

The Ethical Foundations Guide

How to structure your course content so the education/therapy line stays clear for you and your students.

WHAT YOU'LL DISCOVER INSIDE:

- ✓ The legal & ethical distinction that matters most
- ✓ Disclaimer language you can use immediately
- ✓ What to do when a student discloses a crisis
- ✓ A scope-of-content checklist for every module

Ethics as a Foundation, Not a Barrier

Ethical paralysis is the most common reason therapists never launch.

You spent years learning to hold ethical boundaries in a clinical room. Now you're building something that reaches hundreds of people you'll never meet, can't assess, and can't follow up with. Of course that triggers caution.

This guide won't replace consultation with your regulatory body. It will give you a working framework for creating course content that is genuinely educational – and for handling the edge cases that make most therapists freeze.

- Understand the psychoeducation vs. therapy distinction in practical terms
- Write disclaimers that protect you and set honest expectations for students
- Know what to do when a student discloses a mental health crisis in a course context
- Use a module-level scope checklist before you record anything

Read this guide once before you outline your course. Return to Section 3 (the checklist) before you record each module. Ethics work is ongoing, not a one-time setup.

Course is education, not therapy. Giving yourself permission to put on your educator hat is one of the most freeing things you can do

— Therapist Growth Partner

Drawing the Scope Line

1 What is the scope of your course content?

Scope clarity protects you legally and makes your course better for students.

THE SCOPE STATEMENT :

This course teaches [skills/knowledge] to [general audience].
It does not assess, diagnose, or treat any clinical condition.
Participants experiencing [relevant concern] are encouraged to seek professional support.
Completing this course does not establish a therapist-client relationship.

YOUR ANSWER:

Write your course scope statement using the template above:

SCOPE STATEMENTS FROM REAL THERAPIST COURSES:

"This course teaches nervous system regulation skills for everyday stress not PTSD treatment."
"This course covers boundary-setting skills in work settings. It does not treat anxiety disorders."
"Participants experiencing clinical depression should consult a licensed provider."

Your scope statement should live on your sales page, course welcome module, and in your welcome email. Say it three ways in three places.

Crisis Protocol

2

What will you do when a student discloses a crisis?

You cannot provide clinical support in a course context - but you can prepare a clear, humane response.

THE COURSE CRISIS PROTOCOL:

1. Include crisis resources in your course welcome materials (crisis lines, how to find a therapist).
2. In your terms/enrollment agreement: 'This course is not a substitute for clinical care.'
3. If a student discloses a crisis in a forum/email: respond with empathy + direct to professional support.
4. Do NOT attempt to provide clinical support, even if you are licensed to do so in your state.
5. Document all disclosures and your responses, regardless of the outcome.

YOUR ANSWER:

Write the crisis resource paragraph you'll include in your course welcome module:

CRISIS RESOURCES TO INCLUDE IN YOUR COURSE:

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (call or text 988 in the US)

Psychology Today therapist finder: [psychologytoday.com/us/therapists](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists)

Crisis Text Line: text HOME to 741741

You cannot prevent every crisis. You can prepare a response that is compassionate, boundaried, and professionally sound. That's the standard.

Your Ethics Foundation: In Place

YOUR STATEMENT - complete and write it here:

"My course scope is: [scope statement]. My disclaimer is on [sales page / welcome module / enrollment agreement]. My crisis protocol

What Happens Next

1 Add your scope statement to your sales page

Do it today. It takes 10 minutes and signals professional seriousness to potential students.

2 Record a 2-minute welcome video on scope

The first thing students should hear is who this course is for and who it's not for. This builds trust and reduces refund requests.

3 Prepare crisis resources before cart opens

Include local + national resources. Update them annually. Your students' wellbeing matters even in an educational context.

4 Consult your regulatory body once before launch

Not to get permission - to make sure your specific content is clearly educational given your license type and state.

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