Ethical Decision-Making

Why do we need an ethical decision-making model?
- A step-by-step logical procedure will assist in reducing the emotional impact on our ability to think rationally.
- To be in compliance with ACA (2005) Ethical Codes of Conduct.
- More support in situations when you have to testify in a civil or criminal action.

Ethical Decision Making Model Adapted from Welfel (2012):

**Step 1:** *Be sensitive to the moral dimensions of counseling.* Have insight into how your own personal principles, values, and worldview will impact your decision-making process.

**Step 2:** *Define dilemmas and options.* What is the situation? Who is your client? Who are the stakeholders? What are the cultural considerations?

**Step 3:** *Define the central issue and options.* What is the ethical issue(s) and what are the options?

**Step 4:** *Refer to the professional standards (e.g., ACA, ASCA, NBCC) and examine relevant laws and regulations, if any.*

**Step 5:** *Search out ethical scholarship.* What does the literature provide regarding how other counselors have dealt with this type of issue?

**Step 6:** *Consult with supervisors and colleagues.* An option at any point. **Ensure consultation does not violate confidentiality.** Ask:
- What have I not considered?
- What do you think my blind spots are?
- Is my interpretation of the ethical codes and laws accurate? What am I missing?
- What other resources should I look at?
- Have I adequately considered the ethical principles?
- Have I considered all responsible options?
- How would resolve this dilemma? Why?

**Step 7:** *Deliberate and decide.* What are you going to do? Consider your options. Identify competing values. Determine the best course of action. It is often touch to make ethical decisions, remember to engage in *ethical courage!*

**Step 8:** *Inform supervisor and document.* After deliberation, if you have a supervisor, discuss your decision with your supervisor before engaging in chosen action, and document, document, document!

**Step 9:** *Reflect on the experience.*
- “Experience without reflection is wasted” (Welfel, 2012, p. 54).
- Did I act timely?
- Was I educated enough about the ethical codes?
- What ethical resources should I have available to me?
- Did I utilize consolation effectively?
- Did I adequately identify my competing values?
- Would I have done anything differently?
- What did I do that I liked?
- How can I pay it forward?