

Kathy Raffles Counselling Services

Dealing with Ethical Dilemmas in the Supervisory Relationship

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Aims:

To explore some ethical dilemmas that may arise in our practice as Supervisees and Supervisors with emphasis on dealing with these in our Supervision –

We shall consider:

- Ethical dilemmas experienced as Supervisees
- Research findings on Complaints
- An ethical dilemma framework to encourage a wide range of possibilities prior to decision making
- Ethical dilemmas presented in the supervisory relationship



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Ethical Dilemmas

- Will happen to some or all of us by the nature of what we do i.e. our normal activity, which is far from 'normal' to others outside our profession, involves voluntarily entering into highly intimate relationships with others (Clients). The ability to connect with the Client's suffering and then re-connect with oneself outside of our world is crucial for our ethical practice and our survival.
- Ethics in counselling and psychotherapy is not an abstract or academic issue, it is a necessary and active thread that runs throughout every aspect of practice with the intention of acting at all times in the best therapeutic interests of our clients, supervisees, students and professional colleagues.
- Unethical practice causes dilemmas, usually resulting in harm and distress, whereas good ethical practice, by definition, normally does no harm.
- Ethical dilemmas arise on occasions when conflict occurs, such occasions are difficult to anticipate and are often unexpected and complex and they may require urgent attention. **



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Ethical Dilemmas

I don't believe that we can go through our careers without experiencing Ethical Dilemmas in some form or other.

This evening I propose to share a few ethical dilemmas that I have dealt with both as a Supervisee and some as a Supervisor ...and in relating these I ask you to consider if faced with these examples yourself how you would have dealt with these....since there is no definitive answer/resolution.

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Making Decisions about Disclosures – Thinking through Confidentiality

Respective professional bodies code of ethics offer useful guidance and the questions below (Bond & Mitchels, 2015:172) may also assist:

- Is anyone at risk of harm? Who is at risk of harm?
- What is the nature of any risk?
- How serious and how imminent is the risk?
- Would disclosure mean that the risk to the client or others may be significantly reduced or come to an end?
- Does law, guidance or agency policy and procedure require disclosure of these circumstances? If not, is it in the public interest to make a disclosure?
- To whom should disclosure be made?
- What is the best way to make a disclosure?

We don't have to take such decisions alone, discussion with our Supervisor would be beneficial.

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Professional Body – Research Findings of Complaints

Khele et al (2008) conducted an independent audit of complaints processed by BACP over a 10 year period:

- 29% were brought by members of the public
- 32% were brought by trainee counsellors
- 27% were brought by counsellors
- 12% were brought by counselling psychologists

These findings suggests that 71% of complainants were already working within the field of therapy and therefore might be expected to have some understanding of what constitutes professional conduct.

For complaints against supervisors, 25% were made under the clause of '**issues of responsibility**'. These included the need for supervisors to help supervisees reflect critically on their work, help them recognise when personal difficulties may impact on their work, and take responsibility for setting and maintaining the boundaries between the supervision relationship and any other professional relationships.



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Professional Body – Research Findings of Complaints (Cont...)

The greatest number of upheld complaints were in the area of **'management of work'**. After **'issues of responsibility'** the second and third greatest number of complaints were in the areas of **confidentiality** and **contracting** respectively.

To date research in the area of unethical practice has not considered theoretical orientation of the practitioner.

There was a disproportionate number of complaints brought against men, this was supported in previous research about complaints (Sheffler & Achmon, 2004).

Perhaps further research in this area is needed in order to understand why male therapists are more vulnerable to complaints, this may inform counsellor training in the area of power dynamics and gender.

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An Ethical Decision Making Model (Carroll & Gilbert, 2005)

Stage 1: Creating Ethical Sensitivity (Watchfulness) –

Facilitates awareness of what might be a professional or ethical issue. This stage offers suggestions when you might need to consider an action or event as ethical.

Stage 2: Formulating an Ethical Course of Action –

Offers 7 steps to help you formulate an ethical course of action when dealing with an ethical dilemma.

Stage 3: Implementing an Ethical Decision –

Facilitates you taking steps to implement what you have decided.

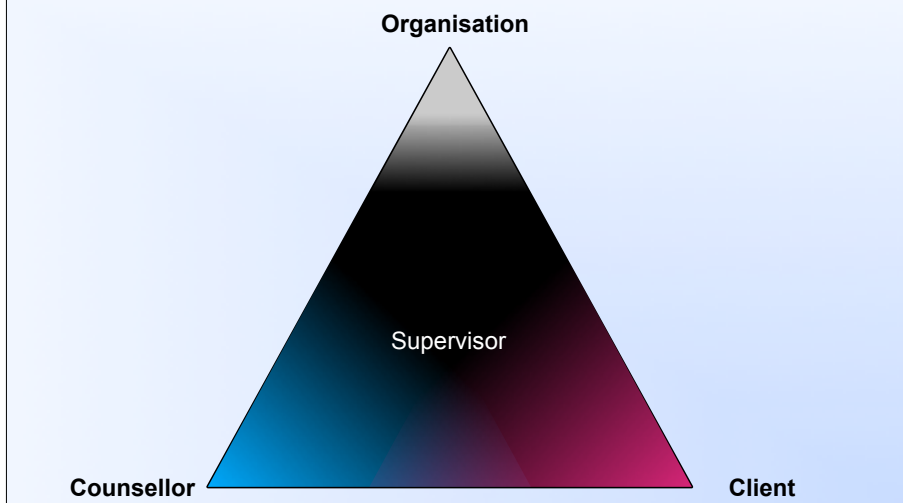
Stage 4: Living with the Ambiguities of Having Made the Decision –

Whilst you may not be happy with the results. Sometimes you have to live with the dilemma of not ever knowing if your decision was the best. However, take comfort of having made the decision in the light of the best information and consultation available to you. (The handout provided offers this model in detail).

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A 3-Cornered Hat (Contract)



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Supervision of Supervision (SOS)

- This type of supervision can be individual, co-consultative as a couple, or done in a group where several supervisors, who are at the same/similar stage come together to discuss their supervision practice. It is often described as '**Consultative Supervision**'.
- This process identifies a different and interesting challenge because the other(s) in this contract are a stage further removed from the client work, as set out below:
 - *Client works with Counsellor*
 - *Counsellor works with Supervisor*
 - *Supervisor works within **Consultative Supervision***



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Supervision of Supervision (SOS)

This type of supervision often focuses on themes related **generally** to the practice of counselling or to guidelines pertaining to ethical and professional matters, such as:

- *Ethical Issues*
- *Professional Matters*
- *Focus on relationship or working alliance issues – transference, boundaries etc.*
- *Organisational issues and complexities involved – three/four way contractual arrangements*
- *CPD – further development and training being undertaken, accreditation, additional supervision training, specialist workshops etc.*
- *Concerns about level of competence of supervisees – trainees or qualified counsellors working with inappropriate referrals etc*
- *Complaints regarding peers and professional relationships*



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Supervision of Supervision (SOS)

SOS makes a major contribution by inviting us as the supervisee to stay alert to monitoring the competency, efficacy and impact of our own supervision practice. It is not enough to have undertaken supervision training, supervision of our supervision practice is a critical ingredient of our ongoing development:

- *Keeping an eye on our supervision workload keeps the system healthy in thinking about all of our supervisees prior to deciding what aspects, themes, concerns etc., require further exploration.*
- *Supervision on our supervision practice provides the essential connectivity that links our learning about supervision on our training with learning from our practice as supervisors.*
- *Our supervisor of our supervision can help us notice the interconnecting dynamics in and between our chosen supervision model(s) and how this has impacted on our supervisee and on us.*

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Supervision of Supervision (SOS)

La Vie En Rose

Hold me close and hold me fast
The magic spells you cast
This is la vie en rose

When you kiss me, heaven sighs
And though I close my eyes
I see la vie en rose

When you press me to your heart
I'm in a world apart
A world where roses bloom

And when you speak, angels sing from above
Everyday words seem
To turn into love songs

Give your heart and soul to me
And life will always be
La vie en rose



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Summing Up....

- Contracting and Contractual Obligations
- Boundaries
- Dual Relationships
- Fitness to Practice
- Practitioner Integrity
- Confidentiality
- Trust and Safety
- Disclosure
- Legal Issues
- Abuse of Power
- Non-maleficence (do no harm to self and to others)

The cornerstones of responsibility, competence and accountability and the requirements of ethical conduct have also been themes throughout.



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Useful References

Bond, T. & Mitchels, B. (2015) *Confidentiality & Record Keeping in Counselling & Psychotherapy (2nd Edn)*. Sage: London

Carroll, M. & Gilbert, M.D. (2005) *On Being a Supervisee: Creating Learning Partnerships (2nd Edn)*. Vukani: London

Khele, S., Symons, C., & Wheeler, S. (2008) *An Analysis of Complaints to the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy 1996-2006*. *Counselling & Psychotherapy Research*. Jun 2008; 8(2): 124-132

Resource – for copy of this presentation: kathyraffles@kracs.uk.com