

Chapter 5

Attachment–Informed Gatekeeping

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter will advocate for an attachment-informed lens when approaching dispositional issues with counselor education students. The authors discuss the bidirectional relationship of attachment and trauma and the importance of careful consideration of both in trauma-informed gatekeeping. Because attachment greatly impacts worldview, valuing the student and the dispositional issue through an attachment-focused lens is imperative. Positing attachment as a protective factor, the authors argue that practicing attachment-informed gatekeeping could be essential in supporting counselors in training and decreasing rates of burnout.

INTRODUCTION

Increasing our understanding of trauma and how stressors manifest physically, emotionally, and behaviorally better informs our gatekeeping practices as counselor educators and supervisors. Using a trauma-informed approach to understanding student needs and concerns may increase recruitment, retention, and completion of counselor education programs. Engaging in gatekeeping from a supportive remediation perspective may also improve student satisfaction and well-being and decrease

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burnout. Increasing our understanding of trauma also allows us to re-evaluate teaching pedagogy, supervision practices, and gatekeeping.

In this chapter, we examine the ethical requirements of gatekeeping and provide a brief overview of gatekeeping history and current practice. We frame gatekeeping in the context of understanding trauma, its neurobiology, and its impacts on attachment. We also discuss how attachment is a protective factor, how to recognize attachment patterns in students, and how to engage in attachment-informed remediation. Finally, case studies will be presented to work with each attachment style.

ETHICS OF GATEKEEPING

Gatekeeping is an ethical responsibility for all counselor educators and supervisors. From the admissions process, through classroom experiences, internship, and pre-licensure, counselor educators and supervisors consistently assess and reassess the counselor-in-training's readiness and competence for the next step. Failure to do so would put the public at risk of harm from inept or unwell practitioners (ACA, 2014).

Preserving the safety of others is the ethical foundation of gatekeeping. The American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics (2014) provides professional consensus on how a lack of competence, wellness (previously described as *an impairment*), and professional boundaries are unacceptable. Echoing the Hippocratic Oath, counselors are taught not to harm their practice. The ethical codes were derived from moral principles, which collectively serve to avoid harming not only clients, but all who can be affected by the scope of professional counseling. Specific to gatekeeping and remediation in the areas of supervision, training, and teaching, the ACA Code of Ethics (2014) states:

Through initial and ongoing evaluation, supervisors are aware of supervisee limitations that might impede performance. Supervisors assist supervisees in securing remedial assistance when needed. They recommend dismissal from training programs, applied counseling settings, and state or voluntary professional credentialing processes when those supervisees cannot demonstrate that they can provide competent professional services to a range of diverse clients. Supervisors seek consultation and document their decisions to dismiss or refer supervisees for assistance. They ensure that supervisees are aware of options to address such decisions. (F.6.b.)

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