Therapeutic supervision

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Workshop objectives

- Differentiate between emotional labour and indirect trauma impacts.
- Define therapeutic supervision.
- Assist workers to develop a coherent narrative.
- Name ways to support emotional processing.
- Assist workers to hold a compassionate frame of mind.
- Identify ways to support wellbeing and the parasympathetic nervous system.

Stress

- Response to an event or situation (a stressor)
- Acute, Episodic acute, or Chronic
- Physical, emotional or psychological strain
- Generated by external forces or internal responses.

Emotional labour

- Inducing or suppressing a feeling.
- Surface acting which can overtime become exhausting.
- Dissonance and incongruence in ourselves which takes energy to manage and can impact our ‘mental fitness’ and emotional reserves.

Trauma

- Exposure to extremely frightening, harmful or threatening events (emotionally or physically).
- Coping abilities overwhelmed.
- Psychological injury.
- Overwhelming stressor which impacts a person's ability to cope.
- Defined by a response not a trigger as it differs for people.
- Disrupts normal functioning.

Indirect trauma impacts (workers)

Vicarious trauma - Cumulative cognitive changes and shifts in belief systems that occur over time in the areas of trust, spirituality, safety, control, self-esteem, and intimacy.

Compassion fatigue - A form of chronic stress often resulting from being in a care giving role, usually with people who have experienced some type of trauma.

Secondary Traumatic Stress - More rapid onset than Vicarious Trauma, can occur after one exposure to traumatic detail. Has a clearer symptomology that can mirror the arousal, intrusion, avoidance, and distress symptoms of PTSD.

“Supervision is the most fundamental and feasible way to mitigate trauma knowledge into practice…trauma informed supervision focuses upon how trauma affects the client, the worker, the relationship between the worker and the client, and the context in which the work is happening.” (Miller, 2018)

Line management (administrative) supervision

…provides oversight and accountability of an organisation's outcomes, activities, and standards to ensure the provision of a quality service. This includes effective and appropriate implementation of agency policies and procedures and compliance with these. It helps provide staff with the resources and systems to manage them in their roles. This includes managing team resources, delegation and workload management, performance appraisal, duty of care, support and other people-management processes.

Clinical supervision

A focus on clinical practice development in a key area or modality of practice. Assists with developing skills, techniques, meeting practice standards, provides clinical direction and support. Enhances clinical expertise, competence and confidence. Can be provided by someone from a different professional discipline to the worker.

Professional (reflective) supervision

A protected time for critical in-depth reflection that supports the integration of experience into professional and personal learning. It is a means of focused support and development which provides review, critique and replenishment (Beddoe, Davys, 2020). This includes exploring roles and relationships, the worker's practice, and personal and contextual factors that impact on the work. It is a professional activity in which practitioners are engaged throughout the duration of their careers regardless of experience or qualification (Beddoe, Davys, 2020). Ultimately professional supervision supports quality service delivery and assists the worker to achieve and sustain a high quality of professional and personal development.

Reflective supervision attends
to the emotional content
of the work and the worker's response.

(Miller 2018)

Three Traditional Functions (Procter 1987)

- Normative
- Formative
- Restorative (Therapeutic)

Exercise 1

What do you think is the difference between ‘therapeutic’ and ‘therapy’?

Please unmute and share your thoughts.

The therapeutic function of supervision

The therapeutic function of professional supervision is to restore and strengthen worker wellbeing. It consciously attends to the emotional labour, stress and distress inherent in social service work. It provides for the consideration of personal and contextual factors which may impact on professional practice. The therapeutic function in supervision contributes to quality service delivery through the enabling of emotionally aware, safe and competent professional practice. It supports self-awareness, emotional management skills of the supervisee, and ultimately contributes to professional and personal growth.

(Weld 2020)

5-minute break… stand up, stretch, run on the spot, get a drink, and come back!

Developing a coherent narrative

Developing a verbally articulated story/description of what happened to promote and consolidate learning and awareness that supports mastery and compassion satisfaction. So if the narrative is brought up in memory it has a sense of meaning to it.

(Miller and Sprang 2018)

Kolb Reflective Practice Questions

- So tell me what happened?
- How do you feel about what happened, both at the time, and now? (What emotions were you/are you aware of?)
- What do you think about what happened (and why)?
- What did you do well or ok?
- Is there anything you would you do differently?
- Is there anything that still challenges you?
- What is the new or reinforced learning you are taking away from this experience and will put into action?

(Adapted Morrison Knapman 1998)

Emotion based questions

- What emotions were you aware of when you were in this interaction? What let you know these were present?
- What emotions have stayed with you from this interaction/event?
- “What would another person have noticed if they had been watching or listening to you?”
- What is most present for you right now talking about this?”
- Were there any ways that the other person's behaviour/reaction triggered any emotions for you? What were/are those emotions?

Consciously and intentionally accept the feelings that arise from trauma work, - notice, allow, express.

STS questions

Arousal

1. Are you finding yourself getting easily irritated or having trouble concentrating?
2. Are you feeling nervous, reactive or jumpy during the day?

Intrusion

1. Are you experiencing any sleep disturbances such as unsettling or stressful dreams?
2. Do you find yourself re-living or constantly thinking about client situations or having thoughts about clients at unexpected times?

Avoidance

1. Are there any clients or work situations you are finding yourself avoiding?
2. Have you found yourself disengaging from daily activities you normally enjoy or social situations?

(adapted Brian and Bride 1999,2004)

Exercise 2

Reflect on the way you approach working with people whose behaviours you find challenging and affronting.

What do you notice yourself doing?

Please unmute and share your thoughts.

Defining Compassion

Compassion begins with self awareness of our own reactions, beliefs and values. We may need to emotionally regulate and anchor ourselves to core motivations that uphold our integrity. We then consciously engage to demonstrate acceptance and develop understanding. Our intention is to enable connection and contribute to the alleviation or transformation of suffering.

(Weld 2021)

Applying ‘Radical Compassion’ (Indirect Trauma Sensitive Supervision – Miller, Sprang, 2018)

- Recognising the emotional effort required to maintain a position of unconditional positive regard and understanding for people.

- Supervisor needs to notice, acknowledge and help worker express these feelings of effort.

- Supervisor need to guide the worker to a position of ‘radical compassion’ – offering nonjudgmental empathy for all clients regardless of their behaviour. The effort of suppressing unexpressed feelings about the client causes ‘emotional labour’ or compassion fatigue- generating compassion when you don’t feel it. Genuine empathy reduces emotional strain.

Radical Compassion continued…

- Normalise these feelings and give them expression and acceptance. This reduces the energy of them.

- Develop a ‘model of mind’ of the client. Focus on the cognitive skills the client may lack rather than their motivations which will give rise to judgement. Acquiring skills contributes to problem solving.

e.g. “She’s more interested in in her substance use than getting her kids back”

“I think substance use is the only way she knows to manage her distress”.

- Ask, what has happened to the client?
- Identify in what ways are they like me?

Supporting self-Compassion

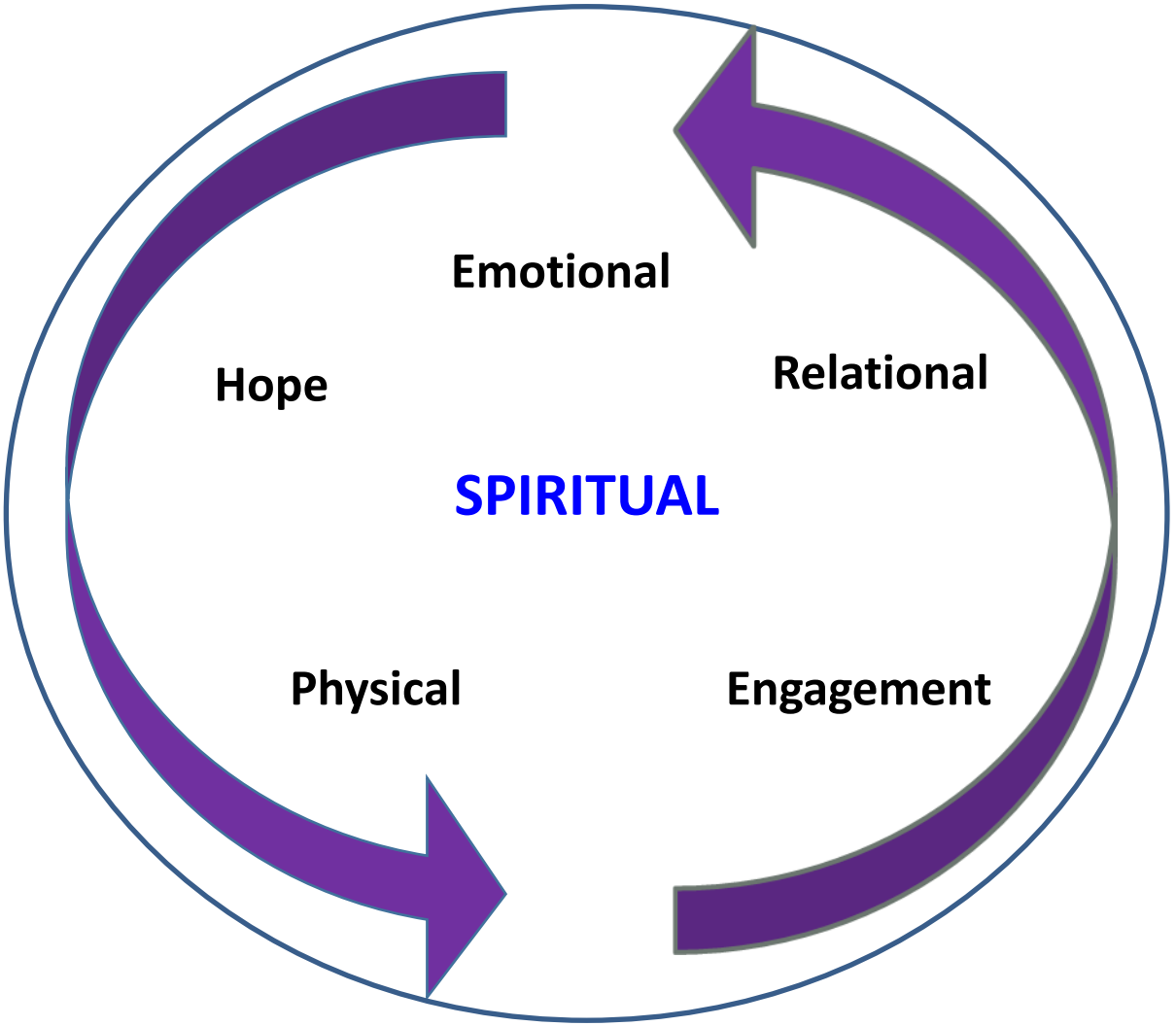
Notice harsh or self-criticizing comments, reduce negative self-bias, identify the inner critic, replace with kind gentler reframes (self-kindness). This supports emotional regulation promoting calm and contentment, increases self -soothing when stressed. Normalise responses as part of the human condition. Demonstrate loving kindness.

Assessing worker well-being/indications of strain.

‘In collaboration with the worker, using empathy and support ‘looking upstream’ before STS symptoms are fully formed. Bear witness to any distress and also assess yourself as a supervisor.’ (Miller, 2018).

Self care, Self awareness, Mutual support

Supporting well-being – The Sphere model



SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

Stress Response

Revs you up, preparing you to fight, take flight or freeze

- **Heart beats fast**
- **Breath is fast and shallow**
- **Pupils of eyes expand (can make you sensitive to light)**
- **Gut becomes inactive (difficult to digest)**
- **Blood rushes to your skeletal muscles and away from your brain, making it hard to think clearly**
- **Hormones rush through your body, making you feel anxious**
- **Expends your energy**

PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

Relaxation Response

Calms you down, preparing you to rest, think and restore

- **Heart beats in slow, rhythmic pattern**
- **Breath is full and slow**
- **Pupils of eyes shrink**
- **Gut is active (helps you digest and absorb the nutrients from your food)**
- **Increased blood flow to gut, lungs and brain**
- **Hormones rush in, lifting your mood and helping you to relax**
- **Conserves your energy**

Vicarious transformation (VTF)

- Transforming one's vicarious trauma, leading to spiritual growth.
- Vicarious transformation is a process of active engagement with the negative changes that come about through trauma work.

Signs:

- deepened sense of connection with all living beings
- a broader sense of moral inclusion (seeing everyone as equal and worthy)
- a greater appreciation of the gifts in one's life
- a greater sense of meaning and hope

Compassion satisfaction

Positive feelings derive from competent performance, characterised by positive relationships with colleagues and the conviction that one's work makes a meaningful contribution to clients and society.

All the very best in your work!

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