



ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING STEP BY STEP



PAGE 1: UNDERSTANDING THE DILEMMA

*Ethical uncertainty does not mean I have failed.
Slowing down, consulting and making my reasoning visible
are part of responsible practice.*

1. NAME THE CONCERN

*What feels ethically uncertain, conflicting
or uncomfortable?*

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*What decision—or absence of a decision—
may be needed?*

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2. CHECK WHAT CANNOT WAIT

*Could delay increase risk of serious harm, abuse,
safeguarding concerns or an urgent breach of safety?*

- ☐ No immediate concern identified
- ☐ Timely consultation or action may be needed
- ☐ I am unsure

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*If urgent safety may be involved,
seek appropriate support now rather than
relying on this worksheet or waiting
for routine supervision.*

3. WHAT DO I KNOW?

Relevant facts...

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*What the client has
communicated...*

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*Information that is missing
or needs checking...*

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*My assumptions,
interpretations or emotional
responses...*

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4. WHO MAY BE AFFECTED?

*Consider the client, practitioner, other people,
services, communities and the therapeutic relationship.*

*Whose voice
is present?*

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*Whose voice may
be missing?*

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*Who holds power,
responsibility or
vulnerability?*

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5. WHAT MATTERS ETHICALLY?

Which commitments or values may be in tension?

- ☐ client autonomy and choice
- ☐ wellbeing and avoiding harm
- ☐ trust, privacy and confidentiality
- ☐ fairness, inclusion and accessibility
- ☐ honesty and transparency
- ☐ competence and professional responsibility
- ☐ relational care and respect
- ☐ something else

*What matters most
to the client?*

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6. WHAT GUIDANCE APPLIES?

*Professional ethical
framework or code...*

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*Law, safeguarding
duties or statutory
guidance...*

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*Placement, employer,
insurer or
organisational policy...*

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*Contract, consent and
information given to
the client...*

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*Accessibility, culture,
identity and reasonable
adjustments...*

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*Where do these sources
agree, differ or remain
unclear?*

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PAUSE AND CARRY FORWARD

What is the central ethical question I will take into Page 2?

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This worksheet supports reflection. Use current professional
guidance and seek appropriate supervision, consultation
or legal advice where needed.

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PAGE 2: OPTIONS, ACTION AND REVIEW

*Ethical decisions are rarely made from certainty alone.
I can seek enough clarity to take a thoughtful, proportionate and accountable next step.*

7. GENERATE MORE THAN ONE OPTION

Option A...

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Option B...

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Option C...

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*Is choosing not to act also
an option—and what might follow?*

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8. CONSIDER EACH OPTION

For each possibility, consider...

- ☐ possible benefit
- ☐ possible harm or unintended impact
- ☐ the client's wishes and understanding
- ☐ confidentiality and trust
- ☐ power, equality and accessibility
- ☐ what is proportionate and least restrictive
- ☐ what could be repaired if difficulties arise

What uncertainty remains?

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9. CONSULT WITHOUT HANDING AWAY THE DECISION

Who could help me think?

- ☐ supervisor
- ☐ safeguarding lead
- ☐ experienced colleague or manager
- ☐ professional body or insurer
- ☐ specialist or legal advice
- ☐ another appropriate source

What guidance, challenge or
perspective did I receive?

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Protect client confidentiality and share only what is necessary.

10. DECIDE AND EXPLAIN

My decision or next step...

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Why this appears the most ethical
and proportionate option...

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How will I involve or communicate
with the client where appropriate?

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What will happen,
by whom and when?

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11. RECORD MY REASONING

What information, consultation, guidance, alternatives
and rationale should be recorded?

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*Record respectfully, accurately and in line
with relevant requirements.*

12. REVIEW THE IMPACT

What happened after the decision?

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What was helpful or harmful?

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Did anything unexpected emerge?

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Is further action, repair or
consultation needed?

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13. LEARNING WITHOUT PUNISHMENT

What have I learned
about myself, the work
or the wider system?

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What might I do
differently next time?

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What support, knowledge
or organisational
change may help?

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14. CARRY FORWARD

One responsibility
I will take...

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One uncertainty I can
continue to hold...

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One question I will return
to in supervision...

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**I may not find a perfect answer.
I can make a careful decision,
remain open to impact and
take responsibility for what follows.**