



## CODE OF ETHICS

### (Guidelines for Interactions Between Postural Integration Practitioners, Group Leaders, Teachers and Their Clients)

The following guidelines are intended to help Postural Integration practitioners, group leaders, teachers and their clients clarify their working relationships. Human relationships are processes defined and shaped directly by the parties involved and these guidelines are intended not as judgments about individual attitudes or behavior, but as markers of opportunities and risks. If the individuals involved misunderstand each other or there is a complaint from either party, the ICPIT Complaint Procedure may also be used.

#### A. RESPONSIBILITIES AND COMMITMENT:

- 1. Responsibility of Practitioners:** (individual practitioners, student practitioners, group leaders, assistants and teachers) In the interaction of practitioner and client, it is the responsibility of practitioners to clarify and share their goals, expectations, attitudes and ways of working. Postural Integrators commit themselves to creating agreements with clients which respect clients' boundaries and allow for confrontation with old limitations, while supporting new possibilities.
- 2. Responsibility of Clients:** (individual clients, group participants, students): Clients contract with Postural Integrators to work toward self-awareness and self-responsibility. This means realizing that they create, for themselves, their present bodymind and that in their process of self-development there will be opportunities for them to experience and become more conscious of old and new attitudes, behavior and feeling. This also means that in this process, they are committed to establishing the limits within which they are willing to work.
- 3. Commitment:** Postural Integration is a process of self-realization through communication and sharing in which both client and practitioner commit themselves to respecting the limits of each other. Both practitioner and client are responsible for making clear their own limits, and also to respecting the limits of the other. When, at given moments in the process, either the client or practitioner may be confused and unable to determine their own limits or the limits of the other, the commitment is to seek clarity through interaction and with the other and the community of friends, colleagues and supervisors. We believe that this communication and respect can serve to enrich the quality of life.
- 4. Confidentiality:** In dealings between practitioners, students, trainers, colleagues and clients, it is expected that the parties will keep any personal information confidential without explicit permission of the parties involved or unless it is handled in the complaints procedure.

#### B. AGREEMENTS (contracts):

Since the interaction between client and practitioner is essential to effective release and integration, the following types of agreements or contracts need to be clear. The client can be

given these guidelines for consideration, modification and agreement or disagreement. The client and practitioner may wish to explore what aspects of the agreements they initially reach and later re-negotiate in writing. This process of stating the agreements reached can also help define the transformation process before or after each session.

Note that what is meant by agreements includes an understanding and acceptance of the initial goals of the practitioner and client. Often in the process of Postural Integration various roles and limits may be re-negotiated without affecting the overall initial goals agreed upon. However, sometimes it may be the case that the initial goals have changed as well, in which case it is important that attention is called to the change in the initial agreement.

**1. Symmetrical Autonomous Agreements :** Clients and practitioners (except for the cases listed below) are autonomous individuals who are entering into agreements where both are equally but differently responsible, that is, they are in symmetrical relationship with each other. The assumption that the practitioner knows the client's needs or best interests violates the principle that only individuals discover and transform themselves. The risk is that the practitioner expects and the client tries to fulfill external models of emotional and physical health. Also the assumption that the client is not an equal contributor to the relationship violates the principle that transformation and growth is mutual discovery. Here the risk is that the client will not benefit from receiving, as an equal, the personal feelings and attitudes of the practitioner. In Postural Integration, then, the practitioner makes no claims of being able to diagnose, treat or cure any symptoms or illness, since human transformation comes through self-realization of the whole person interacting with others and the environment.

**2. Renegotiated Symmetrical Agreements :** Postural Integration is an on-going process in which both practitioner and client are continually making, clarifying and remaking their agreements through physical and verbal behavior. For example, when practitioners give a certain degree of pressure to the client's body, the client may signal "no" when the limit is reached. But as the process continues both may find that "no" no longer expresses the limit but is an exploration of the limit and "stop" becomes a new signal of the limit. Limits are respected but need to be changed with new discoveries. These discoveries may also lead to a revision of the overall agreement and goals defined by the practitioner and client. When the negotiations are not clear or do not become clear the risk is that either the practitioner or client may be assumed to be responsible for determining the limits, when in fact the limits are being discovered and specified by both parties. For example, if the client is seen by the practitioner to project onto the practitioner the role of the parent, it is important for the practitioner, if recognized, to call attention to this. As well, when the client feels the practitioner projects onto the client the role of child (but the practitioner is not aware of this), it is important that this be made explicit, if recognized, by the client. These roles or projections may be encouraged and expressed, but always within the context of mutual agreement.

The responsibility of the practitioner (as part of a monetary payment or exchange) is to create a context or environment in which this negotiating process can happen. Practitioners have a primary responsibility to offer possible avenues of exploration through various methods of contact. Practitioners also have a responsibility for calling attention to the limits of the agreement which both parties have established.

Clients have a primary responsibility to explicitly share their goals and their limits. In this process. Both may need to communicate not only before, during and after sessions, but also in periods in-between. A part of the initial overall negotiated agreement includes a commitment by both to clarify their relationship. They may wish to agree that when needed, they will call for mediation by a neutral third party.

**3. Symmetrically Negotiated Dependency :** When the practitioner and client agree that specific roles are to be taken for specified periods of time, the obligation for both parties is to determine the conditions for initiating and terminating these roles. They may agree that during a given session or number of sessions that the practitioner assumes the role of ideal parent. Or it may also be found just as helpful for the client to be the parent for the practitioner. Assuming, without contractual agreement, that the client is not a responsible individual (a child) creates illusory changes in which the practitioner is controlling and determining the process for the client. Whenever the relationship becomes asymmetrical (dependent), this shift of roles needs to be symmetrically (mutually) agreed upon by both parties and the responsibilities of each outlined as far as possible.

**4. Non-Postural Integration Dependency Agreements:** In certain cases the individual worked with is not only the practitioner's client, and third parties (other practitioners, physicians, psychotherapists, clinics, hospitals, schools, etc.) also have responsibility for the well-being of the client. In these cases the client's relationship with the practitioner may be in an asymmetrical setting, depending on the contract the third party has with the individual and with the practitioner, but the client and practitioner still need to make an agreement. Here it is important for the practitioner to make explicit to the client the nature of all the contracts involved and their possible conflicts with the Postural Integration process.

If there is no place for the individual to assume self-responsibility as a part of transformation and growth, the practitioner cannot act as a Postural Integrator, but only as another kind of practitioner who uses bodywork or body-oriented methods as part of another treatment plan - as in some cases of physician prescribed treatment in medical hospitals, clinics or mental institutions.

In doing Postural Integration with minors the practitioner and parents have a contractual responsibility, but the minor also is searching for self-responsibility and must also be in an agreement with both the parents and the practitioner.

**5. Negotiated Agreements During Friendship and Intimacy :** Practitioners and clients who are committed to clear agreements need to examine the extent to which friendship and intimacy support or hinder the Postural Integration process of release and integration. Clarity about money or exchanges of services are essential for maintaining trust during the process. Friendship or intimacy may interfere with the use of certain methods (e.g., feeling the role of parent or child) and the limits of what can be effectively achieved need to be carefully examined by both practitioner and client. Unwillingness or inability to work with certain bodymind attitudes can be explicitly recognized by both. This respect for the difficulties in the present does not, of course, exclude openness to working together on these issues at a later time.

Also social and legal realities may limit the agreements which practitioners and clients may make. The process of Postural Integration and monetary exchange may need to be terminated for friendship and intimacy to continue, or friendship and intimacy postponed until after the practitioner-client relation has ended. A neutral third party may help in seeking an agreement about these issues.

**6. Legal, Illegal and Non-legal Agreements:** Postural Integration is primarily a non-legal (the working agreements have not been made in a legal form) transforming and growth process of practitioner and client discovering, negotiating and re-negotiating their limits. It can be the case that these agreements, though non-legal (but not illegal) when made, may become legal issues, if seen as such by the practitioner or client at a later date. A dissatisfied client, for example, may refuse to pay for a session or training, even though a clear agreement was made, by using legal definitions to avoid financial responsibility.

Or a practitioner may push the client to give explicit permission (sometimes in writing, without re-negotiating the limits at each step of the process) to work at levels the client later feels were too deep. In the ensuing dispute, the practitioner may then point out that there is no legal justification for complaint, since permission for deep work was granted. Both client and practitioner need to explore the legal, illegal and non-legal frameworks within which they will be working and the risks that each will run and how misunderstandings can be handled.

### **C. MISUNDERSTOOD, UNCLEAR OR BROKEN AGREEMENTS:**

ICPIT wishes to encourage that agreements are continually revised and discussed. It takes seriously any complaints or conflicts which may arise among practitioners and clients and will give advice, where parties agree, on how mediation can be initiated, maintained and concluded. It wishes to offer support without judgment or prejudice against any of the parties involved. See ICPIT Complaint Procedure.

