

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF PROFESSIONAL AROMATHERAPISTS

# CODE OF ETHICS & CONDUCT



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## **IFPA Code of Ethics and Conduct**

The Code of Ethics and Conduct sets out the minimum, basic standards which the International Federation of Professional Aromatherapists requires all its members to maintain.

### **Definitions**

All words used in this document are to be given their ordinary, normal meaning unless otherwise specified. Where this document is translated into other languages, your attention is drawn to the fact that these versions are provided for your convenience only, the English version shall always take precedence.

### **IFPA**

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### **Member (Full, Student, Associate, Non-Practising or Corporate)**

An individual or other legal entity who is registered with the IFPA.

### **School Owner**

An individual or other legal entity who owns a school which is accredited to provide the IFPA Aromatherapy Diploma or Approved CPD courses.

### **Definition of Ethics**

The IFPA accepts ethics to be defined as “a system of moral principles or rules of behaviour.” Ethics is concerned with what is good for individuals and society and is also described as moral philosophy.

### **Definition of Aromatherapy**

Aromatherapy is the systematic, controlled use of essential oils to promote and enhance the health and well-being of the individual.

### **Moral Integrity**

Integrity is the basic fundamental quality of being honest and having strong moral principles, and moral uprightness. In ethics, integrity is regarded by many people as the honesty and truthfulness or accuracy of one's actions.

## **Definition of Conduct**

Personal behaviour; way of acting; bearing or deportment.

## **Background**

Aromatherapy is a widespread, safe, and legal activity and this code helps ensure that IFPA members conduct themselves in such a manner as to maintain the reputation and trust in this industry, IFPA and its members. Used correctly, aromatherapy can achieve positive results for our clients, and we wish to build on this principle for the future. Although on the whole the materials and techniques used in this industry are safe and relatively low risk, like anything if used incorrectly, there can be serious consequences for clients, aromatherapists and other parties.

This code of ethics has been produced to help members of the IFPA understand the minimum standards required of them. It is stressed that these are minimum standards and members should strive to always hold the highest possible standard.

A breach of the standards set out by this code is considered to be a serious matter. Breaching these standards may give rise to serious medical, physical, and legal consequences. A breach is likely to bring disrepute onto the member, the IFPA and potentially the industry as a whole.

Compliance with this code is the best way to ensure that you practise or manage your activities in relation to aromatherapy in an ethical, safe, and successful way.

## **General terms**

1.1 Compliance with this Code of Conduct is mandatory for all members of the IFPA. It is the responsibility of the member to ensure that they are fully aware of and understand the details of these requirements.

1.2 Breaches of this Code will be handled in accordance with the IFPA's Disciplinary Procedure.

1.3 All members will conduct themselves in a professional, ethical, and law-abiding manner in relation to all their work with clients, colleagues, students, fellow professionals, and the general public.

1.4 All members will conduct themselves at all times in an honourable, courteous, and diligent manner, acting with respect and dignity.

1.5 All members must not discriminate against any other person based on age, disability, gender (including gender re-assignment), marriage and civil partnership, race, religious belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

1.6 All members must respect the political, and social views of others.

1.7 No member will make (whether in writing or otherwise) prejudicial or derogatory judgements based on lifestyle, money or health of clients, students, fellow members, or other professionals or any other person.

1.8 All members will ensure their own health and hygiene does not impact on their professional practice in any way.

1.9 No member will use or allow to be used, any prohibited substance during any professional work they carry out or whilst acting on behalf of the IFPA.

1.10 No member will consume, use, distribute (i.e., deal or sell) or allow to be consumed, used, or distributed, any narcotics, alcohol, mind-altering drugs, or intoxicants prior to or during any professional work they carry out or whilst acting on behalf of the IFPA. This includes the use of prescription medication and 'legal highs' of any description.

1.11 All members will carry out the required amount of Continuing Professional Development per year.

1.12 Members will provide, to the best of their knowledge, truthful and accurate information and not make negligent or deliberate omissions or provide information in a way likely to be misleading or incomplete when renewing membership or accreditation in any form.

1.13 All members must notify IFPA as soon as reasonably possible and within 30 days of any material or substantial changes to their professional circumstances and concerning their membership with the IFPA.

1.14 All members will report to the IFPA as soon as reasonably possible and within 60 days any inquiry, arrest or investigation by the Police, Government department or other regulatory body relating to their practise of aromatherapy.

1.15 Where a disclosure under 1.14 or 1.15 above has been made, members are further required to keep the IFPA updated, as far as reasonably possible, on the progress and outcome of these investigations. IFPA may submit in writing to the member at any time, a notice requiring an update to any ongoing investigation. No member shall unreasonably fail to comply with this request.

1.16 No member may undertake any work (whether paid or unpaid) or act for or on behalf of the IFPA where it contravenes a local regulation, bye-law, or other statutory law or requirement in the territory the member is operating in or is required to observe.

1.17 All members must ensure they are suitably qualified, insured and registered with any statutory or regulatory authority where required and as required in their country of practise. The IFPA reserve the right to ask any member for proof of such entitlement, qualification or cover at any time and this will not be unreasonably withheld by any member.

1.18 All members must comply with any statutory or regulatory requirements in the territory regarding confidentiality, data management, processing, collection, storage, disclosure,

disposal, and other matters in relation to personal information of clients, the IFPA or their operations.

1.19 If any member fails to comply with any of the provisions in this policy, that member may be subject to the IFPA's disciplinary process and/or required to surrender their membership.

1.20 If any member fails to comply or co-operate with an investigation or proceeding under the IFPA's disciplinary process, they will be deemed to be in breach of this code and may be subject to disciplinary action.

1.21 Although the Government and orthodox medical policy often use the words 'alternative' and 'complementary' medicine, it is clear that under their rules, any members accept that delegation from a doctor is 'complementary'. The term 'complementary medicine' makes no pretensions of replacing conventional medicine; it informs the public that aromatherapy cannot and does not ever exclude conventional medicine and orthodox healthcare practitioners from patient care and treatment.

### **Further information**

[IFPA Disciplinary Procedure](#)

[IFPA CPD Requirements](#)

[Membership Terms and Conditions](#)

[Equality Act 2010](#)

[The Human Rights Act](#)

[Human Rights Act 1998](#)

[Cancer Act](#)

### **Appropriate Level of Skill & Training**

Operating while using the appropriate level of skill and care is crucial to the ethics promoted by the IFPA. Members must never offer or agree to work at a level higher than they are qualified or insured to perform. Unless they hold a separate medical qualification, they should never diagnose or give advice about medication. In any case, diagnosis, advice, consultation, or any other procedure of this nature is not regulated or endorsed by the IFPA, and no member may make representations, acts or omissions which may confuse someone regarding this point. If at any time a member feels unable to meet the medical expectations of a client or other person, they should refer the client or person to a therapist or medical professional who is qualified to treat them.

The IFPA requires that all members to

- Never give medical advice.
- Always work within their qualifications and limits of insurance.
- Never diagnose, prescribe, or provide any services unless they are trained, licensed, and carry the appropriate insurance to do so and never make such undertakings in the name, or endorsement, or regulation, of the IFPA.
- Never claim to 'cure' - therapeutic benefits may be discussed but must never be guaranteed.
- Be aware that there is a higher burden of competency when dealing with clients suffering from addictions or mental issues.

- Represent their qualifications, training, and experience honestly in all forms of advertisement or promotion of themselves or their businesses. They must not knowingly allow themselves or their business to be negligently misrepresented.
- Refer clients to the appropriate qualified professionals if their needs go beyond the scope of practise, qualification, or insurance.
- Not knowingly treat clients that more appropriately require medical treatment except with the written approval of their GP or Consultant.
- Since December 1991, doctors have been allowed to delegate treatment of patients to specialists, including complementary therapists such as aromatherapists, provided that:
  - the doctors remain in charge of the patient's treatment and
  - the doctor is clinically accountable for the care offered by the complementary therapist.
 These requirements must always be observed by all members where they apply.

### **Animals**

It is understood and accepted that from time-to-time members may receive requests to practise on animals. Whilst generally safe, the same level of skill and care must be taken as when dealing with humans.

- Members must carry the appropriate insurance and qualifications for dealing with animals.
- Members are reminded that all animals can be dangerous and specific requirements may be necessary to ensure the protection from harm for the member, owner, and the animal.
- All and any products used on an animal must be certified as safe for use on that animal. If in doubt, a qualified vet must be consulted. All members must discuss the risks of their practise and the products they intend to use, with the owner or nominated representative, prior to the start of any treatment.
- Members must only treat animals with and under the supervision of a qualified vet and in the presence of the owner or a nominated representative of the owner.
- Members must refuse to treat and refer any animals requiring medical attention to a vet immediately. Sick, lame, or diseased animals must never be treated unless under written approval from a qualified vet responsible for the treatment of the animal and with the owners', or a representative of the owners, permission.
- Any nominated representative of the owner must be capable to act wholly independently of the owner and make all decisions enjoyed by the owner in respect of the animal. All members must make reasonable effort to confirm that the nominated representative is authorised to act in such a way.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is a requirement of running a professional practice. The information disclosed to you as part of a consultation and subsequent treatment should be treated with the utmost respect and care. This information is personal and may be of a very sensitive nature. As a therapist, you should provide a secure environment where information can be collected, stored, and processed securely.

There are a few cases when you, as a therapist, have a legal obligation to break confidentiality. These are:

- If the client discloses information requiring a safeguarding procedure to be activated in line with a safeguarding policy.
- If a client has a notifiable disease.

### Notifiable Diseases

It is a statutory requirement that certain infectious diseases are reported to the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) in the district in which the client is living when the disease is diagnosed. In the UK, the person responsible for notifying the MOH is the GP in charge of the case. If, therefore, a practising member suspects a client has such a disease, they should insist that the doctor is called in. Each Local Authority decides which diseases are notifiable in its area which means there will be variations, but it is assumed that the following diseases are notifiable in all areas of the UK.

Acute encephalitis	Acute infectious hepatitis (A,B,C)	Acute meningitis	Acute poliomyelitis
Anthrax	Botulism	Brucellosis	Cholera
COVID-19	Diphtheria	Enteric fever (typhoid or paratyphoid fever)	Food poisoning
Haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS)	Infectious bloody diarrhoea	Invasive group A streptococcal disease	Legionnaires' disease
Leprosy	Malaria	Measles	Meningococcal septicaemia
Monkeypox	Mumps	Plague	Rabies
Rubella	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)	Scarlet fever	Smallpox
Tetanus	Tuberculosis	Typhus	Viral haemorrhagic fever (VHF)
Whooping cough			

The IFPA requires all members to

- Provide their clients/students with a safe and secure environment.
- Keep well-maintained, comprehensive, dated records and registers for the time required for insurance purposes and by the IFPA.
- Keep all records and information secure and in line with the data requirements of the country in which they are practising.
- Allow clients, students, and staff the right to inspect their records upon request. You may be able to charge a fee in line with local regulations for providing this service.
- Ensure in the case of publications that great care is taken not to disclose any protected information and that all information disclosed is anonymous.
- Keep a record of all referrals and test results showing progress of the client which can be viewed by other health professionals when requested.
- Maintain accurate financial records and pay any taxes required.



## **Working with Clients**

### **Fitness to Practise**

Fitness to practise ensures that all therapists, students, and healthcare professionals are working at the required professional standard and within the bounds of their own training, knowledge, and insurance. Fitness to practise also ensures that professionals work within a moral code set out in this Code of Ethics and Conduct. It further ensures client respect, safety, and welfare.

The IFPA requires all members who work with clients and carry out treatments (in any form) to

### **Insurance & License**

- Hold professional indemnity, malpractice and public liability insurance that is suitable for the practice they undertake.
- Hold any license as required by the country or area in which they work and to maintain its requirements.

### **Premises**

- Have an up-to-date risk assessment for the treatment area and premises (including contagious infections such as COVID-19).
- Ensure the premises are clean, well lit, ventilated and in a good state of repair.
- Provide hand washing, sanitising, and drying facilities on site, and these facilities must be accessible to all clients and staff.
- Ensure the treatment area is safe and secure.
- Maintain all equipment so that it is in a good state of repair and does not pose a risk to staff or clients.
- Ensure the area and practices are sanitised after treating a client and before treating the next client.
- Have signage appropriate to the practice undertaken on the premises.

### **Personal Hygiene**

- Ensure their health and personal hygiene are such as to prevent risk to a client.
- Not consume or allow to be consumed, food or drink in the practising area of the premises.
- Be aware of public hygiene and local safety bye-laws, rules, and specifications.
- Dress in a professional manner that is suitable and be aware of any requirements to use specified Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Where PPE is required, this must be provided and be suitable for the purpose it is intended.

### **Treatment Protocols**

- Carry out treatments observing local bye-laws and legal requirements.
- Carry out all treatments safely within the scope of the practitioner's knowledge, training, and insurance.
- Store all materials in such a way that they comply with required standards.
- Never claim to cure - therapeutic benefits can be discussed but not guaranteed.
- Note on a client's records if a client refuses to consult a GP.

- Fully explain the process in writing or verbally before the treatment, and ensure that the client understands this.
- Treat clients in accordance with ethical principles with a focus on the well-being of the client.
- Respect the client's right to accept or refuse any aspect of the proposed treatment.
- Never treat or provide treatment to a client who is refusing that treatment for any reason.
- Refuse to carry out any treatment they feel is contra-indicated or unsafe for the client.
- Gain informed consent from a client before each treatment.
- Agree a treatment plan with the client prior to providing any treatment.

### **Professional Boundaries**

- Always ensure a professional relationship with the client – members should not breach this relationship.
- Ensure no third party is present during the treatment without the client's consent.
- Not engage in any form of sexual conduct or activities with clients.
- Ensure the client is properly covered and their dignity is maintained throughout their treatment and consultation.
- Not in any way harass the client – sexually, emotionally, physically, or psychologically.

### **Safeguarding**

- Advise, in case of safeguarding, that a third party is present when treating.
- Be aware that, at present, treating a child under the age of 16 (depending on the country in which you practise) instead of them receiving medical attention, is breaking the law.
- Complete a signed disclaimer if a parent refuses to seek medical care for the child.
- Be aware and comply with the ruling that it is against the law for anyone who is not a midwife or doctor to care for a labouring woman.
- Not attend the birth of a baby or treat for 10 days after parturition unless they hold other qualifications or are under the supervision of a hospital doctor/specialist.
- Treat clients with HIV/AIDS at their own discretion.
- Hold an up-to-date DBS check where required.
- Be aware of the signs of domestic abuse and where to refer/signpost clients/students/staff if necessary.
- Be aware of the signs of modern slavery and the requirements for reporting.

### **First Aid**

- All members are encouraged to hold a valid, current, first aid certificate.

### **Use of Essential Oils**

- Be aware that the choice of essential oils or supplier by the member is not restricted by the IFPA.
- Understand that the IFPA does not endorse the use of any substance and the member must ensure that the substances they use are safe and appropriate for use.
- All members are expected to perform the necessary research into any new substance they intend to use and take advice from expert organisations where required.
- Research suppliers to ensure safety/suitability of products.

- Neither teach or practise unsafe essential oil administration, such as is used in Raindrop Technique®, or AromaTouch Technique®, or any similar techniques.
- Comply with the IFPA statement on neat and internal use of essential oils.

### **Complaints**

- Have a clear, concise complaints policy which is accessible for all clients in case of a complaint.
- Adhere to their complaint procedure at all times.

### **Relationships with other Professionals**

- Maintain client records in such a way that they can be understood and used by other IFPA practitioners and health care professionals. Records must not be kept in an ambiguous way or use language which is intended to be misleading or difficult to understand.
- Work in a co-operative and respectful manner with other members of a practice or healthcare team.
- Liaise with other professionals and professional bodies to increase knowledge and awareness for all parties.
- Be aware that members of other healthcare bodies are subject to their own ethics and disciplinary procedures.
- Not overrule the instructions or prescription of a GP.
- Not give advice on operations or drugs. It should be the decision of the client.
- Not diagnose. They should encourage the client to seek appropriate medical advice.

### **Guidelines for working in Hospitals**

- The hospital or other healthcare establishment is responsible for the client and remains ultimately responsible for the client. However, the member remains responsible for any and all treatment they provide to the client.
- Members can treat at the request of the client and with the permission of the hospital or healthcare establishment.
- Members not employed by the hospital or other healthcare establishment should not give or allowed to be given on their behalf, whether intentionally or negligently, the impression that they are. They should have suitable ID, and this must be worn at all times. If requested by a third party, they must identify themselves to the third party.
- When treating in any part of a hospital or other healthcare establishment, the member and the treatment must not interfere with other patients or staff.
- If other patients request treatment, permission must be gained from the healthcare establishment and a full consultation undergone with the proposed client.
- Members should never undermine the patient's faith in staff or treatment.
- Members should provide evidence of IFPA membership and other evidence to treat when required.

### **Further Information**

[Fitness to Practise](#)

[Health & Care Professions Council – Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics](#)

[Managing risks and risk assessment at work](#)

[Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)  
[Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974](#)  
[Control of Substances Hazardous to Health \(COSHH\)](#)  
[RIDDOR - Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations](#)  
[Data Protection](#)  
[Disclosure and Barring Service](#)  
[First Aid at Work](#)  
[Children Act 2004](#)  
[Children Act 1989](#)  
[Children Act 2004 \(summary\)](#)  
[Association of Carers – Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy & Procedure](#)  
[Consent to Treatment](#)  
[Seeking Patient Consent Toolkit](#)  
[Clear sexual boundaries](#)  
[Behind the Mask \(free online domestic abuse training for therapists\)](#)  
[Modern Slavery](#)  
[Modern Slavery Act 2015](#)  
[Anti-Slavery International](#)  
[Domestic violence and abuse](#)  
[Refuge](#)  
[What is domestic abuse?](#)

### **Advertising & Promotion**

Members should ensure that their advertising and the promotion of aromatherapy through their practice and marketing should seek to educate and provide a true picture to their clients and public.

The IFPA requires all members who engage in the advertising of aromatherapy and/or their services (in any form) to

### **Qualifications**

- Represent their qualifications, expertise, and experience honestly and in no way implicate that they are more qualified than they are.
- Work within their scope of practice.
- Advertise their services in a way that the public/clients understand the services and charges.

### **Advertising**

- Refrain from plagiarism and/or intellectual property theft (in any form) by citing and referencing other's materials honestly and appropriately.
- Raise understanding and awareness of aromatherapy and the appropriate use of essential oils in a holistic manner.
- Advertise themselves and their profession and fellow professionals in a positive light.
- Not use negative advertisements, criticism, or denigration in any form against fellow professionals to gain business.
- Not claim to 'cure' or make false claims and should use appropriate language in their promotion.

- Refrain from guaranteeing a wellness outcome in their literature or conversations with clients, the public, or customers.
- Make the focus of their work the positive use of aromatherapy to improve the health and welfare of their clients.
- Not deliberately mislead a client, member of the public, or a customer in any way regarding the use of aromatherapy or essential oils.
- Only use the IFPA Logo in the terms set out in the [IFPA Branding agreement](#).

### **Further Information**

[Advertising Standards](#)

[Non-broadcast Code](#)

[National Trading Standards](#)

[Trading Standards](#)

[Citizens Advice](#)

### **Working with the General Public**

The IFPA recognises that its members work in a range of modalities which may include working with the public in a range of capacities (not in a traditional client/therapist, teacher/student relationship) including retail (both essential oils and products), blogging, writing and education.

The IFPA requires all members who engage in working with the public to

### **Products & Retail**

- Ensure that all products have undergone the required testing, registration, and licensing for the country in which they are working and supplying.
- Ensure that the products they are selling are sourced from ethical suppliers and have been legally harvested.
- Ensure they hold the correct insurance and license in place for supplying to the public.
- Ensure they are not making claims about the products that contravene advertising standards.
- Ensure they are aware and observing any local licensing and selling requirements.
- Ensure the products are stored and transported safely with all the legal requirements noted and observed.

### **Publishing & Education**

- Refrain from plagiarism and/or intellectual property theft (in any form) by citing and referencing other's materials honestly and appropriately.
- Raise understanding and awareness of aromatherapy and the appropriate use of essential oils in a holistic manner.
- Advertise themselves and their profession and fellow professionals in a positive light.
- Refrain from guaranteeing a wellness outcome in their literature or conversations with clients, the public or customers.
- Make the focus of their work the positive use of aromatherapy to improve the health and welfare of their clients.

## Further Information

[Cosmetic Portal \(UK\)](#)

[Cosmetic Products Notification Portal](#)

[Cosmetics Product Notification Portal \(European\)](#) -

[Aromatherapy Trades Council](#)

## Schools, Education & Teaching

All school owners, principal tutors and external examiners must

- Comply with the terms and requirements set out in the IFPA schools manual.
- Comply with the terms and requirements set out in the IFPA accreditation agreement.
- Not deceive or mislead the general public or students in any way that would lead them to believe they are part of the IFPA and state clearly their accreditation.
- Uphold the reputation and integrity of the teaching profession. You should at all times act in a professional manner that in no way would be seen to diminish the confidence in the aromatherapy and teaching profession.
- Act honestly and with integrity at all times when working in an educational or clinic setting.
- Ensure the safety and welfare of learners and comply with any statutory provisions to support their well-being and development.
- Respect the rights of both students and colleagues.
- Be respectful of diversity and acknowledge this as an asset and not discriminate in any way.
- Comply with any information requests by the IFPA in a timely manner (this includes the disclosure of information for or held by a third party).
- Co-operate fully with any disciplinary action against you or involving the school where you provide IFPA accredited or recognised education.
- Notify the IFPA within 30 days if any of the following occur:
  - You are subject to a warning, bar (partial or full) or any other investigation/action by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in relation to misconduct in any way.
  - You are cautioned, charged, or convicted of any criminal offence.
  - You are placed under investigation by any regulatory or professional body in your own or any other country.
- Not dissuade any person from raising a concern or act in a discriminatory manner towards them if they subsequently raise a concern.
- Only use the IFPA logo as set out in the IFPA Branding Guidelines.

It is expected that all educational staff within an IFPA accredited or recognised training setting will

- Carry out suitable CPD training on an annual basis appropriate to their level of skill and the level they are teaching.
- Use and understand a range of teaching methodology and learning styles to provide an inclusive environment for all students.
- Not have any form of physical or sexual relationship with a student for a gain in any form.
- Respect the privacy of students and fellow staff.
- Avoid physical contact unless demonstrating a massage on a student and then only do this if there is consent and/or a third party is present.

## **Regional Groups**

Regional groups are set up and run by members as a way of networking with other members and holistic therapists in order to gain CPD points, provide a support network and share good practise.

- Regional groups are not in any way an office or branch of the IFPA.
- Regional groups are set up and administered by IFPA members.
- Regional groups are not approved/accredited schools or CPD providers and in no way should anyone mislead members or the general public to believe they are anything other.
- Regional groups are not businesses and should not be a profit-making organisation.
- Members should respect each other and treat each other with consideration at all times.
- The organiser/committee is required to keep financial and meeting records for the group.
- The organiser/committee is required to keep registers of attendees to the meetings.
- The organiser/committee is required to keep a record of the meeting content and the CPD points earned.
- Ensure that the collecting and storing of members' data complies with GDPR requirements.
- Provide information and contact details to the Board Member responsible for publication in the *InEssence* journal.

## **Further information**

[IFPA Regional Group Guidelines](#)