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Client reflection model for group supervision

Lisa Derham Supervision, Mentoring and Counselling

This model of group supervision is collaborative in style, allowing a flow of ideas and reflections back and forth between the nominated presenter and other group members. The primary focus is on the group working together to develop a shared understanding of a clinical issue and then reflecting on it together, rather than on an individual presenting a perfect case study to the group. This model does not encourage significant formal preparation prior to a session. Rather, all participants come to sessions with a possible client or dilemma in mind for presentation and reflection and the group decides together who will present. This minimises the anxiety often associated with making formal case presentations in a group and also enables the reflective space rather than the case presentation itself to become the main task of the group.

This model can be used either to support the group to reflect upon individual case studies or to assist the group to focus on client/work related themes and dilemmas, including issues of staff well-being and worker sustainability.

Initial statement of purpose

Once the presenter has been identified, that person begins with telling the group why they wish to talk about this particular client or issue and what they hope to gain from the group discussion. A clear understanding of the presenter's purpose is what guides the group's information gathering and also helps the facilitator and the group to clearly frame the discussion. In the course of the group session, we may revisit the presenter's purpose to ensure that the on-going discussion is meeting their original purpose.

The client presentation

The presenter will begin to talk about their client – giving some basic information, such as demographic facts, the client's reasons for seeking out a service and the presenter's current interventions. It is OK if there is information that is unknown or if the presenter does not remember every detail. Throughout this, the group actively listens, takes notes as they wish and ask questions of the presenter, as they occur to group members. The client presentation segment is co-created. It is the responsibility of the whole group, not just the presenter, to develop a clear enough picture of the client and their situation that the group can work together to meet the presenter's identified needs. The presentation segment usually takes approximately ten minutes, with the bulk of the session used for group discussion and reflection.

The discussion

The discussion aims to focus on whatever the presenter has identified as the primary issue. The discussion may cover a wide range of areas including: the context and environment, the experience of the client and the presenter's ideas about the situation, the transference and counter-transference of the client, the presenter and the group members, new options, ideas and strategies, reflections on the interactions and reflections on the themes involved.

Closing the discussion and reflection segment

Towards the end of the discussion, the group focus is encouraged to shift from the presenter to each individual group member, absorbing the presenter back into the group. At this point, group members may share their own vulnerabilities and reflect on their own learning from taking part in the session.

Follow up

In my experience, group members often wish to report back about their client or the outcome of their work at a later session. In this case, the original presenter gives a very brief summary of the main issues, the themes of the last group discussion and why they wish to report back. This is generally a short section but may spawn another session focused on the same client or issue.

Group responsibilities include:

- Coming prepared with suitable clients or dilemmas
- Being open to their own reflective process, both when presenting and when taking part as a group member
- Supporting colleagues
- Choosing how much personal material feels safe to present in the group

Responsibilities of the facilitator include:

- Keeping the group on track – maintaining focus on the identified purpose
- Managing time keeping
- Supporting a safe group environment and encouraging curiosity and open reflection
- Modeling transparent discussion and reflection

Structural details including length and frequency of sessions, the number of participants and how many presentations per session, are negotiated with the organisation and/or the group in the initial stages.