



Code of Ethics for Playback Theatre Trainers and Practitioners

Using our Code of Ethics, ethically

The Code of Ethics* was written by a team of people - Anna Chesner, Jen Kristel, Veronica Needa, and myself - who developed the accreditation program starting in 2011. We based it on the much briefer code that the Centre had been using in PT Leadership, with reference to codes of ethics used by comparable organizations, including the Israel Playback Theatre Network. Accredited Playback Theatre Trainers are asked to explicitly adopt this code, and the Centre now suggests that all of us, accredited or not, use the Code to guide our practice.

As a founder of Playback Theatre, I'm glad to see the Code used more widely. We are a peer-led community: there is no official body that has power or control over our work. It is up to each of us to ensure that what we do as individuals and groups remains ethical.

Although the Code of Ethics is primarily a guide for a practitioner's or group's own practice, it also gives a basis on which we can maintain ethical practice in our community. As we take on this shared responsibility, let's do so with wisdom and kindness. Making accusations and counter-accusations is all too easy. Instead, we can be mindful of creating what the veteran African-American activist Loretta Ross calls a "[call-in](#)" culture rather than a "call-out" culture. "Calling out", even when justified, can be harsh and counter-productive. "Calling in" is done in a loving and tactful spirit, without shaming.

Let's use the Code of Ethics to ensure that our work, our communications, and our collegial relationships are always safe and respectful.

Jo Salas, APTT

Co-founder of Playback Theatre

**The first version of this document was completed by November 2012, as part of building the Centre for Playback Theatre's Accreditation process.*

This version was adapted in March 2020 to include all practitioners, with a vision of mindful and intentional ethical considerations in our Playback community.

As practitioners and trainers of Playback Theatre, we agree to uphold the following Code of Ethics:

Respect:

We interact with our audiences, students, tellers, company members, and colleagues with respect at all times. We acknowledge and affirm the integrity of the other party and behave in a way that does not seek to undermine or shame the other. We understand and respect the rituals, traditions, principles, and practices of Playback Theatre, and undertake to acquire that knowledge.

Inclusiveness:

We are open to any story and also ready engage with ethical complexities within a story. We seek to include voices that are often unheard in our communities.

Emergence:

We allow the events of a performance to emerge out of the moment, without being preset or manipulated. Stories or tellers are not chosen prior to the show (unless in exceptional situations, which should be transparent.)

Competence:

We commit to ensuring that we have sufficient training and supervision for any Playback Theatre project that we undertake, acquiring further training as needed. We commit to practicing and/or teaching Playback Theatre at the level of our competence and not beyond.

Human rights:

We promote the human rights of all those present and not present. When necessary we take appropriate action to address prejudice that may be expressed consciously or unconsciously by a teller or workshop participant.

Collegial relationships:

We strive to maintain respectful, cooperative, and supportive relationships within the Playback Theatre community. We respect boundaries between companies and undertake to be transparent with our colleagues, particularly in areas which may have financial or professional impact, including in relation to financial supporters.

We respect each other's proprietary material including company names, publicity materials, and project descriptions. When companies, training entities, or trainers are in geographical proximity they need to negotiate and respect regional agreements.

Privacy and confidentiality:

We acknowledge that stories told in a performance are not subject to confidentiality. However, we undertake to repeat or write about stories only in a respectful and discreet way.

For trainers of Playback Theatre:

Ethics topics in training:

As trainers, we commit to developing self-awareness and awareness in our students of ethical issues in Playback Theatre.

Supervision:

As trainers, we commit to an adequate level of supervision.

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