

# Practicing Purposefully

## SOCIAL PEDAGOGY




### Three Ps

Eichsteller, G., & Holthoff, S.  
(2011) Petrie, P. (2011)  
Jappe (2010)

#### What is it?

Social pedagogy has developed through its long history to become an ethical, theoretical, and practical framework for education, practise, and policy. The three P’s is a Danish concept supporting practitioners to reflect what they bring into a relationship with a child or a person they are supporting.

The Three P’s: Professional, Personal and Private – is an idea that underlines how our personality is vital to the relationships we form and that reflecting on who we are becomes vitally important.

The three spheres	Description	Considerations
The Professional self 	Understanding clearly our duties and responsibilities and drawing on our knowledge, practice experience and theory.	In our work we are unavoidably professionals but practice which is solely about our duty can become harmful for those we support, who frequently need human regard, care and love.
The Personal self 	Being open and revealing of ourselves to engage with a child or person in a way that shows them who we are, so that we can develop a better, more genuine and trusting relationship.	Our personal baggage should not be placed as a burden on those we support. But choosing to share something personal about ourselves can have great benefits where we can see each other as human beings.
The Private self 	Seeing the personal boundaries of what we do not want to (or feel unable to) share with a child or person we support and should therefore not be brought into the relationship.	Anything we are unsure about sharing or we feel we must keep to ourselves needs to be kept private. We should reflect on anything before we move it into the personal sphere.

#### The Three Spheres

Working with people in the caring professions is complicated. In some roles we may be unable to reach too far into the personal sphere with people. However, clipboards and policies don't change people’s lives. Our work is relational in its nature and it is through these relationships that people are enabled to grow and thrive.



In any relationships the three spheres may shift and change as relationships grow and develop. We must constantly reflect on how any shared personal information benefits the person we are supporting.

### Why is it useful?

Our work is with people. Thus, it is essential that we can be authentic with them in order to build a successful relationship. Job descriptions in our sector rarely review values or consider the very human aspects of our role.

Social pedagogy recognises the very human aspects of our work and challenges us to use relationships beneficially. The three Ps is a reflective tool that enables us to think deeply about how we bring ourselves into the work we do without harming those we support and also ensuring we meet our professional obligations.

In the complexities of our work things often depend on the context of a situation. This reflective tool enables us to have a shared language to facilitate conversations with our colleagues, in an open and transparent way, about how we offer support authentically and safely to those we support.

### How to apply it to practice

Imagine you have an envelope (or dig one out from a drawer). On the front of the envelope, where the address would go, write down the key aspects of your professional duties and responsibilities. On the back of the envelope write the things that you are comfortable to share about yourself with the wider world. And before you seal the envelope imagine or write inside the things you don't want the rest of the world to know about you. These are your professional, personal, and private selves.

Now consider a child or a family member that you are working with.

Think about what you know about them and reflect on whether you would share things as you described on the envelope. Are you happy about what they know about you as a professional? What do you feel comfortable sharing about your personal life, family or circumstances? Think about your private self, is there anything you might share in the future at some point? Or are there things that you would never share? Have you ever shared something you thought you might not ever share? Consider why you have made these decisions as you reflect on the three Ps.

### A fourth P?

*Although not officially a part of the reflective tool in more recent times we might consider including a fourth P. This could be described as the Public self. With growing access to social media and modern communications we now all have the potential for sharing a public persona. Issues of reputation and professional boundaries become very complicated in this new social space.*

*Consider how you present yourself online. How do you connect with others as a professional and/or in your personal life? This will become increasingly complicated as more of our communication moves into this sphere. Legislation and policy offer meagre support for practitioners to get this right. Thus, reflecting both individually and together with colleagues about these issues can help us stay safe and still support those we care for, as these technologies continue to develop and manage our everyday communications.*

### Criticism

The three Ps are open to individual interpretation and the tool requires ongoing self-reflection. In the absence of good reflection measured by the professional self we might share in a way that could harm. This reflective tool does not give us an imperative to share of ourselves, rather it challenges us to be mindful of what we share, whilst recognising that we must bring ourselves into our work. It helps us avoid any harm which could occur, whilst maximising the connections we make in our supportive relationships.