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Supervision of emotion-focused therapy: a study of congruent practice

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ABSTRACT

Like the unique adaptations of our flora and fauna, emotion-focused therapy (EFT) in Australia has evolved in response to our remote environment. One of the many particular adaptations of EFT in this country is our current approach to supervision. With a strong commitment to person-centered practice, many Australian emotion-focused therapists have tried to stay true to an ideal of philosophical congruence between therapy and supervision. This paper places our approach in the context of the fledgling research into effective methods for EFT supervision, tracks the Australian EFT supervision micro-evolution and puts our attempts to create a congruent supervisory practice under the microscope of focus group research. The aim here is to provide some insight into how emotion-focused therapists can better bring their conditions of therapeutic practice into the supervision space.

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Emotion-focused therapy; supervision; supervision models; person-centered supervision; interpretative phenomenological analysis

Supervision Emotionsfokussierter Therapie: eine Studie kongruenter Praxis

So wie die fremd- und einzigartigen Adaptationen in unserer Flora und Fauna, so hat sich auch die Emotionsfokussierte Therapie (EFT) in Reaktion auf unsere entlegene Umgebung entwickelt. Eine der vielen besonderen Adaptation von EFT in diesem Land ist unser derzeitiger Ansatz für Supervision. Eng verbunden mit Personenzentrierter Praxis versuchen viele australische Emotionsfokussierte Therapeuten, dem Ideal einer philosophischen Kongruenz zwischen Therapie und Supervision treu zu bleiben. Dieser Artikel stellt unseren Ansatz in den Kontext der sich entwickelnden Forschung zu effektiven Methoden für EFT-Supervision, vollzieht die australische EFT-Supervisions-Mikro-Evolution nach und stellt unsere Versuche, eine kongruente supervisorische Praxis zu schaffen, unter das Mikroskop der Fokusgruppenforschung. Das Ziel ist hier, Einblick nehmen zu lassen, wie Emotionsfokussierte Therapeuten die Bedingungen ihrer therapeutischen Praxis in die Supervision einbringen können.

Supervisión de la terapia enfocada en la emoción: un estudio de práctica congruente

Al igual que las adaptaciones extrañas y únicas de nuestra flora y fauna, la terapia enfocada en la emoción (EFT, siglas en inglés) en España ha evolucionado en respuesta a nuestro entorno remoto. Una de las muchas adaptaciones particulares de EFT en este país es nuestro enfoque actual de supervisión. Con un fuerte compromiso con la práctica centrada en la persona, muchos terapeutas australianos centrados en la emoción han intentado permanecer fieles a un ideal de congruencia filosófica entre la terapia y supervisión. Este escrito ubica nuestro enfoque en el contexto de la incipiente investigación en métodos efectivos para la supervisión de EFT, rastrea la supervisión micro-evolución australiana y pone nuestros intentos de crear una práctica de supervisión congruente bajo el microscopio de la investigación de grupos de discusión. El objetivo es proporcionar insights acerca de como los terapeutas enfocados en la emoción pueden llevar de la mejor manera sus condiciones de práctica terapéutica al espacio de supervisión.

La supervision dans la thérapie centrée sur l'émotion : une étude de la pratique congruente

Tout comme les adaptations étranges et uniques de la faune et de la flore, la thérapie centrée sur l'émotion (TCE) a évolué en Australie en réponse à notre environnement particulièrement éloigné. Dans cette région du monde, l'une des adaptations de la TCE porte sur la manière dont nous envisageons actuellement la supervision. Fortement engagés dans une pratique centrée sur la personne, de nombreux thérapeutes de la TCE ont tenté de rester fidèles à un idéal de congruence philosophique entre thérapie et supervision. Cet article situe notre approche dans le contexte d'une recherche novatrice de méthodes efficaces pour la supervision de la TCE. Suivant la micro-évolution de la supervision TCE en Australie, nous portons notre attention sur la création d'une pratique supervisée congruente construite sous le microscope d'un groupe de recherche en matière de focus. L'objectif est de procurer un certain aperçu de la façon dont les thérapeutes de la TCE peuvent mieux aborder les conditions de leur pratique thérapeutique dans l'espace de la supervision.

Supervisão em Terapia Focada na Emoção: um estudo de prática da congruência

Tal como acontece com as adaptações singulares das nossas flora e fauna, também a Terapia Focada na Emoção (TFE) evoluiu na Austrália em resposta ao nosso ambiente remoto. Uma das muitas adaptações particulares da TFE neste país é a nossa abordagem à supervisão. Fortemente comprometidos com prática Centrada na Pessoa, muitos terapeutas australianos Focados na Emoção tentaram manter-se fiéis a um ideal de congruência filosófica entre a terapia e a supervisão. Este artigo posiciona a nossa abordagem no contexto frágil de pesquisa acerca dos métodos eficazes de supervisão TFE; traça a microevolução da supervisão TFE australiana e coloca a nossa prática de supervisão congruente debaixo do microscópio da investigação de focus groups. O nosso objetivo é fornecer algum esclarecimento acerca de como os terapeutas centrados no focus podem colocar melhor as suas condições de prática terapêutica ao serviço do espaço de supervisão.

Introduction

Integrity is congruence between what you know, what you profess, and what you do.

Nathaniel Branden

Emotion-focused therapy (EFT) is an evidence-based, manualized, experiential therapy developed by Leslie Greenberg, Robert Elliott and Laura Rice (Greenberg, Rice, & Elliott, 1993). Originating from a person-centered framework, and incorporating Gestalt and experiential approaches, the method prioritizes the strength of the client-therapist alliance and identifies a series of client markers or indicators of emotional experience, which direct the therapist in the choice of effective processing tasks (Paivio, 2013). Unlike its person-centered base, EFT has not until very recently articulated a more congruent supervision model, where the overarching philosophy and interventions of the approach are brought into the practice of supervision (Greenberg & Tomescu, 2017). This has placed the practice of EFT supervision outside of its avowed person-centered core ethos.

In 2007, as part of the Process-Experiential Emotion-Focused Therapy (PEEFT)¹ Practitioners' Group in Melbourne, Australia, known as the PPG (<http://peeftpg.weebly.com/>), I began experimenting with a model of EFT supervision as part of the professional development practice within the group. In this context, I began to search for a supervision approach that was 'in-mode' or, in other words, faithful to the structure of the therapy model. In this paper, I have outlined the emergent model of this supervision approach, its experimental history, and the findings of a small qualitative focus group study of some of its current Australian practitioners. The findings suggest that person-centered values and practice are very much on the minds of those who currently use this new model and are in line with the small body of recent research into EFT couple therapy training and supervision. The focus group highlighted the potential for significant personal and professional growth in supervision relationships where supervisees have a safe space to process emotion.

Using a therapy model as a guide to supervision inevitably raises the issue of where the distinction between supervision and therapy sits (Society for Counselling and Psychotherapy Educators, 2003). These focus group results show that EFT 'in-mode' or model congruent supervision practitioners have something unique to contribute to clarifying our understanding of how to make sense of this distinction in practice.

History of the PEEFT Practitioners' Group (PPG)

In 2005, a small group of 10 counselors graduated from the EFT specialism in the Master of Counseling program at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia. The program was built on a solid person-centered core of practice with an option to study EFT in the second year. After graduation, six of us formed a supervision group with our mentor and teacher Dr George Wills, and began to develop a supervision practice that included a strong commitment to exploring the emotional processes and moment-to-moment experiences activated within us as supervisees in the course of discussing our work with clients. In the company of Stan Korosi, another former student, who developed an initial theory of this newly developed model of

supervision, and Melissa Harte, a newly trained EFT therapist who offered her services as a participant-supervisee, I presented the fledgling framework and practice of emotion-focused supervision at the 2008 Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy World Congress in Norwich, and further developments were presented at the World Congress conference in Rome in 2010 and at several counseling and psychology representative peak body conferences in Australia between 2010 and 2012.

At the instigation of members of our supervision group, an EFT Practitioners Group (PPG) was formed in order to support this antipodean community. Along with small group practice in EFT and larger group discussion, the PPG included this emergent emotion-process focused or 'in-mode' model of supervision as part of the structure of each quarterly professional development day. This model of supervision continues to form an integral part of the work of the current PPG. The original small practitioner circle has now widened to include therapists all across Melbourne and in other parts of Australia who have trained in EFT both here and overseas, and out of this original organization, many EFT-trained therapists are also using this model of supervision individually and in groups in their own centers of practice.

Continuity of practice between therapy and supervision

In the person-centered tradition, Carl Rogers (cited in Leddick & Bernard, 1980) originally outlined a program of graduated experiences for supervision in person-centered therapy. Group therapy and a practicum were at the core of the program. The most important aspect of this supervision was the modeling of the necessary and sufficient conditions of empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard. Lambers (2013) states that the assumption within a person-centered supervision approach is that supervisees have within them the resources for professional development and that the role of the supervisor is to provide a nonjudgmental environment that facilitates full experiencing. This underlying assumption has held fast throughout much of the contemporary person-centered supervision literature (Tudor & Worral, 2004).

Up until recently, there has been very little formal articulation of the philosophy and practice of supervision within the EFT community. A small body of research literature within the EFT couples therapy stream of practice does propose greater congruence between supervision and therapy work, particularly in terms of the attachment theory foundation of this arm of the approach (Palmer-Olsen, Gold, & Wooley, 2011; Sandberg & Knestel, 2011). Most recently, Leslie Greenberg and Liliana Tomescu, in response to the lack of an EFT supervision model, published a guide to supervision in EFT (2017). This text offers a manualized guide for supervisors looking to practice within this tradition, identifying markers of supervisee difficulties to support supervisors to handle and time their educational, interpersonal and technical interventions in supervision.

However, none of these authors speak specifically about how supervisors can facilitate emotional experiencing within supervision and none appear to look directly to person-centered history for guidance as to how to approach the question of a philosophical base for supervision.

Stemming from a desire to flesh out this research-based ideal of greater congruence, the following description outlines a proposed methodologically aligned approach to supervising difficult emotional experiences within an EFT supervision relationship. This approach references core attitudes and components of contemporary EFT practice, particularly the markers and therapeutic tasks, in order to inform the supervisor as to how s/he might respond empathically and effectively to supervisees' difficult feelings about their clients.

I have included a description of these tasks in the section that follows, in order to illustrate the technical bones of the approach and to provide a general overview of the therapeutic interventions in EFT 'in mode' supervision as they were originally proposed.

The markers and tasks as they are practiced in an EFT model of 'in-mode' supervision

Listening to the story – the narrative marker

The narrative marker as outlined in EFT therapy is characterized by a feeling of pressure and emotional intensity in the client's telling of their story. The suggested task in response to this marker is deep, active, empathic listening and an attempt to both make sense of the story itself and of the felt nature of the narrative (Carpenter, Angus, Paivio, & Bryntwick, 2016). To respond effectively to this marker, the supervisor makes space for the supervisee's need to fully tell their story of the client. It calls for time, attention and deep listening. In following this marker, the supervisor suspends direction, either of process or content, in favor of empathic presence.

Empty chair work – unfinished business in therapy

For one reason or another, therapists may experience a lingering sense of unfinished business in their work. The client who leaves suddenly, dies, is abusive or brings out the therapist's past experiences of trauma or abandonment, may provoke ongoing preoccupation. Sometimes there is intense emotion within the therapeutic relationship for the therapist. When this emotion is present with the sense of lingering painful feelings that are difficult to express, it is a marker for what EFT refers to as unfinished business (Shahar, 2013). In an 'in-mode' supervision practice, the supervisee displaying the marker for unfinished business is invited to dialog with the imagined client in an empty chair process in order to facilitate an awareness of past trauma or neglect and/or the expression of significant needs that have not been met in the therapist's formative relationships. This is not simply a supportive intervention for the therapist, but ideally leads to a greater ability to separate the therapist's personal historical wounds from those of their client(s).

Two chairs: When we are conflicted and interrupt our own experience

The marker of apparent conflicted or interrupted experience calls for an enactment task using a two-chair process where the client has an opportunity to provide a space for separate and conflicting narratives of the self to dialog and come to an enhanced

and differentiated understanding. Two chair enactments can lead to a more accepting experience of both parts of the self (Pos & Greenberg, 2012). In supervision, the marker for two chair work presents itself as a significant conflict *within* the supervisee about their work with a client, or as difficulty in articulating ‘unspeakable’ feelings, including sexual feelings, hatred, boredom and indifference. In following the process model of this method in supervision, the working response is an invitation to enact a two-chair dialog, where both aspects of the self have an opportunity for fuller expression and negotiation. This task can lead to clearer decision-making around dilemmas in therapy through addressing splits in internal experience that prevent therapist actualization.

Unfolding puzzling moments in therapy

Puzzling or surprising personal reactions are a marker for a task referred to as Systematic Evocative Unfolding; a re-experiencing process that allows a decelerated re-telling of both external and internal experience, thoughts and feelings, facilitating deeper and new understandings of our way of being in the world (Pascual-Leone, Andreescu, & Greenberg, 2016). In supervision, the marker is followed in the same way in order to lead to greater understanding of mystifying moments in therapy and unexplored areas of the self of the therapist.

Meaningful protests

We are regularly called upon in supervision to examine our beliefs about being a ‘good’ therapist, in a relationship that ideally is supposed to support us to become ‘better’. While on the surface of the supervision process, these beliefs relate to ethical practice and client outcome, the ‘good therapist’, like the concept of the ‘good mother’, can often overlap with other hidden self and social ideals. Sometimes these and other beliefs are living outside of our awareness, and come into focus only when they are directly challenged, and we are faced with the choice of holding onto the original belief structure and rejecting new experiential evidence in our therapy work, or of taking on the difficult task of working to create new meaning. It is this challenge to our self-understanding that is referred to as a meaning protest. Following the expression of a supervisee’s meaning protest, our task in supervision is to support the therapist to more fully explore the challenged belief in the light of new information, and over time to come to an understanding that is more congruent with current experiencing (Elliott, 2012).

Summary

While this general description of the model’s tasks as they were originally proposed in 2008, provides a technical summary of the approach, the working experience of this model over the past eight years has gone unrecorded.

The following investigation into the experience of practitioners who use this approach sheds further light on the method’s evolution, the felt sense of working in this way and on the underlying values and philosophy of its practitioners.

Focus group inquiry

Method

Eight years after this working supervision model was developed and regularly practiced in the PPG and across the wider Melbourne EFT community, I asked some of those who were using this model about their experience of putting this approach into practice. In particular, I wanted to know if the participants had similar experiences to those who took part in recent EFT supervision and training research, and if they could also articulate a difference between the use of these markers and tasks in supervision as both supervisors and supervisees, and their experience of them as clients in therapy. I particularly wanted answers to the following questions:

- (1) *What impact does 'in-mode' emotion-focused supervision have on your practice?*
- (2) *Do you use this method when you offer supervision, and if so, what is your experience of this?*
- (3) *How does this method compare to other forms of supervision you have received?*
- (4) *How is it different from therapy?*

To facilitate the process of reflection, these questions were provided in the form of an online group forum structured to invite responsive asynchronous communication. The forum was hosted by The Cairnmillar Institute in Melbourne, a tertiary psychology, psychotherapy and counseling training provider, who granted research approval through their Human Research Ethics Committee. The aim here was to provide space for a wide variety of thoughts and feelings to emerge and for participants to dialog with each other in order to challenge and deepen their responses. This small qualitative study was designed to gather some narrative data about engagement in this new method of practicing supervision.

Participants were recruited through the PPG Governance Committee, who provided formal research approval, and six people agreed to answer questions in an online focus group format about their experience of what the interest group dubbed 'in mode' emotion-focused supervision. Of the six, there were five men and one woman, and four were founding members of the original practitioner's group. The focus group was open over the period of a week so people could log on to the group and answer each of the questions for themselves and respond to the answers of others. The group was then closed and the data analyzed thematically using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) framework.

Like supervision, research practice is always a culturally embedded process. Finding a way to both gather and analyze data that is modeled on the core principles of empathy, genuineness and unconditional positive regard is, I believe, fundamental to the ethical integration of our research practice. To this end, I chose IPA for this study, because its focus is the dialectic and embedded relationship between researcher and participant (Cassidy, Reynolds, Naylor & De Souza, 2011), taking phenomenology as its foundation and holding a commitment to the 'comprehension and understanding of the experience of the human being from the consciousness and standpoint of the human being who is having the experience' (De Castro, 2003, pp.46–47).

IPA's main purpose is to explore the subjective meaning that people make of their encounters and how this meaning is co-created in the dance between their inner and outer worlds and between researcher and participant. It is both empathic and questioning, asking researchers to reflect and explore their own subjectivity and to relate this to their hearing of their participants' stories, to empathically enter their participants' personal worlds and reflect back what they hear, see and feel (Smith and Osborne, 2003). According to Fade (2004),

'The researcher's beliefs are not seen as biases to be eliminated but rather as necessary for making sense of the experiences of other individuals. Reflexivity is viewed as an optional tool, enabling the researcher to formally acknowledge his or her interpretative role, rather than as an essential technique for removing bias' (p.648).

While IPA uses the language of 'interpretation', it essentially speaks of the process of doubled reflection, with the researcher both tuning in to the participants and to their narratives, in order to help draw a picture of experiencing that tells a healing story. The 'interpretations' that IPA speaks of, are better described in action as advanced empathic reflections, big-picture summaries of carefully distilled and embodied listening.

Throughout the analysis process, I kept a record of my thoughts and feelings about what I was reading. The focus included my preconceptions, hopes and fears for my community and my own reflections on how I saw the method working. This was especially important here, as I am both a long-term member of the group and originally proposed this particular model of supervision practice. I felt both a strong interest in the model, but also a deep connection to other supervision approaches and a concern about the method's potential to obscure the needs of the client. I was helped in my reflective process by the fact that I have been unable to attend the group's PD days for over 18 months now, and so the transcripts held surprises for me in terms of how the group's process had evolved, and helped me more easily hear what the participants were saying with fresh ears.

Data analysis

As I went through the transcripts, I separately coded my sense of what I was hearing in the responses of the participants, my own reflections and my understandings of their words. This was in order to be able to more clearly and accurately engage in naming themes that represented the core of what was being said. The process of separately recording thematic information and my personal reflections helped me to distinguish between my own blocks to hearing and a thematic reading of the messages from participants. This allowed for more space for the data to be digested, and for a clear and articulated checking back to the research into EFT supervision. Elliot and Timulak (2005) describe this way of organizing themes as 'an interactive process' and 'a kind of dialogue with the data' (p. 154). Emergent themes reflected recurrent descriptions of experience. These were organized under a thematic label that represented a dominant message with a process- or content-based reflective handle. These themes were then re-checked against the transcripts, and re-named where necessary in order to achieve a more accurate empathic reflection. Participants were then given pseudonyms for the reporting of the data.

Results

I drew four main themes from the data, from across the participants' responses to the five open questions. The first, *From the Inside Out*, encompassed the intense focus on the experience of feeling into the memory of working in an embodied way. This theme also captured the importance of the method's felt sense impact by both including the body in the experiential work of supervision and tracking how the body remembers the learning from each session.

The second theme, *No Experts Here*, reflected the participants' appreciation of a collaborative stance where both in one-to-one supervision, and in the context of the professional development group as a whole, all members were supported to be vulnerable contributors.

The third theme, *Self-Indulgence*, spoke to the profound attention paid to the experience of the supervisee. This theme addressed the question of the approach's potential for an exclusive focus on the experience of the supervisee, separate from both clients and practice concerns. Participants saw this 'self-indulgence' as either positive, negative or both.

And finally, *Intentionality*, the fourth theme, was used to encompass an articulation from each of the participants that to work in the method in a safe, ethical and useful way, both supervisors and supervisees needed an intentional way of practicing in order to maintain a commitment to the core conditions of person-centered work and to contain their focus to the central purpose of supervision; to improve their work with clients.

The following excerpts from the participants' responses help to articulate each theme.

From the inside out

Here, the participants described their sense that working in this model as supervisors, supervisees and observers, supported them to become more conscious of processes that were operating outside of their awareness in their work with clients, to separate their own emotional experiences from their clients' and to renew a sense of the present and of presence in their work.

I learn more and am more engaged in the process when working experientially. I get into the session and learn through observing client responses from afar, psychological skills and deficits in the process. It gives learning more meaning when real life client and therapist experiences become alive in the room.

Samantha

Drawing them into reflecting on and exploring their own processes in relation to a client invariably deepens their insight into themselves and their client, their awareness of their own emotional processes in their body as well as deepening their capacity to bring these capacities more into their counselling practice.

Bruce

Their bodies were involved in the process, and their bodies remembered, took in the learning and carried that learning forward into their work.

Having supervision pay explicit attention to what's happening in the supervisee's body as we're working is both a useful model for the supervisee and something to pay attention to in their clients during their therapeutic work...

Declan

When you are opened up by encountering your own process and deepening into a place of feeling and vulnerability you get to know the theory and the EFT approach from the inside out.

Ian

No experts here

All of the responses in some way spoke to how the approach as it is currently being practiced, privileges a person-to-person encounter where emotional safety is created through a nonexpert stance in supervision. Participants also wrote about how this contrasted with more 'top down' supervision models.

...supervision in which the practitioner takes an expert stance and drills for clinical standards and details causing me to radically reduce in functioning...

Samantha

In speaking of the process of facilitating this method of supervision in the context of a group:

The person 'in charge' has taken care to ensure that the emotional vulnerabilities of the supervisees are matched by those of the observers... (and this) minimises the potential for an observer to wound either

or both of them by pontificating on theoretical issues with an underlying intention of exposing inadequacies...

Declan

This (approach) takes away from the supervisor the role of acting as an expert...and supports the supervised to discover for themselves the learnings from their own experience...

Drew

Self-indulgence

This theme was distilled from evidence of a dialogic discussion in the transcripts; on the one hand there was evidence of a deep valuing of the supportive space provided to focus on the supervisee's experiential responses, to truly prize the supervision relationship and the insight and focus this could bring to the work with clients, and a contrasting concern that this open space could potentially bypass the supervisee's clients or that it could become overly focused on therapy for the supervisee. There were concerns here about blurring both roles and boundaries between the supervisor and supervisee and obscuring the central importance of the client. The concern about an overly therapeutic focus was most strongly articulated by the three participants, Neville, Ian and Declan, who had the most supervision responsibilities and experience.

I'm encouraged to attend to personal issues that are currently bugging me and this assists me to avoid confusing my issues with those of my clients.

Later Neville speaks about his felt transgression when the personal story of the supervisee takes up significant time.

A problem does come up though...where the therapeutic work does require time and may take up most of the session.

...I have to say that I often feel guilty when I supervise within an EFT frame.

Neville

What I've found is that those I'm supervising are invariably grateful for the gentleness of the approach, in that they don't feel judged or negatively critiqued.

Declan

...I have noticed that to perform 'in-mode' supervision requires a high level of safety and that this can lead to supervision peers seeing the group space as a support more broadly for themselves...

Ian

Intentionality

All the participants wrote about their responsibility to practice this method with intention. They felt there was a need to consciously enact a commitment to creating safety that prioritized the supervisory relationship, kept a focus on the needs of the client and that allowed for a separation of roles between supervisor and therapist. In some way, each was trying to address the question of how to separate supervision from therapy and how to practice this method in a way that stayed true to its foundational person-centered principles.

...there is a need for us to deal with the supervisee's emotion processes and when that is finished, we need then to return to reference the client who we

have been thinking about and ...wonder how the personal stuff we were just visiting might relate.

Neville

...by tracking the supervisee's processes it is inevitable that the supervisee will experience therapeutic benefits.

Drew

*For me, for 'in-mode' supervision to be truly 'in-mode', the supervisor **and everyone else present** have to share the same commitment to the three core therapist conditions that Rogers described all those years ago – congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard. When any of these are missing, not only is it dangerous and counter-productive – I would argue that it is also not 'in-mode'.*

Declan

There is an underlying intentionality for my presence in the moment that feels different to therapy.

Ian

I reckon we need to develop a protocol that is built into a supervision framework for EFT...

Neville

Discussion

The participants wrote with great enthusiasm, responsibility and ownership about their experiences of working in an 'in-mode' model of EFT supervision. They were particularly interested in how the method supported their learning and deepened their practice as EFT therapists. They also showed a profound commitment to the principles of person-centered practice. Their experiences were in line with those reported by the more recent EFT training supervision research (Palmer & Johnson, 2002, Palmer-Olsen, Gold and Wooley 2011, Sanberg & Knestel, 2011), specifically in the focus on enhanced learning and safety.

This study's narratives also echoed those in a recent qualitative study of EFT couple therapy trainees who reported therapeutic benefits from their training experiences, particularly a sense that they had become more emotionally present in their lives (Sandberg, Knestel & Shade, 2013).

While their expressed desire for guidance in EFT supervision practice may be partly satisfied by the method recently outlined by Greenberg and Tomescu (2017), they may not be satisfied with the authors' assertion that EFT supervision 'does not treat a problem in the supervisee, nor does it attempt to access and transform painful experiences' (Chapter 1, Section 3, para. 1) because of the value they clearly place on specifically therapeutic processes in supervision.

Particular to this current study, was the focus on the importance of the body, its relationship to presence and understanding and the potential to carry forward the messages it provided in supervision back into the therapy room in a concrete way. This supports the ideas of Gendlin (1992) and Gendlin and Hendricks-Gendlin (2015) who, among others (Leijssen, 2006; Pert, 1997; Rothschild, 2002), wrote of the body's importance in carrying memory and supporting integrated learning.

Another distinguishing feature of this study in comparison with the EFT training and supervision research to date, was the focus of the participants on the person-centered core of EFT. This is perhaps due to the person-centered ethos of the teaching content that many of the participants studied during their training. In La Trobe University in Melbourne, where the training of EFT began in Australia, students were taught by faculty members whose commitment had most strongly been in the person-centered tradition. Most students then were already familiar with the work of Rogers and had been taught to prioritize the core conditions before all else prior to beginning their EFT training. In contrast, the EFT research into the supervision experiences of trainees and supervisees, has come from an almost exclusively attachment-based framework in the context of couple therapy, and the concerns and learnings of the participants reflect this theoretical orientation (Greenman & Johnson, 2013).

The participants here were also conscious that the provision of a safe working space in supervision was both necessary for the support of the supervisee, and also that this focus on the personal experience of the supervisee presented a dilemma about how to maintain an appropriate amount of attention to clients and their welfare. This is in line with the current supervision guidelines across all supervision codes of practice that strive to limit therapeutic intervention within supervision in order to maintain appropriate boundary distinctions between the roles of therapist, trainer and supervisor, and to maintain a focus on the needs of the supervisee's clients (Australian Psychological Society, 2004; Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Association of Australasia, 2009;

Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia, 2011; Society of Counselling and Psychotherapy Educators, 2003).

The concerns raised by participants here about the potential for supervision to obscure the focus on the supervisee's clients, is a departure from the EFT research to date, where the concepts of personal support, therapeutic benefit and emotional expression and safety have been reported in exclusively positive terms. This may relate to the fact that in the context of this research, the participants were asked to reflect both on their ideas about how the model differed from other forms of supervision they had provided and received, and on how it differed from therapy. The group members who contributed to this study were also responsible for providing supervision, and thus may have felt a greater need to articulate their responsibilities in the context of this role.

Finally, one of the most compelling findings was the overall interest and commitment of the members to personal responsibility in all areas of the supervision relationship. Framed by some as an appreciation of the method's

encouragement of a nonexpert stance, and by others in terms of each person's responsibility for creating an environment of emotional safety and support for vulnerability, the emphasis that participants placed on the need for safety to be the responsibility of *everyone* involved in the supervision and professional development process, raises questions of interest for trainers, teachers, supervisees and supervisors about how to foster a balance between interpersonal safety and personal responsibility. This strongly echoes the contemporary discussions of supervision within the person-centered community that place a high degree of responsibility on the supervision relationship to support good practice, (Lambers, 2013) and a higher degree of responsibility on the supervisee within the supervisory relationship than do other approaches (Mearns, Thorne, & McLeod, 2013).

Implications for supervision practice

The participants in this study all in some way highlighted the need for a safe environment in which to be vulnerable and a space to discuss difficult personal material in supervision. This raises the question of how to address this need in the context of supervision training and in supervision guidelines across all therapeutic modalities. It also points to an area for future research exploration into effective supervision. Rather than seeing personal material as a supervision hot potato, we may need to view it as a potential source of personal development and understanding.

This small study also demonstrates that there is a strong desire for supervision guidelines about how to work with the personal psychological material of the supervisee without obscuring the needs of their clients, and that these guidelines should also be practical rather than simply philosophical.

This is an important area for future development in the area of both training and supervision ethics.

Conclusion

Australian EFT therapists are a dedicated, curious bunch of practitioners. Raised in a context of person-centered practice, our supervision goals remain fundamentally

Rogerian. The ideals of a safe space to practice, of self-acceptance and of the primary importance of both presence and process, infuse our talk about the difficult business of supervision.

I have found other supervision methods to be supportive, nurturing, and at times challenging. But the ones I have found most powerful have facilitated and added to my own processing.

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As we continue to strive for supervision principles and a model that supports the therapist and illuminates their work with new understandings, we would do well to keep in mind the importance of the intentional practice of both supervisor and supervisee, who hold equal responsibility for the process of becoming.

Note

1. PEEFT is most commonly referred to internationally as emotion-focused therapy (EFT), but I mention its sister name (PEEFT) here because of its continued usage in Australia, and in Melbourne in particular. But for clarity and simplicity, and to reflect wider practice, I will refer throughout this paper to EFT.

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