in the book, also is peppered with scenarios to help clarify important concepts. An understanding of boundaries is important, the authors stress, because it helps practitioners to improve their relationship with clients as well as avoid inadvertent slips into unethical behavior.

Equally important in maintaining an ethical practice—or living an ethical life for that matter—is effective communication. Frequently boundaries are crossed (and problems created) because the practitioner is not communicating clearly with the client or is not able to clearly understand what the client is communicating. Thus Chapter Three is devoted to understanding communication dynamics.

There are two key concepts in this chapter: understanding reflective listening to assure clear interpretation of what the client is saying, and interactive speaking, which allows the practitioner to clearly get the point across and get feedback from the client. This chapter also covers body awareness—sometimes a client will speak volumes with posture or reflexes without saying a word. Practitioners can and should train themselves to see what the client may not be able to say. The authors conclude this chapter with communication techniques that allow clients and

practitioners to maintain their boundaries, thus fostering an ethical and professional relationship.

Having established a platform of understanding, the authors delve into the meat of their subject in the remaining chapters. Chapter Four explores dual relationships and how those can offer both opportunities as well as ethical challenges. A friend asking for massage therapy is an example of a dual relationship. Two practitioners exchanging services would be another. Examples like these are fairly benign, the authors contend, but are not without pitfalls. At the other extreme are instances where a client and practitioner embark on a romantic relationship, something the authors clearly discourage, at least while the professional relationship exists. This chapter concludes with methods to evaluate the potential risk in dual relationships and ways to minimize concerns. Professional supervision is an invaluable tool for navigating gray areas, something Benjamin and Sohnen-Moe encourage and emphasize throughout the book.

Chapter Five deals with sex, touch, and intimacy and is really the heart of *The Ethics of Touch*. The authors clearly define the difference between sex, touch, and intimacy and explore the implication of each in depth. This chapter includes an in-depth discussion of sex and touch therapy. Because humans are sexual beings, Benjamin and Sohnen-Moe contend that keeping sexuality totally out of touch treatment is not possible. What they focus on is helping practitioners acknowledge that sexuality exists in an environment where sex is absolutely taboo, the ultimate ethical challenge. Sexual misconduct is covered in depth, including a risk assessment questionnaire to help practitioners determine the danger they face of moving into unethical territory. Repeatedly, the authors stress that sexual relationships between practitioner and client are absolutely forbidden. And they candidly present the pitfalls of ignoring this advice.

Ethical practice management and ethical business practices are covered extensively in Chapters Seven and Eight. The authors walk readers through the scope and standards of touch therapy practice filtered through the eye of the law, which is pivotal but very often difficult to interpret. Business ethics include issues ranging from attitudes about money to product sales, fee structures, taxes, referrals, marketing materials, insurance, and legal issues.

Any practitioner who deals with trauma victims will find Chapter Eight valuable. Here Benjamin and Sohnen-Moe present the basics of understanding trauma and abuse and the cycle of recovery. They then put in context the benefits of touch therapy to trauma victims and clearly delineate what practitioners need to know to work with these clients. They support this chapter with an appendix offering specialized protocols for dealing with trauma, abuse, and cult victims.

The final chapter explores the role of supervision in the touch practitioner's career. The authors believe that supervision is an essentially in maintaining an ethical and professional practice. They say so repeatedly throughout the book, but in this chapter discuss in more depth what makes a good

supervisor and how to find one, as well as how to use peer supervision as a acceptable substitute.

This book is valuable as a resource for exploring a wide range of sensitive issues. Benjamin and Sohnen-Moe support their thorough work with quotations in the margins throughout the book from a wide variety of sources. Also useful are margin references that lead readers to other related sections. Where appropriate, sources of information are listed alongside the applicable text. In addition, the authors have created three useful appendices. Aside from the aforementioned appendix on trauma, another offers sample office policies and other useful practice forms. The final appendix presents the codes of ethics of 13 different organizations, such as the American Chiropractic Association, the American Massage Therapy Association, the American Polarity Therapy Association, and the Kripalu Yoga Teachers Association.

In the chapter on sex, touch, and intimacy, Benjamin and Sohnen-Moe sum up the *raison d'être* of their book: "Widespread education about ethical behavior is necessary to prevent the next generation of health practitioners from compromising their client's welfare and the public trust." Training has already begun in some schools, but what about those who have received no formal training? The authors answer, "It is never too late to learn." For any touch therapist concerned about maintaining an ethical practice, this book offers an excellent place to start.

## Council of Schools

Council Communicator

Spring 2004

Reviewed by Debra Curties

Every massage student should be exposed to this book. *The Ethics of Touch* is workmanlike in the best sense of that old-fashioned word—not only is its subject matter comprehensively addressed, but also great care is taken to present issues and scenarios in a manner that is relevant and true to everyday clinical practice.

It almost goes without saying that the topics encompassed in touch therapy ethics are complex, diverse, and interrelated in ways that can be quite demanding. Yet in order to protect the interests and well being of both client and practitioner, hands-on therapists must achieve a comfortable competence with a broad range of ethical considerations. The concern for educators, who are providing a general practical education, is scale—what is a basic yet sufficient coverage of this subject matter for our students? How do we expose them (both cerebrally and experientially) to the fundamental ethical questions so that they graduate prepared to become safe and effective therapists? Also, are resources available to our instructors that match their needs?

*The Ethics of Touch* is a welcome addition. After clarifying basic terms and principles, its chapters progress steadily through the core issues: ethical principles, boundaries, effective communication, dual relationships, touch and intimacy

associations, special consideration for working with clients who have experienced abuse, and utilizing supervision. Each subject is addressed in an individual chapter (the boundaries chapter is especially good). The language is clear and understandable, and the text is rich with accessible personal examples and instances from professional life. Complex subjects are clarified in a straightforward manner. The importance of self-accountability is addressed early on, as the authors go out of their way to demonstrate that consistent ethical behavior stems from self-knowledge based on internalized values rather than mere adherence to externally set rules. They recognize that most unethical behavior is subtle and inadvertent, coming from a lack of understanding or thoughtfulness in the well-meaning practitioner. The goal is not to be error-free, but to grow in awareness and effectiveness in the service of a client-centered approach to providing health care. They also show how communication is the key to handling ethical grey areas that arise in the therapeutic relationship.

Two of the chapters address ethical practice management and business ethics. In keeping with the tone set in the rest of the book, straightforward guidance is provided through discussing common issues and urging full consideration of the implications of how clinical practice is conducted. As a non-American I wondered whether there would be a lot of US-specific legal or regulatory material in these sections, but the approach is more generic and the issues fairly universal, so this was not a problem. (There is a country-specific subsection on privacy legislation.)

This is not a book that most people will sit down and read cover to cover. It applies a learning and self-reflection paradigm to one major subject area at a time, drawing the reader into a series of case examples, checklists, self-knowledge exercises, and hypothetical clinical scenarios that are both pertinent and personally absorbing. Its structure is well suited to large and small group discussions in the school environment.

Readers tend to approach writings about ethics with a certain amount of hesitancy. Will it be preachy or overly black-and-white? Will it be too much on the philosophical plane? Will there be a rigid standard set without much useful help about how to achieve it? Will it be tedious to read? *The Ethics of Touch* does a consistent job of hitting the right level. As a reader who has been around the block a few times with these issues, I didn't agree with every point and didn't feel that the writers needed me to. I found the preachiness level low and the pragmatic relevance level very high. As an educator I was quite engaged (great countertransference checklist . . . hmm, I wouldn't use that assertion statement . . . nice case for illustrating use of supervision . . . interesting exercise about types of boundaries . . .).

*The Ethics of Touch* is a trustworthy book, and a useful one.

**Rolf Institute**  
Structural Integration  
Spring 2005

Reviewed by Karl E. Humiston, M.D., Certified Rolfer

Why, in the first place, are we doing structural integration, somatic education, or bodywork? To do good. Ethics comes from the same fundamental source of knowledge as does our professional work. Ever since Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, that knowledge has lived in our tummies, in our heart and gut in a wordless form. To put that knowing properly into words has challenged mankind throughout the ages. When Moses was given some of those words directly by God, his face shone so brightly that it had to be veiled. This is powerful stuff, and these are two powerful books.

The *Educated Heart* is written by a former member of the Rolf Institute's Ethics and Business Practices Committee, a sensitive psychiatric social worker who went on to become a massage therapist, then a Rolfer, and now a Rosen Method bodyworker. To read and ponder her book is to feel inspired, guided, and protected by someone who knows from experience. Her discussion of professional boundaries is by far the best I have encountered; making it clear that a feeling of strength and safety, not of distance, is what the client needs. On p. 12, she quotes a colleague: "When I became clearer with boundaries, my work became easier and my clients were able to go to a deeper level." Nina's only statement with which I disagree is on p. 125, where she says (as does almost everyone), "Sexual abuse and violation issues are about power..." From my own work with sex offenders I know that sexual arousal trumps other feelings and so can become a problem when a person craves more connection with others but doesn't know how to handle the full intensity of so doing. We practitioners need to discipline ourselves so as not to be distracted from staying tuned to the more subtle, though powerful, feelings of the heart and gut. Nina sums it up on p. 23: "To really serve our clients, we need not merely good hearts, but educated hearts."

The *Ethics of Touch*, written by two main authors and a talented pool of 15 contributing authors, was "a work in progress for a decade." Together they reflect the strength of their combined experiences in professional practice, writing, and teaching. *Business Mastery*, a previous book by Cheri Sohnen-Moe, has become assigned reading in Feldenkrais professional training programs. Fundamentally different from one written by a single author, this book is more like a well-organized curriculum at a school where skilled faculty teach in harmony with each other. It reminds me of the superb "History of Western Civilization" course that was required for us freshmen at Stanford University in the late 1940's. This book is indeed like a thoroughly excellent college course in its clear, consistent teaching of concepts. In fact, it is organized so as to be easily used as a textbook in a formal course in ethics, with well-done "chapter highlights" summaries and "discussion

questions and activities" at the end of each of its nine chapters. In the three valuable appendices are sample forms useful in a well-organized practice, protocols for working with survivors of abuse and of mind control cults, and codes of ethics from a number of national bodyworkers' associations.

What can be gained from *The Educated Heart* is the feeling of having a wise mentor at your side. What can be gained from *The Ethics of Touch* is the confidence that comes from understanding the concepts and being able to communicate in words what the ethics of our work is all about.

**AMTA Missouri Chapter Newsletter**  
Fall 2003

Review by Esteban Ruvalcaba

A therapist facing an ethical issue would likely look for help in an old text book such as Milady's, or in a code of ethics.

These sources are hardly adequate. Texts usually devote a single chapter to ethical issues. Such treatments do little more than introduce a complex topic. They typically provide some prescriptive information (avoid dual relationships . . . keep good records for tax purposes . . . etc.), but not a sound and thorough basis for making ethical choices.

The codes of ethics are less helpful, because they are even more general and full of good by broad language that again fails to provide a thorough going basis for developing an integrated ethical model.

This situation has just been remedied with the publication of *The Ethics of Touch* (isbn: 1-882908-40-6), by Ben Benjamin and Cherie Sohnen-Moe.

This 300 page book provides the first thorough examination of ethics for somatic practitioners. The book is easily the most readable ethics text I have ever read.

In nine chapters, Cherie and Ben treat core issues of dual relationships, communications, boundaries, sex, practice management, business ethics, working with victims of trauma, and supervision. In the appendices they also provide, among other useful tools, sample forms that include: Client Bill of Rights; Informed Consent, Trauma Survivor Handout, etc.

Perhaps the most useful aspect of the book is its two initial chapters: Ethical Principles, and Boundaries. These chapters provide the basis for the ethical issues and choices discussed in the rest of the book, and provide the therapist with a tool for developing a personal integrated ethical practice.

It is possible to earn category CEU's from reading each chapter (see page iv) of the Preface for details.

We will be giving away a copy of this excellent text at the state meeting in Columbia.



## American Society for the Alexander Technique

AmSAT News

Winter 2006

Reviewed by Jane R. Heirich

This book is a superb resource about an important topic, relevant for all Alexander Technique teachers, and particularly useful for trainees and new teachers. There are other books that are good resources for this area of our professional practice, but none so thorough as this one.

The book is well-written, clear, well-organized, thoughtful, and practical with plentiful examples and good questions for the reader to work through. It is organized in a useable format for discussion. The chapters raise essential issues concerning the ethics of touch—important issues to consider during training and probably even more useful as one accumulates teaching experience. I think that it is not easy to recognize oneself caught in some of the “slippery-slope” thinking/behavior patterns discussed in this book until one has been teaching a bit. For most of us, self-awareness of boundary issues and communication about them only comes with life experience.

Some brief comments follow to give a sense of the scope of the book. “Ethical Principles” contains an excellent values-clarification (or self-assessment) exercise. My favorite quote from this chapter: “A lack of psychological savvy is no longer a valid excuse for inappropriate behavior.” (p. 14)

“Boundaries” describes many types of boundaries and how to recognize both subtle and gross violations thereof. The material is clear, with many examples to get us thinking about our relationships with colleagues and students.

“Dynamics of effective communication” is primarily devoted to communication about boundary issues and contains relevant examples. The importance of observing both verbal and non-verbal communication is emphasized.

“Dual relationships” can be a big issue for those in the helping, therapeutic, or teaching professions: A teacher has a student who comes for Alexander lessons and also has an additional relationship with the same person. In other words, there may be overlapping of social and professional roles. This section contains excellent analytic questions to consider before plunging into a dual relationship.

“Sex, Touch, and Intimacy” is probably the most important chapter in the book. There is a need for clear boundaries here in order to provide a foundation for safety and trust—qualities basic to the work we do as Alexander teachers. A biological fact we may already know, but I appreciated the reminder: the skin is derived from the same cells that become the nervous system. No wonder touch is such a powerful way of connecting to others.

Appendices include specific techniques for working with self-disclosed survivors of trauma and abuse. This material gives excellent, professionally astute guidance, especially for new teachers who have not been, worked with, or known survivors of abuse.

Two major bonuses: there are 15 contributors in addition to the two named authors, and every chapter includes case-stories taken directly from their experiences. Every chapter includes questions and exercises that could help the trainee/new teacher apply the material from the very beginning of setting up a teaching practice.

Last year, about halfway through the training years for my first group of trainees, we began discussing the material in this wonderful book with the help of two professionals: a veteran BioEnergetics therapist and an experienced music therapist. We will continue the discussions during the remaining months of their training. The book will then be a familiar resource for them during all their years of Alexander teaching.

## AMTA Oregon Chapter Newsletter

May 2003

Reviewed by Glenath Moyle

I have just finished reading this comprehensive book pertaining to ethical issues faced by any health care professionals who use touch in their practices. All massage therapists and bodyworkers can benefit from the information in this landmark work. I wish this book had been around in 1997 when I was involved in writing the ethics rules for the Oregon Board of Massage Therapists.

All of us are faced with ethical dilemmas every day we practice. This book illustrates common issues with specific examples and resolutions that make sense. The book includes interactive exercises, discussion topics, and checklists for action to help the reader deal personally with these issues. It is a common sense approach to difficult problems.

The authors also provide excellent background and information about matters that we may not even think of as ethical issues. They are both highly recognized in the massage profession and bring their knowledge and expertise to this pioneering work. This book is a must for any conscientious massage therapist or bodyworker and should be a part of every massage school library.



## AMTA Nebraska Chapter Newsletter

The Connecting Stroke

Fall 2003

Reviewed by Daniel T. Higgins, BA, LMT, NCTMB

*The Ethics of Touch* is a groundbreaking work that addresses many of the salient issues associated with ethical touch therapy. In my many years as a student and instructor I have attended several workshops and read a number of books on the issue of ethics in general and specifically as it relates to touch therapy. I have never before discovered a work that so thoroughly investigates this multi-faceted subject so clearly and completely.

Ben Benjamin, Ph.D., and Cherie Sohlen-Moe have created an exhaustive work that will support touch professionals as they explore; Ethical Principles, Boundaries, Dynamics of Effective Communication, Dual Relationships, Sex, Touch and Intimacy, Ethical Practice Management, Business Ethics, Special Considerations in Cases of Trauma, Supervision, Forms, Specialized Protocols, and Codes of Ethics.

Each chapter is self-contained and can be read, or studied as a stand-alone session, or combined for a more inclusive investigation. Several of the chapters include exercises and activities that will stimulate questions and personal exploration and reflection. The book is invaluable for personal study, as well as being beautifully suited to group discussion and / or peer accountability review.

This is a work that should find its way into every school of body work as a text for those entering the field. It also can be used by practicing therapists for Continuing Education Units. You can obtain category A CEUs for each chapter. This fine work will make a welcome and useful addition to any library.

## AMTA Wisconsin Chapter Newsletter

Connecting Hands

Vol 10 Issue 3

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Reviewed by Kay S. Peterson, WCMT

*The Ethics of Touch* is the most comprehensive book I have ever seen on the issue of ethical behavior for the massage therapist. The text provides real life examples that clearly illustrate the topic headings. Each chapter also includes suggested solutions to dilemmas, and a complete summary that provides the reader with a quick reference of topics discussed. Each chapter also concludes with discussion questions and activities giving the reader opportunities for strengthening their skills in interpersonal ethical relationships. Topics covered range from barter to post traumatic stress, it would be difficult to find a topic that is not included.

This text is a must have for all massage therapists, I believe it should be required text in all massage schools and should also become a permanent and prominent addition to every established therapist's library. I find myself referring to it often when faced with a difficult ethical dilemma.

You may also order ethics courses that follow this text that satisfy the NCB requirements at [www.sohlen-moe.com](http://www.sohlen-moe.com)

