



# *Supervision Review*

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## *Working with adolescents and young people*

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# Foreword

## **Bruce Kinsey (Lead Editor)**

In October 2011, the Department of Health announced the extension to children and young people of the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (CYP IAPT) service. For charities such as YoungMinds that have been working with children's and young people's mental health for decades, this has been a very welcome initiative with surprisingly radical aims for actively involving young people in their own care pathways and in service planning. It goes some way towards addressing the therapeutic needs of the one in ten children aged 5-16 who has a clinically diagnosable mental health problem (Office of National Statistics, 2005), and the 20% of children having a mental health problem in any given year, and about 10% at any one time (Mental Health Foundation, 2005).

In the future, the CYP IAPT programme seems likely to offer a range of therapies in order to help young people face diverse mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, eating difficulties, self-harm and ADHD and these will be accessed through existing child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and other children's services working under the direction of the Department of Health. Practitioners working within these organisations are now charged to reach out far more into the communities they serve, into accessible local settings where people live and work and that includes schools.

In the light of these new initiatives, the very significant contribution to the mental health of children and young people made by counsellors working within school settings should not be overlooked, and so we decided to dedicate an issue of Supervision Review to consider this territory. We also wanted to add the work in University and Sixth form College setting too. For many young people a significant amount of their day and early life is spent in such institutions and many of the parents and carers we have in therapy also have to negotiate the mental well-being of their children.

As you will discover when reading the articles in this edition, this work can be fraught with anxiety and concern, and it would be fair to say that this edition of Review has also had a shaky start in life. We have missed the careful, helpful and insightful parenting of the previous editions and the new parents of this edition have missed Chris Driver, Anne Power and Lynda Norton. We have also found it hard to get people to write, and a few promised articles have failed to come to fruition in part because of the difficult territory of these early years. Having worked in this area for a couple of decades I too still often feel like a beginner, and I have been grateful that our writers have been cajoled into writing for us. I think you will find some themes presenting themselves in different ways throughout the papers, and hopefully you will enjoy the book review and consider these years in a more optimistic light.

I have found recently that reading children's books and exploring their world has greatly encouraged my engagement and understanding. I am grateful to whoever it was who introduced me to the work of the Margaret and Michael Rustin, their wonderful Narratives of Love and Loss: Studies in modern children's fiction [Karnac 2001] has really helped me and people I work with and those I supervise. But particular thanks should go to a young 'tearaway' Oli, who brought me the work of Jean Little one session and said 'this is me and this is how it feels'. It told me much about his life and world and I recommend Little's writing to you as someone who has captured something of the magic and annoyance of being young.

**Today** [Jean Little 'Hey World, Here I am!' OUP1986]

Today I will not live up to my potential

Today I will not relate well to my peer group.

Today I will not contribute in class.

I will not volunteer one thing.

Today I will not strive to do better.

Today I will not achieve or adjust or grow enriched  
or get involved.

I will not put my hand up even if the teacher is wrong  
and I can prove it.

Today I might eat the eraser off my pencil.

I'll look at clouds.

I'll be late

I don't think I'll wash.

I need a rest.

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# Working in a primary school setting, who are we there for

*Isobel Urquhart*

**Abstract:** This paper focuses on the dynamics and expectations of working in a primary school, the conflicting demands and how these were explored and felt in supervision. The discussion broadens to a consideration of the place and tensions of working in an educational setting and the particular focus and expectations there.

**Key words:** Primary school, Confidentiality, organisations, responsibility and accountability.

In this article, I present a composite illustrative case that highlights some of the issues that are faced by counsellors working in schools and which they subsequently bring to supervision. This case illustration is based on a number of supervision reports derived from a number of different counsellors. This fictionalised composite 'counsellor' is employed by an equally fictionalised organisation which provides a counselling service for young people in the local community. Recently, schools in an area serving a mixed population of private and social housing received some time-limited funding in order to employ counsellors from this local organisation. I have been employed as the supervisor for some of the paid counsellors and in this case, the counsellor and I were also new to each other.

The 'composite counsellor' who will form the basis of this discussion is an experienced counsellor who has a private practice working with adults and young people as well as some years of experience counselling young people in secondary schools and a college of further education. At the time that I became her supervisor, she also began to work with primary aged children, a role which she welcomed as an extension to her professional expertise, but about which she felt somewhat underexperienced. The school she was working in was a newly built school, popular with the first-time buyers, many with young families, who made up the majority of the population of the large estate of mostly private housing. The school had received a glowing report from Ofsted that reflected the educational ambitions and aspiration of its own staff and the wider community.

For the counsellor, this new environment presented some expected and unexpected challenges. Naturally, she anticipated that there would be differences in organisational matters and in the therapeutic approaches suited to a younger group of children. In the secondary schools where she had worked, she had been used to working in a kind of insulated space within the school's everyday functioning that was not untypical – counsellors often reporting that they did not 'belong' to any school-based team or structure, rarely shared the staff room and

were often assigned a space of their own which might or might not involve much interaction with school-based colleagues. In the secondary school, the counsellor had not been expected to share information about the individuals she saw or to offer advice to school staff or parents. However, in her new placement, she was somewhat surprised to find how 'embedded' she was in work of the primary school, which, via the learning mentor, expected that the counsellor would be directly involved in consulting with and informing the parents about the needs of the children and the progress made in the therapeutic work. The counsellor was expected to meet with parents at the start, midpoint and end of the twelve sessions allocated to any individual child. Similarly the learning mentor hoped to receive from the counsellor useful advice derived from her work that could help teachers respond more effectively to individuals in the classroom. In supervision, the counsellor shared her uncertainty about whether this way of working was a prior agreement with the organisation she worked for, or whether it reflected a policy of the specific school to involve parents as much as possible in anything that directly affected their children. She also described her anxiety about whether she was being asked to provide parenting advice, feeling very nervous, unprepared and inadequate about her capacity to do this effectively. In addition, the counsellor felt the pressure of time - about what she could 'achieve' in a 12-session contract, when 3 of the sessions were 'given' to the parents rather than working with the child. And at the back of this was the counsellor's anxieties about accountability - about whether the school would assess whether she was doing a good job and whether her own performance was being evaluated by the quality of 'advice' she was able to offer parents and school staff. She had had some encounters with the school's learning mentor where the latter seemed frustrated when the counsellor was cautious about what she could share, on grounds of confidentiality.

In supervision, this raised a number of issues. First, of course, and as always, was the matter of confidentiality. Negotiating the complexities of confidentiality in the context of therapeutic work in a school is so fundamental it is inevitably and rightly a topic that has to be revisited frequently in supervision. At first, I experienced the counsellor very much as I imagined she experienced the learning mentor - wanting me to provide practical advice about what to do, and me feeling initially that projective identificatory urge to have a categorical answer for her as well as the simultaneous anxiety about my capacity to provide one. Liz Omand (2010) points out that, as counsellors, there are times when "we are not always sure how to use supervision. We have a need to talk about what's happened and to know how we are doing, but this process can be very exposing. We often have a rather idealised way of looking at the client or patient, the work and what can be achieved, and we very much want to get it right. We assume there is a right way, or at any rate we have an idea that there is definitely a wrong way. We don't always know what to do with the space, or what part of our experience with the client counts as relevant."

In this case, the counsellor and I came to be able to use this transference dynamic to understand better the anxieties of both the counsellor and the school (in the person of the learning mentor) that were raised by feelings of 'not knowing' and wanting there to be someone who was unassailably able to identify what should be done. We realised that 'doing something' might take the place of a more thoughtful

reflection about the requirements and flexibility with which to think about confidentiality in schools, especially in the multi-agency ethic that most schools now adopt. We discussed how we might use the different tempo and ethos of the supervision space to take the time to be reflective about the challenge of this dilemma and to resist the projective urgency of the school's own anxieties and one's own insecurities. Under the initial panic, were revealed the counsellor's superego insecurities about meeting her professional standards, as well as her worries about being inexperienced in working with primary aged children which led fears of harming a new and vulnerable population of young children and which made the protection of the child's therapeutic space of great concern.

The encounters with the learning mentor that made the counsellor feel she was frustrating the expectations of school-colleagues and making them displeased with her enabled us to examine these insecurities about working with a new psychodynamic modality – play therapy with children – as well as entering a new educational environment with different ways of working. We explored how these might make us defensively inflexible about rules of confidentiality, and see others' demands as persecutory and accusing, rather than feeling confident to take the time to really examine the implications for confidentiality in this new context and thinking specifically about how the counsellor could use the depth of understanding she gained in her work with the children to inform her conversations with teachers and parents rather than as disclosures of confidential material about the content of counselling sessions. Reflective discussion in supervision exposed, nevertheless, how very difficult it is to ascertain whether asserting her boundaries around confidentiality stemmed from her uncertainty about what to do and say in response to quite insistent demands from others, or whether she was rightly defending the therapeutic frame in the interests of the child's wellbeing. We became increasingly aware that these doubts and dilemmas would always be there and would always need to be explored, understood and negotiated.

There have always been tensions in schools about what and how much information should be shared between counsellors and teachers, two groups both having the child's interests at heart but with distinctive professional aims and practices. Given the duty of wellbeing and the pressures on schools to share information in multi-agency arrangements and in child protection reporting systems, these tensions are more acute than ever in schools. They also highlight ambiguities in how the counsellor's role may be perceived by school personnel and how she saw it herself. In the 'rugged environment' of the school (Music and Hall, 2008), counsellors in schools may face every day the tension between how far they feel they are 'doing' counselling and how far their role is being extended beyond that, willingly or unwillingly, explicitly or on the basis of unexamined assumptions. They may find that they are expected to be prepared to work, not only with the child in the counselling room, but also with the educational systems in which they work, including assumptions of information-sharing and expert knowledge. This can feel akin to having a kind of 'dual citizenship', a loyalty to one's professional training and ways of thinking and working therapeutically, and a respect for the expectations and agendas of the client-employer and multi-agency work. While the dynamics of this extended role can be extremely delicate, where it works well, the counsellor

may become integrated into the school system in a way that enables him or her to provide wider therapeutic insight that can make a real difference to the lives of children and the life of the school as a whole (Music and Hall, 2008: 43) The implications of this suggest that counsellors working in school settings may also need to find in supervision a place to explore not only their own and the school's expectations of their role, but also the unconscious dynamics of organisations, such as the effect of processes of splitting and projection that can, for example, scapegoat pupils or their families, or can leave individual teachers struggling with feelings of isolation, culpability and incompetence.

In Music and Hall's excellent examination of the experience of working in schools, they emphasise how the school-based therapeutic worker often has to manage unusual complexities in working out how much they can allow themselves to be 'inside' the system and how far they can 'afford' to be outside it. (Music and Hall, 2008: 49). Supervision on these matters has therefore been essential when so much of the normal therapeutic frame – a dedicated room, regular session times, waiting areas, the seclusion from other activity and demands on the child's attendance – is often inconsistently available. As another example, the counsellor in this illustrative case discussion described the time a child arrived at his counselling session saying that his teacher told him to use the time to finish off a task he was doing in the classroom. The counsellor described how she was torn between protecting the therapeutic space for the child on the one hand, and, on the other, respecting the authority of the teacher and, in particular, not placing an impossible burden of responsibility on a young child to either disregard the teacher's request or to give up his chance of an hour's play therapy. (Exploring with the counsellor the dynamics of this request by the teacher for the child in the play therapy space was another key aspect of the supervision, but one I don't have the space to discuss in detail here).

Supervision also allowed us to explore the counsellor's discomfort at feeling herself positioned as someone who 'knew', an expert who was expected, at least in her own rather panicked initial perception, to 'tell' professionals and parents what to do. There were both projective and counter transference aspects to this – we've all been to school and have experienced, for good and ill, the authority of teachers. Even as adults, 'disobeying the teacher' and feeling that one is challenging or competing with her or his knowledge and authority, can evoke very powerful emotional memories which make it a distinctly uncomfortable experience and can limit our legitimate confidence in our own knowledge and thinking. The counsellor asked what value could her knowledge – the knowledge of a relatively young woman, unmarried and without children – possibly have for teachers and parents? How could she tell parents how to parent or teachers to teach when it did not seem to me that 'telling' ('telling others what to do' as well as in 'telling tales') was what she was required to do, nor, in not doing so, that she then had nothing to offer and had then to face the disapproval and disappointment she imagined would follow from the teachers.

Indeed, there was a teasingly elusive element to this anxiety – a rather exciting and guilty fantasy that she might actually really possess some particularly potent

understanding that was envied and desired by others. Or at least that this might be their fantasy, introjected from the teachers' desire to 'know' what she knew. The counsellor's guilty perception that others thought she possessed something valuable and secret that they wanted created such anxiety that it was almost as if she had to deny she had any knowledge, preventing her sometimes from being able to think at all about what was valuable about her knowledge about the children and her insights from her training and experience,. In this state of mind, it was understandable that she felt confirmed in her perception that she could not possibly have any 'thoughts' to contribute - even before the ethics of what to share and with whom could be properly weighed up. Sorting out what was illusory about her introjected sense of a guilty possession of secret knowledge from the fact that she did in fact get to know about the children who came to see her in a different way from teachers and parents was an important task in supervision.

Partly in order to do this, we focused on detailed reflection about the therapeutic work in the room with the children, bringing back to mind the counsellor's warm and empathic understanding of the children and how they interacted with her, the playthings in the room, the warmth of relationship – or otherwise – that built up between them and what it told her about the child's underlying desires and fears; and about her own responsiveness. To think about meanings in the room and to take possession once again of how and what she 'knew', that is, experienced in the process of counselling the children, together with the necessarily provisional nature of such knowledge. Only once the counsellor was able to reconnect with her thinking could she find the resilience to withstand the guilty self-accusations and envious projective sorties from others, and then to be able to plan with more equanimity how she might talk constructively with teachers and parents.

In this paper, I have given a severely restricted description of just one or two of the issues that arise in supervising a counsellor working in a primary school setting. Nothing of the work with young children and how the counsellor learned about play therapy has been discussed here, although it forms the main part of what has been discussed. Nevertheless, the dialogue of supervision as described here did begin to help stabilise within herself the counsellor's being able to find a safe and dependable internal therapeutic frame, a steady and grounded internal therapist-object from which to operate. Under the pressure of material that emerges in the counselling session and beyond it in the dynamics with school systems, this internal frame can seem quite unavailable, even to the most experienced of counsellors and therapists. In supervision, therefore, there needs to be space for catharsis as well, for supervisees to talk about and share the emotional impact on them of their experiences and to explore the impact, not only of relationships with children and young people but with parents and school staff as well. (Omand, 2010:) It should also be emphasized that supervision is also a place where counsellors can express their excitement and interest in finding that their therapeutic contributions to the way the school functions are highly valued and are acted upon, and that this expansion of their role can be a source of professional pride and increased confidence in their competence to fulfill it. The focus in this paper which has merely touched on the impact of some organisational and ethical aspects of working as a counsellor in a primary setting seems to me, therefore, to



have been an important aspect that, if not explored, might have lead to serious disavowal of underlying unconscious as well as overtly perceived processes that directly impacted on the ability of the counsellor to carry out her work with confidence, and to reflect on its meanings with imagination and thoughtfulness.

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# Supervision in an educational setting

*Margarete Briggs and  
Anne Kelso-Wright*

## **Abstract**

This paper explores Supervision as the Transitional Space between an Educational Establishment, the Client and the Counsellor. Supervision is also a container; where anxieties and projections can be held and explored. Supervision becomes a shared experience of learning and growth.

**Key words:** supervision, counselling space, learning, container, anxieties, projections, transitional space.

The supervision referred to in this article concerns counselling which took place in an institution; counselling which was bought-in by that institution. The supervision took place in the supervisor's private practice and it was paid for by the counsellor's employer. The setting and context in which counselling and the supervision of it take place must by necessity shape the work itself. Only then can the work be useful and appropriate.

Counselling in educational institutions is different from other settings. All educational institutions, regardless of whether they are schools or universities, state-funded or private have one clear task – to educate, to enable learning. In other words the learner has to be successful. The question therefore arises about what to do concerning failure? Schools and Colleges are designed so that learning can take place. However, they can only create the conditions in which to facilitate learning, not learning itself. Provisions for failure have also to be made.

In her excellent book 'The Emotional Experience of Teaching and Learning' (1983) Isca Salzberger-Wittenberg writes about this subject so clearly. When our mind is filled with anxieties we cannot take anything in. In order to be able to take information in we need to find an outlet for our feelings. We need to express them 'in words or actions'. This recognition has contributed to the provision counselling in education. Failure will always be something to be avoided. It follows that the provision of counselling will never be the primary aim of education; it will always have to serve the task of enabling learning and facilitating growth.

The supervisor of a counsellor in any educational setting needs to be attuned to the environment in which counselling takes place. She needs to always bear in mind that the client's main reason for coming to counselling is to achieve success. In my experience as a college counsellor this was the expectation of clients, staff, parents and college authorities alike.

Just like the school has to create the conditions which facilitate learning, so the counsellor has to create conditions in which growth can occur and the supervisor has to create conditions in which to facilitate learning and growth. We can only create the conditions not the learning and growth itself. (Rock 1997).

There are differing ideas as to how supervision should be conducted. Some supervisors believe that it can be helpful to work with different theoretical models. Others believe that supervision should remain 'pure'. (Catherine Crowther 2003). While it is useful to follow a clear theoretical model it is essential to remain flexible. Supervising counsellors in schools and colleges I became aware of how different their need for boundaries and their understanding of confidentiality could be. To give some examples: A school counsellor may have to fetch the client from class. This means that the teacher and the whole class know who is going for counselling. Confidentiality here still needs to cover the content of the session but does not extend to who sees the counsellor. Another example is the pupil who first revealed her problems to her mentor and wanted the mentor to come with her to sessions. The counsellor and the supervisor have to work with this situation and think together about confidentiality and about how to help the client to feel strong enough to come on her own.

Boundaries may have to be viewed with regard to the client's needs rather than be rigidly applied. One university counsellor I supervised would communicate with some clients by text in between sessions to provide some holding; others would be reminded by text of their sessions. In supervision we thought together about how clients move from dependence to independence (Winnicott, 1952). Some students when away from home regress and become dependent once more. It is useful to think of boundaries as 'permeable'. This means strong boundaries but boundaries that meet the need of the client. To put it another way, the client has to be ready for the boundary. These are issues to think about in supervision.

What follows is a contribution of a schools' counsellor who has been working, for a period of about 7 years, in two secondary schools. The schools have around 1000 pupils each, boys and girls aged between 11 years and 16 years. There are areas of deprivation within both school catchments.

Over the years the weekly counselling sessions have been increased from five to twenty. The pastoral care provided is well organised within the schools. There are regular inclusion meetings. The young people receive one to one mentoring or one to one counselling or are referred to CAMHS. There is no doubt that the counselling is valued and the counsellor myself is reassured of this fact without hesitation. So why then you might ask, is there no dedicated counselling room in one school and on a yearly basis the room has had to change with counselling having to be arranged in different rooms to accommodate exams. This, I feel is connected to the dynamics of the school environment with very different demands being placed on different people.

The head teacher is very focused on the bigger picture, targets, league tables, achievements to report to governors etc. The teachers, on targets, classroom

success, pupil behaviour .The classroom support staff on building up relationships with individual pupils and improving academic ability. The mentoring staff focuses on supporting young people, helping to identify anxieties and stress. The counsellor supports pupils with more complex issues. All want the school to be successful but each will have their own particular focus. These demands create a dynamic environment. The conscious and unconscious forces at play are of great interest. How do they affect the different activities going on?

From a counselling perspective the demand to have a dedicated room is in the midst of others wanting this as well. Some might think why should counselling take priority? We all know what we might say, to ensure confidentiality, to ensure consistency which will help with trust and commitment. But what if the room is not so suitable? My view has always been 'I will make it work'. I am reminded of Bion (1962) who understood the mother to be the 'container' and I feel that I too as the counsellor have to become the 'container'.

The container/contained relationship constitutes a model for processing emotional experience. This might mean explaining to clients why the room has been temporarily used to store furniture or has been used by other staff members who have left the room looking different. I have found myself sharing my thoughts by saying I could not prevent what has happened and that together we can find a way of making it okay for us.

For one young person, an 11 year old girl, the small room for counselling was transformed over the weekend into a storage area. We could still sit down, but now there were a great deal of interesting things to look at. Cabinets were opened and peered into and a large cupboard could be got inside. When A. got into the cupboard I first thought I hope it does not topple over but once this anxiety had passed I thought this could be interesting. A. stayed inside and talked to me about being at home in her bedroom when she was little and being scared. We were able to talk about what had made her scared. This is what I mean 'I will make it work'.

On another occasion, a child protection issue was raised by a 14 year old boy. He agreed I should help and I informed the teacher responsible for child protection in the school. Our next session was interrupted by that teacher, keen to inform us what would happen. The boy was embarrassed and our confidential space felt intruded upon. There is no doubt that the teacher had good intentions but the counselling setting was not considered.

Another room used for counselling had an old pool table in it. One 12 year old boy who was in foster care and about to move again challenged me to a game. We found some balls and shared the cue and played. He proved to be good and I proved to be better than I thought. Our routine became to talk for part of the session and then to play. We talked while we played and in this relaxed setting our relationship grew stronger. He became pleased when he did a good shot and it felt that he was able to find a self within who was capable and strong. I look back on the pool table as being a very therapeutic tool. A PE teacher came in once and was surprised to find us playing pool. The teacher seems more openly friendly now

when I meet him in the corridors perhaps realising that counselling is more adaptable than he first thought.

More recently I was asked at the end of the day to move to a different room. My first thought was where am I going and second, I need to sort everything out before tomorrow. I had no option but to move my things in, these are a small table, cushions, bean bags, lamps and chairs. I also had to take pictures off the wall that young people had drawn. After being there 3 days, I was asked to move back. One client helped me and carried my small table as if he was superman. It made him feel strong and important. This has strengthened our relationship. I had moved before so it was not unmanageable but I was left feeling that no one was really thinking about the effect on the young people I see. Perhaps it is my role to do this, I am the counsellor. I feel that moving back to the original room came about because members of staff had been able to reconsider the needs of the counselling space. They accept that effective counselling takes place in a safe, confidential space. But there is always competition alongside other requirements. It felt as if the school had made a spontaneous decision and then had a rethink. I responded in a spontaneous way by moving quickly to ensure the needs of the pupils could be met the next day. I was left thinking 'All in a day's work'.

Supervision is crucial. It is the container for all my feelings. Twice a month, after school, I can sit in a very safe room with my supervisor, talking about how I really feel. I can be the child for a little while and experience my frustrations. I don't think it is a bad thing to do so and in fact it has helped me to feel that being a pupil in the school system can be very frustrating. Young people have to manage these frustrations as do all the staff and I the counsellor. Being able to share my own frustrations in supervision makes me realise how important it is to be able to contain the frustrations of the young people I see and look after them in the counselling room. I feel that the counsellor/supervisor relationship needs to be open and supportive. I have been extremely fortunate in this and have had no hesitations in bringing what might seem as basic ordinary frustrations which have been understood within the dynamics of the school. The complex client issues and the counsellor/client relationship can then be considered together with all the factors that play their part whether conscious and unconscious.

My work as a school's counsellor is enjoyable. I can feel the energy of the place when I walk through the front door. The place is alive. The unexpected can happen at any time for all of us. The routine is in place and we all need it, but we must be adaptable and flexible. Some evolutionists have said that the most important characteristic of being human is our adaptability. I may not be an evolutionist but I do agree it helps a great deal. If I can model adaptability in my work as a counsellor perhaps some of it can be internalised by young people and used by them to help to make good enough lives.

The counsellor's experience shows how important it is that the supervision should meet the needs of the counsellor. Only then can it be a true learning alliance.

To summarize we have drawn on the ideas of Winnicott and Bion in describing how counselling and supervision can be seen in terms of transitional space, parental couple and container/contained. (Winnicott 1952) and (Bion 1967). We see the counsellor as operating in the transitional space between clients and the institution. She becomes a container for the anxieties that exist (though few in the institution would recognize this). In this transitional space we have the parental couple of counsellor and client; and of counsellor and institution. The counsellor can only contain if she is held in supervision, the other parental couple. Here the supervisor is holding the counsellor. Supervision that is not in-house has a much better chance of providing a safe container because it is a step removed from the environment and influences of the institution. Ideally supervision mirrors and is congruent with the counselling process. If the school/university acts as the container for the students, the counsellor is the container for the client and the supervisor is the container for the counsellor.

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# "Downloading the Body App" - A body psychotherapist reflects on supervising counsellors working with young people

*Gill Chumbley*

**Abstract :** This article looks at supervision of work with adolescents through a body psychotherapy lens. It outlines some counselling challenges met within a school setting. It introduces ways in which noticing the body's responses can be illuminating during both the counselling session and in supervision.

**Key words:** Supervision, adolescents, school counselling, body psychotherapy.

My experience working with young people (YP) as a psychotherapist and supervisor is within a school environment and at a young person's centre. The age group I have most experience with is 10 to 25 years old, which is the range I shall be considering here in this article.

As a body psychotherapist and supervisor of counsellors (who are not body psychotherapy trained), I would like to talk about some of the difficulties met in the context of working with YP generally and in schools particularly. One of the questions I asked myself for this article was "Is supervision of counsellors working with YP so different from supervising counsellors working with adults?" When I did a quick survey of colleagues the resounding answer was "Yes."

What themes do counsellors encounter when they work with YP? Across the age range, they meet YP suffering with low self-esteem; body image difficulties; anger and aggression, school transition problems; relationship difficulties within the family and peer group; acute and chronic depression: overwhelming anxiety and panic states: self-harm: ADHD: OCD: eating disorders: gender identity problems; sexual difficulties; shock and trauma; shame; learning difficulties; autistic spectrum difficulties etc. Of course, there are many human conditions on this list pertaining to adolescents and adults, so what is the difference counselling YP? The counsellors I have worked with highlighted the crucial difference - work with YP is generally far more anxiety provoking. Also that they often end up managing the anxieties of all the adults involved with the YP. Some YP have lots of "Others" around them - concerned teachers, their peer group, parents, social workers etc. One supervisee remarked to me that "there seemed to be a whole crowd in the room".

Counsellors, therapists and teachers have all remarked on picking up on a sort of "frisson" surrounding adolescents, particularly within a group situation in schools. When I teased out some more they said it had a slightly manic feel to it, including an edgy excitement, frustration and exhaustion. Counsellors said that they felt more

personal responsibility for YP than for adults; they felt they were involved in risk management. Mixed in with that was the fear of doing “it” wrong, fear of making mistakes and of the consequences of those “mistakes.” Some felt ultra-aware of legal aspects of working with adolescents and that they would, in the face of the law, somehow be wanting. They wondered about the correct pathways of accessing appropriate responses, along the lines of who is the GP? Who is involved at school? When is it the right time to contact the Child Protection Officer? Supervisees can get caught up in personal issues of not being good enough, not being the “right” person, not doing the “right” thing. Being with the “not knowing” is intensely uncomfortable when counselling YP; several turns of the screw increase in comparison with other client groups. The counsellor, especially those new to school work, can feel alone and unsupported, because counselling in some schools can be a lonely occupation in spite of all the “Others” around.

School counselling demands from the practitioner huge flexibility, diplomatic skills and large resources of creative energy. The school's primary purpose is for education, not counselling and often the two can be at odds. In the context of a school day, it can be problematic to forge frameworks and establish boundaries, especially if, as is often the case, the counsellor is part-time, only available for certain times each week and unknown to the majority of the teaching staff. Therapeutic containment/holding structures that are basic essential tools for therapists - such as meeting in the same place and the same time - are very puzzling requests in the school environment. I have found that setting up and meeting for a first counselling session can be amazingly convoluted in some schools. There are school-led power dynamics between adults and YP that must be somehow negotiated by the counsellor before session can be planned. Well meaning, concerned adults may refer a YP for counselling without allowing the student opportunity to consider what it may mean for them or to easily refuse. Some teaching staff are hostile to the idea of counselling students in school time and will refuse to allow a student to miss their class to attend a session or may object that the student misses their same lessons every week. These sort of hoops can be anxiety promoting for the counsellor before they have even met the YP and will call upon the counsellor's creativity to successfully manage the shape of the working framework.

When I worked in schools, to set up a first meeting with a YP of 11 or 12 years old, I would ask that a member of staff (known to me and the YP) would collect the student and bring her to meet me in the counselling room. In this way, the fears of meeting an unknown adult could hopefully be managed and a boundary of safety established at the very first stage. In contrast, as a supervisor, I heard of a different first meeting. The counsellor was given a name, left to wander the school looking for a YP she had not met and it was some time before she found the right classroom. On entering the class and asking for the student, the teacher understandably wanted to know who the counsellor was and had obviously not been told that the student would be missing that lesson. The students were intensely interested in this diversion and chorused “Who are you Miss? What do you want to see him for? Where are you going? Can I come?” But this is the nature of school environments, things are in constant flux, things happen quickly, rooms



are changed, teachers are absent, unknown substitutes replace, messages don't get through. The energy about the place is alive and quick, which for the school counsellor demands not only thinking on your feet but some fancy footwork too.

In human developmental terms, adolescents are in a process of formation and change, both physiologically and psychologically. Physiologically, their bodies change alarmingly and at the same time their sense of self cycles through states of organisation, disorganisation and re-organisation. These processes resonate throughout the body and all the inner state changes will be manifest by it. We all know how difficult it is to adapt to any sort of changes in our life and in our adolescent bodies the changes can be a torment. Winnicott describes it as the "transient psychosis" of adolescence. Wilhelm Reich (1) (a founder of body psychotherapy) was among the first who laid down the basis for body-mind theory and worked extensively with adolescents. His work concluded that the history and development of all our emotions is written into our body, from the time of our conception. In the body we can find traces of ancient relational episodes: frustrated desires, blocked impulses, uncontrolled fears and repressed anger. His idea was that the energy of these impulses, if not allowed expression, would become solidified in the physical cellular make up of the body, distorting the natural shape and leading to pathology, distress and suffering. He believed that this frustration occurs so often, as it was inherent in our makeup of society, that it gave rise to characteristic body types, each describing the ways in which blocked energy showed a particular patterning relating to childhood and later insults to the body.

For adolescents, in their stage of change and individuation, a YP's sense of separateness and identity can become confused, their boundaries blur and consequently some lose contact with their body-needs and feelings. Other YP can be very awake to their bodies, noticing "strange" tingling and streaming sensations – all perfectly natural autonomic nervous system (ANS) responses that are not generally acknowledged as such in our culture. Some YP are curious and accepting of these phenomena others bewildered and frightened. Some, in the face of the body's turbulence will repress the feelings; the body however cannot ignore the cyclical internal battles and will translate the emotional upheaval somatically. When the mind is pushed beyond its capacity to process difficult feelings, the body will express the levels of distress. Visible, violent acts of self-harm provoke strong reactions from adults who are witness to the adolescent struggle. Counsellors are in the front line as witnesses, but in that position they may also find it difficult to see. Some may choose not to see, their own adolescent memories may blot out or interfere with their wish for clarity. Witnessing the results of self destructive acts, allowing the client to speak and to really listen can be very taxing for counsellors. When the YP is scared and the counsellor is scared it may be difficult to allow themselves to feel it. One supervisee told me that she wasn't supposed to be scared – she was supposed to be helping, supposed to know, supposed to be the adult and know what to do. ( 2 ). We spoke together about how difficult it was to think when fear is so contagious. The feelings provoked are so powerful that the supervisee may feel that the YP has power over them, taking away their identity of the good, helpful person. When working with YP it is important to be aware enough to see and not to get sucked into the counter transference that one is alone and

totally to blame. Supervision is a place where the counsellor can really wrestle with the feelings produced by the clients, a place where their own needs can be explored and in doing so help the counsellor to be more self-resourced and less defensive.

Chemical systems, neurotransmitters and hormones are the body's go-betweens, connecting the nervous system, brain and viscera; regulating our internal systems, our internal milieu, influencing our mood. This interconnectedness of internal state is the essence of emotion; it is dynamic, constantly changing in mega and micro ways. We can be swept away by huge forces, lose ourselves in rage or pleasure, then also feel more subtle inner pulls, equally persuasive. In supervision, I like to take time to reflect with the supervisee, so that they can get a feeling of what is going on within their own bodies. I ask supervisees to be patient with themselves, to wait while they feel how to respond to what is new/happening in the room. With YP, emotions can feel very much in the "Now" and it can be difficult not to want to step in and "Do Something Now". Sometimes it is very important to respond quickly and to intervene and sometimes opening up a bit of space before doing something is better. Experiencing strong emotions and strengthening holding capacity is a resource worth cultivating for this work. Helping the counsellor to slow down thoughts and to just observe, helps to contain these high anxiety times. I ask the supervisee to observe their body responses; owning when they feel tight and impatient and stretched or noticing when they can be more patient and spacious. Space is only possible when fear is lowered; fear tightens the body and thinking stops. By developing a dual awareness of the Experiencing self and Observing self the therapist can learn to hold their seat during difficult moments whilst remaining connected to their creativity. With spaciousness comes a place for containment.

Containment for me as a body psychotherapist is a physical, embodied state. Emotional and relational processes are interlinked with our anatomy, physiology and neurochemistry. Schore (3) describes these complex feelings of containment in terms of emotional attunement and mirroring and in context of early neurophysiological events experienced in the mother and child dyad. He has detailed the transformations in the infant's psychobiological state as it regulates and is regulated by the attachment relationship. The adolescent client will bring his unique experiences of his early scenarios and often have no words to describe them. A different form of holding is required when it is a holding of unexpressed feelings, feelings without form or without words. Our bodies communicate with each other and the therapist may well pick up the unspoken as it passes from body to body. This is known as somatic resonance. The therapist can have a felt-sense awareness in the body, a feeling for the gestalt of the situation, which can provide access to connection between conscious and unconscious process. In my work, I use this body to body resonance a great deal and encourage supervisees to notice and cultivate it if they are interested in this way of working. I think it is particularly useful when working with YP; as I have said earlier, adolescents are less armoured than adults and internal struggles / processes often reveal themselves through the body.

Counsellors may notice the effects their young clients have on their bodies. These effects can be subtle or dramatic. Some supervisees have described how they want to fall asleep, find that their breathing patterns change; they notice that they are close to tears whilst their client gaily describes a sad event. They may notice that they feel cold or hot. They may forget or discount what is said, feel tense or edgy, whether it is appropriate or not to what is being said. All these sensations may alert the counsellor to notice a dissociating client for example, or to reflect on the YP's body state. Developing body awareness, especially the sensations of particular emotions, helps to put a vocabulary in place where there may have been few words. For example, helping to expand the client's range of emotions - anger, rage, grief, joy, sadness. Supervision is a place where there is a chance to explore some ideas about this process of somatic resonance, leading to a better understanding of how to work with embodied transference and counter transference. Even without physical touch, awareness of body, body processes and sensations can usefully inform the psychotherapeutic process. With supervisees I explore how to develop this awareness and see how it may be useful to them. We explore grounding and centring postures which help them stay with the YP's process or in contrast, to move the body and stop the mirroring process when they need to move away from it.

The counsellor, by just noticing his/her own body's responses in this way and willing to reflect upon them in supervision can open up to an effective "deepening" process. The containment process is a factor of making more space, wherein image and metaphor may arise. In this way, the interpersonal relationship between client and therapist becomes the framework of the holding structure. Furthermore, the body states of counsellor and client will be reflected in parallel process of counsellor and supervisor. I find paying attention to what I experience with my supervisees opens up the work for us. I will close this article with a simple illustration of this parallel process at work.

During a supervision session, I was listening to a supervisee telling me about a YP he was working with. It was a lively session, the counsellor was enthusiastic, the client engaged. Quite fleetingly, but intensely, I felt a wave of nausea move through my body, followed by a profound feeling of boredom/switching off. I asked my supervisee to stop for a minute. We looked at what he was bringing and my strong body feelings did not make any head sense at all. So we both agreed to just notice it and move on. The next time we met, the supervisee returned to my feelings from the previous session. He found out that at that point, he had muddled the YP's story with another. This muddling and confusion of one person with another was an ongoing, critical issue in the life of the YP. We directed our attention to this particular issue and it led our exploration in a more spacious, expansive and fruitful direction.

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**Gillian Chumbley** is a Body Psychotherapist practising in Cambridge. She has a private practice for individuals and couples, works in the NHS and is a staff member at the Cambridge Body Psychotherapy Centre. Gill has been a science teacher in a London school and worked as a psychotherapist with adolescents in Cambridgeshire schools. She supervises counsellors working with young people. Before training as a psychodynamic counsellor and body psychotherapist she was a research scientist at Cambridge University.

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## Book review

### **Therapy with young men: 16-24 year olds in Treatment.**

**Dave Verhaagen**

**Routledge, 2010 £19.50 Paperback**

*Reviewed by Bruce Kinsey*

The other day I was enjoying a supper with a feisty female therapist friend. We had got to the stage in the evening when the gloves were off and we were enjoying a free and frank discussion. 'The trouble with the feminist movement', she moaned 'is that men never changed. We could only go so far without that happening, and they haven't and we are now stuck'. Whilst not fully agreeing with this diagnosis, something about it rang true to me and concurred with the insights of this brilliant book I had been sent for review for this edition. *Therapy with young men: 16-24 year olds in Treatment* is part of a Routledge series on Counselling and Psychotherapy with Boys and Men. If the others in the series [and the promised volumes pending] are half as good as this single volume then perhaps my friend will find the sort of man she says fails to exist and all men will be able to grow, change and develop whilst feeling understood and heard. This is a remarkable, impressive and useful book, I would regard it as essential reading in this territory.

Verhaagen tackles early on and head on the area of the alleged differences between women and men, this forthright style is one of the many aspects of the book that makes it so enjoyable. For him it is clear that the specific needs and problems with men need to be tackled in a different manner. He also discusses the tension of whether it is the parents who have brought their son child, the teachers who want this young man more compliant, or the person themselves who is the centre of the endeavour. Through the use of anecdotal and clinical material as well as research, he is able to take an issue, explore it and come to lucid explained positions. He has a light touch, and gentle humour that helps explain and expand his ideas and it is a remarkably readable book. Added to that, his own immense experience shines through, and this book is a useful addition to any clinician's shelf. His use of insights from sociology and contrast theory also helps expand the ideas, and although the book is written from a North American perspective, there is much that is a value elsewhere. Through this he is able to explore the issues of image and identity that cause problems for men and women such as 'boys don't cry' 'take it like a man', 'size matter' 'don't get mad - get even', 'he who has the most toys when he dies, wins'. I took the opportunity to run the full list past a group of 16 year olds young men I work with. Depressingly for me, they concurred with the full list of ten, and admitted it wasn't ideal, 'but heck' as one of them insightfully commented. That sort of staccato response makes work in this field such a character-building challenge.

Verhaagen likes to make lists and to itemise his thinking [in this he would see himself as a typical man and refers to the work of Simon Baron Cohen [2004] the autism researcher in support of his approach]. Indeed this book is backed by much research which helps expand certain themes and ideas, and he is keen on evidence based practice. At the end of each chapter there is also a useful summing up of the issues engaged with. Although this can appear to be repetitive, it does help clarify issues and shows where and how ideas can be put into practise.

His list of the differences between males and females made sobering reading;

Males have more behavioural problems

Males have more drug and alcohol problems

Men have higher rates of completed suicide

Men are more prone to command and conquer

Men have more stigma associated with mental health treatment.

I found it helpful to find ideas broken down into parts, and then explored with the use of thoughtful clinical material. He certainly explores the cultural constructs which might create such contrasts and suggests that whatever the origins, it is the presenting case and world view which is worked with in the therapy space. I also liked the band he had chosen to write about, 'the emerging adults' or 'pre-adults' and his use of Erikson [1968]. Trying to define and delimit adolescence is always fraught with danger, and by expanding the boundaries this work is flexible, suggestive and open at times he opts for the rather nice 'adults in training', where 'the chief developmental task is to gain a sense of personal responsibility for one's life. To do this, they need more freedom, not less; they need more opportunities to manage their lives, to fail or succeed on their own; they need to prove themselves and others that they are ready for adulthood'. [p17] This idea of training is one he returns to in several different ways throughout the book, and the language of therapist as personal trainer has much of value in it, and is certainly useful in working with people.

This book honestly tackles issues around self harm, suicide, sexual anxiety

The only thing lacking for me was the question of what happens when these cases are brought to supervision. Are they heard with such clarity? And what is the atmosphere evoked in the supervisory space? It is clear that he supervises much work and that has added a depth and complexity to his writing, and he alludes to this work, but it felt a shame to me that more of that was not written about by him. He is certainly an author and practitioner I would look out to read more from.

His theoretical framework is psychoanalytic but he is very open about the other influence on him, such as motivational work, CBT and Positive psychology. He is

usefully critical and helpful expansive about these approaches and makes persuasive reading. His work can sometimes seem very 'hands on' but his enthusiasm and determination to help bring about change and not get stuck with the tough non-moving sulky client is creative and powerful. There is certainly much here for therapists to explore in their work and for supervisors to explore their response to. I wondered to myself how I would supervise someone who worked liked this.

There are rich pickings in this work too sections on qualities of great therapists, traps that therapists in this area need to avoid, creating a good space in which to see young men, the place of play and fun and improving emotional intelligence.

I found his section of sexuality issues very helpful, as it was broad, inclusive, and honest about handling male sexual bravado and boasting. It moved beyond the usual discussion of identity to something more nuanced about humanity. Although often sweeping in the pronouncements there was much of value too. As indeed a section on substance abuse and behavioural issues which was wonderfully useful rather than just theoretical. I found the section on anger management particularly helpful as I often find I am sent young men with 'anger' issues. Verhaagen's approach and accompanying worksheet is one of the better ways into working in a frequently presenting area, and I look forward to adding his insights and approaches to my work.

It is perhaps the final chapter on modern technology and internet, FaceBook issues et al that I think makes a brilliant ending to this tour de force of a book. With clear understanding of ethics, boundaries and professionalism Verhaagen navigates a path through issues of Skype therapy, therapists' websites and private inappropriate use of the internet. It somewhat stands alone in this book as it is not really a gender issue so much as an age gap issue between many therapists and the young people who come to see them. I think as a chapter it will be photocopied and used as a great way of opening up a professional debate about some of these more taxing issues.

All in all an excellent book well written and researched based on sound reflective practise. It is the application of good theory that makes this volume essential reading.

***Bruce Kinsey*** trained at the Cambridge Society for Psychotherapy and for supervision with the SAP. He has a private practice in Cambridge where he also teaches.

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# Contributions to future Journals

## **Autumn/Winter 2012 - Supervising in Unusual Settings**

Lead Editor Eleanor Creed-Miles

Copy deadline 3rd December

Do you supervise therapists working in a settings which might be “unfamiliar” or “unusual” for many:- perhaps in a hospital, a hospice, a prison, the armed forces, a chaplaincy, a refuge, a refugee centre, the emergency services, a drop-in centre, home visiting service or others.....? Or is the nature of your supervision distinct from the 'classical' psychotherapy and counselling disciplines; for example- are you working in Art, Music or Drama Therapy?

In what ways does the work of supervision remain the same and in what ways are the issues different? What lessons can be learned and shared? How do the special circumstances of this setting impact on the frame and how can supervisors provide containment in a challenging environment? How do the particular anxieties of the client group work their way into the supervision?

If you have experience in supervising in this area please do consider sharing the wealth of your experience with others. Please contact either Eleanor Creed-Miles or Bruce Kinsey (brlk1@cam.ac.uk) to discuss ideas/the possibility further.

## **Spring/Summer 2013 – Off-cuts and thoughts on supervision**

Lead Editor Frances Hawxwell and Bruce Kinsey

Copy deadline 20th March 2013

We thought it would be good to dedicate an edition to various pieces that don't always fit our 'themed' editions. If you have a clinical case you wish to write on, a set of ideas or thoughts which you would like to pursue, now is your chance to think about them, and help us all explore some mainstream or fringe thinking. All contributions will be happily received.



# Articles for 'Supervision Review' General Guidance

## **Autumn/Winter 2012 - Supervising in Unusual Settings**

Copy deadline 3rd December  
Lead Editor Eleanor Creed-Miles

## **Spring/Summer 2013 – Off-cuts and thoughts on supervision**

Copy deadline 20th March 2013  
Lead Editor Frances Hawxwell and Bruce Kinsey

**Theme:** Articles need to address the theme from the perspective of psychodynamic / psychoanalytic / analytical psychology and focus upon supervision (vignettes may be from the perspective of supervisor or supervisee).

**Copy Deadline:** This allows time for editing/checking queries prior to the committee meeting and 'Supervision Review' going to print. NB. If you would like feedback on a late draft please let the lead editor know beforehand and agree an earlier deadline to allow sufficient time for this process.

**Article length:** Articles are usually 2,000 words (approx), although where appropriate and by negotiation we can offer flexibility with this wordage up to 3,000 (approx). 'Nuggets' i.e. more informal / shorter pieces are also welcome.

**Format:** For articles please include the following:-

- **Title of article and name of author**
- **Abstract** – a one paragraph summary
- **Six key words** - The key words are for use by the internet search engines for the e-journal
- **Main text**
- **Bibliography**
- **Biography** - a few sentences of personal biography.

**E-Journal:** Please note that any published article will also be included in the e-journal on the BAPPS web site.

**Copyright:** If you wish to include/use any of your material previously published in a book/journal please ensure that you liaise with your publisher to obtain permission.

**Lead Editor:** This rotates between Chris Driver, Annie Power, Lynda Norton, Bruce Kinsey and Eleanor Creed-Miles. The role of the lead editor is to provide support & constructive feedback during the process of writing & submission. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have an idea for an article & would like to sound someone out or if you have any other queries.

**AUTUMN CONFERENCE & AGM**  
**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2012**  
**THE PLAY WITHIN THE PLAY**  
**Supervising the Uncanny**  
**CAROL LEADER**

**Carol Leader** is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, training supervisor, and teacher. Formerly a successful actor and presenter, Carol writes, lectures, leads workshops and seminars, and consults in business and the arts.

With a unique insight into her topic, she will combine her extensive experience in both psychoanalytic psychotherapy and the performing arts, to explore the uncanny aspects of the unconscious subtext of the patient's inner drama; subtext which can remain hidden from view in supervision. Using a combination of film extract and case material, she will be looking at how the work of the supervisory couple, or group, promotes the emergence of a more authentic conscious response to the patient's 'script'. This in turn brings meaning to the underlying 'stage directions' that the patient has been unconsciously communicating.

- 9.30 Registration and coffee
- 10.00 WELCOME & SPEAKER
- 11.00 Refreshment Break
- 11.20 GROUP DISCUSSION
- 12.20 Lunch
- 1.20 LARGE GROUP FEEDBACK/PLENARY
- 2.00 END
- 2.15 AGM (Members only)**
- 3.15 Close**

**Venue** The Tavistock Centre, 5<sup>th</sup> floor Lecture Theatre, 120 Belsize Lane, London NW3 5BA. Nearest Tubes: Finchley Road, Swiss Cottage

**Cost** including hot lunch and refreshments:

Non Members: £65; Early Bird: £50

Members : £50; Early Bird: £35; Retired BAPPS members: £20.00

Early Bird deadline: bookings made by 27<sup>th</sup> September 2012

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