

INTEGRATING SUSTAINABILITY IN COACHING, MENTORING AND SUPERVISION PRACTICES THROUGH ETHICS AND INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

WHITE PAPER

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Foreword

Ethics is a concept often shrouded in mystery, but it is fundamental to all we do and the choices we make as practitioners. Ethical practice gives us a moral framework and reminds us of our responsibilities, both to the client, but also to wider society, humankind and other life on earth. We know as a species we are at a precipice, with deep rooted and interconnected challenges, affecting climate, but also poverty related, health and racial inequalities. In the face of all these challenges, we know the best of humanity can engender active hope.

Our members tell us they want more reflective resources to help them consider what they might do differently and to support them to take a more systemic view. The balance between client autonomy and bringing the subject into client conversation, without imposing it, remains a live one. The standalone Appendix to the White Paper provides a selection of case studies to help put things into context and some additional resources.

The recently updated Global Code of Ethics, co-developed and fully supported by EMCC Global, gives us a useful frame to now, as the Centre for Excellence on Climate Action and Sustainability, offer this White Paper as a tool for our membership and beyond to specifically focus on sustainability. We will cover both practice and considerations in organisations or as small business owners. We also complement the White Paper with case studies, bringing to life the stories of individuals who have made very different choices based on their view of their ethical responsibilities, and additional resources for those who wish to take more practical steps to live and run their practice more sustainably.

We know that this is a complex issue and we offer this guide as a 'provocation', to inspire reflection and questioning. As always, our approach is to present possible tools and resources, not to dictate what is right. You may not agree with some of the philosophies suggested and that is perfectly ok.

We hope you find the two publications insightful and helpful. I would like to thank the members of the project group of the CfE, Myriam Ines Giangiacomo, Eve Turner and, in particular, the Project Lead, Rafal Budzinski.

Rita Symons – Lead, EMCC Global Centre for Excellence for Climate Action & Sustainability (2021-2026)

"Leadership today requires more than performance and results. It calls for reflection, courage, self-awareness and responsibility for the wider impact of our actions. As practitioners, we have a unique opportunity to support individuals and organisations in leading with greater humanity, systemic awareness, and care for the inter-connected world around us. I encourage practitioners to read this guide with curiosity and reflection."

Araceli Canedo Bebbington – EMCC Global Vice President Thought Leadership

"This paper is truly eye-opening. It places climate and sustainability at the heart of our profession, building bridges between ethics of duty of care and our aspiration to create meaningful impact. It is a powerful educational resource that equips coaches and leaders to hold reflective spaces and move from awareness to climate action. I hope all practitioners will read it and use it to transform both their work and their lives towards greater sustainability and balance."

Dorota Raniszewska – Lead, EMCC Global Centre for Excellence for Ethics

Preface

EMCC Global takes a broad and holistic view of sustainability, recognising that the impact of human behaviour on climate is interlinked with other aspects of social justice and global inequality. Our belief is that social, economic and climate factors cannot be seen as individual issues, but as deeply inter-connected, requiring systemic, not linear solutions. To some extent the way we have organised society, valuing profit over wellbeing of the planet has led to our current situation.

We also support the UN Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2026), and are committed to playing our part in achieving them.

In this spirit, the Centre for Excellence (CfE) for Climate Action and Sustainability was established in 2021 with the aim of:

- Shifting the message on climate action from one of crisis and loss to one of active hope and a more fulfilled way of living and being.
- Raising awareness of the inter-connectedness of global challenges, seeking opportunities for synergy in how we address them.
- Continuing to provide support and resources to our members, systematising our communication with them.
- Working with others to embed an eco-centric, inclusive approach into our work, including in accreditation.

Therefore, this White Paper, with its standalone Appendix, fits with our stated purpose and objectives.

Alongside several other coaching, mentoring and supervision professional bodies, EMCC Global is a founding member of the Sustainability Coaching Coalition (SCC) with its clear perspectives on climate change and sustainability, and we value and celebrate the cross organisation partnership this creates. As EMCC Global members, we follow the SCC statement as set out on p.6 of the latest Global Code of Ethics, Acting responsibly (also see below p14):

"Members abide by their respective bodies' statements and policies on inclusion, diversity, social responsibility and climate change."

Indeed, arguably, ignoring sustainability violates our professional duty of care (Carroll & Shaw, 2013). One could then suggest that coaches and mentors who avoid sustainability topics in their practice are not maintaining neutrality, they are failing to serve clients' best interests in the actual world.

In offering this White Paper, we encourage coaches, mentors and supervisors, but also trainers and training providers, later referred to as 'practicing members' or 'members', to consider their role.

To help the reader navigate through the two publications, we have created the following map. We would ideally like members to engage with all the content, however, we also recognise we all come to this with different needs and priorities.



Introduction

Ethical practice is at the core of how we work, and how we show up. It is our foundation, infusing everything we do. And our actions matter.

This is reflected in the Introduction and Purpose and Executive Summary of the latest Global Code of Ethics (the Code), which was updated in February 2026, which says that it “helps us navigate the world now and in the future. This will include providing support in a changing world” citing instances from AI to racism to the climate and biodiversity crisis.

The UN Secretary-General António Guterres warns that “The ...Global Climate is in a state of emergency. Planet Earth is being pushed beyond its limits. Every key climate indicator is flashing red (World Meteorological Organization, 2026),” He has called on us all to step up our action for our planet, and in our interconnected world the link between climate change, and for example, poverty and health outcomes, has long been understood (World Bank, 2025).

As practicing members we do not sit separately from what is happening around us. So to work ethically, we need to consider not only how we show up, but also our role in the society each of us lives in. This brings us to consider all that we believe, and hold about ourselves, others and the world, to think about our own moral principles, core beliefs and ethics.

Cavanagh and Turner (2023, p351) argue that we “cannot and do not sit separate from these concerns. We...live in a world in which all systems - social, economic and environmental are so intimately connected that our action as coaches contributes to this environmental degradation” so we need to shift the paradigms we bring to our work, questioning whether they reflect the “complex interdependence that makes up our world.”

Integral ecology emerges from *Laudato si'* (Pope Francis, 2015), the encyclical that called for a rethinking of our relationship with the natural world. Far from being a purely theological concept, integral ecology offers a systemic framework that has found resonance across disciplines, from environmental philosophy to organisational development.

At its core, it holds that ecological, social, economic, and cultural dimensions are not separate domains but deeply interwoven realities: to address one is inevitably to touch the others. This interdependence is not only metaphorical, but it is the actual condition in which human life, and therefore human development, unfolds. For our professional practice, this has direct implications. Integral ecology invites practitioners to move beyond a purely interpersonal frame and recognise that clients are always embedded in living systems, such as communities, organisations, territories and ecosystems that shape and are shaped by their choices.

Development, from this perspective, is never only personal. Every shift in awareness, every decision, every leadership behaviour ripples outward into the wider web of life.

Integral ecology asks us as practicing members to hold a more complete picture of what it means to support human flourishing in an interconnected world.

Ethics provide the moral compass guiding how we live and practice; integral ecology expands that compass beyond human relationships to the wider web of life. The Code describes ethics as "the glue" shaping our values and decisions in relationship with others. Integral ecology deepens this by extending these relationships to "wider society" and "the natural environment", both explicitly named in the Code, thus broadening ethical scope rather than replacing it.

The Code's five Values and its section on Acting Responsibly embody this integration. By committing members to policies on climate change and development in response to "societal or environmental needs," the Code shifts from interpersonal to systemic ethics (Senge, 1990). Ethics supplies the normative framework, i.e. what is right and responsible, while integral ecology widens concern to future generations, ecosystems, and global interdependence. The Code operationalises this: practicing members must answer not only for personal integrity but for broader ecological and social impact. Ethics becomes ecological; ecology becomes ethical.

This White Paper guides members through a value-by-value analysis, offering both the explicit obligations and the deeper invitations, supported by practical reflective questions for implementation.

Part 1: Establishing the Foundation

1.1 The changed world we coach in

The Code opens with a crucial observation about the contemporary context for our professional practice. The Executive Summary explicitly acknowledges that professionals must navigate:

"...a world where the 'other-than-human' world faces major challenges in the current climate and biodiversity crisis, from wildfires, to floods, drought, crop failure and famine. A world where racism is still prevalent and impacting ours' and others' experiences."

This is not peripheral context or background information. The Code presents these realities, i.e. climate crisis, biodiversity collapse, systemic inequality as fundamental conditions that shape our professional practice. We cannot as a profession continue to be passive if clients or practitioners operate in a way that damages the living system.

From an integral ecology perspective, this framing reveals a profound truth: we never work "only" with individuals, but with people embedded in living, fragile, and interdependent systems. The traditional separation between personal development and environmental context is not merely incomplete, it is fundamentally inaccurate. Integral ecology calls us to recognise the interdependence between personal, organisational, social, and environmental dimensions. This means moving beyond viewing our professional practice as neutral or isolated, and acknowledging that every developmental process has an impact on the world, whether direct or indirect.

1.2 The dual lens: ethical obligations and ecological maturity

The Code and integral ecology bring two distinctive perspectives on integrating sustainability consideration in our professional practice:

The standard-based perspective

Sustainability is an explicit, non-negotiable requirement of the Code. Section 3 on Professional Conduct states unambiguously that "Members abide by their respective bodies' statements and policies on inclusion, diversity, social responsibility and climate change." Furthermore, members must "engage in professional development activities that contribute to increased self-awareness in relation to inclusion, diversity, technology, latest developments in societal or environmental needs."

The maturity-based perspective

Beyond obligations, sustainability represents an invitation to professional maturity and depth. This perspective reframes the five core values through an ecological lens, revealing that environmental consideration is not an addition to ethical practice but inherent to it. Integral ecology invites practicing members to develop the capacity

for systemic coherence, complexity tolerance, and recognition of our embeddedness in the more-than-human world.

These perspectives are not contradictory but synergistic. The first establishes the floor – what is essential. The second reveals the ceiling – what becomes possible. Together, they create a complete framework: coaches should both adhere to professional requirements AND develop ecological maturity in their practice.

Part 2: The Values – Integrated Analysis

The following sections examine each of the Code's five core values through both lenses, demonstrating how sustainability considerations are both required by the Code and essential to practicing each value with depth and maturity.

2.1 Integrity

What the Code says:

"Acting with honesty, fairness, and consistency in all professional interactions."

The explicit requirement

Integrity demands that we consider sustainability because:

- Integrity means that we acknowledge that this is a complex and multifaceted reality and encourages us to have some knowledge of what is happening.
- Honesty requires acknowledging the reality of what is happening. There can be good reasons to avoid these issues in client conversations and at the same time doing so can have the potential to be dishonest when climate change affects clients' futures, careers, industries, and wellbeing. A member who helps a client plan a multi-year career without considering how climate change will reshape their industry is not being honest about the world the client will actually navigate.
- Fairness requires acknowledging inequality and its root causes. Climate impacts are distributed inequitably, with marginalised communities bearing disproportionate harm (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014). Treating all clients' situations as equivalent, regardless of their climate vulnerability, violates the principle of fairness.
- Fairness also demands acknowledging social transformation. The accelerating pace of technological change, economic restructuring, and demographic shifts is not experienced equally. Younger generations, workers in transitioning industries, and communities facing social displacement carry a disproportionate weight of uncertainty. Treating all clients' situations as

equivalent, regardless of their exposure to these structural pressures, means failing to see the full context in which their development is taking place.

- Consistency requires systematic application. While members may rigorously consider certain contextual factors — such as market trends, organisational culture, or regulatory changes — truly systematic practice also requires consideration of the environmental context. Without this, they are not acting consistently.

The deeper invitation: systemic coherence

Beyond the Code's definitions of honesty and fairness, integral ecology invites us to examine coherence between stated values and actual impacts. This deeper layer of integrity asks: What kind of development are we supporting? Raworth (2017) asks whether we are inadvertently reinforcing extractive, competitive, or dehumanising models even while claiming to serve human flourishing?

Systemic coherence means developing the capacity to question whether performance goals are compatible with human and systemic wellbeing. It means asking whether we are helping clients "function better" within dysfunctional systems, or supporting them to imagine healthier alternatives for themselves, for teams and for whole organisations. Members are well placed to help clients to imagine a better reality.

Reflection questions

For personal integrity

- How can I make personal choices that fit with my values and reduce the impact of my consumption?
- How can I be honest with clients about how climate change might impact their industry, career trajectory, or life goals?
- How could I apply the same ethical rigour to environmental considerations (spanning from climate change to sector change) as I do to confidentiality or professional boundaries?
- Am I being fair to future generations by ignoring sustainability in present-day development conversations (Gardiner, 2011)?

For client work

- How am I supporting my clients to consider the impact of strategy on future customers and employees and their potentially changing priorities?
- How am I supporting my clients to consider the legacy they want to leave, personally and professionally?

- When a client's goals or business model contribute to environmental harm, am I acting with integrity by remaining silent?
- How can I invite climate considerations into the conversation without bringing judgement?
- How can I help my client to consider whether a performance goal is compatible with human and systemic wellbeing?
- Am I helping this person "function better" within a dysfunctional system, or supporting them to imagine healthier alternatives?

For systemic impact

- What is the cost of this success? For whom? And in the long term?
- Consider whether I am inadvertently supporting practices or systems that degrade the environments in which communities thrive?
- What kind of present and future would I like to invite into the room when coaching a client about their dreams and aspirations, in a planetary healthy world?
- What is the impact I want to have on those around me and the broader world?

2.2 Courage

What the Code says:

"Choosing to act ethically, even when it feels uncomfortable."

The explicit requirement

Courage demands sustainability consideration because:

- Ethical action often feels uncomfortable. Raising climate and sustainability topics may feel uncomfortable for both practicing member and client, but discomfort does not exempt us from ethical necessity. The Code explicitly calls for "choosing to act ethically, even when it feels uncomfortable."
- Innovation increasingly means sustainable innovation. The Code calls members to "approach each session with an open mind and innovation." In a climate-changed world, innovation that ignores sustainability is obsolescence. True innovation now requires environmental literacy.

- Ethical dilemmas include environmental harm and wider impact on the earth, both human and non human living entities. The Code requires members to "approach and clarify situations that may constitute an ethical dilemma." When a client's goals involve clear environmental costs, this constitutes such a dilemma and must be addressed, not avoided.

The deeper invitation: staying with uncomfortable questions

Through the lens of integral ecology, courage becomes the ability to stay with complexity without rushing to simplifications (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). This means not avoiding uncomfortable issues such as environmental impact, inequality, or value conflicts. It means creating space for clients to tolerate uncertainty rather than seeking quick fixes.

Ecologically mature courage means not closing down reflections on meaning too early. It means supporting clients to explore difficult questions: What is the cost of this success? For whom? And in the long term?

Reflection questions

For personal courage

- Am I avoiding sustainability conversations because they feel uncomfortable rather than because they're irrelevant? And if so, how important is it to me to feel comfortable while coaching?
- What fears prevent me from introducing environmental considerations into a dialogue with my clients?
- How can I build more courage to stay with complexity and uncertainty rather than offering premature closure?
- In what ways am I modelling ethical behaviours in the choices I make in an organisation or as a small business owner?

For client work

- When clients pursue goals with clear environmental costs, how can I find the courage to explore this dimension?
- How can I approach sustainability with the same "open mind and innovation" I bring to other topics?
- How am I creating sufficient space for clients to sit with uncomfortable questions about impact and meaning?
- How can I model the courage to make different choices and prioritise our future planet?

For systemic impact

- What would it mean to support innovation that genuinely serves regenerative futures?
- How do I help clients develop the courage to question systemic assumptions about growth, success, and progress?

2.3 Respect

What the Code says:

"Valuing people, cultures, and perspectives, and responding in ways that honour their dignity."

The explicit requirement

Respect demands sustainability consideration because:

- The Code explicitly includes the "other-than-human world." The Executive Summary's acknowledgment of challenges facing "the 'other-than-human' world" establishes that respect extends beyond humans. This is not metaphorical, it is a direct statement that our professional responsibility includes the living systems we are part of.
- Cultural identity is inseparable from environmental context. The Code requires practicing members to "support the client/learner's best interests and cultural identity." For many cultures (e.g., Indigenous communities)⁹ cultural identity is deeply intertwined with land, place, and relationship with the natural world.

Environmental degradation is cultural harm

- Dignity includes the right to a liveable planet. Honouring people's dignity means acknowledging their right to clean air, water, food security, and stable climate conditions. Professional practice that ignores environmental threats to these foundational conditions cannot claim to truly respect human dignity.
- Dignity also includes the right to social belonging and economic security. Honouring people's dignity means acknowledging their right to meaningful work, equitable access to education and opportunity, and freedom from systemic discrimination. Professional practice needs to recognise these dimensions to genuinely serve the whole person.

The deeper invitation: recognising otherness (human and more-than-human)

Integral ecology broadens the scope of respect to include not only people but also cultures, territories, communities, and ecosystems. This perspective recognises that human beings are not separate from the environment but part of it.

This translates into listening to the context as much as to the individual by attending to cultural, territorial, and generational dimensions (Hawkins, & Smith, 2013). It means avoiding the universalisation of solutions that only work for privileged few, and recognising the wisdom held in Indigenous knowledge systems about human-nature relationships.

Reflection questions

For personal respect

- How do I honour the dignity of communities disproportionately affected by climate change?
- How am I respecting Indigenous perspectives and wisdom regarding human-nature relationships?
- How does “bringing my whole self” include my relationship with the natural world?
- What is already working in my own consumption and ecological behaviour / What else could I do or stop to become more consistent in this field of action to further reduce my own impact in terms of using the earth’s resources?

For client work

- How do I balance listening to the context, i.e. environmental, territorial and cultural, as much as to the individual's stated goals?
- How can I support clients' cultural identities when those identities are tied to threatened landscapes or ecosystems?
- How am I respecting the full dignity of this person by acknowledging their right to environmental wellbeing?

For systemic impact:

- In what ways might my professional practice inadvertently reinforce systems that degrade the environments in which certain cultures thrive?
- How can I avoid universalising solutions that only work for those insulated from environmental harm?

2.4 Responsibility

What the Code says:

"Being accountable for our actions and committed to doing what is ethically required."

The explicit requirement

Responsibility demands sustainability consideration because:

- "Best interests" increasingly require environmental sustainability. The Code commits practicing members to "support the client/learner's best interests." In a climate-changed world, a client's best interests cannot be separated from environmental sustainability. A career path that depends on unsustainable practices may offer short-term gains but long-term collapse.
- Continuous learning must include climate literacy. The Code requires members to "commit to continuous learning and development." So how are we reflecting this in the attention we pay to our continuous learning? Climate literacy is now a core professional competency.
- Professional practice cannot be isolated from environmental consequences. Supporting "coaching as professional practice" means acknowledging that our work has ripple effects. Practicing members are accountable not only for process quality but for the developmental trajectories we enable and the systems we help perpetuate or transform.

The deeper invitation: being accountable for effects, not only intentions

From an integral ecology perspective, responsibility includes awareness of the systemic effects of our professional practice, not just the immediate outcomes for individual clients. This means questioning what kinds of leadership and decisions we are enabling through our work.

Being responsible means not reducing our professional practice to a tool for passive adaptation to dysfunctional systems. Instead, it means partnering with our clients when it comes to their capacity to act as a responsible agent within their ecosystem, someone who can navigate complexity while contributing to healthier, more sustainable patterns.

Reflection questions

For personal responsibility

- How much have I invested in understanding climate science and sustainability well enough to serve clients responsibly?

- How have I helped clients consider the environmental implications of the goals and strategies I help them develop?
- What is my own relationship with continuous learning about environmental and social transformations?

For client work

- What does "best interests" mean when short-term career gains might contribute to long-term environmental harm?
- How do I balance a client's immediate development needs with broader environmental responsibility?
- How am I partnering with my client in supporting them to become a responsible agent within their ecosystem?

For systemic impact

- What kinds of leadership and decision-making am I enabling through my professional practice?
- What role am I taking - helping to perpetuate unsustainable systems or to transform them?

2.5 Making a difference

What the Code says:

"Creating a positive impact through our work."

The explicit requirement

Making a difference demands sustainability consideration because:

- Positive impact cannot exclude environmental impact. The Code calls practicing members to "make a positive contribution to the sectors" in which they work and to "help the client/learner grow through each interaction." In climate-critical sectors (energy, agriculture, transportation, manufacturing), a "positive contribution" that ignores environmental sustainability is fundamentally contradictory.
- "Seasons of change" has literal climate connotations. The Code describes members as those who "thrive in navigating clients/learners through seasons of change and transition." The metaphor has become literal – we are navigating actual climate seasons and unprecedented transitions in how we live and work.

- Growth must be regenerative, not extractive. Supporting client growth that depletes resources, harms communities, or accelerates ecological collapse cannot be considered "making a difference" in any meaningful positive sense. True growth must now be understood as regenerative development (Mang & Reed, 2012).

The deeper invitation: generating shared value

Through the lens of integral ecology, "making a difference" becomes contributing to sustainable transformation processes that hold together people, organisations, and the world. It means supporting change that creates shared value¹² rather than extractive gain.

The guiding question shifts from "How do I help this individual succeed?" to "What kind of world am I helping to make possible through my work?" See the Climate Coaching Alliance (CCA) playbook for further ideas.

Reflection questions

For personal impact

- How can I "make a difference" if I ignore one of humanity's most pressing challenges? What will make me feel equipped to consider this?
- What does "positive contribution" mean in my specific professional practice contexts and client sectors?
- How do I define success and growth in ways that include regenerative impact?

For client work

- How can I help clients grow in ways that create regenerative rather than extractive impact?
- How do I support clients through transitions toward more sustainable ways of working and living?
- What would it mean to help this client move from individual success to shared value creation?

For systemic impact

- What kind of world am I helping to make possible through my work? What kind of impact do I hope to achieve?
- How does my professional practice contribute to or challenge unsustainable systems?

Part 3: Professional Conduct and Practical Integration

3.1 The explicit mandate

Beyond the value-based implications explored in Part 2, the Code contains direct, unambiguous obligations regarding sustainability and climate change in its Professional Conduct section.

What the Code says:

"Members abide by their respective bodies' statements and policies on inclusion, diversity, social responsibility and climate change."

Note that climate change is not parenthetical, suggestive, or aspirational. It is listed alongside inclusion and diversity as a mandatory consideration. This is a professional conduct standard / requirement, not optional guidance.

What the Code says:

"Members engage in professional development activities that contribute to increased self-awareness in relation to inclusion, diversity, technology, latest developments in societal or environmental needs."

Environmental needs are positioned as equal to societal needs. Continuous professional development in this area is required. Self-awareness must extend to environmental dimensions. These are not suggestions, they are professional obligations.

3.2 What this means in practice: building ecological competence

From the integral ecology perspective, these explicit obligations point toward sustainability as a professional competence, not an optional specialisation but a foundational capacity for contemporary professional practice.

Building ecological competence involves:

Developing systemic awareness

This means cultivating the capacity to read individual questions within broader transitions (Senge, 1990), i.e. understanding how personal development connects to organisational change, which connects to societal transformation, which connects to planetary health. Systemic awareness is the ability to hold multiple scales simultaneously (Meadows, 2008).

Building climate and sustainability literacy

Practicing members need basic understanding of climate science, ecological principles, systems thinking, and sustainability frameworks. This is not about becoming environmental scientists, it is about having sufficient literacy to recognise

when sustainability issues are relevant to client work and how to engage with them competently.

Cultivating reflexivity about biases

This includes examining our own assumptions about growth, progress, success, and development. Many people and frameworks implicitly assume unlimited growth is possible and desirable. Ecological competence requires questioning these assumptions and exploring alternative models of human flourishing. Learning to accompany without imposing, yet without withdrawing into false neutrality

This is perhaps the most delicate competence: how to bring sustainability considerations into our professional practice in ways that respect client autonomy while honouring our responsibility. It means neither imposing a sustainability agenda nor pretending environmental and social realities don't exist.

3.3 A place of ecologically mature professional practice

Synthesising the explicit obligations with the integral ecology framework, we arrive at a conception of ecologically mature professional practice, one that holds together person, systems and planet. Individual development is never isolated from systemic context or planetary health. These dimensions are interdependent, not competing priorities.

Works on development without separating it from meaning. Performance, productivity, and achievement are examined alongside questions of purpose, impact, and contribution to collective wellbeing.

Recognises that every process in our professional practice is a collective act – by contributing to shape the future we collectively create. Members cannot opt out of this reality; we can only choose to be more or less conscious of it.

Part 4: Moving Forward

4.1 Requirement and invitation

This White Paper demonstrates that sustainability in our professional practice exists on two essential levels:

The floor: non-negotiable obligations

The Code explicitly mandates attention to climate change and environmental needs
Each core value, when practiced with integrity, demands sustainability consideration
Professional development in sustainability is required, not optional
Ignoring sustainability violates professional duty of care

The ceiling: ecological maturity

- Sustainability is not an additional topic but a fundamental lens
- Members work with people embedded in living, interdependent systems
- Every developmental process contributes to shaping collective futures
- Ecologically mature practice holds together person, systems, and planet

These are not competing but complementary. Practicing members must both follow ethical obligations with explicit obligations AND develop the deeper capacities for ecological maturity. Meeting the minimum is necessary but insufficient. The invitation is to move beyond mere compliance toward a transformed understanding of what our industry and individual practice can do.

4.2 Practical next steps for members

For members seeking to integrate sustainability into their practice in alignment with the Code, the following steps could be taken:

Immediate actions

- Review your supervision and continuous professional development plan. Does it include learning about climate change, sustainability, and systems thinking? If not, how could you systematically add these elements?
- Examine your intake and contracting processes. Do you ask about the broader context in which clients operate? Add questions that surface environmental and systemic dimensions.
- Use the reflection questions in this document. Choose 3-5 questions that resonate and journal on them. Bring them to supervision.
- Connect with others to explore your thinking, for example by joining the Climate Coaching Alliance (2026), which is free.

Near-term development (next 3-6 months)

- Build basic climate and sustainability literacy. Read accessible overviews of climate science, systems thinking, and sustainability frameworks (for example see Capra, 2002). You don't need to become an expert, you need sufficient understanding to recognise relevance.
- Experiment with bringing sustainability dimensions into existing client work. When appropriate, ask: "How does environmental/social sustainability show up in this situation?", "What would success look like if we considered the

long-term (environmental) impact?" or "When you imagine the legacy you want to leave, what's the widest circle you'd want that to touch?"

- Connect with peers exploring this territory. Seek out communities of practice, reading groups, or peer supervision focused on sustainability in our professional practice.

Ongoing practice (the long game)

- Cultivate your own ecological consciousness. This isn't just intellectual, it includes your own relationship with the natural world, your patterns of consumption, your sense of connection to place and planet.
- Integrate sustainability into your professional identity. Move from "I sometimes consider environmental factors" to "I embrace ecologically mature professional practice as part of my core identity."
- Contribute to the field's evolution. Share your learning, write about your practice, offer workshops, and contribute to research. Help build the collective knowledge base.

Conclusion

The Code doesn't merely permit sustainability considerations – it requires them. The contradiction exists not between professional practice and climate action, but between the Code's explicit obligations and any practice that ignores environmental reality.

Practicing members who avoid sustainability topics are not protecting professional neutrality. They are violating their duty of care, their commitment to integrity, their responsibility for continuous learning, and their obligation to serve clients' best interests in the actual world, not an imagined one where climate change doesn't exist.

The integral ecology perspective deepens this understanding by revealing that sustainability is not merely a compliance issue but an invitation to a more mature, systemic, and meaningful professional practice. It asks us to hold together person, systems, and planet, recognising that these are not competing priorities but interdependent dimensions of any genuine development work.

Ultimately, both perspectives converge on a single, essential question for every member to carry into their practice:

What kind of world am I helping to make possible through my work?

This question honours both the Code's obligations and integral ecology's invitation. It holds us accountable while opening possibilities. It grounds us in professional duty while lifting our eyes to collective futures. And it reminds us that our professional practice, at its best, is not merely about helping individuals succeed – it is about contributing to a world in which all can flourish.

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