Clinical Supervision of Psychotherapy

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Definitions:

- **psychotherapy**: interpersonal relationship designed to promote beneficial changes in the thoughts, feelings, behavior of distressed clients.

- **clinical supervision**: a method of dialogue between a senior and a junior psychotherapist which influences the conduct of psychotherapy.

- **metatherapy**: a therapy of the process of psychotherapy.
Today’s Agenda

- functions of clinical supervision
- a basic method of clinical supervision
- types of supervisory interventions
- assessing clinical interventions
- supervisee developmental issues
- training clinical supervisors
Clinical Supervision Functions

- insuring client welfare
- enhancing supervisee growth within stages
- promoting transition from stage to stage
- evaluating the supervisee

![Graph showing evaluations of clinical supervision over quarters.](image)
A Basic Method

- consider the context of supervision
- form a consultative style
- choose a difficult case
- meet regularly
- follow a specified format
Presenting A Case

- client description
- diagnosis
- presenting issues
- central history
- treatment plan
- status of the progress of psychotherapy
- offer a sequence of “process notes”
Process Notes

- a summary of a portion of a recent meeting
- client said and felt, therapist said and felt
- example

"this sucks"
"blah-blah"
"this sucks"
What Is the Supervisor Doing?

- focus on the relationship between the client and the psychotherapist
- identify with the client
- listen to how the client adapts to what the psychotherapist says
- listen for “derivatives” in the client’s responses
What Is the Supervisor Doing?

- silently form a hypothesis
  - what is the meaning that the client finds in the conversation reported?
- note the nature of the very next client responses reported
  - they will confirm or deny your hypothesis
What Is the Supervisor Doing?

- observe your subjective reactions
  - your mood, fantasies, associations, posture, intuitive notions
- consider the “parallel process”
  - vestiges of the client-psychotherapist relationship in the supervision itself
What Is the Supervisor Doing?

- offer your hypothesis of what is happening for the client
- cite theoretical references to how to respond
- cite your own experience of similar clients
- seek out countertransference realities
- role-play the psychotherapist, and the supervisee the client
What Is the Supervisor Doing?

- follow case over time: “the client is the ultimate clinical supervisor”
- assess supervisee developmental needs
- assist the supervisee in learning
- defend the supervision in the setting
- seek your own supervision
Assessment of Supervisee Interventions

A client will respond to an “effective” intervention by...

- modifying defensive behavior
- disclosing unexpected material that helps reorganize understanding what has been said
Supervisee Assess Their Intervention

- does it meet the client’s need?
- does it meet the psychotherapist’s need?
- does client maintain or decrease defenses?
Some topics that are considered

- iatrogenic craziness
- transference
- technical language
- dual relationship
- treatment planning
- therapeutic alliance
- therapeutic frame
- treatment context
- subjective experience
- symptom reduction
- client strengths
- managed care
- medications
- silence
- awareness
- collusions
- contact
- failure
Categories of Supervisor Interventions

- facilitative
- confrontational
- conceptual
- prescriptive
- catalytic
Assessing the Supervision Itself

- the supervisory context & relationship
- supervisee developmental stages:
  - stagnation
  - confusion
  - integration
Supervisor Variables

- genuineness
- potency
- optimism
- courage
- sense of timing
- sense of humor
- capacity for intimacy
- openness: fantasy and imagery
- respect and consideration
Supervisee Developmental Issues

- professional ethics
- competence
- emotional awareness
- respect for individual differences
- autonomy
- identity
- purpose and direction
- motivation
Training of Clinical Supervisors

- conceptual
- experiential
- personal self-knowledge
- integrative
Auxiliary Methods

- structured exercises
- video or audio tape
- observed meetings
- peer supervision
- supervision group of six
- computer conferencing?
Small Groups and Supervision

- composition
- roles
- size
- disciplines
- attention to group process
- personal affinity
Supervision Over Time

- clinician’s strengths, weaknesses addressed
- countertransference is consistent
- supervisory admonitions repeat themselves
- it is not psychotherapy
Handouts

- Clinical Supervision: A Conceptual Model
- Clinical Supervision of Direct Practice Social Work
- Clinical Consultation Between Colleagues
References


