

# **The ethical container: Different dimensions informing ethical action**

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## **Abstract**

This paper considers various threads woven into the fabric of an ethics of psychoanalytic psychotherapy. A call is made for a mature ethic, residing and held within the person of the psychotherapist, within the wider network of reflective openings afforded through supervision and other forms of inquiry. From this mature ethical position, various realities are poised in a balancing act: that of the psychotherapist's clinical objectives and the nature of the analytic container created to encourage these objectives, as it exists within a particular legal-socio-historical context, which is informed by idioms of the practice of psychoanalytic psychotherapy. The psychotherapist sustains an ethic that is particular to the needs of the individual patient through maintaining a flexible membrane that frames the therapy space from the wider context, yet realistically considers the nature of external reality. The whole is considered in the specific. Particular reference is made to the application of this mature ethical position to the principles of confidentiality and self-determination, particularly considering the patient's threat to harm his or her own person.