

Dr. John Stuart Ablon (Massachusetts Psychologist #7542) is the Director of the Think:Kids program in the Department of Psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. As Director, he supervises all staff working under the auspices of the Think:Kids program. Dr. Ablon's conduct, spanning nearly a decade, is in violation of a wide range of ethical principles governing the conduct of licensed psychologists in Massachusetts – delineated in 251 CMR 1.10 of the Division of Professional Licensure and the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* of the American Psychological Association – and these violations have prompted the filing of this ethical complaint.

1. Dr. Ablon's longstanding extramarital sexual relationship with [REDACTED] at Think:Kids – [REDACTED] -- is a violation of ethical principle **3.05 Multiple Relationships**, which *occurs when a psychologist is in a professional role with a person and at the same time is in another role with the same person*. As per the same ethical guideline, *a psychologist refrains from entering into a multiple relationship if the multiple relationship could reasonably be expected to impair the psychologist's objectivity, competence, or effectiveness in performing his or her functions as a psychologist, or otherwise risks exploitation or harm to the person with whom the professional relationship exists*. This conduct is also in violation of principle **3.08 Exploitative Relationships** (*psychologists do not exploit persons over whom they have supervisory, evaluative, or other authority such as clients/patients, students, supervisees, research participants, and employees*), and principle **7.07 Sexual Relationships With Students and Supervisees**, which states that *psychologists do not engage in sexual relationships with students or supervisees who are in their department, agency, or training center or over whom psychologists have or are likely to have evaluative authority*.
2. Think:Kids staff were well aware of this inappropriate relationship, and the implicit demand that they remain silent about it caused many staff significant distress. Dr. Ablon's caustic treatment of staff members who called this inappropriate relationship to the attention of leadership in the Department of Psychiatry at MGH caused additional distress and prompted fears of retribution. This scenario placed these staff members at professional and personal peril; at least four staff members found such working conditions to be untenable and felt that they had no choice but to leave their positions at Think:Kids and MGH. Dr. Ablon's conduct is therefore also in violation of ethical principle **3.04 Avoiding Harm**, which states that *psychologists take reasonable steps to avoid harming their clients/patients, students, supervisees, research participants, organizational clients, and others with whom they work, and to minimize harm where it is foreseeable and unavoidable*.
3. Violations of several of the above ethical principles have also occurred in Dr. Ablon's therapist-patient relationships. A father whose child and family were in treatment with Dr. Ablon sponsored Dr. Ablon for a membership at the [REDACTED] Tennis Club in [REDACTED], to the consternation of the father's wife (the parents were going through a contentious divorce at the time), and causing her to question Dr. Ablon's objectivity. Indeed, in his role screening new referrals to a mental health clinic, Dr. Ablon intentionally and purposely did internet searches on new referrals so as to prioritize those of significant wealth for the purpose of subsequently soliciting donations. In another instance, when Dr. Ablon learned from a colleague that the son of a wealthy Boston financier had mental health needs, he tried hard to bring the financier into his clinical practice for the express purpose of eventually asking for a donation to Think:Kids.
4. Several legal rulings are pertinent to this next ethical violation. First, in 2013, Massachusetts General Hospital was awarded ownership of the trademark "Collaborative Problem Solving" in U.S. federal court, a trademark used until that time by Dr. Ross Greene to refer to the model he originated and described in his book *The Explosive Child* (first published in 1998). Dr. Greene

subsequently changed the name of his model to “Collaborative & Proactive Solutions.” The model *now* called “Collaborative Problem Solving” – and being marketed by Dr. Ablon through the Think:Kids program at MGH – is based solely on the content of an entirely different book, *Treating Explosive Kids*, on which Dr. Greene listed Dr. Ablon as a co-author, published in 2005. There are significant and fundamental differences between what is now called “Collaborative Problem Solving” and “Collaborative & Proactive Solutions.” Third, in 2013, Dr. Ablon was found, in U.S. federal court, to have infringed Dr. Greene’s copyright on *The Explosive Child*.

Dr. Ablon continues to cite published research based on the content of *The Explosive Child* as evidence of the effectiveness of the “Collaborative Problem Solving” model he is marketing through the Think:Kids program. He does this on the Think:Kids website and in publications, speaking engagements, and applications to organizations certifying that models of psychosocial treatment are empirically supported. These false claims are in violation of ethical principles **5.01 Avoidance of False or Deceptive Statements** (*psychologists do not knowingly make public statements that are false, deceptive, or fraudulent concerning their research, practice, or other work activities or those of persons or organizations with which they are affiliated; psychologists do not make false, deceptive, or fraudulent statements concerning...their publications or research findings*); and **7.03 Accuracy in Teaching** (*when engaged in teaching or training, psychologists present psychological information accurately*).

The falsely cited research papers include the following:

Ollendick, T.H., Greene, R.W., Fraire, M.G., Austin, K.E., Halldorsdottir, T., Allen, K.B., Jarrett, M.E., Lewis, K.M., Whitmore, M.J., & Wolff, J.C. (2015). *Parent Management Training (PMT) and Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) in the treatment of oppositional defiant disorder in youth: A randomized control trial*. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*. This research paper explicitly refers to the fact that the model under study was Collaborative & Proactive Solutions.

Greene, R.W., Ablon, J.S., Monuteaux, M., Goring, J., Henin, A., Raezer, L., Edwards, G., & Markey, J., & Rabbitt, S. (2004). *Effectiveness of Collaborative Problem Solving in affectively dysregulated youth with oppositional defiant disorder: Initial findings*. This research paper was published in 2004 (the study it describes was conducted even earlier), prior to the publication of *Treating Explosive Kids*, and therefore can only refer to content published in *The Explosive Child*. It was published before Dr. Greene was forced to change the name of his model.

Publications falsely citing research include:

Pollastri, A., Epstein, L., Heath, G., and Ablon, J. (2013). *The Collaborative Problem Solving Approach: Outcomes Across Settings*. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, v. 21, p. 188-195.

5. On a paper posted on the internet and co-authored by Dr. Ablon -- *Collaborative Problem Solving: An Effective Approach For Managing Conflict In The Workplace* (see attached) – Dr. Ablon falsely cites himself as the first author on the above 2004 paper on which Dr. Greene is the first author. While this has been brought to Dr. Ablon’s attention on numerous occasions, the paper with the incorrect reference is still posted on the internet. This is a violation of ethical principle **8.12 Publication credit** (*Principal authorship and other publication credits accurately reflect the relative scientific or professional contributions of the individuals involved, regardless of their relative status*).