

## VALUES CLARIFICATION

Burkhardt - Chapter 4 - *Values Clarification*

### INTRODUCTION

- Principled behavior flows from personal values
  - Personal values guide and informs one's responses, behaviors and decisions
  - Self awareness includes knowledge of what values are considered important
- **Axiology**: branch of philosophy that studies nature and types of values
  - Origin from Greek refers to worth or worthy
  - Includes values in various areas
    - Art: **aesthetics**
    - Human relations and conduct: **ethics**
    - Beliefs regarding the divine: **religion**
- Must be aware of personal values
  - Awareness re relationship to self and others
  - Professional and personal arenas

### WHAT ARE VALUES

- **Values** are ideals, beliefs, customs, modes of conduct, qualities or goals
  - Values reflect that which are highly prized or preferred by individuals, groups or society
  - "Pattern of subjective, strongly motivational preference" (Omery, 1997)
  - Learned in conscious and unconscious ways
  - Become part of person's makeup
  - Reflection of preferences in hierarchical order when choices are evident
  - Example: choice of dress for an interview
    - One values comfort and appearance in dress
    - Hierarchy evident in choice of restrictive suit vs relaxed dress for interview
  - Values reflected in choices regardless of whether one is conscious of values
  - May be expressed overtly or indirectly
    - Overtly as espoused behaviors or verbal standards
    - Indirectly: verbal and nonverbal behavior
- Moral thought**: individual cognitive evaluation of right vs wrong; good vs bad
- Moral values**: preferences or dispositions in human behavior which reflect thought
- Moral values deal with special case of values
  - Particular circumstances evoking them deal with ethical issues
  - Values may be acquired via a variety of means
    - Religious or philosophical orientation
    - Professional orientation

## ACQUIRING VALUES

- Ethical behavior flows from values which develop over time
- Forces which shape values
  - Cultural, ethnic, familial, environmental, education
  - Other experiences of living
- Begin to incorporate values into our beings at early age
- Continue to process throughout life
- Values acquired in both conscious and unconscious ways
- Conscious ways which induce values
  - Parental instruction, teachers, religious leaders, education
  - Professional and social group leaders
- Many values are formally adopted by groups
  - Professional code of ethics
  - Religious doctrines
  - Societal laws
  - Statements of organization's philosophy
- Some values are permanent; others are transient and change (response to experiences)
- Most important aspect is freedom to choose values
- Awareness of values is important aspect in making choices

## SELF AWARENESS

- Self-awareness necessary to ethical relationships
- Ongoing and evolving process
- Perception of what is truth colored by perceptions and can evolve over time
- Concepts re values and perceptions - can be quite variable
  - Most situations are not black or white
  - What one perceives depends on a variety of factors
    - How far or close one is standing
    - From what angle is one viewing
  - Variety of perceptions and views for any situation
- Understanding truth more likely under certain circumstances
  - Persons accept concept that views will differ
  - Persons are free to share differing views
- **Values clarification:** process of identifying one's values
  - Sheds light on personal perspective
  - Ability to make decisions improves as one clarifies values
  - Allows choices so as improve personal integrity
  - **Integrity:** adherence to moral norms sustained over time
    - Trustworthiness
    - Consistency of convictions, actions, emotions
  - Needs to address both cognitive and affective domains
  - Discern choices are rational vs which are due to preconditioning
  - Goal: moving toward choosing one's own values vs acting out prior programming

## ENHANCING SELF AWARENESS

- Related to values clarification
- Requires acknowledged intention to be aware
- Consciousness re: thoughts, feelings, physical and emotional responses and insights
- Awareness promotes appreciation of values - analyzing promotes self-awareness

### Techniques for self-awareness

- Meditation techniques: tuning into one's breathing - note rate, rhythm, depth, etc;
- Attend to feelings: identify emotions without judging them
- Recognizing origin or source of certain feelings
- Individual discussion or reflection
- Hear/react to views of others helps clarify own views
- Other techniques
  - Taking other side in a debate; interviewing people with differing opinions
  - Defending another persons position
  - Requesting feedback re one's position
  - Asking philosophic questions

### Developing self-awareness: components

1. Prizing and cherishing one's own beliefs and behavior including knowledge of same
2. Choosing own beliefs and behaviors via evaluating alternatives
3. Acting on beliefs

### Journaling: records kept on regular basis - useful tool in developing awareness

- Factual materials
- Subjective interpretations of events, feelings, thoughts, plans
- Text discusses techniques and details re developing art of journaling

## VALUES IN PROFESSIONAL SITUATIONS

Understanding own values provides basis for insight to decision-making circumstances

- Explains one's own reactions/responses to situations
- Explains similarities and differences in values when interacting with others
- Facilitates more effective communication and service

Assists professional personnel in facilitating processes in others (patients, families, etc.)

### **Values Conflict**

- Personal values at conflict with those of patients, colleagues or institution
- Results in internal or interpersonal conflict which can affect patient care
- Effective dealing with conflict of value systems - requires particular awareness
  - Requires awareness of own values and perceived values of others
  - Awareness of potential situations where own values conflict with patient care
    - **Judging others values in terms of one's own values**
    - **Imposing values on another** i.e. patients
  - Making choice to respond appropriately to values conflict
    - Avoid "knee-jerk" reaction
    - Seek understanding and common ground
    - Consciously seeking to understanding opposing viewpoint

## IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONAL VALUES

**Overt values** - institutional values which are explicitly communicated

- Values of individual institutions and organized health care systems
- Explicitly communicated through philosophy and policy statement

**Covert values** - Subtle or hidden values implicit within an institution

- Identified through participation in or controversies within setting
- Identification important for those seeking employment within institution
- Accepting employment implies committing to values
- Can be source of considerable stress and conflict for professionals
- Should ID what is important to employer
  - Where to they stand on issues
  - What does employer reward and value

### **Moral distress:**

Reaction to situation where there is clear solution but external constraints prevent following one's moral beliefs

Evidenced: anger, dissatisfaction, frustration, poor job performances

Identifying organizational values key to successful employment within a setting

- Conflict between institutional and personal values predicts failure
- Variety of published tools available to identify covert values

## CLARIFYING VALUES WITH PATIENTS

Patients are consumers of health care - advisable to be aware of their values

Patient and provider perceptions of quality care can differ widely

Discrepancies can lead to patient dissatisfaction

Consequences of discord

- Noncompliance with health care recommendations
- Marring reputation of agencies
- Potentiating malpractice

Example of events leading to discord

Patient's expectation regarding nurses spending time with them vs institutional emphasis on task-oriented expectations of nurses

Awareness of own values prerequisite to identifying potential conflicts