SCENARIOS FOR DISCUSSION*  
(PUT YOURSELF IN THE POSITION OF THIS COUNSELOR’S SUPERVISOR)

1. You are late for the airport to catch a flight to an important family vacation, in danger of missing your flight (during the holiday season when it might be very hard to get space on a later flight) when you receive an emergency call from a local hospital. One of your clients has tried to commit suicide and has been hospitalized. The patient is desperate to talk with you in person immediately, refusing to talk over the phone, about having just discovered a horrifying secret. You have no idea what the “secret” is.

   1. How do you feel? Any reactions that are difficult to acknowledge?
   2. What are your options? What do you think you should do?
   3. To what extent, if at all, do any concerns about being sued influence your decision?

2. You’ve been having tough financial times and might have to declare bankruptcy unless you sell your house. So you put your house up for sale, but after 12 months there are no buyers. You hold another open house. The only person to show up for the open house is a client of yours who says, “This is a great house! I’d love to buy it. And although I’d be buying it anyway, it is nice that it will help you too.”

   1. How do you feel? What would you say? What would you do?
   2. What are your options?

3. During a counseling session a client mentions that, because of her job, she receives free tickets to concerts, plays, and other events. She loves giving them away to doctors and friends, and because it costs her nothing, she sees it as a way of showing her appreciation for the services rendered to her. She tells you she has already mailed two tickets to you for an upcoming concert because you mentioned you were a fan of that performer. This performer has never held a concert in your part of the country. This is your only opportunity to see your favorite performer. You have tried before to find tickets for your family to see the concert but to no avail at any price.

   1. What do you feel? What issues do you consider?
   2. Is there any more information you might want before you decide what to do?
   3. Under what circumstances, if any, would you accept the tickets?
   4. After the session is over, what would you put in your chart notes?

4. You are a counselor at an agency whose policy is that if a client misses two appointments without calling, the counseling automatically terminates. A client who is a single mother, uses public transportation, has no phone, and is often distressed by finding baby sitters, does not show up for her appointment for the second time. Your supervisor insists that you terminate counseling by sending the client a letter so stating, given the long waiting list of potential clients seeking help from your agency.

   1. What feeling do you have? What are your assumptions about the client’s absence?
   2. In what way, if at all, might her diagnosis be relevant?
   3. What do you feel about the agency’s policy?
   4. What are your options in responding to your supervisor? The client? The agency as a whole?
5. You have been working with a seventeen-year-old client for several months. During one session, the client suddenly discloses that she has been having sex with her father for the past two years. She has been chronically depressed and says, “If you tell anyone about this, I will find a way to kill myself.” You believe this is a serious threat.
   1. How do you feel? Under what circumstances, if any, do you disclose this information to child protective services, your supervisor, any family members, anyone else?
   2. What priorities would shape your decision?
   3. What is your liability and how would it affect your course of action?

6. You’ve been counseling for 4 months a forty-year-old alcoholic who is also moderately depressed. The sessions do not seem to be going well. Before your next session you check your voice mail and find a message from this client. The message says, “I want to thank you for trying to help me, but I see that nothing will do me any good. I will not be seeing you or anyone else ever again. I’ve left home and won’t be returning. I did not leave any notes because there really is not anything else to say. Goodbye.” You have a client waiting in the lobby for her appointment in two minutes. You will be seeing clients for the next four hours.
   1. What feelings do you have? What do you want to do?
   2. What are your options? What do you think you should do?
   3. What are your legal and ethical obligations? Are they in conflict in any way?

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