CYBER SUPERVISION

ANNE STOKES

For me, these four short lines embody the essence of supervision. While theory and academic knowledge are useful as an underpinning, we miss the person, both the client and the supervisee, if supervision is not a 'lived posture'. What I would like to suggest in this short article is that using our creativity helps us to move towards that integration –

that living posture. It can cut through the layers of 'shoulds, oughts, musts and mustn'ts' and help us discover what may be happening in the counselling relationship and how we can then be alongside our clients as they journey.

Humans are creative beings, though through education and life experiences, many people believe that they are not. Creativity is wrongly equated to being 'artistic', rather than being concerned with using our ability to harness our right brain.

Using our creativity with our online clients and supervisees may help them to break through to meanings and understandings that they are struggling with. Because it often by-passes conscious

thought, it can be very powerful.

However, counsellors and supervisors may be loath to engage in this area of work because they have not had the opportunity to try it out for themselves. I think this is especially true with online work, as we panic, thinking we don't have the tools to hand in the same way as in our f2f practice – no stones, no paper, no felt tips!

But remember – creativity is a way of being! Therefore in the moment in online supervision, decide what might 'fit' in being useful to shine a light on the process. Does the client (or the supervisee) use visual or auditory words? Do they use metaphor and images? Go with this as it suggests they may

Using Creativity in Online Supervision

be receptive to working in a particular way.

Photographs, drawings, and collages can be shared, either directly or through scanning them. This can be done whether you are working synchronously or asynchronously, particularly once you are both used to working this way. You can use a whiteboard together and create images or drawings, or show the supervisee's understanding of a particular dynamic (different sized and coloured circles can be the equivalent of the stones in f2f work!).

I have found that supervisees (and their clients) often refer to a scene from a film, or a piece of music. These can be accessed comparatively easily

online, though possibly not as instantaneously as we would like. Using these can bring hidden feelings, thoughts and awareness into the online room.

Simply working with words can be so creative. Poems and stories are written and shared – in the moment or by email as part of supervision by email, or before a session in realtime. Indeed, I have experienced supervisees writing poems or short stories in the online session which have powerfully brought about a new understanding or insight.

If you are a Second Life resident, you might well take your supervisee (or your supervisor!) into your office and work there in the fantasy world. This would be a very good way

of undertaking a 'supervision journey' with the avatar client.

One of the important aspects of working with our creativity in supervision concerns how to translate this back into the work with our clients. Sometimes our new understanding of a particular aspect of the process is enough – it will transform our work simply through that awareness. However, it is sometimes essential to put time aside in online supervision to ask 'What does this mean in my practice with client Y? Do I need to "do or be" any different?' In a synchronous session, the supervisor can ensure that time is set aside for this. In asynchronous work, it may be that the supervisor asks the question in an email exchange,

and leaves the supervisee to reflect on this themselves. There could, of course, be a further exchange of emails to consolidate and integrate this aspect.

As an appendix to this article, there are some suggestions of ways of working. You may or may not want to try them out.

A final word of warning though – if we become slaves to creative techniques, rather than being creative in our ways of living our online supervision, then we are in danger of changing the opening lines above to 'No creative technique is satisfactory'.

'WHAT DO I WANT

TO LEARN

OR COME TO KNOW

IN THE PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC SITUATION?

. . . . .

WHAT IT IS TO REACH FOR

THE SPIRIT OF MAN

*(From Miller Mair in
'What do I want to know?')*

REFERENCE

Mair, M. (1989) Between <u>Psychology and Psychotherapy: a poetics of experience.</u> London Routledge

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BLOCKS TO CREATIVITY

- Using the whiteboard, make a circle of aspects of your creativity (you could also draw this offline, scan and send it to your supervisor. Another way would be to use clip art rather than drawings)

- Place 'yourself' in the middle

- Then put in representations of what might block you using your creativity in your work

- With your online supervisor, consider what you need to help you remove the blocks

THE FISH EXERCISE

(yes – this favourite f2f exercise can be done online too!)

things to try!

- Think of a client
- Draw that person as a fish
- Now add yourself in
- Look at your drawing and notice what you see
- Ask your supervisor to notice what s/he sees

HERE ARE TWO WAYS OF USING STORIES .

- The first is access which story (great literature, fairy tale, best seller) comes to mind when you think of them. This will often reveal aspects of their life or your relationship with them
- The second is to 'write' their story with your supervisor as a witness. It could be done in a live session, or by email. It can highlight how you view the client, and /or things about them you haven't noticed.

- You could do the same thing with films.

WRITING A POEM

Think about the online supervision of this client:

- What has come to you?
- What have you learned about yourself, your client or your work?
- What do you want to leave behind or take away?
- Do you want to send this poem to your online supervisor?

THINKING ABOUT SYSTEMS

- Use a system your client is in, and draw that system as a room/sweet shop/ house. You could use a whiteboard in a live session, or send your

supervisor the drawing you have done offline.

- Look at that picture with your supervisor and see what new meaning can be drawn from it.

Now create your own ideas and share them with your supervisor – they will be better than anything from outside! Experiment and believe in your own creative spirit.