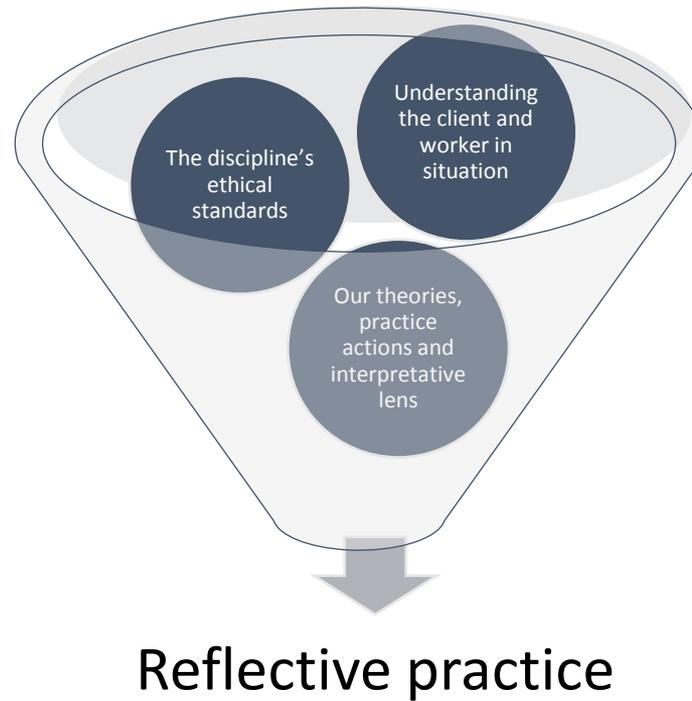# From Theory to Practice

Combined Schools of Social Work 2015

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Reflective Practice
What do we include in our reflections?

Reflective practice

Reflective Practice draws on more than theory as a type of knowledge

Three types of knowledge to bring together:

1. **Theoretical knowledge** from formal theories and based on empirical research
2. **Practice wisdom or personal theory** based on professional experiences
3. **Tacit knowledge** developed through life experience

WHAT IS THEORY?

Often a confusing term – used differently in literature and in professional conversations

Two categories of knowledge that constitute 'theory'

- **explanatory theories** which represent a way of understanding the human experience – answers the question 'Why does this situation/problem exist?'

- **practice theories and models** which provide us with a mechanism to apply the knowledge and work towards change – answers the question ' What is needed to bring about change in this situation?'

Theoretical Perspectives Informing our Practice

- Psychodynamic – emphasises the inner world and the processes of communication within the working relationship

- Cognitive Behavioural – change occurs within three domains: way the person thinks, way they felt or reacted, the way they behaved

- Task-centred – emphasises addressing immediate tasks relating to the problem and developing emotional and practical coping skills

- Feminist and Critical – emphasises structural change, empowering individuals

- Narrative and Solution-focused/Strength-based – Narrative emphasises the way the person constructs and relates the stories of their life; Solution-focused emphasis the development of insight and control over the narrative

- Ecosystems – emphasises systems at a variety of levels and interactions across domains

Psychodynamic Approach

Some of the key things we are listening for when using a psychodynamic approach:

- the lifelong patterns of behaving and relating
- family and significant others and their impact on the person's sense of self
- Conscious and unconscious motivations and drives
- Transference and countertransference experiences

The focus of our work:
- Developing insight into defense mechanisms and repetition experiences

Cognitive Behavioural Approach

Some of the key things we are listening to when using a cognitive behavioural approach:

- **A**ctivating events

- **B**elief system (rational/irrational; helpful/unhelpful)

- **C**onsequences in terms of thoughts, feelings and behaviours

The focus of our work

- To identify and challenge irrational and unhelpful beliefs

- To control and monitor unhelpful thoughts

Narrative Therapy Approach

Some of the key things we are listening for when using a narrative approach:

- The dominant life story/stories
- The meanings that the person attaches to their experiences, thoughts, emotions and behaviours and how these fit with their dominant life story/stories
- Person's strengths and coping abilities

The focus of our work:

- Helping the person explore meaning;
- Externalise the dominant story/stories
- Helping the person to deconstruct and re-author life narratives

Solution-focused approach

Some of the key things we are listening for when using a solution-focused practice:

- The person's understanding of their situation
- Person's strengths and coping abilities;
- Exceptions and solutions to problems

The focus of our work:

- Identify and amplify existing strengths and coping capacity, rather than focus on the problem
- The future – the 'miracle' question being a key technique

Anti-oppressive approach

- Recognise people's skills and abilities – reject negative labels

- Enable people's right to choose the work to be done for themselves

- Understand how social and economic policies and structures contribute to an individual's oppression and ongoing disadvantage

- Challenge oppression resulting from social constructs

- Model non-elitist practice

Other Theoretical Approaches ...

- Ecological Theory
- Family Systems Theory
- Brief/Crisis Intervention
- Social Learning Theory
- Development Perspectives
- Attachment/Disrupted Attachment Theory
- Trauma Theory
- Feminist Theory

Other Theoretical Approaches ...

- Solution Focused Approach

- Competency Based Approach

- Person-centred Approach

- Social Network Approach

Theory and Practice

Discussion:

What theoretical models and approaches inform your own practice with staff and/or clients?

How might this impact on your student supervision and support?
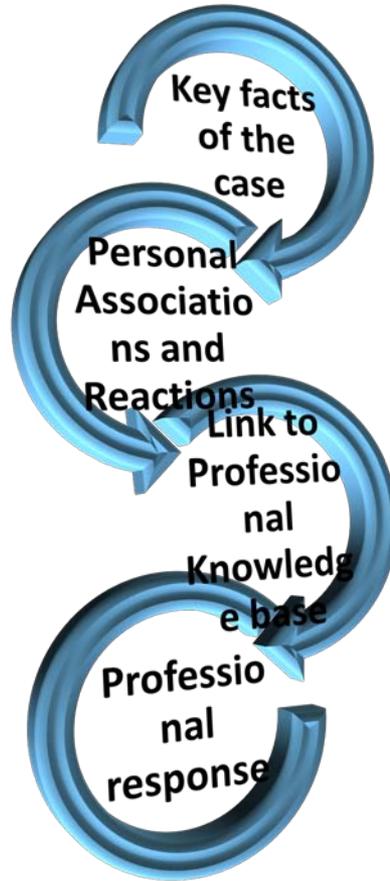
(Handout: OVERVIEW OF THEORY AND PRACTICE FRAMEWORKS)

INTEGRATING THEORY AND PRACTICE (ITP)

STRUCTURED ENQUIRY

Integration of Theory & Practice Loop Model

- A four-phase process that serves as a structure for reflective practice.

- Focus is on cumulative and ongoing reflection and action.

- Each phase of the loop affects the next

THE ITP LOOP

Key facts of the case

Personal Associations and Reactions

Link to Professional Knowledge base

Professional response

(Bogo&Vayda, 1998)

FACILITATING THE ITP LOOP THROUGH A **STRUCTURED ENQUIRY** PROCESS

Gain commitment for learning

Probe for professional knowledge

Teach to the general principle

Identify and amplify strengths

Capitalise on errors made as 'teachable moments'

GAIN COMMITMENT FOR LEARNING

Cue: Supervisee presents information on a case to you and asks what to do next?

Structured Enquiry Response: Ask the supervisee to give you their interpretation of what the information suggests

Rationale: Encouraging the supervisee to articulate their view increases the supervisee's commitment to working through issues themselves

Questions you may ask:

What do you think is going on for this client/patient?

What other information do you feel you need?

PROBE FOR PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Cue: The supervisee looks to you to confirm their view or to suggest alternatives

Structured Enquiry Response: Before offering your view, ask the supervisee to articulate what knowledge they are basing their opinion on

Rationale: Asking the supervisee to articulate their thought process helps you to identify what the supervisee knows and where there are gaps

Questions:

What led you to this conclusion?

What else did you consider?

What stopped you from going down that path?

TEACH TO THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE

Cue: the supervisee has articulated what it is he/she needs or wants to know in working through the specific case or issue

Structured Enquiry Response: Provide general principles, concepts and considerations and target to the supervisee's level of understanding

Rationale: Instruction is more memorable and transferable if offered as a general rule or principle

IDENTIFY AND AMPLIFY STRENGTHS

Cue: The supervisee may not consider what they did effectively

Structured Enquiry Response: Take the first chance you find to comment on the specific good work and the effect it had

Rationale: Skills in workers are often 'vulnerable' because they may not be well-established yet. Reinforcing the skill establishes competency

CAPITALISE ON ERRORS MADE AS 'TEACHABLE MOMENTS'

Cue: Something the supervisee did or said will have an adverse impact

Structured Enquiry Response: As soon as the error is made, find an appropriate space to discuss the situation encouraging the supervisee to critically reflect on their thought process and behaviour. Work with the supervisee to identify what could be done differently next time

Rationale: Workers who become aware of their mistakes and know what to do differently in the future only need reinforcement

ITP Loop Model (Bogo & Vayda, 1998)

Phase 1: Retrieval and recall of the salient facts of a situation

Phase 2: Reflection on the practitioner's personal subjective association/reaction to aspects of the situation (associations and reactions will often involve tacit knowledge

Phase 3: Linking both facts and reactions to various concepts derived from professional knowledge base (both theoretical knowledge and practice wisdom)

Phase 4: Professional Response – reconsideration of the situation based on the previous steps, and planning for future action

LET's practice

- In pairs, take turns in the role of Supervisor and Supervisee.

- Role play a scenario from your own practice experience using the structured enquiry approach.

- Those in supervisee roles to provide feedback to those in supervisor roles before swapping roles.

Large Group Discussion

What worked? What didn't?

How might you approach it differently?

THANK YOU!