

# Counselling Supervision

## Lecture 5

### Tasks of Counselling Supervision

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## 5.1 Introduction

In this lecture, we will discuss the tasks of counselling supervision; we will identify the modes of supervision delivery.

## 5.2 Expected Learning Outcomes

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

- a) Discuss the tasks of counselling supervision.
- b) Identify the modes of supervision delivery.

## 5.3 Tasks of Counselling Supervision

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

### **5.3.1 Relationship task of supervision**

A supervisory relationship relies on the same core conditions of counselling, such as openness, respect, honesty, and genuineness (Bradley, Gould, & Parr, 2001). Without this open relationship, supervisees may feel devalued and judged in the supervisory process. Supervisees may also not feel comfortable disclosing their feelings about the counselling process during supervision sessions or about the supervision process.

There is little agreement on the 'kind' of relationship involved in counselling 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.

### **5.3.2 Monitoring the professional and ethical aspects of supervision**

Monitoring the professional and ethical aspects 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 until 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.

In monitoring counsellor performance, an important and often difficult supervisory task is managing problem staff or those individuals who should not be counsellors. This is the gatekeeping function. Part of the dilemma is that the supervisors trained as a counsellor, and their values lie within that domain. Therefore, taught to acknowledge and work with individual limitations, always respecting the individual's goals and needs. However, they have the responsibility to maintain the quality of the profession and to protect the welfare of clients. Supervisors have the task of assessing the counsellor for fitness for duty and have an obligation to uphold the standards of the profession.

Experience, credentials, and academic performance are not the same as clinical competence. In addition to technical counselling skills, many important therapeutic qualities affect the outcome of counselling, including insight, respect, genuineness, concreteness, and empathy. Research consistently demonstrates that personal characteristics of counsellors are highly predictive of client outcome (Duncan & Miller, 1999). The essential questions are: Who should or should not be a counsellor? What behaviours or attitudes are unacceptable? How would a counselling supervisor address these issues in supervision?

Unacceptable behaviour might include actions hurtful to the client, boundary violations with clients or program standards, illegal behaviour, significant psychiatric impairment, consistent lack of self-awareness, inability to adhere to professional codes of ethics, or consistent demonstration of attitudes that are not conducive to work with clients in substance abuse treatment. You will want to have a model, policies, and procedures in place when disciplinary action is undertaken with an impaired counsellor.

As supervisors act as gatekeepers to the profession, making judgments about the quality of work of supervisees is inherent in the task of supervisors. Supervisors can use several assessment measures to assess the skills and abilities of supervisees. Supervisors have an ethical responsibility to the profession to ensure that counsellors are competent and adhering to professional and ethical standards (American Counseling Association, 2005). To entrust a supervisee who is not functioning at expected level would compromise the profession and the treatment of future clients of the supervisee.

After evaluation, constructive feedback serves as a source of growth for both parties. It is essential for supervisors to evaluate the learning needs of counsellor trainees; it is with the information that supervisors can decide how to interact and work with counsellor trainees that will be most conducive to development.

### **5.3.3 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.

There is a need in supervision to focus on the relationship of self to self. This is provided by the counselling task of supervision, in which the supervisor notices the themes in client work that may be outside the supervisee's awareness and invite the supervisee to explore those themes. So temporarily steer the supervisee's attention away from the client and onto himself or herself. The change of focus can help the supervisee make connections between their own unfinished business and the way they respond to the client and the supervisor. The supervisee may become aware of himself or herself thus improving the quality of client relationships, particularly where a supervisee perceives an impasse between themselves and the client.

#### **5.3.4 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 used in supervision include demonstration, role-play, taping, psychodrama.

Teaching involves the supervisor identifying the developmental level of the supervisee, monitoring and evaluating their skills as a counsellor. With this information the supervisor can respond to the supervisee. This response is based on what roles or focus areas will be most conducive to the growth and development of supervisees (Bernard, 1997). Some of the teaching methods which are used in supervision include; demonstration, role-play, taping and psychodrama.

#### **5.3.5 The evaluation task of supervision**

Ongoing feedback evaluation should 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.

Supervision inherently involves evaluation, building on a collaborative relationship between you and the counsellor. Evaluation may not be easy for some supervisors. Although everyone wants to know how they are doing, counsellors are not always comfortable asking for feedback. In addition, as most supervisors prefer to be liked, you may have difficulty giving clear, concise, and accurate evaluations to staff.

The two types of evaluation are formative and summative. A formative evaluation is an ongoing status report of the counsellor's skill development, exploring the questions "Are we addressing the skills or competencies you want to focus on?" and "How do we assess your current knowledge and skills and areas for growth and development?"

Summative evaluation is a more formal rating of the counsellor's overall job performance, fitness for the job, and job rating. It answers the question, "How does the counsellor measure up?" Typically, summative evaluations are done annually and focus on the counsellor's overall strengths, limitations, and areas for future improvement.

It should be acknowledged that supervision is inherently an unequal relationship. In most cases, the supervisor has positional power over the counsellor. Therefore, it is important to establish clarity of purpose and a positive context for evaluation. Procedures should be spelled out in advance, and the evaluation process should be mutual, flexible, and continuous.

The evaluation process inevitably brings up supervisee anxiety and defensiveness that need to be addressed openly. It is also important to note that each individual counsellor will react differently to feedback; some will be more open to the process than others.

There has been considerable research on supervisory evaluation, with these findings; the supervisee's confidence and efficacy are correlated with the quality and quantity of feedback the supervisor gives to the supervisee (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004).

Clients are often the best assessors of the skills of the counsellor. Supervisors should routinely seek input from the clients as to the outcome of treatment. The method of seeking input should be discussed in the initial supervisory sessions and be part of the supervision contract. In a residential substance abuse treatment program, you might regularly meet with clients after sessions to discuss how they are doing, how effective the counselling is, and the quality of the therapeutic alliance with the counsellor.

Before formative evaluations begin, methods of evaluating performance should be discussed, clarified in the initial sessions, and included in the initial contract so that there will be no surprises. Formative evaluations should focus on changeable behaviour and whenever possible, be separate from the overall annual performance appraisal process. To determine the counsellor's skill development, you should use written competency tools, direct observation, counsellor self assessments, client evaluations, work samples (files and charts), and peer assessments. Examples of work samples and peer assessments can be found in Bernard and Goodyear (2004), Powell and Brodsky (2004), and Campbell (2000). It is important to acknowledge that counsellor evaluation is essentially a subjective process involving supervisors' opinions of the counsellors' competence.

### **5.3.6 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.

### **5.3.7 The administrative task of supervision**

Supervisors are aware of the contextual issues in and around both counselling 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. The supervisor may hold tripartite meetings to discuss issues to facilitate working together.

In the typical substance abuse treatment agency, the clinical supervisor may also be the administrative supervisor, responsible for overseeing managerial functions of the organization. Many organizations cannot afford to hire two individuals for these tasks.

Hence, it is essential that you are aware of what role you are playing and how to exercise the authority given you by the administration. Texts on supervision sometimes overlook the supervisor's administrative tasks, but supervisors structure staff work; evaluate personnel for pay and promotions; define the scope of clinical competence; perform tasks involving planning, organizing, coordinating, and delegating work; select, hire, and fire personnel; and manage the organization. Counselling supervisors are often responsible for overseeing the quality assurance and improvement aspects of the agency and may carry a caseload. Kadushin (1976) identified the multiple administrative tasks for a counsellor supervisor: Staff recruitment and selection; orientation and placement of employees; work planning and assignments; monitoring, coordinating, reviewing, and evaluating work. Staff communication both up and down the chain of command; advocating for client and counsellors needs. Acting as a buffer between administrators and counsellors; and acting as a change agent and community liaison. As part of their administrative responsibilities, supervisors are often required to manage program transitions and modifications.

Counselling supervision enables organizations to measure the quality of services. It ensures that employees follow agency policies and procedures and comply with regulatory accreditation standards while promoting the mission, values, and goals of the organization. Supervision provides administrators with tools to evaluate job performance.

Supervisors who play the role of administrative and supervision functions is a significant balancing act. Tips for juggling these functions include:

- Try to be clear about the “hat you are wearing.” Are you speaking from an administrative or clinical perspective?
- Be aware of your own biases and values that may be affecting your administrative opinions.

- Delegate the administrative functions that you need not necessarily perform, such as human resources, financial, or legal functions.
- Get input from others to be sure of your objectivity and your perspective.

There may be some inherent problems with performing both functions, such as dual relationships. Counsellors may be cautious about acknowledging difficulties they face in counselling because these may affect their performance evaluation or salary raises.

#### **5.4 Modes of supervision delivery**

There are four modes of supervision delivery.

**Individual:** As the name implies, individual supervision is conducted on a one-on-one basis between the supervisor and supervisee. Typically, the supervisee is prepared to discuss counselling sessions that occurred. Discussion centers on the sessions as a context for supervisee learning and development.

**Dyadic:** Dyadic supervision is generally conducted in the same way as individual supervision, but the supervisor works with two supervisees at the same time.

**Group:** In group supervision, a designated supervisor works with a group of counsellors. The unique aspect of group supervision is that members are not only influenced by the supervisor, but they also are influenced by (and influence) the others in the group. The interventions used in the group supervision are incorporated to capitalize on and account for this interrelatedness. Practicum and Internship experiences in training typically incorporate group supervision as their “classroom” experience.

**Live:** Live supervision occurs as the supervisee is acting as counsellor. Supervisors interact with the supervisee “in the moment” and therefore directly affect the counselling process.

#### **5.5 Summary**

We have discussed the following tasks of counselling supervision; relationship building, monitoring the professional and ethical aspects, counselling, teaching, evaluation, consultation and administrative task. We have identified the mode of delivery of counselling supervision.

## 5.8 Further Reading

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