Exploring Shadow and Transparency in Psychotherapy Training Institutes: Implications for the design and implementation of institutional complaint procedures (Part 2).

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Concluded from last issue

Is psychotherapy training different from the wider field?

I have reflected above on the themes of culture, care and communication, and their relationship to power within psychotherapy training institutes. The data from PHASE 1 indicates that these are areas that naturally exist in all types of organisations but the PHASE 2 analysis shows evidence that in psychotherapy institutes they are particularly problematic. The difference in the psychotherapy world is the subject that we teach and the potential for dependency of our students in our care. The model of teaching that occurs within the field which puts emphasis on the understanding of internal emotional states and personal self awareness inadvertently invites the students into a state of dependency with those in the position of tutorship. Alongside this potential dependency is the tutor who in the transferential role of 'parent' teaches about trust and the therapeutic relationship. Young (1996) suggests that *'some of the most neurotic acting-out behaviour imaginable is routinely perpetrated by psychoanalytic organisations'* and lays this at the feet of the practitioners within them*.*

Action research cycles

PHASE 3 involved my own institute where an experimental model, designed to address the concepts of shadow and transparency, was on-going throughout the project. The model took the form of bi-monthly Mindfulness groups for Matrix management members and Restorative Justice in relation to complaints. Matrix transcripts were also used as data in PHASE 2 as a fifth institute.

Mindfulness

The very nature of a Mindfulness group requires deep reflection on personal states whatever they are and an agreement to follow the principle of 'maitri'.

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When the space is cleared from repetition of mental formulations, feelings are more freely available. This can be alarming at first, to feel the full extent of anger, guilt, anxiety and fear. When these feelings become the object of mindfulness, they become nourished by the energy of the practice. Because these practices are conducted in the spirit of maitri – unconditional friendliness towards oneself - they are able to rise, often feel overwhelming, can be remained with, even at times penetrated. Sometimes they remain constant or unavailable, and at other times dissolved. Over time I think the practice allows us to have an active living relationship with 'core pain', where we do not have to repress and project on to others or act out from this place. Over time there are moments of clarity, peacefulness and happiness.

(Wilde McCormick 2003)

Over the project we worked on different forms of mindful meditation: breathing, walking and eating mindfully. We practised mindfulness of feeling states, a mindful body scan and mindful dialogue of personal issues. We also practised a variety of activities which were always done within the principle of maitri. Following an exercise we would share our experiences together. We were encouraged to spend a little time at home and develop a mindful practice of our own with an occasional facilitator. The aim was to understand whether the model of an on-going Mindfulness group and Restorative Justice would have a constructive impact on the institute in relationship to shadow and transparency. The question was asked: Have the Sangha group and restorative justice been able to increase communication effectively and is the result robust enough for other training institutions and accrediting bodies to consider as a template in the design of institutional complaint procedures?

The analysis of the data from these transcripts showed that the same phenomena seen in the other four institutes could be seen in Matrix although to a lesser degree. However, the comparison of the Matrix transcripts with the others did show a significant difference in the categories of care and communication which were spoken of as welcomed and productive.

Conclusion

From the analysis of the data from PHASES 1-3 it was deduced that:

- There are three clear areas of concern that can be seen in the wider field and ubiquitously found in psychotherapy training institutes: culture, care and communication, within which there is a central phenomenon of power.

- The psychotherapy training environment means that aspects of dependency and the wounded healer with the intersubjectivity that these bring, alongside the rhetoric of the subject, create a

dissonance between what we as trainers say - and what we actually do (SAT Paradigm).

• The presence of a model of a Mindfulness group and Restorative Justice within a system makes a significant difference to the generalised feelings of satisfaction in communication, a sense of being valued within the institute and a feeling of shared power.

• Action research cycles demonstrated that a focus on group awareness of relational dynamics through a Mindfulness group and Restorative Justice in a psychotherapy training environment lessens the potential for shadow dynamics by creating a safe arena for difficulties to be addressed.

• Fewer grievances occur when a model of a Mindfulness group and Restorative Justice principles are in situ. There is less fear and resolution is more likely.

• Unconscious shadow behaviours are ubiquitous in all areas of concern and identified generally as mismanagement, abusive management, neglect, manipulative communication and the misuse of psychobabble.

• Deeper shadow descriptions associated with the psychotherapy training system are surmised from the data as punitive, elitist, deluded, denying and self-serving. These represent the disparity between the rhetoric used in psychotherapy training institutes and the reality identified within the analyses.

From the data it can be seen that psychotherapy institutions have similar broad organisational difficulties as in the wider field. However, the subject of psychotherapy, the pressures and demands put on trainers and the particular transferential difficulties that arise, contribute to a training environment where specific shadow dynamics can be seen (see SAT Paradigm). This creates a dissonance between what we as trainers say - and what we actually do.

Reflecting on the findings

Forthcoming statutory regulation is motivating institutes to get more and more programmes validated. This is an arduous and time consuming process which requires detailed attention to the monitoring of standards and procedures. I suggest that the risk of this, in a culture where hard work and busy-ness is the norm, is that leaders and staff, who normally have little or no managerial training, resort to Model I of organisational learning (Argyris and Schon 1978). Psychotherapy institutes are demanding financially. I have discovered that psychotherapy institutes are always very busy places. People at the top were generally multi-tasking, under pressure and saying 'Everything is fine here'! People under pressure make mistakes and cut corners. Leaders hold the burden of responsibility and juggle extra, unpaid administrative tasks while running successful private

practices of their own. I discovered leaders had little or no business training and were having to learn different skills in a system fraught with managerial responsibilities, marketing needs, academic demands and employment issues. All these things have to be managed amongst the complexities of the inevitable transferential relationships found in training institutes such as dependency, attachment and authority. Throughout the project I have become increasingly conscious of the importance and status of those in leadership positions, the multi-tasking that is required and the influence that the personality of the leader has on the whole. I experienced many energetic leaders who held the vision and worked long hours putting in voluntary time in order to contain the system. Trainers also put in voluntary time between their own practices in order to keep the show on the road.

Lousada, in a speech at the Freud Museum's 1999 conference on the future of psychotherapy, spoke of the 'caring professions' veering towards a state of mind which itself is scared of relationships (in Kearns 2006). This perhaps corresponds to the findings in this study which suggest a dissonance between philosophy and practice within institutes.

I have attempted in this project to bring into awareness, through the examination of transparency, the aspects of shadow that are consistent and widespread in our psychotherapy learning environments. As the results suggest, consistent areas of concern appear in all types of organisations. However in psychotherapy we have our own particular flavour of the same issues, as seen for example in the use of psychobabble to defend against threat. What makes psychotherapy institutes most worrying is that we are in the business of understanding the complexities of the mind and use the vehicle of relationship in our work. It is deeply unsettling that in teaching these things we simultaneously model dysfunction and collude with the implicit *'Everything is fine here'.*

Significance and potential applications for this work.

According to Kearns (2006:1) practitioners are being traumatised and current complaint procedures from accrediting bodies are '*unthought through and lead to the escalation of disputes rather than containment, mediation and resolution'*. She refers to psychotherapy training institutes managing complaints without the embodiment of the philosophy that is the in-house rhetoric.

It could be argued that there is nothing new in restorative justice. Certainly there is a movement towards mediation in our field. Springwood (in Kearns 2006) as Chair of the United Kingdom Association for Humanistic Psychology Practitioners (ukAHPP) describes how this body has employed the use of mediation as a form of understanding and dealing with client : practitioner complaints. Their procedure is based on the principles of restorative justice. In my experience most institutes rely on the use of complaint

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procedures that are based on a traditional format of rules and regulations that are very distant to the relational context in which they have occurred. Words such as 'judicial' and 'evidence' are still favoured over 'mediation'.

Bond (2004) as Fellow of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) led the change in 2002 from rule-based ethics to a principle-based system and promoted ethical mindfulness in professional practice and research (2004). In April 2006 the United Kingdom Council of Psychotherapy (UKCP) published an alternative route for complaints which incorporates mediation as a principle. I suggest that this can be developed in the context of institutional settings and that this project can support the current work that is being done on the subject. It is paradoxical that in institutional settings, where trainers who possess the necessary skills to support effective mediation, and who are themselves models for their students, are still bound by complaint procedures that are punitive rather than relational.

I believe that through the results of this project I have provided a template that can be used in the design of institutional complaint procedures. This template requires:

- The integration of mindfulness and restorative justice principles.

- Full understanding of shadow areas described in the findings of this project which indicate a ubiquitous culture whereby problems are likely to occur.

No psychotherapy accrediting body, institute or ethics committee was able to provide me with figures regarding how many complaints or grievances had been made that year or in previous years. Eight were contacted. The balance of content areas of complaints and grievances were also unknown. I was informed that no statistics were kept. I suggest that these figures would be a guide as to whether complaints and grievances are increasing and what their focus is. I suggest that this should be common practice.

I hope that institutes will be able to make use of these findings as a window into the inner life of psychotherapy institutes. I offer the following for reflection and consideration:

- For more transparency and self reflection by management and trainers within psychotherapy training institutes. The purpose of this would be to transcend the possibilities of inertia, where a hierarchy can unconsciously encourage a culture where challenge is avoided, thereby leading to potential conscious and unconscious abuses of power.

- For psychotherapy institutes to integrate Restorative Justice within their organisations whereby both complainer and

complained against are respected and a negotiated way forward is found based on the needs of the 'victim' and relevant responsibilities of all concerned, thus leading to a more satisfying, less punitive and shame-based culture.

• For psychotherapy training and accrediting bodies to seriously consider the dimensions of shadow and the SAT paradigm in the design of organisational complaint procedures. The purpose of this would be to raise awareness of those who are in the position to guide the profession and model healthier functioning.

• For psychotherapy institutes to consider using the practice of Mindfulness in management as an aid to non-oppressive and transparent communications.

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