6. Supervision and Intervision

*Supervision* is speaking with another caregiver. The topics of the conversation, in general, are the issues of the clients and groups whom the caregiver is seeing as well as the interaction between the caregiver’s professional life and his or her private life.

*Intervision* is doing this in a group. Sometimes, such groups are known as *Balint Groups* after the Hungarian general practitioner who started them.

The reasons for supervision are to gain perspective on the work in general and on issues that are contributing to it and on the specific issues of the clients and groups as well as gaining perspective on the person of the caregiver. It is important that the caregiver gain insight into himself or herself. This strengthens the caregiver in virtually all aspects of his or her life.

In an earlier part of this course, we mentioned the identification of the caregiver with the client and counter-transference. Supervision is the place to deal with these issues. Further, virtually all caregivers undergo *secondary traumatization* when seeing highly traumatized clients. It is necessary for the caregiver to process these traumas. The facilitation of this processing is one function of supervision.

Another function of supervision is to deal with the issues that have affected the caregiver’s life, much as the caregiver would give to a client.

Further, the interaction between the client’s reactions and the caregiver’s experience can have profound effects on the caregiver. Another function of supervision is to deal with this.

A person giving supervision need not be the most senior person on the team. People within a team can form pairs and/or small groups and supervise one another. It is even better to find someone outside of the team to give supervision. This gives greater objectivity and allows the person being supervised to feel freer and less threatened.

There are varying opinions about the language of supervision. Many feel that it should take place in the language of the person receiving the supervision. Other people feel that doing it in another language gives distance. Our reaction is that this is a decision for the person being supervised.

The time taken for supervision should not be rushed. It is extremely important that it occurs in a relaxed manner and that as many issues as possible be explored in depth.

The frequency of supervision is dependent on the circumstances. There are a number of factors that play a role here. One is the number of clients that the person being supervised is seeing. Another is the difficulty of the clients for the person being supervised and the levels of the traumas being seen. Still another is the experience of the person being supervised. A further factor is the depth to which the types of issues being seen affect the person being supervised. In general, we find one hour per week an absolute minimum.

We find supervision crucial for all caregivers without exception. This includes not only caregivers giving psychological assistance but also such people as firefighters, police, lawyers, and anyone working with traumatized people.

We also find that even people working for a short period of time as volunteers MUST have supervision during and after their period of volunteering. They also must be prepared for what they will face.

We find not having supervision unprofessional. We will come back to this in future courses.

If you cannot find a supervisor in your region, please contact us.

Activities

How is supervision working for you?

Again, we emphasize that, if you don’t have supervision already, you MUST get it.