

# E-THERAPY

## Lecture 12

### ONLINE COUNSELLOR SUPERVISION

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# ONLINE COUNSELLOR SUPERVISION

## Lecture Twelve Outline

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### 12.1 Introduction

In this lecture, we shall have focus on online counsellor supervision, functions and tasks of online counsellor supervision as well as stages of online supervision process.

### 12.2 Expected Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

- a) Discuss functions of online counsellor supervision.
- b) Discuss stages of online supervision process.

### 12.3 Introduction

Supervision is essential to ensure high standards of professional practice. Ongoing supervision helps therapist to monitor and review the quality of their work as well as their client's progress. Supervision is central to the personal and professional development of a counsellor. One of the roles of a counsellor supervisor is to facilitate the integration of counsellor self-awareness, theoretical grounding and development of clinical knowledge and skills; and improve functional skills and professional practices. Another role is to assist the supervisee to identify and respond to issues related to the impact of clinical practice on the supervisee. To develop skills in negotiating and implementing practice supervision agreements, develop skills in negotiating supervision goals,

agendas and minutes, develop skills in evaluation of practice supervision and develop techniques of skills acquisition. The Supervisee objectives are to ensure the receipt of effective and ethical supervision. To enable supervisees' to maximize supervision learning experience, and to reduce the potential for harmful or ineffective supervision.

### **What is counsellor supervision?**

According to BACP, (2012) counsellor supervision is a formal, mutually agreed agreement for counsellors to discuss their work regularly with someone who is normally an experienced and competent counsellor and familiar with the process of counsellor supervision. The task is to work together to ensure and develop the efficacy of the supervision in counselling practice.

The definition lays emphasis in the competency of the counsellor and the client welfare during the process of counselling. Counsellor supervision is further defined as working alliance between a supervisor and a counsellor in which the counsellor can offer an account or recording of his/her work, reflect on it and receive feedback and, where appropriate, guidance. (Skipp and Proctor 2001). The objective is to enable the counsellor to gain ethical competence, confidence and creativity to provide his/her clients with the best possible service.

It is a formal arrangement that enables counsellors to discuss their counselling regularly with one or more people who have an understanding of counselling and counselling supervision or consultative support (BACP, 2012). Supervisors support performance and quality of care by meeting the needs of service providers, which enables the providers to perform well and meet the needs of their clients.

Supervision is essential to caring for counsellors, enhancing professional development and helping prevent burnout. Counsellor supervision is an activity of professional support and learning that empowers counsellors to develop knowledge and competence, maintain responsibility for their practices, enhance quality outcomes for clients and ensure the safety of therapist and clients in complex counselling situations.

Supervision is as an opportunity to oversee, monitor and critically appraise a supervisee's practice. For the supervisee, supervision provides a structured opportunity to bring together and integrate personal experience, professional learning and practice and offers a measure of both challenge and

support. There is often an element of learning from an experienced professional with the supervisor being a mentor (Palmer and Bor, 2008).

### **Purposes of Supervision in counselling**

As an ethical requirement: Supervision is a way of maintaining the accountability of counsellors to their clients. It ensures that we are working responsibly and to the best of our abilities. A supervisor, besides being responsible to the profession and the client is responsible for the agency and to counselling practice.

As a necessary resource: Supervision is a key professional requirement for practicing counsellors as a way of mitigating for their personal burnout, protecting the client and the profession.

- Supervision is a requirement for all counsellors, no matter how experienced they are.
- Counselling is highly personal and taxing in nature.
- We may be working with people when they are at their most vulnerable, distressed and needy.
- We may work with clients who leave us puzzled or confused.
- We may become hardened or burned out without realizing it, which will affect our work.
- We may get out of date and need to be encouraged to continue our professional development.
- We may become exploitative of our clients without realizing it.

### **Goals of supervision**

- Facilitating effective counselling practice.
- Developing or enhancing professional competences.
- Facilitating the processing of emotional reactions by supervisees so as to ensure a strong focus on ethical responses.
- Ensuring development and stimulation of new ideas, skills and facilitating the delivery of quality counselling services in accordance with professional standards.

Supervision provides an opportunity for counsellors to:

- Explore the way they work, stand back and get different perspectives on their clients and the way they work with them.
- Become more aware of the way they affect clients and are affected by their clients.
- Relieve emotions and recharge energies and ideals.
- Feel supported in their competence and confidence as professionals.
- Receive feedback and challenge the quality of their practice, monitor and develop ethical decision-making

**How is supervision different from counselling or therapy?**

Supervision differs from therapy in that the supervisee is not a client in the sense of a client and therapist relationship. Either issues may arise in the supervisee’s work with the client, or indeed, in the relationship with the supervisor, or another colleague, which can trigger personal reactions in the supervisee due to past or present personal experiences. Some of these reactions are relevant for discussion in supervision, others may be more deep-seated or personal and would be responded to or managed differently in the context of personal therapy. Supervision, nevertheless, is an appropriate forum for particular personal issues to be identified that might affect the quality or work with clients (Palmer and Bor, 2008).

*Differences between Counselling and Counsellor Supervision*

Counselling	Counsellor Supervision
<p><b>Aim</b></p> <p>Enables clients to lead more satisfying lives</p> <p>Increases clients capacity to live resourcefully by developing their ability to reflect on their own experience</p>	<p><b>Aim</b></p> <p>Enables the fullest therapeutic use of counselling</p> <p>Helps counsellors develop their counselling skills and their ability to reflect on their use in the counselling process</p>
<p><b>Presentation</b></p>	<p><b>Presentation</b></p>

Material presented verbally by clients (sometimes supported by records, photographs, etc)	Materials presented in various ways, verbal, written, audio/video tape or observed
<b>Relationship (Counsellor)</b> Relates to clients at emotional level Models effective self management	<b>Relationship (Supervisor)</b> Relates to counsellor at professional level Models effective role management
<b>Expectations</b> Client attends, tries to make use of the counselling and is not expected to prepare for the session Pace is determined by client's readiness to adopt a course of action	<b>Expectations</b> Counsellor attends, prepares for the session and provides the necessary input Pace is determined (usually by supervisor) by the need to reach some resolution before the next counselling session or the next work related encounter (if not a client specific issue)

#### 12.4 FUNCTIONS OF COUNSELLOR SUPERVISION

Generally, support supervision satisfies a number of functions in practice. These may be in relation to the supervisee emotional competence needs of a supportive nature, knowledge and skills competence needs of educative/ learning needs as well as service management needs which may be administrative in nature.

**Support / Restorative:** During counsellor supervision sessions, counsellors are provided with forums, where they can discharge emotions and recharge energies. Counsellors are helped to reflect on personal issues that may hinder their capacity to provide effective services to clients and at the same time receive support to manage such issues constructively. This restores counsellor's ability to continue working with the clients.

**Education/Formative:** The counsellor receives information on new counselling trends, and on use of skills or updates on policy matters. They may be helped to reflect on their way of working with

clients and to ensure they maintain ethical practice. It is also an opportunity to receive feedback and challenge on the quality of their practice.

Administrative issues/Normative: Counsellor supervision can help account for the counsellors' practice in relation to the nature of services offered, number of clients seen over given periods of time, factors hindering the provision of quality counselling services, the use of available resources (e.g. copies of guidelines, space for counselling, record keeping/data tools, supply of condoms, IEC materials).

Supervision captures issues of interpersonal conflict among counsellors that could affect good practice and communicate with line management. Through counsellor supervision, counsellors could be helped to negotiate for manageable client workload, time and space.

Evaluation of Casework: By assessing client needs, outcomes, approaches and so on. Evaluation promotes quality care and ensures standards are being met.

## **12.5 TASKS OF SUPERVISION**

There are many generic tasks to be achieved in counselling supervision. These may include: Relationship building, monitoring the professional and ethical aspects, counselling, teaching, evaluation, consultation and administrative task.

Relationship task of supervision: There is little agreement on the 'kind' of relationship involved in counselling supervision. A number of metaphors are used to describe this relationship. This relationship changes as supervision progresses and the supervisor is able to combine other roles with supervisees but this must be within the ethical guidelines. There is an element of power within supervision .and the supervision relationship is characterized by choice: self-disclosure, transference, counter transference and contracts.

Monitoring the professional and ethical aspects of supervision: Monitoring the professional and ethical aspects is seen is an essential task of supervision. Although supervisors do not see themselves as teaching the ethical dimension of client work, some issues emerge around this for supervisors. They need to assure themselves that their supervisees are working ethically.

There are different opinions on how to monitor the professional and ethical aspects. Some supervisors wait till it emerges from client work. Supervisors need to work out strategies for dealing with supervisees when they are anxious about the ethical or professional side of their work.

The counselling task of supervision: It is normal to expect personal issues to arise from supervision. Supervisors are concerned that the supervisee's personal issues might interfere with client work. Supervision deals with personal issues as they emerge from work with clients but not personal issues per se. Not all personal issues arising from client work require counselling.

There is learning for supervisees from their own (personal) reaction. Some supervisors work with personal issues only when they throw light on work with client. Other supervisors articulate personal issues but do not see supervision as the place to deal with them. Some supervisors give limited space to deal with personal issues.

There are different stances on whether or not supervisors should require supervisees to be in personal therapy at the same time as they undertake their supervision. Views on required personal counselling do not divide on orientation lines.

Some supervisors demand action if they are worried about client work. This action may include asking the supervisee to seek personal therapy.

The teaching task of supervision: Teaching is individualized within supervision. It is more informal than formal. Modelling is seen as an important teaching method. Teaching recedes as the supervisee becomes more experienced. The teaching methods used within supervision are mostly determined by the supervisor. Some supervisors react negatively to formal teaching in supervision. Some of the teaching methods are used in supervision include demonstration, role play, taping, psychodrama.

The evaluation task of supervision: Ongoing feedback evaluation ought to be built into the supervisory contract. Evaluation is the responsibility of the supervisors and it inevitably affects supervisory relations. In evaluation the power issues are very clear. Supervisors tend to give methods of formal evaluation. There are different stances on the use of taped material for evaluation purposes. Evaluation is used where supervisors are unhappy with the client work of supervisees or where they consider a supervisee may not be suited for the role of counsellor.

Evaluation may extend beyond the supervisor/supervisee to include the agency. The work contract may need to specify who will be evaluated, how and what for. This will reduce anxiety associated with evaluations.

Consultation task of supervision: The consultation task is widely seen as the underlying key task of supervision. It is described in various ways by supervisors. There is different emphasis on different systems. In consultation the supervisors want to know what is happening to clients. This is achieved by cautiously exploring the parallel process. Counsellor's developmental stage need to be considered in consultation task.

The administrative task of supervision: Supervisors are aware of the contextual issues in and around both counseling and supervision. These will come up in supervision. The agency in which supervisees see clients affects their work with clients. Special considerations come into play when supervisors are part of the agency in which supervisees see clients.

The supervision session gives the supervisees the opportunity to explore the administrative issues and in some cases find ways of addressing them. There is need to be careful not to give advice or go out to do it for them. Tripartite meetings to discuss issues are sometimes used to facilitate working together.

### **Types of supervision**

- Personal supervision - for one - ones professional guidance.
- Group supervision-where a supervisor engages supervisees in a group format; best for institutions or trainee counsellors.
- Peer supervision - where a group of counsellors with similar levels of experience supervise one another in turn.
- Online supervision-all these formats for supervision are suited to online interaction.

### **12.6 The Stages of Online Supervision Process**

Online counselling supervision can be carried out via email, video chat (such as Skype) or in a text-based online chat room. It is arranged at a mutual time between the supervisor and

supervisee(s) where they 'meet' virtually in a private chat room, and talk by typing questions and responses in real time.

### Process of online supervision

Contracting: Supervisors have ethical duty of care to ascertain that the supervisee is conversant with the chosen mode of technology. Prepare the supervisee where necessary for the technology as well as any logistical concerns like privacy

Online modes: Ascertain and agree the formats on which the supervision will take place. Possibility of interaction using several different modalities – chat, email, videoconferencing etc. for different purposes

Communication Modalities: Agree on the frequency and mode of communication, and whose responsibility it is to initiate contact (usually the supervisee). Possibility of inter-session communication for clarifications. Communication must be concrete and trust-based.

### **Maintaining Supervisory Relationship**

- Considerations to maintain effective supervisory relationship
- Being knowledgeable of the requisite skills to provide effective supervision
- Having a fun, relaxed understanding of the technology being used
- Understand how to integrate effective supervision skills with technology utilization
- Attending to and mirroring the supervisees writing style,
- Engaging professionally within the space created for supervision,
- Being competent in the use of technology,
- Intentionally attending to the supervisory relationship; dealing with problems as they arise and focusing on the relationship.

### **Benefits of online supervision**

- Convenience in scheduling supervision sessions
- Effective use of time no commuting
- Accessibility of supervisors; increases the scope of supervision; greater variety of supervisors
- Greater access to records in online supervision; no problem with forgetting records behind or carrying sensitive documents to supervision
- Privacy; it enhances the supervisee(s) patience and obscurity.
- Reducing Stigma - Any stigma, stigmatization, or perceived stigma associated with seeking mental help services can be reduced or eliminated by online counselling supervision
- Adherence and Compliance Levels of adherence, attendance and compliance as good as or better than in-person treatment can be achieved using online counsellor supervision.
- Freedom for both Supervisor and Supervisee(s) - It affords greater freedom including more professional opportunities and a better balance between professional and private life.
- Diminishing Intimacy - the distance provided by technology inhibits physical proximity, helps to reduce the risk of supervisor-supervisee (sexual) intimacy
- Informed Consent-The informed consent process can be enhanced by online communication-for example, web pages can be revisited.

### **Challenges to Online Supervision**

- Technology challenges-unreliability of technology
- Supervisors can be technology "immigrants due to their seniority and lack of familiarity with modern technology
- Process impacted - lack of non-verbal or limitations of non-proximity
- Miscommunication and misunderstanding - not reflecting inflections in written communication, unfamiliarity with jargon.

### **Conclusion**

Whether online or traditional supervision, every practicing counselor must receive supervision services. All counselling supervisors have to be knowledgeable and skilled on the same whether they offer the services online or face – face. Supervision provides practitioners with regular and

ongoing opportunities to reflect in depth about all aspects of their practice in order to work as effectively, safely and ethically as possible

### **12.7 Summary**

In this lecture, we have discussed the purpose of counsellor supervision; the functions of counsellor supervision; we have identified the process of online supervision and we also identified the benefits of online counsellor supervision.

## References

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