The Professional Check-In: A Self-Evaluation for Psychologists

Psychologists regularly assess the functioning of their clients. We monitor symptoms, functioning, risk, progress, and change.

How often do we intentionally assess our own professional functioning?

Self-evaluation is not about judging ourselves. It is a routine professional practice that can help us notice small changes before they become larger problems.

WORKLOAD AND WORKFLOW

Ask yourself:

- Am I consistently working beyond the hours I intended?
- Do I routinely skip breaks?
- Have I stopped taking vacations or meaningful time away?
- Am I accepting responsibilities even when my schedule is full?
- Am I allowing enough time for documentation and consultation?

CLINICAL FUNCTIONING

Consider what happens inside the therapy room:

- Am I consistently present and engaged?
- Am I starting and ending sessions on time?
- Am I distracted by personal concerns?
- Am I unusually irritated, detached, or emotionally reactive?
- Am I avoiding certain cases or clinical tasks?

One difficult day does not mean impaired practice. Patterns matter.

BOUNDARIES

Ask:

- Am I communicating outside established expectations?
- Have I made exceptions to policies that I would not normally make?
- Am I over-disclosing?
- Am I taking responsibility for problems that belong to the client?
- Have I stopped consulting because I do not want someone to question my decisions?

PERSONAL WELL-BEING

Consider sleep, physical health, relationships, mood, stress, substance use, and other factors that could affect concentration or judgment.

APA Standard 2.06 addresses personal problems and conflicts. Psychologists should not begin professional activities when personal problems create a substantial likelihood of preventing competent performance. When personal problems interfere with professional duties, psychologists should take appropriate measures, including consultation or assistance and consideration of whether duties should be limited, suspended, or terminated.

A SIMPLE CHECK-IN

Rate each of the previous areas from 1 to 5:

1 = Significant concern
2 = Needs attention
3 = Generally manageable
4 = Functioning well
5 = Strong and sustainable

The purpose is not to create a clinical score. It is to identify areas worth noticing.

The goal is not perfection. Psychologists are human. We will have difficult weeks, losses, illnesses, frustrating cases, and periods when routines fall apart.

The goal is to develop the professional habit of noticing what is happening and responding before problems become harder to address.

A useful question is simply: How am I doing, and is the way I am practicing still sustainable?

If the answer gives you pause, talk with someone you trust. Consultation is often easier when it happens early.

Resources: APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, Standard 2.06.

Note: This article is educational and is not legal advice. Psychologists should consult current North Carolina law, Board guidance, and the APA Ethics Code for questions about their individual practice.