

Newly-Qualified Social Workers

A Practice Guide to the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment

STEVEN KEEN, JONATHAN PARKER,
KEITH BROWN and DI GALPIN

**3rd
Edition**

 **SAGE**

 LearningMatters



Learning Matters
An imprint of SAGE Publications Ltd
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP

SAGE Publications Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320

SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd
B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road
New Delhi 110 044

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Editor: Kate Wharton
Development editor: Lauren Simpson
Production controller: Chris Marke
Project management: Swales & Willis Ltd, Exeter,
Devon
Marketing manager: Camille Richmond
Cover design: Wendy Scott
Typeset by: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd, Chennai, India
Printed by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon,
CR0 4YY

© 2016 Steven Keen, Jonathan Parker, Keith Brown
and Di Galpin

First edition published 2009
Second edition published 2013

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of
research or private study, or criticism or review, as
permitted under the Copyright, Design and Patents
Act, 1988, this publication may be reproduced,
stored or transmitted in any form, or by any
means, only with the prior permission in writing
of the publishers, or in the case of reprographic
reproduction, in accordance with the terms of
licences issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency.
Enquiries concerning reproduction outside these
terms should be sent to the publishers.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016940554

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the
British Library

ISBN: 978-1-4739-7797-6 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-4739-7796-9 (hbk)

At SAGE we take sustainability seriously. Most of our products are printed in the UK using FSC papers and boards. When we print overseas we ensure sustainable papers are used as measured by the PREPS grading system. We undertake an annual audit to monitor our sustainability.

Chapter 6

Managing the personal: from surviving to thriving in social work

*Kate Howe with a contribution from
Pru Caldwell-McGee (NQSW)*

PROFESSIONAL CAPABILITIES FRAMEWORK

This chapter will help you to demonstrate the following ASYE-level capabilities:

1. Professionalism: identify and behave as a professional social worker, committed to professional development.
 - Demonstrate workload management skills and develop the ability to prioritise.
 - Recognise and balance your own personal/professional boundaries in response to changing and more complex contexts.
 - Develop ways to promote well-being at work, identifying strategies to protect and promote your own well-being and the well-being of others.
2. Values and ethics: apply social work ethical principles and values to guide professional practice.
 - Recognise and manage the impact of your own values on professional practice.
 - Recognise and manage conflicting values and ethical dilemmas to arrive at principled decisions.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS STATEMENTS

This chapter will help you demonstrate the following requirements:

Child and family:

1. Relationships and effective direct work.
9. The role of supervision.

Adult:

7. Direct work with individuals and families.
8. Supervision, critical reflection and analysis.

Introduction: the current context of social work

As a newly qualified social worker you probably know some of the effects social work practice can have on the individual. Making the transition from student to qualified social worker is often a larger shift than anticipated. Expectations and responsibilities are different, and the support mechanisms are not always obvious.

You may have experienced some feelings of stress, or witnessed colleagues reacting to stressful situations. Social work is no ordinary job as professionals engage with individuals who are at risk and invariably facing difficulties in their lives. Coupled with this, the working environment is beset with uncertainty through frequent changes in policies and practices, as well as staff turnover. A recent Community Care research report found that 73 per cent of their sample of 1359 social workers were emotionally exhausted (McFadden, 2015). The most recent Health and Safety Executive (2015) report finds that health and social care associated professionals have one of the highest rates of work-related stress, anxiety and depression. However, the evidence is not all negative as an earlier study found that 62 per cent of social workers were satisfied or highly satisfied with their current job (Baginsky *et al.*, 2010).

Organisational issues such as job demands, high caseloads and long hours contribute to the demanding nature of social work. Grant and Kinman (2014) also suggest that role stress is an important factor where the social worker not only feels overloaded with too many demands and expectations but also experiences conflict within the role. This is because the demands of one role make it difficult to fulfil another which can lead to ambiguity and contrasting expectations. Further factors such as the lack of control and professional autonomy coupled with constant change and little social support can cause a difficult work environment. The organisation clearly has some responsibility for taking steps to provide a healthy workplace culture, and this is to some extent explored in the following two chapters.

In this chapter though, my focus is on the individual social worker and therefore the 'personal'. You will also meet Pru, a newly qualified social worker, who is halfway through her ASYE year. Research has shown that stress does not always have to lead to negative outcomes. Some social workers are able to 'thrive' and demonstrate high levels of resilience during demanding times, managing to sustain good professional practice despite difficult circumstances (Grant and Kinman, 2014). Being a professional social worker in today's climate is clearly a complex task and requires you, the newly qualified social worker, to build the personal qualities and resilience to thrive in your work. So how can you be one of these thriving, resilient social workers in your first year?

Taking care of 'you' is a good start. Other professionals use a range of tools to practise; an artist has brushes and a nurse has medical instruments. For the social workers, the main instrument is **self**. So, just as other professionals will care for their instruments, you as a professional social worker need to care for yourself. A stressed, exhausted social worker is not able to offer the respectful standard of care that a service user has a right to!

So, the first part of this chapter is about understanding and managing the emotional impact of your evolution to a confident social work practitioner. Being aware of your emotions is a crucial part of this process as is the ability to manage them in order to develop professionally and address some of the opportunities laid out for you in Chapter 2. My view is that by looking after yourself, developing your personal and interpersonal competence and by managing your professional environment, you will be more able to work effectively with people who use services and carers, which incidentally is one of the key factors that motivates social workers to stay in the profession (Cameron, 2003; Huxley *et al.*, 2005).

Emotions and emotional intelligence in social work

It is easy to think that as a qualified social worker you have learnt to be 'objective', and maintain your professional boundaries even in the most difficult of situations. Indeed, there is ample anecdotal evidence of organisations discouraging and frowning on any emotional responses from their workers, dismissing them as unprofessional.

However, a growing body of knowledge is starting to acknowledge the role of emotions in practising social work effectively and reject the standard, rational approach to social work that is characterised by the managerial approach (Howe, 2008; Ingram, 2015). The essence of social work practice is the relationship that you can create with those who use services and so awareness and management of your emotions is crucial.

Harrison and Ruch (2007) distinguish between 'self-less' social work where the emphasis is on the *doing* of the tasks, and 'self-ish' social work that has self-knowledge and awareness at the heart of *being* a social worker. By rejecting the description of 'self-less', they challenge the traditional social work perspective of a distant, neutral and emotionless professional as lacking true focus on people who use services. To practise from a 'self-ish' perspective forces us to consider and understand the interpersonal dynamics of an interaction. Personal self-awareness as well as knowledge of others is at least as important as knowing 'what to do' and 'how to do it'. Developing this understanding leads to an appreciation of the unique relationship between yourself, the people who use services as individuals and our social context, and thereby a true personalised service. To attempt to reduce this understanding to standardised and rational behaviour patterns loses the depth and heart of the social work relationship.

The concept of emotional intelligence can help us to gain a depth of understanding, and it is simply defined as an individual’s ability to be aware of their – and others’ – emotions in any situation and manage their responses. Latterly, Goleman (2006) popularised the theory by claiming it was more important than cognitive intelligence in the development of successful leaders. Although some of these claims are contentious and some would argue that the many different definitions weaken its theoretical coherence (see Howe, 2008), it can give us a useful framework by which to gain insight into ourselves and our relationships with others.

Figure 6.1 is adapted from Goleman *et al.*’s (2013) model of emotional intelligence and shows the key aspects of each of the domains of emotional intelligence they identified. The construct of the four domains emphasises the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects as well as differentiating between awareness and management. The arrows demonstrate that all domains are related and lead to the core aspect of managing relationships. Understanding this ‘interrelatedness’ is key to you being able to work in stressful and emotionally charged situations. As Shulman (1999, cited in Morrison, 2007, p251) points out, a social worker can only really understand and be in touch with the feelings of those he or she works with if they have the ability to acknowledge and manage their own emotions.

More recently the link between emotions and thought has been emphasised by Howe (2008) and others arguing that we need to understand how emotions can be used to

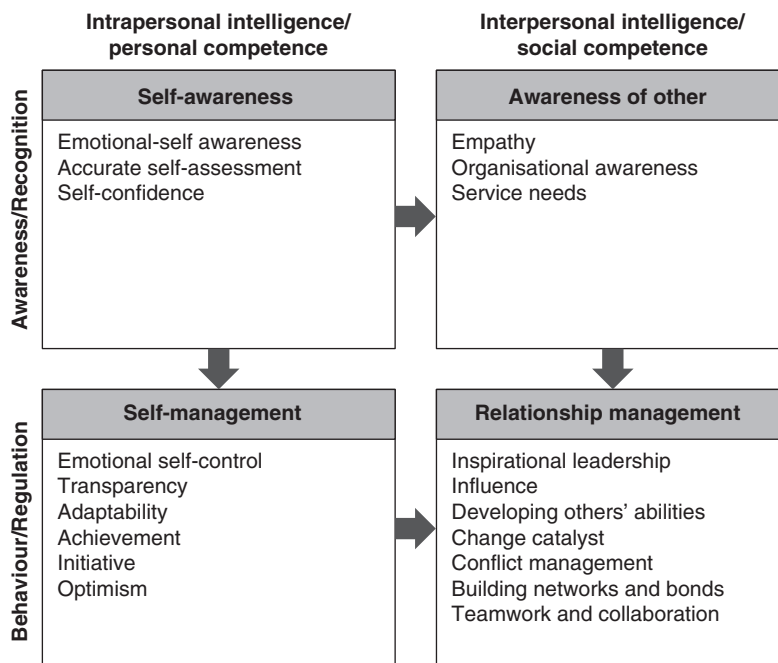


Figure 6.1 Emotional intelligence model

(Adapted from Goleman *et al.*, 2013)

improve reasoning and decision-making. Our mood and emotional state affects how we think and behave and, of course, how we think affects how we feel (Howe, 2008). It is probably not difficult to remember a time when a remark from a colleague triggered an angry response in you on a day when you were tired and stressed, and on reflection you recognised that it was a little 'over the top'. We know from neuroscience (Howe, 2008; Ingram, 2015) that being in an anxious state can seriously disrupt our ability to concentrate.

Our level of emotional intelligence can also affect and predict our ability to be resilient. Grant and Kinman (2014) found that the more 'emotionally literate' a social worker was, the more resilient they were. We will look at developing resilience later in the chapter, but for now read about Pru's experience.

CASE STUDY 6.1

Pru's experience: part 1

I am halfway through my ASYE year and am slowly beginning to recognise my own emotional reactions to working in a frontline childcare team. I am gaining in self-awareness and sense of my own well-being through the quality of supervision I receive from my line manager and ASYE mentor. Through this, I am learning that with increasingly complex cases comes an increased strain on my emotional well-being. I am beginning to recognise the cases that will demand high levels of my emotional energy. For example, I am working with a family where there is suspected Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder of the mother of four young children. In one visit I can be screamed at, thanked, made to laugh or provide comfort to her as she sobs while, at the same time, constantly assessing the impact she is having on her children and trying to focus the work on their needs. I can feel apprehensive before a visit and emotionally drained after so I now ensure that I plan visits that build in time to prepare, process, recover and recharge. The element of diary management plays an enormous part in being an effective practitioner and I am learning how to incorporate my own emotional protection into this.

With the benefit of supervision from two very different types of people, my critical reflection skills are constantly developing. My ASYE mentor is a CAMHS manager and my first two supervisions reduced me to tears. There are always going to be some cases that affect us more than others and one really got under my skin. It was a family with two boys where the older boy's behaviour was affected by the long-term emotional abuse he was suffering. Supervision helped me to unpick why this case had such an impact and allowed me to explore the emotion it evoked in me. I realised that I was comparing the life of this boy to my son's as they are similar in age and this therefore triggered an intense emotion in me. I felt embarrassed when I welled up during our conversation but my mentor reassured me this was normal and, perhaps more importantly, perfectly reasonable to expect. By being honest in supervision and open to exploring my own vulnerability, I was able to process it and build my resilience which in turn made me determined to improve the life of this young boy.

Have another look at Pru's account. Think about and identify the aspects of emotional intelligence that she identifies from Figure 6.1 before moving on to Activity 6.1.

ACTIVITY 6.1

Think of a time . . .

Think of a time when you know you worked well with a service user; when you were being a 'self-ish' social worker. It might be when you encountered an unexpected or difficult situation and were able to reach a positive outcome. Now look at the competencies identified in Figure 6.1 and reflect on which of them you were using.

Personal competence: building self-awareness

Goleman (1996, p46) defines self-awareness as the *sense of an ongoing attention to one's internal states*. In other words it is the ability to know how you are feeling and why, as well as identifying the impact they are having on your actions. This awareness of self is the first step to building emotional intelligence and your resilience.

Social work practitioners are emotional beings as much as people who use services. You may think it easy to recognise your emotions when faced with an angry user of services, but do you have the same level of awareness when completing the same care assessment paperwork for the hundredth time? Are you filling in a form or really listening to what your client is saying?

As already mentioned in Chapter 2, Daniel Kahneman (2011) brings an interesting perspective to this discussion by talking about our minds as having two systems. System 1 is fast, automatic and requires very little effort. It is the system that makes quick and very often unconscious decisions and can be the basis for our intuitive responses. It responds to our emotions. System 2 is slower, and requires energy and control to engage rational thought and understand the complexity of a situation. This can be linked to our understanding of how our emotions can be the basis for our actions knowing that the emotional part of the brain is the first to receive and react to an outside stimulus, with the more developed pre-frontal cortex always coming in second. One of Kahneman's assertions is that we often believe we are thinking rationally (system 2) when we are really reacting to events on an unconscious and intuitive basis (in system 1). This can lead to reactive practice and we need to grow our conscious awareness of how our mind is processing information. As Munro (2009) argues, we must be very aware of our emotional triggers and biases and their effect on our performance; we must not discount these system 1 thoughts, but be consciously aware of them. Developing reflective skills is clearly a method of increasing this awareness and making a regular time for critical reflection with your supervisor is important as Chapters 2, 3 and 5 have already pointed out.

Additionally, being able to assess your emotional state on a moment to moment basis increases emotional intelligence. In our busy lives we can often go through the day on 'auto pilot' and neglect to really get in touch with our 'self'. We know that how we are physically affects our feelings and Rosenberg's (2003) model of non-violent or compassionate communication suggests that our emotions are also inextricably linked to our needs. For example, we will have an emotional reaction if we need respect, or affection or even something to eat. However, we sometimes lack the awareness and breadth of language to express this. I have found using Rosenberg's feelings list as well as his needs inventory very helpful in identifying and understanding my emotional state. There are free and downloadable resources available from www.nonviolentcommunication.com/aboutnvc/nonviolent_communication.htm.

ACTIVITY 6.2

Checking in

(a) *Take a little time, stop what you're doing, and as you read this 'check in' by yourself:*

How are you feeling physically? Notice how you are sitting or standing, which parts of the body are more tense/relaxed than others? What might be the reasons?

How are you feeling emotionally? What might be the reasons?

What do you need at this moment to increase a state of well-being?

(b) *Take it one stage further: Commit to your own personal 'research' by writing down your feelings and needs over a period of time – say a week – where you take your 'emotional temperature' three times a day using the above questions. What patterns do you notice?*

(c) *As an extra perspective you might buddy up with someone in your team, swap notes and get some feedback from them. It could fit into a tea-break and give you some useful information.*

(d) *In preparation for working with a service user always ask yourself the question: What is my emotional state and what do I need? That 30-second space can make the difference between a productive or non-productive visit.*

Stress and burnout

Stress itself is not an illness – it is a state, and certainly in some instances some stress or pressure can be a motivator to get a task done. Collins (2008) talks of stress as being the individual's perception of a disparity between the demands being made and the ability to cope, i.e. high demand and low feelings of being able to cope result in stress.

The HSE's formal definition of work-related stress is *the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work* (available here: www.hse.gov.uk/stress/furtheradvice/whatisstress.htm). However, if stress becomes too excessive and prolonged, mental and physical illness may develop and can result in what is called 'burnout'. McFadden's (2015) research project funded through the Stand Up for Social Work campaign examined the extent of 'burnout' in social workers, where it was defined as:

a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do 'people work' of some kind . . . Burnout can lead to deterioration in the quality of care or service provided.

(Maslach and Jackson, 1986, p1, in McFadden, 2015, p4)

Each of these above components is now examined in turn. **Emotional exhaustion** is at the heart of burnout and leads to the other two. It is characterised by:

- a lack of physical energy, lack of energy; feeling tired all the time;
- emotional outbursts; feeling angry and frustrated, short-tempered and irritable;
- a low sense of low self-esteem where nothing seems to be going right, and you always seem to 'fail';
- disillusionment about work;
- being physically not well – having headaches and generally feeling run down.

Depersonalisation is when you have an unfeeling or impersonal response to the service users; they no longer seem real and are perhaps categorised by their problem rather than name. You become hardened to the work and everything is 'just part of the job'. Signs of depersonalisation can include:

- losing empathy with service users;
- creating physical and emotional distance between yourself and service users, avoiding visits;
- taking longer to do the 'easier' tasks;
- isolation from others (can include colleagues and friends) and feelings of being alone;
- leaving work early.

The theory is that combining these two factors can result in **reduced personal accomplishment** with feelings of no longer being able to work as well as you could, no longer being effective when working with service users and being dissatisfied with self. Interestingly, although McFadden's (2015) research found that the sample of 1359 social workers had high levels of emotional exhaustion and moderately high levels of depersonalisation, this had not resulted in reductions in feelings of personal

accomplishment or satisfaction. Nevertheless, being aware of and watching out for early warning signs of burnout may help you to prevent their build-up.

ACTIVITY 6.3

Watch out

Watch out for the early warning signs of burnout. The signs above can be distilled into four key areas:

- *Physical – such as aches and pains, frequent colds, digestive problems.*
- *Emotional – such as irritability, feeling overwhelmed, depressed, agitated.*
- *Cognitive – such as lack of concentration, predominantly negative thoughts, forgetfulness, lacking judgement and ability to make decisions.*
- *Behavioural – such as changes in appetite, increase in alcohol use or smoking, lack of sleep, isolating yourself.*

Take an honest and careful analysis of your current well-being. Do you have any areas of concern? If so, what might you do about them?

Personal competence: self-management

Good self-management is about being able to respond appropriately to a situation. It is not about denying or completely suppressing emotions – we have already shown how important emotions are – but being able to choose when, where and how they are expressed. To be able to do this consistently requires us to take care of ourselves and build our resilience.

Laming (2009) emphasised the need for social workers to develop emotional resilience, and it is one of the skills a qualifying social worker is required to demonstrate in the professionalism domain of the Professional Capabilities Framework. Recent work by Grant and Kinman (2014) has identified the need to focus on building resilient social workers and its relationship to improving professional practice. Munro (2011) and Mor Barak *et al.* (2009) have found that using strategies to increase our emotional resilience could provide some protection against the stress of work. As I mentioned earlier, Grant and Kinman (2014) suggest that social workers who have high emotional intelligence often having high resilience. There are so many definitions of resilience and lists of characteristics to be found within them (Grant and Kinman, 2014) that it is hard to be concise about its meaning. Collins (2007) offers a view that it is our general ability to develop flexible and resourceful strategies to external and internal stressors. An added dimension that I think is important to consider is that resilience cannot be acquired without some exposure to adverse situations; we need to be able to experience and understand our actions in difficulty to know how to act in future.

Hardiness

Research by Kobasa (1979, cited in Kamyra, 2000) and Maddi *et al.* (1998) identified three characteristics of 'hardiness' or what we sometimes refer to as resilience, i.e. someone's ability to handle and manage problems or difficulties.

1. Having a strong characteristic of **commitment** that results in finding reasons for remaining involved in a situation and a way forward. You will have an active problem-solving approach and can find meaning in activities even when faced with significant adversity.
2. Believing you have some **control** over present circumstances which then enables an individual to think they can influence the course of events, rather than being a victim of circumstance. Control can either be a primary control, which is the ability to change a situation positively, or a secondary control, which is the ability to change how you think about a situation. Secondary control can also be called 'reframing'. By changing how you perceive a situation, you can change the meaning and thereby change your response to it (for further information, see O'Connor, 2001). For example, it can help you to accept areas that you know you cannot change and focus on the areas where you have some influence. Stephen Covey (1989, 2004) develops this characteristic and distinguishes between areas of **concern** and areas of **influence**. Within our area of concern are all the topics that we focus on ranging from health, family, climate change, global politics, organisational structure to how much we are being paid, and so on. However, many of these subjects are outside of our influence and control. It can be tempting to focus our energy (particularly our mental energy in the form of worry, frustration, irritation and complaining) on those things in life that most concern us. But if we have no influence over them that energy can be said to be wasted. By focusing your effort on what you are able to influence, you are likely to be more effective in your interventions and thereby increase your capacity for influence. Covey (1989, 2004) characterises those who focus on areas of influence and control as proactive and those who focus on what is beyond their control as reactive. People who are more reactive are more likely to feel a victim of circumstance and blame others for problems. Proactive people are more likely to be able to widen their influence as they focus on areas they can change or control.
3. Enjoying **challenges** and so seeking out opportunities for continual growth and learning, rather than staying in routine and safe comfort zones. This proactive attitude sees stress more as a challenge that is neither unfair nor unfortunate, but part of life to be accepted and worked with. Combining this with a realistic understanding of your own capabilities and limitations means that challenges can be perceived at an appropriate level.

Kamyra (2000) highlights that younger social workers tend to have lower levels of 'hardiness' and fewer coping strategies and, therefore, may be more prone to stress and burnout. This is why it is so important to positively develop coping and management strategies which address the issues of workload, emotional stress and conflict.

ACTIVITY 6.4**Difficult situations**

Think about a difficult situation you are currently facing. Ask yourself the following questions and write down some responses:

- What reasons can I find in the situation that mean I can commit to being involved?
- How can I reframe the situation to regain a sense of perspective and control?
- What elements of control do I have?
- What can I accept as out of my control?
- What can I do to influence the outcome?

Review what you have written and now consider:

- What is my opportunity for learning in this situation and what can I do to develop and/or improve my skills?

Charles and Butler (2004) also offer a framework of control, influence and acceptance (out of my control) that is relevant to social work. It focuses on managing the tension between the ideals of social work (that as a newly qualified or about to qualify social worker are fresh in your memory) and the practice realities that often cause stress and dissatisfaction. It is worth considering Charles and Butler's (2004) distinctions between situations where you have control, those where you have some influence, and those where you have neither of these and need to reach a state of acceptance (Table 6.1). Focusing your energy on productive areas is likely to decrease stress levels, enhance job satisfaction and increase your resilience.

Table 6.1 Control, influence and accept

	Control	Influence	Accept
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of time • Use of skills • Relationship building • Values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team development • Express appropriate dissatisfaction about agency policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciation of own strengths and limitations • Preferred methods of working
Professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of working methods • Development of own expertise/specialisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using professional credibility and research to influence other professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty • What is possible to achieve and what is not • That small-scale changes can transform lives
Organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills in work/systems management • Your image at work of organised, professional worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective action; participation in lobbying/union groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency limitations • Benefits of work (e.g. plan holidays and take time off in lieu)

Adapted from Charles and Butler (2004)

ACTIVITY 6.5

Control and influence

Take a few minutes to consider how much control and influence you have in your work or study. Then consider the following questions:

- Do you agree with the contents of Table 6.1?
- What else might you add to these columns?
- Then consider whether the statements in the Accept column are accurate for you?
- What might you add or alter?
- How do these distinctions change your view of your work or study?

Developing understanding of situations can bring emotional resolution

Using critical reflection and evaluation skills developed during your qualifying programme are good examples of how you can get to a place of letting go of negative emotions. Supervision is an obvious place to take time to 'unpack' difficult situations. Research has shown that *regular, extensive supervision, better informed and more sensitive supervision is likely to provide more effective support for social workers* (Collins, 2008, p1182). If you have not done so already, please refer to Chapter 5 – the last part of this chapter centres on supervision. Making space for reflection by yourself or with a team colleague can also help to bring about that important level of understanding. Arranging regular supervision sessions and attending sessions prepared with the issues you wish to discuss, including emotional issues, will be vital for your development.

Collins (2008) also stresses the importance to practitioners of developing support systems from colleagues, for example mentors and/or 'buddy systems' (Collins, 2008). Other types of support are also crucial to your emotional well-being: friends, partners and family can give you the opportunity to 'come up for air' and get a different perspective on life. Do make time for being with others to allow you to switch off from the pressures of work. Taking annual leave, switching off the work phone and work emails during the evening and weekends or when you are off duty are vital for the development of your emotional health. If this becomes increasingly difficult it is time to talk with your supervisor. Don't leave it until it is too late.

Developing good work strategies are important in enabling you to cope with pressures. As Pru points out in Case Study 6.1, managing your diary and allowing time to complete tasks is important. Ask yourself questions about how you manage your diary, for instance: is arranging a visit immediately after a particularly difficult multi-disciplinary strategy meeting really the best time? Could this visit be undertaken at a different time, thereby giving you time to address any practical or emotional issues that may arise from the meeting? While there are frequently deadlines to work to,

ask yourself: are these imposed on me through statute, organisational guidance or am I putting pressure on myself?

Prioritise and be realistic – social work practitioners can have an overdeveloped sense of responsibility, leading to the setting of unrealistic goals. Also, be clear about what *must* be done now and what can be left until later. Covey (1989, 2004) has model of time quadrants that can help to identify where we might manage time better (Figure 6.2). Do take regular breaks – any you are entitled to during the working day, even if it is just ten minutes. Breaks are really breaks when you move out of your current environment, so a walk or even standing outside noticing the weather can be good enough. Read how Pru copes before completing Activity 6.6.

CASE STUDY 6.2

Pru's experience: part 2

I was fortunate to be offered a permanent position from my final placement setting so the transition from student to ASYE was relatively smooth. The biggest impact is the combination of increased complexity of my caseload and the adjustment of the reduced safety net of being a student.

I am continually assessing parents' capacity and emotional availability to their children but I now recognise that I must also do this for myself and my family. It would be easy to get caught up in trying to keep on top of the ever-demanding administrative aspects of the role by sitting at a computer till all hours of the night and never switching off but I have had to make a rule; unless it is something specific such as a report or assessment I do not work in my own time. I make sure this is the exception and not the rule as I am consciously not allowing my professional life to interfere with my personal life to protect myself and my family. I am encouraged to book admin days into my diary and have the flexibility of either working somewhere out of the office or, on occasion, working from home. This, for me, is an indication of working in a supportive and nurturing team which is fundamental if I am to thrive as a social worker.

ACTIVITY 6.6

Managing your time

Using the framework below (Figure 6.2), think about what you have done in the last week of work or study.

Identify which tasks fit into which quadrant.

The aim, i.e. to be most effective, is to have most working time in quadrant 2.

The tasks in quadrants 3 and 4 can be the places where time can be gained.

Where could you make some changes?

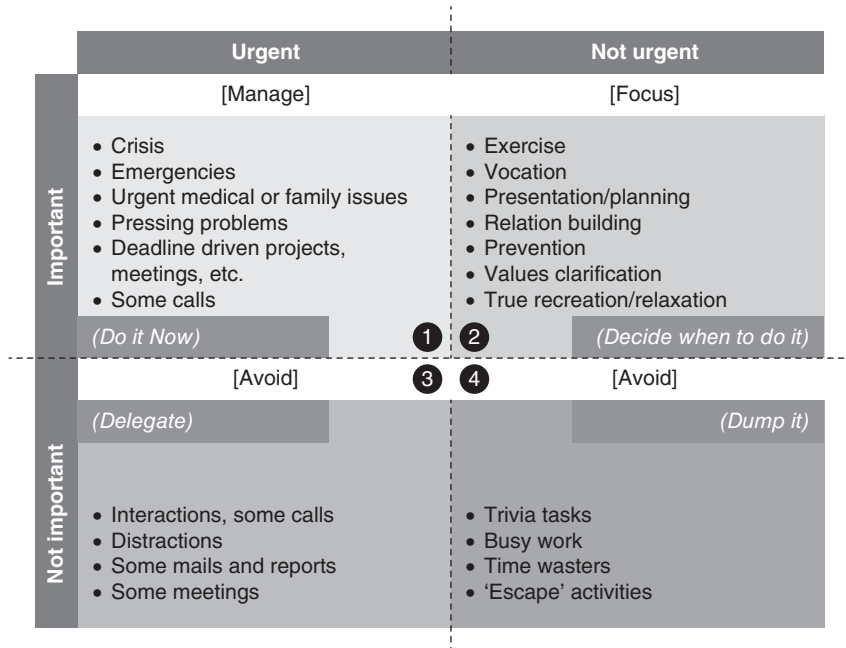


Figure 6.2 Covey's time management matrix (Covey, 1989, 2004, p151)

Image available from <http://takisathanassiou.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Covey%E2%80%99s-Time-Management-Matrix.png>

Mind/body awareness and development

Understanding of how a situation is affecting your physical body is also a neglected area and, given that we know the body and mind are inextricably linked, it is an important gap to fill when considering how to look after yourself. For example, where do you hold tension after a difficult interview? Taking some time out to notice your reactions and then do some breathing and stretching exercises to help unblock those areas that are tense. Mindfulness is a growing area and there is increasing research demonstrating its effectiveness in improving mental health and concentration (Williams and Penman, 2011).

Popular resources such as Williams and Penman's (2011) book *Mindfulness: a practical way to finding peace in a frantic world* come with a very useful CD included to assist the development of mindful practice. The final link below is to a book by Steve Hicks – a social work professor in Toronto – where there are three free downloadable chapters:

www.bemindfulonline.com/

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/mindfulness.aspx

<http://lyceumbooks.com/MindfulnessAndSocialWork.htm>

Another approach that may help develop positive self-management when faced with difficult situations is called 'anchoring'. This can be useful when giving evidence in court, or presenting a report at a case conference, or when you know you have a difficult interview to do. An anchor is a stimulus that becomes a trigger to make us respond in a certain way. It can be visual, auditory, a feeling, a smell or a taste. Existing anchors can set off emotions by remembering a particular experience. For example, hearing the first three notes of your favourite piece of music can create a warm feeling inside as you remember not only the rest of the music, but also any associated memories. A picture of your family by your desk can evoke a sense of joy. Equally, anchors can be negative. Certain places, people and events can make us feel upset, sad or afraid. For instance, just the smell of perfume worn by a critical teacher can bring back negative memories. You may be unaware of many of these anchors; in other words, they operate at a subconscious level. We can use positive anchors to improve our ability to work in difficult circumstances, exercise more control over our behaviour and actions and achieve outcomes we are working towards. Try the following activity.

ACTIVITY 6.7

Anchoring

Find a quiet space where you will not be interrupted. You may need a pen and a blank piece of paper. Allow about ten minutes.

- *Step 1: think about the situation you are preparing for and decide on the positive emotional 'state' you want to be in. For example, you may write down 'confident' or 'assertive', but be specific about what sort of 'confident' or 'assertive' you mean. Add more precise words, so that you have a really comprehensive understanding.*
- *Step 2: decide on the 'anchor' that you want to use. This needs to be easy to apply in the situation you want to use it and has to be distinct, in your control, short and easily repeatable. It can be visual, auditory or kinaesthetic. Hand gestures may work well, such as clenching your fist, pressing your first finger and thumb together or pulling your earlobe. Visual or auditory ones can include looking at a picture or repeating a particular word.*
- *Step 3: think of a specific occasion when you remember being in the positive state you wrote down in step 1. It must be a positive memory and you need to be central. Then spend a minute remembering more about the situation. For example, think about the people who are also there and their movements and expressions; remember any colours, voices or other sounds. What were you doing, saying and thinking – were you walking around or sitting down, talking or listening, what were you saying to yourself?*

(Continued)

ACTIVITY 6.7 *continued*

- *Step 4: then, when the memory is really strong, repeat the anchor you decided upon in step 2, and hold it for a count of five. Let go and relax as your memory and feelings created in step 3 start to diminish.*
- *Step 5: then let go of that memory completely by doing something totally different for 20 seconds. Stand up, turn around and sit down again, look around the room or remember what you ate at your last meal.*
- *Step 6: repeat steps 3, 4 and 5 a couple of times to strengthen the anchor – and this can be repeated regularly to reinforce the feelings. Then ‘fire’ the anchor on its own and notice how your state changes to the one you identified in step 1. Some people find it helpful to close their eyes.*
- *Now think about the situation from step 1; imagine it is happening and use your anchor. Using your imagination and noticing what is happening will aid preparation substantially.*

You can use this and other anchors to recall positive memories and create a positive emotional state. You will find that the more you build these anchors, the more you will be in control of your actions and feel positively able to achieve your goals.

(Adapted from Henwood and Lister, 2007, p159)

CASE STUDY 6.3

Anchoring: an editor’s tale

One of the editors (Jonathan Parker) remembers his first time giving evidence in court as a qualified social worker. Having observed court proceedings on a number of occasions and having taken and supported people at court hearings, the process and environment were well known. However, when it came to being responsible for giving evidence and ensuring the best outcome for those involved, it was a nerve-wracking experience. It were important to remain anchored to the reasons for being in court and to the planned approach determined beforehand. He had with him two well-worn pebbles that he held and moved around in his hand which allowed him to focus, take time, relax and concentrate on the task. There are, of course, many ways of anchoring and it is important to choose one with which you are comfortable and, if in court or other formal settings, something fairly unobtrusive.

You may recognise that these simple autogenic and ‘self-talk’ techniques derive from neurolinguistic programming (O’Connor, 2001; Henwood and Lister, 2007) and cognitive behavioural approaches. They can help you in your social worker role as well as being a process you may share with someone who uses services.

Interpersonal competence

So far we have considered the role of the personal and a range of intrapersonal activities that can help us acknowledge and manage our emotions in practice. We now turn to the management of difficult relationships and awareness of others in particular.

Management of difficult relationships

Good social work is conducted through effective relationships (Ruch, 2005) with anti-oppressive practice at its heart. Morrison (2007) believes that interpersonal intelligence is central to high-quality practice (see Figure 6.1). Throughout your qualifying education there will have been an emphasis on building communication and relationship skills. You will have developed a good understanding of the concept of empathy and its importance in understanding others. However, one area of relationship management that can cause much disquiet and anxiety for newly qualified social workers is working with conflict (Brown *et al.*, 2007). Conflict is an inevitable part of life arising from differences in needs, values and interests and is a state of discord or disharmony. What is important is how we respond to and manage it. We can respond constructively or destructively – often when we respond constructively we do not realise we have done so. When we view conflict in organisations or teams as positive it can:

- highlight underlying issues;
- motivate to deal with underlying problems;
- enhance a mutual understanding;
- stimulate a sense of urgency;
- discourage avoidance of problems;
- sharpen understanding of issues and goals.

However, when conflict is responded to destructively, it can take a tremendous amount of our energy and attention. We can resort to unhelpful strategies because of our emotional reactions.

ACTIVITY 6.8

Thinking about conflict

Pause for thought: think of a time when you responded positively in a situation of conflict and one where you think your response was more negative. Note down your answers to the following questions for each situation.

(Continued)

ACTIVITY 6.8 *continued*

- *What were you thinking or feeling at the time?*
- *What did you do?*
- *What are the differences?*

The thoughts and skills you demonstrated may then help you next time you are in a situation of conflict.

Now compare your responses with the model of conflict resolution in Table 6.2.

Thomas and Ruble’s (1976, cited in Huczinski and Buchanan, 2007) model of conflict resolution (Table 6.2) shows, in essence, that our actions in conflict can be understood by reference to two axes:

- how assertive or unassertive each party is in pursuing their own concerns;
- how co-operative or not each party is in meeting the needs of the other.

They distinguish five approaches to resolving conflict, which are explained below. No one style is perfect for each conflict situation and the table draws out some of the positives and negatives for each. However, for long-term effective solutions a collaborative approach is likely to be more successful.

Table 6.2 Thomas and Ruble’s (1976) model of conflict resolution (cited in Huczinski and Buchanan 2007, p777)

Summary of style	When best used
<p>Avoidance:</p> <p>This person ignores conflict and hopes it will go away. They will withdraw or evade conflict situations, feeling they are harmful. It is an ineffective approach because the situation is likely to remain unresolved and people will become frustrated.</p>	<p>when an issue is trivial or more important ones are pressing;</p> <p>when you perceive no chance of satisfying your concerns;</p> <p>when potential disruption outweighs the benefits of resolution;</p> <p>to let people cool down and gather perspective;</p> <p>when others can resolve more effectively;</p> <p>when issues seem tangential or symptomatic of other issues.</p>

Accommodation:

This person is willing to meet the needs of the other at their own expense. They want to keep the peace and be friends with everyone. It can often result in conflict being resolved through submission or compliance without the views of others being considered.

when you find you are wrong – to allow a better position to be heard, to learn and to show your reasonableness;
 when issues are more important to others than yourself – to satisfy others and maintain cooperation;
 to build social credits for later issues;
 to minimise loss when you are outmatched and losing;
 to allow others to develop by learning from their mistakes.

Competition:

This person uses their power to force their views on others. They often believe that there is only one right answer and hurt feelings are unavoidable. It often results in conflict being resolved at a superficial level, but there is long-term damage to relationships.

when quick decisive action is vital (e.g. emergencies);
 on important issues where unpopular action needs implementing;
 on important issues vital to organisational or others' welfare, when you know you are right;

Compromise:

Often seen as the best approach and delivers an agreement that everyone can live with. This person believes that conflict is draining and so wants to reach a quick solution. But sometimes it leaves dissatisfaction on all sides and a better resolution might have been achieved with more time.

when goals are important but not worth the effort or potential disruption of more assertive modes;
 when opponents with equal power are committed to mutually exclusive goals;
 to achieve temporary settlements to complex issues;
 to arrive at expedient solutions under time pressure.

Collaboration:

Time is spent listening to each person to find a way to meet everyone's needs. Conflict resolution is about reaching a good solution, and respecting each other's views. It is not about winning. Even if complete agreement cannot be reached, all parties feel the process has been fair. Collaboration is seen as being the 'gold standard' of conflict resolution, and is the outcome to be strived for, as it has much more chance of sustaining long-term resolution. However, each party will need to commit time to get there.

to find an integrative solution when both sets of concerns are too important to be compromised;
 when your objective is to learn;
 to merge insights from people with different perspectives;
 to gain commitment by incorporating concerns into consensus;
 to work through feelings that have interfered with a relationship.

It is clear that the most effective sustainable approach is collaboration and there are many reasons why this may not always be the approach used, and perhaps what is most difficult is being able to hold onto your own thoughts and feelings as well as those of the other. There may even be times when compromise and collaboration

are both needed. The following four stage model of resolving conflict completes the chapter and can be useful in reaching good resolutions.

Step 1: in preparation

Here you might recognise that we have returned to Goleman *et al.*'s (2013) model of emotional intelligence (Figure 6.1) to give a preparation framework.

Self-awareness	Awareness of other
What are you thinking about the situation?	What is the other person thinking about the situation?
What are you feeling?	What is the other person feeling about the situation?
What do you need (look back at the needs list referred to earlier in the chapter) to resolve the situation?	What do they need? Step into their shoes to really consider these questions and understand their reasons.
What do you want to achieve?	<i>Can you accept these two statements about the other person?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>that their behaviour is the best way they know of acting in the current context.</i> • <i>that their behaviour has a positive (although sometimes unconscious) intention.</i>
Self-management	Relationship management
How will you manage your emotions effectively?	How will you respond to the other's wants/wishes?
What do you need to do to be able to listen to the other?	How will you manage the emotional dynamics?
How will you communicate your needs and wishes in a way that the other can hear?	What needs to happen to be able to reach a collaborative solution?

Step 2: in discussion

- Be able to manage and express your emotions and views positively. Recognise when it will be useful to express your emotions. Techniques such as deep breathing, sitting back, taking time out, looking up at the ceiling for a count of 5 (or 10) are sometimes useful here.
- It is important that you say what you need to say, in a way that can be heard by the other person. You need to decide if this is at the beginning of the meeting or after the other person has spoken. It needs to be expressed when the other person can hear it and checked out with them.
- Listen to the other point of view and validate their contributions – this takes time. Listen and listen again. If they repeat the point they still feel that they have not been

heard, so let them know that they have been heard. Paraphrase or summarise your understanding and ask them to say whether you have got it right.

- Find out what is important to them about their position and remember your own perspective. Consider whether there is any consensus. Any consensus will usually be at a higher level than the area of disagreement. For example, if you disagree about how many team meetings to hold in a month, then work out what you agree about the function of the meetings. This can develop a new understanding of the issue and help to open up different options. Take care to stay focused on this issue and to summarise at times throughout the negotiation.
- From this consensus position, you can now work on finding other solutions or alternatives to achieve a shared position. Identify a number of alternatives before deciding on which one is best. These may be a combination of your original positions, though it may be helpful to identify one that is distinct from them.
- Decide on which choice or combination of choices is going to be most effective and workable.

Step 3: resolving the conflict, even if there is no solution

If the conflict is not resolved in discussion, consider the following strategies.

- Time out – agree to disagree for the present time and plan to meet again later (it is often surprising how much can change during any interval).
- Mediation – use someone you both trust as neutral and impartial. Going to mediation is not failure – it is a courageous step that recognises it is important to find a resolution.

Step 4: looking after yourself

Resolving conflict is hard work whether you reach a resolution or not. If the conflict remains unresolved ensure you spend some time letting go of your emotions about the issue – try physical exercise, or a relaxation exercise, or talk it through with a *neutral* friend.

Summary of key points

- At the heart of social work is the 'personal'. Good practice is dependent on growing and valuing this perspective in all of the unique relationships you create.
- Thriving in social work involves development of your emotional intelligence which means paying attention to your intrapersonal intelligence and your interpersonal intelligence. This, as part of your continuing professional development, takes time and conscious effort. Reflection will assist your progress.

- Stress is part of the job – being aware of it and taking time to build resilience strategies will protect you against emotional exhaustion and help you to continue to enjoy the rewards, challenges and successes of your profession.
- Take time to look after all aspects of your 'self'. It is your most important professional instrument. And do not forget to celebrate your achievements!

FURTHER
READING



Conflict resolution network: www.crnhq.org/

This website is a great resource for those considering any aspects of conflict resolution. It has a huge variety of downloadable free materials and an easily accessible self-study guide, which encourages you to develop confidence in conflict situations.

Grant, L and Kinman, G (2014) (eds) *Developing resilience for social work practice*. London: Palgrave.

Grant and Kinman provide an in-depth look at how resilience is an important subject for social workers to consider from a personal and organisational perspective.

Henwood, S and Lister, J (2007) *NLP and coaching for healthcare professionals*. Chichester: Wiley.

Although this book has originally been written for 'healthcare professionals' it is equally relevant to social workers. It is a self-help book that offers many tools and exercises designed to increase your self-awareness and self-confidence.

Howe, D (2008) *The emotionally intelligent social worker*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

This book provides a readable and in-depth analysis of emotional intelligence and its uses in social work. Much of the focus and examples are related to social work practice and there is a helpful final chapter which considers the practitioner perspective and working under stress.

Ingram, R (2015) *Understanding emotions in social work: theory, practice and reflection*. Oxford: OUP.

A well-received, practical, up-to-date book that will enable your understanding of, and critical reflection on, your own emotions and those of others.

Marshall Rosenberg

The work by the late Marshall Rosenberg into non-violent or compassionate communication is a very accessible way of explaining how to build relationships with others. What follows is a website link and book reference: www.nonviolentcommunication.com/aboutnvc/nonviolent_communication.htm

Rosenberg, M (2015) *Non-violent communication: a language of life*. Encinitas, CA: Puddle Dancer Press.

Chapter 7

Joining and contributing to a team

Anne Quinney with contributions from George (carer), Liz Slinn (social worker), Marion Davis CBE (a former Director of Children's Services) and Greg Hind (team leader)

PROFESSIONAL CAPABILITIES FRAMEWORK

This chapter will help you to demonstrate the following ASYE-level capabilities:

2. Values and ethics: apply social work ethical principles and values to guide professional practice.
 - Demonstrate respectful partnership work with service users and carers, eliciting and respecting their needs and views and promoting their decision-making wherever possible.
5. Knowledge: apply knowledge of social sciences, law and social work practice theory.
 - Recognise the contribution, and begin to make use of, research to inform practice.
7. Intervention and skills: use judgement and authority to intervene with individuals, families and communities to promote independence, provide support and prevent harm, neglect and abuse.
 - Build and use effective relationships with a wide range of people, networks, communities and professionals to improve outcomes, showing an ability to manage resistance.
8. Contexts and organisations: engage with, inform and adapt to changing contexts that shape practice. Operate effectively within own organisational frameworks and contribute to the development of services and organisations. Operate effectively within multi-agency and interprofessional partnerships and settings.
 - Work effectively as a member of a team, demonstrating the ability to develop and maintain appropriate professional and interprofessional relationships, managing challenge and conflict with support.