

radically new approach to those who suffer from 'inner emptiness'. Instead of working towards filling that void with new purpose, direction and meaning, I would aim to assist sufferers to go even deeper into that empty-ness and discover its true nature, I would actively discourage all ideas of 'inner journeying' towards wholeness, or 'paths to enlightenment'. These serve merely to postpone happiness here and now, and build up the self-illusion.

3) In the spiritual domain, I would fire all gurus and transpersonal psychologists who use stage-by-stage models of 'self-development' (explaining experiences like mine as fifth-level transient nirvikalpa-samadhi — or whatever). And I'd like to see the term Self with a capital S — Self-actualisation, Self-realisation, Self-tran-

scendence — expunged from psychological and spiritual literature, reserving the word strictly for the empirical self of everyday life. It is the whole obfuscating concept of 'self' which needs to be transcended, for in my experience there has never really been any self to transform, actualise, realise or transcend.

4) Finally, as a dream-researcher, I would like to see more work done on the liberating power of sleep (a condition much maligned in spiritual traditions, despite the Upanishadic statement that every night in deep sleep we go to the feet of Brahman). Shakespeare called sleep 'the death of each day's life' — and if there are occasions when the self-sense relaxes and the body-mind opens to empty-ness during sleep, as I now suspect, then it may well be 'chief nourisher at life's feast'.

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## ***A Transpersonal Model of Supervision***

*Alyss Thomas*

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As a recently accredited transpersonal psychotherapist (Karuna Institute) I have found a lack of both practical and theoretical approaches to transpersonal supervision. Psychospiritual material can get left outside the supervision room because a transpersonal model of supervision has not been consciously developed. Our models of supervision need to reflect

who we are as practitioners and this is a small contribution towards building a transpersonal model of supervision.

The BAC code of ethics for the supervision of counsellors states that 'the primary purpose of supervision is to ensure that the counsellor is addressing the needs of the client'. I think that in both transpersonal and humanistic supervision,

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attention also needs to be paid to the process happening in the present moment between the two participants, and that equal attention should be given to the needs of the supervisee. I trust that the client's needs will be met if the counsellor or psychotherapist is in a good-enough state to provide them.

### *The Garden of Supervision: a Horticultural Analogy*

Cultivation is the art or practice of paying attention to living things to help them to grow and develop. Whatever happens in a garden can happen in counselling, or in the psyche of the individual who is working. Things continually flourish and die back in natural rhythms, and one naturally expects and works with this regeneration process rather than against it. There can be too much or too little water and nourishment, storms and diseases, rampant growth of weeds, a time of waiting for new spring shoots to emerge, a time to cut away dead wood and so forth.

The supervisee's roots are usually already established in a well-dug soil. The supervision session can be a kind of Gardeners' Question Time where the supervisee reflects on and discusses how to cultivate certain clients. The supervisor is aware of the potential needs of both novice, journeyman and master gardeners. These include restorative needs — water and nourishment and the natural processing of rich organic material, a shady place to rest, and a space in which to play; formative needs — shaping, pruning, giving direction, looking at the garden as a whole; normative needs — aspects of culture and professionalism

that need to be shared and understood; and educational needs — there is always more to learn about the needs, nurture and behaviour of living things.

The psyche of the psychotherapist-as-person must continually grow and replace what has worn out as part of the natural entropy and composting process. This is where the role of the supervisor lies in a transpersonal approach: keeping track of the need for change and replenishment, for personal space within the work for maintaining a reflective, witness position.

### *Restoration*

The restorative function of supervision is especially important in a transpersonal approach. Experience is reflected on, learnt from, re-used, forgotten — i.e. returned to the unconscious, from where it enriches the ongoing present growth. Without this space to reflect, to turn the raw material of counselling work into experience that has been attended to, counsellors and therapists can become sterile, depleted, dried-up. A 'master' counsellor is not merely someone who has been counselling for a long time and become part of the accredited establishment, but someone who has been involved in this cyclical process over many seasons, who has matured and become wiser and more effective through the organic processing of the experience. A supervision of counselling can be cultivated in time, during which the counsellor herself can learn to become a supervisor.

A transpersonal approach to supervision allows more space for reflection and less for interpretation than in some other models. It fosters an expansive, non-threatening but stimulating mood, and

encourages creativity and insight. This calls to mind Donald Winnicott in *Playing and Reality*: 'Psychotherapy is done in the overlap of the two play areas, that of the patient and that of the therapist. If the therapist cannot play, he is not suitable for the work.' (1971, p54). Supervision needs to provide a space for play for, as Winnicott believed, only in playing can the adult or child be free enough to be creative. If supervision is too task-focused, or too concerned with the 'right' interpretation, vital opportunities for gaining fresh vision will be missed. I suspect that when I am most effective, both as therapist and as supervisor, my inner child is fully present.

My experience in a transpersonal supervision group (in core process supervision at the Karuna Institute) helped me build a sense of identity as a therapist by providing safety, companionship, holding, and a peaceful space in which to review the work and how I was doing in relation to it. There were few expectations, and little sense of competition. It was acceptable to bring difficult material. The sessions were nonetheless exciting, and sometimes scary, and I left with a clearer sense of direction and an opening up of possibilities for me and the client.

Petruska Clarkson's model of the five types of therapeutic relationship (1993), can also be applied to the supervisory relationship. These include the working alliance, the transferential and counter-transferential relationship, the reparative or developmentally needed relationship, the I-you mutual relationship and the transpersonal relationship. One of the hallmarks of the transpersonal relation-

ship in psychotherapy is the sense of timelessness it brings, and the shared perception that there is a healing process taking place which the counsellor does not produce, but allows space for. Petruska Clarkson describes this as 'intuitive illuminations which seem to flourish the more the psychotherapist dissolves the individual ego from the therapeutic container, allowing wisdom and insight to occur as a self-manifesting process.'

I have experienced this transpersonal dimension when working with supervisees or supervisors who are open to it. From the supervisor, it can come as a gentle reminder to trust the process and the client and not to work so hard to 'solve' problems. In the supervision session it can be a mutual allowing of space or silence in response to feelings or a piece of work, which has the quality of those few moments one spends watching a sunset after a hectic day. It can manifest as either of us intuitively realising or feeling something important about the client, or letting go of anxiety about them, or arriving at a new insight, or a shared awareness and stillness. This requires respect for each other's individuality and integrity, and an openness to the arrival of universal or archetypal themes, or even miracles.

There is a transpersonal approach to supervision which works well in group supervision contexts. It comes from the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado which is a Buddhist psychotherapy training centre. They take what they call 'a contemplative approach' (Bonnie Rabin and Robert Walker, 1987) and are interested in the application of meditation practice to psychotherapy and supervi-

sion. The technique used is designed to 'bring one's experience of the client and of one's relationship to the client vividly into the supervision situation'. The emphasis is on awareness, and on cultivating a skilful frame of mind. What happens in the session is that the supervisee who is working presents a description of the client under three categories of body, speech and mind. Theories and explanations are not entered into. Instead of focusing on the problem, or any one aspect of the person, rich detail about the client's whole person and life is brought into the room. This encourages curiosity, and an unhurried approach. Spontaneity and free insight are encouraged. The client herself is allowed to permeate the room. In a group, three different people can listen and ask questions under the headings of body, speech and mind. Body includes a physical description, including the presenter's own body when she is with the client, the client's physical environment and daily life. Speech includes the communication between the client and therapist, the emotional life and relationships. Mind includes the client's thought processes, beliefs, assumptions, world view. Through this process, the helping relationship is evoked in the room, and the participants are encouraged to notice and share their responses. The presenter has the opportunity to deepen her ability to respond to the client. Suggestions of appropriate action often simply emerge, and theoretical or clinical issues can be brought in later in the session if appropriate.

### *Transpersonal Supervision is . . .*

Here are a few personal reflections on the nature of transpersonal supervision prac-

tice. The aspects suggested below can be brought into any style of supervision practice, as long as space is made for the transpersonal dimension. They are deliberately poetic, because poetry is a way of refreshing our vision.

#### ***A Container***

A container is a place to put things so that our energy is not lost but is stoked up again into a creative fire. Often we are on our last legs when we reach supervision. Our energy is drained, we have lost our zest, focus and direction, and there is no use in trying to solve it on our own. This is part of the natural process of cultivation. We lose our ability to see freshly and innocently, and we experience stress, exhaustion and creative blocks. What we need is a holding relationship, a protected space for re-focusing and renewal. Supervision is a contained space where the supervisee can feel cared for and protected.

#### ***A Rocking Chair***

Clarissa Pinkola Estes writes in *Women Who Run with the Wolves* that 'Patience, peace and rocking renew ideas. Just holding the idea and the patience to rock it . . . is a necessity.' Coming to sit in the rocking chair is just sitting and breathing together, finding one's rhythm again, putting one's feet back on the ground, deciding what is true, hearing how things sound when they are spoken, stopping to notice what we are really seeing.

#### ***The Island of Contemplation***

Patrick Casement (1986) calls this 'the mental space within which the internal supervisor can begin to operate . . . the process of supervision should develop into

a dialogue between the external supervisor and the internal supervisor.' Supervision is consultation with one's own wisdom. Wordsworth called poetry 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'. Supervision has a poetic function, in recalling and recollecting the accumulated richness of sessions. Contemplative supervision is attentive viewing or consideration without pressure to do or decide anything, a way to watch the sessions from the outside, to fully reflect. Here one attends to the soul of the work, and I find this not a luxury but a necessity if I am to continue in a fit state to counsel.

### ***Watching the Sunset***

Sitting watching the world go round means it is possible to stop the world enough to let it go. We do not want to carry our clients and their troubles around with us all the time. In watching the sunset, we can ease and let go our attachment to them.

### ***A Joint Process***

The supervision session is a joint venture. When it is regarded as a parallel process, and when the play areas of the counsellor and supervisor overlap, creativity and new information are available. This joint focus creates an energy that is more than the sum of its parts. I find the Peter Hawkins-Robin Shohet double-matrix process model immensely helpful when I am supervising, especially as a way of experiencing the client and the client/counsellor relationship for myself. This gets around the problem of supervisees wanting to know 'what to do next'. Diane Shainberg (1983) writes "The work of the supervisor is to show that the work is

ongoing, that there is no 'way', that one never knows for sure the experience of the other, and that it is in the mutual participation of discovering the essential quality of the patient that the healing takes place.' The process model provides one way of being with the client and the supervisee with attention and awareness.

### ***Visiting the Old Woman in the Forest***

In many fairy tales, the heroine reaches a point where she is at her wits' end and hasn't a clue what to do next. This is when she makes a journey into the forest, up a mountain, or down a long road to visit the wise woman who knows (Estes, 1992). She is the helper, healer or magical force who must be consulted. The consultant is always expecting us. She expects us to wear out, feel exhausted and need replenishment on a regular basis. Counsellors tend to be surprised when they are exhausted, blame themselves that they have worn out their precious resources, and are not eternally able to cope. They drag themselves through the forest on aching legs saying they are alright and must keep going. This is when the resources consultant needs to consciously refrain from focusing on the task — although this may be a tough discipline — and must avoid saying "This is what has happened and this is what you should do about it". If this happens the weary counsellor falls into self-doubt and disempowerment, and will seriously consider working at the supermarket check-out for the rest of her life. Whatever the supervisor can do to suggest rest and regeneration may help, to return her to the rocking chair and hold her in front of the fire in the hut in the dark forest at the end of the road till she regains her powers.

We have not yet reached a complete model of transpersonal supervision, but some of these ideas may provide a few building blocks. I would be most interested

to hear from readers who have experienced transpersonal supervision, for example in psychosynthesis, or who practise it themselves.

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## Further Reading

Michael Carroll, 'Counselling Supervision: The British Context', in *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, Vol 1, No 4, 1988

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Petruska Clarkson, 'A Multiplicity of Therapeutic Relationships', in *On Psychotherapy*, ed Petruska Clarkson, Whurr Publishers, 1993

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Peter Hawkins and Robin Shohet, *Supervision in the Helping Professions*, Open University Press, 1989

Brigid Proctor, notes from workshop on *MSC Course in Counselling for Trainers and Supervisors*, Bristol University, 1993

Bonnie Rabin and Robert Walker, 'A Contemplative Approach to Clinical Supervision', in *Journal of Contemplative Psychotherapy* Vol IV, 1987, The Naropa Institute, Boulder, Colorado

Diane Shainberg, 'Teaching Therapists How to Be With Their Clients', in *Awakening the Heart*, Ed John Welwood, New Science Library, 1983

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# The Transpersonal and The Psychospiritual

Thomas Greaves

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## Trusting the Process

Transpersonal models provide us with frames of reference in which depth experiences, particularly those associated with spiritual growth, can be interpreted. They operate on the boundary where the empirical ground of experience and the unconscious mystery of spirit meet, help-

ing to demystify and give shape to the ebbs and flows between conscious and unconscious worlds. But all psychological theories are limited by their fixed literal forms and cannot reflect the ever changing flow of process; they are individual frames of a continuous film, islands in a sea of flux. This is like our relationships with clients that flow like a river, down which we are

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