

## **Use of Self Model Of Training and Supervision**

A central component of the Georgia State University Counseling Center training program is a focus on developing the "person of the therapist" and "the use of self" as an instrument of change. Use of Self is defined as a process through which therapists (and trainees) learn how to use their personal (emotional and cognitive) reactions and knowledge of self in order to: 1) inform conceptualizations of their client's struggles and 2) create a therapeutic relationship that is collaborative and conducive to corrective relating with the aim of overcoming difficulties and facilitating personal growth.

Although our supervising clinicians represent a variety of theoretical orientations, (e.g., object relations, interpersonal, cognitive behavioral, humanistic, feminist and integrationist), we all use a supervision model that looks at your reactions to clients/supervisors and their reactions to you and how to utilize this information in your work with clients. We view the training year as a critical time for the integration of professional and personal development with a focus on clarifying professional and personal identity.

We, therefore, expect our trainees to invest in synthesizing effective use of self with clinical skill acquisition through supervised experiential learning and formalized training. Because of this philosophy, supervisors commonly prompt trainees to self-reflect and, often, this does result in an implicit expectation that some exploration of the trainee's personal experience (as triggered in her/his clinical activities or in the supervisory relationship) will be open for discussion between supervisor and trainee in their working relationship. The choice of how much personal history to share, however, is up to the trainee, and trainees are not penalized for asserting their best assessment of an appropriate level of disclosure regarding such personal history. The emphasis is on the willingness of the trainee to discuss his or her reactions to clients and/or the supervisor in addition to exploring the **impact** of personal issues on his/her clinical work.

The emphasis in our training model is not on probing to simply learn private information around the personal issues of trainees or toward getting trainees to work through such issues, and supervision is never viewed as psychotherapy. Furthermore, the emphasis of such disclosure is not on the content of the trainee's personal history but rather on the trainee's emotional and cognitive reactions in counseling sessions that are related to experiences in that personal history. The trainee's reactions (negative as well as positive) toward clients and supervisors are viewed as potentially important data that can inform the therapeutic process and then be used to further the therapeutic action with clients.

Because we operate with a collaborative emphasis, the supervising Faculty meet regularly in an Executive Training Committee to discuss the progress of all the Center's trainees in terms of their training and development. This may involve sharing information about the Trainee's experience with clients and in individual supervision. Faculty use judgment in sharing with other faculty on the Executive Training Committee specific personal disclosures made by the trainee's in supervision, only sharing that which aids in the overall training staff being sensitive to and aware of the Person as Trainee and how this influences the trainee's clinical and professional development.

It is also our objective to empower the trainee in her/his development, personally and professionally, which inherently involves support toward the trainee coming to realize the most appropriate and effective level of self-disclosure toward personal and professional development. We not only value this because of the impact on the trainee's counseling relationships but also toward the development of the trainee's skills in providing clinical supervision to other mental health professionals and trainees. Thus, supervision is viewed as a vehicle in which *the development of clinical skills and identity* as a mental health clinician is achieved by exploring the many dimensions of the counselor/client and the supervisor/counselor relationships.

Consequently, our training program assumes the mutually agreed upon goal that the trainee will not only develop skills of doing psychotherapy but also enhance awareness of how one's personhood impacts the trainee's professional endeavors.

Recent guidelines in the APA Ethical Principles regarding Student Disclosure of Personal Information states that:

*Psychologists do not require students or supervisees to disclose personal information in course- or program-related activities, either orally or in writing, regarding sexual history, history of abuse and neglect, psychological treatment, and relationships with parents, peers, and spouses or significant others except if (1) the program or training facility has clearly identified this requirement in its admissions and program materials or (2) the information is necessary to evaluate or obtain assistance for students whose personal problems could reasonably be judged to be preventing them from performing their training- or professionally related activities in a competent manner or posing a threat to the students or others.*

We agree with and support these new guidelines as part of our overall commitment to providing quality training in keeping with the high standards put forth by our profession. Therefore, we ask our interns to indicate their understanding of our Use of Self training approach and we provide them with written information as a formal gesture toward gaining their informed consent to enter into such training with us.

See Article: Wells, M., & Bell Pringle, V. (2004). Use of self in supervision model: Relational, ethical & cultural issues. Retrieved December 10, 2004, <http://www.appic.org/NewsOnLine/Articles/Supervision12-8-04.html>.