



GETTING CLEAN IN YOUR HEART

Business policies that work for you
and your private practice

While Standards of Clinical Practice provide guidance on many aspects of being a counsellor in B.C., private practice RCCs need to make their own decisions about a few areas, for example, complimentary sessions, sliding scale, no shows, and cancellations. A primary reason BCACC doesn't have rules for policies like these is to ensure the counsellor has enough autonomy to allow the therapeutic relationship between the counsellor and client to remain the priority.

As Jennifer Hollinshead, RCC-ACS and founder of Peak Resilience, points out, studies have shown — and most counsellors would agree — that the therapeutic relationship is the biggest predictor for success in therapy, no matter how the client may define success.

“If we're all coming back to the relationship being the most important predictor of therapy working, we also need to have boundaries, and we need to recognize that therapists are 50 per cent of the relationship,” she says.

“Every therapist is their own human being in their own location, dealing with their own privileges and barriers. The policies they create need to reflect what is sustainable practice for them and what is also trauma-informed and realistic for clients.”

But how do you create your own policies? You start by turning inward, which counsellors are seldom taught to do.

“We are really, really good at turning outward and asking what the client needs and what a situation requires,”

saysCarolynn Turner, RCC-ACS and founder and director of Lavender Counselling. “But part of our job is honouring the relationship. Does it feel clean in my heart to provide pro bono counselling or sliding scale or complimentary consultation?”

That turning inward is your responsibility to yourself, your client, and the therapeutic relationship.

“If I don’t first listen to myself, and I’m building resentment or a sense of frustration, then I’m going to bring that out in the relationship with the client,” she says.

Further, decisions about these policies may require flexibility at different times in our lives.

“When my children were young, I actually couldn’t be very flexible in offering last-minute sessions to clients,” says Turner, explaining that childcare

arrangements meant sticking to her schedule. “Referring clients out to community supports because of this sometimes felt really sad for me.”

It was through processing her own sadness and setting the boundary that came from that process — “I wish I could help, but I can’t. I have my own family.” — that Turner was able to prevent a lack of agency and subsequently a sense of burnout. Doing the work in a way she feels proud of helps to ensure she doesn’t become bogged down.

Now that her children are grown, she may occasionally let a client know they can reach out for a last-minute session if something urgent comes up. She also does more pro bono work now than she did when she was new to the profession, and she may sometimes offer a sliding scale.

“To go back to that expression ‘clean in my heart,’ I feel great about it, because as much as my motivation for helping has always been there, my financial stability has changed, so I have more space to do that,” she says.

As BCACC Approved Clinical Supervisors, both Turner and Hollinshead offer their perspectives on policies every private practice RCC needs to consider. Because of the importance of this topic and the space needed to cover it adequately, the beginning appears here in *Insights* magazine, while the full article is featured on the BCACC blog. Learn more about sliding scales, no shows and cancellations, complimentary consultation, refunds, rate increases, vacation time, and communicable disease plans at <https://bcacc.ca/blog/> ■

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN

IN TIMES OF DIFFICULTY

CELINE CLUFF, RCC

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE represents the ability to cope with a crisis mentally or emotionally or to return to pre-crisis status quickly. Scientific studies on resilience explore the way we execute these coping mechanisms and how we conduct ourselves to survive emotionally — for example, during a pandemic.



According to research from Michael Ungar, founder and director of the Resilience Research Centre at Dalhousie University, and Kristin Hadfield, assistant professor of psychology at Trinity College Dublin, factors that improve a young person's life change depending on whether they live in a stable, safe community or a challenging environment. This means researchers have to pay attention to a child's environment to understand what factors help them build resilience.

Something to keep in mind is the relationship between the child and their primary caretaker(s). A resilient child will have at least one resilient

interpersonal relationship with a parent, caretaker, close relative, or even friend. Nurturing these relationships plays a pivotal role in the maturation of a child's psychosocial development. Nurturing our interpersonal relationships is also healthy for our happiness levels. Research from the positive psychology realm continues to point us towards countless mental health benefits of having fulfilling interpersonal relationships. It is the quality, not quantity, of these relationships which brings us the most joy.¹

The same goes for children. It is important to let children engage

with each other on their own terms (interfering only if and when necessary), letting them partake in outdoor and indoor playtime, preferably unsupervised, while letting them act out different scenarios with peers. Allowing children to enjoy each other's company daily is pivotal for developing healthy social skills. It is in these early years in which children's social and emotional repertoires are developed. Extracurricular activities are also valuable; however, they cannot replace the social/interpersonal exchange. It is important to keep in mind the need for both when we strive towards raising resilient kids.

In their research, Ungar and Hadfield place emphasis on people's social ecologies (or preservation thereof) when it comes to their development and level of resilience during times of crisis.² Because a stable, safe environment plays a pivotal role in laying the groundwork for this development, stay open-minded about parenting during times of crisis. It is important to have dialogues with children. A brief exchange about your day or how you are feeling will suffice. Keep the message simple. You may be positively surprised to learn how much children give in return if we show them we are vulnerable, too. ■



REFERENCES

1 Holder, M. (October 28, 2014). Three words that will change your life. Dr. Mark Holder: TEDxKelowna [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDXtFbSmBAg&t=810s>

2 Ungar, M., & Hadfield, K. (2019). The Differential Impact of Environment and Resilience on Youth Outcomes. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 51(2), 135-146. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cbs0000128>

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