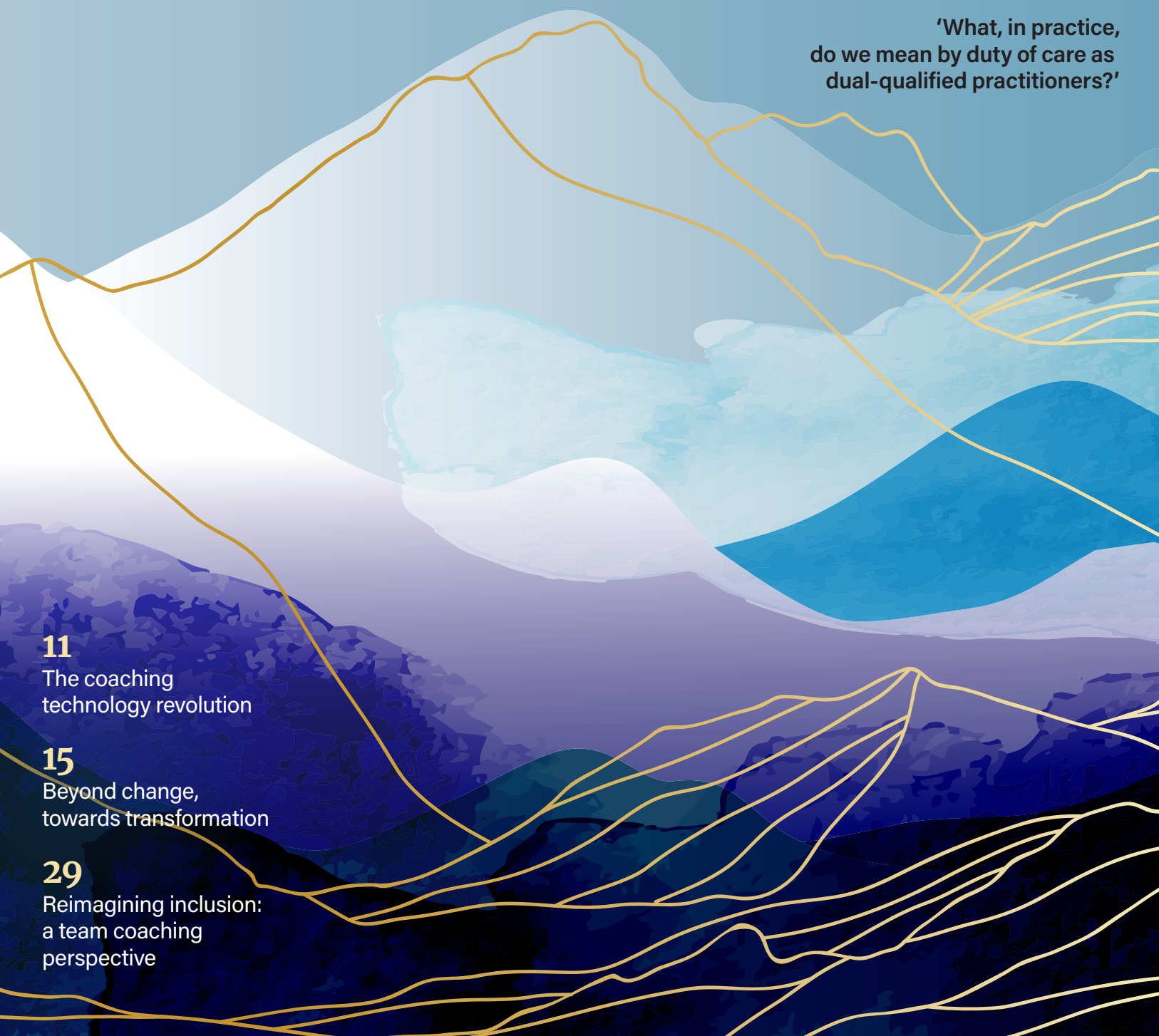
April 2026
For counsellor-coaches and other coaching professionals

Coaching Today

Navigating a complex landscape

'What, in practice, do we mean by duty of care as dual-qualified practitioners?'



11
The coaching technology revolution

15
Beyond change, towards transformation

29
Reimagining inclusion: a team coaching perspective

Supervision digest

Ioannes Alexiades offers a personal account of the role supervision plays in maintaining practitioner self-care





Ioannes Alexiades

is an integrative dual practising coach–therapist who also works as a clinical supervisor, facilitator and lecturer in an academic setting at two London-based universities. Ioannes is an Executive member of the BACP Coaching division and current Chair of the Supervision Special Interest Group (SIG).

If you would like to join the Supervision SIG, please contact Ioannes at **info@mindhauscounselling.com**

The Supervision Special Interest Group (SIG) was launched by BACP's Coaching division Executive in 2020.

The Supervision SIG aims to promote the role of supervision by:

- Increasing visibility for dual coach-therapist practitioner supervisors within BACP
- Supporting the creation of a dual practitioner register of supervisors in BACP online directories to ensure that our members have access to experienced supervisors who integrate therapy and coaching
- Promoting the role of supervision and creating a network of dual practising supervisors within BACP
- Hosting regular meetings as a means of demonstrating best practice in supervision and raising awareness of the challenges faced by dual practising supervisors.

The Supervision SIG meets every two months, and our membership comprises experienced dual practitioners who seek to expand our understanding of supervision theory and practice. We also regularly invite accomplished authors and practitioners as guest speakers to join us, and share the latest developments in the field.

In my previous column in the January issue of *Coaching Today*, I explored theoretical frameworks in supervision training.[1] In this issue, I continue with the subject of training, looking at the importance of self-care in the supervision process, using my own experience of applying self-care during my psychotherapy training. I believe this to be pertinent, as self-care may not always feature on the curriculum of training courses for supervisors and supervisees.

Practitioner self-care

Before delving into the role of supervision in maintaining the wellbeing of both practitioner and client, it is worth looking at the concept of self-care first. Self-care is generally defined as the practice of taking certain actions to maintain or even improve our health, including our physical and mental wellbeing. In the helping professions, including counselling, psychotherapy and coaching, self-care is seen as an essential component of ethical practice that may assist with sound professional decision making and help facilitate the process of self-management.

Equally, self-care can denote individual, professional and organisational responsibility. This may include intentional actions we take to look after ourselves to detect and prevent burnout or vicarious trauma from clients; better management of workload, boundaries, and

continual professional development; and finally, formulating and encouraging supportive policies for employee wellbeing in organisational settings. More specifically, in the counselling and coaching professions, as well as being required by the respective professional bodies for providing oversight of the client workload, supervision also provides space for supervisees to pause and reflect on their own challenges and requirements during the work.

Supervision and self-care in training

Reflecting on my own psychotherapy training, I found supervision to be an invaluable asset. I recall feeling extremely uncomfortable when clients brought up difficulties, including trauma. Initially, this was due to the fact that I didn't have relevant experience to deal with these issues, but also in the case of trauma, this conflicted with my unresolved feelings derived from my own turbulent childhood. When I look back at my initial training, I recall the difficulties I experienced in separating the two and learning to process my own feelings of shame and guilt while bearing witness to someone else's. Supervision provided the space for this.

Moreover, I recall finding it difficult to discuss my clients' trauma with my supervision group while undertaking clinical placements. Although this may have been derived from my own sense of shame, as time went on, I was encouraged by how supportive the group was when others brought similar issues to supervision. Additionally, once a sense of trust had been established in the group, I gradually became more comfortable in beginning the process of sharing details relating to my clients' experiences, and how this felt for me to do so.

At around this point in my training, I was introduced to the method of phenomenological reduction.[2] As such, I started to bracket my own thoughts and feelings relating to my own trauma, from that of my clients. Learning to maintain this separation proved helpful, and I used supervision to address my clients' feelings before I focused on my own feelings in personal therapy. This approach allowed me to see the advantages of working phenomenologically and not allowing my own thoughts and feelings to get in the way of my work with my clients.

Supervision as container

Ultimately, the experience of feeling supported in supervision allowed me to deal with my clients' challenges and the parallel process that related to my unresolved feelings about my own trauma. In this sense, supervision provided the space for emotional containment and enabled me to process difficulties derived from both sources, without falling into the trap of being overly critical or judgmental of myself, or feeling that I was alone and had no-one to turn to.

In addition, I was also able to reach out to my supervisor to seek further support during this difficult period, which proved invaluable. Being mindful of the requirements of BACP's *Ethical Framework* helped me to realise that it would have been unethical for me to continue with client work if I was not fit to practise myself. At the time, I also found BACP resources, such as the fact sheets, to be invaluable.[3-5] In this sense, the process of supervision reinforced ethical and safe practice, and enabled me to continue practising within my own competence, providing a 'safety net' for both me and my clients.

Furthermore, to avoid the prospect of burnout and the impact of vicarious trauma, I worked out a plan with my supervisor. This involved not taking on new clients in my two placements. It was also recommended by my supervisor that I take a break during the summer months to reflect and process my own trauma and to recharge my batteries. This experience showed me the importance of self-care through boundary setting, knowing when to say no to more clients and to adjust my workload accordingly.

The experience of feeling supported in supervision allowed me to deal with my clients' challenges and the parallel process that related to my unresolved feelings about my own trauma

Supervision for personal and professional development

Overall, supervision had the effect of enriching my way of working through the development of new skills and increased confidence. Focusing on my self-care during this process allowed me to acknowledge my own needs when working with clients. This process ultimately enabled me to view self-care as my own responsibility, and to continuously reflect on further blind spots and to focus on my personal development and growth. In summary, supervision became the enabler that made self-care sustainable for both practitioner and client.

I will remain eternally grateful to my extremely considerate and experienced supervisor and my fellow supervisees who were instrumental in holding me during a very testing time in my psychotherapy training. This experience has afforded me the blueprint for the support that I now provide to my supervisees in both an academic setting and in my private practice. This is achieved by spending an appropriate amount of our time on ascertaining supervisees' own mental health needs at the start of our session before we delve into their work with their placements and clients.

As such, I believe that professional bodies, such as BACP, have an important role to play in continuing to raise awareness of the importance of self-care in the profession. One way this can be achieved is by ensuring that training providers and their personnel, including supervisors, are adequately trained and experienced to support supervisees. This includes detecting the early signs of burnout and vicarious trauma during the work, particularly for those that are undergoing further training. ■

REFERENCES

1 Alexiades I. Supervision digest. Coaching Today 2026. BACP: January; 34–35.
2 Husserl E. Ideas for a pure phenomenology and phenomenological philosophy. London: Routledge; 2014.
3 British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. Good practice in action fact sheet 078: fitness to practise in the counselling professions. BACP; 2024. https://tinyurl.com/8ww5jp7n (accessed 5 February 2026).
4 British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. Good practice in action fact sheet 088: self-care for the counselling professions. BACP; 2025. https://tinyurl.com/5xhtamkm (accessed 5 February 2026).
5 British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. Good practice in action, clinical reflections for practice 094: fitness to practise within the counselling professions. BACP; 2023. https://tinyurl.com/5t2arzfm (accessed 5 February 2026).

