

**CONTRACTS IN COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY – ed.  
CHARLOTTE SILLS** (2006) Sage pp 200 £18.99

Like most practitioners, I suspect, I thought I had a reasonable idea of what contracts were about. Opening this book and reading the contents list was enough to tell me just how much I didn't know. The book covers the many facets of contracting and is organised in four parts.

In the first part, 'An Overview', Sills begins with some reflections on the nature of contracts, and concludes that they are both a necessity and a limitation. She goes on to describe various types of contract: administrative, professional, psychological, and discusses important features of each. Although the whole book would be very useful to a new practitioner, this section in particular sets out the basics. It includes the fundamentals of the therapeutic frame and discusses fees and breach of contract as well as ethical issues around contracting. The whole is strongly research based, using concepts from a variety of orientations.

The second part, 'Theoretical Approaches', draws together a range of writers who are experts in their fields. Michael Jacobs explores the place of contracting in the psychodynamic approach. He considers contracts as a definition of boundaries, and includes a statement of the components of the secure frame. Jacobs provides some useful scenarios to illustrate his points, which may be helpful for practitioners from other orientations.

Jacobs is followed by Frank Wills on CBT. He is very clear that contracts are important in this approach, even though the word 'contract' is not often used. There are two ways in which cognitive therapy is very contractual; the first is the matching of the therapy to the client, and the second is the 'rolling contract', both requiring a collaborative working style. It could be argued that these factors are not confined to cognitive therapy. Wills describes part of the work as constructing a 'problem list' and using agenda-setting, and it is easy to relate this back to the 'contract for change' which Sills presented in Part 1.

Mike Worrall evaluates the place of contracting within the person-centred approach. I found this particularly interesting since he is clear that the role of the person-centred therapist is not to do anything to her client (is it for any of us?), but simply to create a relational climate to facilitate self-directed exploration and development. He also insists that behavioural outcomes are out of place here, drawing on Thorne's (1991) discussion of 'contractual living' as the root of the problems which bring the client to counselling. Under certain

conditions, contracts could inhibit the growth of the client. Worrall states (p. 54) that his person-centred contract:

'will reflect the precise needs and wants of both the client and myself, will arise out of the nature of the relationship between us, and will both enshrine and further a commitment to mutuality.'

Psychological contact is the first of the person-centred conditions, and Worrall claims that by arranging to meet and sitting together in the room the pair may not only have made contact, but have also made a rudimentary contract. However, when discussing unconditional positive regard, he is clear that this condition will prevent a counsellor-led contract which seeks to impose a direction or seeks an explicit behaviour from the client; giving no-harm or no-suicide contracts as examples. He sees this as a unilateral imposition rather than a bilateral agreement. A dynamic and flexible approach is necessary for contracts to work in a person-centred setting, although he makes it clear that this is his own stance.

Part 3 is 'Types and Considerations'. At first glance I wondered if this was going to be an expansion of part 1, but in fact it is a collection of unconnected situations. There are outcome-focused contracts, process contracts and contracts related to harmful behaviour, different personality types, and finally ethics and law.

In discussing outcome-focused contracts, Ian Stewart makes the distinction between actions and outcomes, and differentiates them both from contracts. He then goes on to describe a number of conditions for effective contract-making which relate to both action contracts and outcome contracts, and it is the in-depth discussion of these six conditions which forms the remainder of the chapter. As with Part 1, this section would be extremely useful for beginning practitioners.

Adrienne Lee is responsible for the chapter on process contracts, which she describes (p.74) as:

'those that are made moment-by-moment during the ... session as part of the interpersonal process in the here-and-now'.

She divides the therapeutic cycle into four stages, of which the process contract is the third. The administrative contract (see Part 1) sets the scene and prepares the client for the process-eliciting question 'What do you want now?' The second is the treatment contract, which will usually be softer or less specified. The process of elicitation is an experiential rather than a cognitive process. The process contracts themselves constitute the third stage. They are:

'miniature replays of the overall treatment contract' (p.76)

which are both organic and spontaneous. Finally we come to completion contracts, which may be problematic in that the evolving process is the experience of a lifetime.

Having discussed these stages, Lee goes on to describe six qualities of process-oriented contracts, followed by ten tips for making them. She concludes by restating that change is being co-created in the present, moment by moment.

Contracts and harmful behaviour are discussed by Geoff Mothersole, who focuses on the use of no-harm contracts in the prevention of suicide and self-harm. He begins by differentiating between three concepts; conditions, contracts and promises. In making a contract for work together, the practitioner sets out the grounds (conditions) upon which he is willing to enter into a therapeutic contract. Contracts are seen as a way of containing situations where there is concern by providing extra support for the work. While the contract is seen as a commitment to the self, a promise is an undertaking to another person, and as such may externalise the locus of control. However, Mothersole contends that sometimes a promise is the best that we can hope for, and therefore we are justified in requesting it.

Mothersole gives case examples to illustrate his points. He concludes that although contracts are no substitute for a solid working alliance, they have the potential to reduce the risk of harmful behaviours.

Charlotte Sills and Max Wide discuss the making of contracts with different personality types. They start by considering the usefulness of Ware's (1983) six personality adaptations as a framework for this work. Then they progress to a deeper discussion of Jung's four aspects of human functioning. Using examples, they continue by describing the making of contracts with the various types; sensation, intuitive, thinking and feeling. They conclude by stressing that this typology should not be used in a way which will limit the client through categorisation, but rather to utilise the tendencies of the individual.

Finally in this part, Peter Jenkins examines issues relating to contracts, ethics and law. This chapter covers a great deal of ground, from the requirements for a contract and the context of contract law, through contractual terms, obtaining informed consent and reporting issues, to a discussion of ethical principles and contractual duties. Once again, this chapter is one that has particular relevance to those setting out in practice.

Part 4 is 'Contracts and Contexts'. Keith Tudor covers the complexity and challenge of contracts, and critiques the ways in which they are often used. He examines three-handed contracts, power relations and social contacts. This chapter unites the basic theory of Part 1 with Jenkins chapter on law and ethics. He also touches on working with EAPs and doing couples work.

Jenifer Elton Wilson discusses contracts in time-limited work, again drawing on Part 1. However, contracts do not feature strongly in this introduction.

Brigid Proctor and Charlotte Sills consider the place of contracts with trainee practitioners, examining the three-handed relationship

of therapist, client and course. A number of professional tensions are listed and a means to resolve them is offered – the three-cornered contract. The contracts between course and trainee, course and therapist, and therapist and client are discussed. As they state on p. 160:

'ensuring clarity of understanding about the purpose, aims and circumstances of required therapy can do much to avoid a wasted experience.'

Finally, Brigid Proctor discusses contracting in supervision. This is an excellent chapter which covers a great deal of ground with useful lists, tables and diagrams to illustrate her arguments. In her summary she states (p. 173):

that 'creating a customised working agreement for supervision ensures, as far as possible, that counsellor, agency, training course, professional association and, last but not least, the supervisor are engaged in an active, participative working alliance'.

Little wonder, then, that supervising is such a demanding task.

This book is a wide-ranging exploration of many facets of contracts. The chapter authors are skilled in presenting their very individual contributions, and the result is a very readable book which should prove useful to practitioners in various fields at most levels.

## Reference

Thorne, B. (1991) *Person-Centred Counselling: Therapeutic and Spiritual Dimensions*. London and NJ, Whurr.

## Brenda Hutchison

---

Two reviews of:

***Shattered Lives: Children who live with courage and dignity.***  
**Camila Batmanghelidjh** pp174 Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2006.  
(£13.99)

There is only a handful of psychotherapists in the public arena in the UK, and Camila Batmanghelidjh is increasingly one of them. Kids Company was featured in a powerful TV documentary earlier this year. Tate Modern hosted an installation created by the young people she works with, and in October she was the subject of *Desert Island Disks*. Her book and her work remind me of Alice Miller's writing, courageous, raw and challenging.

Camila Batmanghelidjh is a child psychotherapist who founded two charities for children, The Place2Be and Kids Company. She works with the children nobody wants, who have eluded all the safety nets which have been provided by the state, who are held up as objects

of fear, and sometimes of 'evil'. In this book she tries to give them a voice through a series of letters written to them. The letters are heart-breaking, telling the story of the children's lives and her relationship with them. She believes in loving, but loving without sentiment. She is repeatedly threatened, often by the children's parents, knows that she puts herself at risk, and has in place strong contracts and strategies for safety for herself and the staff at Kids Company.

The book is passionate and often angry. All the statutory services come in for criticism. Many children are neglected, abused and failed in our society, and then, as she says in her author's note, they are blamed. There is no careful, measured response here, but a real sense of someone working at the extremes of everything our culture throws up.

At the end of each chapter she gives messages to workers trying to find ways of dealing with vulnerable children. 'Through numbness the worker feels protected against helplessness and pain. Through shutting down the ability to feel, you no longer have the will to act, to bring about change.'

These letters are lyrical and beautiful. While they lash out at those responsible for the trauma the children continue to experience, the children's own strength, courage and sanity shine through – the sense of what they experience, want and need. 'It's not about feeling sorry for them. It's about our collective agony...children who survive traumatic events and inconsistencies, and continue embracing life, can teach us inspiration'. The longing, of course, is for love and recognition, but it is often expressed in ways which make that hard to see.

Camila Batmanghelidjh challenges our thinking about young people, drugs, hoodies and violence. 'I understand why the public feels bullied by young people high on drugs and their own suicidal non-caring...but our encounters with these horrors are momentary and accidental...imagine if the same bullying and terrorizing relentlessly happened in your own home by the people who were supposed to love and protect you.'

Camila Batmanghelidjh reads out the letters she has written to the young people to them for approval and records their response. Chardonnay 'was silent, then you took my pen. You wrote "I love you" in joined-up handwriting on my hand. I wished your mother was there to accept this honour.'

As well as offering this direct, powerful narrative, there is an introduction to therapeutic thinking, a section on the therapy world and a 'tourist's guide to substance abuse'. Even if we do not work at this edge, this book offers a wise and challenging reflection on our society, our ways of seeing children and young people, and our own level of openness to painful experience. I found it compelling, uncomfortable reading, and recommend it highly.

**Maxine Linnell**

After hearing Camila Batmanghelidjh interviewed on Radio 4 about her work with children who are generally scapegoated, I checked her website and found reference to this title which I've since seen reviewed in Therapy Today (BACP's journal.)

Written in the form of letters from herself to nine of the many children she has worked with in Kids Company Ms Batmanghelidjh bears witness to the abuse that underlies aggressive, frequently violent behaviour that is automatically punished rather than addressed by a society, which takes on roles of both victim and perpetrator. She apologises for the shortfall in provision of care that frequently compounds the children's original abuse, challenging the terrified stance of helplessness that mirrors the children's own, and she recognises the obvious that's so readily ignored – that all adults carry responsibility for the well-being of children, none of whom were born criminal.

After each letter, comes a section of clearly presented jargon-free theory that supports her experiences and consolidates her overview of professional interventions laid out in the introduction.

Reading Shattered Lives I was reminded of Alice Miller - no danger here of being allowed to forget the origins of vengeful acts. Her call is for understanding and compassion, and to take up responsibility.

A 'please read' for anyone protecting themselves from knowing what violent behaviour really means.

**Jane Barclay**

---

***Clinical Supervision Made Easy by Els van Ooijen*** 2003  
Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone. ISBN 0 443 07242 6 £23.99 1325 words

Van Ooijen has written before on supervision. Her professed aim with this book is to provide:

'a step-by-step guide on how to actually run a [supervision] session' (Pg. 8)

The book does somewhat more than this in that it also looks at uses of supervision and argues for it to be applied in many helping professions.

The key element in the book is the art of reflection, but there is also much energy involved in arguing the advantages of using a three stage model to problem-solve at many levels.

## **Background**

In her initial exploration of supervision, van Ooijen wisely splits the range of supervision models into four: those that focus on the whole concept of supervision, those that focus on tasks and injunctions, those that focus on the process and those that focus on structure and process. Not surprisingly, Van Ooijen's own model focuses on a broader approach that incorporates all the different aspects of supervision. This double helix model is one she has developed and explained elsewhere. Unfortunately for me I found it very difficult to understand. This however, I'm glad to report, is the exception rather than the rule; in the main I found it an extremely clear book. I also found it to be unbiased in the way it leaves the practitioner open to their own model. There is a refreshing openness to the work of others such as Gilbert & Evans, Inskipp & Proctor, Carol, Hawkins & Shohet, Page & Wosket.

## **Practical inclusion of such things as specimen contracts.**

For me personally the idea of a written contract for supervision was something new; but it was argued well and when I addressed it to one of my own supervision groups I found that (a) they had different contractual ideas about the relationship both with each other and with me and (b) that they actually liked the idea of such a structured approach. As she herself says:

'the clearer and stronger the structure, the safer people will feel to engage with the process' (Pg. 60)

The book is sprinkled with practical tips such as:

'at the end of the session give each other feedback on how the session was experienced.' and 'Change your supervisor every 3 to 4 years'

And I like Van Ooijen's attitude towards mistakes. She sees supervision as helping spot or uncover mistakes and mistakes, she sees, as the 'ideal way in which we learn' (Pg157).

## **The method**

The three steps are defined as: What? How? and What Now? I find the terms a little clumsy and not really self-explanatory. In fact, in the course of the book, I am not at all convinced that the terms always stand for the same thing. Sometimes they seem to indicate What are the problems, What needs to be done to rectify them and How we implement our plan. At other times it is more along the lines of Structure, Process Evaluation. Or even Facts, Feelings and Actions. So it might owe something to the work of Egan (2004) and his model. However, to leave it there would be to do an injustice to the book because, although the slick packaging of the ideas might leave much to be desired, there is much to offer inside the package.

The Basic 3-step method is defined as:

Step 1: WHAT – What do I need to know?

Step2: HOW – How am I going to find out?

Step 3: WHAT NOW – What will I do now that I have found out what I wanted to know.

### **Application to supervision:**

Step 1: The WHAT

What clients do you want to bring?

What time do you need?

What do you want to achieve?

What do you want to feel at the end of the session?

There's an acronym here: B A B E

Be yourself

Awake, aware, alert

Be prepared

Evaluate.

Step 2: How

This is about how to proceed once the focus for the work has been established. Interestingly this is split up into two: the rational and the non rational

Rational How

How skills can be a help

How personal qualities can help.

How tasks of the supervisor and the supervisee can be defined to aid the process.

How reflection can be maximised.

It is in this section that there is a creditable emphasis on the idea that when the supervisor and supervisee reflect together what then emerges is a co-creative process; what Page & Wosket (2001) describe as 'reflective alliance'.

Also, what lies beneath the surface – working with the non-rational?

How is the client being affected?

How is the relationship between counsellor and client affecting the process?

How is the interaction between supervisor and supervisee impacting on the process?

In other words, looking at transference, counter-transference and parallel processing but looking at it in a light-hearted and practical way rather than in a deeply analytical way. So the tips include such things as asking the counsellor if she and the client were cars, what kind of car would they be? If they were waiting together at traffic lights, what happens when they change to green?



### Step 3: What Now?

Van Ooijen uses another acronym here (how I hate acronyms!) LAMEE (Pg 150)

Learning: Clarify and consolidate the reflection that took place in step 2.

Action: What does the supervisee want to do with her new insight? This might mean action but not necessarily.

Monitoring: In step 3 this means looking at what the supervisee plans to do.

Evaluating: How effective does the supervisee feel the session has been?

Evidence: Bearing in mind legal consideration and the data protection act, nonetheless it is increasingly becoming more important in the counselling profession to show evidence of effectiveness.

### Style

This is a modern, user-friendly style manual kind of a book with lots of headings, diagrams, tables and boxes of various shapes and sizes. Some can be useful, like the little boxed 'Thinking Points'. The idea suits me as my mind naturally jumps out of a book to ask questions. Van Ooijen's style encourages that. It is not, however, always used to best advantage. Sometimes it genuinely seems to seek for personal involvement of the reader e.g.:

'Have you been in working environments that you experienced as "shame-based"? What effect did or does this have on you? What do you think the consequences might be for supervision?'

but at others, unfortunately, it asks a question and then supplies the answer e.g.:

'As a supervisor how do you see yourself as fulfilling the three functions of supervision?'

is followed by a table of the three functions and how to fulfil them. Some of the tables are, however, useful such as those pointing out in a particular situation what the Tasks and Skills of the supervisor are and what those of the supervisee are.

I found the discussion on one-to-one as opposed to group supervision very interesting and some of the suggested ideas for creative approaches while working with groups to be quite inspiring.

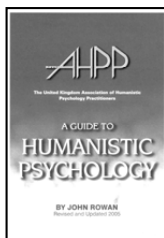
This 3 step method is also used to look at ethical decisions, to explore group supervision, to provide a method to end supervision, and to implement supervision within management. I have no doubt Van Ooijen can and does apply it to just about any problem to be solved. Indeed readers might take it up as a generic strategy. Personally, it doesn't work for me, but neither does it detract from many of the ideas that do work for me throughout the book.

The book is not intellectually challenging. It is an easy read and an even easier source of reference so I have no doubt many people will find it a useful guide to supervision.

Egan, G. (2004) *The Skilled Helper: A Problem Management and Opportunity Development Approach to Helping* 7<sup>th</sup> edn. Monterey: Brooks/Cole

Page, S., Wosket, V. (2001) *Supervising the counsellor. A cyclical model*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Hove: Brunner-Routledge.

**Mike Berry** is an experienced Transactional Analyst and counsellor. He works with young people for the Department of Education, has a private practice and trains counsellors to Diploma level.



**John Rowan's newly revised  
Guide to Humanistic Psychology**  
Reviews, promotes and critiques humanistic  
psychology in today's world.  
Essential reading for all those interested in  
human development.

Published by UKAHPP at £5.75 inc. p&p.

**Available to members of AHP(B)  
at the special price of £3.75 inc. p&p.  
Send a cheque payable to AHP(B),  
or pay online on the Membership Details page of the website.**

Non-members of AHP(B) should purchase by cheque for £5.75  
payable to UKAHPP from:

UKAHPP Box BCM AHPP London WC1 3XX  
T: 0345 660326 admin.ahpp@btinternet.com  
www.ahpp.org

**Donate £9pa to AHP(B) for the cost of a stamp.**

If we don't know your tax status, there will be a Gift Aid form with your copy of this S&S. So *please*, look for it, sign it and post it, even if not a UK tax payer. If you've mislaid it, then ask us for another.