



Clinical Supervision

with Early-Career Counsellors

Developing Learning and Reflective Practice

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*expressive
therapies*
AUSTRALIA

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Using this Book

This book of photocopiable worksheets was developed over the last ten years out of a need to support counselling interns and early-career counsellors to strengthen their reflective skills as supervisees. The worksheets bring together the extraordinary knowledge and research evidence from many pioneers in the allied worlds of counselling theory, research, and the provision of supervision. Here we can stand on the shoulders of pioneers, experts, and theorists of diverse orientations.

Often arriving for their first supervision sessions with slight knowledge of the supervisory process or their role in it, and sometimes with a fear that they will be required to confess all their faults, new supervisees can be hesitant to engage. Sometimes with little understanding of the need for both professional and self-reflection, they can be slow to open to the benefits of supervision. Research has shown that there are often significant differences in how supervisors and supervisees assess competencies (Swank, 2014). Arriving for a supervision session prepared with some structured reflection on skills, competencies, and attitudes, can lead to more readiness to receive feedback. Engaging in pre-supervision

self-assessment leads to enhanced self-observation and self-evaluation, and having knowledge about one's behaviour will influence future behaviour (Bandura, 1991). In arguing for ongoing evaluation of trainee counsellor fitness for practice, Gaubatz (2006) gathered data from Master's level counselling students, that showed they students were well aware of deficiencies in their peers and suggested that up to 21.5% of their peers were regarded as deficient. In the same study faculty estimated that approximately 8.9% of the students were deficient in competencies. The differences suggest further reasons for rigorous clinical supervision requirements when practical placements commenced.

While most supervisors will provide some guidelines for preparing for supervision sessions, I have found through the provision of both individual and group supervision at several universities, that new interns and early-career counsellors may feel at sea in gaining the most from their supervisory support. Hence the evolution of the worksheets, and a seeking of a more evidence-based approach to guiding supervisee reflections. I wondered if the guidelines of the many pioneers in the provision of clinical supervision could be offered in a one-page summary that required active reflection and notation. While many aspiring therapists claim an interest to become intuitive practitioners, how could their explicit, and growing implicit, knowledge be harnessed and clarified?

The worksheets provide a catalyst for reflection on: both generic and theory-specific intervention skills, case conceptualisation from the perspective of different approaches, on professional boundaries, on professional behaviour, on the supervisory alliance, on supervisee self-compassion, on multicultural competencies, and on trauma awareness. These one or two-page worksheets are designed to generate creative arts responses, while some explore what we do, how we think, how we feel, and how we can connect with clients. Some focus on what we do, some on how we are – our personal qualities - in relation to clients.

Practical note: When copying worksheets, please check recommended enlargement size - either A3 or A4. Towards the end of a session, provide the hardcopy worksheet to the supervisee, to support their reflection homework, their preparation for their next session.

Introduction and Research on Supervision

The worksheets in this book are designed to provide supervisors with structures for enhancing the proactive practice reflection of counselling interns and early-career counsellors. Engagement with the worksheets can develop skills in preparing for clinical supervision. The worksheets draw together aspects of case reflection, theoretical understanding, performance self-review and professionalism, identified in the literature as contributing to conducting competent supervision and therapy practice.

Due to supervisee's initial limited understanding about the supervision process, and hoped-for growth into active engagement in supervision sessions, supervisors' have a vital role in inducting new interns and shaping their identity as supervisees (O'Donoghue, 2012). The need to support supervisees to become more proactive in their preparation for engagement in supervision sessions has been widely identified (e.g., Morrell, 2005). Across a number of human services fields, the question of enhancing supervisees' abilities with the reflective process, as well as including supervisee's internal responses and reactions to clients in the reflective process, have been highlighted (Atkins & Murphy, 1993; Pack, 2009; Wilson, 2013). One of the key goals of a counselling clinical supervisor is to guide interns towards becoming reflective practitioners (Neufeldt, 2007). Encouragement and support for supervisee reflection on clinical practice is a core component of effective supervisory practice (Falender & Shafranske, 2014).

The behaviours of the most effective supervisors, that have been found to be related to optimum supervision outcomes, relate to building the supervisory alliance (Ladany, Mori, & Mehr, 2013). In addition, supervisees value empowerment in the supervisory relationship "via encouraging autonomy and facilitating openness to the supervisee's ideas" (Ladany, Mori, & Mehr, 2013, p. 41). A question of interest for supervisors is: How to develop and provide practical ways to build realistic supervisee empowerment? Here we claim that providing scaffolding for developing

reflective capacities - for example, with practical reflection-generating worksheets - is one way to strengthen the supervisee's contribution to the supervisory process and thus build empowerment.

A systematic approach to teaching reflection in clinical training has been recommended as interns can become distressed in sessions when faced with challenges, and revert to an intervention driven approach (Burgess, Rhodes, & Wilson, 2013). The ability to reflect on and respond to client dynamics in a session is considered a sign of expertise (Hill, Charles, & Reed, 1981). Some scaffolding strategies used within supervision include verbal and nonverbal statements, such as questions, cues, reminders, prompts, and contexts (James, Milne, & Morse, 2008). Reflection-promoting workbooks have been found to enhance trainees' reflective ability and interpersonal communication, flexibility and perceived competence (Bennett-Levy et al, 2009). Several ways to scaffold the reflective process in supervision, beyond offering verbal questions, have been reported, for example, using as reflective learning tools such as reflective logs (Wilson, 2013), creative arts processes (Chesner & Zografou, 2014; Deaver & Shiflett, 2011; Shepard & Brew, 2013), use of miniatures (Williams, 1995), and sandtray activities (Pearson & Wilson, 2014).

The use of scaffolding strategies to promote learning was recommended by Vygotsky back in 1978. Scaffolding is described as a way to provide assistance to a student on an as-needed basis, with the assistance being reduced as competence increases (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). Scaffolding is intended to guide supervisee's development into competent practitioners, by "driving learning forward, causing the supervisee to access new information, reflect on past experience, and so forth" (James, Milne, & Morse, 2008, p. 31). Guided tasks, with scaffolding in place, have been found to increase learning (Alfieri, Brooks, Aldrich, & Tenenbaum, 2011). Furthermore, Molenaar, Van Boxtel, and Slegers, (2011) refer to "metacognitive scaffolding" that allows people to think about the way they think (p. 785), pointing out links between metacognition and the reflection process.