



# CYBER SUPERVISION

ANNE STOKES

It is strange how things come together. When I wrote the column for the last edition, I had no conscious awareness that I was thinking about my ending here, and my decision to make this my final contribution. In fact interestingly I had even temporarily forgotten that this had been the focus of that issue when I was making my decision!

Last time I considered whether endings online are really endings, but here I would like to explore why and how we make the decision to end the supervisory relationship, both as a supervisor and as a supervisee. Knowing when to move on is a key aspect of supervision, and ideally in the early stages of the

relationship there will have been exploration of how each partner would signal that they might want to discuss this. However, I suspect that most of us either don't do this, or we do it, and then we forget what we've said!

The ending can be initiated by supervisor or supervisee, but hopefully in a good collaborative relationship both will be involved in the process. It may help the supervisor to be aware of how the supervisee manages endings with their online clients, as this may give indicators of the possibility of a supervisory ending and also the attitude of the supervisee towards endings. Are they a person who needs plenty of time to work towards a final

session, or are they someone who prefers to 'go' once the decision is made? Neither is right or wrong, and both have advantages and downsides. Is it our need as supervisor to spend time 'working it through' rather than the supervisees, or do we unconsciously feel upset that they are leaving us and so push them out of the nest too soon? Perhaps supervisors need to make sure they take endings to their own supervision of supervision, so that someone is watching out for the blind spots in the process.

One reason for ending may be to do with the age and stage of development of an online supervisee. Our first online supervisor will have taken us through the initial stages of

# When Is An Online Ending Really An Ending? *Part Two*

training and working online, but as we become more confident and experienced a supervisor with different strengths may be more appropriate. Perhaps it would be someone who has set up an online practice themselves, or someone with an online specialism that matches our own practice. It could be simply that we have worked with one supervisor for a considerable time and feel that we would benefit from a new perspective or challenge.

Much of what I've written above applies to f2f as well as online supervision, so what particular aspects need to be considered online? I think there is a greater possibility of a 'sudden' ending, and I referred to this in the previous

column. My sense is that this is more likely to happen in text based work, and particularly in email supervision, than in webcam sessions. It may be more important for the online supervisor to support the supervisee in the process of finding a new supervisor, as there are currently fewer supervisors trained to work online than f2f. This leads into the accountability of a supervisor to the online clients of their supervisees. If we accept that there are fewer online supervisors, do we have an ethical responsibility to ensure that our supervisee has indeed a new contract in place elsewhere? What do we do if they haven't?

From the perspective of the online supervisee, what

do they do if they feel that they are not getting the supervision they need from their supervisor? Hopefully the relationship will stand that exploration, but we know that sometimes life is just not like that! A brave supervisee will be upfront about their decision to leave, and while it may still be difficult to do this, it is possibly easier online than f2f. There is much less chance of coming across the supervisor later because they are probably not geographically close to each other.

So what are my reasons for leaving here? They are similar to those I would bring to my work as an online supervisor. There is nothing sinister about them! Kate and DeeAnna haven't been brave and told

me that it's time to move over. It is partly about the general reduction in my working life, but mainly because I want to stop while I am still enjoying doing this column and have something to say; 'to end while the going is good' as the saying goes. There is also the consideration that I have been around in the online world for a very long time (though 'long' is of course a relative word in online circles) and someone newer and fresher may bring many different and interesting perspectives. I would also bring these considerations to my work as an online supervisor

Thank you for reading these columns (though of course, you may not have!) and to Kate and DeeAnna for the opportunity from the first edition of TILT. I've enjoyed being part of the TILT team and wish everyone well for its future. ■



## EDITORS NOTE:

It is with sadness that we say goodbye to Anne, who has been with us as our CyberSupervision columnist for 20 issues! We wish her all the best for her future, and it truly has been a pleasure reading her work. From Issue 21, we'll be welcoming Cedric Speyer as our new CyberSupervision columnist, who has big shoes to fill!

*Kate and DeeAnna*

## 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](#). She can be contacted at [anne.stokes4@btinternet.com](mailto:anne.stokes4@btinternet.com).