

UK Counseling Psychology Program
Interpersonal Guidelines
Last Revised 10/27/20

- All Relationships
 - It is our mutual responsibility to
 - Be supportive of one another. We need each other's support to thrive in the face of the challenges of our professional work. Seek to cooperate rather than compete.
 - Be authentic
 - Remember that success depends on clear, direct, compassionate, ongoing communication about needs, preferences, and boundaries (shaped by both ethical and personal considerations). These will vary from dyad to dyad.
 - Be mindful of how cultural identity and interlocking systems of oppression influence the relationship, power dynamic, and both person's perceptions. We must bear in mind that our social location positions us in different places in the matrix of oppression (in the world and in the department). This asymmetry puts the onus on people holding more privilege to cultivate self-awareness to help minimize their potential for harming others and practice accountability.
 - Demonstrate professional deportment (e.g., empathetic, demonstrating positive regard, collaborative, socially just, mutually respectful of each other's humanity and worth), congruent with the Counseling Psychology Model Training Values Statement Addressing Diversity, as operationalized by [Winterowd et al., \(2009\)](#). This includes practicing nonverbal, paraverbal, and verbal behaviors that acknowledge the humanity, fallibility, and worth of each other.
 - Practice non-defensive openness in response to feedback you receive
 - Repair harm (see Relationship Repair section below)
 - Acknowledge that ruptures are inevitable and mutual commitment to the relationship creates the possibility of a strengthened bond by working through conflict.
 - People will disappoint each other. It is helpful to not take others' behaviors personally and recognize that others generally are doing the best they can at any given moment in their own growth and development. Disclosing the impact of colleagues' behaviors and making assertive requests without blame and judgment are important professional skills to practice for the successful resolution of conflict.

- Student-Faculty Relationships
 - By nature of their respective roles, students and faculty have different levels of institutional power. This power is further increased or decreased depending on the social location of the faculty member and the other people involved in a given interaction. Organizational-position-based power differences are not, in and of themselves, bad things. To the contrary, there is merit and value in this power difference. Power differences have the potential to be used to facilitate student

growth and accountability to the ethics of our profession. However, power differences should not be amplified or misused. Students and faculty also have different responsibilities as it relates to their role in our learning community. Students' role is to learn and grow. Faculty's role is to teach, guide, advise, supervise, evaluate, and act as gatekeepers to the profession. Faculty and students are not peers, but faculty and students have equal value and worth.

- Faculty's responsibility to
 - Acknowledge power differential (implications of gatekeeper power)
 - Tell students what forms of support they are willing to offer within each context (teacher, research mentor, faculty academic advisor)
 - Describe interpersonal expectations around how students can build rapport with, or request support from, faculty
 - Care for the whole person, not just students' professional performance
- Students' responsibility to
 - Appreciate the value of the organizational-position-based power differential
 - Respect the time and effort faculty have invested over their professional lifetimes to become mentors worth learning from
 - Have realistic expectations of faculty (faculty must balance the needs of the many parties they serve)
- Student-Student Relationships
 - Relationships characterized by mutual professional deportment are required. Collegial and warm professional relationships are encouraged but not required.
 - Personal relationships (e.g., friendships) are only by mutual interest and may grow, change, or end over time.
 - Respect students' sense of discretion when observing relationships based on sharing salient cultural identities. Sometimes what is shared between a group of people may not be for you to partake in, and that is OK.
- Relationship Repair
 - Guidelines for Person who caused harm
 - If harm is identified immediately, work to acknowledge immediately, then engage in reflection and self-education, which may inform your strategy for repair. Do not avoid initiating the discussion.
 - Ask if they are interested in receiving your attempt at repair and, if so, when (person who experienced harm may want time to process and recover) and whether they would prefer this be in public (if applicable) or private.
 - Practice authenticity and vulnerability throughout the repair process.
 - Take responsibility, validate their experience and feelings, apologize, and practice accountability by taking meaningful steps toward correcting future behavior.
 - Practice non-defensive openness in response to feedback you receive

- You may briefly acknowledge feelings (e.g., anxiety, sadness, guilt) around having caused harm but do not practice fragility by centering your feelings.
- Be mindful of bodily sensations and feelings, not just your cognition, throughout the process. Lack of mindfulness can lead to fragile behavior. Be mindful of nonverbals.
- Provide ample time and space for person who experienced harm to process with you if they wish.
- Engage in critical consciousness self-education; person who experienced harm can explain how they were impacted but should not be asked to provide critical consciousness education.
- Ask person who experienced harm what they want from you now and in future; they may not be interested in repair; respect boundaries of person who experienced harm; accept potential unfinished business; it may take time.
- Be mindful of how cultural identity and systems of oppression influence the relationship, power dynamic, and both parties' perceptions.
- Guidelines for Person who experienced harm
 - In 1998, [bell hooks said](#) “How do we hold people accountable for wrongdoing and yet at the same time remain in touch with their humanity enough to believe their capacity to be transformed?” If we have a critical awareness that privilege has to be unlearned in many ways, then we should develop realistic expectations for what the unlearning process is and how long it takes, even when we are the person who experiences harm. All humans are flawed, will microaggress/harm on occasion, and our learning community cannot function unless all members hold realistic expectations.
 - Remember that the person who caused harm may enact a more successful repair attempt if they are first allowed some time to reflect and self-educate, though this is not a license for unnecessary delay.
 - Impact is more important than intention, and it is helpful to consider the intention of the person who caused harm. If it is true that the person who caused harm did not mean to cause harm and will take meaningful steps toward correcting future behavior, there is a rationale for practicing compassion toward the person who caused harm.
 - If you are interested in repair, be willing to describe your experience, as the person who caused harm may not know what your internal experience was.
 - It is not required that you forgive or forget; your willingness to do so is a gift you can give, one you may yourself desire to receive when you inevitably harm someone in the future.