

Academic Discipline of Social Justice and Inclusion
MArts/BA Humanistic Counselling Practice

Module: Practicum 2

Assessment Component: 1

Assignment Title: Practicum 2 Component 1

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Within counselling practice there are many aspects to consider, such as what theoretical approach is to be used and the reason behind the choice. There are also things to consider such as the contract between client and practitioner as the contract provides the ethical boundaries that underpin practice, this is in order to keep the client and practitioner safe when conducting practice in cases of ethical dilemmas. It is the job of the practitioner to ensure that they are competent within their practice in which case there may be issues in terms of staying attuned to the client. This is where interpersonal process recall (IPR) comes into play. IPR is a method whereby the practitioner recalls a recorded session of practice in order to reflect on any stages within practice where they feel that they did not totally understand the client's message; this could be done in a supervision setting. This may be due to the practitioner getting in the way of their own process, meaning they are too focused on what they say next which in turn leads to the client not being fully understood. With reflection IPR could help practitioners stay attuned with their clients of which would help uphold good practice (Cashwell, 1994). In this piece of writing there will be a case study which will entail a 20 minute counselling session that will be reflected upon, in the reflection there will be a discussion on the decision of the theoretical approach used, whether there were any points where the client was not being heard by the practitioner as well as an exploration into any potential ethical dilemmas faced by the practitioner. To follow the reflection there will be an analysis of the session which will lead on to an evaluation looking into ethical dilemmas that the practitioner faced or could face, following this the evaluation will also look at diversity/discrimination which will then boast the importance of supervision and having a sufficiently qualified/experienced supervisor. The evaluation will then go into a summary/conclusion.

The session began with the counsellor introducing themselves to the client which lead on to the contract between client and counsellor; areas were covered such as confidentiality whereby the counsellor went into the limits of confidentiality in terms of law. In this part of the session the counsellor seemed to muddle their word which is an area to improve on in order to be clearer to the client. The client began to talk about their issue which was regarding their friend who has a new partner invited the client to their house. The client went into how all the friends and children were having a good time, but later in the night the friend's new partner started to change in behaviour as they drank more which lead to them seeming more "boisterous". At this point the counsellor began to paraphrase back to the client what the counsellor understands to have happened; doing this the counsellor outlined the word "Boisterous" as a reflection. The client then felt that "Boisterous" was not the right words which lead to the client changing the word to "Inappropriate" in a social aspect. The client then went on to discuss how the behaviour didn't seem right as the new partner had not been around for long. The client then added that most people were drinking weaker alcoholic drinks but the partner was drinking what appeared to be spirits of some kind. The client grew more concerned when the partners behaviour started to become more erratic when they started to become louder and began swearing and getting in people's faces. The client was concerned with the situation as her friend's child was in the room whilst this was going on which made the child uncomfortable. The client then noticed that her friend didn't do anything about the situation until the partner started trying to dance with people which made the child increasingly uncomfortable, this lead to the friend/mother of the child taking the child out of the room. The situation has worried the client. The counsellor again paraphrased back to the client as there was a lot of dialogue which needed to be clarified; the counsellor used the word

“rowdy” to describe how the partner began to behave as well as “inappropriate”. At this point the client went on to describe how the partner behaved as if they had known the client for a long time which was not the case, this was described as “Odd” by the client. The counsellor then brought up that there was a child present during the event which for the counsellor might be a concern in terms of safeguarding of the child, the counsellor paraphrased that the friend/parent did take the child away from the situation however there was still a concern. The client then described the character of the friend which was quiet and didn’t really swear. The counsellor then asked the client how the situation made the client feel inside in order to focus on the client’s feelings. The client described that they felt as if their stomach was being squeezed when they noticed the child was present during the event which they described physically by grabbing their stomach. When the client described the feeling the counsellor mirrored the client’s body language in order to convey understanding and then used the word “constricted” instead of squeezed. In order to avoid mimicking the client, however looking back it might have been a good idea for the counsellor to use the word “squeezed” as the counsellor may come across as directing. The client also noticed how unaware the partner was of their actions. The client then conveyed that they have thought of discussing the situation with their friend but upon seeing the friend they noticed that the friend acted as if nothing was wrong. This did not sit right with the client as they then addressed that their friend’s ex husband was an alcoholic in which case the children have already experienced this sort of situation, so the client feels as though there could be a repeat of the “Same” issues. The counsellor then reflected the word “same” and described the situation as “similar” which the client agreed with. The client then verbalised their concern for the children more so than the parent. The client then reiterated how the new partner made her feel “uncomfortable”. The counsellor then

asked an open question as to how the client feels the children are coping with the situation. The client focused on the youngest child who in the client's opinion is "on the ball" and doesn't really talk about their father. The client went on to mention that the child does however say that the new partner engages in playing football with them, on the other hand the client then reverted back to the event and described that they didn't think it was going to "be". The counsellor then tried said the word "hard" whilst pointing towards their stomach which could have been phrased better such as saying "it sounds hard". The counsellor went on to weigh up that on one hand there is good but on the other there is still that concern with regards to previous issues. The client agreed and went on to describe the feeling it leaves in their stomach with regards to a repeat of events which the counsellor could have focused more on in order to convey understanding to the client. The client then mentioned that the friend depended on them quite a lot which the client couldn't find the word for so they said it did "spill over" which the counsellor then said "impacted" in a questionable manor to which the client agreed. The client then explored their feelings and found that inside they feel that they don't want to go through the experience again with their family and whether they want to say something to the friend or to say nothing. The counsellor then paraphrased to the client taking into consideration the strain the situation has on the client as well as the other aspects which then lead to an open question asking "looking forward what do you think would be a route to take"? This was done in order to explore the client's avenues. The client did not want to go through the experience again nor did they want their family to as it was not their issue. The counsellor went on to explore with the client how the client could get that across to their friend and what would the client say. The client said that they would give their concerns but then detracted by talking about their friend to which the counsellor said "But for you" in order to get the client back on

track. The client then said that they would have to say that “I can’t do it a second time, none of us can” which lead to the client going into that they do value their friendship but it was too much as the friend would turn up at the clients house in the night with the children and ask the client to do things for them. This caused the client to realise how bad the situation was for the client at the time which the client described as “horrific”. The client continued to go into how with the ex husband tried to detox but it didn’t work and the ex husband is now begging in the streets which acts as an unpleasant reminder to the client. The client then reiterated that they think the same thing will happen again, to which the counsellor added “it sounds like a lot to carry” in order to show empathy, the client agreed with this and went on to reflect on the event and how bad it was. The counsellor then outlined that when the client first started the session it was mostly about the friends issues but as the session went on the client realised the impact the events had on them and their family which has lead to an exploration of possible solutions, the counsellor emphasised that this was a “big step”. The client then went into how they see things from their friend’s point of view but this time they are more “cynical” and have realised the impact it has had. The counsellor then asked an explorative question which was “when you think of all this are there any feelings” whilst pointing to their body to emphasise the feelings inside. The client went into the feeling in their stomach and how looking forward they have a “choice” and don’t have to go through the situation again the feeling turns into a “calm” which takes away the “horrible anxious knot”. With that being said the counsellor gave notice of the end of the session and got permission to summarise what has been spoke about in the session. The counsellor went into the initial event and how it has affected her in the past in relation to alcohol, as well as the impact it had on the client. The counsellor then went into how the client has actually come to possible avenues to resolve the client’s issue.

During the session the counsellor used the person centred approach, however there were some aspects of the session which drew more directive responses from the counsellor this was due to there being a child involved so a potential safeguarding issue could have been present. In the session as well as in feedback it can be seen that a lot of the session was focused upon the clients friend and their issues of which on reflection could have been helped by the counsellor by bringing the client back to how they felt about the situation. In the session it could also be seen that the client was exploring their feelings, however the physical feelings of the client could have been explored more in order to gain more understanding. When introducing the contract to the client the counsellor could have been more thorough in order to provide clarity to the client as there were points where the counsellor stuttered. There was also a moment in the session where the counsellor interrupted the client of which could have been seen as not letting the client tell their story, this is something which could be reflected upon in future. When giving the summary of the session the counsellor could have been more detailed as there were gaps within it which could lead the client to believe that they were not listened to. Overall the counsellor displayed the core conditions however in terms of body language and facial expression , the counsellor could take on a more relaxed and warming expression as there were times where the counsellor looked too serious, in terms of body language the counsellor began to slouch a bit during the session which could be off-putting to the client.

In the beginning of the session the contract was introduced whereby confidentiality was mentioned as well as the limits of confidentiality. During the session the client mentioned that there was a child being exposed to the event also which automatically set off warning signs to the counsellor due to a potential risk to the child in future. The

counsellor kept reiterating that there was a child present in order to attain whether or not the child was safe. This is an important reason to always make sure that the contract is completed between client and counsellor in order to ensure that if further disclosure revealed that the child was in fact in danger then the counsellor would have no choice but to inform the correct authority, be it the supervisor or line manager (BACP, 2018). Within practice the approach used was that of person centred. During the session the counsellor displayed the core conditions in order to provide the space for the client to potentially achieve growth. During the session the client seemed to be steering away from the client's story and began to tell the friends story, this acted as an obstacle to the client as they were unable to say how the event impacted themselves. To help the client achieve growth the counsellor used open questions to bring the attention back to the client's experience. Doing this helped the client realise that they were also impacted by the event which lead them to explore how much of an impact the event actually had on them. When the client began to explore the impact of the event the counsellor used paraphrasing and reflecting in order to convey understanding. When the counsellor thought it was the right time they asked the client what they thought could be a possible avenue for the client in order to promote the client to find their own resolve. The client came up with the solution that they speak to their friend and explain that they do not want to put their family through the same situation again as it was too hard the first time. Now that the client had reached their own conclusion this felt like the right time for the counsellor to summarise the themes of the session (Reeves, 2013, p.69). In terms of diversity within a counselling practice it is important to acknowledge that when in practice it is important that the counsellor is competent in their work. This is where diversity comes into the equation. With the client presented in the case study there was not much concern in terms of diversity which leads on to reflection as a

counsellor in professional practice does not know who will come through the door. Diversity encompasses a lot of things such as culture. If a client were to walk into your practice that is a Muslim for example then there may be certain boundaries that the client has in terms of what they will disclose, this is an important aspect because some counsellors may not be educated in these areas so the client may not receive the best service possible (Bond, 2015, p.200). Within the case study the person centred approach was used which uses active listening as a key concept. In terms of diversity active listening is a way in which a counsellor can learn about someone and with the core conditions backing the process it could lead to a good therapeutic relationship that promotes understanding (Corey, 2001, p.187). It is important to recognize discrimination when conducting practice in order to provide a safe place for people who are under discrimination so as to provide counselling to everyone. As a practitioner it should be a responsibility that the practitioner keeps up to date with legislation. If a counsellor does not keep up to date with legislation otherwise they may be at risk of an ethical dilemma due to lack of knowledge. In the case study there has been mention of a child of which if in further sessions is revealed to be a serious risk then the practitioner has to act in the correct way. This is where supervision is key as the counsellor may just be starting out and is not totally sure what to do, which is where supervision comes into play as counselling practitioners should have a supervisor that is experienced in counselling as well as supervision. If this is not apparent then the counsellor may have to seek a more experienced supervisor. In the case study alcohol was one of the issues of which some counsellors may not be versed in so again it is important to have a supervisor that has a wealth of experience in such areas (Bond, 2015, p.228). Within the case study there was no initial assessment which in terms of the person centred approach has not really been implemented. Due to the nature of the person centred approach it could be seen

that assessment is being directive of which goes against the foundations of the approach (Corey, 2001, p.180). When in professional practice depending on where a counsellor is working there may be an organisational requirement to conduct an assessment before the therapy starts. One of these methods is known as the CORE outcome measure (CORE-OM) form. It is used in order to show how the client has felt within the last week. It works on a point scale of 5 which measures how good or bad someone is feeling. To use this along with the person centred approach may come across as leading which doesn't align with the way the approach works. If I were to present this form to the client in the case study there could be issues such as the client may have dyslexia which may hinder the client in reading the form, or the client may be impatient and tick anything which could lead to misinformation. The CORE-OM could however benefit some clients as they may be at high risk which would act as insight to the practitioner leading to the client getting sufficient help (COREims, 2019).

Within the case study it can be seen that the client had problem with an event that occurred with their friend's new partner regarding inappropriate behaviour. This lead to the client talking about how her friend has been through a similar situation in the past, however the client seemed to be talking a lot about her friends problem and not as much about how the client felt. The counsellor brought the client back to how they feel which lead to the client realising the impact the previous event had on them and their family. The counsellor then went on to help the client explore possible avenues in order to reach a resolve for the client using open questions as well as reflecting and paraphrasing. Towards the end of the session it can be seen that the client's original anxiety started to diminish due to the client reaching a potential decision to address their concerns with the friend in order to prevent

the client from going through a repeat of events. The Counsellor then brought the session to a close by summarising the themes of the session in which the counsellor outlined that the client had come to their own decision on how to go about resolving their issue. The session outlined how the person centred approach can help facilitate the growth of the client, in this case the client was distracted from their own journey but brought back whereby they found a potential solution. On evaluating the session/approach it can be seen that there are some areas for improvement such as clearly addressing the contract and one of the main points was to try and focus on the client's story rather than the people within the story otherwise there will just be a narrative. In the evaluation it can be seen that supervision is very important in continuing professional practice in order to promote good practice and to have as a network so as to voice any ethical dilemmas regarding practice. It is also important to acknowledge diversity and discrimination by keeping up to date with relevant legislation and changes to law as well as learning first hand from clients by actively listening. It is also important to acknowledge the place and importance of assessment within practice as within the person centred approach there is still no clear implementation of assessment of explanation to whether there should be assessment. In conclusion it can be seen that the person centred approach can be effective as a counselling intervention and can help people take charge of their own growth and autonomy, however it is crucial that the individual practitioner continues to do research in order to further their knowledge and be able to conduct good practice.

References

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