

President's Message

CCPA's Accomplishments in the Past Year

I hope that everyone has had a moment to refresh him or herself and do some self-care over these summer months. Our work is demanding and we all know it, yet as caregivers, we sometimes do not take that pause for ourselves.

In May at our National Conference in St. John's, we held our Annual General Meeting, and in the President's report Dr. Caverley noted what had been accomplished during the past year. It was a lot. She, all Board Members, Committee and Chapter members are to be congratulated for what was achieved during the year. As well, we know that our National Office staff continue to provide professional service to members, and carry out all our programming and services for our membership. Thank you to everyone for all that has been accomplished over the past year.

At our AGM in St. John's, we also installed our 2017-2019 CCPA Board of Directors. The Board includes both new and returning members. As President, I am pleased to say that you have elected a strong group of members whose goal is to serve you, our members and our profession for 2017-2019 term of office.

Below is a listing of our Board and the constituencies they represent. Their bios can be found at <https://www.ccpa-accp.ca/team/>

- Jen Rowett, President-Elect
- Natasha Caverley, Past-President
- Michel Turcotte, Treasurer and Quebec Francophone Director
- Carrie Foster, Quebec Anglophone Director
- Marion Clorey, Prince Edward Island Director
- Andrea Currie, Nova Scotia Director
- Meredith Henry, New Brunswick Anglophone Director
- Serge Hall, New Brunswick Francophone Director
- Madeleine Lelievre, British Columbia and Yukon Director
- Leah Lewis, Newfoundland and Labrador Director
- Joyce Milligan, Manitoba and Nunavut Director
- Kathy Offet-Gartner, Alberta and Northwest Territories Director
- Nicholas Renaud, Ontario Anglophone Director
- Vicki-Anne Rodrigue, Ontario Francophone Director
- Bill Thomas, Indigenous Director
- Kimberly Young, Saskatchewan Director

As CCPA strives to support our membership and the profession, the central core of our mission continues to be the collaborative work done by the Board and our National Office Staff. The overall activities of CCPA can be represented as four quadrants.

1. **The Certification Process** – Our ongoing work for supporting and developing our Canadian Certified Counsellor and Canadian Certified Counsellor - Supervisor designations.

2. **Advocacy and Outreach** – Our Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy, National Conference, Webinars, Chapter workshops and events, presentations to existing and emerging regulatory colleges, public website, issues papers and news releases.

3. **National Standards** – Continued work on our Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, CACEP (our university accreditation program).

4. **Professional Learning and Membership Services** – Our searchable database, professional liability insurance and other insurance supports, CCC and CCC-S designation, COGNICA, webinars and professional learning activities, workshops and events.

Our 2017-2019 Board will continue to work on these four major areas to support you and our members. Meeting set goals in these areas will further strengthen and support our association.

Part of doing a good job as a board means listening to our membership. I invite you to support us by asking you to let us know what you think. If you have a question, an idea or a concern please send it along. You can contact our National Office by phone at 1-877-765-5565 or email at memberservices@ccpa-accp.ca. You can email me or call me also at 902-401-5308 or email me at president@ccpa-accp.ca. Our association is strong and growing for many reasons, and I believe that one is a willingness to listen, so please, send along those comments, questions, concerns and ideas.

All the best to everyone and do take care,

John

President – Canadian Counselling & Psychotherapy Association

President-Elect Message

Annual Conference 2017, Accomplishments as the New-Brunswick Director and New Role

Now that conference season has settled, I am happy to be home once again. Our national conference in St. John's, Newfoundland was a huge success this year, with over 500 participants, and many diverse presentations and cultural experiences. A highlight for me was meeting counsellors that were attending from across the country and globe, many of whom were enjoying their first adventure in Newfoundland. Thankfully, I had visited before, and did not need to participate in activities for first timers, like kissing a cod, which I'm sure some of you will vividly remember! There is always a diversity of networking, learning, and celebrating at CCPA conferences, and I can hardly wait to see what our conference committee has in store for Winnipeg in 2018!

I am very enthusiastic and ready to serve as your President-Elect for 2017-2019. During my tenure as New Brunswick Anglophone Director and a member of our national Board, I served as Chair of the Global Partnerships Committee, and as Board Liaison for the School Counsellors Chapter. At the provincial level, I also served as a Board member of the New Brunswick Association of Counselling Therapists, and as a member of the Federation Working Group, which had been diligently working toward legislation of our profession in New Brunswick.

It was a very productive and rewarding two years, particularly when we reached our collective goal and our *Licensed Counselling Therapists Act* became an Act of the Legislature on May 5th, 2017. On June 1st, 2017, the College of Counselling Therapists of New Brunswick commenced. I continue to be committed to contributing to the growth and organization of our profession provincially, nationally, and internationally. I will contribute my strengths and experiences including advocacy and outreach; counsellor education and research; and leadership and collaboration.

I am grateful for a range of experiences that currently inspire my professional growth and fulfillment including clinical practice, university instruction, supervision of students, and the journey of my doctoral degree. I have enjoyed being an entrepreneur for over 20 years, and various volunteer activities that range from being a firefighter to a team leader for Global Village, Habitat for Humanity. I live in unceded Wolastoqey territory with my husband, where I am constantly in awe of the beauty of nature that surrounds us.

I look forward to continuing to serve our Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, and you, our members, in this new role.

Thank you, Merci, Woliwon!

Jenny Rowett, MEd, CCC-S, LCT
President-Elect, CCPA

NOTEBOOK ON ETHICS, STANDARDS OF PRACTICE AND LEGAL ISSUES FOR COUNSELLORS AND PSYCHOTHERAPISTS

Dr. Glenn Sheppard

Allegations of Professional Misconduct Against a Counsellor (An Arbitration Case)

I have decided for this Notebook to report on an arbitration case because it involves a grievance based primarily on alleged professional misconduct by a Counsellor. It provides insight into how the Arbitrator dealt with each of the allegations. Also, this case highlights the complex environments in which some counsellors work and its associated challenges.

The case is entitled the **Halifax Employer's Association (HEA) v The Halifax Longshoreman's Association (HLA), Local 269 (Union)**. The Arbitrator was Michel G. Picher and the name of the counsellor and the employees involved are not disclosed in this public Report. The Union's grievance application concerned how the employer was delivering a Substance Abuse Program for its members. The HEA had asked Medavie Blue Cross to sponsor this program and it contracted with a national Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to deliver it. The person who was key to this delivery was a Counsellor in the Halifax area who was a local service provider for the EAP. The main objective of the program was to assess certain employees for substance abuse problems, and if they were determined to be substance dependent, to disclose this to their employer and to provide addictions counselling services to them.

The Union alleged a wide range of professional violations by the EAP Counsellor. These included: his not being qualified to provide the professional service, being in a conflict of interest by being both the assessor and the counsellor, breaches of employees' confidentiality and privacy, inappropriate location of his office, and inappropriate communication with employees who were his counselling clients.

I have dealt with each of these allegations in turn and included the Arbitrator's decision for each of them.

Issue 1

The Counsellor's Qualifications:

The Union stated in its grievance that the counsellor was not registered or licensed by either the *Nova Scotia College of Counselling Therapist* or the *Nova Scotia Psychology Board* nor was he certified as an alcohol and drug counsellor by the *Canadian Addiction Counsellor's Certification Federation*. Their position was that he did not have the necessary professional preparation and was therefore not qualified to make drug dependency assessments, make the related recommendations, or to provide substance dependency counselling. Of course the employer challenged this claim and submitted its own arguments as to why they believed the counsellor was qualified to perform these responsibilities. They also submitted their position to the Arbitrator on all the other allegations.

In addressing this first claim the Arbitrator considered the Counsellor's credentials and listed the following information in his Report:

- *Held a Masters of Education Degree with qualifications as a **Registered Professional Counsellor (RPC)**. He held that status while he was a member in good standing of the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association.*
- *He had the status of **Master Practitioner of Counselling Psychology (MPCP)** as members of the Canadian College of Professional Counsellors and Psychotherapist (CCPCP)*
- *A member in good standing of the Canadian Professional Counsellor Association*

He also noted that the Counsellor had more than 25 years of counselling experience and that included a one year internship with the Nova Scotia Drug Dependency Commission.

After his review, including his consideration of the Employer's submission, the Arbitrator concluded that the counsellor had the qualifications to perform the duties assigned to him by the EAP agency as a substance abuse counsellor for HEA employees. So this claim was dismissed.

Issue 2

The Counsellor's Conflict of Interest:

The Union position that the counsellor was in a conflict of interest was expressed as follows:

The Union takes particular exception to the fact that on a number of occasions Counsellor J assessed employees who had been referred to him, found them to be dependent on drugs or alcohol and then recommended that they attend counselling sessions with him. The duality of those roles, that of assessment and treatment, in the Union's view, constituted a conflict of interest contrary to ethical standards which govern the practice of counsellors and psychotherapist.

The Union argued that the Counsellor's referral-to-self benefitted him financially and point to one employee who saw the Counsellor once per week for a considerable time as an example of this benefit.

The Arbitrator observed that it was not the Counsellor himself who referred an employee to him for assessment and subsequent counselling if needed, but the EAP company holding the contract for this service. He also consulted the *Code of Ethics of the Canadian Professional Counsellors Association* and concluded that the Code, in his words "does not draw a wall between the two services." He dismissed the Union's allegation by concluding the Counsellor's providing both these services to the same employee did not violate any professional ethical standard as far as he could determine.

Issue 3

The Location of the Counsellor's Office

The Union alleged that the Counsellor acted unprofessionally and in a manner which could have violated the employee's privacy rights by conducting his counselling sessions in the living room of his home. The

Arbitrator also dismissed this claim. He observed that “Home offices are not uncommon in many professions, and the use of a home to provide professional services is not unheard of.” So, in his decision he stated:

The Union has directed the Arbitrator to no law, regulation or guideline which would prohibit a professional counsellor from utilizing his or her home to meet with or deal with clients, particularly when there is no other person present during his or her provision of counselling services and where no indiscretion or violation of the obligation of confidentiality has been demonstrated.

It appears that the Arbitrator did not assess the inherent risk of a client encountering a family member or a neighbour of the Counsellor, but rather, was satisfied with the Union’s inability to demonstrate that such an encounter had occurred.

Issue 4

Alleged Breaches of Confidentiality

The Union mentioned that the Counsellor breached the right to confidentiality by disclosing to an employee’s employer, HEA, that he had a lung cancer diagnosis. Both the HEA and the Counsellor argued that this disclosure was made since it could increase the risk of a relapse from the drug recovery program. The Arbitrator states that the Counsellor did not provide any psychological or medical support for this position. He concluded that the Counsellor’s disclosure was a “*blatant violation of confidentiality*“....*could foreseeably undermine the trust that is essential to the viability of the counselling process itself.*”

Issue 5

Alleged Breaches of the Employee’s Right to Privacy and Confidentiality

It was alleged by the Union, and confirmed in the Arbitrator’s Report, that some of the counselling sessions with the Counsellor took place in public places including at: Tim Hortons, Home Depot, the Waterfront and during the Counsellor’s grocery shopping. One employee said the following about his experience of being with the Counsellor in a public place:

When we were out together, I always felt uncomfortable, especially at Tim Hortons. One of the Tim Hortons we went to was one that my father goes to. I was always terrified of running into people I know. A couple of times we did, and I didn’t know how to introduce Counsellor J. Again, there was no confidentiality.

After his review of these actions by the Counsellor, the Arbitrator reached the following conclusion:

In the circumstances, the Arbitrator is compelled to conclude that by conducting counselling in public places Counsellor J departed from the requirements of paragraph 8 of the Code of Ethics which mandates a safe and private setting for counselling, along with the expectation of privacy found in

Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA), which I am also satisfied is implicit in any employment relationship and in the collective agreement.

Issue 6

Alleged Unprofessional Communications with Employer

A number of employees reported concern about how the Counsellor spoke to them about private matters during some sessions with him. One said that he was asked how often he had marital sex, and another was asked if he had sex with his common law spouse. The Arbitrator did agree that these alleged statements constituted to a lack of professionalism on the part of the Counsellor, however, he concluded that he did not see it as an issue of privacy and confidentiality which was the grievance being considered in this instance. On the other hand, a circumstance in which the Counsellor spoke on the telephone to an employee about private matters when another employee was present with the Counsellor was seen by the Arbitrator as a confidentiality violation. *He said "that it was plainly unprofessional on the part of the Counsellor. In my view it also deeply offended the rights of the employee who would have every reason to doubt his ability to communicate at any time thereafter in confidence with the Counsellor."*

In the conclusion to his Report, the Arbitrator summarized his decisions on the various grievances, and addressed the issue of a remedy for those for which the Counsellor was found liable for professional misconduct. He considered the Union's request for remedies and the HEA response. He stated that as an Arbitrator he could only award compensatory remedies, not punitive ones. There were 4 HEA employees who were participants in this case, and in his view, each were affected differently by the Counsellor's behavior. He directed their employer, HEA, to make the following financial compensatory awards to three of them: \$5000.00, \$2500.00 and \$1500.00 respectively and he provided his rationale for these different awards. He also directed the HEA to work with the EAP company by which Counsellor was employed, to review all the reports submitted by the Counsellor for each employee with whom he worked, and to purge any inappropriate personal information from their personnel files. He observed that the Counsellor was no longer retained by HEA so there was no need for him to address this matter further, but if it had been necessary he would have so directed.

I invite readers to reflect on the allegations made in this Arbitration Case and, based on the limited information available in this Notebook, to engage in a collegial discussion regarding the decisions made about them.

This case can be found at www.Canlii.org, 2015, 39432 (ON.LA)

CCPA 2017 Conference Award Winners

During the award ceremony, Natasha Caverley commended all members far and wide who (on a daily basis) make a positive difference in the lives of people and the advancement of our profession. The awards ceremony recognizes and honours some outstanding individuals in the counselling and psychotherapy profession. From students emerging into our profession to those who have been practitioners, supervisors, and mentors, CCPA offers its appreciation for your work in growing a strong foundation of caring and action.

CCPA Honorary Life Membership Award

This special award is given to members who have made a considerable contribution to the aims and objectives of CCPA.

Lorne Flavelle is the only CCPA Past President whose contributions were previously noted with his own award. Lorne filled many roles during his work with CCPA. He was the Quebec Anglophone Director for 4 years, President Elect, President and Past President from 2001-2007, secretary to the Board and Certification Registrar for 2 years, co-founder of the Private Practitioners Chapter where he has served as the Chapter's President and Treasurer. Lorne is a strong Ambassador for CCPA and he has encouraged many others to become actively involved with the Association. He has regularly gone beyond the call of duty. And those of you who have regularly attended the CCPA conference know that "Chez Lorne" is always open.

Dr Ron Lehr has served CCPA in a number of capacities over many years: President-Elect, President and Past-President from 2007-2013, provincial Director for Nova Scotia, he is a strong and active advocate for the regulation of Registered Counselling Therapists in Nova Scotia, president of the Counsellor Educators Chapter, chair of the Ethics Committee, co-author of 2 CCPA publications on ethics issues and cases and contributing editor to CCPA's Standards of Practice, site visitor for CACEP and co-chair of the 2009 National Symposium on Inter-Provincial and Territorial Mobility within the Counselling Profession. It was under Ron's leadership that CCPA introduced the National Indigenous Director position to the Board thereby ensuring Indigenous issues are addressed in national policy and program decisions. He also helped to launch the Social Justice Chapter.

Dr. Blythe Shepard is receiving this Honorary Membership award for her outstanding contributions to CCPA over the last 12 years. Blythe was the Regional Director for British Columbia. She then moved to Alberta where she served as the Regional Director for Alberta for 4 years. During the time that she was a Director she also served as the CCPA Treasurer. If that was not enough she then served as President Elect, President and Past President from 2011-2017. Her accomplishments and contributions are many. In no particular order, Blythe served on the BC Task Group and FACT BC from 2005 until now. It is this group that developed the competency profile that is in use in several provinces. Blythe continues to serve this group by being a member of the Registration Committee of FACT BC. She served as the Chair of the CCC Certification Committee for several years, co-developed the CCC-S program and the corresponding

master's level course and continues to sit on the advisory committee for this program. She teaches the Master's level supervision course on behalf of CCPA, chaired the Governance Committee, edited two textbooks for CCPA, the Ethics Casebook and the Supervision Textbook and co-wrote the Supervision Handbook. Blythe has co-chaired a project which has developed a set of supervision competencies. She has been the co-chair of the 2009 and 2011 National Symposium on Inter-Provincial and Territorial Mobility within the Counselling Profession. Blythe was a member of the Competency Profile Committee for FACT-Alberta, gounded the AB/NWT Chapter, initiated the Northern Network Project, and the list goes on.

CCPA Student Travel Grant

This award supports CCPA members in their attendance of the CCPA annual conference.

This year's recipients are: **Jessica Isenor, Elise Meertens, Lakshmi Sundaram** and **Rebecca Ward**.

CCPA Lorne Flavelle Award

This special award is given to a member in recognition of outstanding volunteer service to CCPA.

Glenn Sheppard has worked passionately and tirelessly for CCPA on many fronts. He was Chair of the CCPA's Ethics Committee, and continues to write comprehensive and relevant articles for Cognica on current ethical issues. Glenn was one of the original authors of CCPA's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice and he chaired the first CCPA Ethics Adjudication Tribunal. Glenn served as the Newfoundland and Labrador Regional Director for 8 years and then volunteered another 6 years as President Elect, President and Past President of CCPA. If that was not enough when Glenn stepped down from the Board he stepped into the position of President of the Counsellor Educators Chapter. Glenn was also Chair of the Conference Committee when CCPA held its conference in St. John's in 2005 and was co-Program Chair of the 1979 CCPA conference in St John's. Other volunteer roles include belonging to the Editorial Board for the Canadian Journal of Counselling, co-Chairing the CCPA National Labour Mobility Group and its 3 national symposia and most recently, serving as a member of the provincial committee seeking regulation for counsellors in Newfoundland and Labrador. In addition, Glenn's expertise and dedication have resulted in the Ethics Committee relying on Glenn as their Ethics Amicus. Glenn is always ready to volunteer for CCPA projects as well as support and mentor newcomers. He has presented multiple webinars and continues to contribute to CCPA, offering his expertise and wisdom with passion and dedication. We recognize his outstanding volunteer service.

CCPA Humanitarian Award

The CCPA Humanitarian Award recognizes the spirit of good will and humanitarianism in CCPA members.

The first recipient of CCPA's new Humanitarian Award is **Mego Nerses**. This Award recognizes the spirit of good will and humanitarianism in CCPA members in a local, national or international capacity. Mego runs a private practice providing counselling and therapy to refugees and asylum seekers in the LGBTQ community that are new to Canada in multiple languages, offering them support, a safe space and breaking isolation. He has presented very well-received CCPA webinars on the topic and hopes to continue to advocate for the rights and mental health wellbeing of these individuals.

CCPA Unsung Hero Award

This award will recognize special individuals within CCPA membership, who have gone above and beyond the call of duty. These individuals have taken part in an inspirational activity for those in need or for someone unable to do things for themselves.

Nicole Imgrund has served with the CCPA, AB/NWT Chapter board since its inception. Her role was that of President-Elect, then President, then Past-President, and now Regulation Director. Nicole has been instrumental in advocating for the regulation of Counselling in Alberta. She has recently been elected as Chair of FACT-Alberta the group which is advancing the cause of regulation in that province. This position requires her to meet with members from a number of associations and professional organizations and the Alberta government to make the regulation of the Counselling profession in Alberta a reality. She has done this, and so much more with grace, integrity, class, and intelligence all in the name of CCPA, for the protection of the public and the right of everyone to receive competent, ethical, and professional counselling services from qualified and competent practitioners. Recently, Nicole was not only instrumental in assisting the Albert/NWT Chapter in hosting the third bi-annual CCPA Research conference, she facilitated partnering the conference with an evening with Clara Hughes for our conference goers and many, many members of the St. Albert community. For nearly six months she laboured, rallied, and promoted this event to schools, businesses, organizations and the community, personally backing the event to ensure it could proceed no matter what. Nicole also owns and operates Rivers Edge Counselling Services in St. Albert, Alberta, and mentors, supervises, and teaches in the Masters of Psychotherapy and Spirituality program at St. Stephen's College, an affiliate of the University of Alberta in Edmonton. As such, many a student and practitioner owe their solid grounding in ethical practice, in part, to Nicole. Nicole's impact on our profession and association extend far beyond her—she is the pebble, who when tossed into the pond creates a chain reaction that extends and grows far beyond and for much longer than the original impact. What makes her even more endearing is that she does all of this in the service of others, not for glory, not for fame or fortunes, but because she believes it is the right thing to do. Without a doubt, she epitomizes the very essence of an “unsung hero”!

CCPA Conference Travel Grant

This award is given to support a CCPA member of their attendance at the CCPA annual conference.

This year's recipients are: **Anya Brooker, June Harper, Sherry Law, Judi Siklos, Dawn Schell and Sandra Dixon.**

CCPA Master's Thesis Award

This award is to recognize the work of CCPA master's level students.

This year's recipient for the master's thesis award is **Melanie Baruch** who is a graduate of the University of Manitoba. Her thesis was entitled 'The Business of Therapy: Examining the Process of Working in Private Practice'.

CCPA Counsellor Practitioner Award

This award is to recognize exceptional CCPA counsellor practitioners.

Belinda Josephson is currently working as a school counsellor at Bridgewater Elementary School in Bridgewater, Nova Scotia. Belinda has been involved with CCPA in many ways. She was an Executive Committee member of the School Counsellor's Chapter since 2009 and is current serving as President of the Nova Scotia Chapter. She has been actively involved with promoting Canadian School Counselling Week as well as creating professional development opportunities for counsellors in her area. Belinda is very involved in ongoing professional development and program development. She has sought out specialized training as part of her own professional development which included: Race Relations and Cross Cultural Understanding Training; and learning to be an International Facilitator for the League of Peaceful Schools. Belinda's nominator has indicated that "she represents the optimal model of a caring person and professional whose knowledge, skills, and talents are valued by students and colleagues. She is a hard working practitioner with a professional demeanor who is dedicated to the counselling profession." This award indeed recognizes Belinda as an exceptional CCPA counsellor practitioner.

CCPA/BMS Bursary

BMS, the CCPA professional liability insurance broker of choice, provides two \$500 awards to support graduate students research in counselling.

The student receiving the BMS Group student bursary this year is **Sakthi Kalaichandran**, a CCPA Student Representative in the Master of Arts Counselling Psychology program at the University of Western Ontario.

Are Boundaries Crossings Necessary for Effective Therapeutic Relationships?

By Lindsey Thomson

Ethical boundaries have received a great deal of attention by professionals in the field of counselling for various reasons. This topic has been mainly approached from a problem-oriented stance and over the years, ethical codes have been reshaped in pursuit of tighter strictures. Different reasons for this attention include the individual actions of therapists, the risks clients may face in their sessions, the responsibility therapists have to society, and the maintenance of the reputation of governing bodies such as the Canadian Counsellors and Psychotherapists Association.

As professional members of governing associations, therapists are required to follow a code of ethics. The code of ethics is meant to be a safeguard for therapists and clients, and ensure that the therapeutic relationship is as ethical as possible - but at what cost? "Members increasingly confront challenging ethical demands and dilemmas in a complex and dynamic society to which a simple and direct application of this code may not be possible." This begs the question; are boundary crossings necessary for effective therapeutic relationships?

Working within the Frame of Boundaries

To be able to work within the frame of boundaries, effective therapists are both emotionally engaged and detached. This affects the relationship that the therapist builds with the client. The therapist needs to be involved with the client's life to a certain point so they can collaboratively establish goals. This way the therapist can understand the client's strengths, weaknesses and behaviours or actions, and customize the therapy methods to the individual needs of the client and work in the client's best interest. The therapist needs to be emotionally detached because he or she needs to help and interact with the client from a position of neutrality. The therapist needs to recognize where the boundary lines are drawn, and maintain an appropriate distance from that so he or she does not allow personal emotions toward the client or the client's situation to interfere. The therapist is there to provide an alternative perspective to the client's situation so he or she can guide the client in developing their self-awareness. By providing an alternative perspective, the client will be able to have a better view of the big picture of their life and experience wholeness, a meaningful life or increased self-awareness, depending on their goals and method of therapy.

If a therapist can balance being emotionally engaged and detached at the same time while in a therapeutic relationship, he or she is more likely to be able to work with the client within the frame of boundaries. The therapist does not allow him or herself to become so emotionally involved that the client feels threatened, and uncomfortable with the therapist's forwardness. Additionally, he or she does not become so detached that the client perceives him or her as cold, insensitive and unsupportive. Either sides of this dichotomy could cause a great deal of harm to the client.

How Boundary Crossings Can Occur

One of the original goals of Sigmund Freud's psychotherapy method was to maintain an authoritative separation between client and therapist. There was a clear power differential in which the therapist was

the expert and the patient was the submissive counterpart. Since Freud's day, the theories behind the treatment methods of counselling have undergone a great deal of transformation. Presently, therapists are generally more focused on the equality of each participant in therapy sessions. Existential psychotherapy focuses on the concept of the fellow travelers, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy holds a similar notion that 'we are all in the same boat'. This approach in the therapeutic relationship is seen to have a greater influence on the client's ability to connect with the therapist. Yet, in terms of ethical boundaries, this greatly reduces the distance in the relationship and presents a concern for when and where therapists are meant to draw the line.

By transforming the previous method of treatment and trying to reduce the perceived power differential in the therapeutic relationship, this reduces the thickness of its boundary limitations. Boundary thickness is described as the professional conduct of the therapist who is able to differentiate between his or her own thoughts and feelings. Thin boundaries are described as the opposite of this. By promoting therapists to be empathetic and compassionate toward the client, the boundary limits become blurred. Some therapy methods such as existential psychotherapy believe the therapist is equal to the client, and this can allow for self-disclosure when appropriate. The more and more therapists connect and share with their clients, the more the therapeutic relationship waivers between a professional and personal one. This is when boundary crossings start to occur. The main differences between a professional and personal relationship is that in the personal, both parties tend to share their experiences, stories and feelings with each other. There is also a sense of mutual connection and comradery. Conversely, professional relationships mainly focus on the agreed upon topic of the encounter and are treated more like a business transaction. Boundary crossings are truly inevitable because counselling is a professional business but the agreed upon focus is the experiences and feelings of a client.

When Boundary Crossings are Appropriate

Boundary crossings can serve the purpose of creating a greater connection with the client and strengthening the therapeutic relationship with the purpose of helping the client to overcome their presented problem. Because all cases of therapy with clients are tailored to their individual needs, establishing ethical boundaries in individual sessions is very subjective and is dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Counselling ethics are shadowed by a large grey area for assessing the limits to ethical actions that should be taken by a therapist. Individual cases can become very detailed and complex, therefore the therapist is required to ensure that he or she is not deliberately breaking any ethical principles, and must use his or her best judgement in the given situation. In addition, it can be said that boundary crossings can be deemed as acceptable in a therapeutic setting because of the type of persons the counselling field recruits as therapists.

Most therapists are highly altruistic, compassionate and caring people. These characteristics combined with the therapeutic expectations of the client and therapist working as fellow travelers can lead therapists to cautiously consider boundary crossings. Due to the compassionate nature of therapists, rigidly working within the frame of boundaries could be especially difficult for a therapeutic relationship that has been ongoing for years. This is because there is likely to be a high level of comfort, which could lead the therapist to engage in self-disclosure and supportive physical contact.

Ideal therapists are self-aware and monitors their own needs, feelings and emotions. They also need to demonstrate a high level of consistency between their beliefs and actions to be able to stay true to themselves and their clients. This relates to the notion of virtue ethics in that therapists are attuned to their motivations for their ethical decisions and actions, and to which they must constantly attend while in a session with their client. Therefore, it is possible for a therapist to be self-aware and understand the needs of his or her client, all while pushing the limits of boundaries when he or she believes that it would be

helpful for the growth and maintenance of the therapeutic relationship. Ideally, a therapist would only cross a boundary when it was appropriate for the specific relationship, and only in a case where they believe there is no risk of said action harming the client.

There is a hierarchy to boundary crossing that must be followed to ensure that no harm comes to the client. For a boundary crossing to occur, the therapist needs to first establish and ensure the ethical principles of confidentiality and informed consent. Once these two principles have been maintained, the therapist can move on to cautiously crossing the boundaries of the therapeutic relationship when things such as self-disclosure, physical contact and gift giving come up in the interactions with the client. Self-disclosure is a controversial, yet under-utilized therapeutic technique that can be effective in helping a client gain a new perspective on a situation, or reduce their feelings of loneliness, for example. Self-disclosure is a powerful tool that can help build feelings of trust and commonality in the therapeutic relationship. Physical contact, depending on the context, waivers on the line of sexual misconduct, and so should be used with great caution. An arm touch, shoulder squeeze or short hug, when used appropriately, can have a great positive impact on the client and help them to feel supported or cared for. Gift giving by the client is a third boundary crossing that can be difficult to assess but can be especially salient when working with clients of different cultural backgrounds, for example. In certain cultures, gift giving is a significant part of relationships and can be done to signify respect, thanks or well wishes. When in a situation like this, the therapist must consider the implications of accepting and not accepting the gift. If the therapist does not accept the gift, they run the risk of offending their client who wants to show their appreciation, for example. If they accept the gift, they run the risk of inviting the client into a more personal relationship. Either choice can lead to the possibility of negatively affecting the bond of the therapeutic relationship. It should be noted that the therapist should only ever accept items of small value should they choose to engage in gift giving. Self-disclosure, physical contact and gift giving are just three examples of the many forms of boundary crossings that can arise in a therapy session, and help to develop or maintain a positive therapeutic relationship.

Conclusion

The issue of boundary crossing within the scope of ethics is a complex and controversial topic that will remain unresolved. There are many professionals within the field of counselling that make valid arguments for both sides of the issue and at times it can be difficult to determine what the best course of action is. Yet the individuality and subjectivity of therapist-client interactions is foundational to the therapeutic method and client growth, so the grey area of making ethical decisions in a therapeutic relationship remains. Therefore, I believe that boundary crossings can be effective in individual therapeutic relationships. I believe it can be in the best interest of the client for their therapist to be able to decide if using self-disclosure, physical contact, gift giving or other boundary crossings may positively influence their relationship with the client and the client's growth.