Using Supervision to Encourage Resilience in Social Workers

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Introduction

• Definitions: supervision & resilience
• Messages from Research
• Scaffolding reflective practice in supervision
• Discuss how we use supervision to encourage resilience in social workers-keeping a balance of heart & brain
It's great to have a nice, calm environment to share ideas.

...so what have YOU been doing?

...well we've been...

In memory of Tony Morrison
Supervision: Now or Never

Day to day pressures!

Workload!

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Definition of Supervision

“A process in which one worker is given responsibility to work with another worker(s) in order to meet certain organisational, professional and personal objectives. These objectives are competent, accountable performance, continuing professional development and personal support”

(Harries, 1987 used in Staff Supervision in Social Care, Morrison 2005.)
Resilience

Resilience can be ‘encouraged, cultivated or disrupted, but certainly not taught or imparted by well-intentioned professionals’ (Furedi 2009, p. 99).

• Rather, resilience emerges from the actions people take when faced with challenging and unexpected circumstances and ‘through improvisation and adaptation’ to changeable and challenging circumstances (Furedi 2008, p. 658).

• (Liz Beddoe & Carole Adamson University of Auckland, Allyson Davys WINTEC:Building Resilient practitioners

• Common Threads Different Patterns April 2010)
Why research resilience in the profession?

- Collins (2007) challenges: what might enable some social workers to thrive and survive, compared to others who may become ill or disillusioned and sometimes leave their profession? Research in this area potentially has implications for retention and management practices, for health and safety and for the wellbeing of the workforce and service delivery to clients.

Dr Carole Adamson & AP Liz Beddoe, School of Counselling, Human Services & Social Work, University of Auckland,

- Dr Peter Huggard, Director, Goodfellow Unit, School of Population Health, University of Auckland
“Ordinary Magic” (Masters)

• Resilience arises from successful adaption to everyday events
• Emergences from ordinary human capabilities, relationships & other internal & external resources-thinking outside the box
• Underlying competencies: Emotional Intelligence (Literacy), Reflective Thinking Skills, Empathy, Social Skills, An Optimistic Explanatory Style (Grant & Kinman)
We all react differently to having 'one of these days!'  

We all have 'a strategy!'

stress... worry!

Me? Oh I'm just fine!

... say nothing ... cards close to chest ...

AGGHHH!! I'M SO FED UP!

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Message from the Research: NZ

• Adamson, Beddoe& Huggard researched defining resilience in health social workers in NZ.
• A qualitative study of experienced social workers in physical and mental health who self-defined as resilient
• Participants were asked to define the concept of resilience and to explore the elements of resiliency within their practice
Research: NZ

• **Research findings:** Experienced social workers considered that their resilience was a dynamic and constantly adjusting interaction of personal attributes, the organisational environment and mediating factors that determined a sense of control and connection.

• The research findings developed into a conceptual **framework** strengthening arguments for supervision and other professional supports and are aimed also at assisting ongoing curriculum design around developing robust social work graduates:
Research: NZ

• Participants’ initial definitions of resilience as a personal characteristic were developed into a strongly contextual and relational construct, the binding feature of which was self-awareness and the capacity to reflect.

• A strong feature of resilience was the focus on relationship with colleagues and the quality of professional social work practice with service users.

• Further reflexive and structural elements were identified, highlighting that resilience is in dynamic relationship with the organisational context.
Adamson and Beddoe: Defining Resilience in Health Social Workers

Developing a framework for resilience from the research:

- Self
  - Attributes
    - Personal history & sensitisation
    - Moral & ethical code
  - Work-life balance
  - Developmental learning
  - Coping behaviours & relational skills
  - Supervision & peer support
- Mediating factors
- Practice Context
  - Organisational structures
  - Political & legal frameworks
  - Professional identity
  - Knowledge, education & theory
Messages from Research : Northern Ireland

Mcfadden, P: Resilience Building in Child Protection Social Work: Findings From Doctoral Research Northern Ireland and Beyond(September 2014)

To examine factors related to resilience and burnout in child protection Social Work in statutory and voluntary sector provision in Northern Ireland.
Messages from Research : McFadden

• Good management support, particularly in the first year of practice is a significant source of resilience for staff. Peer support and cohesive teams an important factor for individuals who wish to remain in child protection.

•

• More than 50 % (54%) said that resilience was down to relationships with manager One in three said that burnout was due to lack of support from their manager .Some experienced a burnt out manager
Messages from Research


• Message: Importance of supervision
Supervision should be VALUED!

It’s NOT a dusty old thing on a shelf
Key Conditions for Effective Supervision

• Clarity of purpose
• Emotional competence
• Psychological safety
• Accurate assessment of worker’s competence
• Positive modelling by Supervisor
• User-centredness
• Skills and knowledge enhancement

(Morrison 2005:20)
Lessons from Practice

High Quality Supervision central to the delivery of quality outcomes for service users
Supervision is an important relationship for practitioners
Using the context of supervision, can help us explore and respond to the emotional impact of the work that we do
Aims to facilitate both individual and systemic change
Supervision must attend to process & content
Let's keep focused on the challenges . . . be positive!

I'm not sure what's in the future . . .

If we could get behind THIS we could see the REAL story
Support Function of Supervision

• Impact of work on worker
• Impact of worker on work
• Debriefing
• Exploring blocks
• Assistance with job stresses, not counselling/therapy  
  (Knapman & Morrison pg.10)
Application of Goleman’s five elements of emotional intelligence in supervision

- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation
- Motivation
- Social skills
- Empathy

(Morrison 2005, *Strength to Strength*, Brighton: Pavilion)
Self-Awareness

Knowing one’s internal states, preferences, resources and limitations

• Emotional awareness: recognising one’s emotions and their effects
• Accurate self assessment: knowing one’s strengths and limits
• Self-confidence: strong sense of self worth and capabilities
Self-Regulation

Managing one’s internal states, impulses and resources

• Self-control: keeping disruptive emotions and impulses in check
• Trustworthiness: maintaining standards of honesty and integrity
• Take responsibility for personal performance
• Adaptability: flexibility in handling change
• Innovation: being comfortable with new ideas
Motivation

Emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals

• Achievement drive: striving to improve
• Commitment: aligning with the goals of the agency or group
• Initiative: readiness to act on opportunities
• Optimism: persistence in pursuing goals
Social Skills

Ability to induce desirable responses in others
• Influence: ability to persuade
• Communication: listening openly
• Conflict management: negotiating and resolving disagreements
• Change catalyst: initiating and managing change
• Building bonds: nurturing key relationships
• Collaboration and co-operation: working with others towards shared goals
• Team capabilities: creating group energy in pursuing collective goals
Empathy

Awareness of others’ feelings, needs, perceptions and concerns
• Understanding others: sensing other’s feelings and concerns
• Identifying their needs: bolstering their abilities
• Service orientation: recognising and meeting users’ needs
• Leveraging diversity: cultivating opportunities through different kinds of people
• Social awareness: reading a group’s emotional currents and power relationships
Using the Supervision Cycle

- Sometimes the cycle will be triggered by change, sometimes by a case, sometimes by the desire to innovate.
- For the development or problem-solving to be fully effective, all four parts of the learning cycle need to be engaged.
- Staff should receive enough reflective supervision to develop their own internal supervisor. (Morrison 2005, pg.161)
KOLB Experiential Learning Cycle

Experience (Being)

Action Planning (Doing)

Reflection (Feeling)

Analysis (Thinking)

adapted from Kolb 1988 (in Morrison 2005:69)
The Reflective Supervision Cycle

• Good practice involves engaging service users in looking at, reflecting on and understanding their needs or problems and identifying plans and services

• The supervisory cycle involves a parallel process of engaging with workers in terms of their observations, reflections, analysis and action planning

(Morrison 2005,:182)
Experience

• Learning is triggered by experience
• Engagement in experience is essential
• Supervisor helps elicit accurate observations from worker
• The worker’s account and focus is significantly shaped by the supervisor’s questions
• Use open-ended questions
• Evidence-based practice depends on how well the story is elicited at start of the cycle  
  (Morrison 2005.158)
In the rush to get things done . . .

C’mon! This way!

You can miss the impact of emotion

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Reflection

• Reflection explores feelings, patterns and connections arising from the experience
• Feelings processed
• Strong emotional and moral responses acknowledged and processed
• Clarify the source of these responses
• Reflection allows recognition of common elements in different situations by referencing previous experience
• Explore how previous professional experiences, skills and knowledge can help with the present situation

(Morrison 2005,:159)
Analysis

• Apply knowledge of theory, research, professional values, policies and procedures
• Consider worker’s understanding of problem/situation
• Help worker to develop an evidence-based view and formulate the problem
• Analysis should result in an understanding and contextualising of the situation

(Morrison 2005, pg.160)
Analysis (2)

- Ensure worker has explored how family members, especially children see the problem/situation
- Identify what further information is required to test or deepen analysis
- Leads to hypotheses
- Provides the basis for wider learning

Analysis translates information and observations into professional evidence

(Morrison 2005, pg.160)
Action Planning

• Generate options
• Examine practicalities and feasibility of options
• Make decisions on appropriate course of action
• Focus on planning and preparation
• Identify potential outcomes
• Explore risks, innovations and contingencies
• Acknowledge limitations

Planning is how theory and practice are linked – testing analysis and learning via action

(Morrison 2005: 161)
We learn ALL the time

... from when something ‘goes well’...

Supervision

Supervision X

Learning

... AND if it goes ‘pear shaped...!’

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To function at the highest level

The organisational structure must be in place
What I can do as a supervisor to promote resilience in social workers

• Believe in the value and importance of the service
• Hold high professional standards
• Help staff understand broader policy and professional contexts
• Help staff identify and value their good practice
• Involve staff in problem solving, such as developing green cycle team strategies

(CWDC 2009:172)
What I can do as a supervisor to promote resiliency

• Connect with staff and their concerns
• Develop a strong team and learning ethos
• Model respectful behaviour to staff, service users and partners
• Show persistence and optimism in the face of difficulties
• Develop positive relationships with partners
• Make supervision a priority

(CWDC 2009:172)
I mean, the very fact that you've scheduled my supervision at the end of the day suggests to me that you don't take it seriously.

Clare?

Go on, go on, I'm listening.


Community Care Info www.communitycare.co.uk/info on IASW Website Reports: Guide to Developing Emotional Resilience.


References
