I have a very simple value that I follow: ‘Whatever you do it shouldn’t significantly hurt yourself or people around you’. That’s about it. Clients who come in with value conflicts, that’s something I share with them too and that is something I believe in… One of the craziest sources while growing up was Star Trek… You don’t interfere with cultures inferior than you, who don’t have your kind of technology… you can’t have these limited values when you can have a huge wide world with probably contrary opposing values. So what happens when you go to another culture? What happens if you find aliens and they have altogether different values? What is the best value to follow? Don’t do any thing that hurts you or others significantly. Simple… the over-riding principle probably always has been that… That gives me the framework, other than that I don’t know. Probably never really thought about them.

The heartfelt answer and the unexpected source of personal values shared by Keshav were striking. Keshav, however, mentioned that he had never actively thought about how his values came into play in psychotherapeutic practice, and he was not the only person who mentioned this. Arindam, in a similar earnest manner, mentioned in the interview that he really found it difficult to answer the questions on personal and professional values, as he had never thought about it in that way. Jiya was excited that the interview would perhaps be an opportunity for introspection as she had not thought about these things in a long time. Ameesh mentioned in the follow up interview that there was so much that had churned up for him that he did not sleep well after the first interview, and kept wondering if he could think up any more values to share. What was interesting to note was that on being nudged, all participants
drew out links between values at the ideational level and their functioning as therapists... I was required to be persistent and keen to facilitate this inward journey. Did it help that we had developed a relationship through which they could explore personal values? It did help, and how! When I reached this part of the interview, it helped to be a 'therapist researcher'.

One of the objectives of the study was to identify values held by the therapists and how these values influenced their therapeutic practice. The in-depth interviews with the participants explored the participants’ perspectives on the values they endorsed and how they influenced their day-to-day practice. This chapter focuses on documenting the values highlighted by the therapists as important in their personal and professional lives, how they influenced their therapeutic work, the sources of these values, the nature of value conflicts in their psychotherapeutic practice and pathways to resolve the same.

**Signposts for Therapeutic Trails**

"Living in a way that reflects one's values is not just about what you do, it is also about how you do things." — Deborah Day

Deborah Day, an inspirational writer, has often been quoted saying values don’t just reflect what we do, but reflect a lot about how we do it. This section outlines the values shared by therapists that were important to them and how they saw them impact their therapeutic work. This interface of therapist values with the therapy process is the highlight of this section.

**Valuing Acceptance: If I Can Accept, I Can Heal**

Six of the therapists shared acceptance as an important value that they held, Hina’s response captured beautifully the essence of the theme, “You have to accept them for who they are and what they come with”. The value of acceptance emerged as
a significant aspect that influenced the therapeutic stance towards the client. Father Joseph also shared acceptance as critical to therapeutic healing.

Samira emphasized how the therapist cannot be judgmental of the client if therapeutic work needs to progress, “you cannot be judgmental about anybody’s actions in any way”. Keshav also shared how this could become an asset for the therapist to facilitate therapeutic work with clients.

Well, biggest asset, biggest help because it [acceptance] is probably the fact why I don’t get easily judgmental about people. I have a lot of gay clients and I never was judgmental about them. Yeah he’s a client with problems… Yeah people can do different things, people can believe in different things. (Keshav)

What was interesting to note was that the therapists were also able to identify that there were moments when they were being judgmental and could not accept the client completely, even though they believed strongly in the value of acceptance.

Sarah shared during the interview:

Acceptance is a value… but it is tough and I do get judgmental at times, and I say this is not right… but under that I still know that people are what they are because they are just what they are… (Sarah)

The struggle to stay close to this value of acceptance and recognizing and working around these personal difficulties was also shared by Keshav.

Only area where I have to consciously work on myself is marital issues. There is somewhere where I need to remind myself look you can’t be judgmental.

Look you are getting judgmental. (Keshav)

Valuing Honesty: Being True to the Process and the Client

Being honest emerged as an important value for the therapists, and more than half of the therapists stated it as an important value that they held. Hina shared how it
was a core value for her, “the most core value that I can pinpoint is that I am a very honest person. If there is a person who is dishonest then that person will see my honesty and feel ashamed and go away from me”. The value of being honest to self and others was reiterated by many therapists. For example, Jiya mentioned, “being honest to yourself and people around you, I think these are the most important”.

Some of the therapists shared how honesty translated to transparency in the therapeutic process. Sarah discussed this aspect in her interview: “I think honesty. I like to keep it clean and transparent as possible, as it is too stressful any other way. It is too much of a burden to carry if one isn’t clear about things. I like to be very ethical and honest about everything. I don’t like jugaad\(^{13}\).” Sarah mentioned that she was completely honest with her clients if she felt that therapy was not progressing and not much was happening in the sessions. Zeba, in a similar vein opined how being honest translated into various aspects of the therapy process.

If I say something, I stick by it; I have seen many professionals who will just say ‘yeah, yeah, the kid will be ok’, but you know internally that is not going to happen, and the last thing one should be doing is giving false hope. Giving hope is a good thing, but giving hope against hope is not ok. (Zeba)

Shabana enumerated how values could percolate into the therapeutic interaction with a small example:

Honesty in terms of where I am with each of them that by itself helps the process… it is an awareness process, as to why I got angry, what upset me. So honesty in relation to myself and honesty in relation to the client… I must share this experience, my dad passed away, and I went to school after fifteen days, as there was no one there, and I was not ok, so one kid came up to me

\(^{13}\) A colloquial Hindi-Urdu word for an innovative fix or a simple work-around.
and said you are not ok, so I said yes I am not ok, so he was a kid who never shared his feelings. He asked me what happened, I told him what happened, then he asked me why I had come, I said XYZ needed to get done, so then he began talking about what he does when he is not ok… and we had a long chat… for him it was that it is ok to be not ok, then I can also be ok with being not ok… kids are very sharp and they pick it up. That honesty helps, as you don’t have to put up a front and not in the sense that I am not ok and you take care of me but it tells the client that it is ok to be not ok… (Shabana)

Valuing Compassion and Tolerance: Being the Instrument to Heal

A few of the participants shared how being compassionate was an important value for them. Having compassion for others was noted as a value that facilitated engagement with clients and was expressed as empathy and care for them. Sheetal and Ishrat mentioned compassion as an important value for them. Father Joseph explained the idea of compassion through being good to others as a value that he had imbibed as a Christian.

In our Catholic church we have St. Augustine who has only one commandment, love God and do whatever you want. Now when you love God and do whatever you want cannot be wrong, no? So there is no name for it. It is just like reflecting goodness as it comes to you, and you are an instrument for passing it on to others. Otherwise I will have to say honesty and this thing and that thing and whatever. I think they are variations to the same things. (Father Joseph)

Hina cautioned that compassion for the client, though critical to the healing process, had to be measured and expressed appropriately.
Being just considerate of others is a value very dear for me, just to know what is another person feeling or meaning and offering them that… Things like touch and compassion have to be given in a measured amount as the client needs. It is like sugar in tea, if you give too much, it becomes like…uhhh!!! … distance is important, otherwise the client just starts depending on you and that is not a value in therapy then. (Hina)

In a study done by Pirzadeh et al. (2007), benevolence was seen to be the most highly prioritized value among the participants. Care and compassion were reported to be central values held, which involved extending help to people, being empathetic and considerate towards others.

**Valuing Freedom, Autonomy and Empowerment: Clients Choose What is Best for Them**

Another set of important values that emerged through the interviews was freedom, autonomy and empowerment. Ameesh articulated that he personally valued freedom and autonomy:

I am a citizen of the universe, which is why I should be free to go anywhere I want. I should be free to live anywhere I want. I should be free to follow any religion I want to. I can’t be contained in one tiny little religion or a tiny little country or a tiny little house. There is something I believe very strongly in.

Though Ameesh discussed it as an important value for himself, Deepak highlighted how this value held for both himself and his stance towards his clients, “The two values that I uphold are Freedom and Happiness… I would not do anything that would impinge on someone else’s freedom and encourage others to do stuff that makes them happy”.
This dimension was reflected further in Father Joseph’s narrative, where he shared that the clients were free to choose what they thought was best for them and the therapist could not be the one to decide for them. He elaborated beautifully that there are times when clients might ask for help to make choices or ask the therapist for what they think is the right thing to do, but the therapist’s value of freedom helps the therapist navigate that.

Keshav highlighted how this value of client freedom and autonomy could be frustrating to uphold, especially when the therapist saw the client in suffering and pain.

That is something I question at times. But that’s something I usually abide by. That you know a person is choosing to live in difficulty, you have an open hand but he doesn’t want to take that hand, you can’t do anything for that person. Yeah I do regret it at times especially in close quarters. Otherwise I generally manage to follow that. (Keshav)

Fisher-Smith (1999, as cited in Jackson et al., 2014) interviewed therapists and found that therapists endorsed the value of individualism, which included authenticity, agency, and autonomy, and also wanted to promote a similar value in their clients to decide about their clients’ own lives. Corey et al. (1998) identified seven values commonly held by therapists, and one of them was of freedom and autonomy. They defined autonomy as the client’s right to choose their own course of action.

Over the years, counseling and psychotherapy practice has highlighted the value of empowerment as helping a client discover personal strengths and capacities and having the right to manage their own life. The value of empowerment mentioned
by both Dirghayu and Sheetal, was linked to keeping psychotherapy jargon free and
the counseling process demystified.

Then I think another value that I have is empowerment… people should be
empowered to handle situations, to handle different challenges…
empowerment is a very important value also which includes, you know, that
we should try to do our best… (Sheetal)

Valuing Equality: Deconstructing Power in the Therapeutic Relationship

The value of equality was brought up in the interviews of two therapists, both
of whom shared how it was a strongly held personal value and how it also seeped into
the therapy room. Ameesh passionately shared how equality is importa
nt to him as a
value and also brought up how this translated to negotiating power in the therapeutic
relationship.

Eventually we are all the same. We are not different… Mind is the same, pain
is the same… Whether it’s a Tata-Birla who will come to me for therapy, my
attitude will not change… or the poorest person... I will respect both the same.
And if I don’t do that I will find it very weak on my part… that what am I
doing? If I have a rich person I become fearful and if a poor person comes to
me then I become strong? No that should not happen with me. Everybody is
equal, and everybody is a human being and that’s all. That’s a very strong
value I have. (Ameesh)

With equal emphasis, Dirghayu discussed the value of equality in
deconstructing power in the therapeutic relationship and making the therapy process
work for the client.

It has impacted my work… I believe in equality, in therapy I am an equal with
my clients, I don’t treat them badly … I have experienced therapist’s like that,
holier than thou, sitting in their ivory towers and looking down on their clients, it never works. (Dirghayu)

**Valuing Respect: Connecting with the client**

Ameesh shared a value that he strongly held of respecting others, “Everybody is respected. Everybody has a chance to live… it’s a value that I have”. Shabana and Jiya both mentioned how they respected their clients irrespective of their age. While Shabana mentioned that it helped her respect the client’s pathway to change, Jiya specified how it helped her connect with her clients.

I think for me, I strongly believe in respecting people around me, irrespective of whether it is a child, or even if I meet someone who has molested a child or raped somebody, I think that person still deserves to be respected as a human being, it is personally very difficult for me, to see somebody not getting respected the way they should be… I think my values at times really helps me to connect with people because if we talk about any basic needs of people, I think all of have the need to be heard, loved and to be respected, and I really value these things. (Jiya)

**Valuing Humility: Working for the Client’s Best**

Humility as a value was disclosed by Arindam and he elaborated on how that impacted his work.

For me doing is more important than being, so I never try to impress anybody. That is a very important value. I just feel that the client is always very important… and I am not… that is a very strong thing, my credit is not important, client’s benefit is important, the techniques are important, I am not important… I have to present the process to the person, you come to me I will
do everything, no not that, we will use this and that will work… that is my approach…(Arindam)

**Valuing Excellence: Ensuring Quality Professional Work**

Excellence as a value was shared by Rita, Ameesh and Samira, which translated to providing quality therapeutic care for clients and ensuring professional standards were maintained.

Professional values means, not compromising on quality – cannot be accepted, we can’t say ‘chalega’. If you have given somebody a time, you should be there. (Samira)

**Openness to Experience: Factoring the Context in Therapy**

Keshav shared openness towards experiences with clients in therapy as a value important for him. Ameesh too brought up aspects of how openness to experience was important for him to understand the client’s context.

I have to know whatever amount I have to know because if I wouldn’t know I wouldn’t help. I have to know. Even the environment, even the political, even the cultural, even the normative. Whatever… everything I have to know. Because person lives in that background and I wouldn’t know I wouldn’t help. I have to know. Again, openness to experience… (Ameesh)

On exploring therapists’ values, therapists shared values of acceptance, autonomy and empowerment, honesty, humility, equality, respect, compassion, tolerance and openness to experience. Through examples from therapeutic practice they linked these values to how they reflected in the therapy process. The above section clearly highlights that therapist values translate into therapeutic practice.

Considering this was a qualitative inquiry, therapists used their own choice of value names to express the values they endorsed. Rangarajan (2013) in mapping
value profiles of experienced therapists in India using the Portrait Value Questionnaire found the top three values endorsed by therapists as benevolence, self-direction and universalism. When the same therapists were interviewed and values were explored, participants shared values of honesty, care and compassion, fidelity, commitment, growth, respect, equality and justice. The value profile was somewhat similar to that found through the interviews with the therapists in the present research. These findings indicate that for profiling values of therapists there may be a taxonomy that needs to be specifically developed. This may be needed more so, as free listing values during an interview, might lead to therapists mentioning only a certain set of values that are particularly relevant in the context of therapy. As Schwartz (1992) mentioned there may be differences in terms of the values that may be prioritized based on the context or situation that an individual may find herself in. This aspect may play out in the therapeutic process as well, where certain values may become more relevant or important. In order to capture a comprehensive profile of therapist value system, other methods need to be explored.

Further, there is hardly any research on how therapist values impact the process. The parallel that the therapists in the present research drew between articulating a value and the myriad ways in which the values would be expressed in therapy was an aspect that needs more attention, particularly in the context of self-reflective work in training and supervision.

**The Confluence of Therapist Personal and Professional Values**

While it is evident that there are a set of professional values that are a core aspect of therapy, in being an essential component in defining and assessing client concerns, determining therapeutic style, approach and strategy (Tjeltveit, 2003; Tseng & Streltzer, 2004), as therapists practice and train they begin to understand and
exercise certain professional values till they internalize them. Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) explained that therapists aim to create a role, which is congruent with their own values, interests, attitudes; which makes them conduct their professional conduct in an authentic manner.

In the interviews when participants were asked to mention how their personal and professional values were similar or different, all participants reported that the values they considered as important professionally were also values they considered equally important personally. What emerged was an integration of the values in both their personal and professional lives.

If you are to be authentic you cannot have separate sets of values… so I cannot be respectful only in professional settings or only in personal settings… if I value respect I have to be respectful everywhere… I don’t think that people have separate sets of values… if you believe killing living things to have food is not okay then you can’t say I will be vegetarian at home and non-vegetarian outside. You cannot be honest in one situation and dishonest in another, it does not work. (Deepak)

Almost all therapists mentioned this convergence. Sheetal highlighted an important aspect that it might be possible to have certain values play a more critical role in certain spheres, and not in others, but convergence was a given.

I don’t know if they diverge. I think they mostly converge. Just that it is possible that in your real life… in your day to day dealing… some values might play a more important role than in your work as a counselor… for example justice may play a more important role in your own life, unless you see a client who either seems to be doing injustice or is tolerating injustice. (Sheetal)
Psychotherapy as a profession requires a certain stance and endorsement of specific beliefs and values that facilitate the process. Whether because certain individuals hold those beliefs and values and therefore find a profession that is consonant with it, or whether the profession instills those values and the personal and professional merge, is hard to say. Sheetal brought this up in her discussion that her value system found a perfect match in therapeutic practice.

I’m sure… Although again I didn’t think it like this… but I think all these values… if I had to take them somewhere… if I had to do something with them, if I have to even practice them. I think that this profession is a perfect place for this. (Sheetal)

Williams and Levitt (2007) highlighted the principle of value atomization, for therapists to separate their personal and professional values and beliefs. They mentioned that this would ensure therapists bring into therapy only professional values and personal values that have the potential to impact the therapy process are kept out. Similar suggestions have been made (Strupp, 1980; Tjeltveit, 1986) recommending that therapists sieve out their personal beliefs that are irrelevant to the process of therapy from the professional values, to ensure that value convergence with clients and other ethical concerns do not arise in therapy.

However, considering that the personal and professional are so closely linked, this distinction might be hard to uphold in practice (Jackson et al., 2014). In fact, what has been realized is that values are meaningfully interconnected in so many different ways, that this segregation is untenable. Moreover, the personal values of therapists may play a huge role in the therapeutic work even if they are so as to say not directly relevant to the profession. Sheetal opined on this aspect as well:
I’m thinking of personal values that do not impinge upon my work… Very difficult… because integrity also, if it is one value… then if you hold a value as a person, it would and it should be part of your work. (Sheetal)

Thus, therapists would need to be aware of their personal and professional values, how they integrate and also how they translate into their therapeutic practice. As therapists achieve congruence between personal and professional in terms of values it leads to a consonance and ease of functioning, else it may create a feeling of dissonance. In the next section on sources of values, it further becomes evident that the personal and professional values may be intertwined in many ways.

Sources of Values

The interviews with the therapists also focused on exploring what the therapists identified as the sources for the values they held. The critical influences that were mentioned by the therapists are listed below:

Parents as Role Models

Some of the therapists mentioned that they imbibed their values from their parents as they were growing up. The values held important by their parents were internalized and guided them in their personal and professional life. As Jiya mentioned, “I think definitely my parents, as a part of my upbringing I guess… when I look at my parents, I think they were very honest I was always taught to respect people around me”.

Parents can be important role models for their children as they grow up and mold their value system. Samira shared her view on this:

According to me the value system comes from parents, the first and last role models are parents. If your father believes in honesty, generosity, standing up
against wrong things, not accepting bribes, being loving and attentive, then
those would be the values you would pick up. (Samira)

**Experience is the Best Teacher**

Another source factor shared by some of the therapists was that of personal
experience. Jiya and Sheetal asserted that the values that are internalized from parents
or other sources get further strengthened through meaningful personal experience.

I think these values become all the more stronger when, I remember when I
was not respected and I didn’t like it, so it became stronger in me that yes
people deserve to be respected no matter what. At times, when I felt that my
friends or class mates behaved in a way I did not appreciate, or I felt
manipulated, or cheated, by them… so now I know how much that matters, if I
feel like this then how is somebody else going to feel, so I think, again these
values are a part of our upbringing and experiences. Because each and every
experience makes some value stronger and better, and the other values dilute.
(Jiya)

**Clients as a Source of Inspiration**

Hina shared how she learnt the spirit to never give up from her clients.

From my patients, definitely, I learnt a lot from them, I learnt to stick with
something and change will come. I was a person who would give up very
easily and not hold on for too long, I would have patients telling me that you
know if we worked on this a little more may be I could change, let us not give
up so easily. And there have been patients who have actually seen me get
stuck in therapy and have given me reading material, very empathically
understanding that I am stuck. There have been patients who have taught me
through their behavior, through their stories, how they have dealt with
adversities, I definitely don’t have all that pain. So my patients are really a resource to me, thinking of what they have gone through and how they dealt with it… it makes a huge difference in my everyday life, so a lot of my values have come from them (Hina)

Clients could be an important source of values for therapists. Through the interpersonal interactions and relationships that the individuals in therapy share, clients too contribute to the value system of the therapist (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Schwartz, 1992).

Looking Inside

Both Sheetal and Dirghayu shared that it was looking within and thinking about things that helped them evolve their value systems. Dirghayu mentions, “Years and years of self-work… for the last 7-8 years I have thought about what is it that is important for me and I feel that these are the things that are.”

Religion

Both Barbara and Father Joseph shared religion as an important source of their value. Barbara mentioned that her values of honesty and conscientiousness came from her parents and her religion, and Father Joseph mentioned how his value of reflecting goodness came from St. Augustine’s teachings.

I Learn What I See

Arindam shared how his reading influenced his value system and Keshav spoke of media as an influence, as mentioned in the beginning of the chapter.

On exploring the sources of the values endorsed by the therapists, parents, life experiences, clients, religion and media emerged as critical. Therapists did not seem to mention psychotherapy training as a source of their values. Rangarajan (2013) found training to be a source of values amongst Indian experienced therapists.
interviewed. This area would therefore need more comprehensive and systematic research. If therapists’ personal experiences and self-reflection are so critical in determining their values that influence their professional work, it indicates strongly towards a need to create spaces within supervision and training for therapists to explore these aspects.

In the Indian culture, values of compassion, tolerance, benevolence and acceptance are inculcated within families. With different philosophical and religious systems propagating these values over the aeons, these values have found place in the psyche of almost every Indian. Would it, thus, in some way make transitions easier into the healing role? Also, despite being socialized in a value system, the values may or may not percolate into everyday functioning, and much would depend on the salience of those values in individual lives, how they might have been processed and integrated.

Considering that training was not mentioned as a source of values, we would need to consider if the values held by the individual drew the person to a profession that would allow the expression of these values, more so for values of compassion, care, benevolence and universalism. This would also highlight the need for training programs to create systematic ways to promote discussion on both personal and professional values so quality therapeutic care is provided to clients.

**Resolving Value Conflicts in Therapy**

“It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are.”

— Roy Disney

Values have been defined as principles that guide actions, and the values that therapists’ hold determines how they conduct therapeutic action. It guides them through situations in therapy that require them to take a stance.
As a human being what I am today it is basically my values, my behaviour, my action, my gestures, everything has some value beneath it, I mean beyond that it is not going to happen, so I think even in my professional life when I decide to choose something, to take up something, that is because of my values, so yes at times there is going to be conflict in the client and therapist values, which creates a difference and affects my work (Jiya)

Therapists brought up in the interview a range of value conflicts that they experienced in their sessions with clients. Sarah mentioned how her value of punctuality came in conflict with her clients, who did not value time and came late for sessions and Shabana disclosed how her value of respect was conflicted when her child clients called their helpers by name. Zeba mentioned that parents being punitive towards their children came in conflict with her value of respect. Sheetal mentioned that men who believed that women needed to take care of all domestic chores, came in conflict with her value of equality, or if a woman was being abused, it came in conflict with her value of equality, justice and non-violence. Dirghayu similarly shared, that if he had to work with an abuser his values would come in the way. Hina gave the example of valuing fidelity and how that came in conflict with clients disclosure of extramarital involvement.

As stressed by the therapists, there are bound to be value conflicts in therapy. The following section outlines the themes that emerged when therapists were asked to share how they resolved value conflicts that emerged in their therapeutic work.

**Personal Strategies**

Acceptance that there will be differences. One of the aspects when interviewed on value conflicts, was accepting that there would be differences in values with clients. Arindam mentioned how it was alright to have differences in
values and we need to accept them. Ishrat mentioned how she welcomed the
difference just as she would welcome any other material that the client would bring to
therapy, as all of it was the way she got to know and work with the internal world of
the client.

You don’t contradict it. He may come with a contradictory… that is something
he is talking about himself. He is talking about something that he believes in.
So you don’t dismiss that. You allow that to come in, you allow that to… at
that point it has nothing to do with what I believe. So those are all external
things. But what this person is bringing to you is his internal world, his
mindset… what he is thinking or what he is talking at that time and it is
important for the analyst then to see what is happening at that time. What is he
bringing to you? What is he communicating and what is it doing to you and to
the patient at that time. So that’s what you look into. That’s a part of the
process… It’s really important for me to know that the patient is ill. He’s not
coming with the intention of contradicting my beliefs. That he may not even
know what I believe… And you wait it out and you think about it… You
explore a little more with the patient. (Ishrat)

**Awareness as the key.** Jiya shared that the key was in being aware when there
was a value conflict with a client, as when a conflict emerged with the client it could
impact therapeutic work.

Yes, that does happen but the key thing is to be aware of what we believe,
what the conversation is doing to me, because I am going to, as a therapist,
direct this conversation in a direction that makes me feel comfortable
internally or it increases my irritability depending on how I see my client.

(Jiya)
Since therapy is seen to be value-laden, there is thus, an inherent therapist-client value conflict in all interactions. In light of this, researchers urge therapists to continually analyze and become aware of how their value system keeps infringing upon the therapeutic practice (Vaughan, 1963; Patterson, 1989; Odell & Stewart, 1993).

**Focus on the therapeutic role.** Hina mentioned the value conflicts that she had experienced in therapy with her clients and shared that what she found helpful was focusing on the therapeutic role.

Happens all the time… Many are there… There are clients who are into extra-marital affairs, I am not, so I can’t show that value judgment towards a client. A client might be beating up their child, I don’t do that so that is a conflict…. Many of these conflicts may arise, but my job as a therapist is to keep myself out of this, and bring my skills to the session, and at times the person into the session, but not intrude into the client’s territory. I can’t tell them what to do with their lives. (Hina)

Keshav revealed his internal conflict in dealing with his client tolerating injustice and unfairness.

Yes. I remember one couple who had come to me. The husband just one fine day told the female that look this is not working we need to divorce. No conflicts, nothing of that sort. So the female came to me with the idea that I want to save this. The instinctual thing was that if there are no problems the guy is stupid. Why does he want to end it? Those are the kind of times you remind yourself look you have to listen to the guy once… even if the guy is stupid you can’t afford to be judgmental... I needed to remind myself that look what is your role here? You are a mental health professional. What is your
role? Your role is to help reduce the clients’ emotional problems. Stick to that, the rest is not your business. So that’s something I needed to do very, very consciously. (Keshav)

Engage in self-reflective practice and supervision. Shabana, Ishrat, Keshav and Hina shared using self-reflective practice and supervision or sharing when value conflicts with clients came up.

What I do is create a space… I put it into a box, which I can open at the end of the day and sort out. What is affecting me I write it down, if something is continuing to affect me then I speak to my therapist… (Hina)

Keshav mentioned actively reflecting on his work, by asking himself what was the conflict and how it impacted him and what was his role as a therapist. Ishrat, too mentioned, waiting it out and thinking about it, while Shabana shared that she brought it up in supervision.

Client Related Strategies

State values at the outset to avoid conflict. One way in which Sarah resolved such conflicts was by stating her values clearly to the client. She mentioned that it is important in these situations that she kept her side clear, by letting the client know.

I understand them lying, I understand them having different values from mine because I don’t come with the perspective that they are wrong. They have reasons for being that way. So like I was telling you about my appointments and my time, I keep my side clear – your values could be whatever, but my values are that this is your time slot, you come and do your session, if you don’t then you pay. I play it safe – I tell the patient in the beginning this is how I would like it, there is no fine print and everything is very clear. Think
about it, sign up for therapy accordingly and this is how you’ll be charged etc. Everything is told very clearly. So then when the conflicts come up there isn’t too much space for me to get disappointed. So then I’m able to understand those conflicts and work with them. (Sarah)

**When the conflict happens express your values.** Shabana shared how the value conflicts with children could also be handled by the therapist in the session by stating their personal values up front.

Like I have many kids who don’t do anything at home, but I have to pack, and I tell them to do so, they tell me but we don’t do this at home. So I tell them here you have to do it. Sometimes kids are very rough they call their help ‘maid or servant’, and this is not liked by me at all, so I tell them to call them by their name or what it is… and by now I know most of their drivers or helpers names and one day the old helper didn’t come, and someone else came so I asked the child “Where is Maushi?”, so he said, “you mean the maid”… but I continued on calling her Maushi. Earlier I would get hassled and worked up but I didn’t change and didn’t insist on changing the kid either. Today I can separate it out and I don’t have to value what he is doing and at the same time keep to my values too, and then he says he will not call her that way so I said you do what you want, but I do what I have to. (Shabana)

Sheetal mentioned how in her work with adults, she did state her values clearly in the session, especially when it was about intimate partner violence.

Suppose I have this value that nobody has to be abused and a woman is saying that I am being abused but I want to continue with this marriage… I would state… I will be with you for as long as you want me to be there, whenever you want to come or if you want to not come I am with you. If you want me to
suggest another therapist I’m with you… I will help you with that. Although my opinion is that this marriage may not work Specially as I said when there is abuse I am not non-directive. I am directive. Yet I would be supportive.

(Sheetal)

**Use the example of a third person when client seeks guidance on a value.**

When the client insists on an opinion from the therapist and there is a therapist – client values mismatch, Hina shared that the situation needed to be carefully handled. They do that also… What is your opinion on this, or pose a value conflict…I would tell them honestly, if you ask me about this, I don’t do this, and I don’t sit in judgment about what you do. Let’s think about a third person and they are facing the situation, and what would they do. Often clients are posing this question because they don’t have anything in their brain, how I am going to handle this, so I am going to look up to how you handle it. Oh that is a red flag, because they are going to throw out anything that you are going to tell them. So I would say how would XYZ or your friend handle this situation, so I would immediately move it out of my space. I find that helpful, because finally they are only trying to get answers in their head. (Hina)

**If conflicts are unmanageable terminate sessions.** Zeba shared how the value conflict could happen with parents of children being seen in therapy. Therapist values of patience and appreciating micro gains can come in conflict with the value of the parents who are seeking instant results and do not approve of the therapist methods.

See I can’t expect everyone to follow all my values. I have had these kids for remedial work. Again, I do remedial work very differently, if a child is having a difficulty in writing, I will use ABT to get the child to write. I tell parents
that I work very differently, if they are ok then fine, if not they can discontinue. (Zeba)

Dirghayu imagined that if he were to ever work with someone who abused children it would activate a value conflict for him and he would decide not to work with that person.

**Ending Comments**

Values are now seen as inescapable in therapy. Therapists during the interview outlined clearly how their values interfaced with their therapeutic work. In sharing the values they endorsed, therapists discussed how these values had developed over the years and were relevant personally and professionally for them. While some values may be expressed more in the professional sphere, others may emerge less often, or only in the context of a client concern. The fact that the values therapists held determined therapeutic action, makes awareness and dialogue around values necessary.

Research has shown that value conflicts between therapists and clients are experienced by therapists as a sense of discomfort or dissonance and have associated with significant decrease in treatment outcomes (Farnsworth & Callahan, 2013). Further, there is a need to address values in therapy to achieve beneficence, non-maleficence and justice (Farnsworth & Callahan, 2013).

Rangarajan (2013) in her research found that therapists mentioned facing value conflicts in their therapeutic practice related to non-violence, honesty, and fidelity. They reported strategies such as taking a stance on their value, empowering the client, and focusing on client values as helpful. William and Levitt (2007) in their research with experienced therapists found that therapists would disclose their values to encourage clients to share and explore their own values. Strupp (1980) suggested
that in making disclosures, therapists could limit them to therapeutic or professional values, rather than idiosyncratic personal values, that were not relevant to therapy. He believed this would ensure reduction of indoctrination and value convergence.

Farnsworth and Callahan (2013) provided a detailed model to negotiate value conflicts in therapy. They first suggested moving from detection of the conflict to examining the values and then categorizing it in stages of pre-emptive (before direct contact with the client), adjacent (when the value conflict is not explicitly related to the treatment goals), operational (when the therapist and client agree with the overall significance of the value but not with the application) and finally, unarticulated (when the client is experiencing emotional distress due to a value conflict but is unable to articulate why). To negotiate these conflicts in therapy, Farnsworth and Callahan (2013) provided solutions such as focused supervision, outcome tracking, diversity training, values articulation, terminal training, and finally, referrals.

To reduce the challenges faced by value conflicts in therapy, Farnsworth and Callahan (2013) advocated that the best protection was to allow practitioners the space to develop greater personal and professional awareness of their own values and recognize the impact they have on the therapy they provide to their beneficiaries. In the case of cultural conflict specifically, Knapp and VandeCreek (2007) recommended viewing the clash from the perspective of ‘soft universalism’ which entails accepting that all cultures share basic universal values, even in the case where expressing the same may differ.

What is strongly recommended is that there is a structured framework for therapists to articulate their therapeutic or professional and personal values (Jackson et al., 2014). Along with that, there is the need to incorporate a value sensitization component in training therapists and counselors to increase awareness of their own
values and their ability to sensitively deal with the values of their clients (Wilde, 2008). Jackson et al. (2014) asserted that in a plural and diverse society, where therapist and clients could endorse very different values, this becomes very critical. They suggested that an axiological taxonomy be developed for therapists to articulate their values, and therapists need to be trained to articulate their ontological and philosophical stance, and draw parallels in how they reflect on their beliefs or theory of change, interventions, goals, and other therapy related beliefs. In a pluralistic culture like India where diversity is common, this becomes even more important.

No individual is free from bias and prejudice, therapist and counselor trainees also have a range of attitudes, beliefs, and behavior that they bring into the professional space. Mintz and Bieschke (2009) have developed a Counseling Psychology Model Training Values Statement Addressing Diversity (CPMTVSAD), which would explicate the professional values upon which students’ clinical work should be based. They propose a model to facilitate examination of trainee attitudes, assumptions, behaviors, and values in a safe and trusting relationship with the trainer to facilitate therapeutic work effectively despite cultural, individual, and role differences between therapist and client.