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Group Supervision: Helping Supervisees Transition from Student to Therapist

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Abstract

Students beginning counseling psychology practice consistently reported feeling anxious about their new role as a therapist and subsequently about their performance in group supervision. In this study, it is hypothesized that incorporating mindfulness practice in supervision would help students learn techniques that not only manage their own anxiety related to their new role as a therapist but also increase their sense of competence when incorporating mindfulness in their clinical practice. This study examines the course feedback responses (interviews and written responses) regarding student's experience in the supervision group when mindfulness exercises were incorporated into every group. Throughout the study, grounded-theory techniques were used and a constant comparative method of analysis. Transcribed data were coded and analyzed using the open, axial, and selective coding procedures of Strauss and Corbin's (1990) grounded-theory method. Four primary domains emerged from the data. In addition to these four primary domains, nine secondary (sub) domains emerged from the data. These domains served to categorize the various responses to the mindfulness activity including the students' overall reactions and how these techniques impacted their supervision and ultimately their clinical work. Overall, students expressed positive feelings about practicing mindfulness in their clinical supervision and reported that the exercise was useful to them personally and in their clinical training as a therapist. In particular, mindfulness training was most helpful after student's received more exposure to the various techniques. Based on these findings, clinical implications and future research are discussed.

Keywords: training therapists, group supervision, mindfulness.