

# Counselling Supervision

## Lecture 7

### Counselling Supervision Practice

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# **Counselling supervision Practice**

## **Lecture One Outline**

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Expected Learning Outcomes.
- 6.3 Counselling supervision practice.
- 6.4 Counselling supervision process.
- 6.5 Planning for a supervision session.
- 6.5 Counselling supervision skills.
- 6.6 Summary
- 6.7 Further Reading.

## **6.1 Introduction**

In this lecture, we will discuss counselling supervision practice. We will explore counselling supervision process and how to plan for a supervision session. We will also identify the skills used in counselling supervision.

## **6.2 Expected Learning Outcomes**

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

- a) Discuss counselling supervision practice.
- b) Explore counselling supervision process.
- c) Identify counselling supervision skills.

### **6.3 Counselling supervision practice**

Supervision in counselling happens when a professional counsellor uses the services of another counsellor or psychotherapist to review the way they work with their clients. It is a key requirement by many reputed professional counselling membership and regulatory bodies such as the BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) to ensure all counsellors in practice are keeping their skills up to date and that they work in a safe and ethical way. Supervision in counselling forms part of the counsellor's continuous professional and personal development. Supervision is therefore what makes counselling a managed and professional activity.

According to Hawkins and Shohet (1989), supervision is essential to ensure high standards of professional practice. Ongoing supervision helps practitioners 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 objective is to assist the supervisee to identify and respond to issues related to the impact of theoretical practice on the supervisee, 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.

Counsellors are at different stages of professional development; meaning that supervisory approaches are appropriate for counsellors at different stages of development. An understanding of the supervisee's and the supervisor's developmental needs is an essential ingredient for any form of supervision.

### **6.4 Counselling Supervision Process**

Counselling supervision process involve a number of processes such as linear, cyclical and developmental (Callicott and Leadbetter, 2013). The supervision relationship requires examination

of multiple issues and the supervisory process must incorporate sensitivity to the role and responsibilities of both the supervisor and the supervisee. Below is a five stage model.

The process of supervision is a complicated one with multiple elements and people involved. Supervisors are faced with a threefold responsibility of protecting the welfare of the client, mentoring supervisees in their professional development, and protecting the interests of the profession and public at large (Storm & Todd, 1997). Counselling supervisors take on multiple roles when they become involved in the supervision process, as a supervisor, educator, mentor, evaluator, and role model for the counselling profession.

### **The Stages of Supervision Process**

The supervisory process involves all of those components required to set up, maintain and terminate a supervisory relationship (Carroll, 1996). Essentially this involves decreasing the ambiguity of supervision whilst negotiating and clarifying the process, roles and outcomes expected of the relationship. These stages are designed to operate as a guide for the supervisor and to enhance the balance within supervision.

#### **Stage 1: Pre-assessing and assessing**

The initial assessment will continue across several sessions. It takes some time to assess all areas of counsellor growth and identify themes and patterns. With the first client or session tape, you can begin to assess the supervisee's skill level. Discussion of that client will offer an initial idea of how the supervisee conceptualizes a client. All of these discussions also will alert you to the supervisee's developmental level and needs. As suggested earlier, almost any supervisory intervention used in initial and subsequent sessions provides assessment information.

In all of these activities—establishing a contract, identifying learning goals, discussing expectations and hopes, introducing multicultural issues—the supervisor has the opportunity to make an initial assessment of the supervisee. Supervisees' responses to your multicultural and diversity statements give you an initial glimpse of their comfort level in discussing these issues, which issues are particularly salient to a supervisee and perhaps, some level of awareness regarding diversity dynamics in relationships. The presentation of self, from the first point of contact to the closing moment, provides some glimpses of how the supervisee approaches new relationships and

learning contexts. Discussion of learning goals indicates what areas are important to the supervisee or which the supervisee is willing to put on the agenda.

This stage involves the relationship building between the supervisor and supervisee. In this initial stage, the supervisor and supervisee set goals and write a working contract. The supervisor and the supervisee should meet in person for an in-depth interview prior to agreeing to establish a supervision relationship. Some of the questions a supervisor will want to ask the supervisee are; what prior clinical experiences has the supervisee as a person had? Are there certain clinical issues that the supervisee has a comfort/discomfort with based upon either personal/professional values or experiences? This means that the supervisee needs to have a pre-requisite understanding of supervision, any experience of supervision and preparation for supervision.

The supervisor needs to have a philosophy of supervision and how to maintain a supervisory relationship. Assessment involves assessing the supervisee, supervisor, supervision context, roles and responsibilities, methods of evaluation, practicalities such as availability and the criteria for evaluation.

## Stage 2: Contracting

Among the first tasks in supervision is to establish a contract for supervision that outlines realistic accountability for both the supervisor and the supervisee. The contract should be in writing and should include the purpose, goals, and objectives of supervision; the context in which supervision is provided; ethical and institutional policies that guide supervision and clinical practices; the criteria and methods of evaluation and outcome measures; the duties and responsibilities of the supervisor and supervisee; procedural considerations and the supervisee's scope of practice and competence.

The contract for supervision should state the rewards for fulfilment of the contract such as clinical privileges or increased compensation, the length of supervision sessions, and sanctions for noncompliance by either the supervisee or supervisor. The agreement should be compatible with the developmental needs of the supervisee and address the obstacles to progress for example lack of time, performance anxiety, or resource limitations. Therefore in negotiating a supervision contract, one needs to consider the practicalities, management of supervision, roles, evaluation,

responsibilities, appeals, emergencies, and the learning goals/objectives (Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987).

The supervisor's and the supervisee's responsibility is to make sure that clients get enough of their supervision time, that they are brought and thought about adequately to enable best practice and that issues of personal maintenance and development do not interfere with supervision.

At a minimum, the supervisory contract should address the following:

1. The number and frequency of meetings, and when these will occur, as well as how you will contact each other if a session needs to be rescheduled.
2. How each of you is expected to prepare for supervision sessions. What information (in what format) should the supervisee provide for you (and when is this due)?
3. Is the selection of sessions for review up to the supervisee, or do you have some parameters for choosing (e.g., one initial counseling session, one closure session, one group session, two consecutive sessions for at least one client, etc.)?
4. What kinds of experiences (if any) the supervisee should complete, as appropriate to the setting (e.g., lead a minimum of one group, conduct at least one classroom guidance unit, participate in in-home family sessions).
5. What professional behaviors are expected (e.g., case notes are to be completed within what timeframe after a session, which staff meetings the supervisee should attend, being on time, etc.).
6. What supervisory interventions you will or may use. In particular, the use of audio or videotapes needs to be addressed, including an appropriate client consent form that states how the tapes will be used in supervision and, ultimately, disposed of or erased, and how client confidentiality will be maintained.
7. How the supervisee will be evaluated. Both formative and summative evaluations need to be addressed. What type of ongoing feedback will you provide?

Verbal or written, the feedback format should be an appropriate match for your supervisee's needs. It is also important to provide the supervisee with a copy of any assessment tool you will use, such

as a midterm or final evaluation form, or the format required by the licensure board, the employer or agency. Supervisees have a right to know how they will be evaluated, and knowing the criteria upfront can help lessen their anxiety about the evaluative aspect of the supervision process also.

8. What the supervisee should do in case of an emergency. Agencies typically have written policies, which should be shared with the supervisee. If you are a university supervisor of an intern, this may involve notifying site supervisors first and following the site's emergency procedures. Be clear when and how you are to be notified, and what your role and responsibilities are in these situations.

9. Supervisor should indicate fee per session if applicable, how and when this is to be paid.

### Stage 3: Engaging

This stage includes the use of time, presentation/methods of supervision, learning needs of supervisee, level of development, parallel process, external influences, and focus of supervision. It comprises the supervisee management of their presentation and the amount of time available for reflective space which are dependent on the number of learning objectives per session. Engaging encourages supervisees to be accountable for the reason they are prioritizing their issue by openly acknowledging their felt responses. The supervisor utilizes this segment to decide how to help the supervisee respond in the most useful way in service of the supervision work.

According to Moon (2004), the supervisor facilitates moving the supervisee into the central level of developmental task at this point. The supervisor is both a teacher and plays the role of counsellor. It is the focus of moving from the person doing the work to the work itself, that is, the actual work done with a view to using that work to improve future work. The supervisee explores the feelings that arise during the therapy sessions. The supervisee is cognizant aware of their deficient in skills, technique and theory.

### Stage 4: Evaluation

This involves evaluating the supervisee, supervisor, supervision relationship, and attainment of learning goals, organizational context, and effectiveness of supervision. Evaluation of the supervisee typically involves scheduled regular supervisory meetings to assure understanding of

feedback provided. Development of supervisee self-awareness may be enhanced through review of patient/client sessions, and through ongoing planning for future sessions incorporating information from prior sessions.

Any concerns of the supervisee are discussed with the supervisor who will in turn provide support in problem solving strategies in managing issues or concerns. The supervisor moves away from damage control. The supervisee is progressing and feeling more confident. Counsellor supervisors are responsible for collective evaluations and assessments of supervisee competence by clearly delineating performance objectives that were set out during initial supervision contact.

#### Stage 5: Termination/Cessation

In this stage, the supervisor moves further away from the supervisee and takes on more of a consulting role. The supervisee becomes responsible for their own development. It comprises of the overview and review of work, review of learning goals/objectives, future directions, and professional developments focus (Carroll, McMahon & Patton, 2002).

### **6.5 PLANNING FOR A SUPERVISION SESSION**

According to Borders and Brown (2005), the supervisor should receive an audiotape or videotape of a counselling session and the supervisee's self-evaluation of the session several days before the supervision session is scheduled. Identify statements or portions of the tape that are particularly relevant to the counsellor's stated needs and overall learning goals, write down observations or questions about the counsellor more so than the client (Borders, 1992).

The supervisor should review their notes for themes and patterns, thus determining priorities. These points should be stated as supervision goals; what the supervisee will gain from attention to these point, rather than agenda items, things you will do in the session. Attention to goals helps make sure that the supervisor focus on the supervisee's learning and not just the method.

### **Implementing supervision interventions**

The preferences for direct observation of a supervisee's work and interventions based in educational principles are not unique. There is no bad intervention per se. Each intervention has its advantages and limitations, each has its purpose. The emphasis is on encouraging supervisors to be clear about the purpose(s), so that an informed choice of an intervention(s) that fits the goals for a particular session is possible. Each intervention can be used as an assessment of the supervisee, an intervention meant to facilitate change, and an evaluation of progress (Borders and Brown, 2005).

## **SUPERVISION INTERVENTIONS**

### **Self-Report**

Self-report is both the most commonly used intervention likely due to its convenience and the most criticized intervention. Essentially, self-report means the supervisee makes a verbal report of what happened in one or more sessions with a client. Limitations of this approach are obvious. The supervisee can only report what he or she consciously heard and observed, through whatever biases and unconscious filters govern the supervisee's conscious awareness. In addition, the supervisee intentionally can choose what to report and not report, as well as what to emphasize or de-emphasize, and so forth. Critical information about the client (or couple or family or group) or the counseling relationship may be left out, consciously or unconsciously. These same factors, however, highlight the usefulness of this approach, particularly as an adjunct to other supervisory interventions.

Over time, a supervisee's self-reports reveal what information is apparently outside the supervisee's awareness. Patterns and themes of omissions become evident. These omissions may become the focus of other interventions, such as having the supervisee watch a videotape without sound to force a focus on nonverbal behaviors, or confronting the discrepancy between the self-report and session content (per supervisor's review of session audiotape). In addition, how the supervisee self-reports may be "the message," particularly if the supervisee behaves differently, becomes animated or flat (Bordes and Brown, 2005).

This self-report could be the supervisee's unconscious attempt to play the role of the client, the first step in a parallel process (Goodyear & Nelson, 1997) that may become the focus of

supervision. The self-report is more reliable with supervisees at more advanced developmental levels, as they have achieved a certain measure of self-awareness as well as recognition of the key issues that need to be reported, and may be less likely to self-protect in their verbal reports. Nevertheless, self-reports at beginning levels are instructive, and changes in self-reports (e.g., fewer omissions, more awareness) can be useful in evaluating supervisee progress.

### **Process Notes**

Process notes are distinct from case notes. The latter are a report of the session content, including the client's report, the identified problems, and the counseling interventions used. In contrast, process notes are the supervisee's reflections on the processes of the client, the counsellor, their interactions and relationship. To be effective, at least in early use of this approach, supervisors need to provide a structure or format that encourages introspection and reflection.

These formats include questions focused on the counsellor's feelings and thoughts about the client; rationale for interventions used in the session; preferred and alternative hypotheses about the client, client-counsellor interactions, and session content and flow; attention to potential diversity issues; and perhaps some IPR-type questions concerning the client's thoughts and feelings about the counsellor (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998). Much like self-report, process notes likely are limited by supervisee awareness and developmental level.

Although advanced supervisees' process notes may be richer, a beginning supervisee's use of this approach (perhaps with a limited focus on one or two process questions) can help that supervisee start developing an awareness of process elements and an appreciation for their value in understanding a client and the work of a counsellor. Process notes also provide an assessment of current awareness of feelings and cognitions, and a measure of improved awareness over time. Likely, as with self-report, the use of process notes in conjunction with other supervision interventions is preferred. For example, process notes for a session could be part of the tape critique turned in with a session audiotape. The supervisor's review of both the notes and the tape can yield rich material for the supervision session.

Audiotapes and Videotapes (Goodyear & Nelson, 1997) was one of the first to advocate for the use of electrically recorded interviews in counsellor training and supervision. Today, use of

audiotapes and videotapes are common and valued modes of supervision, with increasing ease of use due to technological developments. Most basically, tapes provide access to the actual counseling session content, and so are an important complement—and contrast—to self-reports and process notes. Having tapes available, however, does not ensure quality supervision. As with other supervisory interventions, the particular method of tape review should be grounded in a supervisee's learning goals and the supervisor's session goals. Often, these goals are reflected in a required self-review and tape critique that is turned in to the supervisor along with the tape.

The tape critique format may be some combination of case notes, process notes, and self-evaluation, or emphasize only one of these, based on the instruction or processes desired through this method. Regardless of format, a supervisee's self-review—structured by the tape-critique format—is a critical component. Supervisees' review of their own tapes of counseling sessions is a teaching tool. For example, focused observations via tape review increase awareness that can lead to greater in-session awareness, a better appreciation of one's strengths and areas for growth, and more accurate self-monitoring and self-supervision.

### **Micro training**

Micro training is most appropriate for skill acquisition. Originally designed to teach basic helping skills, more advanced skills have been added to the program. Microskills hierarchy ranges from attending behaviors to skill integration and developing one's own style and theory. Microtraining follows a step-by-step procedure:

- (a) Skills or parts of skills or techniques are isolated and taught one at a time;
- (b) The skill is explained via lecture and written materials, and, most importantly, is modeled.
- (c) The supervisee practices the skill and receives feedback via self-observation of audiotapes and videotapes as well as from peers, trainees, and supervisors.

There is ample empirical support for the effectiveness of micro training. Research evidence also indicates that, with follow-up training and reinforcement, counsellors transfer learning to actual counseling sessions. Micro training may be most useful with a supervisee who has a specific skill deficit but also may be seen—at least in adapted form—through role-plays in supervision.

Interpersonal Process Recall in contrast to micro training's focus on skill development, Interpersonal Process Recall (Kagan, 1997) was designed to increase self-awareness, particularly counsellors' in-session thoughts and feelings. It is assumed that there are perceptions kept just beyond the counsellors' self-awareness as a self-protection. Allowing these perceptions into consciousness awareness would threaten the counsellor's sense of psychology safety in interpersonal exchanges. Based in humanistic and phenomenological theories, IPR is designed to provide the optimal environment to allow counsellors to become aware of these covert thoughts and feelings, and feel free to express these in the here-and-now without experiencing the anticipated negative consequences.

**Role-Plays:** Role-plays are a very versatile supervision intervention, as they can be used for several different purposes and goals, including practicing skills and exploring client dynamics. They involve the supervisee in the counsellor role and the supervisor in the client role, with the supervisee working on a particular skill deficit or learning and practicing a new technique. An advantage here is that supervisees can receive immediate feedback, and they can practice skills and techniques until they feel ready to use them with clients. Similarly, role-plays can be designed for practice responding to different types of clients (e.g., resistant, angry, dependent, suicidal, or seductive clients) that supervisees may encounter in a particular setting (Broder and Brown, 2005).

Although role-plays can be very helpful in clarifying client and relationship issues, the supervisor does need to be alert to the possibility that supervisees may inject some of their own dynamics into the role-play of the client, and attend to this as needed.

## **Modeling**

Modeling, a component of micro training, is perhaps most frequently associated with skill development, and it is certainly an effective approach, especially when it is combined with guided rehearsal and focused feedback. Supervisors may model a variety of specific skills, opening or closing a session, or follow-up processing of an experiential exercise. One caution is that supervisees may be overwhelmed by a supervisor's skill level in role-playing the counsellor so that one should model at a level that the supervisee can understand and achieve.

The supervisor constantly models professional and ethical behavior (i.e., how you handle confidentiality, your openness to feedback). Even more important, however, is the way supervisor interact with the supervisee, respect for and appreciation of the supervisee as a person. Bottom line, supervisors should be aware that supervisees are watching and experiencing the supervisor, as a model, at all times (Borders, 2001).

### **Live Observation and Live Supervision**

Many university settings and some practice settings, have facilities that allow live observation and live supervision, including one-way mirrors and phone systems. Both involve direct observation of counseling sessions, with the key differentiation being whether there is interaction with the counsellor during the counseling session being observed. Live observation is just that—observing a session as it is happening. Live observation is the preferred method if the supervisor’s goals are limited to gaining a more immediate and full view of the counsellor, client, their interactions, session dynamics, and feel of the session than is possible with audiotapes and videotapes. It provide support and reassurance for the counsellor, particularly early in training (Border and Brown, 2005).

### **6.6 Counselling Supervision Skills**

The techniques employed in counselling supervision are suggested by the theory and the model that inform the supervision practice. Counsellor supervisors need to be well versed in each of these theories/models and the techniques they suggest.

Cognitive counseling skills; supervisees’ cognitions is the main focus of supervisory work” (Borders, 2001). Developmental models of supervision are based in theories of cognitive development, including those of Piaget (Borders and Brown, 2005). Supervisor’s task is to encourage supervisee movement toward a very high level of functioning.

Professional reflection is a central process for moving from novice to expert. This process is similar to descriptions of the reflective process. It requires a meaningful problem at an appropriate level of challenge and ambiguity and a safe environment to explore the problem, as well as how one’s personal and professional experiences inform and influence their process.

In the practice-oriented literature on cognitive skills, formats or models of case conceptualization are useful in helping counsellors be systematic and thorough and learn the variety of information relevant to therapeutic decision making, particularly when they are applied to supervisees' actual clients.

Skill in preparing for a session is as important as implementing a plan during a session. Counselling supervision work involves use of skills and techniques most of which are employed in counselling. By using skills and techniques, the art of conducting supervision becomes clearer. They include but are not limited to the following:

Genuineness; it means that the counsellor is aware of what he is feeling, seeing and experiencing. He acknowledges it and does not need to pretend or cover it up. Therefore, how he behaves agrees with how he feels and what he is experiencing.

Empathy; it indicates that the supervisor understands what the supervisee is putting across from the supervisee's point of view. Supervisors are trained to deal with the feelings the supervisee's is experiencing during the session.

Summaries; summaries are brief statements of longer excerpts from the supervision session. A check-out, phrased at the end of the summary, is an important component of the statement, enabling a check of the accuracy of the supervisor's response. They are similar to paraphrasing, except they are used less frequently and encompass more information.

Observing; by accurately observing non-verbal behavior, a supervisor can gauge the effect her/his words and actions have upon the client. A supervisor can also gauge the effectiveness of their words by carefully observing the facial expression and eye contact of a supervisee.

## **6.6 Summary**

In this lecture, we have discuss counselling supervision practice and explored counselling supervision process. We have also identified counselling supervision interventions and skills that are used in supervision session.

## 6.7 Further Reading

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