

Reflective Supervision

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Social Work and Stress

- We know that Social Work is satisfying, but we also know that it is stressful
- Evidence shows that stress is related to poor psychological and physical health, and leads to illness, absence and impaired performance in Social Workers
- Stress has been identified as a particular problem for trainees and AYSE's, although very often more consideration is given to their emotional well being than more experienced workers
- But some social workers are more resilient to stress than others, the question is why? And how do we improve the resilience of all?

Importance of Resilience

- Recent social work reforms have highlighted the need for social workers to be empathetic, reflective and resilient
- Social Workers need to develop the emotional **resilience** to manage the challenges they face' Iaming 2009
- The Social Work Taskforce identified the need for social workers to demonstrate 'empathy, **resilience**, common sense and analytical skills' (2009)
- Emotional **resilience** refers to effective coping and adaption when faced with hardship and adversity (Collins 2008)
- Emotional **resilience** has been characterised by an ability to experience and 'bounce back' from negative emotional experiences by adaptation, to check the changing demands of stressful experiences (Tugade and Fredrickson, 2004)
- Yet the processes for how we develop **resilience** is relatively unexplored

Developing Resilience

Beddoe et al (2011) provide a helpful framework to identify the factors contributing to the development of resilience among social work students and practitioners including;

- Factors that reside in the individual
- Factors linked to the organisation
- Factors linked to educational preparation and training

Other identified factors in other studies have found

- Effective coping and problem solving skills
- Taking care of ones self
- Skills for self reflection, empathy and emotional intelligence

Resilience

- Resilient people have the ‘capacity to bend without breaking and the capacity once bent to spring back’ Valliant (1993)
- Resilience is not just about the individual and how they cope with pressure and stress but is also about the organisation
- ‘It is important not only to train workers in the skills that allow them to use coping strategies, but also create organisational environments that facilitate such coping strategies’ Lee, Forster and Rehimer (2011)

How do we Increase Resilience?

Key literature identified the following factors as key to improving resilience and well being;

- Regular Supervision
- Opportunity to reflect on work frustrations with colleagues (peers support)
- Supportive management
- Case reflection outside of supervision
- Continuing Professional Development
- Clear definition of roles and responsibilities
- Adequate and appropriate working tools
- Healthy organisation and culture
- Work like balance

Reflection

- Reflection is a key factor running through literature and research in respect of developing resilience and well – being
- Practitioners need to adopt and maintain a reflective attitude and practice critical reflection
- Munro highlighted the need for front line workers to demonstrate ‘professional confidence’ and stated that professionals should have opportunities to explore and reflect on their work outside of normal supervision (2011)
- Social Work Reform Board’s Professional Capabilities (2011) stated that practitioners are required to use critical reflection and analysis to inform and provide a rationale for their professional decision making

What is Reflection?

- 'A process of reviewing an example of practice in order to describe, analyse, evaluate and so inform learning and practice' Reid (1993)

Forms of Reflection;

- Technical reflection – what and how
- Practical reflection – incorporation of practice wisdom and the use of self
- Process reflection – consideration of the importance of relationships and how these effect the situation
- Critical reflection – all of the above and critique plus the recognition of power issues and a commitment to anti oppressive practice

Benefits of Reflection

Fook (2002) suggests that reflective thinking is concerned with identifying a process of working things through, whereas reflexive thinking is concerned with taking into account as many different perspectives on a situation as possible. Reflexive thinking thus stresses the usefulness of developing multiple hypotheses as opposed to developing a fixed, unchanging view which is potentially dangerous, as in the case of Baby Peter.

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is a process that allows the practitioners to reflect on their own knowledge, ideas, experiences and values that impact on their action. Reflection should be viewed as a process of taking a moment to stand back and think about the meaning given to a situation or a set of circumstances in a particular time and place, in relation to self, others and the wider context.

A systemic approach offers a structure that enables multiple ideas from a variety of sources.

‘Reflection means more than just pondering on a case. It implies drawing on our values, knowledge and experience in a systemic way, looking back at what we have done and looking forward at what to do next’ Tovey (2010)

Reflection in Practice

‘Reflective practice helps social workers to develop an understanding of practice events...in the context of supportive peer group it makes it easier for social workers to admit feelings of frailty, failure and personal vulnerability. It is a safe place in which to talk without fear of repercussion and this can dramatically reduce work related stress’ Oelofsen (2012)

This reflection may well result in certain actions being undertaken in relation to specific cases but this is not the only benefit. Developing the concept of a supportive peer group makes individual practitioners feel safe and supported. This improves emotional well being.

The development of skills in reflection promotes the use of critically reflective practice, not just in supervision, group supervision and in discussions with peers and partners but to reflect –in-action as well as reflecting –on – action. This enhances confidence in individual practitioners

Gibbs Reflective Cycle

- Description – what happened
- Feelings – what did you think and how did you feel about it?
- Evaluation – what were the positives and negatives
- Analysis – what sense can we make of it?
- Conclusion – what else can be done?
- Action Plan – what will you do next time?

It is a cycle as what action you take in the final stage will feed back into the first stage beginning the process again

Reflection on the Hoof!

Rolfe's Framework

What – is the problem? was my role? Happened? were the consequences?

So what – was going through your mind? should I have done? Do I know about what happened now?

Now what- do I need to do? Broader issues have been raised? Might happen now?

Lots of different models available.....

Shropshire Practice Group Guidelines

- Preparing – Prior to session group members to think about what issue/case they wish to bring to the reflective practice supervision
- Presenting – One member of the group bring a social work issue for discussion
- Clarifying – Each group member asks the presenter one question to help to understand the situation more clearly
- Affirming – Each group member tells the presenter what impresses them about how they are dealing with the situation
- Reflecting – An open group discussion about the issue
- Closing – The presenter responds to the discussion and sets themselves some goals/actions with the support of others

Role of Facilitator

- Facilitate Discussion and adherence to process
- Manage time
- Ensure process is supportive
- Ensure discussion gives due to emotion and how presenter felt/feels
- Encourage critical reflection and analysis
- Record outline of issue, nature of discussion and actions identified

Benefits of Reflective Practice Supervisions

- Improve staff morale
- Increased support available to staff
- Developing a safe environment for reflection
- Will encourage reflection in all areas of our work
- Improve worker resilience
- Improve worker confidence
- Improve worker well being
- Improve retention
- Develop a reflective culture and one that promotes one of continuous learning and improvement