

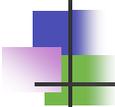
Blending EI/ECSE and Applied Behavior Analysis: Grappling with Ethical Issues Facing BCBAs

Ilene Schwartz, PhD, BCBA
University of Washington
Ilene @uw.edu



Today's Objective

- Acknowledge that professionals who are BCBAs and practice in ECSE have a unique set of issues of concerns
- Begin to create a network of behavioral early educators
- Provide an opportunity to study ethical challenges with colleagues



The Problem

- What happens when values focused on in ECSE (e.g., family centered, culturally sensitive,) and values focused on in ABA (e.g., scientifically based, clearly defined professional/client relationships) collide?
- What happens when compliance guidelines conflict with personal values?



What is "Ethical Behavior?"

- Is it what a "*good person*" would do in this situation?
- Is it what the *BACB Compliance Code* says you should do in this situation?
- In schools, is it what an *educator* or *special educator* should do in this situation?



Guidance versus Compliance

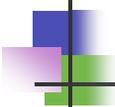
- We have been practicing for years under the BACB's "Guidelines for Responsible Conduct for Behavior Analysts"
- In 2016, we started practicing under a new ethics code called the "Professional and Ethical Compliance Code for Behavior Analysts."
- The BACB states *"the Code will be enforceable in its own right and in its entirety."*

What does this mean for us?



Black and White?

- Have you ever...
 - Accepted a cup of coffee from a client's family?
 - Helped a desperate mom out by watching her child for her after therapy hours while she ran out on an unexpected and critical errand?
 - Helped a school team with a behavior that you do not have experience with because you are the school district's behavior specialist and that is your job?



What is "ethical behavior" in a given situation?

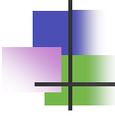
- Is it what *YOU* would do?
- Is it what a *professional* should do?
- Is it what an EI/ECSE professional should do?
- Is it what a BCBA should do?

We need to be careful about our usage of the word "ethical," especially when dealing with other professionals. People often make the equation of
ethical = good person
unethical = bad person



50 Shades of Grey

- There are many ethical dilemmas that are not black and white.
 - Two guidelines may conflict.
 - You may be working under several professional ethical codes which may conflict.
 - There may be contextual factors that you feel argue for an ethical resolution that conflicts with a guideline or guidelines.

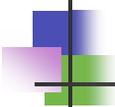


What are some ethical dilemmas that you have encountered in your practice that are shades of grey?



Is This Right vs Right?

- Rushworth Kidder: "How Good People Make Tough Decisions."
- What kind of decision is this, really?
 - Right vs Right?
 - Right vs Wrong?



The Question

- What do we do when there is not a clear cut answer to how we should act?
- How do we arrive at an “ethical” decision?



A Process

1. Does this trigger my ethical radar?
2. Clarify WHY it triggers my ethical radar.
 - Identify the issue
 - Identify the appropriate guidelines in the code
3. Decide: is this *really* a conflict or is it just uncomfortable to do the right thing?
4. Brainstorm solutions
5. Evaluate solutions
6. Make a decision and implement it with fidelity
7. Reflect upon the results and evaluate.



Evaluating Solutions

Weigh the following factors when evaluating solutions:

- student safety
- student dignity and self-determination
- impact on your relationships
- student outcomes
- family preferences
- cultural norms and beliefs

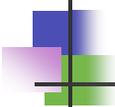


CASE STUDY: CHOOSING YOUR CLIENTS

MaryAnn is a BCBA and an early childhood teacher. She has taught kindergarten for two years, but recently got moved to a position in a preschool self-contained classroom. She has just received notice that a child newly arrived from Africa will be arriving in her class. The child has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Additionally, MaryAnn has been told that the family does not speak English at home. Although MaryAnn has worked with numerous children with ASD, she is very concerned because she knows very little about African culture and she also knows very little about how to work with a child with ASD who is also an English Language Learner. She believes her BCBA ethics tell her that it is not appropriate for her to work with the child given her lack of expertise, but she does not have the luxury to choose which students come into her classroom.

Additionally, the school district's budget is very tight and she has been told that there are no resources for outside consultation. How should MaryAnn handle this situation?

Potentially relevant BCBA Guidelines: 2.01, 1.05 (c)



CASE STUDY: SCIENTIFICALLY SUPPORTED TREATMENTS

Tonya is an early childhood specialist and a BCBA. As part of her job at an early childhood center, she works at homes with families. She has been spending a great deal of time with one of her families, who has a four-year-old with ASD. The family has had a very difficult time adjusting to their son's diagnosis, and in particular, has been very apprehensive about using applied behavior analytic techniques. The mom, in particular, had a very negative initial experience with ABA, considering the ABA consultant (prior to Tonya) over-opinionated and dogmatic and the therapy demeaning and non-childlike. Tonya has been working very hard to gain the mother's trust and she feels that she has slowly been making progress. Today she arrives for a home visit and the mom tells her excitedly that she has just gone to a full day workshop on Floortime. She thought it was fantastic, and she wants to incorporate it into her son's therapy. She gives Tonya the book on Floortime that she bought at the workshop and asks Tonya if she could start incorporating Floortime into Tonya's work with her son. Tonya doesn't know a lot about Floortime, but she's pretty sure it's not scientifically supported. How should Tonya handle this situation?

- **Potentially relevant BCBA Guidelines: 2.09 (a)(d)**



CASE STUDY: INADEQUATE RESOURCES

Martin is a BCBA and a kindergarten teacher. He has a classroom of students with significant disabilities. Most of the kids have intense needs and many have a variety of challenging behaviors. Martin has been given very little para-educator support for the classroom and the one para-educator who has been assigned has received very little training. Martin is so busy trying to oversee the needs of all the students that he has had very little time to provide training for the para-educator himself. One of Martin's students, Selma, has exhibited some significant challenging behaviors over the past year. Martin did a functional behavior assessment and concluded that Selma's challenging behaviors are primarily attention-based. Martin believes he has a plan to effectively address Selma's behavior problem behavior and teach her some new appropriate behaviors, but he feels he cannot do it with the resources he currently has. He simply doesn't have the bandwidth to give Selma the attention she needs, particularly during the beginning stages of the plan, and he doesn't have the time or opportunity to provide the support and training that his para-educator would need. Martin has talked to his principal about the problem and has been told that there are no funds available for additional support. What should Martin do?

- **Potentially relevant BCBA Guidelines: 2.04 (d), 2.09 (b)**

CASE STUDY: MULTIPLE RELATIONSHIPS AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

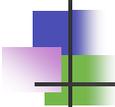
Rachel is a special education teacher and a BCBA who works in an urban school district. She works for a public school and is the lead teacher in a program that provides a combination of inclusive preschool and intensive instruction to young children with ASD. As part of this program, Rachel conducts monthly home visits for all of the children in the program. Many of the families with whom she works offer Rachel tea, snacks, and small gifts of food when she visits. One family, recently immigrated to the US, always does and seems very offended if Rachel refuses. The family has also invited Rachel to join them to celebrate the child's birthday and other special cultural events. Rachel has been trying hard to develop a positive working relationship with this family and she understands that offering food is a sign of respect in this family's culture. She is concerned that participating in these events or accepting food may not be appropriate, but on the other hand, she is concerned that if she is too formal with this family, they may not be willing to work with her and the quality of the child's program will be affected. What should Rachel do?

Potentially relevant BCBA Guidelines: 1.06(a)(d)

CASE STUDY: WORKING WELL WITH COLLEAGUES

Drew is a BCBA who works at an early intervention center on a team that provides center and home based services to toddlers with disabilities and their families. At the early intervention center staff are assigned to four-person interdisciplinary teams that consist of an educator/BCBA, speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, and a social worker. Other members (e.g., physical therapists) are brought on to the team as needed as consultants. One of Drew's colleagues, who is the occupational therapist on the team, recently attended a workshop on sensory integration and now wants to incorporate some of the sensory integration activities (e.g., providing deep pressure, sitting on a therapy ball during group activities) into the activities at the center. Many of the children seem to "enjoy" the activities and the parents want to know how to implement them at home. Drew is worried about how to navigate this situation. He recently read a study that showed no effect from some of these sensory integration activities. What advice would you give Drew?

Potentially relevant BCBA Guidelines: 2.03(b), 2.09(a)



Last Activity

- As a group, come up with the top three things that you would want to tell any BCBA working in schools (linked to the guidelines):
 - "You shalt..."
 - "You shalt not..."