

Oasis Institute Center for Mindfulness

Program Evaluation

Supervisee Completes:

Supervisee Name: Geri Wilimek MSW; LICSW

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Date: 12-9-19 typed from hand written supervision notes 9/30/15 through 4/18/16

Supervisor: Pamela Erdmann, M.Ed

1. How would you describe the quality of the supervision?

My supervision was originally set up when I learned I had been assigned a supervisor, Pamela Erdmann, by the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Healthcare and Society and the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

Pamela presented herself as warm, informal, and very competent regarding teaching issues. She was also resourceful, directing me to video presentations and books that would feed my interests, and illuminate skillful MBSR teaching. Her skill at creating safe space for dialogue allowed the supervision to be very helpful in identifying rough spots in my teaching, directing my learning during the two 8-week MBSR courses I taught during our supervision .

I had an initial interview with Pamela by phone, and we got acquainted and discussed general issues in teaching MBSR. We decided to set up supervision sessions using Skype. This worked well overall, with the usual complications that can arise when using e-communication. All in all, we completed the required 10 sessions, the first two being focused on Orientation for Fall Classes in September/October of 2015 and , because that course did not carry because of lack of participants, the remainder supervisory meetings corresponding with the 8 weeks of class in my Winter session (2/29/16 through 4/18/16). I left supervision knowing myself much better as a teacher.

2. What would have improved the exchange?

There is nothing like face to face discussion. I would have loved to have been present physically for these sessions. But I think the Skype sessions were very effective. There were 2 meetings that required rescheduling later in the week because of internet problems. As for the exchange itself, it was focused on my questions and needs, and felt very responsive to addressing what I wanted to learn.

3. Please provide any other comments relative to the process of supervision, including logistics and the supervision sessions themselves.

See above.. Post script 12/19: Overall, my comment about logistics are that the training I have attended has been excellent: well organized, compelling and transformative. The process of getting certified has been frustrating, only for the fact that the program itself was a moving target, with changing criteria for certification each time I approached the program to apply.

More comments on my learning process:

Learning Process:

Winter 2016, I taught 2 classes, a morning class with 8 participants and an evening class with 11 participants. The CFM was made aware of the fact that my supervision had been “cut short” by lack of participants in Fall 2015, and that it resumed the next cycle, Winter, 2016. My classes were held on Mondays, spanning 2/29/16 through 4/18/16. We discussed issues arising in both classes, and were able to look at differences in group dynamics by comparing the morning and evening classes.

Learning focus: There were many issues we discussed in supervision. I would usually focus on the previous classes I’d taught, and find something that stood out as significant to me. There were many positives, and it was edifying to share these with an experienced MBSR teacher. There were also areas that I felt I was not “hitting the mark”, especially in the evening class, and it felt safe and very helpful to explore these with Pamela.

The importance of working skillfully with time: I noticed and shared with Pamela that I had occasional “time issues” with my classes. I would run over time to squeeze something in, or delay the start of class for latecomers, or defer content to the next class, which just created a new time squeeze. I became aware that I was making some strategic errors and more importantly, why I was doing so....I used supervision to motivate starting and ending class on time, and apportioning time in realistic ways. For example, in a group share, letting people know we won’t have time to hear from everyone, but inviting comments, and ending when the class flow needed to move forward. Pamela suggested that managing time skillfully is not only a responsibility of the teacher, but communicates trustworthiness, and safety, benefitting everyone.

Being real: Pamela was able to hear my concerns about glitches in teaching. An example was working with inquiry, and letting go of my “teaching agenda”. As I discussed this with Pamela, and experienced her genuine interest and ability ask “clean” questions of me, I on the receiving end, felt safe to ask questions of myself in her supportive presence. This opened my opportunity to explore some “signature” things I do at times to complicate and inhibit good inquiry. My supervision with Pamela really gave me space to identify when I feel unsure of what I’m doing, and to make that transparent in a way that could assure others that not knowing is manageable! “I’m feeling pretty curious right now, but don’t exactly know what question to ask.....” or “I think I need a moment ...”(pause pause...and let the question bubble up ...then ask!) And if I’m still drawing a blank, it’s okay to say...“...well, when I get clearer about what I wanted to ask, I’ll come back to you, if that’s okay with you....” . So “not knowing” can be

transformed from an embarrassment to a rich practice, by applying gentle transparent self-inquiry.

Skillful self-disclosure: I discussed with Pamela my nagging awareness that I would at times tell a personal story in class for the sake of humor, or to display something I know. I watch-dogged myself on this, and discovered a “felt” difference between serving self and serving perceived needs in the group. I practiced and processed this in my supervision and think I am better at steering clear of “performance”.

Walking into the unknown. Inquiry is really willingness to walk into the unknown, with nothing but the self awareness available in the moment, and deep listening to the other in the moment. This also applies to class “plans”. Through my discussions with Pamela I played with and became more comfortable with knowing what the course needs to “deliver” in a given week, and *finding the in-class experiences* to teach it, rather than overly structuring or sequencing the class according to a plan. This requires me to have clarity of the content, and an alertness to the natural opportunities arising in the class to teach that content.

The importance of “now”. Pamela and I discussed the qualifier, “now” as a way make expressive, and descriptive self disclosures, that emphasize the fluidity of experience of self. I think this fluidity, seeing things as temporary and ever changing, is at the core of healing (example: “I am depressed.” vs. “I feel depressed right now.” “I’m confused.” vs. “I feel confused right now.” I use “now” as I narrate the process in the group, as I reflect disclosures made by others and disclosures about my personal process using this “now” or an equivalent qualifier.

I had a very rich and productive experience in supervision. It was a privilege to have Pamela Erdmann as my supervisor.



Geri Wilimek