

Case Studies/Activities

Chapter 10: Reflective practice

Example 1: To maintain confidentiality and anonymity I will refer to the guest speaker as Mark for the purpose of this reflective account. Today at work I participated in a training course about autistic spectrum conditions in which the guest speaker Mark had Asperger's Syndrome. He talked about his school years. Due to having social communication and interaction difficulties, Mark isolated himself from his peers at break times to prevent his anxiety levels increasing, as he found it difficult to initiate and sustain friendships as a result of his condition (The National Autistic Society, 2011). Listening to Mark's story made me reflect on my own childhood and how I felt during my school years. I was bullied a great deal for being overweight which at the time led me to feel rejected by my fellow peer group. Fellow peers judged me on the basis of my physical appearance rather than my personality which was very hurtful as they didn't even know the real me. Stage five (identity versus role confusion) of Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory, stipulates that during adolescence we attempt to create a sense of identity predominately through interaction with peers. If a sense of identity is not gained this can lead to confusion about what roles we play as adults (Keenan, 2002). During my youth I was confused about my identity as my fellow peers led me to believe through continual torment that being overweight made me different from everyone, which led me to experience low self-confidence. As a result of a strong devotion towards friends of mine that were positive, my levels of self-worth increased and I felt that I had attained a real sense of identity (Keenan, 2002).

I began to think about Mark's situation and thought to myself what it would be like to have the inability to initiate friendships. This brought home to me how much I take my social skills for granted as it is just a natural process that occurs on a daily basis. Mark did not have the same opportunities that I did to interact with peers and gain a true sense of identity which I find heartbreaking, as every young person has the right to be treated equally and as an individual (Scottish Social Services Council, 2009). I felt a great deal of empathy towards Mark because despite being bullied, I still had the opportunity to interact and socialise with my fellow peers. I found this upsetting as I could not imagine going through school without experiencing high levels of social interaction. This training has made me evaluate even more how I view situations. I am a very non-judgemental person who considers all viewpoints of a story rather than display a biased decision. I feel that due to my background I display the core principles of respect, dignity, rights and identity and Mark's story has further reinforced me to do this as all individuals should have the right to equal opportunities (The British Association for Social Workers, 2011).

References

Keenan, T. (2002) *An Introduction to Child Development*. London: Sage.

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The National Autistic Society (2011) *What is Asperger Syndrome?* London: The National Autistic society. Available at: www.autism.org.uk/aboutautism/autism-and-asperger-syndrome-an-introduction/what-is-aspergersyndrome.aspx (last accessed 15 November 2011).

The Scottish Social Service Council (2009) *Details for SSSC Codes of Practices for Social Service Workers and Employers*. Dundee: The Scottish Social Service Council. Available at:

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Example 2: For the purpose of this reflective account and to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, I will refer to client A as Aaron. Aaron, a fourteen-year-old boy, who has Asperger's Syndrome, was extremely unsettled this evening as a result of being told over the phone about family problems that were on going at home. This led Aaron to become unsettled and he started to hit himself and threaten fellow young people in the placement. Two of my colleagues and I talked with Aaron to identify if there was any measure that could be taken to make him feel more settled and if he wanted to talk about the issue that was troubling him. Aaron exhibited he did want to talk but rather engage in violent behaviour. At this point, to protect the welfare of Aaron and safeguard others within the residential setting, staff had to physically intervene through the use of Team Teach which is always the last resort (Scottish Social Services Council, 2009). Throughout the safe hold Aaron, who is a lot taller and stronger than I am, directed extremely derogatory comments about my family and friends at me as he was extremely frustrated. At this point, I called for another staff member to take over from me and I left the room. Freud stipulates that human behaviour is driven by internal forces that are stored within our unconscious mind (Davey, 2004). The information that Aaron received earlier tonight provoked negative memories that Aaron has stored in his unconscious which led him to display anger as he was unable to deal with these emotions (Ibid). As a result of Aaron and I having a trusting rapport this may explain why he exhibited such negative language towards me. On reflection, I feel I did the right thing by asking another member of staff to take over the situation. Listening to such derogatory comments made me recall how I felt when I was bullied through my childhood and the frustration that I felt inside, yet never displayed these feelings. Although I am a very non-judgemental person and am not biased in any respect I look back at the situation and think – would my perception of the situation have altered in any manner if I had not asked for help? What I mean by this is because a physical intervention is not a nice experience for any party to be involved in. If I were to be exposed to further abuse would this have altered my temperament and the way I viewed the situation? An alternative approach that I could have taken is rather than just leave the room, explain why I was leaving, but as Aaron was in such a heightened state I did not feel this was appropriate. Furthermore, I could have asked another member of staff who did not know Aaron so well to take over before the physical intervention occurred.

References

Davey, G. (2004) *Complete Psychology*. London: Hodder & Stoughton

The Scottish Social Services Council (2009) *Details for SSSC Codes of Practices for Social Service Workers and Employers*. Dundee: The Scottish Social Service Council. Available at: www.sssc.uk.com/component/option,com_docman/Itemid,486/gid,1020/task,doc_details/ (last accessed 20 March 2012).

Example 3

To maintain confidentiality and anonymity of the young people I work with I will refer to client A as Tom for the purpose of this reflective account. During tutor group this morning Tom spoke a lot about his future prospects and what career path he wanted to follow. Tom proposed that he hoped to go to college to study a media and design course which I thought was excellent. He further stipulated that if, for whatever reason, he could not go to college another route that he may look into would be trying to gain a job offshore. I commended Tom for the amount of thought and research that he had done in relation to finding out about future career opportunities as this shows

he has high levels of determination and motivation. Furthermore, it was essential that I did this to enable Tom to feel valued and that his choices were respected as it is his future, therefore it is fundamental he has the opportunities to make his own decisions (The British Association for Social Workers, 2012). Listening to Tom talk about his future prospects made me revert back to the time when I was 15 and had numerous discussions with my guidance teacher about what career opportunities I would like to embark on. My teacher informed me of different sectors that I could work in and although I thought hypothetically about each one, this was a difficult decision to make at such a young age. Piaget's theory of cognitive development specifies that between the ages of 11 and 15 young people begin to think in a more abstract rather than concrete way (Santrock, 2011). Tom exhibited, whilst talking about his future career prospects, that he was thinking in an abstract fashion when he highlighted that if attending college may not become an option then he had thought about other pathways to entertain (Ibid). Displaying the ability to think hypothetically is a common trait within this normative stage of development which Tom is currently at (Ibid). Reflecting back on the situation, I feel that it was a very positive discussion. I feel by commending Tom that this would positively contribute to his confidence which is essential when making difficult decisions regarding life changes (Keenan, 2002). It may have been more beneficial for Tom if we had further discussed these areas and looked at alternative career options in order to provide Tom with a series of options rather than being restricted to two. When talking with young people in the future regarding careers, I feel it would be more beneficial to instate, with input from the young person, a strategy that will stipulate step-by-step methods of how to gain information regarding careers, the relevant agencies to do so and a timescale to work with this information.

References

Keenan, T. (2002) *An Introduction to Child Development*. London: Sage.

Santrock, J.W. (2011) *Child Development*, 13th edn. New York: McGraw Hill.

The British Association for Social Workers (2012) *Code of Ethics*. Scotland: The British Association for Social Workers. Available at: www.basw.co.uk/about/code-of-ethics/ (last accessed 28 March 2012).