



Ethics Boundary Issues and Violations

Module 4
Unit 3

Ambivalence Towards Power

- As counsellors it can be uncomfortable to admit that we are in a position of power
- Clients will often view the counsellor as having power / project power onto the counsellor
- Our exercise of personal power may be largely unconscious and therefore unexamined
- In a democracy, we can have difficulty in integrating the discrepancy between people with status and principles of equality



Looking at the flip side

Acknowledging that our speakers have less power can be helpful in accepting the imbalance.

The definition of power is
'the ability to do something'

This helps us to understand that it is the speaker not the counsellor that has the ability (and therefore power) to make changes in their lives.



- Boundaries are important limits that allow for a safe connection based on the speakers needs
- Counsellors difficulty in owning / accepting their power is the primary source of origin for boundary violations.
- In every boundary violation there is a fit between the professional's need and the client's vulnerability.



Marilyn Peterson 1992

“in every story of violation four characteristics emerge”



- Reversal of roles
- Indulgence of privilege
- The double bind
- The Secret



- If we accept our power
- we have to alter our position of feigned equality

- accept that the counsellor / client relationship is not democratic

- that we have more power than our speaker

- that we make intentional and unintentional choices that influence their lives



Reversal of roles

Counsellor looks to client for gratification of her needs

- The client may feel important at first, needed / chosen / special
- Client may feel that they have to look after counsellor to get what they need / be cared for.
- The client may feel like a scapegoat or used and try to fix the client / counsellor relationship.
- The feeling of a healing relationship is replaced with fear and the feeling that the client has to look after the counsellor to get what he/she needs.



The Secret

Critical knowledge is kept from the client (colleagues, others)

- The counsellor has an unfair advantage in the relationship perhaps reducing the choices of the client and giving the counsellor a hidden agenda.

- Sexual misconduct – client enlisted in secret

- The real secret is the motive of the counsellor



The Double Bind

The client is caught in a conflict of interest

- Client is in a lose / lose situation. The client cannot leave without getting hurt. They fear being without the relationship.
- The client knows something is wrong but unable to do anything about it.
- For example being enticed into a friendship, doing odd jobs, more frequent sessions unable to say no – the client may feel that the therapists needs to see them, needs the work / money / experience.



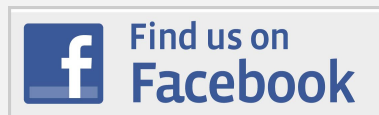
Indulgence of Privilege

The counsellor takes advantage of the client believing s/he has the privilege to do whatever s/he wants with the client

- Using status of counsellor to meet the needs of the counsellor – whatever those needs may be – to boost ego, maintain increase status, money, sex, friendship, academia



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