

Book Review: The Ethics of Caring

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Claire Nana

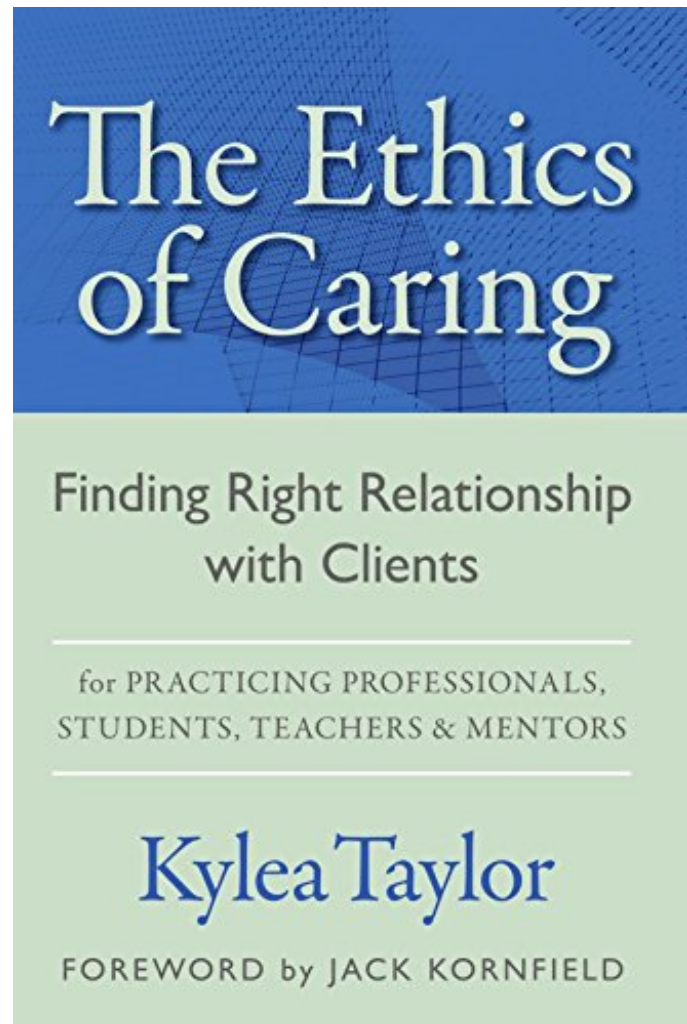
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Caring is a universal force that compels healers all of kinds, from therapists to bodyworkers. Yet, as much as we are all drawn to the desire to help, really helping someone depends not just on desire, but on truly understanding the ethics of caring.

In her new book, *The Ethics of Caring: Finding Professional Right Relationship with Clients for Practicing Professionals, Students, Teachers & Mentors*, Kylea Taylor illuminates just what is necessary to offer an authentic relationship where genuine transformation can occur, and to utilize the tremendous power of shared energy — felt in transference and counter-transference — to invoke powerful change.

“These intense shared experiences that arise for many clients in the context of a professional healing relationship can bring to the surface compelling, and often unconscious, fears, needs, and longings in both the client and the professional.”

It is precisely through exploring these deeper ends of the spectrum of human experience that profound healing and transformation occurs, and within which, according to Taylor, a broader range of human experience and expression can be found.



Beyond the outward definitions of ethics, we have inner ethics, where through ongoing internal self-examination, we discover our own values and motivations. This sense of inner ethics becomes especially important for therapists when sharing extraordinary states of consciousness with their clients.

“I have come to believe that a close examination of ethical issues and of our personal interest in ethical right relationships could involve more than merely rote learning of a set of external rules and hearing how to protect ourselves from the perils of legal prosecution. I believe now that such an examination gives us precious insights into ourselves and our sacred relationships with our clients. These insights affect our clients and their therapeutic outcomes as least as deeply as what we learn from any other part of our professional training,” writes Taylor.

More than any technique, training, or theoretical orientation, therapists and healers bring their person to the work they do, and doing great work depends on the ability to share a human experience with their clients as they explore uncharted territory – which is often where frightening material arises.

Taylor quotes Mary Sykes Wylie:

“Blind allegiance to a particular therapeutic model becomes an ethical failing when the therapist consistently gives more weight to the model than to what clients say they want and need.”

On the other hand, the openness of a therapist to extraordinary experience is a key factor in how normal the client feels while having extraordinary experiences — something that becomes particularly important when healing from trauma.

“Most wounding (mental, physical, emotional, or spiritual) involves extraordinary states at the time of the injury or trauma, and it often appears that the client has to re-enter and relive that extraordinary state, to some degree at least, in order for healing to take place,” Taylor writes.

What is often overlooked in therapy, is that the relationship between the therapist and client is the service delivered. And it is through ethical self-reflection powered by a reverence for all life that the foundation of morality and ethics is formed.

Yet, Taylor writes that professionals are most vulnerable to ethical missteps when either having a “special relationship with a client or student” and when “the client or student enters a profound state of consciousness, either spontaneously, or through a therapeutic technique.”

Situations like these often reveal “shadowed parts of ourselves,” which, Taylor writes, “either tend to have ‘too much’ or ‘too little’ of a quality.”

And while therapists may be aware that when clients have intense experiences those experiences affect them as well, it is much more difficult to accurately predict just how much they will be influenced. Further, because work with clients in extraordinary states often blurs professional boundaries, therapists must be sensitive in a unique way – which makes doing their own personal deep work all the more important.

The following questions can be especially helpful in guiding the therapeutic relationship, as well as providing knowledge of what Taylor calls the seven centers:

Is this what the client needs?

Is the intervention for me or the client?

Is this intervention in harmony with what I perceive to be the healing trajectory that the client is wanting or demonstrating?

For each of the seven centers — money, sex, power, love, truth, insight, and oneness — Taylor explores the personal and communal representations of each as well as the ways in which they can affect, and be affected by, transference and counter-transference.

“If the professional’s own energies are currently moving in the personal centers (first, second, and third) rather than the transpersonal centers, she may relate differently to a client who is experiencing cosmic unity. Some themes arising may be: a desire for merging or dissolving boundaries and a fear of losing one’s self-identity,” writes Taylor on the topic of oneness.

Taylor’s book is extraordinary. Moving beyond traditional therapeutic models, techniques, and practices, *The Ethics of Caring* is a paradigm shift in the practice of therapy — one that will have readers thinking deeply about what it means to care.

The Ethics of Caring: Finding Professional Right Relationship with Clients for Practicing Professionals, Students, Teachers & Mentors

Kylea Taylor

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