



Australian Breathwork Association

Code of Ethics and Code of Breathwork Practice

www.australianbreathworkassociation.org

CHANGE RECORD

Revision	Date	Change
1	26/10/11	Ratified by ABA
2	11/6/18	Formatted and numbered as part of standardising all ABA documents Cover sheet added, formatted to standard. No content changes made except removal of vision and mission to a separate document
3	23/5/19	Delete reference to Assistant practitioner under "Relevance of the Code"

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Version	Document	Description
Current	ABA-GB-001	ABA Constitution
Current	ABA-GB-009	ABA Code of Supervision
Current	ABA-GB-010	ABA Code of Continuing Professional Education (CPE)

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PREAMBLE

This Code of Ethics and Code of Breathwork Practice (hereafter “the Code”) was drawn up by the Executive Committee of the Australian Breathwork Association (hereafter the “ABA”) in recognition of the need to update the existing Code of Ethics (2006) and bring improved professional standards to the Breathwork Profession. The document was accepted by ABA members at the Annual General Meeting of the Association on October 30th.

The Ethics Committee of the ABA will oversee this Code. It will be reviewed regularly on an ongoing basis.

All members of the ABA are required to sign a declaration in respect of the Code as a prerequisite for membership of the ABA. Membership to the ABA means that members acknowledge their professional responsibility to abide by the terms of the Code and the associated Procedure for Breathwork practice.

All members of the ABA will have ready access to the Code via the ABA website.

The ABA executive will update changes to the Code on the Association’s website and notify members by email. It is each member’s responsibility to ensure they have the latest version of the Code.

Clarification of the Code and ethical issues relating to Breathwork practice may be obtained by contacting the Ethics Committee of the ABA as listed on the website: www.australianbreathworkassociation.org.au²

Introduction

The Practice of Breathwork is supported by ethical principles. The ABA considers these to be realistic, trustworthy and reliable, for both Breathwork practitioners and clients.

Intention of the Code

The intention of the Code of Ethics is to

- establish principles and values that support membership of the ABA
- outline required professional values for professional standards of Breathwork practice
- provide information for clients and the general public regarding their rights in relation to a professional Breathwork practitioner or trainer
- provide members of the ABA with guidelines facilitating self assessment and maintenance of professionalism

As a professional member of the ABA, each member agrees to align with the spirit of this Code and to abide by the guidelines and standards of the ABA.

Aspects of the Code

The Code is set in two parts:

1. The Code of Ethics – the ethical principles upon which the Code and our practice of Breathwork is set.

² ABA acknowledges CAPA for their model

2. The Code of Breathwork Practice – application of the ethical principles, translating them into professional behaviour

The ABA is committed to establishing, and promoting, professional and ethical practice in the field of Breathwork.

The intention of this section of the Code is to ensure high quality professional practice and quality of care.

Relevance of the Code

This Code applies to all members of the ABA and across all aspects of their Breathwork practice. Within the context of this Code, the term Breathwork practitioner implies membership of the ABA.

The terms ‘Breathwork practice’ and Practitioner refer to the three levels of Practitioner recognised by the ABA:

- I. Practitioner
- II. Group Facilitator
- III. Trainer

The term ‘Peer Support and Review’ refers to the experience of formal professional Breathwork supervision as outlined in the ABA Peer Support and Review document .

The term ‘client’ refers to individuals, couples, groups, involved in any of the above mentioned levels of Breathwork practice.

A Definition of Breathwork

Breathwork is the therapeutic use of Conscious, Connected Breathing.

The intention of Breathwork is to guide the unfolding of full human potential inherent in each human being.

We see Breathwork as one of the most powerful transformative processes available, as it enables simple access to the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels of being.

Breathwork is client focused, in that it is an experiential therapy. All practitioners have used Breathwork extensively for their personal exploration and inner work.

PART 1. THE CODE OF ETHICS

This section of the Code of Ethics and Code of Breathwork Practice sets out the principles which underpin our understanding of ethical practice in Breathwork

The Primary Principles are:

1. Autonomy and Inclusion

Breathwork practitioners respect the dignity of all people, and we promote this value in our work.

2. Professional Caring

In our Breathwork practice we act in ways that support, nurture and value our client's human rights. Our behaviour is always in the service of personal wellbeing and of the common good.

3. Integrity and Respect

Breathwork practitioners:

- 1) interact with clients in a truthful, courteous, considerate and compassionate manner, being mindful to avoid, at all times, mistreatment of a client, past or present, financially, emotionally, sexually or in any other way.
- 2) Practice within the limits of their competence.
- 3) Willingly and actively participate and commit to ongoing training, 'Peer Support and Review' and professional development.
- 4) Aspire to living in alignment with these principles and values.

4. Confidentiality

Breathwork practitioners respect the privacy of clients and preserve the confidentiality of information acquired in the course of their work.

5. Equality

Breathwork practitioners recognise and respect diversity among people, including philosophies of health and wellbeing, and oppose discrimination and judgemental behaviour.

6. Responsibility

Breathwork Practitioners take responsibility for:

- 1) Maintaining ethical and professional standards;
- 2) The safety of clients;
- 3) Maintaining the integrity of Breathwork Practice.

7. Client Autonomy and Responsibility

Breathwork practitioners encourage clients to make responsible decisions on their own behalf.

8. Professional Practice

Breathwork practitioners practice only when in sound condition and not when impaired by emotional issues, illness, alcohol, drugs or for any other reason.

Practitioners aspire to be respectful to self and to others at all times.

This Code of Ethics exists to highlight the values inherent within our profession, and provides a foundation from which any ethical dilemmas may be examined.

The Code of Ethics aims to support practitioners facing any ethical conflicts which arise, and to remind us of the core values to which we are committed.

PART 2. THE CODE OF BREATHWORK PRACTICE

This section is an application of the ethical principles in Part 1.

The ABA requires it's member practitioners to remain committed to being:

- 1) Skilled, Certified Professionals in their Breathwork practice.
- 2) Empathic, encouraging and compassionate in their relationships with clients and colleagues.
- 3) Fair and just in behaviour at all times.

A. Professional Care

Breathwork Practitioners:

- 1) Avoid implying or offering guarantees of healing, rather support clients to move toward self responsibility.
- 2) Regularly update their professional skills, as per Membership guidelines.
- 3) Demonstrate competency in Breathwork practice.
- 4) Participate in Peer Support and Review as per "Peer Support and Review" document.

B. CAPABILITY IN PRACTICE:

Includes:

- 1) Awareness of one's professional capacity, with a commitment to act within the limits of that capacity, and to refer on to another professional if that is in the client's best interest.
- 2) Participation by Breathwork practitioners in 'Peer support and review' for reflection and feedback on their practice.
- 3) A commitment by Breathwork practitioners to ongoing education and continuing professional development.
- 4) Breathwork Practitioners being aware of their legal responsibilities. This includes knowledge of applicable State and Federal legislation and any amendments made to that legislation over time.

C. Confidentiality

- 1) In Breathwork practice, anything shared by the client is treated with respect and total confidentiality.
- 2) Confidentiality applies to any and all identifying features of a client. Identifying features include client's name, address, physicality, employment, any details obtained from the client's assessment interview, any detail discussed in a Breathwork session.
- 3) Breathwork practitioners ensure that any and all records of Breathwork practice are stored safely and privately and are to be treated with the strictest of confidence.
- 4) Breathwork practitioners discuss in their initial assessment interview with clients the level of confidentiality the client is assured of.
- 5) An exception to confidentiality may arise when circumstances suggest to the practitioner that a client is at risk of inflicting harm to self or inflicting harm to others. A Breathwork practitioner's primary responsibility is always to the client's health and wellbeing.

- 6) In the event of paragraph (e) arising, Breathwork practitioners should, where appropriate, discuss with the client their obligation to report to a Peer Support and Review person, or senior colleague, any situations they feel could lead to harm to the client or another person. In certain circumstances however, particularly if the practitioner feels they themselves may be a risk, it is appropriate to speak directly with a colleague, seek legal advice or report the matter to the appropriate authority.
- 7) Legislation in most Australian States makes it mandatory for professionals to report, to the relevant authority, any concerns they have where a child is at risk of harm.
- 8) More information regarding mandatory reporting is available from the NSW Department of Community Services website³.
- 9) In the case of criminal acts of clients, Breathwork practitioners must not make known a client's information unless there is a prevailing and unmistakable legal obligation to do so, or where there is serious risk of harm to the client, to others or to the practitioner, or paragraph e) applies.

A Breathwork practitioner must exercise great discretion when considering a breach of confidentiality. Every effort is made to consider disclosing only to individuals judged to possess a legitimate need to know.

D. The Use of Client Information

- 1) Before acting on any information given by clients within Breathwork practice, the informed consent of clients is required.
- 2) Unless there is a direct legal requirement, or where paragraphs f) or g) above apply, informed consent of a client is required before acting on any information given by clients within Breathwork practice.
- 3) With any Breathwork case material, anonymity and client privacy is always a priority, Practitioners are reminded to be particularly mindful when writing up for publications, advertising and or internet use.
- 4) In Breathwork practice practitioners are advised to discuss with the client, and gain the client's informed consent prior to initiating any physical touch.
- 5) The Breathwork Practitioner will obtain consent from a legally authorised person acting in the best interests of the client, where a client is unable to give such consent for themselves, as in the case of children.

E. Breathwork practice with children and young people

- 1) Working with children and young people requires careful consideration.
- 2) A child or young person's capacity to give informed consent independent of any person acting upon parental responsibility requires consideration.
- 3) Working with children and young people requires supervision.

³ http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/preventing_child_abuse_and_neglect.html:

- 4) All Breathwork Practitioners have a responsibility to become familiar with the legislation in their State which governs the care and protection of children and young people, and will also be familiar with any accompanying guidelines that support the professional to identify children at risk.
- 5) Breathwork Practitioners have a responsibility to become familiar with the Children and Young Persons Care and Protection Act⁴ 1998
- 6) Child protection is a whole community responsibility, including Government and non-Government agencies that provide specific services to children and young people.

The *NSW Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention (2000)* provide guidance regarding the responsibility of agencies to work collaboratively to secure and sustain the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people. All staff providing services to children and young people are mandatory reporters under Section 27 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. This means that any child suspected to be at risk of harm must be reported to the Department of Community Services (DoCS) Helpline⁵, which is open 24 hours a day. Further information is found on the community services website⁶.

F. Boundaries in Breathwork practice

- 1) The relationship between a Breathwork Practitioner and client is a unique and privileged relationship. It is critical that practitioners understand the intrinsic imbalance of power and influence contained in this relationship, and take responsibility for acting with due care and respect.
- 2) The Breathwork practitioner's role is to support and nurture the client's capacity for moving toward personal freedom and self determination.
- 3) Breathwork practitioners always use utmost ethical practice. Their behaviour in the practitioner/client relationship must be fair and just, and must never seek to gain sexual, emotional or financial advantage. No personal advantage of the client is ever taken.
- 4) Sexual relations with clients are prohibited.
- 5) Breathwork practitioners are reminded to exercise respectful and reflective consideration in entering into personal or business relationships with clients. They must consider as first priority:
 - the client's rights,
 - the Practitioner's motivation,
 - potential dependency issues,
 - potential imbalance of power and influence.They are advised to discuss such intentions openly with their peer support and review practitioner.
- 6) Breathwork practitioners keep their relationship with clients professional, always respecting and honouring differences, which may include: lifestyle, gender, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, belief and/or cultural differences.

⁴ <http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/enact/enact.htm>

⁵ telephone number 132 111

⁶ <http://www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/E404A6CA-AC16-4665-A643-AAC8ED0017F9/1004/ChildrensStandardsInActionWebC.pdf>

- 7) It is important that Breathwork Practitioners are clear with clients about the extent and limits of their availability and accessibility.
- 8) Practitioners are mindful and considerate of client care during holidays and/or extended breaks to the therapeutic process.
- 9) Where a client participates in ongoing work, the Breathwork practitioner assists their client(s) to resolve their issues as soon as is practicable and beneficial to the client.
- 10) It is the responsibility of the Breathwork practitioner to ensure that the client is made aware of resources and professional help available where harm has come to a client, and where that harm could reasonably have been the responsibility of the Breathwork practitioner.
- 11) Breathwork practitioners are to uphold a high standard of fair and just principles as announced in this document.

G. Training and Group Facilitation

- 1) In the interest of expanding and extending the professionalism of Breathwork, all Breathwork practitioners are encouraged to share their professional knowledge and expertise.
- 2) Breathwork Trainers and group facilitators agree to attain the appropriate skills, attitudes and knowledge necessary to provide professional aptitude in their trainings and/or group leadership.
- 3) Breathwork Trainers and group facilitators treat all students with sincerity, integrity and honesty.
- 4) It can be relevant in trainings and in supervision to share information about clients . It is imperative that client confidentiality and anonymity is always honoured.
- 5) Should a Breathwork session be recorded for the purpose of training or supervision, the facilitating practitioner must obtain the voluntary and informed written consent of client(s) prior to any recording taking place.

H. Peer Support and Review

Peer Support and Review is a required component of practice, training and continuing education for all practicing members of the ABA. All Breathwork practitioners, group facilitators, trainers and supervisors are required to participate in Peer Support and Review.

A Peer Support and Review person's responsibility is:

- 1) To support and encourage healthy professional practice by Breathwork practitioners.
- 2) To monitor practitioner's case management and practice management.
- 3) To observe explore and develop the Breathwork practitioner's attitudes, skills and knowledge.
- 4) To mentor the Breathwork practitioner so that effective therapeutic service is provided.
- 5) In the event a Breathwork practitioner is deemed to be ineffective in therapeutic service, for either health or personal reasons, the support person and Breathwork practitioner will explore the appropriate action

necessary. It may be necessary for the Breathwork practitioner to stop practicing for a period of time, in which case consideration and or alternative arrangements for existing clients is to be made.

I. Further Development of Breathwork

- 1) The ABA is committed to encouraging and supporting research within the practice of Breathwork that will inform and develop Breathwork as a therapeutic modality. All Breathwork practitioners are encouraged, where possible, to support such programs.
- 2) Throughout any research program, close monitoring and honouring of the standards of good professional practice in Breathwork is required, so that the rights and confidentiality of all clients is respected.
- 3) To facilitate a research programme, the informed consent of all clients is required. In addition, should a client wish to withdraw from participation in the programme, their desire is to be respected with no ongoing consequences.

J. Complaints from Clients

- 1) In the event a client makes a formal complaint in respect of a practitioner, the practitioner is expected to respond without delay and in an efficient manner. If hurt, mischief, or injury has been caused, the Breathwork practitioner agrees to take action to remedy, to the best of their ability, any harm they may have caused to their client, and to prevent any further harm.
- 2) Any and indeed all complaints from a client are to be discussed in full, with the practitioner's Peer Support and Review mentor in order to be professionally sure that the best possible steps have been taken to prevent any unnecessary impairment to the client and to avoid any repetition.
- 3) If a Breathwork practitioner considers they have acted in accordance with principles of fair and just professional practice, yet their client is still dissatisfied, the client is encouraged to seek a second opinion. The most appropriate person may be a trainer from the Association. If necessary the client can contact the integrity committee.
- 4) Clients are encouraged to consult the ABA's *Code of Ethics and Code of Breathwork Practice* Document as reference to the professional requirements of all Breathwork practitioners.
- 5) All practicing Breathwork practitioners must have the relevant professional indemnity and public liability insurance to adequately cover their Breathwork practice .

K. Professional Conduct

When working collaboratively with other practitioners, Breathwork practitioners act with:

- 1) mutual respect, sensitivity, and maturity. They commit to clear honest communication, and have a strong, transparent and ethically flexible set of boundaries.
- 2) Breathwork practitioners must not undermine the relationship another practitioner has with a client.
- 3) All communication between practitioners about clients should be respectful to both clients and practitioner, purposeful, built on the goal of enhancing the best interests of the client, and mindful of confidentiality.

- 4) Breathwork practitioners have a responsibility to protect clients when they have good reason to believe that other practitioners are placing them at risk of harm. Great caution must be exercised in order that, where possible, the rights of all are protected.
- 5) If a Breathwork practitioner holds a concern regarding the ethical behaviour of a colleague, they should take steps to verify their concerns, discuss the situation with their supervisor in a peer support consultation, and if appropriate, report the matter to the ABA Ethics Committee.
- 6) It is important that the issue/incident be resolved at an appropriate level, without it escalating beyond what is required to bring about justice, resolution and reparation.
- 7) When information against a practitioner is provided by a client, and before action takes place, the client must be informed and their permission obtained, unless the gravity of the concern is such as to override the wishes of the client.
- 8) All Breathwork practitioners share a responsibility to take part in relevant professional conduct procedures, whether as the person complained against, or as the provider of relevant information.

L. Honesty and Integrity in Professional Practice

1) Referrals

The ABA considers it unethical for its members to:

- a. accept or offer payment for referrals.
- b. engage in any transactions for financial or other gain, apart from those associated with negotiating the ordinary fee for Breathwork services.
- c. solicit the client of another Breathwork Practitioner.

2) Practitioner/Client Agreements

- a. Where appropriate, Breathwork Practitioners are responsible for creating clear agreements with their clients that clearly define the terms by which the Breathwork practice will be governed.
- b. These Agreements could usefully include:
 - i. An outline regarding availability of the practitioner.
 - ii. Agreement re initial number of sessions, confidentiality, payment of fees, and arrangements for cancellation.
- c. If a Breathwork Practitioner agrees to provide services at the request of a third party, it is the responsibility of both practitioners to clarify the nature and purpose of the Breathwork relationship with all persons concerned.

3) Conflicts of Interest

A Breathwork Practitioner should disclose to clients any conflict of interest that may arise, as soon as it arises, and after due consultation with the supervisor.

4) Clinical Material and Data Collection

- a. Breathwork practitioners must be aware of the current requirements of any Federal or State legislation in respect of privacy issues.
- b. On the 21st of December 2001, all health professionals became subject to the Federal Privacy Act 1988.

Breathwork practitioners have a responsibility to be familiar with both the Privacy Act 1988 and the Information Privacy Principles (IPP) contained in Schedule 3 of that Act. The IPP can be accessed through the government's privacy website⁷.

- c. When client notes are taken, It is important that Breathwork practitioner store them in secure locations.

5) Advertising

- a. When advertising their services, Breathwork practitioners endorse their work truthfully. This includes reference to their skills, qualifications, experience and theoretical and practical approaches to Breathwork practice.
- b. It is appropriate for a client to request information relevant to a Breathwork practitioner's training credentials and professional affiliations. If asked, all Breathwork practitioners are encouraged to fulfill such a request.

6) Disclosure Commitment

Upon application for membership, or at the time of the event, a Breathwork practitioner has the responsibility to inform the ABA of any past or pending criminal charges, and/or any past or pending complaints relating to professional misconduct. It is a significant breach of this Code to omit to do so.

In Conclusion

It is the intention of this document to bring to the fore the Breathwork practitioner's professional responsibility:

- 1) to the profession,
- 2) to the clients,
- 3) to themselves as practitioners.

Breathwork is a therapeutic process, and as such, it requires practitioners to be professional in conduct and in skills, with clients and with colleagues, so that the experience for all parties is deemed to be fair and just.

⁷ <http://www.privacy.gov.au/publications/ipps.html>