

# ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

## INTRODUCTION

“Sport Psychology” is a term used to refer to the psychological aspects of sport, physical recreation, physical education, exercise, health, and related physical activities. The International Society of Sport Psychology (ISSP) is dedicated to the development and professionalisation of the **field** of sport psychology from a global perspective. The following ethical principles are guidelines that regulate ISSP professionals in sport psychology to act responsibly and ethically in the provision of services to insure the dignity and welfare of individuals, athletes, professionals, volunteers, administrators, teams, and the general public. These ethical standards are expressed in general terms in order that they can be applied to sport psychologists engaged in varied roles. The application of the ethical standards may vary depending upon the context (i.e., country and organization). The ethical standards outlined in this statement are not exhaustive, and the fact that a conduct is not addressed by these principles does not indicate that ISSP endorses it as either ethical or unethical.

It is the individual responsibility of each sport psychologist to aspire to the highest possible standards of conduct. It is expected that each sport psychologist will act in accordance, and not violate, the values and rules described in the ethical principles, as well as the values and norms of one's culture.

Material in this ethics statement is based in large parts on previously developed guidelines by: The American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, the British Association of Sports Sciences - Sports Psychology Section Code of Conduct, and the Ethical Principles of the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology. Over 200 organisational ethics codes were examined and were influential in the preparation of this document.

## **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

### **Principle A: Competence**

ISSP members strive to maintain the highest standards of competence in their work. They recognize the boundaries of their particular techniques and methods and the limitations of their expertise. They must not misrepresent their qualifications or expertise in any way. Members must provide only those services and use only those techniques for which they are qualified by education, training, or experience. They must maintain knowledge related to the services rendered, and recognize the need for ongoing education. ISSP members should be aware of the role and function of psychological testing, and should use only those tests for which they have received appropriate training. Claims for the effectiveness of sport psychological interventions and other practices must not be exaggerated or misleading. ISSP members are cognizant of the fact that the competencies required in servicing, teaching, and/or studying individuals or groups of people vary with the distinctive characteristics of those individuals or groups. In the event of being requested to work in any way beyond their training, ISSP members should refer the request to a suitable colleague. In those areas in which recognised professionals standards do not exist, ISSP members should exercise careful judgment and take appropriate precautions to protect the welfare of those with whom they work.

### **Principle B: Consent and Confidentiality**

ISSP members should obtain informed consent of participants in research and professional practice. Potential subjects or clients should normally be informed of intended aims and procedures. When children are involved, informed consent should normally be provided by the parent or guardian. All consenting parties must be informed that participation can be terminated by them at any time and that they are free to withhold any information they wish, ISSP members must endeavour to preserve the confidentiality of information they acquire. Information should not be divulged without the prior consent of the individuals concerned. If an individual's data are being published in any way, anonymity must be preserved unless consent is given for disclosure.

**Principle C:**

**Integrity**

ISSP members seek to promote integrity in the research, teaching, and practice of sport psychology. In these activities sport psychologists are honest, fair, and respectful of others. In describing or reporting their qualifications, services, products, fees, research, or teaching, they do not consciously make statements that are fake, misleading, or deceptive. To the extent that it is feasible, they should attempt to clarify the roles that they can assume as well as the obligations they accept. Sport psychologists avoid improper and potentially harmful dual relationships and conflicts of interest.

**Principle D:**

**Personal Conduct**

ISSP members shall conduct themselves in a manner beneficial to the well-being of their clients and in a way that brings credit to the field of sport psychology. Sport psychologists should not:

1. Exploit relationships with clients for personal gain through the media or publicity;
2. Exploit relationships with clients for personal gratification;
3. Jeopardize the safety and well-being of clients;
4. Practice or work when they are unfit to operate effectively;
5. Allow their practices or judgments to be influenced by considerations of religion, sex, race, age, nationality, politics, social standing, class, or other extraneous factors.

**Principle E:**

**Professional and Scientific Responsibility**

ISSP members are responsible for safeguarding the public and the ISSP from members who are deficient in ethical conduct. They must uphold professional standards of conduct and accept appropriate responsibility for their behaviour. ISSP members should consult with, refer to, and cooperate with other professionals and institutions to the extent needed to serve the best interests of the recipients of their services. The moral conduct and standards of the ISSP

members are personal matters to the same degree as is true for any other person, except as their conduct may compromise their professional responsibilities or reduce the public's trust in the profession or the organisation. ISSP members are concerned about the ethical compliance of their colleagues' scientific and professional conduct.

**Principle F:                      Research Ethics**

Sport psychology researchers should uphold the highest standards of inquiry when conducting research. Investigators should declare their names, status and affiliation to all subjects. Reasonable care should be taken, seeking expert advice as necessary when investigations require deception, stress, or invasion of privacy. In sport psychological research, the welfare of the subject must be paramount at all times. In the interest of the advancement of knowledge in sport, investigators should not seek to restrict the dissemination of research findings. Also, they should avoid drawing unjustified conclusions.

**Principle G:                      Social Responsibility**

ISSP members should be aware of their professional and scientific responsibilities to the community and the society in which they work and live. They should apply and make public their knowledge in sport psychology in order to contribute to human welfare. ISSP members are sensitive to real and ascribed differences in power between themselves and others, and they do not exploit or mislead other people during or after professional relationships. They comply with the law and encourage the development of social policy that serves the interests of the general public.