

In every professional social group, together with its development, two kinds of rules of behaviour can be observed: technical and moral, which constitute professional ethics, or what can be referred to as deontology, which regulates professional practice of the members of a particular profession. This, in turn, leads to honour or dignity connected with the profession - which can be infringed by anyone who does not adhere to the rules of professional ethics, whose laws and regulations are passed together with the skills or knowledge required for that profession. They may be coded, as in medical ethics.

How can professional ethics be defined

- Professional ethics can be defined as philosophical science dealing with moral improvement, needed to perform the work one has chosen. A profession should involve fulfilling one's vocation in the best possible way and to the best of one's knowledge.
- The improvement depends on the concepts of work itself and the theories connected with it. In other words, professional ethics is a theory of responsible, morally well performed work.
- Some rules of professional ethics have been created almost alongside the emergence of the professions to which they themselves pertain, for example medical ethics together with the famous Hippocratic Oath. Other professions, having existed for hundreds of years without any formally written moral code of behaviour, are based on moral sense of the professionals. This situation can be observed in the teaching profession.

Topic: Professional ethics of people working for Central Sterilisation Units in Hospitals.

1. NOTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH ETHICS.

- a) a set of moral rules and judgement accepted in a given social group (national, religious, professional) often understood as synonymous to morality;
- b) a particular system of ethical outlook and moral norms;
- c) the science of morality, as a branch of philosophy (value theory) , independent ethics (etyka niezależna) created by Tadeusz Kotarbiński, according to which, the most important aim of a human being is the strive to reach happiness;

The role of ETHICS is to inquire into which actions, reasons and rules of behaviour deserve respect, therefore, in its wider sense, it can be seen as WISDOM OF LIFE, visible in three areas:

- HOW TO LIVE: to enable oneself and others the possibility of reaching more happiness and to learn ways of avoiding misery whenever it is possible;
- HOW TO COOPERATE WITH OTHERS: to earn respect of honourable people, and avoid negative feedback;
- HOW TO ACT: in order to make our actions meaningful, and devoid of incompetence.

2. THE CONCEPT OF WORK

- The value of work cannot be overestimated, not only in terms of its role in providing income necessary for making a living, but also as a crucial factor in human development. Work can be seen as a commodity which should be highly respected, because developing work reliability enriches employees, and adds to the wellbeing of the whole nation. On the other hand, it is equally important to strike balance between work and private life, because fast pace of living and professional burn out may have detrimental effect on people and their families.
- WHAT WOULD LIFE BE LIKE WITHOUT WORK?
- IS WORK A RIGHT OR A DUTY?
- WHAT IS GAINED THROUGH WORK?

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What can be done for work to enhance one's development as a human being?

- 1) think about the recipients of your work;
- 2) ensure good organisation of work;
- 3) be open to new ways of increasing efficiency;
- 4) adhere to safety regulations;
- 5) enrol for in-work-training;
- 6) choose an interesting career;
- 7) teach your profession to others;
- 8) take part in meetings with other people who perform the same work, to learn about their experiences;
- 9) be responsible for the result of your work;

3. THE ABILITY OF CONNECTING WITH OTHERS: COMMUNICATION

- It constitutes the basis for good relations with friends, family, colleagues and other people. It helps prevent unnecessary conflicts, makes it possible to overcome psychological isolation, and strengthens friendship;

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COMMUNICATION:

Communication can be observed when one person transmits information and its recipient verifies the content, to make sure it has been received properly. It may be infringed when the participants **lack in openness** (making their intentions clear) or **empathy** (the ability to share someone else's feelings and experiences) and lead to a total break in communication, causing various complications and life problems, for example:

The clothes you are wearing!

It has to be stressed, that alongside the content of the message, its form is of equal importance (the tone of voice, face expression, body language)

COMMUNICATION BARRIERS:

Every stage of the communication process may be prone to various disruptions:

- 1) The sender may be unaware of his/her own intentions, or willing to mislead the recipient;
- 2) The message may be mistakenly encoded by the sender.
- 3) The message may be ambiguously verbalised.
- 4) The communication channel may be disturbed by external factors: traffic, high temperature, etc;
- 5) The reception of the message may be imprecise.
- 6) The recipient may decipher the message incorrectly.

PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS IN COMMUNICATION
(the level of intention and understanding)

There are four barriers in conveying the core meaning of the conversation:

- 1) Problems connected with information;
- 2) Inadequate/negative relationship between the people involved;
- 3) Differences in life values;
- 4) The structure of the situation;

MEANING

INFORMATION BARRIER

RELATION BARRIER

VALUE BARRIER

STRUCTURE BARRIER

INFORMATION BARRIER

Information barrier pertains to misunderstandings resulting from:

1. Lack of knowledge;
2. Faulty reasoning;
3. Different interpretation;
4. Different context;

Ad.1 A doctor tells a patient he's going to perform colonoscopy. Not being familiar with the procedure, the patient associates it with gastroscopy, which he remembers from the past, and is surprised to discover that in preparation for the procedure, a nurse wants to give him an enema.

Ad.2 I make an appointment with a friend to wait for her at the door. She waits in front of her door , and I wait in front of mine.

Ad. 3 Five people are witness to a road accident, and all of them give a different account of what happened.

Ad. 4 Flower – a thing which grows in a garden, flour – white powder used for baking.

RELATION BARRIER

Relation barrier can be seen as negative approach between discourse participants, resulting from:

1. Misinterpretation of behaviour.
2. Strong emotions.
3. Stereotypes.
4. Negative experiences.

Ad. 1. I couldn't catch his eye when we were talking, he was nervous, he must have been lying!

Ad. 2. Kate failed her re-take exam. At home, her parents tell her she's chaotic, has a messy room and doesn't appreciate the conditions they have provided for her.

Ad. 3. The person at the garage was a woman. I'm sure she's not competent enough to repair my car. I'll go and look for some male mechanic.

Ad. 4. I have already visited this doctor and he was very rude. I'll wait for some other doctor. I don't want to talk to this one ever again.

VALUE BARRIER

Value barrier are conflicts caused by:

1. Different religious, political, cultural, ideological and other values;
2. Values pertaining to "I".
3. Everyday values.

Ad. 1. I won't talk to him, because he's a democrat. I'm sure he'll oppose the idea of raising the taxes.

Ad. 2. I strongly disapprove of people who use swear words when they speak. I cannot focus on the true meaning of what they're talking about and as a result, I reject whatever they have to say.

Ad. 3. If someone pays attention to social etiquette and is faced with a person who fails to say hello, or doesn't introduce himself/herself properly, everything they say afterwards will be rejected.

STRUCTURE BARRIER

Structure barrier are distortions resulting from:

1. Uneven distribution of power.
2. Space and time.
3. Social roles, family roles, occupation.
4. Uneven access to resources.
5. Limited resources.

Ad. 1. A conversation between an employee and their superior.

Ad. 2. Face-to-face communication is far more effective than an on-line chat, or telephone conversation.

Ad. 3. A conversation between a mother and her child, teacher and student, superior and their employee.

Ad. 4. A CEO of a big international company, and a small company owner.

Ad. 5. A student, who doesn't have a computer, or access to the Internet and has to resort to information gathered in a library.

Only when the above-mentioned barriers are eliminated, can problems be addressed. It has to be remembered, however, that apart from solving problems, participants in communication may also use conversation as a means to satisfying their individual interests and needs.

PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS – are usually associated with those identified by Maslov, according to which people have five basic needs, which constitute a hierarchy, where no higher need can be satisfied before lower level needs. Those are:

1. Self-actualisation
2. Esteem
3. Love and belonging
4. Safety needs
5. Physiological needs

PROCEDURAL NEEDS

All people have expectations connected with the ways in which certain events take place. Most social events happen in accordance with rules known by the society. When deviations occur, they may result in high stress levels and cause conflicts.

CONTENT NEEDS, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PROCEDURAL NEEDS

They should be satisfied at the same time. It is no coincidence that this situation is often compared to a three legged stool. If any of the legs is shorter, triangular satisfaction, or satisfaction of any kind, cannot be achieved.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

(according to R. Bolton)

Problems in effective communication may also result from a certain lack of caution, excessive preoccupation with oneself (thus not listening to others), emotions, and linguistic differences.

Making judgements	1. 2. 3. 4.	Criticising Name-calling Diagnosing Praising evaluatively
Deciding for others	1. 2. 3. 4. questioning	Ordering Threatening Moralising Excessive/Inappropriate
Escaping the problems of others	1. 2. 3. 4.	Advising Diverting Giving the logical argument Reassuring

5.

RESPONSIBILITY

It cannot be argued that developing the self, love or ecology would not be possible if we were devoid of the sense of responsibility for ourselves, our families, for other people, for our professions, and for the Earth. Freedom comes through responsibility. The ones who have the freedom of choice, are responsible for their choices. The more freedom, the bigger responsibility.

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What is RESPONSIBILITY:

- 1) Readiness to own up to one's actions, and being ready to accept their potential consequences.
- 2) Fulfilling one's obligations and promises.
- 3) Punctuality.
- 4) Adherence to rules and regulations.
- 5) Diligence in performing one's duties.
- 6) Staying committed to the set ideals.

Who are we responsible for?

- 1) For ourselves.
- 2) For other people.
- 3) For higher values.
- 4) For the surroundings.
- 5) For the work we do.
- 6) Other

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Professional responsibility has its roots in responsibility understood in a wider sense, which is the necessity of facing the consequences resulting from law, moral and social rules, in terms of one's own actions and the actions of others.

Depending on the criteria, various kinds of responsibility can be found:

- 1) Liability
- 2) Criminal responsibility
- 3) Political responsibility
- 4) Disciplinary responsibility
- 5) Staff responsibility
- 6) Moral responsibility

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Professional responsibility is necessary in every profession, especially when not everything can be described by the rules of law, and as a result, depends on the particular professionals performing their work (as in the case of medical staff)

THIS KIND OF RESPONSIBILITY SHOULD BE CONSIDERED IN TERMS OF MORALITY.

From the ethical point of view, responsibility is seen as the awareness of one's actions performed, or restrained. This behaviour may be triggered or forbidden by moral norms, and further assessed as positive or negative. The evaluation may be performed by the professional group or the recipients of services provided, and most of all, in the privacy of one's own conscience.

LEGISLATION

Legislation regulating professional activity may be divided into three categories:

- **STRICTLY CONNECTED WITH PERFORMING ONE'S PROFESSION**
For example a decree of the Minister of State for Health and Ageing related to medical staff qualifications
- **REQUIREMENTS GIVEN BY EMPLOYERS**
May be contained in the Labour Code, or the various decrees of the Minister of State for Health and Ageing
- **GENERAL LAW**
The rules contained in the Penal Code, pertaining to crime against life and health, or Civil Code, for example connected with redress for damage incurred during the use of health services.

6. CONFLICT SOLUTION

Conflicts belong to common phenomena. Their meaning may be negative, or positive, if we learn to solve them. Conflict disclosure may be indicative of a sense of freedom or aspirations and can provide a chance for changing the situation for the better. Conflicts should not be fuelled by accepting only one's own arguments or winning by the use of force, nor suppressed by silence and evasion of difficult matters. They should be solved. Both sides should account for the difference in reasoning of the other side, express their opinions in a clear and unbiased way, and learn to listen attentively to the other person. This way compromise can be reached. This skill can be learned, to benefit all areas of life: family, work, social activity, etc.

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WHAT IS CONFLICT?

- 1) A dispute between people;
- 2) A quarrel;
- 3) A difference of opinion;
- 4) A tiff;
- 5) Other...

CAUSES OF CONFLICTS:

- 1) Egoism;
- 2) Greed;
- 3) Contradictory views;
- 4) Envy;
- 5) Viciousness;
- 6) Intolerance;
- 7) Other...
- 8)

FACTORS IMPEDING CONFLICT SOLUTION:

- 1) Stubbornness;
- 2) Jokes;
- 3) Lack of honesty;
- 4) Misunderstanding the situation;
- 5) Vanity;
- 6) Prejudice;
- 7) Other...

FACTORS ENABLING CONFLICT SOLUTION:

- 1) Empathy;
- 2) Acceptance of reality;
- 3) Tolerance;
- 4) Strive for agreement;
- 5) Apologizing;
- 6) Other...

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Ija Lazarć-Pawłowska:

Professional Ethics are written norms pertaining to the question of how, from the moral point of view, people in particular professions should and should not act.

According to M. Michalik:

Professional ethics is the general implementation of main moral directives which can be found in a given society to particular professions, which can also be described as specification of general social morality.

MEDICAL ETHICS

Medical staff are required to follow the code of general medical ethics irrespective of one's position. Everybody, and as a consequence, the whole society, expects that medical staff behave in an ethical way, and possess the necessary knowledge and skills. Social trust, is therefore built on the conscience of every medical staff member, with regard to their willingness and ability of earning that trust.

MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Medical professional ethics is expressed in relation to the wellbeing of other people, especially their health. It is the responsibility for patients, their surroundings and work colleagues.

THE AIMS OF THE CODE OF MEDICAL ETHICS:

- 1) Encouraging medical staff to behave ethically;
- 2) Making medical staff aware of the moral issues connected with their work;
- 3) Imposing certain rules on medical staff, to strengthen integration and ensure that ethical standards be met in everyday practice;
- 4) Providing professional advice on solving moral dilemmas.
- 5) Familiarising the society with the scope of medical service possibilities.

MORAL CHOICES BECOME PART AND PARCEL OF THE LIFE OF EVERY MEDICAL STAFF MEMBER

- The programme was called by its author the ethics of reverence for life

Topic: ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

Bibliography:

„Nie, które buduje”, Maria Moneta-Malewska, Joanna Malewska

LANGUAGE – commonly known as a means for **communication**, may also **disrupt** the process, a word which bears little meaning to one person, may hurt another.

In the past every **word** was precise. Nowadays, we are bombarded with information, words flow faster and faster, and become meaningless.

Words may both **motivate** and **discourage**. Through words, we can both love and hate. Words may create problems and solve them. One of the biggest problems in communication is the constant strive to decipher the thoughts of the other interlocutor, and the need for them to read our mind.

If we want other people to respond to our needs, or thoughts, they have to be expressed in a clear and friendly way, so that the other people are willing to cooperate.

Assertive people are those, who respect **themselves** and **others**.

The respect is clearly seen and reciprocated by other people. It is not about tricks or careful choice of words, but the sense of wellbeing and mutual respect.

Assertiveness is based on its own linguistic rules, which may greatly differ from the ones most people acquired as children. A few attempts at complying with its rules will suffice to see that it really works.

Assertive behaviour is based on a clear definition of “I” – it allows you to focus on the **PROBLEM**, without blaming other people.

For example: “I’d like to speak without being interrupted” instead of “You always interrupt me halfway through”

USE FACTS, NOT JUDGEMENT:

For example: “Have you noticed the stains on this T-shirt?” instead of “I hope you are not about to go out dressed like that, you look like a beggar in this T-shirt”

EXPRESS YOUR OWN FEELINGS, THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS

For example: “It makes me angry when Peter doesn’t keep his promise” instead of: “He drives me up the wall”

WHEN YOU ASK SOMEONE TO DO SOMETHING, DO IT IN A CLEAR AND FIRM WAY. DO NOT USE EXPRESSIONS WHICH MAY IMPLY A NEGATIVE ANSWER

For example: “Open the window, please”, instead of: “Could you open the window if you have a minute?”

SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES:

1. Broken record – repeat the same sentence over and over again, in a calm, low voice. Do not let other people draw you into giving arguments, proving you are right, let alone explaining yourself.

For example:

You decide to return trousers.

“I’ve decided I don’t want these trousers anymore. I’d like to return them and ask for a refund” if the shop assistant protests, keep repeating what you’ve said. If needed, ask to speak to the manager, and repeat your sentence once again. It works.

2. Fogging– this technique allows you to receive negative criticism based on fact, and keep the right to choose the behaviour most suitable for you. It lets the participants avoid arguments, and discourages people from constantly criticising you. It is probably the best way to keep your integrity, without offending others.

For example:

You are going out. Your mother says: “ This top is awfully low-cut, don’t you think you should be wearing something more modest? Such tops are not fashionable anymore” You say: “Yes, you’re right, they are not fashionable at the moment”. You agree with your mother, but you choose to look the way you like and you have the right to do that.

3. Cliffhanger – this technique makes it possible to stop the consideration of the problem at hand, to focus on the interlocutors. It is indispensable in a situation where the other person is not listening, gives sarcastic comments or laughs off the problem, instead of focusing on it.

For example:

“You’re off topic. Let’s get back to the core of the problem, namely your behaviour during the trip”

“I’m starting to feel uncomfortable, because I have the impression that you are not listening. I’d like you to focus”

4. Cooling down – this technique lets the participants take a rest before they resume the discussion.

Example:

“I can see you’re nervous. I understand. I think we need some time to rest. It’s best if we talk about this later, maybe in an hour?”

5. Freeze – a technique similar to Cliffhanger , but usually used during an argument. “Stop. What are we talking about? Let’s get back to square one and redefine the problem”

Example:

A :“Could you help me with statistics?”

B: “I’m up to my ears in work and I don’t know when I’ll be finished, leave me alone”

A: “Is this really such a big deal? It will only take you about fifteen minutes. You promised me yesterday, you’d help”

B: “I’m sick and tired of helping you all the time. It’s getting more and more difficult for me to meet all the deadlines. I’ve also got this extra work and a sick child to look after...”

A: “Ok, wait a minute. How did we get from statistics to being tired of helping me and your personal problems?”

6. Summary- it helps to make sure if the intentions of the other person have been understood correctly.

Example:

A: “So what you’re saying is, you’d feel better if I didn’t come up to you, when you’re chatting with your friends? Is that what it is? You don’t want me to notice you, when you’re talking with your friends. Am I right?”

7. Precision – it is of utmost importance that your feelings, wishes, emotions and needs are clearly expressed, it enables avoiding unnecessary misunderstandings and misinterpretation of your intentions.

Example:

“I’d like you to pick up the clothes from the floor right now”

“I’m doing homework at the moment, I’ll call you in an hour”

ASSERTIVE RIGHTS AND DUTIES

Bibliography:

„Nie, które buduje”, Maria Moneta-Malewska, Joanna Malewska

There are various lists of human rights, however, it has to be remembered that other people have exactly the same rights!

Assertive rights according to Herbert Fensterheim:

- You have the right to express yourself, your opinions, needs and feelings – as long as they don't hurt others.
- You have the right to express yourself, even if it hurts other people, as long as your intentions are not aggressive;
- You have the right to ask people to do things for you, if you accept their right to refuse.

There are situations when the rights of particular people may not be clear. You have the right to discuss this with the other person. You have the right to your rights.

Human rights connected with assertiveness according to Shan Rees and Roderick S. Graham:

- The right to do everything which does not violate other people's rights;
- The right to behave in an assertive or non assertive way;
- The right to make choices;
- The right to change;
- The right to control over body, time and possessions;
- The right to express opinions and beliefs;
- The right to think well of oneself;
- The right to make requests;
- The right to express sexuality;
- The right to have needs and desires;
- The right to fantasy;
- The right to have information;
- The right to have goods and services that have been paid for;
- The right to be independent and to be left alone;
- The right to say no;
- The right to be treated with respect;

Rights according to Robert Sharpe:

- The right to change one's mind;

- The right to make mistakes;
- The right to make decisions or expressing beliefs without the need to justify them;
- The right to say “I don’t know” and “I don’t understand”
- The right to experience both positive and negative feelings, without evaluating them as signs of weakness or inadequacy;
- The right not to be involved in other people’s problems unwillingly, or if one lacks the time, energy and possibility to help;
- The right to say no;
- The right to evaluate oneself and one’s actions, and the right to face the consequences of those actions;
- The right to be oneself, without the need to take action for the benefit of other people;
- The right to all the above mentioned rights, without justification.

Let us consider some of the rights, as a starting point for individual work and search and identifying the areas of life which require conscious development.

The right to behave in an assertive or non assertive way

A truly assertive person lives in **peace with themselves**. You do not always have to win.

Example:

Two women riding the bus were talking about self-development. Suddenly, they heard some argument in the front of the bus. They were both listening attentively to the raised voices, with slight tension. Finally one of them said: “You know, I’ve just realised I don’t need to get involved in this” The other one raised her head, straightened her jacket and briskly moved to the front of the bus, saying: “I’ve just realised I need to get involved”

The most important aspect is how we feel with the decision we have made. As long as we are comfortable with the choice, it has been the right one, regardless of whether we decided to act or not.

The right to make choices

We make choices from a very young age. At some point we realise we need to take into account the potential consequences of those choices. We are lucky if our parents enabled us this lesson. The sooner we learn to make satisfying choices which do not hurt other people, the better. **We are the ones responsible for our life.**

Buddha said: “if you want to know your past life, look into your present condition, if you want to know your future life, look at your present actions”

Making choices is difficult. It is often impeded by our desire of having immediate benefits:

1. Example: I’m getting married, because I don’t want to stay single. I don’t take into consideration the fact that the future husband does not seem to be perfect. Later, I feel disappointed and blame the partner for the situation.
2. Example: I choose the majors that are the easiest. I’m not worried about my lack of interest in those areas. This choice may have detrimental effect on finding satisfaction in future professional life.
3. Example: I have a deadline to meet for tomorrow. A bunch of friends suggest going to a party. I have fun, but the next day have to face the music, and ruin my boss’s trust.

Even small children should be taught that pleasure may be postponed, and aims achieved with greater effort are more meaningful.

Stop for a minute before making a choice, think twice, to avoid the situation where you blame fate for your misfortunes.

The right to change

“This is how you created me, my Lord, this is the way I am” – if this is what you think, you forget your right to change. Maybe you’re so afraid of change that you don’t even try? In order for things to change, you need to leave your past behind – even if proves to be painful.

If you do not enjoy this right, you are stuck in a rut. Development and growth are possible at every age. Every change brings new possibilities, and widens one’s horizons. If you are not happy with yourself, your work, or the place you live – make the effort and change it, you have every right to do this!

The right to think well of oneself

We convey to the world the image of ourselves which is deeply ingrained in ourselves. It’s expressed through our behaviour, gestures, body language and the tone of voice.

If you think badly of yourself, the world starts to reflect this opinion.

It is not about saying “I’m so great” if it is not the case. Everybody has their strong points. Taking notice of them may lead to a change in the perception of oneself, and give rise to significant transformation. We should strive to learn to love ourselves. Only then can we show a smiling face to the world, and other people like smiling faces. The right to change is the right to happiness.

Every being has the right to the pursuit of happiness, as long as they do not hurt others.

We have to learn to derive pleasure from small things.

The right to fantasy

Fantasy – the main drive in our lives. Dreams feed the soul. The first step to achieving your goals is the word, which brings epiphany – “Yes, that’s what I want.” It is important not to mistake dreams for doing nothing and thinking “What if...”, because that behaviour is not beneficial. Real dreams have magical powers which may ignite us to act, by providing us with the necessary energy and strength, and causing favourable circumstances for the dreams to come true.

A **dream** is passion which turns into action.

WE ARE THE ONLY ONES CAPABLE OF MAKING OUR DREAMS COME TRUE.

There is a TV show, in which people decide to make an effort and to something they thought would be the hardest thing for them. In return, the TV show host offers the participants a chance to fulfil the dreams of their loved ones. Surprisingly, as a result, the contestants seem happier than their loved ones, whose dreams have come true. Apparently, if a dream becomes reality effortlessly, it does not bring as much satisfaction.

The right to express opinions and beliefs

There are many situations, especially during large meetings and discussions, when people feel they strongly disagree with the opinions they hear. The misunderstanding of basic concepts may turn to aggravate them, however they are afraid to air their criticism for fear of being ridiculed, which usually results from low self-esteem, shyness, or fear.

Everybody has a right to state their opinion in a peaceful way, if it does not negatively affect other people. If we decide to enjoy the right express ourselves, we are obliged to acknowledge that other people may also be willing to express their opinions.

The right to be “different”, and accept oneself

This right is strongly connected with self-respect, accepting our own beliefs and lifestyle, regardless of the beliefs and opinions held by the majority of the society. Refusal to surrender and following one’s beliefs may turn to be painful. Most people want to be accepted and liked by others, even if the price is high. Sacrificing one’s own beliefs and values leads to frustration and regret.

The right to say “I don’t know” and “I don’t understand”

During a lecture for year three medical students in a huge assembly hall, a professor asks one of the students a simple question. The student stands up, slightly bends forward, raises his head and says: “There are many scientific theories pertaining to this problem, Sir”

Everyone, including the professor, bursts out laughing. The awareness of not knowing the answer negatively influenced the student's self-esteem. We are all human, and we do not need to know the answer to every question. Admitting not knowing something may actually give us more credibility as a human being.

The right to make mistakes

"Nobody is perfect"- this well known saying may prove helpful in accepting one's mistakes. The past cannot be undone, but we may draw conclusions for the future. Learning by mistakes may be painful, but very effective. Accepting one's imperfections also leads to a better understanding of the mistakes made by other people. However, in a situation where other people face the consequences of our mistakes, apologies do not suffice. We are usually filled with remorse and have to make amends for our actions. It is also difficult to admit mistakes. As a wise man said: "Mistakes? I try to make fewer of them"

The right to say no

Most people find it extremely difficult to firmly disagree, or simply say no. The awareness of having a right to do so, and learning this skill may change our lives in a positive way. However, social rules still have to be followed. It is not advisable to refuse to perform our duties, unless we are treated unfairly. Not being able to say no, may undermine our self-respect and lower our self-esteem.

The right to change one's mind

People change throughout their lives. They mature with time, their opinions transform, and life goals shift. Sometimes even one word may influence our view of important matters. Admitting this change of perspective is positive if it continues to reflect our beliefs. It proves the existence of a thinking mind, which never fails to seek better solutions.

Having the right to change one's mind must inevitably lead to accepting the other people's right to do likewise.

The right not to be involved in other people's problems

Situation: If you are snowed under with work, and a friend comes and wants to discuss his or her family problems, it is probably not the best time to do so. If you begin to get involved against your will, you may start to feel anger, or even resentment towards that person. It is better to politely, but firmly admit you are preoccupied with your work and cannot focus on anything else at the moment. This way, you defend your own right not to be unwillingly involved in the problems of other people. By the same token, other people may refuse us help, in a situation where they are not capable of providing it.

WE SHOULD LET OTHER PEOPLE BE THEMSELVES, BY BEING OURSELVES.

Assertive behaviour in this respect does not equal indifference. Temporal inability to deal with the problems of other people is not the same as not caring for other people.

INDIFFERENCE SEPARATES US FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD, ASSERTIVENESS IS A WAY TO COEXISTENCE WITH EQUAL RIGHTS.

The right to experience both positive and negative feelings

People who express themselves clearly are safer in everyday communication than those, who hide their true feelings. Being true about oneself gives a clear message about our condition, points to the things that hurt us, and lets other people know our true opinions.

Every true feeling conveyed to another person leads them closer to our true selves, and improves communication.

OPEN PEOPLE BOOST OPENESS IN OTHERS.

Generally, people find it easier to express positive emotions, rather than negative ones. We usually expect rejection and lack of acceptance, but does not have to be the case, negative emotions may be indicative of the fact that we do not agree with some opinions.

Only internally strong people, who feel good about themselves, do not hesitate to express their true feelings.

Emotions are transmitted every day, the clearer they are, the easier our lives will become.

Topic: Stress and ways of dealing with it.

Maria Jolanta Andryńczyk

How can stress be defined?

During their lives, most people experience the feeling of being exhausted, and not capable of making sense of things. This state may be connected with excessive stress levels – which need to be analysed, to alleviate their negative consequences.

Stress can be defined as a state of tension caused by a difficult situation, which one finds difficult to cope with, in other words, a stressful situation. It is usually accompanied by psychological and muscular tension, heart palpitations and higher blood pressure, when something negative happens to us, regardless of whether it serves as a response to psychological or physical threat.

We are often inclined to believe that stress is a phenomenon typical for our century, and that it was caused by the development of civilisation. This is a faulty interpretation, because stress was also prevalent in the lives of our ancestors, though its sources may have differed.

Reactions indicative of stress may also involve a state of heightened tension, reaction to threat and higher concentration.

In small doses, stress is necessary, when it becomes excessive, however, it may have a detrimental effect on our health. Stress is usually associated with negative events, a difficult or acute situation.

In psychology – stress – is described as a state of mobilising the organism's force in reaction to a strong physical or psychological stimulus. (STRESSOR)

In medicine, stress is a syndrome connected with changes in the body of a person or animal, caused by the stressful factor. The main organs responsible for managing stress levels are: the brain , neurons, pituitary gland, thyroid gland, adrenal gland, blood vessels, connective tissue and white blood cells.

STRESSORS: can be defined as factors (stimuli) responsible for the stressful reaction. They can be internal or external. People vary in the susceptibility to stress, some people are more prone to suffer from stress than others.

According to H. Selye, a Canadian physiologist, it is not the stimulus, but the reaction to that stimulus, that leads to stress.

Perception is an individual feature of every human being.

There are two types of personality, connected with susceptibility to stress:

Type A: low stress tolerance

Type B: high stress tolerance

STRONG STRESSORS

1. Threatening situation:
 - threat to life or health;
 - threat to one's social position (social embarrassment, job loss)
2. Overload situation:
 - performing tasks bordering with one's mental and physical capabilities;
3. Distractions:
 - inability to complete one's tasks due to obstacles (ex. Lack of time, or necessary tools);
4. Deprivation
 - difficult life situation (ex. death of a loved one, separation)

STAGES OF STRESS REACTION

Stage 1 – Mobilisation

1. **Preparation for the flight or fight response.**
2. **Release of adrenaline and noradrenalin**
 - ADRENALIN:**
 - increases blood supply to muscles and heart, decreases blood supply to irrelevant areas, for example the digestive system;
 - increases heart rate, blood pressure and respiration;
 - increases glucose levels in the blood;
 - accelerates metabolism;
 - dilates the pupils;
 - increases blood supply to motor and other basic regions in the brain;
 - NORADRENALIN:**
 - keeps high blood pressure;
3. **Cortisol Release from the adrenal cortex**
 - further strengthens the effects of adrenalin and noradrenalin;
 - lowers the efficiency of the immune system;
4. **Emotional tension, irritation, motivation**

Stage 2 – Critical

1. **The intensity of stress levels reaches the threshold of the immune system.**
2. **Further release of adrenalin and noradrenalin.**
3. **Higher and irregular heartbeat, reduction in blood clotting;**
4. **Lower lungs efficiency;**
5. **Higher production of gastric acid in the stomach - lowered pH;**
6. **Increased tension of the skeletal muscles;**
7. **Tunnel vision – inability to focus, think rationally, or solve problems;**
8. **Adverse effects of stage 1;**

Stage 3 – Destruction

1. **Appears when stress has not been relieved;**
2. **May serve as a defence system against stress;**

3. **May turn into aggression or attack, with the aim of destroying or damaging the source of stress.**

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF STRESS:

1. **Short-term stress, with low stressor levels**
 - **Mobilisation stage – (fight or flight reaction)**
 - **Rest – return to normal functioning;**
2. **Long-term stress, with high stressor levels:**
 - **Mobilisation stage;**
 - **Critical stage;**
 - **Destruction stage;**
 - **Negative consequences of stress, for example hypertension;**

STRESS SYMPTOMS

In order to identify a stress related condition, the following symptoms have to be considered:

PHYSIOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS:

- increased heart rate;
- increased respiration;
- trouble breathing;
- dryness in the mouth;
- excessive palm sweating;
- muscle tension (clenched teeth and fists, stiff neck and shoulders)
- chronic fatigue;
- strong headaches;
- digestive problems, appetite loss;
- increased resistance to pain;

PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS;

- anxiety, often for no apparent reason;
- fear and terror;
- irritation and anger;
- lack of satisfaction;
- the feeling of being maltreated by others;
- hopelessness, inability to make decisions;
- memory problems (frequent forgetting about important things)

- insomnia (for example, loss of the ability of falling asleep, or sleep disturbance),

Scientists have been trying to assess general impact stressful situations may have on people. Despite individual differences in the perception and reaction to stressful situations and distinctive character traits and temperament for each person, scientists found that many stressful situations are perceived by many people in a similar way. The following table presents some of those situations. The level of stress is represented by life change units (0 – lack of stress, 100 – maximum stress).

Life Event	Live change units
Death of a spouse	100
Divorce	73
Marriage	50
Job loss	47
Marital reconciliation	45
Business readjustment	39
Change of job	36
Change in work hours or conditions	20
Vacation	13
Christmas	12

WAYS OF DEALING WITH STRESS

Transactional model of stress and coping developed by R. S. Lazarus and his team, is one of the most widely known methods of dealing with stress.

“Psychological stress refers to a relationship with the environment that the person appraises as significant for his or her well being and in which the demands tax or exceed available coping resources”

The process of coping with stress depends heavily on the nature of the situation, personality structure of the person and intentions. The way in which a particular person deals with stress is thus highly dependent on the individual. Coping with stress can be described as constantly developing cognitive effort aiming to meet their external and internal demands.

According to Maruszewski, ways people deal with stress can be divided into two categories:

1. REALISTIC – containing ways driven by cognitive functions and serving for adaptation.

2. UNREALISTIC – often associated with defence mechanisms.

Main ways of coping with stress:

1. Seeking information about the stressful situation, and what can be done to change it.
2. Direct action aiming to either change the situation, or calm down.
3. Restraining oneself from action (refusal to be provoked);
4. Intrapsychic processes (denial, pushing the problem aside);
5. Seeking help.

There three main styles of dealing with stress:

1. Problem Engagement– reactions, which change the situation.
2. Cognitive approach – reactions which change the meaning or assessment of the stressful situation
3. Problem avoidance - reactions aimed at controlling negative emotions;

L. Lazarus and S. Folkman differentiate between the following strategies:

1. Task oriented:
 - Confrontational, defending one's point of view with the aim of achieving one's goals.
 - Planned, systematic solution to the problem;
 -
2. Emotion oriented:
 - Distancing oneself (trying not to worry);
 - Avoiding the situation (waiting for the problem to solve itself, desensitising oneself ex. with the use of alcohol);
 - Blaming oneself;
 - Self-control (restraining emotions)
 - Seeking support (telling other people about the problem, accepting signs of sympathy and compassion);

- Reframing the problem in such a way that it no longer evokes a negative emotional response;

The efficiency of stress coping methods depends to a large extent on the intensity of the stress itself. In a situation where the demands exceed coping resources of the person, their adaptation and defence system breaks down and psychological crisis results.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CRISIS

Is a short term period of psychological disequilibrium, experienced as a result of dealing with problems, which temporarily exceed one's coping resources.

WORK RELATED STRESS

If the amount of work, numerous appointments or reproach from the boss stimulate us to work more effectively, it is a positive sign of coping with the situation.

However, if the symptoms such as a feeling of having a knot in one's stomach, or a lump brought to one's throat, block the ability of logical thinking, the problem requires a thorough analysis.

SOURCES OF WORK RELATED STRESS

- work overload (too much work, tasks exceeding staff capabilities, work overtime);
- work underload (monotonous tasks, below the expectations or ambitions of staff);
- undefined work role (imprecisely determined duties);
- role conflict (mutually excluding tasks);
- little control (lack of control over some aspects of work, such as working schedule);
- insufficient support (from superiors and work colleagues);
- bad conditions (noise, little space, pollution);

If the abovementioned factors are present in one's work, they belong to a high risk group to suffer from work related stress.

HIGH RISK GROUPS

- new employees;
- persons with inadequate experience, skills or knowledge;

- sensitive persons, not confident about their position at work, or with low self-esteem;
- people with dominant personalities, impatient perfectionists acting in haste ;
- elderly people with insufficient adaptation skills;
- people with problems unrelated with work, such as family or financial problems;

If one belongs to any of the above-mentioned groups, and they experience stress related syndromes, they should resort to techniques of coping with stress, instead of for example falling victim of addiction, such as alcohol, drugs or sweets.

How can stress be defeated?

Temporary solutions

- In a situation where you feel a sudden flood of anger taking over, count to ten in order to calm down.
- Practice deep breathing. While inhaling the air, try to feel the tension subside and think about some positive images, for example the sea, or beautiful meadow. It is also a good idea to buy relaxation CD's.
- Relaxation training – it is a set of exercises which help relax the muscles, for example: Jacobson's relaxation technique, or Schulz's autogenic technique;

How can stress be defeated?

Long-term solutions

- Take care of yourself – make sure you strike the work/life balance, get enough sleep. Try to eat healthy food, exercise regularly and undergo regular medical check-ups;
- Plan – make a list of things to do, label them according to importance, starting with the most important ones, plan some free time for unexpected events;
- Be gentle with yourself – there are no people with infinite knowledge, or those who are never late – making mistakes is human!

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Test questions:

1. How can stress be defined:
 - a) Tension caused by a difficult situation;
 - b) Backlog at work;
 - c) Life dissatisfaction;
2. Excessive stress:
 - a) may stimulate more efficient work;
 - b) has detrimental effect on our health;
 - c) helps in professional development;
3. What do you associate with the word “ethics”:
 - a) Duties at work;
 - b) Helping people in need;
 - c) A particular system of ethical outlook and moral norms;
4. How can professional ethics of a Central Sterilisation Unit employee be defined:
 - a) All medical staff follow the same code of medical ethics;
 - b) This position does not require any specific ethical code;
 - c) General rules of ethics apply;
5. What are the main characteristics of an assertive person?
 - a) Self-confidence resulting from one’s upbringing;
 - b) High awareness of one’s needs and wants;
 - c) Being capable of respecting oneself and others;
6. Every human being has rights. What is the most important aspect of respecting them?
 - a) One has to be extremely clever to enjoy their rights fully.
 - b) Wide knowledge of the law helps in taking advantage of one’s rights.
 - c) We have to take into consideration the fact that other people have the same rights.
7. How can responsibility be described?
 - a) Readiness to own up to one’s actions and face the potential consequences of those actions;
 - b) Adequate qualifications for one’s profession;
 - c) Ability to deal with difficult situations;