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5 THE FOUR FIELDS OF SPECIALISATION

5.1 Introduction

The theory and practice of transactional analysis is applied in four different areas called the Fields of Specialisation. It is possible to undertake training and certification in each of these fields. The four fields are Counselling, Education, Organisations and Psychotherapy.

5.2 Brief Descriptions

A. The Counselling field of specialisation: TA Counselling is a professional activity within a contractual relationship. The counselling process enables clients or client systems to develop awareness, options and skills for problem management and personal development in daily life through the enhancement of their strengths, resources and functioning. Its aim is to increase autonomy in relation to their social, professional and cultural environment.

B. The Education field of specialisation is for practitioners who work in the area of learning and study in pre-school, school, university, and post-university contexts. It is also concerned with the support of child, adolescent and adult learners within the family, the institution or society. The work may be applied to the development of teaching teams and institutions. The aim is to further personal and professional growth, both scholastic and social.

C. The Organisations field of specialisation is for practitioners who work in or for organisations, taking into account organisational frames of reference and contexts as well as the organisation's development. Their work is aimed at the development, growth and increased effectiveness of people working within organisations.

D. The Psychotherapy field of specialisation is for practitioners capacity for self-actualisation, healing and change. The psychotherapeutic process enables the client to recognise and change archaic, self-limiting patterns understand themselves and their relationships and create options to live their lives in an aware, creative, spontaneous way and open to intimacy.

There may be national legal restrictions on who can practice as a psychotherapist, and it is important that trainees discuss these with their Principal Supervisor when choosing this field of specialisation.

5.3 The core competencies

A task force from each field has drawn up a set of core competencies, which articulate the knowledge, attitudes and skills expected from a certified transactional analyst in that field.

5.3.4 Psychotherapy core competencies

Using his/her knowledge and understanding of transactional analysis theory, a transactional analysis psychotherapist will demonstrate the following abilities.

1. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- a) Understand TA theory and its application to psychotherapy with individuals and with couples, families and groups as appropriate.
- b) Assess the client and make an informed decision about taking him or her into treatment, including up-to-date knowledge of other treatment possibilities, the ability to convey different options to the client, and the willingness to assist in choosing how to proceed.
- c) Know the ITAA/EATA Code of Ethics and demonstrate of ethical and professional competence in practice, including working within the legal requirements governing psychotherapy in the region of practice.
- d) Demonstrate the ability to locate TA within the wider field of psychotherapy.
- e) Have an awareness of the significance and implications of cultural and social diversity and difference within and outside the consulting room.

2. THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

- a) Manifest a respectful attitude towards self and others.
- b) Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of the therapeutic relationship in effecting change, its nature, and its difference from any other relationship.
- c) Show empathic sensitivity and understanding of the client, his or her symptoms and self-limiting script, as well as showing the ability to communicate this understanding to the client in such a way that the client feels understood.
- d) Exhibit a capacity to understand another person's phenomenology and bracket his/her own frame of reference without losing contact with his/her own separate experience.
- e) Display ability to self-reflect and to use this self-awareness in appropriate self-disclosure.
- f) Demonstrate an understanding of developmental issues, transference and counter transference phenomena, and the ability to use transactional analysis to address it successfully. This will include the willingness to allow transference to develop in the client/therapist relationship and to handle the client's regressive states appropriately and therapeutically. It will also include understanding his/her own counter transference and the limits it may create, as well as the ability to use it constructively.
- g) Behave in a respectful way toward self and others, including showing sensitivity for different frames of reference, cultures, and social norms as well as taking account of the impact on the relationship of these differences in the consulting room.
- h) Demonstrate potency, protection, and permission and show an understanding of their importance.
- i) Communicate congruence in their interactions.

3. TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS THEORY

- a) Articulate an understanding of the basic theory of TA and its application in clinical practice as described in the major TA texts, including structural analysis, transactional analysis, game, racket and script analysis and child development.
- b) Describe the application of aspects of all the major approaches to TA and demonstrate knowledge of recent developments, including the similarities and differences between these approaches.
- c) Demonstrate an understanding of TA theories of group process.
- d) Make interventions which can be explained according to TA theory and practice.

4. CONTRACTING

- a) Show an understanding of the necessity for a clear business contract as well as the ability to negotiate contracts.
- b) Have the capacity to negotiate with a client in order to arrive at a shared understanding of the work to be undertaken and to formulate an appropriate treatment contract. This will include understanding and respecting the difference between contracts for social control and contracts for autonomy which allow for intrapsychic and interpersonal change involving dismantling limiting scripts and the resolution of impasses.

5. PLANNING: ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT DIRECTION

- a) Describe a comprehensive system of assessment and diagnosis using standard TA concepts.
- b) Show an understanding of the psychiatric diagnostic systems used in the country in which practice takes place (e.g., DSM, ICD).
- c) Make meaning of a client's experiences using standard TA concepts in a way that maintains the I'm OK - You're OK attitude.
- d) Show an awareness of and have the ability to respond to risk and harm factors for self, client, and others.
- e) Assist the client in recognising and naming their self-limiting patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving and in deciding whether or not change is desired.
- f) Conceptualise, using TA theory, in order to develop an overall treatment plan based on the particular issues to be addressed.

6. IMPLEMENTATION: THE PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC PROCESS

- a) Show the capacity to make accurate phenomenological observations of the client and use those as the basis for a therapeutic hypothesis that is linked to TA theory and philosophy.
- b) Show ability to use group process as an effective intervention.
- c) Select interventions appropriate to the stage of treatment and the treatment contract.
- d) Demonstrate the ability to effect timely interventions.
- e) Recognise and assess script issues as they arise within the session and address them appropriately according to the stage of treatment (for example, script signals, game invitations, discounts, driver behaviour).
- f) Show the ability to evaluate the effect of an intervention and use that information to update hypotheses and select subsequent interventions.
- g) Encourage the client's autonomy and resources.

7. PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

- a) Demonstrate a commitment to the philosophy of transactional analysis in such qualities as a belief in the capacity of the individual to take responsibility for him/herself, understanding an individual's ways of being, and responding to an individual's ability to grow and change.
- b) Have a willingness to be available for ethically intimate contact, including the practice of
- c) Demonstrate a commitment to ongoing personal and professional development, specifically the development of autonomy, including the capacity for awareness, spontaneity, and intimacy such that therapeutic interventions are not affected by script decisions.
- d) Recognise one's own limitations and the limitations of psychotherapeutic practice.
- e) Use intuition and creativity in response to the therapeutic situation.

- f) Show understanding of strengths and limitations of personal resources.
- g) Have the ability to seek help appropriately and use it effectively.
- h) Demonstrate the capacity for self-reflection.