



**Shirley Young**

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Two Worlds Consultancy**

***Cultural and Clinical Supervision for Aboriginal  
and Non-Aboriginal Allies.***

## **Kurna Acknowledgement**

I would like to acknowledge that this land that I meet on today is the traditional lands for the Kurna people and that I respect their spiritual relationship with their country.

I would also like to acknowledge the Kurna people as the custodians of the greater Adelaide region and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to the living Kurna people today.

I also pay my respects to the cultural authority of Aboriginal people from other areas across the Nation that meet with me virtually today.

I acknowledge the cultural knowledge and authority of other Aboriginal people that are meeting with me virtually today.



# My connection to country



## My location to this topic

- Aboriginal woman descending from the Nukunu people.
- Social Worker and the Director of Two Worlds Consultancy working Nationally for almost 6.
- Worked in the Public Service for 23 years in variety of portfolios and positions such as child protection, out of home care, child and adolescent mental health and Aboriginal health.
- Cultural and clinical supervision of Aboriginal and non Aboriginal staff on a National level both clinically and culturally across a large number of sectors and professional disciplines.
- Supervision to individuals and group supervision.
- Provide training and development to other staff.



## My supervision journey as an employee

- Started as a trainee with no understanding of what supervision is.
- Both positive and unhelpful experiences.
- Questioning of Aboriginality.
- Cultural supervision was provided later in my career but without clear direction and purpose.
- Not provided models that I could apply cultural knowledge to creating conflict.
- Curiosity and deep listening not utilised to understand the complexity and relationality of culture in my work.
- Systemic racism and power imbalances.



## The supervisors positionality

- So what do you bring to the supervision role?
- What are your relationships like with Aboriginal staff?
- What have your own experiences of supervision looked like and how have they informed the way you currently supervise staff.



## Research

- There is very little written about cultural supervision for Aboriginal people in Australia by Aboriginal academics.
- There are no accredited models
- Aboriginal academics are starting to write broadly about issues that support cultural supervision like decolonising practices, relationality, power and anti oppressive practices, revitalising cultural practices and so on but there does not appear to be any complete frameworks.



## **AASW Practice Standards for Supervision**

Professional supervision contributes to the professional capacity of practitioners, the effectiveness of the practitioner within their organisation and in their contribution to achieving positive outcomes for the people with whom they work, and to the identity of social work as a profession.

[AASWPracticeStandardsSupplementpdf169\(1\).pdf](#)





## **Supervision is a relational based activity**

Supervision is a 'relationship based activity which enables practitioners to reflect upon the connection between task and process within their work. It provides a supportive, administrative and development context within which responsiveness to clients and accountable decision making can be sustained'. (Davies 2000, p.204)



## What is supervision

Professional supervision in social work is defined as “...a forum for reflection and learning.... An interactive dialogue between at least two people, one of whom is a supervisor.

This dialogue shapes a process of review, reflection, critique and replenishment for professional practitioners.

Supervision is a professional activity in which practitioners are engaged throughout the duration of their careers regardless of experience or qualification.

The participants are accountable to professional standards and defined competencies and to organisational policy and procedures” (Davys & Beddoe, 2010:21) From the AASW Supervision Standards.

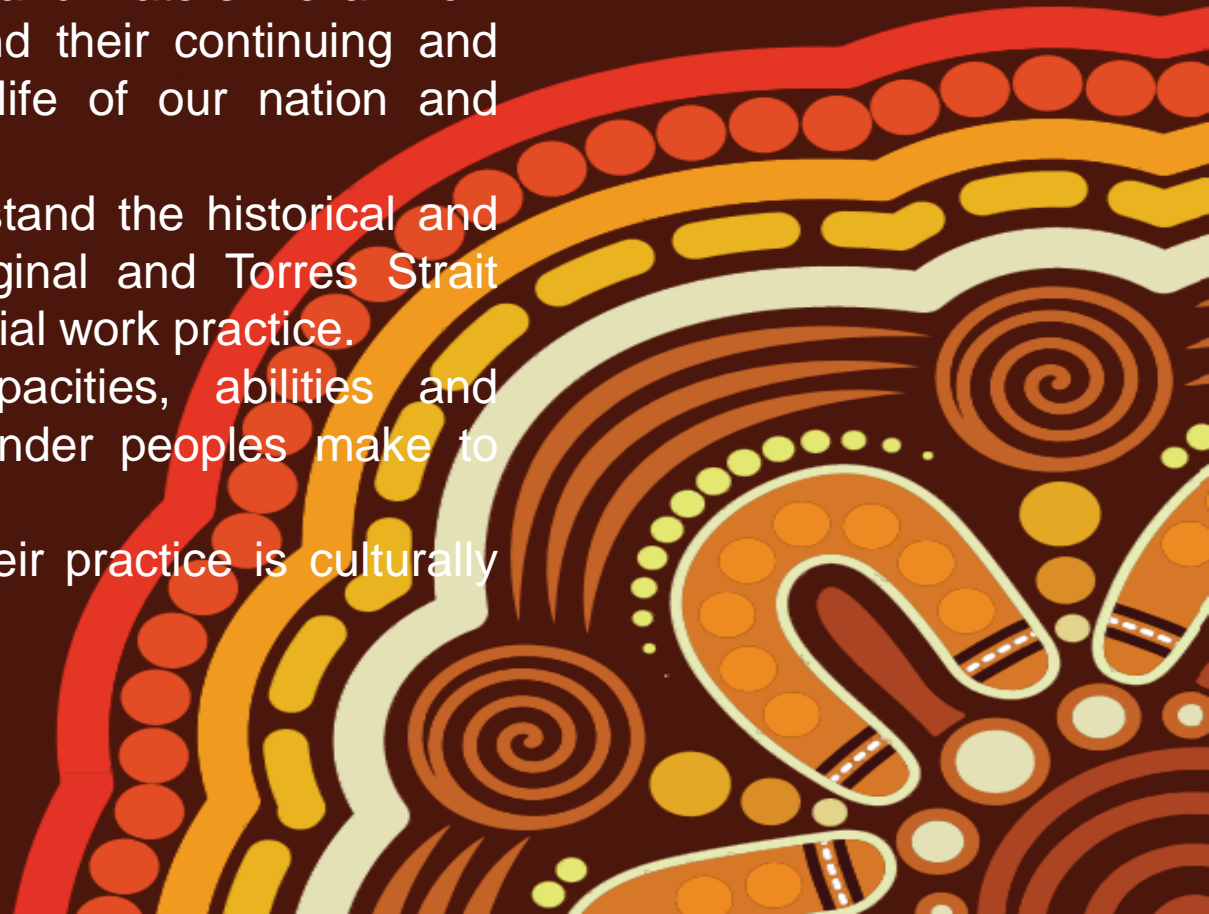
[What is supervision? \(aasw.asn.au\)](http://aasw.asn.au)



## **AASW Commitment to reconciliation**

The AASW is committed to the process of reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

- Social workers acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the First Australians, whose lands, winds and waters we all now share, and pay respect to their unique values, and their continuing and enduring cultures which deepen and enrich the life of our nation and communities.
- Social workers commit to acknowledge and understand the historical and contemporary disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the implications this has for social work practice.
- Social workers acknowledge the strengths, capacities, abilities and contributions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make to wider society.
- Social workers are responsible for ensuring that their practice is culturally responsive, safe and sensitive.



## The purpose of supervision

- **Education-** further developing professional skills and knowledge that improves the competence and professional satisfaction of social workers
  - Providing knowledge and skills z Developing self-awareness
  - Reflecting on practice
  - Integrating theory into practice
  - Facilitating professional reasoning.
- **Support-** providing the space for critical (self) reflection and supportive environment for practitioners to gain insight about themselves, and to respond more effectively to complex and challenging situations
  - Dealing with job-related stress
  - Sustaining worker morale
  - Developing of a sense of professional self-worth
- **Accountability-** providing a forum for exploring the application of ethical and professional social work practice in the context of the social worker's practice environment.
  - Clarification of roles and responsibilities
  - Work load management
  - Review and assessment of work
  - Addressing organisation and practice issues.



## Creating an environment of safety and trust

- A meeting place where someone feels culturally safe- may be out of the office.
- Time to listen and yarn- this may require a greater amount of time.
- An agreed agenda so there are no big surprises and staff know what to expect.
- Utilising Indigenous knowledges, worldviews, practices and protocols.
- Listening deeply for meaning, not making assumptions and being open to learning new things.
- Acknowledging biases and systemic racism.
- A two-way sharing and getting to know each other.
- Encouraging truth telling and learning from it.



# Dadirri- Deep Listening

[Dadirri Handout.pdf \(miriamrosefoundation.org.au\)](http://miriamrosefoundation.org.au)

## Dadirri – Listening to one Another



- Ngangikurungkurr - *dadirri* - listening to one another in contemplative - reciprocal relationships.
- Pitjantjatjara - *kulini* (listening), or *pulgkara kulin tjugku* (really (deep) listening, and wanting to listen).
- Bundjalung - *gan'na* hearing, listening, feeling, thinking, understanding.
- Gunmbayngirr - *junga-ngarraanga miinggi* - hearing, learning, understanding, knowing from the heart.

Artwork: Christopher Edwards Haines 2004

Artwork: Christopher Edwards Haines 2004



# Critical Reflexivity

Critical reflexivity is an essential practice that involves continually reflecting on one's own values, biases, and assumptions, and how they may impact the relationship with the Aboriginal person.

**1. Self-awareness:** Social workers must be aware of their own cultural background, values, and beliefs, and how they may influence their interactions with Aboriginal people.

**2. Cultural competence:** Social workers must have a deep understanding of Aboriginal culture, history, and traditions, and how they relate to the client's current situation.

**3. Collaboration:** Social workers must work collaboratively with Aboriginal people, respecting their knowledge, skills, and expertise, and involving them in the decision-making process.

**4. Empowerment:** Social workers must empower Aboriginal people to take control of their own lives, by providing them with the necessary resources, support, and information.

**5. Reflection:** Social workers must reflect on their own practice, and how it can be improved to better meet the needs of Aboriginal people.

[Working-Collaboratively-with-Australia's-First-Nations-People-Scoping-Review.pdf](http://www.mhcc.org.au/Working-Collaboratively-with-Australia's-First-Nations-People-Scoping-Review.pdf)  
([mhcc.org.au](http://www.mhcc.org.au))



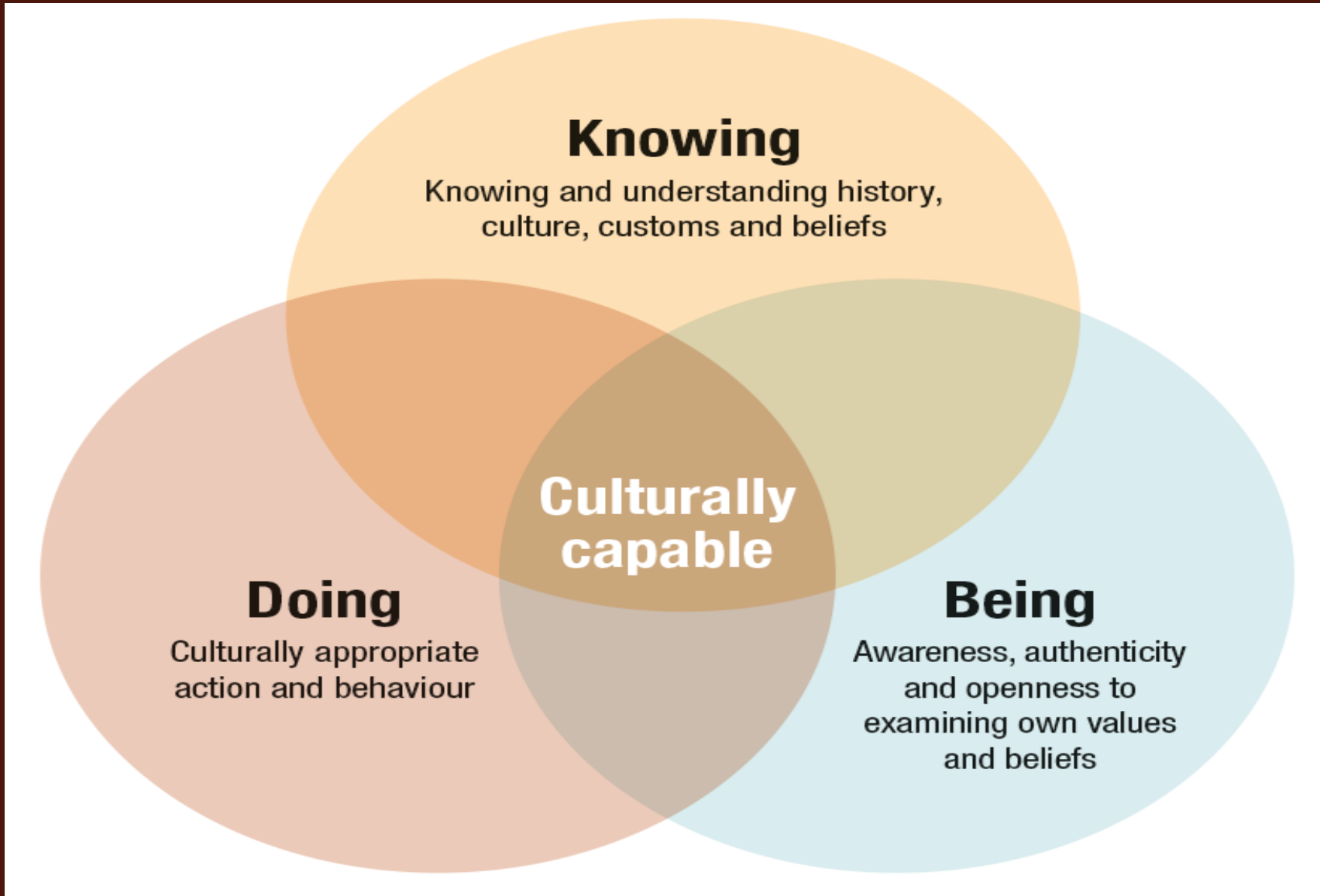
## Clinical vs Culture

- The elephant in the room
- Social & emotional wellbeing models
- Supporting non Aboriginal staff to understand SEWB models
- Assessments that encourage Aboriginal & non Aboriginal practitioners to share knowledge to form collaborative formulations.





# Aboriginal ways of knowing, being & doing.



# Social & emotional wellbeing

## The nine principles of SEWB:

Health is viewed as being holistic.

Self determination.

Culturally valid understandings.

Understandings of intergenerational trauma.

Human Rights focus.

Acknowledges racism, stigma, environmental adversity & social disadvantage.

Family & kinship & reciprocity, sharing & responsibility.

Diversity in ways of knowing, being & doing & environments.

Strengths & protective factors in culture.



SEWB Diagram adapted from Gee et al., (2014)

## Relationality

- All things are connected and interconnected.
- We are connected through our kinship systems, our country- water & skies, our cultural practices, our stories ect.
- We are deeply connected to one another- when you talk about them you are talking about me.
- We choose to work in our own communities.
- We connect within our communities outside of 9-5 and this is normal.
- We are joined through our stories.



## Decolonising

- Dismantling colonising systems in the way we work alongside Aboriginal people.
- Decolonising our minds and thought processes, our practices and our systems.
- Challenging processes and policies that create barriers to social justice and equity in the work we do and in the way we supervise.
- Deep listening- beginning to understand knowledge and wisdom that is brought by Aboriginal people in their local context
- Realigning by listening and challenging westernised beliefs and frameworks and rein visioning the power structures that subjugate Aboriginal people.



## Re-Indigenisation

“Indigenisation is concerned with the use of appropriate First Nations theories and practice method that can transform the entrenched and sometimes enforced Westernised values, norms, and philosophies”.

*Bennett, B. and Gates, T.G., 2021. Working towards cultural responsiveness and inclusion in Australia: The re-Indigenization of social work education. Social Work & Policy Studies: Social Justice, Practice and Theory, 4(2).*



## What can I do as a supervisor?

- Creating a safe environment for supervision.
- Collective development of a supervision framework and agenda with agreements of the implementation.
- Supervision agreement- how, how often, when, where, how issues are best addressed and how the supervisee manages critical feedback best.
- Ongoing self critical reflection of supervision processes, thoughts, feelings, emotions, frameworks, world views ethics etc.
- Decolonising practices- Systemic, Practices, Environment, Personal- mind emotions, thoughts, feelings.
- Aware of wellbeing issues by working in westernised systems.
- Being aware and understanding of (cultural load) cultural responsibility.
- Promptly managing micro aggressions.
- Providing space for Aboriginal voices.
- Promptly identifying and addressing systemic racism.
- Managing undressed procedural fairness- impacts of wellbeing, motivation and cultural safety.



## What can I do as a supervisor?

- Demonstrating from the top what you expect and actively managing with brave leadership to influence behaviours and actions of others.
- Dismantling power imbalances
- Having crucial discussions from a stand point of wanting the best for Aboriginal people.
- Encouraging self determination and taking the lead with Aboriginal voices at the table- nothing about us without us.
- Understanding the impact the NO vote has had on Aboriginal people- it's a step back and cultural safety is challenged and broken.
- Be authentic and open minded and practice ongoing learning.
- Strengths based perspectives and protective factors in culture.
- Actively seek and maintain relationship with the local Aboriginal community. Co design, implement, feedback and maintain honest and transparent relationships that are reciprocal.



## Allies and cultural supervision

- Understanding the ongoing impacts of intergenerational trauma due to historical events, policies and practices that your organisations taken part in and subsequent fear and over representation of Aboriginal people in systems.
- Providing a supportive context for staff to manage complex cultural issues
- Ensuring safe practice and culturally appropriate behaviour.
- Enabling staff to be clear about roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities
- Promoting professional development by building skills, knowledge, confidence, and competence in understanding Aboriginal attitudes, behaviours, and responses



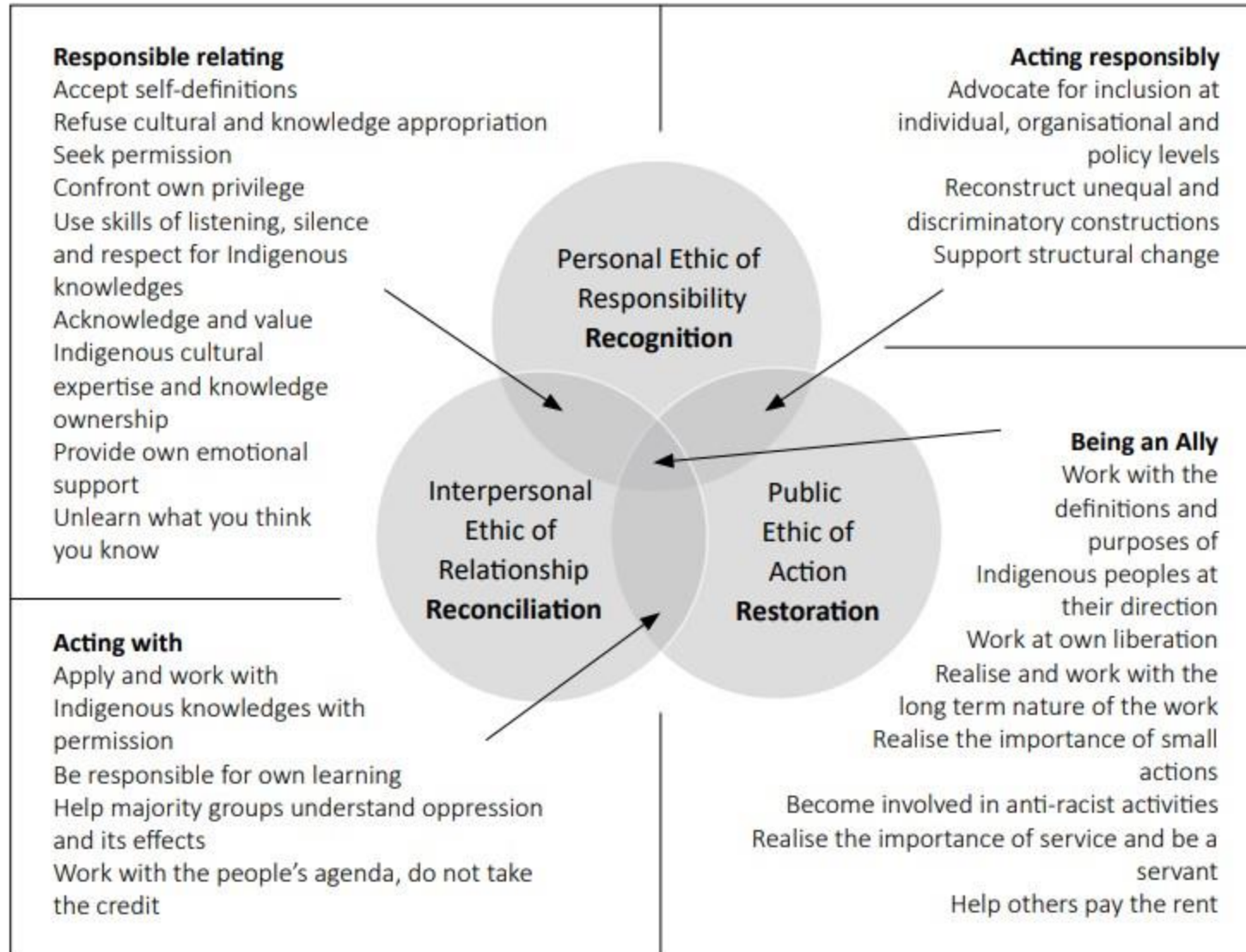


## Allies and cultural supervision continued

- Providing opportunities for staff to appraise their responsiveness to Aboriginal practitioners within their practice.
- Supporting staff learning by linking practice to cultural knowledge.
- Clinical practice being culturally responsive.
- Unpacking clinical and cultural conflicts.
- Supporting understanding of Aboriginal worldviews, frameworks and Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing.
- Working alongside Aboriginal staff respectfully.



Figure 2. The practices of Ally Work



Based on the Ally Work Framework (Hendrick & Young, 2017)

## Aboriginal staff and cultural supervision

- To discuss how they are experiencing working within a mainstream organisation.
- Discuss the conflicts that arise regarding the use of westernised, Eurocentric bio psych social, medical models.
- Systemic racism and unaddressed procedural fairness.
- Lack of support in the workplace.
- Only one Aboriginal person in the workplace.
- Role of education of all other staff and ongoing decolonising practices.
- Culturally inappropriate assessments.
- Tertiary environments where there is a gross over representation of Aboriginal people in systems.
- Job and person specs that don't represent what they do and issue with the direct translation of them when applying.
- Inability to access cultural supervision in workplace.



## Aboriginal staff and cultural supervision

- Vicarious trauma.
- Feeling culturally unsafe in the workplace.
- Performance issues- interpretation issues, working to a Indigenous worldviews, beliefs and values.
- Support to address a gap in their knowledge.
- Debrief from critical incidents.
- Support to learn how to apply their cultural knowledge to “clinical” setting.
- Debrief on the feedback from community about their experience of organisations.
- Planning their future career.
- Support to understand what is happening from clinical perspectives.
- Intergenerational trauma
- Perceptions of workplace bullying and silencing, shame, fear.



## **Cultural supervision for Aboriginal staff cont.**

- Ability to talk about what is happening in the workplace in a culturally safe negotiated space.
- Confidentiality.
- Able to speak openly and transparently about what they need to be the best employee they can be.
- Discuss what their hopes and dreams are for their career and to plan what they need to do to get there.
- Locating their strengths.
- Understanding of Indigenous knowledge without having to decolonise and educate.
- Able to use humour and know they are not being judged.
- Able to be safely supported to recognise vicarious trauma and access support.
- Safely talk about struggling to apply knowledge and understand complex systems and struggles working in tertiary systems.
- The length of engagement varies. Clear process for engagement.



## Benefits

- Ability to talk about what is happening in the workplace in a culturally safe negotiated space.
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## Benefits

- Allies benefit from being able to discuss theories and applying in practice in culturally appropriate ways.
- Support to both Aboriginal staff and allies in the workplace- both coming from a good place.
- Transparency.
- Staff less stressed and able to work in collaboration.
- Systems transformation.
- Decolonising systems, frameworks, policies and practices.
- Application of Indigenous models- Re-Indigenisation.
- Working in multi disciplinary models.
- Greater understanding of how to both Aboriginal staff and allies can support one another.
- Locating strengths of staff and identifying opportunities for learning.
- Staff retention and debriefing.



**Thank you for joining with us at the  
Australian Centre for Child Protection.**

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