



**CERTIFIED
PRACTISING
COUNSELLORS
AUSTRALIA**

Summer 2023 Edition

President's message

Professional Supervision for Wellbeing

**A personal insight to the
benefits, experience and
importance of Professional
Supervision**

Work Placement & Supervision

Encounters With Supervision

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WELCOME



President's message

Welcome to the Summer edition of the CPCA journal. In this edition we explore Supervision. Supervision isn't the process of having someone look over your shoulder or make sure you are doing your job. Supervision is the process of using a mentor or fellow professional to gain insight. This insight could be on the way you work, your therapeutic processes or, on a deeper level, the way you process the events within your practice. Counsellors need someone who is able to understand the nuance of practice while also being able to separate themselves from the supervisees perspective. Their role is to engage with that perspective, bring their perspective and create a way for the supervisee to develop their skills as a professional and their ability to cope with the rigours of practice.

In this issue we look at supervision from a variety of perspectives. I trust you will enjoy it and engage with supervision as a meaningful part of your practice.



Mark Cresswell
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Mark Cresswell

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Mark has previously been a board member of two peak bodies, the Australian Psychological Society and the Scottish Drug Forum. His focus is on member experience, governance and service delivery. Mark has also managed rehabilitation services and training organisations here and abroad. Mark has over 35 years of experience as a clinical and consulting psychologist. He has worked with all levels of government in Australia and overseas as a manager and consultant. He currently runs his own organizational and training consultancy.

He is currently the President of the Australasian Association of Counselling Professionals Inc, President of the CPCA, Vice president of the Men's Information and Support Association Inc, and Secretary of the Lockyer Valley Community Centre.

Professional Supervision for Wellbeing



Professional Supervision

In Australia, professional supervision is an established formal process for qualified counsellors (Schirmer & Thompson, 2021). It is a collaborative process between the counsellor and the supervisor for ongoing learning and practice development. Professional supervision also contributes to workplace wellbeing and reduces the risk of burnout that may occur when supporting people in difficult situations (Iosim et al., 2022). Other professionals working in challenging and demanding roles can also benefit from professional supervision.

For this article, professional supervision does not refer to student supervision, line management or performance management and is very much independent and separate from these structures. The difference is that professional supervision focuses upon the professional and practice development of the counsellor while line management focuses upon accountability and responsibility in the workplace.

After the completion of formal training, it is valuable for counsellors to engage in reflective practice with someone who is experienced in counselling and trained in supervision. This is often a requirement of continuing professional development to maintain registration (for example, with the Australian Counselling Association or the Psychology Board of Australia). Supervision is considered an effective learning and development activity regardless of a counsellor's level of experience or professional background. It works best when it is a flexible process that is responsive to the counsellor's stage of development and career path and provided within a supportive working relationship.

The Supervision Relationship

For professional supervision to be effective, the process relies on the development of a strong working alliance between the supervisor and the counsellor (Schirmer & Thomson, 2022). Working alliance refers to the supportive relationship formed that fosters mutual respect, appreciation, and trust. Within this relationship of safety and trust, counsellors are more likely to openly evaluate the effectiveness of their professional practice through reflection and reflexivity (Calvert et al., 2017). This in turn facilitates safe and effective counselling practice that is responsive and adaptive to each client within their context and culture.

Reflection in supervision involves the evaluation of a situation or action with follow up engagement in further learning and subsequent enhancement of professional practice (Calvert et al., 2017). The process requires the counsellor to be open to observation and positive feedback from others and then feeling empowered to learn from the reflection. On the other hand, reflexivity informs reflection but goes further to consider how our own perspectives shape, and are shaped by, our surroundings and broader organisational and societal contexts. Reflexivity involves self-awareness of our personal limitations, beliefs and biases and how these might intentionally or unintentionally affect others and our own practice.

Counsellor Wellbeing

Individual professional supervision is a process for counsellors to meet with a qualified supervisor to share reflection on clinical situations and discuss emotional experiences in a safe and confidential environment. The benefits of collaborative professional supervision include being supported to enhance counselling skills and practice, keep up to date with evidence-based research and identify blind spots and individual tendencies (for example, avoiding raising difficult issues or going over time in sessions). It is also critical in helping counsellors manage ethical issues (for example, maintaining appropriate boundaries), and in enhancing reflective practice to better understand the relation dynamics that occur between the counsellor and the client.

The supervision relationship may appear to have some similarities with the therapeutic client relationship. For example, the importance of establishing rapport and trust that allows each counsellor to share problems and vulnerabilities about their practice. However, there is a clear distinction as counsellor supervisees are not required to disclose personal information, and where they need their own counselling or therapy, they would engage with another professional for this service.

The impact of our counselling roles can contribute to the development of emotional exhaustion, compassion fatigue, stress and burnout. Professional supervision has been found to be important for emotional support which can lead to increased job satisfaction and lower levels of burnout (Iosim et al., 2022). Through the process of professional supervision, which also involves debriefing and support, individual counsellors can engage in a genuine strategy for professional growth as well as learn new strategies and skills to support and enhance their own self-care.

The author of this article has received external professional supervision throughout her career and is privileged to have committed to reflecting, learning and growing with the same professional supervisor for over 11 years. Being an experienced provider of supervision across a range of industries, including health, psychology, education and business, the author has also offered a specialised form of professional supervision, known as clinical (or peer) supervision, for psychologists and other mental health professionals seeking to meet continuing professional development requirements. This requires a commitment to ongoing training to be a Psychology Board of Australia (AHPRA) Approved Supervisor. It has been a privilege to work collaboratively with people to reach their full potential and empower them professionally while in turn being open to what each person can teach us.

References

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Dr Kathryn Bekavac is an educational and developmental psychologist with over 20 years' experience in organisational and clinical settings. She is passionate about lifelong learning, completed a PhD in 2021 and is now enrolled in advanced clinical studies. Along with Danielle Copplin, she is a director at Scope Psychology Services Australia.

Kathryn and Danielle are passionate about promoting wellbeing within the healthcare community as this is an industry often affected by high rates of burnout and stress. They will be launching Chatt.Club which will offer healthcare professionals insights into the latest science about wellbeing. Further information will be shared via Scope Psychology Services Australia.



A personal insight to the benefits, experience and importance of Professional Supervision

I remember the first time I heard about professional supervision; it was the first day of my employment in the Community Services and Care sector. During my induction I was informed that professional supervision would be a requirement of my employment once a month and that as a requirement of my employment, my employer indicated they would cover the cost up to a certain amount. I thought wow, that's amazing and at the same time I wondered why it was required each month to attend and if I really needed it.

Fast track twenty-two years later and I still attend Professional Supervision on a regular basis. It has been a lifeline in the preservation of well-being, prevention from burnout and a measure of self-care. I believe it to be an integral reason for my longevity and resilience in the sector attributing to my ability to reflect and review my practice regularly. Professional Supervision has been key to providing best practice to meet the needs of clients I have worked alongside, and it has prevented the negative slide to burnout that many professionals and workers in our sector experience and unfortunately I have witnessed.

The concept of burnout has been around for over fifty years, with many different descriptions, however, there are many commonalities regarding words used to describe it. These key words included fatigue, frustration, disengagement, stress, depletion, helplessness, hopelessness, emotional drain, emotional exhaustion and cynicism. These words point to a very profound weariness and fracture from self. It is important to identify that burnout starts from a position of strength and success rather than from weakness. As a care worker, it is not a reflection of incompetence, but the disappearance of motivation, passion and care towards self and others (clients, colleagues, and organisations).

When attending Professional Supervision, it is with self-reflection and self-care at the forefront. It is accompanied with seeking guidance and support to address difficulties and concerns experienced in the workplace with clients and colleagues; to review practices to better meet the needs of the client/s I worked with; problem-solving; understanding the withdrawal of my participation and engagement at times; maintaining my wellbeing and mental health; professional boundaries and identifying strategies for self-care and preservation in an industry, where we can give so much of ourselves emotionally and mentally.

Over the years I discovered that Professional Supervision has promoted my ability to be fully engaged and prevented the prospect of burnout. Being fully engaged meant I had energy not exhaustion, I was involved and not cynical and was effective rather than ineffective in my practices and boundaries. Professional Supervision provided the opportunity to address work overload, feelings of lack of control, unfairness, breakdown of community and value conflicts. It allowed me to identify creation and prevention of burnout within my role and of the organisations I worked for. It meant that I could address work overload and identify what was a sustainable workload, from feelings of lack of control to feelings of choice and control from insufficient reward to recognition of reward, from a breakdown in community to a sense of community, from unfairness to fairness, respect and justice and from significant value conflicts to work that was meaningful and valued.

Professional Supervision addresses the psychosocial stress that is experienced by professionals in the community services and care sector daily, where caring and nurturing others can take a toll on the individual. Throughout the years I have worked in many settings where some I considered to be burnout creators and some burnout preventors. In those that created burnout, there was nothing in place to support its workers, and in these settings it was left up to me to create an environment that worked, whilst settings that promoted well-being and care for their workers, not just their clients promoted self-care strategies, provided support when needed and access to programs and professional supervision when required or requested.

The benefits of Professional Supervision can include skills acquisition and usage, treatment knowledge, self-awareness, self-efficacy, and a working alliance, stimulating supervisees' development of intervention skills, use of self as a clinical instrument, and case conceptualisation skills. Professional Supervision was most impactful during my early days in the Community Services and Care sector, at a time when I was most vulnerable and lacking in foundational knowledge and functional competencies. As time went on and I continued to attend Professional Supervision, it became a map of continuing evolving learning needs and developmental processes. It enhanced my skills, confidence and competence. Regular, scheduled professional supervision continues to provide me with a space to raise concerns and discuss issues with an experienced practitioner, discuss matters and casework in retrospect, and helps to enhance my skills for future practice.

To ensure that clients are safe and work practices remain ethical, it is important to maintain a space utilised solely for the means of having ongoing and continual discussions about the work you undertake. Otherwise, we can busily go about our work without noticing risk factors. By having a space to openly discuss cases and areas of our work, professional supervision provides another set of eyes to review what's happening and determine if we've possibly missed something. After all, two heads are better than one. You might not always be able to discuss things openly in your workplace, so engaging in professional supervision can also be a great space to receive emotional support with work-related matters.

Discussions I have had with my supervisor have helped to remind me of organisational and practice standards. Whilst we all work in the same sector, every organisation has different policies and each discipline practices under a different set of standards. To remind ourselves of these procedures and guidelines, we can utilise professional supervision to ensure that not only are we being compliant in all areas, but determine whether the employers and organisations we work within are being compliant also.

I found Professional Supervision to be quite robust and empirically supported. To this day I consider professional supervision to be empathic, respectful and warm, facilitative and collaborative, flexible, affirming and encouraging, interesting and engaging, providing useful feedback, and at times constructively challenging. For me, this has led to greater satisfaction in the sector, across various roles and organisations, less burnout, a higher sense of self-efficacy and well-being and has allowed me to be more willing to self-disclose to develop and achieve better coping resources and strategies.

Being a worker in a sector that requires helping others with significant concerns in their lives can be highly effective, satisfying, and meaningful and it can also be extremely valuable, challenging and life changing all at the same time. This means we need not only invest positively in others, but also in ourselves if we are to be able to care for others. Professional Supervision provides accountability to self, to our clients and the organisations we work for allowing us to build on skills, knowledge and quality of practice that is real and sustainable. Whatever your role, working in the Community Services and Care sector exposes us to risks; risks relating to others and to ourselves. One of the most important steps in effective learning is reflecting on the experiences you encounter and have been exposed to. It's for these and many other reasons that Professional Supervision becomes an important part of your working life.



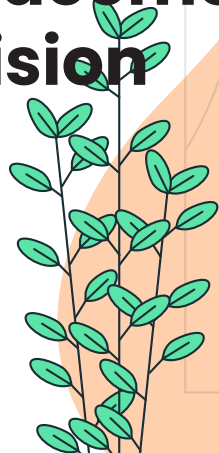
Samantha has over 22 years' experience in Community Services and Care and Education Sectors. Before embarking in private practice as a Professional Supervisor, she previously held positions as a Guidance Counsellor within Catholic and Independent Queensland Schools, as well as a Senior Teacher in secondary schools in areas of Vocational Education and Mathematics. More recently as a Trainer

and Assessor across the Australian College of Community Services and Care, a private RTO, training and assessing for qualifications that include Mental Health, Counselling, Community Services, Youth Work, Alcohol and Other Drugs, and Child, Youth and Family Intervention. Samantha also has vast experience working in both the Private and Not-For-Profit sectors as a Professional Supervisor, Counsellor, Team Leader, and Manager within Youth Services and Community Services. She draws on all these experiences, as well as in her current roles as a Trainer and Assessor and Practitioner focusing on professional supervision, career and professional development and transitional support.

Samantha's unique background in community, youth and education services has enabled her to give an independent perspective on the whole care entity, organisational structures and behaviour as well as providing professional supervision, individual planning, and career guidance and support. She is the recipient of the Pride of Australia Medal for Queensland for her work with at risk youth; has received a National Excellence in Teaching Award (NETiA) for Excellence in Secondary Teaching; and appeared in the Courier Mail QWeekend 50 Bright Stars list of movers and shakers in education.

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Work Placement & Supervision



A Student's Perspective

I wasn't sure what to expect from my work placement, naturally I was nervous, curious, and eager at the same time. However, it was the most eye-opening opportunity I had ever experienced. Being able to apply the theory in a real-life setting, does provide a deeper perspective and a practical hands-on approach. The theory lays out the basic fundamentals, however without the work placement, it would've been difficult to genuinely grasp the theories, principles and techniques outlined in a textbook. It was absolutely vital for my development to have that work placement opportunity.

I gained valuable insights into workplace policies, procedures, and industry best practices. I was coached and mentored by experienced colleagues and had the chance to meet clients and other stakeholders, further adding significant value to my learning experience. I was supported and provided with many opportunities to challenge myself. Some of the challenges included self-doubt in abilities, generating trust with a couple of clients, to being overwhelmed with the large volume of data entry into client files. This was only temporary though, as time progressed, everything fell into place, and I found confidence and adapted relatively well within the workplace, and successfully supported a number of clients with a myriad of enquiries.

On completion, I was better prepared and more confident to commence my journey in seeking employment opportunities. As a graduate from the Diploma in counselling, it was great to have the placement as an experience to discuss at an interview. Additionally, I have since engaged professional supervision services, where I can discuss, reflect on my work, explore my thoughts, ideas to experiences, and other factors or triggers that may have challenged me.

I wish you all best in journey!



Lewis Ramos serviced in the Royal Australian Army as a Medic, he further graduated from the Australian Federal Police (protective services counter terrorism first response course, and served a short tenure prior to moving into the private sector. With over a decade of experience in security risk management, workplace training, corporate facilities management, and asset protection. Lewis

provided professional consultation to both the government and private corporate sectors in emergency management and safety. Lewis is currently an employment consultant.

He holds a Diploma in Counselling, with other CPD certificates in suicide prevention and cognitive behavioural therapies. He is credited with coaching and counselling those less fortunate needing support to find a brighter and independent future. At work, Lewis applies a holistic person centred approach, to support clients to manage stress and barriers, and works closely with clients to find sustainable employment. Lewis is a level 3 member with the Certified Practising Counsellors of Australia. In his leisure time, he likes to go camping, driving, reading books, bike riding, and spending quality time with family and friends.

Encounters With Supervision



Professional Supervision

What is the reason that you are doing supervision? Is it a work obligation? Choosing what you want to gain through supervision as a counsellor is a necessary part of the experience. Having an idea of what you want to gain as a result of supervision will support the process and also the outcomes.

I remember being quite anxious and concerned that I would not be performing at the level that was required of me when I first started going to supervision. I was concerned that I would use the wrong vocabulary or the wrong words when speaking with the supervisor. They have enough experience in the field to be able to identify someone who is brand-new to it.

The procedure was simple to complete, and the company provided me with a supervisor that they had already been utilising with other employees. It was enjoyable for me to interact with the supervisor during those occasions. I felt heard and supported. I realised that my firsthand experiences and lived experiences, in addition to my professional experiences, were just as significant as my practice.

In addition to broadening my knowledge and abilities, I also met a professional who was eager to assist me in improving as a counsellor. They were not egotistical or of the opinion that I was not good enough. They acknowledged my talent, and they were prepared to collaborate with me to provide new opportunities for me to learn and grow. The truth is that after going through this experience, I understood that when you participate in supervision, you are actively looking at growing your potential.

With such great experiences, I later assumed the job of supervisor for numerous individuals, both informally and formally. Because of this, I had the chance to actively learn about other people's experiences and how they built their own paths to knowledge and experience.

Being a counsellor can make it seem like you are competing with other counsellors for clients in a tough market. Starting out can be challenging and frustrating, so if we offer to mentor and assist new counsellors, are we not also offering to improve the industry? Creating and providing connections for those seeking the same profession to co-travel with. Building stronger communities and teaching competent counsellors how to conduct heart work should be the framework of a supervisor's mission.



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