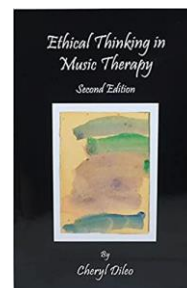


## BOOK REVIEW

# Ethical thinking in music therapy (2nd ed., Dileo)

Reviewed by Anastasia Canfield

Creative Remedies LLC, USA



**Title:** Ethical thinking in music therapy (2nd ed.) **Author:** Cheryl Dileo **Publication year:** 2021  
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### REVIEWER BIOGRAPHY

**Anastasia Canfield** is a board-certified music therapist, mental health counsellor, and play therapist in Colorado. She owns and operates Creative Remedies, which serves people across the age spectrum who are Neurodivergent and/or have experienced trauma. Anastasia has taught Continuing Music Therapy Education courses on the topic of cultural competence and ethics, combating impostor syndrome, and the neurobiology and neurochemistry of music processing. Ethics is a research interest area as well as a primary focus of her private practice's music therapy internship program. She is a performer and educator in addition to her work as a therapist and business owner. [[anastasia.mtbc@gmail.com](mailto:anastasia.mtbc@gmail.com)]

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*Ethical Thinking in Music Therapy*, second edition, by Cheryl Dileo is a thorough text spanning over 550 pages from cover to cover. It is expanded from the first edition, which was a little over 300 pages and originally published in 2000. The second edition has been updated to reflect ethical concerns and dilemmas that are relevant in its publication year of 2021. It is an essential text for any music therapist, music therapy educator, or music therapy student to have readily accessible when an ethical concern arises.

The book is geared toward music therapy professionals, students, and educators, particularly those in the U.S. It may be relevant for other helping professionals or musicians in healthcare to further understand the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) Scope of Practice (Certification Board for Music Therapists [CBMT], 2010), Standards of Practice (AMTA, 2013a), and Code of Ethics (AMTA, 2013b) of music therapy, but it is not intended for these audiences. It may also serve as an advocacy and education tool for music therapy professionals, students, and educators; an ethical code is a major aspect of what sets apart a qualified music therapist from those who have not completed such a training. However, it is important to note that this book does not necessarily aim to speak to ethical issues beyond the U.S., since it works from the AMTA documents mentioned above and discusses these from the cultural and societal perspectives and issues prevalent in the U.S.

*Ethical Thinking in Music Therapy* begins with an explanation of general ethical approaches, comparisons of ethical codes across several different helping professions, and what it means to be a "virtuous music therapist" (Dileo, 2021, p. 47). After this, the author discusses the ethics of multiculturalism in music therapy. Multiculturalism is an important topic that many music therapists

would benefit from further guidance in navigating, as our field remains overwhelmingly white, cisgendered, heterosexual, colonial and non-disabled. This text serves as a guide for the dominant culture to begin to gain awareness of the oppressive stance the field has taken for many years. Dileo also explores ethical considerations for the individual music therapist in many contexts including workplaces such as hospitals, private practices, and agencies. Some relevant laws, policies, and ethical codes are referenced throughout. The ethics of research, education and supervision, financial practices, confidentiality and its limits, telehealth, and online presence are examined too. Throughout each section of the book, the author is careful to explain that some of these issues do not have clear music therapy ethical codes to cite so she references codes from other similar fields such as psychology, counselling, and medicine. This is important because some ethical dilemmas music therapists face are not clearly represented in the AMTA (2013) Code of Ethics and CBMT (2010) Standards of Practice and Competencies. Dileo goes above and beyond what has previously been published about music therapy ethics and offers useful critical thinking exercises such as mock-ethical dilemma scenarios, further learning opportunities, and written as well as online resources to access. The ethical dilemma scenarios are relevant and timely; her exploration of ethical issues in online presence span advertising, telehealth, and other business ventures, and she emphasizes throughout the book the importance of cultural competence in all facets of music therapy.

There are numerous strengths I can identify in *Ethical Thinking in Music Therapy* as a music therapist, music therapy business owner, and music therapy internship supervisor. The content is in-depth and thorough as well as realistic and timely for the 21st century music therapy profession. The author emphasises frequent consultation (the sharing of experience or advice between two professionals in an informal setting), supervision, meetings with attorneys where necessary, and familiarity with U.S. state and federal law. These deepen public trust in music therapy practice and bring validity to the music therapy profession. This may be applicable to other countries or nations to some extent, but it is not intended to speak from international perspectives. Dileo is clear and realistic about the potential risks of unethical behaviour, even if it is encouraged by an employer or agency. She also discusses the ethical implications that burnout and compassion fatigue may induce. This is an important discussion that I believe is not addressed enough due to the U.S. cultural standards of occupational productivity, which stems from the expectation of a 40(+) hour work week. It is difficult, verging on impossible, to quantify this from a social capital perspective, and can lead to therapists' desperation and reliance on insurance reimbursement, grants, or other funding sources to have some level of financial stability. This does not reflect the emotional investment and toll on the clinician. Logistically, music therapy is difficult work to quantify since there is often significant preparation required to provide creative, unique, and evidence-based interventions. In other words, to be an ethical, virtuous, and evidence-based music therapist, the unpaid workload can be immense. It can diminish work-life separation and opportunities for the therapist to engage in their own self-care – something that is necessary for the intense work of holding space for others.

Despite these positives there are some areas of the book that deserve critical engagement. The major drawbacks that were, at times, distracting while reading this book were the numerous typing errors throughout. The content is rich and important, but the typing errors took some focus away from that. Also, while the book clearly states that the ethical considerations are from a music therapy perspective, perhaps more explanations about music therapy practice were needed should the text be

utilised by other professions. This leads me to believe that this would not be a text that could be collaboratively consumed across a treatment team, for example.

I wondered as I was reading if I would come across ethical considerations for situations in which music therapy is misrepresented or how to confront individuals claiming to provide music therapy who are not trained to do so. Addressing media misrepresentations of music therapy was briefly discussed, but further recommendations or considerations were not, particularly on a micro level such as with an individual or with an agency. In addition, although burnout was referenced as an ethical issue, I felt there could be further discussion about unethical practices that are influenced by or adjacent to burnout as well as a responsibility of the field to make the profession more viable (e.g. benefits, insurance reimbursement, licensure, and pay rate), which is an important aspect in preventing burnout. Lastly, the author suggests the completion of an ethical decision tree as a guide to making thorough and ethical decisions where dilemmas arise; I felt more guidance was needed on this important task. AMTA offers an ethical decision tree but I wondered if a consideration of those from other helping professions might be of use. The ethical decision tree used may depend on the specific ethical dilemma, the identities of those involved (e.g. a feminist ethical decision-making model, a multicultural decision-making model, etc.). It would also be useful to see recommendations of how to use the decision tree effectively in everyday professional contexts.

In conclusion, I highly recommend this book for U.S.-based music therapists, particularly those who identify with the dominant culture. It sheds light on current and relevant issues that have arisen in several contexts in the U.S. such as concerns about safe spaces, cultural competence, and the increased prevalence of telehealth. There may be some information that music therapists in other countries can glean from this book as well, but I do not feel it is primarily intended for those audiences as there are nuances and cultural differences which may make it inapplicable or contraindicated.

## REFERENCES

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