DPE Task Force for Model Mixed Distance-Mediated/On-Site Psychoanalytic Education Interim Suggestions

While the task force meets to develop its model template for helping institutes and their members optimize their educational activities during the COVID pandemic, we are releasing interim suggestions. It is our hope that you will distribute them to your various committee chairs for implementation as needed. These are intended solely as voluntary guidelines that can be utilized as desired and necessary. They are an attempt to be timely and respond to the reality that institutes will be starting/resuming classes in a month and have many questions and imminent challenges. The guidelines listed below will be updated and supplemented over the coming months. Please feel free to contact Alan Sugarman (sugarmanalan@gmail.com), the chair of the task force, with questions or suggestions that feel pressing.

**Distance-Mediated Frames:** We take as a given that the pandemic has been traumatic for all members of our institutes as well as for the institute as an entity itself. Part of that trauma is due to the fact that it has forced changes to all the implicit and explicit frames that have guided our educational programs and the various activities that comprise them (classroom learning, analyzing, supervising, etc.), and it has challenged our customary ways of practicing analysis for many of us new to distance-mediated treatment. These changes lead to anxiety that can become destabilizing if not contained. We believe that explicit consideration and discussion of the new frame for all institute activities will provide a useful container. This frame will be articulated in our various suggestions.

**The Educational Frames:**

No longer meeting with candidates on-site changes many aspects of the classroom frame that we have taken for granted without necessarily articulating. Most of these elements of the frame involve the containing function served by being in the same room with each other and its implicit support of group cohesion. For this reason, we suggest that institute governance bodies or curriculum committees set policies around class participation. It is our recommendation that when classes use video-conferencing technology, all students be required to enable their video using gallery view. A student's failure/refusal to do so may communicate rejection to the group and may deprive the class members and instructors of any possibility of reading body language that may help to promote useful group discussion. In addition, during a period of crisis when all feel vulnerable, seeing and being seen can feel both necessary for emotional safety through affiliation and dangerous for fear of having vulnerability exposed. It is essential, currently, that all members of the class share responsibility for helping each other and the group deal with these issues. If students do not want to have others view their home or office interior, they can create a virtual background setting. If a candidate cannot agree to this expectation (policy), the institute leadership ought to consider offering a leave of absence to that candidate.
Our recommendation is an example of a general principle that groups form by participants relinquishing part of their autonomy and projecting it on the leader of the group who is authorized to be in that role. Work groups function best when principles such as this one are explicated and followed. This sort of policy functions as a frame to help everyone pay attention to boundaries such as time, space, and "airtime". The instructor in a video-classroom needs to actively monitor these boundaries in a firm but benevolent manner as they are essential for a learning environment, especially an on-line forum where there will be unavoidable intrusions and disruptions.

The Analytic Frames:

Part of the new frame in working with teleanalytic training cases during a time of crisis involves regulating one's anxiety about having to modify almost everything that one has previously learned and thought about working analytically. This anxiety goes beyond the understandable but rather concrete anxiety about whether the hours with an analysand "count" when conducted on-line. Generally, it also involves the larger anxiety or disillusionment of whether or not, or to what extent, the idealized notion of analysis carried out in a "proper" setting feels violated or bent so that it does not count in the candidate's mind. As with many of our recommendations for managing the challenges to analytic education posed by the pandemic, the task force believes that promoting self-reflection about them in a formalized and structured way will serve a containing function. Thus, we recommend one or more meetings with candidates wherein the EC chair or respected faculty member helps them to discuss and think about their anxieties about beginning cases on-line. Candidates should be encouraged to discuss their various biases, fears, discomforts, and comforts and so on. The importance of discussing these feelings with their supervisors when they sense an intrusion should be stressed in these meetings. It will also be helpful to admit to the candidates that there are no widely accepted models for this sort of work so that all of us are learning as we go. In fact, candidates may be more comfortable with conducting teleanalysis than their supervisors because they have greater familiarity and comfort with technology. The importance of the frame and how it has changed should also be discussed. It can be acknowledged that more self-disclosure than typical may be necessary-for example, the need to answer a patient's opening question of how the analyst is. On the other hand, relative abstinence and neutrality remain part of the frame. A supervised teleanalysis does not mean anything goes. The need to negotiate aspects of the frame such as phone versus video should be another part of the discussion.

The Supervisory Frames:

Similar meetings should occur among supervisors to promote their self-reflection about how best to help their supervisee-candidates during this time. They, too, need to think about the differences in working on-line and how best to teach their supervisees to think about and work with them. In this regard, they also need to be honest and admit their need to learn from their supervisees. It is quite possible, even likely, that their candidates have greater experience with using the technology than they do. A narcissistically vulnerable supervisor could struggle with this fact and become rigid or critical about a teleanalysis. In order to mitigate this anxiety, it is essential the supervisor be open to or initiate a discussion of this dilemma (need to start but is
starting really starting) and what remains core to the psychoanalytic encounter conducted either on-site or via secure video-conferencing technology. Maintaining an analytic attitude around what Eisler called a "parameter" can be discussed as being not that different from other parameters that are routinely employed. The role of the supervisor is to help the candidate see that the role of the analyst can still be maintained under different conditions. For those supervisors who are not amenable to supervising teleanalysis (not because they are inexperienced, per se, but because of a closed mind) it is incumbent on them to either become amenable or to transfer the supervision to a supervisor versed teleanalysis.

We hope that you find these and our future suggestions helpful.