



Chiron Consultation and Therapy Services

JULIETTE'S DILEMMA - GROUP SUPERVISION SESSION

Context

Juliette is a clinical psychologist working in an adult mental health service. She is white and British. She has been working with Anil, a 37year old Indian man for 18 months. Anil is married with two children aged 14 and 7. The family lived in the same street as his parents and extended family in East London.

Anil came to England from India when he was six to join his parents. He was born with a cleft palette. Although he has had corrective surgery, it is still hard to understand him when he talks.

Anil was diagnosed as having learning difficulties when he transferred to secondary school and moved to a special school. When he left school his mother found him a job and took charge of his earnings. Anil stayed in this job for 10 years but was unhappy. He found extreme ways to make himself unwell so he didn't have to go to work. For instance he took rat poison and cut himself. Over time his behavior became increasingly worrying for his family as he climbed rooftops. His aggressive behavior towards his wife parents and, sometimes, total strangers, brought him to the attention of the police.

The psychiatric team caring for him thought his behavior was a response to his family dynamics. They recommended family therapy as the best hope for understanding and changing this behavior. It became apparent to Juliette that Anil was increasingly unable or unwilling to use the sessions and his aggressive and intimidating behavior was also preventing his wife and other family members to do so. Anil's family thought if the psychiatric team gave him medication it would be more helpful and asked their local Member of Parliament (MP) to intervene with the team.

Juliette's dilemma, at the time she brought the case for consultation, was connected to her manager's instruction to close the case. On one hand Juliette was relieved with this instruction but she also wondered whether she could or should do more.

Peer group discussion

The group explored the following areas:

- What work was "contracted for" and with whom.
- How race, culture and immigration might have impacted – may still be impacting – on Anil and his family.
- How the family's beliefs might influence their expectations about what should

- or could be done (this is a Hindu family).
- What were the issues around keeping safe and how these were being managed for the family, CMHT (Community Mental Health Team) professionals and general public
 - What were other services' (eg police GP) responsibilities

The peer group discussion echoed ones she had had with her colleagues, Anil and his family.

Supervisor's contribution

In addition to facilitating discussion to enable issues to emerge for exploration, a supervisor's role is to offer a theoretical framework for thinking about the dilemmas encountered. The theoretical framework I offered was Domains of Action Theory (Lang et al 1990). This theory invites professionals to think about how they position themselves as well as how they are positioned in different interactions and relationships.

Juliette's dilemma formed the question "Have I done all that I can before closing this case?" She knew she had her line manager's permission. Her colleagues agreed she and they could do no more. However, in asking the question, I thought she was highlighting the unspoken questions:

- (a) What does it mean to close this case?
- (b) Are there other views that need to be taken into account?

These questions foreground the fact that we are often accountable to a much wider audience than a line manager and colleagues.

Juliette and her peers identified Anil's GP, the police, the MP, and the general public as important people to consider. Naming who might be affected by the decision to close the case led to an exploration of the different expectations, duties, responsibilities and obligations held in relation to the case. This enabled Juliette to have a different conversation with her line manager about how she would close the case, remain congruent with her personal and professional beliefs and stay close to the agency's policies and procedures.

Reference: Lang, W.P., Little, M., Cronen, V.E. (1990) The Systemic Professional: Domains of Action and the Question of Neutrality. Human Systems, Vol.1:34-49