

Supervision and Whistle Blowing

The previous Ethics Column presented realistic dilemmas relating to supervision including this one, requiring unavoidable action:

Dilemma *I supervise a religious person who believes sex is dirty and works with sexually abused children.*

Response by Katrina Voysey

If I were a supervisor, I would approach this dilemma by encouraging the supervisee to explore two areas - authority and how she manages her belief about sex, viz:

On authority

- How did she form her belief that sex was dirty? For instance by accepting the received views of her deity, or of church elders, or by some other means?
- How does she react to my stating my different view of sex? How would she react to a client stating a similar or opposing view to her own?
- How does she imagine that sexually abused children might form their views of sex? Can she appreciate that children may have:
- Accepted the authority of the more powerful abuser.
- And/or been so overwhelmed by the experience that their disgust and feelings of being dirtied (and perhaps the reaction of others) is confused with the sexual act itself, or indeed with themselves.
- Can the supervisee appreciate that she may be seen by the child client as an authority on at least three counts, because she is a therapist, an adult and a possibly sexual adult.

On how she manages her views on sex

- How will she handle her own feelings about sex, if/when the client discloses sexual matters? What draws her to work with these clients?
- Based on her exploration of the above, I would hope that the supervisee would come to an understanding that her views are incompatible with working with sexually abused children. If not, I would point this out.
- I would also have reservations about how the supervisee would handle sexual material brought by other clients. I would ask her to more fully explore in therapy this and any of the above that appeared to warrant it.



Sadly, there this was the only reply to the supervision dilemmas, which were quite realistic, not dramatic, and hence I'd hoped would elicit a wider response than hitherto. But it seems there is not the energy, or the interest, amongst S&S readers to respond to the dilemmas presented over the last few months. Maybe the need (if there is one) for such a column is met by the more mainstream psychotherapy journals? With the unethical (in my view) Iraq War raging as I write, our own doorstep issues may seem too trivial to discuss. Thus, sadly, the following will be our last dilemma and the closure, at least for now, of the Ethics Issues column in this form. If this is a loss to you, then contact me with your views.

Ethical Dilemma - Blow the whistle?

You are an experienced and practicing counsellor, taking a higher psychotherapy degree. For the course you have to take two clients to a college appointed peer supervision group led by Kate, who you find very helpful, knowledgeable and supportive. For the end of year assessment you each have to present a mini-case study of a key piece of work with one of your clients, supported by a tape and its transcript. Only Kate will hear the tape and see the transcript in a one-to-one tutorial with each of you. You are ok on this. But Jim, your fellow student and supervisee, is having problems with erratic clients and getting permission to tape. You like Jim, he seems pretty competent, in the group and in class.

Over lunch Jim confides to you (naively? or foolishly?) that he has 'sorted things with Kate', she's agreed to him writing as accurate a transcript as possible of a key interchange and then get his girl friend to act as the client and make a recording.

What might you do? Stay silent?; express your view privately to Jim?; to Kate?; spill the beans in the group?; whistle blow to the College? The latter would probably mean Jim and maybe Kate leaving the College and damaging both careers. Remember, you like both of them, think they're competent, and this might be a one-off indiscretion.

Contributions should be limited to 200 words, and sent as an email attachment, or on disc, or as clearly typed copy. Send directly to the Ethics Editor:

*Tony Morris, 6 Burston Road, Putney, London, SW15 6AR
Tel 020 8788 3929 tony.morris01@virgin.net*

Tony will be leading a one-day AHPP workshop *Ethical Dilemmas - Resolving Predicaments & Risking Creativity* on Saturday 21 June, 10am-5pm in central London, cost £40.

For more details and booking see www.ahpp.org or phone 08457 660 326 as soon as possible.