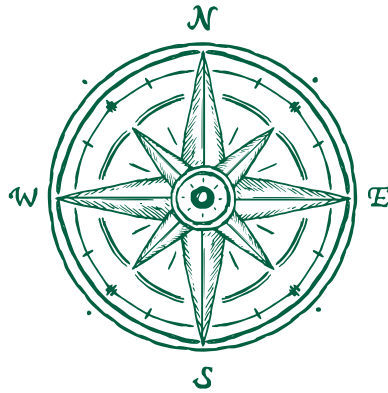


THE CODE OF ETHICS OF ITALIAN PSYCHOLOGISTS



ORDINE
DEGLI PSICOLOGI
DELLA LOMBARDIA



Psychologists consider **their duty to increase knowledge** about human behavior and to use it to **promote the psychological well-being** of the individual, the group, and the community

INDEX

Introduction	5
Chapter I (Articles 1–21): General Principles of Professional Ethics	6
Chapter II (Articles 22–32): Relations of the Psychologist with Users and Clients	13
Chapter III (Articles 33–38): Relations with Colleagues	16
Chapter IV (Articles 39–40): Relations with Society	18
Chapter V (Articles 41–42): Code Implementation Regulations	19

INTRODUCTION

The Code of Ethics is not just a set of rules: **it is the ethical soul of our profession.** It is what binds us together as a community of psychologists, beyond differences of orientation, field, or generation. Within these pages are not only duties to follow, but values to uphold: **respect for the individual, responsible listening, care for relationships, and protection of the most vulnerable.**

To reprint and share the Code today is to reaffirm that, across all contexts and transformations, there is a shared **compass** to guide our actions. **Bringing it to life through everyday practice, complex decisions, and new scenarios—including digital ones—is the task entrusted to each of us.**

President
Valentina Di Mattei



CHAPTER I: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Article 1

The rules of this Code of Ethics are binding for all members of the Register of psychologists. All registered members are required to know them, and ignorance of these rules does not exempt from disciplinary responsibility. The same rules also apply in cases where services, or parts of them, are provided remotely, via the Internet, or through any other electronic and/or telematic means.

Article 2

Failure to comply with the provisions established in this Code of Ethics, as well as any action or omission that is in any way contrary to the decorum, dignity, and proper exercise of the profession, shall be sanctioned in accordance with Article 26, paragraph 1, of Law No. 56 of February 18, 1989, according to the procedures established by the Disciplinary Regulation.

Article 3

The psychologist considers his/her duty to increase knowledge about human behavior and to use it to promote the psychological well-being of the individual, the group, and the community. In every professional setting, the psychologist works to improve people's ability to understand themselves and others, and to behave in a conscious, appropriate, and effective manner. The psychologist is aware of the social responsibility that derives from the fact that, in the exercise of their profession, they may significantly affect the lives of others; therefore, they must pay particular attention to personal, social, organizational, financial, and political factors, in order to avoid inappropriate use of their influence, and must not make improper use of the trust placed in them or of any situations of dependency on the part of clients and users who are the recipients of their profes-

sional services. The psychologist is responsible for their professional acts and for their foreseeable direct consequences.

Article 4

In the exercise of their profession, psychologists respect the dignity, the right to privacy, to self-determination and to autonomy of those who make use of their services; they respect the opinions and beliefs of others, refraining from imposing their own system of values; they do not engage in discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, nationality, social background, socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. The psychologist uses methods and techniques that safeguard these principles and refuses to collaborate in initiatives that violate them. When conflicts of interest arise between the user and the institution in which the psychologist operates, the latter must clearly explain to all parties the terms of their responsibilities and the constraints to which they are professionally bound. In all cases in which the recipient and the client of a support or psychotherapeutic intervention are not the same, the psychologist gives priority to protecting the recipient of the intervention.

Article 5

The psychologist is required to maintain an adequate level of professional preparation and continuing education, with particular attention to the fields in which they practice. Violation of the obligation of continuing education constitutes a disciplinary offense that is sanctioned in accordance with the provisions of the professional regulations. The psychologist acknowledges the limits of their own competence and therefore uses only theoretical and practical tools for which they have acquired sufficient expertise and, where required, formal authorization. The psychologist employs methodologies for which they can indicate the sources and scientific references and does not create unfounded expectations in the client and/or user.

Article 6

The psychologist accepts only working conditions that do not compromise their professional autonomy and compliance with the provisions of this Code, and, in the absence of such conditions, informs their professional Order. The psychologist safeguards their autonomy in the selection of psychological methods, techniques, and instruments, as well as in their use; they are therefore responsible for their application and usage, for the results, and for the evaluations and interpretations derived from them. In collaborating with professionals from other disciplines, the psychologist maintains full professional autonomy while respecting the competencies of others.

Article 7

In their professional activities, in research activities, and in the communication of the results thereof, as well as in teaching activities, the psychologist carefully evaluates—also in relation to the context—the degree of validity and reliability of the information, data, and sources on which the conclusions are based; when appropriate, they present alternative interpretative hypotheses and clarify the limitations of the results. As regards specific cases, the psychologist, expresses evaluations and professional judgments only if they are based on direct professional knowledge or on adequate and reliable documentation.

Article 8

The psychologist opposes the unauthorized practice of the profession as defined by Articles 1 and 3 of Law No. 56 of February 18, 1989, and reports to the Council of the Order any cases of unauthorized practice or title misappropriation of which they become aware. Likewise, the psychologist uses their professional title solely for activities to which it pertains and does not endorse deceptive or abusive activities with it.

Article 9

In their research activity, the psychologist is required to adequately inform the individuals involved to obtain their prior informed consent, including information regarding the name, scientific and professional status of the researcher, and any affiliated institution. The psychologist must also guarantee to such individuals the full freedom to grant, refuse, or withdraw consent. In cases where the nature of the research does not allow the subjects to be fully and correctly informed in advance about certain aspects of the research itself, the psychologist is nonetheless obligated to provide the necessary information at the conclusion of the experiment or data collection, and to obtain authorization for the use of the data collected. With regard to individuals who, due to age or other reasons, are not capable of giving valid consent, this must be provided by those holding parental authority or legal guardianship, and also by the individuals themselves, if they are capable of understanding the nature of the requested participation. In all cases, the right of the individuals to privacy, non-identifiability, and anonymity must be protected.

Article 10

When professional activities involve animal behavior, the psychologist commits to respecting the animals' nature and to preventing them from experiencing suffering.

Article 11

The psychologist is strictly bound by professional confidentiality. Therefore, they do not disclose any information, facts, or knowledge acquired by virtue of their professional relationship, nor do they reveal details regarding professional services carried out or planned, unless the circumstances outlined in the following articles apply.

Article 12

The psychologist refrains from giving testimony about facts of which they have become aware by virtue of their professional relationship. The psychologist may depart from the obligation to maintain professional confidentiality, including in the case of testimony, exclusively when there is valid and demonstrable consent from the recipient of the service. In any case, they assess the appropriateness of making use of such consent, giving primary consideration to the psychological protection of the individual concerned.

Article 13

In cases of mandatory reporting or legal obligation to file a complaint, the psychologist limits disclosure of what was learned through the professional relationship to what is strictly necessary, to safeguard the psychological well-being of the individual. In all other cases, the psychologist carefully assesses whether it is necessary to fully or partially waive their duty of confidentiality, should serious threats to the life or psychophysical health of the individual and/or third parties arise.

Article 14

In cases where the psychologist intervenes with or through groups, they are required to provide, at the initial stage, information regarding the rules that govern such intervention. They are also required, when necessary, to ensure that group members commit to respecting each individual's right to privacy.

Article 15

In cases of collaboration with other individuals who are likewise bound by professional confidentiality, the psychologist may share only the information that is strictly necessary in relation to the nature of the collaboration.

Article 16

Even when addressing professionals bound by professional confidentiality, the psychologist's scientific communications safeguard, in all cases, the anonymity of service recipients.

Article 17

The confidentiality of communications must also be protected through the safekeeping and control of notes, records, writings, or recordings of any kind and in any form that concern the professional relationship. Such documentation must be retained for at least five years following the conclusion of the professional relationship, unless otherwise provided by specific regulations. The psychologist must ensure that, in the event of their death or incapacity, such protection is entrusted to a colleague or to the professional Order. The psychologist who participates in the creation and use of documentation systems works to ensure that appropriate safeguards are implemented for the protection of the individuals concerned.

Article 18

In every professional context, the psychologist must strive to ensure that the client and/or patient's freedom to choose the professional to whom they wish to turn is respected as much as possible.

Article 19

The psychologist who carries out professional work in selection and evaluation contexts is required to respect exclusively the criteria of specific competence, qualification, or preparation, and does not endorse decisions that are contrary to these principles.

Article 20

In their teaching, educational, and training activities, the psychologist fosters in students, trainees, and interns an interest in ethical principles, also by modeling their own professional conduct on those principles.

Article 21

Teaching the use of tools and techniques for assessment and intervention that are reserved to the profession of psychologist to individuals who are not members of the profession constitutes a serious ethical violation. It is considered an aggravating circumstance to endorse, through one's professional activity, deceptive or abusive practices by contributing to the conferral of qualifications or certificates, or by leading others to believe they are authorized to carry out activities that are characteristic of the psychologist's role. Specific to the profession of psychologist are all tools and techniques for assessment and intervention related to psychic processes (relational, emotional, cognitive, behavioral) that are based on the application of psychological principles, knowledge, models, or constructs. This does not preclude the teaching of such tools and techniques to students enrolled in university psychology programs and to interns. The teaching of psychological knowledge is likewise not precluded.



THE PSYCHOLOGISTS...
*respect the **dignity**, the
right to **privacy**, to self-
determination and to
autonomy of those
who make use of their
services*

CHAPTER II: RELATIONS WITH USERS AND CLIENTS

Article 22

The psychologist behaves in ways that do not cause harm to the individuals they work with professionally and does not use their role or professional tools to obtain improper benefits for themselves or others.

Article 23

The psychologist agrees on the professional fee during the initial phase of the relationship. In any case, the amount of the fee must be proportionate to the significance of the work. In clinical settings, such compensation may not be made conditional on the outcome or results of the professional intervention.

Article 24

At the initial stage of the professional relationship, the psychologist provides the individual, group, institution, or community, whether users or clients, with adequate and understandable information regarding their services, the purposes and methods of those services, as well as the extent and legal limitations of confidentiality. Accordingly, they act in such a way that those entitled to do so may give informed consent. If the professional service is to be provided on an ongoing basis, its expected duration should be specified where possible.

Article 25

The psychologist refrains from improper use of diagnostic and assessment tools. When performing services on behalf of third parties, they inform the individuals concerned about the nature of the intervention and do not disclose any information that could be harmful to them, except within the scope of the authorized mandate. When communicating the results of diagnostic or evaluative activities, the

psychologist ensures that such communication considers the psychological well-being of those involved.

Article 26

The psychologist refrains from initiating or continuing any professional activity when their own personal problems or conflicts interfere with the effectiveness of their services, rendering them inadequate or harmful to the individuals receiving them. Furthermore, the psychologist avoids taking on professional roles or carrying out interventions with clients, even at the request of the Judicial Authority, if the nature of any prior relationships may compromise their credibility and effectiveness.

Article 27

The psychologist evaluates and, where appropriate, proposes the termination of the therapeutic relationship when it becomes evident that the patient is deriving no benefit from the treatment and it is not reasonably foreseeable that they will benefit from its continuation. If requested, the psychologist provides the patient with the necessary information to seek other, more suitable interventions.

Article 28

The psychologist avoids any overlap between their professional role and private life that could interfere with their professional activity or otherwise damage the public image of the profession. A serious ethical violation is committed when the psychologist conducts diagnostic, psychological support, or psychotherapeutic interventions with individuals with whom they have had or currently have significant personal relationships, particularly of an emotional, romantic, and/or sexual nature. Likewise, it constitutes a serious ethical violation to establish such relationships during the course of the professional relationship. The psychologist is prohibited from engaging in any activity which, by

virtue of the professional relationship, may result in undue direct or indirect personal gain, whether financial or otherwise, excluding the agreed-upon compensation. The psychologist does not exploit their professional position with respect to colleagues under their supervision or trainees for purposes unrelated to the professional relationship.

Article 29

The psychologist may make their intervention conditional on the patient's use of specific facilities, institutions, or places of care only for well-founded scientific or professional reasons.

Article 30

In the exercise of their profession, the psychologist is prohibited from accepting any form of compensation that does not represent payment for professional services rendered.

Article 31

Professional services provided to minors or individuals under legal guardianship are generally subject to the consent of those who hold parental authority or legal responsibility over them. If the psychologist, in the absence of such consent, considers the professional intervention necessary and its strict confidentiality essential, they are required to inform the Guardianship Authority of the establishment of the professional relationship. This does not apply in cases where such services are provided by order of a legally competent authority or within institutions legally designated for this purpose.

Article 32

When the psychologist agrees to provide a professional service at the request of a client other than the recipient of the service, they are required to clarify with all parties involved the nature and purpose of the intervention.

CHAPTER III: RELATIONS WITH COLLEAGUES

Article 33

Relationships among psychologists must be guided by principles of mutual respect, integrity, and collegiality. The psychologist supports colleagues who, in the course of their work, regardless of the nature of their employment or hierarchical position, find their professional autonomy or adherence to ethical standards at risk.

Article 34

The psychologist is committed to contributing to the advancement of psychological disciplines and to sharing progress in their knowledge and techniques with the professional community, also for the purpose of supporting their dissemination in service of human and social well-being.

Article 35

When presenting the results of their research, the psychologist is required to acknowledge the sources of others' contributions.

Article 36

The psychologist refrains from publicly expressing negative judgments about colleagues concerning their training, competence, the outcomes of their professional interventions, or any statements that may harm their dignity or professional reputation. It is considered an aggravating factor if such negative judgments are made with the intent of attracting the colleagues' clients. If the psychologist becomes aware of cases of improper professional conduct that could result in harm to clients or damage the dignity of the profession, they are required to promptly report the matter to the relevant Professional Council.

Article 37

The psychologist accepts a professional assignment only within the limits of their own areas of expertise. If the interests of the client and/or the recipient of the service require additional specific expertise, the psychologist recommends a consultation or refers the individual to another colleague or professional.

Article 38

In the exercise of their professional activity, and in all circumstances where they publicly represent the profession in any capacity, the psychologist is required to act in accordance with the principles of decorum and professional dignity.

THE PSYCHOLOGIST...
respects colleagues and
helps foster a thriving
professional
community.

CHAPTER IV: RELATIONS WITH SOCIETY


Article 39

The psychologist describes their training, experience, and competence accurately and appropriately. They consider it their duty to help the public and users develop informed and autonomous judgments, opinions, and choices.

Article 40

Regardless of the limits set by current legislation on advertising, the psychologist does not engage in improper public behavior to solicit clients. However, informational advertising may be carried out regarding professional titles and specializations, the characteristics of the services offered, as well as the prices and overall costs of the services, in accordance with principles of transparency and truthfulness. Compliance with these principles is verified by the appropriate Professional Councils. The message must be formulated with respect for professional decorum, in accordance with standards of scientific seriousness and in a manner that protects the image of the profession. Failure to ensure transparency and accuracy in advertising constitutes a breach of professional ethics.

THE PSYCHOLOGIST...
*engages in **informational,**
non-persuasive
advertising and
self-promotion.*



CHAPTER V: CODE IMPLEMENTATION REGULATIONS

Article 41

A 'Permanent Observatory on the Code of Ethics' is established within the Commission on Professional Ethics of the Order of Psychologists. It is regulated by a specific resolution of the National Council of the Order and is tasked with collecting case law on conduct matters from the regional and provincial Councils of the Order, as well as any other material useful for enabling the Commission to submit proposals to the National Council of the Order, including for the periodic revision of the Code of Ethics. Such revision shall be carried out in accordance with the procedures set forth by Law No. 56 of February 18, 1989.

Article 42

This Code of Ethics shall enter into force on the thirtieth day following the official proclamation of the results of the approval referendum, in accordance with Article 28, paragraph 6, letter c) of Law No. 56 of February 18, 1989.





ORDINE
DEGLI PSICOLOGI
DELLA LOMBARDIA

corso Buenos Aires, 75 - 20124 MILANO

tel: +39 02 2222 6551

PEO: segreteria@opl.it | PEC: segreteria@pec.opl.it

www.opl.it

