

## CYBERSUPERVISION: A BRIEF APPROACH TO ONLINE SUPERVISION Stokes, A.

Over the next few issues, interspersed by other themes, this column will look at models of supervision and consider their appropriateness for online supervision. A question sometimes asked is whether f2f approaches should be adapted for online work, or whether new ones, specific to the medium, should be developed instead. My answer is 'yes'! In other words, it is not 'either/or', but 'and/and'. If I am comfortable using a particular approach f2f, what is wrong with using it online, with necessary adaptations? However, I would suggest that few of us use 'pure' models anyway, in counselling or supervision. So, consciously or unconsciously, we probably have developed a 'new' model.

I'm beginning with Brief Interventions. For me, this approach to supervision works well, whether or not the supervisee works briefly with clients because 'brief interventions' is genuinely an approach, rather than a model. It is collaborative – which is what I hope is represented by the image above! A criticism of online supervision concerns whether an hour of synchronous work is equivalent to a similar time f2f. I don't want to get into that argument here; rather, I would say that a 'brief' focus helps to make good use of the time available, both synchronously and asynchronously.

One of the basic tenets of brief work is respectful curiosity concerning the supervisee and the process of therapy. It aims to validate competence and resources, and to work to defined goals. The latter might be set each session: 'What are you hoping to achieve from

this session/exchange of emails? It could also encompass a number of sessions: 'I want to increase my ability to challenge appropriately online'. The supervisor checks frequently whether goals are being achieved.

Many of 'ways of being and working' from SFBT are useful here, e.g. looking for exceptions to problems arising in the supervisee's work or identifying pre-existing solutions. Generally, the focus is more on how the supervisee is working than on the client's story.

A helpful brief way of ensuring that the supervisor retains an overall sense of the supervisee's work is for every client to be named occasionally, then rated on a scale of 0 - 10 (10 being that everything is going as well as it possibly could). The supervisee writes briefly about what would be different if the next session moved up a point, and how they would recognise this. This enables the supervisee to recognise if they need to do or be something different, or do/be more of the same.

Another criticism of online supervision is that it concentrates on competence and is not sufficiently challenging if there are problems or even unethical work. This needn't be so, though the way of challenging may be different. It begins from a position of building on what is going well, and looking at the issues *together* as a dilemma, rather than taking the expert position.

Many supervisors already integrate brief ‘techniques’ into their supervision. For my part, from time to time, I find it useful to go back and see if I could do more in order to improve my online supervision.

About the Author: Anne Stokes is based in Hampshire, UK, and is a well-known online therapist, supervisor and trainer and Director of Online Training Ltd.

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## References

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