

Self-Disclosure: Case Studies

CHANG

Chang is a Chinese second year student who is studying in the UK. He feels very homesick and misses his family. He finds it difficult to understand and feel comfortable with UK culture and feels 'on the outside'. Before becoming a counsellor you lived for several years in China and your partner is Chinese. You tell Chang about this, which he finds very helpful. Sessions are increasingly defined by you both talking about China and places you both have visited. You also tell Chang about the difficulties your partner experienced when she moved to the UK, and how she coped.

TAMSIN

You see Tamsin in independent practice, working from your own home. You have taken active steps to remove from your therapy room personal photos and other items and have made the space as neutral as possible. You have a bookshelf with various books on it. During one session Tamsin makes a joke about one of your books, which is an autobiography of a leading political figure. She clearly disapproves of this book and talks about her own political beliefs. While you decline to talk about your own political beliefs when she asks you to, Tamsin refers to the book in subsequent sessions (even though you have removed it) and begins to make assumptions about your politics.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- 1 What are your thoughts about the counsellor's self-disclosure to Chang? What are the specific issues here?
- 2 What impact has that had on therapy, and how might the counsellor address this impact?
- 3 Do you believe having the particular book on the shelf is an example of self-disclosure? If so, why and, if not, why not?
- 4 How might the therapist work with Tamsin and respond to her comments?