CHAPTER 3 THE SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP

PERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL ISSUES IN SUPERVISION

- The relationship between supervisor and supervisee is the foundation for the work that will occur in supervision.

- Importance of building a good working relationship.

- For optimum learning to occur, a solid working relationship between supervisor and supervisee is essential.

- Constructive feedback to their supervisees in a supportive, and nonjudgmental environment.
Holloway has identified three essential components of the supervisory relationship:

- (a) The interpersonal phases of the relationship, including dimensions of power and involvement
- (b) The phases of the relationship
- (c) The supervisory contract, consisting of the establishment of a set of expectations for the tasks and functions of supervision
PERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL ISSUES IN SUPERVISION (CONT’D)

- Holloway’s contextual perspective of the supervisory relationship is described in a model that has three phases:
  - Early Phase
    - The tasks are clarifying the nature of the relationship, developing ways to work collaboratively and effectively in supervision, designing a supervision contract, selecting supportive teaching interventions, developing competencies and designing treatment plans
  - Mature Phase
    - The emphasis is on increasing the individual nature of the relationship and promoting social bonding
PERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL ISSUES IN SUPERVISION (CONT’D)

- **Termination Phase**
  - Reflects a greater collaborative working structure
  - Trainees understand the linkage between theory and practice in greater depth, and there is less need for direction from the supervisor
  - This is the time for a summative evaluation process, including a discussion of the meaning of termination and the feelings and thought associated with it
SUPERVISOR-SUPervisee RELATIONSHIP

One of the most important elements in the supervisory process is the kind of person the supervisor is and his or her ability to establish and maintain a good connection with the supervisee.

Essential elements of the supervisor-supervisee relationship include: establishing trust and a safe environment, encouraging self-disclosure, identifying transference and counter transference, examining diversity issues, and establishing appropriate boundaries.
Trust

- Trust is best defined as being able to rely on another with a certain sense of predictability.
- There is an importance of establishing a safe “holding” environment in supervision, a place where supervisees feel safe and free to explore, share, and experiment with new ideas and strategies.
- How a supervisor responds when a supervisee discloses their anxieties pertaining to trust will affect supervisees’ openness to such discussions in the future and may lead them to play it safe if the supervisor conveys a judgmental or untrustworthy tone.
SELF-DISCLOSURE

- Supervisors consider incorporating self-disclosure into their supervisory style as a method for building an emotional bond and a working alliance with supervisees.
**Transference and Counter Transference**

- A supervisee may transfer those feelings and fantasies to the supervisor
- It is not uncommon for supervisees to begin to idealize their supervisor
- If supervisees have unresolved authority issues, they may play out in the supervisory relationship in the form of resistance
- Counter transference refers to the reactions therapists have toward their clients that are likely to interfere with their objectivity
- Counter transference on the part of the supervisor can occur
TRANSFERENCE AND COUNTER TRANSFERENCE (CONT’d)

- Unresolved personal issues, and sometimes even problem areas that have been worked through, can be triggered through interactions with supervisees.
- It is critical for the supervisor to be self-aware, identifying any counter transference that may arise and understanding how it is affecting the supervisory relationship.
- Ethically, supervisors are expected to identify and deal with their reactions through their own supervision, consultation, or personal therapy so that their supervisees are not negatively affected in the supervisory relationship.
Diversity Issues

- A discussion of the differences between a supervisor and his or her supervisee should be incorporated into supervision sessions.
- Supervisors need to understand how these contextual issues influence supervisory relationships.
- Because of the power dynamics inherent in the supervisory relationship, it is the supervisor’s responsibility to serve as the catalyst for facilitating discussions about diversity issues.
- Supervisors can model curiosity about the supervisee’s differences and be eager to learn from the supervisee as well.
- It is essential that supervisors possess specific multicultural competencies.
**Appropriate Boundaries**

- There is a difference between a boundary crossing and a boundary violation, with the latter being a serious violation of legal or ethical standards.

- A boundary crossing should have little potential to harm the supervisee; in fact, extending the boundaries should have a good chance of benefiting the supervisee and the supervisory relationship.
POWER AND AUTHORITY

- Power is the ability to influence or control others, whereas authority is the right to do so.
- The importance of self-monitoring so that power and authority, which are an inherent part of the supervisory roles, are used in an ethical and constructive manner.
- In contrast to supervisors who have a strong need to be in control at all times and impress their trainees with their vast knowledge and wisdom, supervisors who use their power and authority appropriately may empower their trainees to take necessary risks and develop professional autonomy without feeling threatened.
**Parallel Process**

- Because certain aspects of the relationship between the supervisee and his or her client may be paralleled in the supervisory relationship, it is useful for supervisors and supervisees to pay attention to and explore the various manifestations of parallel process in supervision.
PERSONHOOD

- Our values and attitudes affect the supervision that we provide

- Even though we may believe we are objective and won’t impose our personal values on supervisees, they may come through in subtle ways
**Tips for Supervisors**

- Supervision can be effective even if the supervisory relationship is not ideal, but both the supervisor and the supervisee may need to work harder to ensure that the goals of supervision are accomplished.
TIPS FOR SUPERVISORS (CONT’D)

Practical tips for establishing a good working relationship:

- Establishing a healthy, productive relationship with supervisees
  - Treat supervisees with respect; be open and honest about what you do and do not know
  - Work at developing a spirit of mutual trust and collaboration
  - Listen diligently to what supervisees are both saying and not saying, and try to tune into their fears, struggles, and hopes
  - Have a clear understanding of the purpose and the limits of the supervisory relationship
  - Be available, especially by being fully present during the supervisory session and by making sure that this is “protected time” that is free from interruptions
  - Be willing to seek consultation when you are unfamiliar with the topic under discussion
  - Be clear on the boundaries of the relationship
Tips for Supervisors (cont’d)

- Practical tips for establishing a good working relationship:
  - Guarding against imposition of your values
    - Work on having a clear understanding of your values, beliefs, and attitudes regarding the range of typical issues that come up in supervision
    - Discuss with your supervisees their values and beliefs
    - Talk openly about how values and beliefs affect the supervisory relationship and supervisees’ work
    - Initiate discussions with supervisees regarding their values about marriage and divorce, family values, cultural diversity, sexual orientation, religion and spirituality, suicide, child rearing, and violence
SOME SUPERVISOR CHARACTERISTICS

Some supervisor characteristics and factors were thought to have an adverse impact on the supervisory relationship:

- Being judgmental or overly critical
- Being personally or theoretically rigid
- Not being committed to the supervisory process
- Being unavailable to the supervisee
- Having limited clinical knowledge and skills
- Being unethical or demonstrating poor boundaries
- And being too self-focused
Supervisee characteristics

Characteristics of supervisees or factors that were rated as helpful promoting a positive supervisory experience included:

- A desire to learn and improve
- Being non-defensive and open to feedback
- General openness and flexibility
- Possessing knowledge and good clinical skills
- Intelligence
- Being responsible and prepared for supervision
- A willingness to take initiative and risks
DEALING WITH DOUBTS AND FEARS

Here are a few statements that supervisees often say to themselves:

- I am fully responsible for my clients’ outcomes, and negative outcomes mean that I am not competent.
- I must be successful with every client and should be able to help my clients solve all of their problems quickly.
- I must be available at all times.
- I am afraid I won’t know enough to help my clients and may actually make matters worse for them due to my lack of experience.
- Too often I compare my performance with others and tell myself that I do not measure up.
DEALING WITH DOUBTS AND FEARS
(CONT’D)

- It is very difficult for me to be fully present with clients because I am so concerned about what I will say or do next.

- Whenever my supervisor is in the room, I get so anxious because I am sure she will discover that I am not competent.

- I worry about not being able to understand a client’s pain if I have not had similar kind of life experience.

- I must please my supervisor at all times. He or she should agree with and approve everything I do.

- I feel intimidated by my supervisor and fear sharing this with them.
IDENTIFYING UNRESOLVED PERSONAL PROBLEMS

- Although trainees may think that they have effectively dealt with their personal problems, they are often surprised when they recognize in themselves some of the struggles their clients are talking about.
AVOIDING THE ROLE OF THE PROBLEM SOLVER

- Trainees sometimes have a tendency to focus too quickly on solving clients’ presenting problems before clients have had a chance to identify and explore these concerns
IDENTIFYING COUNTER TRANSFERENCE

- Effective therapists use their own life experiences and personal reactions to help them understand their clients and as method of working with them.

- When drawing on your personal experiences, it is essential that you are able to establish clear boundaries so that you do not get lost in your client’s world.
RESPECTING DIVERSE VALUE SYSTEMS

- The therapeutic endeavor is a value-laden process and that all therapists, to some degree, communicate their values to clients.

- There is an abundance of evidence that therapy not only is value laden but that therapists and clients often have different value systems.

- Some researchers have found evidence that clients tend to change in ways that are consistent with the values of their therapists, and clients often adopt the values off their therapists.
Respecting Diverse Value Systems (cont’d)

- The challenge you may have is to recognize when your values clash with a client’s values to the extent that you are not able to function effectively.

- You will be need to be useful to your clients.

- In supervision, you can explore barriers within you that prevent you from working effectively with specific clients.
COMMITTING TO PERSONAL GROWTH

- If you are willing to recognize some ways that your personal characteristics could get in your way as a therapist and a supervisee

- Honest self-appraisal is essential if you are committed to be as effective as you can be in your roles as therapist, supervisee, and ultimately, as a supervisor
SUPERVISEE ANXIETY

- As supervisors, we should be aware of how common, and maybe even healthy, it is for supervisees to have anxiety. We should focus on what can be done to help supervisees manage anxiety effectively.
Supervisee Reactions to Client Failures

- One of the most difficult situations for a therapist to deal with is the failure of clients to benefit from therapy.

- The job of the supervisor is to help the supervisee do everything possible to bring about a positive outcome in therapy and to assist the supervisee in putting it in perspective when the outcome is not so positive.
CHAPTER 10 EVALUATION IN SUPERVISION

Evaluation is an essential component for accomplishing the four defined goals of supervision: promoting development of the supervisee, protecting the welfare of the client, serving as gatekeeper to the profession and fostering the empowerment of the supervisee.

1. In promoting development and teaching the supervisee, evaluation measures the degree to which learning is taking place.
2. In protecting the welfare of the client, evaluation ensures that the supervisee is measuring up to established standards of clinical and ethical competence.
3. In serving the gatekeeping function for the profession, monitoring supervisee performance is a cornerstone in providing information about the supervisee’s professional and clinical competences as well as his or her suitability for the profession.

4. In fostering the empowerment of the supervisee to be able to work as an independent professional, the evaluation process serves a model for the supervisee to learn how to self-evaluate and continue to learn and grow throughout his or her career as a helping professional.
CODES OF ETHICAL EVALUATION

- Supervisors are obligated, both ethically and legally, to provide timely, accurate, and relevant feedback and evaluation to supervisees regarding their clinical performance
OBJECTIVE VERSUS SUBJECTIVE EVALUATION

- Much of the evaluation by supervisors has been largely subjective rather than objective.

- Very few standardized methods for evaluation of supervisees exist, and supervisors have had to develop their own systems to evaluate performance and professional behavior.

- Individual training programs have developed their own assessment and evaluation procedures, which have lacked specificity and empirical foundation.
**OBJECTIVE VERSUS SUBJECTIVE EVALUATION (CONT’D)**

Evaluation falls into two major categories: formative and summative

- **Formative evaluation**: involves providing ongoing evaluation, typically in the form of feedback throughout the supervisory process, to facilitate the supervisee’s long-term professional growth and development

- **Summative evaluation**: refers to evaluation episodes wherein a supervisor provides specific evaluation of how a supervisee is performing, which generally consists of an endpoint evaluation
STANDARDIZATION OF METHODS

- Supervisors are more likely to invest in the evaluation process when standardized procedures and evaluation forms are in place.

- Many agencies, schools, and field training sites have developed rating forms and other tools for evaluation of supervisees and supervisors.

- Many of these forms are thorough and objective, though few have undertaken the rigors of reliability and validity testing that should be conducted on these measures.
CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

- It is extremely helpful when supervisors have specific and clear criteria for evaluation and these are included in the supervision contract.

- The supervision contract then becomes the basis for measuring that which the supervisee has accomplished over the course of supervision.

- Having established criteria gives the supervisor standards by which to measure the performance and conduction of the supervisee.

- Supervisors must distinguish between performance and personality.
In the helping professions, the personal characteristics of supervisees play a major role in their clinical abilities.

It is possible for the supervisees to perform adequately yet receive a negative evaluation from their supervisors based largely on personality factors.

The difficulty, then, is in learning to separate out and measure those personal characteristics that are essential to clinical competence.
**Organization of Evaluation**

- The evaluation process is most effective when it is planned and organized and discussed with the supervisee at the beginning of the supervisory relationship.

- Evaluation procedures, methods, and time frames should be clearly spelled out in the supervision contract.

- This encourages the supervisor to have a well-developed plan about the role and methods of evaluation rather than having to develop something at the 11th hour before the evaluation is scheduled to occur.
**Due Process**

- The consequences of a serious negative evaluation might be, what recourse supervisees will have to correct any deficiencies identified, what they can do if they would like to challenge evaluation with which they do not agree.
EMPOWERING THE SUPERVISEE TO CONDUCT SELF-EVALUATION

- The ultimate goal for supervision is to empower the supervisee to be able to self-supervise throughout his or her professional career.

- A major part of this self-supervision includes the ability to self-evaluate.
Evaluation of the Supervisor

- Supervision is very often a one-way street in which the supervisor evaluates the performance of the supervisee.

- However, a comprehensive evaluation process includes an assessment of the performance of the supervisor by the supervisee and by the agency, department, or the supervisor’s supervisor where appropriate.

- Some supervisors are simply not open to this idea, but those that are can use this feedback as an opportunity for their growth and learning.
The supervisor and supervisee could review and discuss the feedback from the supervisee and discuss what actions can be taken to improve the supervisory process.

Here are some of the qualities on which supervisors can be evaluated:

- Availability
- Communication skills
- Cultural competence
- Ethical and legal knowledge
- Clinical and professional knowledge
- Professionalism
- Provision of useful feedback and evaluation
EVALUATION OF THE SUPERVISOR (CONT’D)

Here are some of the qualities on which supervisors can be evaluated:

- Punctuality
- Responsiveness to supervisee’s needs and ideas
- Resolution of issues/conflicts promptly and professionally
- Effective modeling for the supervisee
- Supervision of psychotherapy
- Supportiveness
- Use of supervision interventions
GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING EVALUATIONS

Let’s look at some of the guidelines for developing the evaluation process and conducting evaluation sessions:

- Evaluation seems most effective as a continuous process. Formal evaluation should occur several times over the course of supervision, and informal evaluation should be conducted on a regular basis. It is good practice to present a balanced evaluation, highlighting both the supervisee’s strengths and deficiencies. Some supervisors tend to focus more heavily on the deficiencies.
GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING EVALUATIONS (CONT’D)

When the supervisee is not open to feedback and evaluation, help the supervisee become aware of and explore that aspect of his or her learning. That could be done by helping the supervisee look at the feedback provided from various sources and how he or she has processed that information. Conduct evaluations frequently enough to keep the supervisee apprised of his or her progress and need for improvement, and give the supervisee ample time to remedy any deficiencies. The frequency of evaluation depends on the needs of the situation and the length of time over which the supervision will occur.
GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING EVALUATIONS (CONT’D)

- Understand the administrative policy for evaluation and who else needs to be involved. Many agencies have their own evaluation procedures and tolls. Determine how the clinical evaluation fits into the agency evaluation process, and whether it is compatible with employment practices. Does this evaluation process satisfy the needs of the graduate training program or licensing board?
GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING EVALUATIONS (CONT’D)

- Try to be involved in the evaluation process, those who have had significant contact or supervision with the supervisee. If they cannot attend the evaluation meeting, call them or send them a form to complete to give input into the progress of the supervisee.

- Involve the supervisee in the evaluation process. If feedback is given routinely, there should be no surprises of the supervisee when the formal evaluation session occurs. Encourage supervisees to evaluate their own progress and discuss how their evaluation may differ from yours.
GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING EVALUATIONS (CONT’D)

- In conducting the evaluation conference, be sure the supervisee knows when and where it will occur and what to expect in the session. Try to meet in a room of offices that is private and free of interruptions. Be as clear as possible in stating your evaluation of the supervisee’s performance. Use specific examples of his or her performance to illustrate your points. Ask supervisees to evaluate their training, including the values of the supervision and what could be improved about the supervisory relationship.
GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING EVALUATIONS (CONT’D)

- Be clear on what needs to be accomplished form here; that is, explain the remediation necessary to correct any problems and include time frames, behavioral expectations, how progress will be assessed, and who will conduct the assessment. Document the session and maintain accurate records of the supervisee’s performance and conduct. Ongoing documentation of the supervisory sessions and critical incidents will provide a basis for the periodic formal evaluations and serve as a record regarding the supervisee’s performance under your supervision to employers, licensing boards, and professional associations.
The issues of openness to supervision should be a major topic of any evaluation—this is a key component of the supervisee’s ability to grow and learn. As a supervisor, model openness to feedback. Try to evaluate performance and behavior and not personality styles, but address personal and interpersonal characteristics that affect the supervisee’s clinical work as apart of the evaluation process.
GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING EVALUATIONS (CONT’D)

The following list provides some specific areas to include in the evaluation of the supervisee:

- Intervention knowledge and skills
- Assessment knowledge and skills
- Relationships with staff and clients
- Responsiveness to supervision
- Awareness of limitations and knowing when to seek outside help
- Communication skills
- Ethical and legal practice
- Multicultural competence
- Professionalism, judgment, and maturity
GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING EVALUATIONS (CONT’D)

The following list provides some specific areas to include in the evaluation of the supervisee:

- Openness to personal development
- Compliance with agency policies and procedures
CONCERNS OF SUPERVISORS

- Many issues that supervisors have with evaluation lead to a desire to avoid the evaluation process altogether, but supervisors must be able to substantiate their observations and their evaluation of the supervisee.

- By developing a system of evaluation using established criteria and measures, supervisors can find their role as evaluators tolerable and productive for both supervisors and the supervisee.
Evaluation Methods

- Supervisors evaluate trainees in a variety of ways.
- The most common method is providing evaluative feedback one-on-one with the supervisee.
- Another form of evaluation commonly used is for a group of professionals who have worked with the supervisee to arrange a meeting with the supervisee to provide evaluative feedback.
- Direct observation of supervisees’ work is necessary to ensure an accurate picture of supervisees’ clinical abilities.
Here is a sampling of questions that might be included to begin the evaluation discussion:

- How do you measure your own professional growth as a therapist?
- What do you see as your strengths and weaknesses?
- What have been your past experiences with evaluation?
- What meaning does evaluation hold for you professionally and personally?
- Describe for me other evaluations you have encountered outside of supervision? How did these experiences affect your professional or personal life?
- How do you conceptualize evaluation in supervision?
- Describe your comfort level with being an evaluator in general? In working with clients? In working with therapists (supervisees)?
The current norm for letters writers in the United States is rarely to include negative qualities, and 'faint praise' may be most telling feature of some letters.

When there is negative information, referees are often reluctant to write it down.

It may be that they do not want to have to justify their observation, or they may worry about liability issues.
LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION CHECKLIST

- Your position now and when you supervised the supervisee, and how familiar you are with the supervisee’s work
- How long you have been in your position
- Position and function of the supervisee
- Dates the supervisee was under your supervision
- The supervisee’s duties and responsibilities, and how he or she performed
- Examples of specific training activities
- Level of clinical knowledge and skills
- Was supervisee open to supervision, growing and learning?
LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION CHECKLIST (CONT’D)

- Did supervisee work well with individuals and groups?
- Does the supervisee have good common sense?
- Does supervisee demonstrate good judgment?
- Does supervisee demonstrate an awareness of and an ability to work with multicultural issues?
- Was supervisee enjoyable to work with?