

Presentation:

**Tracking the trainees' course: From the linear «correct» to the circular
«it depends»***

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7th Congress of European Family Therapy Association (EFTA), Paris, 29-31 Oct.
2010

* Μορφή κειμένου για να ακούγεται. Χρόνος 12'

Introduction

When I started tracing the implied, silent development of at least three groups of trainees, I was amazed with the various layers of development revealing themselves.

The last revelation was the emergence of development in the role of the therapist and in the human being as a whole, in the training process.

Those trainees the majority in their late twenties to early forties, come monthly for a very long, three full day, weekend, from various parts of Greece.

Most, are already working as experts in public or private organizations. They are experienced in relevant fields and roles, thus motivated and determined.

For the narration that follows, I have chosen those issues under question that reflect the process of the role development. So any guidelines on how to handle a specific issue of a therapeutic case are either omitted or included if relevant to the role-development.

Below, follows a narration form, in the first person, a summary of a synthesis of the dynamics of about 45 trainees during their four years of training.

“I have embarked in this ship with destination, to become a systemic psychotherapist. Resistance seems useless. So, I’d rather accept the new and the different being introduced in my life.

I know I have to go through my own therapy in an open therapeutic group consisting of clients not necessarily trainees.

My obvious need in training is to learn what to do, how to act quickly and effectively so as to comfort the pain of my future clients, to enhance their thinking clearly, so that they can come out of their frustrations and confusions. Moreover, to provide them with **correct** solutions that fit them for solving their personal and inter-personal problems.

I was shocked to learn that before constructing the role of therapist, I have to de-construct convictions based on tradition, stereotypes, even scientific dogmas.

In supervision, I was triggered to view my present workplace, from the perspective of both real and “shadow” dynamics and I was helped to see the cost of the violation of my role boundaries either by others or by myself. Actually, by my rush and haste to help at all costs. I wonder how harsh and merciless I must be to others in order to protect myself.

The magic begins. Dynamics change dramatically. After supervision, relationships at job even get smooth and I feel relief.

My supervisor says that entropy is getting less. What is left, is not attracted by me. I don't quite understand but it feels good and satisfactory.

I enjoy the relief, and I observe the tension going hierarchically upwards where it has always been.

For the moment the savior of my workplace inside me is quite.

I enjoy the experiential nature of the training and although I feel fear, I recognize this approach as meaningful, suitable and effective.

At times, I am overwhelmed by conflicts and dichotomies demanding to combine old with new, logic with emotion, taking it easy with responsibility, doubt with content.

I feel stepping on a moving sand.

Ghosts intrude the process with my clients in the form of **my** unresolved issues in my own therapy.

Real people intrude my life in the form of psychological needs of relatives and friends.

In a daily nightmare, my self as a whole demands space to breath.

In the midst of all this, I have to transform my over-involvement, into going as far as I can and know, my rush, into pacing with the clients rhythm.

In the supervision, I realize that I am manipulated by over-demanding not paying clients and that I am infused in their family patterns, losing track of the therapeutic course.

I am moved by the feedback I get even if at times I have to face my hard feelings”.

“**Starting the second year** everybody out there keeps on demanding from me to be everyone’s therapist everywhere.

A key phrase seems to be: “ “Go by the ear” also following your feelings”.

In my workplace, I would never imagine the cost of **becoming** different among the **same** colleagues. Let alone the cost of **becoming** different among the **same** closed relatives and friends as a consequence of my therapy. All this feels lonely.

In the midst of this despair an inside voice is slightly getting stronger. In the supervision they have called it “intuition”. Surprisingly enough, my role guides me effectively whenever I rely on it, but only, when I am relaxed.

Securing my boundaries, I am surprised to find out the disappointment of certain of my authority figures. This seems normal since I manage not to serve others at my expense. This new type of inadequacy in the eyes of others, deeply feels good and adequate in **my own eyes**.

*The supervision points out clearly the difference between short-term counseling and mid-term or long-term psychotherapy. The magic is here again. When I distinguish between those two, the client gets relaxed. I don’t rush, **she** doesn’t rush. I step on her positive steps in the here and now, **she** does also.*

It feels tiring yet fulfilling.

I wonder how I can survive the co-existence of being involved with the client and at the same time being distant. From one side, I have to take distance from the clients’ needs, from the expectations of my boss, from my own disorienting ideals. On the other side, I have to be involved, committed, responsible.

After all, I can rename conflict into harmonious co-existence of opposites. In the training we call it reframing.

Another agony has emerged. That of distinguishing the severity of a case to be referred to another expert.

Inadequacy is slowly turning into self awareness of my limits. A less obscure identity of the therapist role emerges.

The more I realize that I am not and cannot be a perfect therapist, the more the responsibility, the doubt even some fear, make me more human.

In turn, all this inspires trust to the client and sense of equality to my colleagues.

Doubt gives me strength!

Being in the middle of my journey, a negotiating phase sums up to “where do I stand?”, “where my context takes me?”, “which is my synthesis”.

The synthesis I seem to be able to do at this point, is the following: I realize the importance of commitment to the role, through the use of my experiences up to now. I learn to stay back, to observe, to let go, to smooth myself to the process. Asking myself if I am ready, shows sense of responsibility. In the meantime, I am dealing with my deficiencies in a cool manner”.

“**Starting the third year**, handling clients – maybe my life also – “going by the ear”, I am surprised of the effectiveness of proper **timing**. It seems that I abandon the skin of the snake called savior and I see the new way to becoming a therapist.

The most important element at this point is the fact that I can distinguish my signals and the client’s signals mostly by using my feelings.

I can tell when any personal weakness of mine intrudes the therapeutic process and I am alert to ask for supervision.

The less expectations I have and the less available I am, the more I can tell manipulative tendencies. I wonder where I stand in this journey of training. I see a new professional identity emerging yet, with anxiety and insecurity.

Now that as a trainee-therapist I sit next to a group therapist being a member of the therapeutic system, I both look for and develop my own style, observing from a secure position details, movements, techniques, as well as the therapeutic process as a whole. I get enthusiastic, I see myself on the spot, and I experience in practice my adjustments to the role. I realize more than ever the value of “going by the ear” and of “it depends”.

I can appreciate the satisfaction of a client even if I think I haven’t done much for her. It is as if I am saying “the water is cold, but I will fall”. I am determined and fully aware of the difficulties of the role”.

“**At the onset of the forth year**, I find myself in the role of the **almost** therapist. Safe, relaxed, optimistic with my development, also satisfied with my taking distance from overinvolvement. Accepting difference, feeling creative in the role.

I am skeptic with the way I widen my activities, commitments and involvements. Either in workplaces or private practice. Contracts must be renewed, keeping in mind the situation out there, not only my abilities and strong wishes. The magic in class is here again. We converge in our issues as well as in the way we meet them. Supervision for one of us fits for the rest more than ever before. Protection, encouragement, acceptance, reconciliation with difficulties, are felt strongly.

The use of the symptoms has become – can I say it? – a game for me not only with clients, also in my workplace. So I can “play” with the new potential of the role. I can adjust it to my workplace both for its benefit and for my protection. Protective is also the multiplicity of voices in my class. Apparently contradictory, those voices, when I am cool, guide me to see where I stand. Not only as a new therapist but also as a client still facing issues in my own therapy.

Supervision in class is valuable. It is exhausting in this role to ask only myself when I have to handle dilemmas, issues, questions.

Also, I should keep in mind not to undertake yet any serious cases, because **the savior still blocks the therapist**. However, when I am told I function effectively I don’t fully feel it yet, I can’t clearly tell that I have succeeded.

Anyway, at the end of my forth year, I seem to end up with the following: “It fits me, I like it, I want to do it. I know how to protect myself. I enjoy it, yet I am afraid of loneliness and of being infused by the client’s lives. I wonder if it will ever give me back the effort, the time, the cost.

The peacemaker, the savior of my family has become a therapist. Now, I reduce the cost in order to avoid burnout and proceed with humor, good mood and a sense of responsibility.

I have learned to view others with empathy through the magic of their being different. Slowly, I will fill up my deficiencies stepping on my good elements.

I wish I can come to the point to see my clients flourish and to consider myself worthy”.