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Practice
Tool



Promoting emotional resilience in online and hybrid spaces



Department
for Education

Funded by the Department for Education

www.practice-supervisors.rip.org.uk

Introduction

Resilience is a dynamic concept that constantly fluctuates for individuals and teams in social work. This tool is designed to work with [other resources in this section](#) about thinking differently in order to promote emotional resilience in an online world. As a practice supervisor, you play a key role in creating a team culture that supports staff to share when they are feeling less resilient and to seek help without fear of judgement or blame. As we move between in-person, online, and hybrid spaces how do we recognise when staff are distressed and support them to sustain their resilience?

This tool reminds you of the importance of maintaining awareness of your own resilience as a practice supervisor, as well as remaining alert to the issues faced by your supervisees. It introduces you to the concepts of the ‘6Ps’ – aspects of our personality that may need to be more mindfully juggled in an online world. The 6Ps are **private**, **personal**, **professional** and **public** as well as what is necessary to maintain **psychological** safety and **physical** health and wellbeing.

In this tool we are introducing you to the concept of e-personality. The e-personality is an idea developed by Dr Elias Aboujaoude (Virtually You, 2011) and referenced by Gannon (2022). Thinking about e-personality helps us recognise how online interactions differ from those we encounter in person. Gannon describes e-personality as, ‘the filtered, controlled avatar version of us (p. 80).’ As social work professionals, our behaviours, reactions and actions need to integrate, whether we are relating in online meetings or in person. An e-personality might be a shorthand way of making sure you and your staff consider the 6Ps and what is altered by working in a digital space.

Sustaining professional integrity, whether online or in person, in line with the professional expectations of your organisation, is an important aspect of supervision. At the end of this tool you will have the opportunity to explore the ways in which you can develop strategies in online supervision that promote emotional resilience.

A brief overview of emotional resilience

Social work can be a stressful job so building and sustaining resilience is an important part of social worker wellbeing. Resilience is described as the, 'Potential to exhibit resourcefulness by using available internal and external resources in response to different contextual and developmental challenges.' (Pooley & Cohen 2010, p. 34).

As this definition makes clear, resilience neither relies completely on the individual nor is it a static process within the individual as it interacts with other facets of their personal, professional and organisational lives. Additionally, strategies can be developed that build resilience individually and as a team. One of the biggest developmental challenges we are facing is shifting social work practice and management into an online space as never before and integrating practice that takes place online alongside in-person interactions, the so-called 'hybrid model'. The hybrid model varies. For some it means continuing to work largely in person (e.g. visiting children and families), with the online space reserved for meetings. For others, it may mean working mostly online with in-person contact limited to once or twice a week.

Supervisors may need to find out what best suits team members. There may be colleagues who prefer to work from home and not face daily aggressions e.g. racism or disablism. Some may need the protection of the office to separate from or transition between the roles they take on at home e.g. parents / carers. It is important to help supervisees think about how they transition between their personal and professional lives when they occupy the same physical space. Transitional rituals can help. Some colleagues use the concept of liminal space (spaces between one place and another) and deliberately build in a 'commute' to and from the office at home, or as protection from back-to-back online meetings.

We know resilience is strongly affected by having emotional support and that family and friends are crucial in maintaining it, as are connections to community networks. Practice supervisors have a role in ensuring supervisees have the opportunities they need to connect and stay, 'human in an online world' (Gannon, 2022).

Resilient people have an internally located sense of control and self-efficacy. Grant and Kinman (2014) suggest there are four further components to being resilient in social work:

> emotional intelligence – the ability to understand your own and other people’s emotional reactions

> reflective ability – the ability to think about the impact of situations on the self / others

> social skills – the skills needed to relate to other people

> empathy – the ability to understand how other people may feel about their situation.

[See this Knowledge Briefing, promoting emotional resilience](#)

Recent work by Bunce (2019) has also found the following factors to be important in developing and maintaining emotional resilience:

> autonomy – being trusted in decision-making

> competence – being skilled and knowledgeable

> relatedness – being able to make relationships and connections to other people (Bunce describes this as self-determining theory).

In thinking further about staying human (and humane) while online, Gannon (2022, pp. 1-2) uses this analogy:

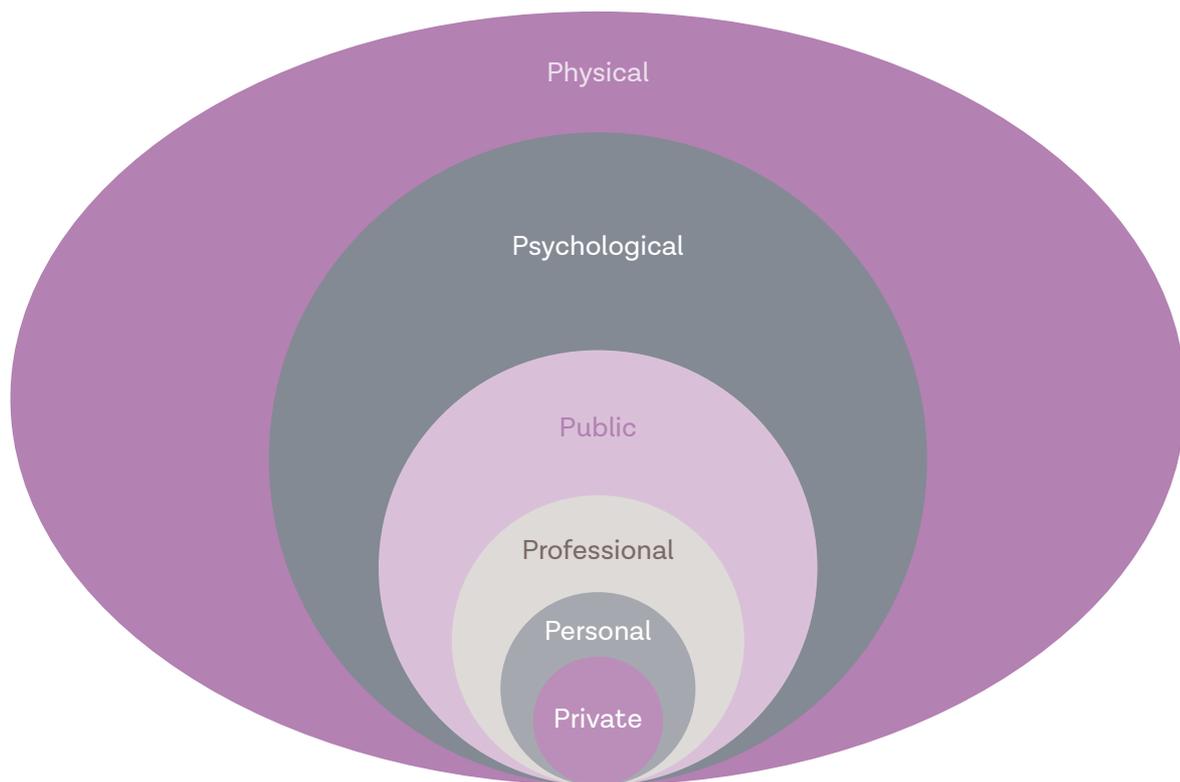
‘[Trees] keep each other in the loop, they stay connected, they compete sometimes, but they also protect each other. They use their network of roots to co-operate and help each other. Like the trees... we are all connected... through our screens and social media networks, and our actions have consequences on each other... Without trees, all hope would be lost. Without each other, we would be lost too.’

In section 1 of this tool you are asked to think further about professional autonomy and how aspects of our personality may be affected by being online, both in relation to yourself and with the staff you supervise. This is followed by questions, linked to the concepts outlined above, which are designed to encourage you to think about developing resilience in yourself and in your supervisees, and how working online / managing in a hybrid world has affected your ability to do this.

In section 2 you are then invited to consider the ways in which you can facilitate discussions about emotional resilience in online supervision. There is a grid you can use with your supervisees to find out what you are doing well and, based on their feedback, identify areas where you might improve.

Section 3 offers you the opportunity to reflect on team dynamics and what is working well in the hybrid model.

Section 1 - exploring the 6P model for online supervision



Task 1 – exploring the 6P model for online supervision: your own needs

Please spend a few minutes thinking about how you would answer the questions below as a private activity. You might find it useful to set an alarm on your phone and allow yourself 15 minutes to think through the questions and jot down your responses.

The questions encourage you to think about who you are in an online space, especially if that is based in your home environment. Is there a difference between you online (e-personality) and you in the office / work environment? You may find there is much more you need to think about and please do consider how much autonomy you have to make decisions about these aspects of your professional life online.

In this activity, and the one following it, always consider how you and your supervisees are unique, and that we all have voiced and unvoiced, visible and invisible **social GRRRAACCEESSS**. Might any of the 6Ps have different implications or meanings in different situations of power or privilege?

	Psychological	Physical	Public	Professional	Personal	Private
Examples of questions that need answering – there will be more!	<p>How can I transition between activities and carve out a safe supervision space?</p> <p>How do I help others to get what they need to work online, particularly if they have protected characteristics?</p> <p>What is it that maintains psychological safety in the online world?</p> <p>What additional skills do I need to be a better online supervisor?</p>	<p>How comfortable am I, e.g. toilet / drinks / warmth / desk / chair / lighting?</p> <p>How do I move in this space and use my bodily presence?</p> <p>How do I pay attention to my body and its needs?</p> <p>How do I develop an embodied supervisory practice online?</p>	<p>What are the organisational expectations about an online presence, e.g. cameras on / off / blurred backgrounds / set images / dress codes?</p> <p>What adjustments have been made to roles and responsibilities for online working?</p>	<p>How do I have a professional persona working from home?</p> <p>Whose space am I occupying, is it only mine or do I have to share?</p> <p>What impact does my working life have on my family / personal life?</p> <p>What tensions might arise in me carrying out my professional role publicly from a private space?</p>	<p>Who hears what I am saying and how I am feeling?</p> <p>How do I protect those in my personal space who need it from the distressing issues that can arise in my professional life?</p> <p>What support do I need to sustain my personal life when I work from home?</p>	<p>What can stay hidden and how do I make this happen?</p> <p>What is it essential to keep private?</p> <p>What consequences do I fear?</p>
Space to answer						

	Psychological	Physical	Public	Professional	Personal	Private
What additional questions come to your mind under these headings?						
What needs to be in place for me to begin a supervision session as a supervisor?						
What do I need before supervision as a supervisee?						
What changes to the supervision agreement are required?						

Task 2 – exploring the 6P model for online supervision: managing others

Now please look at the questions you have just worked through and put yourself in the shoes of the staff you supervise. How is my colleague similar to and different from me? What specific consideration does the supervisee require to sustain their emotional resilience online? How might they answer these questions from their perspective?

	Psychological	Physical	Public	Professional	Personal	Private
Examples of questions that need answering – there will be more!	<p>How can I transition between activities and carve out a safe supervision space?</p> <p>What is it that maintains psychological safety in the online world?</p> <p>How do I help others to get what they need to work online, particularly if they have protected characteristics?</p> <p>What additional skills do I need to be a better online supervisee?</p>	<p>How comfortable am I, e.g. desk / chair / toilet / drinks / warmth?</p> <p>How do I move in this space and use my bodily presence?</p> <p>How do I pay attention to my body and its needs?</p> <p>How do I develop an embodied supervisory practice online?</p>	<p>What are the organisational expectations about an online presence, e.g. cameras on / off / blurred backgrounds / corporate signage / dress codes?</p> <p>What adjustments have been made to roles and responsibilities for online working?</p>	<p>How do I have a professional persona working from home?</p> <p>Whose space am I occupying, is it only mine or do I have to share?</p> <p>What impact does my working life have on my family / personal life?</p> <p>What tensions might arise in me carrying out my professional role publicly from a private space?</p>	<p>Who hears what I am saying and how I am feeling?</p> <p>How do I protect those in my personal space who need it from the distressing issues that can arise in my professional life?</p> <p>What support do I need to sustain my personal life when I work from home?</p>	<p>What can stay hidden and how do I make this happen?</p> <p>What is it essential to keep private?</p> <p>What consequences do I fear?</p>
Space to answer						

	Psychological	Physical	Public	Professional	Personal	Private
What additional questions come to your mind under these headings?						
<p>What can you and your supervisee do to stay in relationship with each other online?</p> <p>Note anything you have learnt from being their online supervisor about their relational needs.</p>						
What changes to the supervision agreement are required?						

Spend a few minutes considering this. What organisational standards or expectations are you aware of around online working and supervision? How is it being assessed or maintained?

Then move on to these questions:

- > What can you do to enable your staff to become more autonomous when they are working from home?
- > What are the barriers to doing this? You might want to consider personal factors (for you and for individual staff members), team-specific or cultural factors and organisational barriers in your reflections. How do power, privilege and difference intersect with the 6Ps?
- > How do you promote self-efficacy in the staff you supervise? What responsibilities belong solely with them?
- > Can you identify any areas where you might give staff more autonomy? What do you think would change if you did?

Task 3 – what are you going to do to promote resilience online?

Please read again the factors identified by Grant and Kinman (2014) and Bunce (2019), which are thought to promote emotional resilience:

- > emotional intelligence – the ability to understand your own and other people’s emotional reactions
- > reflective ability – the ability to think about the impact of situations on the self / others
- > social skills – the skills to relate to other people
- > empathy – the ability to understand how other people may feel about their situation (Grant & Kinman, 2014)
- > autonomy – being trusted in decision-making
- > competence – being skilled and knowledgeable
- > relatedness – being able to make relationships and connections to other people (Bunce, 2019).

This last point, knowing your staff and attuning to them, from the research conducted so far (Cook, 2020) is felt to be a strong indicator in building resilience online. A factor that always emerges in training is how staff overlook their bodily needs, especially going to the toilet when they need to. Early feedback suggests this is even more of an issue in an online world where only head and shoulders are visible. How do you make sure you and your staff look after your physical self-care?

Action plan - given your reflections on yourself and from the point of view of your supervisee(s):

- > What do you think is a priority for you to continue to do?
- > What would you like to do more?
- > What, if anything, do you need to stop doing?

Section 2 – activity to do with supervisees about how online supervision supports their resilience

The ability to reflect is an important component of resilience and facilitating reflective discussions in supervision is an obvious area of focus. The activity in this section of the tool encourages you to seek feedback from your supervisees about the role supervision plays in promoting emotional resilience. The table is designed for you to work through with each staff member.

The table below asks you to think about how you promote emotional resilience with the staff you supervise. In the first two columns, you are encouraged to use a five-point scale as a guide with one meaning ‘needs considerable improvement’ and five meaning ‘managing this well most of the time.’

The first column is for your own assessment. It will be interesting to see how closely this tallies with your supervisee’s view (column 2). Column 3 could include feedback from your supervisee about ideas that would help them as well as your own thoughts. The final column is for you to set your own goals.

	How well are you doing this 1-5 (your perspective)	Feedback from your supervisee 1-5	What needs to improve?	How will you know you are getting better at this?
Assisting your supervisee to integrate their online work (e-personality) with their in-person work.				
Offering emotional support for anything specific including equalities or issues arising from the pandemic / working from home (relational sensitivity).				
Identifying, challenging and supporting supervisees to recognise and change any negative self-talk.				
Ensuring staff have a) a manageable workload and b) the capacity to manage their time effectively.	a) b)	a) b)		
Being self-aware and calm in supervision, i.e. providing a safe base for supervisees.				
Helping supervisees to name their emotions as well as the impact of their experiences on them.				
Managing a safe space to explore the discomfort of not knowing what to do.				
Assisting supervisees to put forward their own ideas and plans about what happens next (developing autonomous practice).				
Noticing and looking to improve on success (strengths oriented).				
Offering developmental feedback to supervisees (building self-esteem / competence).				

Section 3 – promoting resilience in your team in online and hybrid spaces

This part of the activity could very well be done as a team activity using the concepts of eco-maps. Depending on the size of the team it is sometimes helpful to start as a pairs exercise and then join together to include the range of perspectives.

Map out your team and where you perceive there are strengths in the hybrid model. Identify who is flourishing working from home / online and who is flourishing in the office.

Start with the known strengths that the team has identified about the hybrid model, i.e. who likes working from home / online and who prefers to be in the office. Does this strike the right balance across the team in terms of who spends what time where?

Think about the reasons people have put themselves in those positions. What does this make you notice about resilience? How accurate is this representation when everyone contributes?

What socio-cultural (Burnham, 2012) factors affect whether people can flourish working from home or being in the office? What adjustments can you make as a team to support each other to thrive at work?

How well do you and your staff think you are managing to integrate the e-personality into your usual work persona, on a scale of 1-5?

Summary of your learning

Identify the first goal you are working on and give yourself a method for knowing when you will have succeeded

There are a range of strategies that can supplement this work, which can take place in individual supervision, peer coaching / mentoring, and group supervision. One strategy that is particularly helpful for those involved in emotional labour is reflective journaling. Writing down and reflecting on how you are feeling builds your awareness and ability to identify your emotional responses to experiences, and take the action required to manage those responses (Grant & Kinman 2014).

Other ways to use this practice tool

- > We recommend doing section three (the eco-map) with your team, allowing each person to explore where they find strength in either being in the office, working from home / online or a hybrid mix of the two. It might be helpful to prepare team members for the exercise by asking them to consider their position in relation to the 6Ps.
- > Discuss the factors that promote resilience included in this tool with your team as a whole to get their views on how to promote autonomous, competent practice and what responsibilities team members can take forward to support each other to maintain resilience.

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