



# Positive Ethics with the Most Difficult Clients

Presented by

## Mitchell M. Handelsman, Ph.D.

### Objectives - To increase participants' ability to:

*Through the use of case discussions, exercises, and didactic presentations, participants will learn about positive ethics and practical applications to therapy with difficult clients.*

#### Participants will:

- better understand the elements of positive ethics and ethical acculturation

- become more aware of ethical conflicts and pitfalls inherent in working with difficult clients
- develop techniques that integrate professional ethical codes and personal moral values when encountering difficult clients
- learn preventive strategies to maintain excellent ethical behavior no matter the client

### 4 CD's or Cassettes - 6 hours - Ethics

#### 1 Positive Ethics in Context

- Levels of awareness that form the basis of ethical practice— *personal, professional, and political*
- Practical implications for **borderline, suicidal, angry, abusive, court-ordered, seductive, non-compliant, and other “difficult” clients**

#### 2 What Makes Difficult Clients So Difficult?

- Therapist reactions to difficult clients
- Ethical acrobatics: Balancing the personal and professional, clinical, and legal
- Maintaining the right mix of detachment and involvement
- Prevention vs. reaction: Applying positive

principles to avoid ethical pitfalls

#### 3 Strategies and Tactics

- Ethical reasoning in difficult circumstances
- How to inform clients
- What to document
- When to consult and with whom to consult
- When to refer and how to terminate

#### 4 Putting It All Together

- Ongoing strategies to prevent ethical problems
- Case Examples

## Mitchell M. Handelsman, Ph.D.

Mitch Handelsman is currently professor of psychology and a President's Teaching Scholar at the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center. He received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Kansas.

Dr. Handelsman has published over 50 articles and book chapters. He is the senior author of chapters on positive ethics in the first two editions of

the *Handbook of Positive Psychology*.

In 1996-1997 he served as a policy consultant to the Colorado Mental Health licensing and grievance boards, where he conducted research on over 200 sanctions applied by the boards to psychologists, counselors, social workers, and family therapists.

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904 Church Rd., Wyncote, PA 19095-1601

(800) 801-5415

www.JKSeminars.com

JK@JKSeminars.com