Unit 9 DB Lecture:

Welcome to your final Discussion Board lecture! This lecture focuses on ethics. Ethics includes a consideration of overall values that should be incorporated when implementing change in organizations. Relevant guidelines from the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) will be highlighted.

“Ethics” refers to many different things but among the questions to be answered when considering ethics is “What is right and wrong?” What does it mean to be a good behavior analyst? The purpose of behavior analytic interventions, whether inside or outside organizations, is to help others by improving behavior or conditions. Even if a behavior analyst is functioning as a consultant for a Fortune 500 company, he/she is creating change that will help the workers within the organization and also the customers or consumers who receive services from that organization. It is important that behavior analysts consider the weight of their actions and always practice in adherence to our ethical guidelines and for the greater good.

Ethics are important in the field of OBM and ABA because it helps practitioners determine what is right and what is wrong. The ethical guidelines provide a clear set of expectations that all behavior analysts are expected to follow despite personal values or experiences. Ethical guidelines help to protect the client, the behavior analysts, and the field of ABA as a whole.

Ethical practice is shaped by values and, more formally, by ethical guidelines that govern the field of behavior analysis. In our textbook, Daniels discusses values and how they relate to creating interventions for organizations. Among those values are honesty and transparency. One must not withhold information from workers in an organization. Instead, creating a culture of transparency in which everyone is made aware of what is happening throughout each stage of the problem-solving process should be nurtured. Integrity and trust point to the fact that words and actions should align. If an organization says a bonus will be tied to a certain action, then the action should always produce the reinforcer. To demonstrate integrity, one must show that he/she follows the values set forth. Both of these general values relate to Code 1.04 of the BACB compliance code “Integrity,” which states: (a) Behavior analysts are truthful and honest and arrange the environment to promote truthful behavior in others.

Equality and respect are also important values to consider when implementing interventions in organizations. A consideration of the fact that employees are engaging in problematic behavior due, in part, to the work environment and taking into account the concept of humble behaviorism, as described by Nueringer, will help promote respect. Approaching situations in this manner will help to eliminate passing judgment, as well as the human inclination to punish behavior prior to seeing the full picture. This relates to BACB Code 2.05: Rights and Prerogatives of Clients. This code states that the rights of clients should come first and relates to the idea of treating clients with dignity. Behavior analysts in organizations must consider the performers’ rights, their dignity, and their right to choose. Even when working within an organization, any individual who will be impacted by an intervention should be considered and accounted for.

Creating clear and consistent goals and consequences leads to another value of creating peace of mind. Workers report that having clear expectations, such as knowing what behavior will be rewarded and what will be punished, produces increased job satisfaction. Managers who are unclear about expectations and the presentation of reinforcement and/or punishment produce mental and emotional anguish on the part of the worker. Many BACB ethical guidelines encourage behavior analysts to include clients in the planning process and to indicate clearly how and when the intervention will be implemented. Code 4.05: Describing behavior change program objectives, indicates that all objectives should be described clearly and in writing and, when necessary, a Risk-Benefit Analysis should be used to discuss the procedures and approaches to implementation. Although front line performers may not be included in every part of the process, it is the behavior analyst’s job to review objectives and goals with executives and also encourage them to explain objectives and interventions to all members of the organization.

Another important ethical consideration that is particularly relevant to organizations is to always use scientifically validated interventions. As was discussed in the initial units of the course, many organizations operate using outdated management practices that are not scientifically supported. BACB Code 2.09: Treatment/intervention efficacy, highlights the fact that it is the behavior analyst’s responsibility to advocate for scientifically supported treatments and the most effective procedures, and then to educate the client on these procedures. When operating as a consultant in an organization, it is important to explain and promote only the use of interventions that have research and evidence to support them and to continue to evaluate the effectiveness of an implemented procedure using appropriate data collection.

Finally, the Golden Rule, which is often taught as early as kindergarten, is an important consideration in implementing interventions in organizations. This rule dictates that you treat others as you would like to be treated. If managers model the behaviors they want to see, and use positive reinforcement when interacting with staff, these behaviors will be encouraged in others and throughout the culture. When operating as a behavior analyst, try to remember how you prefer to be supervised or how you would like an intervention implemented. Doing so will help to ensure that the interventions are implemented in an acceptable way and promote the long-term impact of the intervention.