Sticky Wickets in Supervision

What is a Sticky Wicket?
In cricket, it’s when the surface of the pitch (area between the bowler and the batman) changes in composition, making the ball bounce differently... the bowler cannot control the throw and the batman cannot reliably swing.

Happy Texas Independence Day!
March 2, 1836
What is a Sticky Wicket?

In supervision, it is challenging situations that are not as routine, not as reliably or consistently dealt with or managed.

Normal, routine aspects of supervision

Common Factors include
- Enhance the professional functioning of the trainee
- Monitor quality of services to clients
- Serve as a gatekeeper to the field
- Others?

Normal, routine aspects of supervision

This can include:
- Case management
- Clinical development
- Ethical awareness
- Professional development
- Others?
So, how can supervisors assist trainees navigate non-routine situations?

This presentation will look at a few of those challenging and difficult situations in supervision
(participation is expected!)  

Learning objectives

- Explore the role of the supervisor when supervising higher risk clients.
- Describe reasonable steps to take when supervising trainees in challenging cases.
- Explore options for the supervisor to take should there be potential State Board violations.
Some Preparatory Principles

Consider the wisdom of supervising the way you do therapy:
- respectful of the other
- not being quick to problem solve for the other
- joining well with the other
- listening more than speaking

Presentational Topics
- Confrontational Situations with Trainee
- Suicidal Clients
- Counter-Transference Situations
- Forensic Situations
- Licensing Board Notices
- Others? Open forum...

Sticky Wicket #1: Confrontational Situations with Trainee

Cases:
1. Difference of opinion that gets heated.
2. Showing up late for supervision.
3. Treating supervisor "too friendly".
4. Others?
Sticky Wicket #1:
Confrontational Situations with Trainee

- Possible Responses:
  1. Deal with it sooner than later.
  2. "Seek first to understand, then to be understood" – Covey
  3. Softly let them know that there is a hierarchy.
  4. Encourage and nurture the "better angels" between each other.
     *We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory will swell when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.* – Lincoln
  5. Others?

Sticky Wicket #2:
Suicidal Clients

- Cases:
  1. The trainee reports a client is talking self-harm.
  2. The trainee reports getting a call from their client threatening self-harm, or leaves a session with the impression self-harm may occur.
  3. The trainee reports a client has completed suicide.

- Possible Responses:
  1. First, ascertain levels of safety of the trainee’s client.
  2. Walk through community resources that are available: local inpatient facilities, coordinate with their psychiatrist, schedule session sooner than later, etc.
  3. Process with the trainee their feelings and strategies, but don’t do therapy with them.
  4. Refer them to individual therapy if necessary.
  5. Encourage self-care and boundary-setting approaches.
  6. Others?
Sticky Wicket #3: Counter-Transference

- **Cases:**
  1. The trainee reports feelings toward his/her client.
  2. The trainee reports feelings toward you that seem to be inappropriate.

Possible Responses:

1. Address the elephant in the room, regardless as to how the feelings are being directed.
2. Remind them of the professional boundaries required for clinical work.
3. If feelings are directed toward you, be aware of your own counter-transference.
4. Others?

Sticky Wicket #4: Forensic Situations

- **Cases:**
  1. Your trainee reports working with a client that has court potential.
  2. Your trainee received a subpoena for records.
  3. Your trainee received a summons to appear in court.
  4. Others?
Sticky Wicket #4: Forensic Situations

Possible Responses:
1. Remind them they have to comply with the court order.
2. Walk them through how to thoroughly read the subpoena.
3. Coordinate with their agency’s rules and expectations.
4. Prep them for court testimony, and consider accompanying them to court for moral support.
6. Other?

Sticky Wicket #5: Licensing Board Notices

Cases:
1. The trainee receives a letter on renewing their license.
2. The trainee receives a letter from the State Board regarding a potential violation.
3. Others?

Possible Responses:
1. Calm them down and reduce their anxiety!
2. Walk them through the steps to renew their license, making sure you are current with updated forms and processes yourself.
3. Read through the Violation Notice carefully, and work on addressing the issue in a sequential manner.
4. If needed, have them consult an attorney, and accompany them to Austin for their hearing.
5. Others?
Other Sticky Wicket Situations?

Conclusion

- Supervision is a privilege to assist a trainee into the profession… be kind, gracious, understanding, patient… but maintain the mentor role at all times.
- Remember the better qualities of your own supervision and use them wisely as you “give back to the profession”.
- The Golden Rule can be a theme: supervise as you would like to be supervised.

Thank you for your attention!

Be mindful of those sticky wickets in your supervision, and have a great Conference!

Russ Bartee, PhD
rfbartee@txwes.edu