Boundaries And Dual Relationships

Name

Affiliation

Course

Date

* **Introduce the case study and analyze the implications of the events in the scenario.**

Blending professional relationships with other kinds of relationships with clients often raises ethical concerns. Therefore, it is always important to think of clients' bests interests when considering engaging in multiple relationships. Multiple relationships are essential when a human service professional assumes more than one role simultaneously with a client. It entails mixing the professional relationship with a nonprofessional relationship like socializing with clients or becoming emotional or sexually involved (Corey et al., 2019). In this case, Ms. Cheney, a case manager, engaged herself in dual relationships in her engagement with Ms. Rosalind. First, the fact that the client was also divorced shifted her association in terms of how she considered Ms. Rosalind. People with common and shared issues often find themselves inclined towards each other, which explains why the two women became close friends.

The events in this scenario implied that sharing many common interests and the good times that Ms. Cheney had with her client made it hard for her to heed the warning signs in their relationship with Ms. Rosalind. Ideally, she failed to pay sufficient attention to the possible problems involved in boundary-crossing by innocently engaging with a client because their many similarities clouded her. Spending additional time together, like going out on weekends evenings, going to the movies, were all after their sessions. Such acts would imply that considering themselves to be close friends would result in errors in judgment because the dual relationships might prompt the therapist to disregard the negatives aspects of the client's situation to maintain the relationship. In the end, the friendship failed with negative outcomes for both the therapist and the client.

* **Investigate the harmful effects of such a relationship on all parties involved: Ms. Rosalind, the helping relationship, and Ms. Cheney.**

From the onset of such a relationship, it was clear that it would be harmful to all parties involved. On Ms. Cheney’s part, the dual relationship with her clients had the potential of impairing her judgment concerning the case at hand, further increasing the potential for conflicts of interest. There was the possibility of the client being exploited because she, too, was a divorcee like her. If she had not completely moved on, the professional nature of the therapeutic relationship would have been blurred and distorted. In addition, to maintain the relationship, Ms. Cheney would have deliberately blocked out the awareness of the potential for serious harm and instead focused on the beneficial aspect of the relationship, which is unethical because it affects her objectivity in helping the client (Corey et al., 2019).

Above all, if found in breach, such a relationship would cause her to lose her job and license, which would be very harmful and devastating for her. For the client, Ms. Rosalind, the biggest harm of such a relationship would be her not receiving the necessary help, and the feeling of betrayal after their relationship was terminated. With the therapist's judgment impaired and lacking objectivity, and the nature of the relationship already blurred by their friendship, the client would not receive the help she required because of the conflict of interest. There is also the risk of her trust and dependency being exploited by the therapist because often, when human service professionals engage with clients, power and status are unequal. In the helping relationships, the harm would be that the therapist's lack of objectivity would impact her service delivery, making it hard for the client to receive the required help.

* **Discuss both the social and emotional impacts of such a relationship as well as their effects on the treatment relationship. Use specific examples.**

Such relationships have social and emotional impacts that can affect the treatment relationship. At first, with both the therapist and the client has so many things in common, their relationship and the social connection would have had numerous benefits. Their engagement would help to lower rates of anxiety and depression, improve their self-esteem, be more trusting, and foster cooperative relationships. For example, activities like spending a significant amount of social time together, going out to the movies, and visiting local restaurants would have improved their social and emotional capabilities. However, after the friendship was terminated because of their differences, there is a risk of emotional impact on both the therapist and the client. After being fond of each other for months, the client feels lonely and betrayed by the therapist. Such emotional issues can lead to depression, anxiety, and the client's ability to interact with others. Developing relationships and socializing with other people can also be challenging, especially after things do not work well with someone supposed to be trusted (Corey et al., 2019).

To the therapist, with the client sharing similar emotional issues arising from divorce, the emotions would also impact the relationship but negatively. Because of the social and emotional attachment and the social engagement, the treatment relationship would not be effective because the situation would present a conflict of interest and thus reduce the therapist's ability to be objective and unbiased in determining the best interest of the client. For example, even if the therapist found faults that would explain why the client divorced in the first place, it would be difficult for her to divulge such information because of the emotional attachment she has with the client but rather would focus on the positive aspects. Eventually, the treatment would be ineffective because the relationship would be more of a friendship than a professional setting.

* **Discuss the likely outcome of Ms. Rosalind’s complaint if it was filed in your state.**

It is always encouraged that a client who suffer harm or feel exploited because of the dual relationship can file a malpractice lawsuit against the therapists (Corey et al., 2019). However, very few guidelines exist regarding multiple and dual relationships. The likely outcome of Ms. Rosalind's case would be the dismissal of the case and the client being referred to another human service professional. The rationale being that such cases require extensive investigations and hard evidence to justify the situation because the legal implication about dual relationships depends on the nature of the relationship and whether the client suffers harm. In the helping profession, as many relationships are discouraged, its mere existence does not constitute malpractice. The ethical implications rest on if the relationship is harming or exploiting the client (NOHS, 2019).

In addition, from the case study, no evidence of exploitation or harm exists because this was a non-sexual relationship, and the two women got along together. The only problem was the issue of objectivity hence biased decisions (Reamer, 2021). This would have been unethical, but no evidence from the case study suggests that was the case because the reason for the falling out was not related to therapy. Also, it is the client who approached the therapist. Thus, the therapist might argue that she engaged with the client to get to know her better to offer appropriate help. However, if it found that the therapist was not objective in her assessment and treatment and that she caused harm to the client, that would be unethical. She would be judged to have committed unethical malpractice because it is the job of human service providers to monitor such interactions in order to prevent potential abuse or harm to the client.

* **Analyze strategies to minimize the likelihood of such a relationship arising in your practice.**

It is prudent to avoid dual relationships as much as possible and, if need be, take necessary precautions to protect clients when such relationships are unavoidable. In my practice, I will take necessary precautions to minimize the likelihood of such relationships arising by adhering to the NOHS ethical codes at all times (NOHS, 2019). However, I will consider several factors before entering into multiple relationships due to the issue's complexity. First, I will think about a few things, such as if going into the relationship is required or if it can be avoided. If the dual relationship has the potential to hurt the client, and if the risk of harm is low, would the relationship be effective and if the matter can be evaluated objectively.

Answering the questions will allow me to analyze the risk of conflict of interest, loss of objectivity, and the ramifications for the therapeutic partnership in greater depth. Finally, I will always attempt to maintain healthy boundaries from the start, obtain informed consent from my clients, and address the potential dangers and benefits of dual partnerships with them (Reamer, 2021). When the dual partnerships become difficult, I will seek supervision and speak with another professional if necessary. In addition, I will document all dual connections in clinical case notes and, if necessary, refer my clients to another specialist.

References

Corey, G., Corey, M. S., & Corey, C. (2019). *Issues & ethics in the helping professions* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.

NOHS. (2019). *Ethical Standards for HS Professionals*. Nationalhumanservices.org. <https://www.nationalhumanservices.org/ethical-standards-for-hs-professionals>

Reamer, F. G. (2021). *Boundary Issues and Dual Relationships in the Human Services*. Columbia University Press 2021. <https://doi.org/10.7312/ream19402>