



MAKING CONNECTIONS

Learning & Leadership in Social Work

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Norma Parker Address

Becoming a trustworthy profession: Doing better than “doing good”



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Social work prides itself as a profession committed to professional integrity, respect and social justice. Yet studies of client experiences and the findings of public inquiries suggest that our profession and the human services institutions in which we practice have, at times, fallen short of the values to which we aspire. Perceptions of dissonance, or contradiction, between the values our profession espouses and our practices can be a source of distrust and of moral injury to those who have placed their faith in us. In this Norma Parker address, I will discuss the challenges social workers face in becoming a trustworthy profession. The challenges relate both to the tensions between our profession's values and the increasingly regulated contexts in which we practice, and also that our aspirational values can themselves be a source of loss of faith between us and those with whom we practice. In this address, I will consider the role of professional competence, personal courage and authenticity in enabling us to become worthy of the trust we need others to place in us as individuals and as a profession.