

Reflect on a work experience in which you have applied your learning from your life experience to your current Social Services practice.

Experience: Describe the experience, what happened?

In a supervision session I supported Jean, a care worker, who was finding it difficult to focus on her work because of difficulties she was experiencing at home. Although we had agreed an agenda for this meeting beforehand, when Jean came into the room she was very agitated and immediately raised the subject of her home situation. I felt that it would be impossible to progress with other issues until we had discussed this and looked at how it was affecting her. Although I appreciated myself that this was not a counselling but a work supervision situation, I was able to use some of the communication skills that I had gained on my counselling skills course to listen to Jean and enable her to reflect on how her situation was affecting her work. This was done through responding to her statements with a summary of what I understood her to have told me and through the use of open questions, focusing predominantly on how her situation was affecting her work. I also used empathy, was genuine in my approach and showed unconditional positive regard, all foundations of a helping relationship. In addition to this I advised that if she felt she needed help with her personal situation Jean should perhaps approach our HR department for assistance of a practical and/or counselling nature. We developed a plan of what steps she would take and she calmed down considerably, saying that it had helped a lot to get this off her chest and look at what steps she could take. She also had not realised how much her home situation had been affecting her work performance and the service users she was working with on a daily basis. After this we were able to return to the agenda of our supervision session to look at Jean's development needs and difficulties that had been arising with some of the service users. Following the session I wrote up my own reflective account of working with Jean as a way of identifying areas that showed the application of knowledge and skills and also areas that may need further thought and development.

Knowledge: What do you know now that you did not know before you had the experience?

That sometimes flexibility is needed if there is unanticipated stress or emotion that detracts from dealing with an agreed agenda

That counselling skills of listening, responding, summarising and developing a plan of action are useful in dealing with emotional situations that arise in supervision

That it is important to make a distinction between counselling and supervision. Where an emotional situation is affecting work performance the supervisee may be advised to seek additional help

Skills: What can you do now that you could not do before you had the experience, or can do better now because of the experience?

I built upon my use of counselling skills through applying them to support a member of staff experiencing difficulties in her home life.

I adapted my communication to deal with the issues presented by this person in this situation

I used empathy, genuineness and unconditional positive regard to demonstrate to Jean that she had my attention and that I was concerned about her as a person

I thought about the differences and similarities between counselling and supervision and became clearer about the boundaries between the two

I gained confidence in dealing with a stressful situation through the application of communication skills learned and practised on my counselling skills course

I developed my report writing skills through writing a reflective account of my practice following the supervision session with Jean. At the end of the supervision session Jean and I also agreed a more formal record to show main points dealt with and issues to carry forward to the next session. The latter is an agency requirement whilst the former reflective account was for my own development.

Reflections:

What were your feelings and thoughts? What did you do well? What would you do differently? What values did you use?

I was concerned for Jean both as a person and also as a worker whose standard of work was beginning to fall below that needed by the service users she was employed to work with

I felt I had a responsibility towards Jean as her supervisor and also towards ensuring that service users got the best possible service

I thought that I listened well to Jean and showed her that I was concerned about her

I clearly established a boundary around how much of Jean's home situation could be dealt with in supervision

I could have separated the emotionally-charged discussion of Jean's circumstances from the usual supervision session by building in a break e.g. saying that we would have a coffee break, and then return to our supervision session, rather than trying to achieve everything in one session

I used all the values and principles underpinning the Code of Practice and the National Care Standards, especially respecting the worth and dignity of everyone, protecting the rights and promoting the interests of service users, and being accountable for my practice. I also used empathy, genuineness and unconditional positive regard in helping Jean to discuss and deal with the issues at home that were affecting her work.

Application: Think of a situation in which you could apply what you have learned.