

# Supervision Techniques 1

FOUR SUPERVISION TECHNIQUES  
EDITED BY MICHELLE LUCAS

PICTURE CARDS  
THINKING PAIRS  
INTENTIONS AND INTERVENTIONS  
SUPERVISION AND SENSING

This resource is an extract from the book  
*101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches,  
Enquiries and Experiments* by Michelle Lucas  
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Where can this be used?				Typical level of supervisee experience required	
					
Professional one-to-one supervision	Professional group supervision	Peer group supervision	Individual reflection	Most levels	Experienced supervisees only

## TECHNIQUE 1: ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES WITH PICTURE CARDS

Written by Michelle Lucas and Charlotte Housden

Where can this be used?				Typical Level of Supervisee Experience Required	
					

### When is this used?

Typically, the cards are used at the beginning of a session as an ice-breaker or arrivals exercise. Alternatively, they can be used the end to help close a session.

### What is the technique?

The pack contains 10 double sided picture cards, which are offered as a ‘muse’ to help develop a response to a question. Typically referring to an image invites a more reflective and richer contribution than simply speaking to the group.

**Step 1:** Spread the cards out on a flat surface (a table top or floor) so that they are easy to view

**Step 2:** Pose a question as appropriate to the situation

- For arrivals:
  - What’s happened since we last met that feels important to share?
  - What are your hopes for this session?
  - What do you need to say to help you become truly present today?
  - How are you arriving today?
- For departures:
  - What are you noticing about how you/we have worked today?
  - What learning are you taking away?
  - What will you reflect further upon when you leave?
  - How are you leaving today?

**Step 3:** Encourage the supervisee(s) to peruse the cards noticing which images appeal to them. Remind them not to over think it, but to use a more instinctive approach – they may not know yet why they are drawn to an image and that is fine too.

**Step 4:** Invite the group to describe the image they selected and, as far as they can, what the image means to them in the context of the question posed.

**Step 5:** When everyone has spoken, suggest they might like to take a photograph of their image to act as an aide memoire. Where the question posed relates to a group dynamic it may be appropriate to arrange all the chosen cards into a collage before taking a picture.

**Step 6:** Collect all the cards and ensure the pack is intact.

### **How to work with the technique...**

As the supervisor it can be informative to watch how individuals choose their cards. The manner in which they select an image may offer some information about the clarity, thoughtfulness and difficulty experienced by each person in making their selection. Where this is a group exercise, you may invite those who chose their card swiftly to lead the group exchange. Occasionally one of the group will need significantly more time to select their card – in which case remind them not to overthink things and suggest that they have another ‘moment’ in order to decide. To give them some space, it may be helpful to turn to the remainder of the group and invite them to see what more they are now noticing about their image.

When working in a group, should there be time constraints, Step 4 could be done as a pairs or triads exercise. Alternatively, where time is particularly tight, the group could simply be invited to reveal their chosen card without offering an explanation.

### **A word of caution.**

Some individuals can become very attached to their chosen image and want to take the card with them. If it is important to keep a full set of cards then you will need to be vigilant about the number of cards returned.

Conversely some people will struggle to connect with imagery, covering off this possibility in Step 3 is likely to reduce their sense of ‘difference’ within the group. An alternative is to suggest they think of a song title or theme tune; or perhaps to create a metaphor that means something to them; or indeed just to share their answer in a more conversational style without using any prompts.

### **What other uses are there for this technique?**

This tool is hugely flexible and can be used in many individual, group and workshop settings in support of any avenue of enquiry. The only limit is your own imagination!

## TECHNIQUE 2: THINKING PAIRS

Written by Linda Aspey

Where can this be used?			Typical Level of Supervisee Experience Required		
					

### When is this used?

This can be useful when deciding what a supervisee wishes to focus on in the session, or to deeply explore each person's own thoughts on an issue before the whole group considers it, or as protected time for brief reflective practice with a peer supervisor.

### What is the Thinking Pair?

Thinking Pairs are one of the Building-block applications of the Thinking Environment. It is based on the Thinking Partnership session, one of the full Applications of the Thinking Environment™, where two people offer each other sustained listening to generate independent thinking. Where a Thinking Partnership session typically lasts 30-90 minutes, a Thinking Pair will use less time. In supervision it can be used as follows:

#### Step 1: The contract.

Either agree that each person will think about their own material or agree a shared question that both will consider in turn. If a whole group is working in pairs, perhaps with the intention of sharing thoughts afterwards, agree a common question.

Agree the duration of the Pairs - typically five to ten minutes each and who will be the first to think. Commit to an absence of interruption, and that the Listener will only speak if the Thinker invites them by saying "I'm done" or requests a question.

#### Step 2: The exercise.

The Listener asks, "What would you like to think about today, and what are your thoughts?" Or if a group-in-pairs exercise, the question they have agreed, e.g., "What do you think might be common ground arising from our work?"

The Thinker responds, safe in the promise that they will not be interrupted, the Listener listens with ease, fascinated attention and encouragement. Should the Thinker invite a question, the Listener offers "What more do you think, or feel, or want to say?"

When the agreed time has elapsed, they swap roles and repeat the exercise so the other has their turn.

### **Step 3: The close.**

Each person offers a brief Appreciation of a *quality* or strength observed in the other. Note this is not a comment on narrative content or actions.

### **How to work with the Thinking Pair...**

In most conversations we interpret pauses and silences as an opportunity or subtle invitation for a question or comment. People seem to think in waves (often out loud) and pauses (often silent) and both are of equal value. In this approach, a pause is not a prompt to contribute rather an invitation to stay Easeful.

If the Thinker says they are completely finished before the agreed time and the “What more” question does not generate more, both can sit comfortably in case more thinking may come. Alternatively, the Thinker may finish and invite the other to become the Thinker.

### **What else might need attention?**

The purpose here is to generate independent thinking which means the process is highly emergent. In the context of supervision, it may be helpful to think more strategically about client work and to introduce some structure.

For example, using Clutterbuck, Whitaker and Lucas (2016) distinctions of long-term approaches to supervision, then the question posed could take a particular direction:

1. Whole Case Load: “What from your coaching practice would you like to think about today, and what are your thoughts?”
2. Supervisee-Led: “... which clients do you most want to think about today...?”
3. Developmentally Led: “..... given your current development needs who or what would be most helpful to think about today...?”
4. System Led: “... what do you think your client organisations would invite you to think about today...?”

### **A word of caution.**

As in all forms of conversation, any narrative can trigger the Listener and make it challenging for them to stay interested in the Thinker’s thoughts. It helps to relax and remember that that they will have a turn, they can then return to being fascinated by how the Thinker’s thinking is unfolding.

### **What other uses are there for the Thinking Pair?**

It can be used in a variety of situations and contexts for example team meetings, facilitated events, and mentoring, where quality independent thinking is the goal. Coaching clients can find a Thinking Partner outside of the coaching sessions. Thinking Pairs are not suggested as a way of working between Coach and Client as it can elicit content that is beyond the coaching boundary, but a Dialogue could be used instead.

### **References:**

Clutterbuck, D. Whitaker, C. and Lucas, M. (2016) *Coaching Supervision: A Practical Guide for Supervisees*. Routledge: Maidenhead. pp. 158-161.

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**Further Reading:**

Kline, N. (1999) *Time to Think: Listening to Ignite the Human Mind*. London: Cassell Illustrated.

Kline, N. (2015) *More Time to Think: The Power of Independent Thinking* (2nd ed.). London: Cassell Illustrated. (See chapter: “How’s it going? Coach supervision in a Thinking Environment” pp. 191 -192.)

## TECHNIQUE 3: INTENTIONS AND INTERVENTIONS

Written by Benita Treanor

Where can this be used?				Typical Level of Supervisee Experience Required
				

### When is this used?

As we cultivate a deeper understanding of self as the ‘instrument’ of change, we need to welcome our blind spots and be awake to our intentions such that we make conscious choices in how we intervene with our clients.

Developed by Heron in the 1970’s the Six Categories of Intervention provides a tool kit for how we intervene. It is used to enhance clarification at the level of *intentions* rather than loosely identifying *behavioural* outcomes. It sets out to establish a place of ‘witness’ (internal supervisor) within the awareness of the supervisee, increasing ability to self-regulate their practice, recognising the ‘gap’ between results and intentions. It enhances the supervisees ability to be aware of *what* they are doing, as they are *doing* it.

### What is the approach?

The six categories provide a range of styles, supporting agility through switching interventions to meet the emerging context. “An ‘intervention’ is an identifiable piece of verbal or nonverbal behaviour that is part of the practitioner’s service to the client” (Heron 1991, p.3). Within each style, the emphasis is on intention, what drivers or motivators are behind the intervention.

There are two basic styles for describing how we intervene (Authoritative and Facilitative), each sub divided further as outline in Table 2.1 below:

**Table 2.1: Heron’s Six Categories of Intervention with examples**

<i>Authoritative</i>	
<i>taking responsibility for and on behalf of the supervisee.</i>	
<b>Style</b>	<b>Example</b>
<u>Prescriptive</u> – directing behaviour, giving advice, taking a hierarchical stance	Your cancellation policy is not clear therefore you need to reclarify with your client.

<u>Informative</u> – giving instructions through conveying knowledge, information, meaning	When you challenge in that way so soon after meeting, and with little rapport, it could be unhelpful
<u>Confronting</u> – Give constructive feedback in order to raise the supervisees awareness or blind spot	You seem to have introduced your own solutions rather than allow the client to find their own
<i>Facilitative</i> <i>encouraging/affirming supervisee, self-awareness</i>	
<u>Cathartic</u> – releases tensions, recognising emotions, freeing up energy	How did it feel when your client cancelled their session for the second time?
<u>Catalytic</u> – encourages self- discovery, self-directed learning and problem-solving	How have you dealt with this on previous occasions?
<u>Supportive</u> – Valuing, affirming capability and qualities, compassionate and kindness	You really stayed present with your client as they worked through their frustrations

**Step 1:** In listening, notice which of the six styles are in play? Authoritative or facilitative? Hold this in your awareness.

**Step 2:** Ask your supervisee questions

- What was their intention by intervening?
- How might this have been received?
- How are their actions impacting the intention of the work?

**Step 3:** Work more consciously to understand what styles are in play.

- Did the supervisee accomplish what they set out to do?
- The supervisor might offer observational or developmental feedback?

**How to work with the approach...**

This level of observation can be challenging. Care needs to be given in how this approach is introduced. Consideration of purpose and clarity of contract is vital.

In group supervision peers can add a 'third position' to notice any disconnects between intention and interventions. Peers may need gentle encouragement to challenge their counterparts in this way, and it is a useful parallel for how they might challenge their own clients with similar observations.

### **A word of caution.**

Our actual intervention may be at odds with our intention. This may signal further attention needs to be given. For example, the supervisor may notice the supervisee's a tendency to avoid following their instincts, perhaps fearing they might get it wrong, be rejected or lose rapport. The supervisee might need encouragement to reconnect with their good intention and to take a risk, whilst also exploring how they might mitigate or deal with the perceived risks.

### **What other uses are there for this approach?**

Supervisors can be mindful of their own interventions. In slowing down, articulating both our intention and our behaviour, taking an educative stance role models self-awareness and vulnerability. Similarly, coaches can raise awareness with client interventions and impact on outcomes.

### **Reference:**

Heron, J. (1991) *Helping the client: A creative practical guide*. London: Sage Publications.

### **Further reading:**

Heron, J. (1976) Six Category Intervention Analysis, *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 4 (2), pp. 143-155.

Heron, J. (2001) *Helping the Client*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Sage Publications.

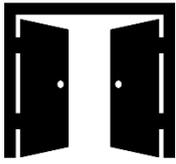
### **Resources:**

Visit John Heron's South Pacific Centre for Human Inquiry, website: <http://www.human-inquiry.com/jhcvpubl.htm> [Accessed 4 September 2019]

Oasis School of Human Relations Intervening in Human Relations [online] Available at: [www.oasishumanrelations.org.uk](http://www.oasishumanrelations.org.uk) [Accessed 5 September 2019]

## TECHNIQUE 4: SUPERVISION AND SENSING

Written by Claire Davey

Where can this be used?				Typical Level of Supervisee Experience Required	
					

### When is this used?

Useful when a supervisee is curious about working beyond talking and thinking and wishes to explore and experience sensing, tapping into their inner wisdom that often gets overlooked, dismissed or drowned out. It might also serve a supervisee that is stuck, enabling them to ground themselves and access a different perspective.

### What is the technique?

It is a form of meditative self-enquiry, guided by the supervisor. It is influenced by the wisdom tradition, yoga nidra.

**Step 1:** Establish the area the supervisee wants to enquire into and agree a timeframe in which you will work. Explain that time can get distorted and you will be the guardian of the process. This enables the supervisee to drop deeper into the experience.

**Step 2:** If working individually set up two chairs opposite each other, when working in a group, a circle of chairs with you as part of the circle. Adjust as appropriate if working remotely.

**Step 3:** Ask the supervisee(s) to make any final adjustments in how they are sitting to settle into the space, with their eyes open or closed. For example, some people like to take their shoes off to feel their feet connected with the floor.

**Step 4:** Using your own words, guide participants into the practice for example:

*“Get comfortable in your seat, allowing the body and mind to settle, feeling your feet against the floor, your back against the chair, clothes against the skin...”*

You might then turn the supervisees attention to their breath, to release any residue of tension in the body, grounding them into the now and surrendering to the core of being. Take the time to do this step fully, typically between five and 15 minutes.

**Step 5:** Guide the supervisee(s) to bring into their awareness the focus of their enquiry. Invite them to welcome in what emerges, letting go of judgement or assumptions and suspend themselves in enquiry. Offer some of the following:

- a) *“Notice any sensations surfacing in the body.....”*
- b) *“Where in the body are you experiencing sensation.....?”*
- c) *“Are there any emotions co-arising with the sensation/s.....”*
- d) *“If yes, what’s the opposite of that emotion.....and does that opposite emotion reveal sensation in the body.....”*
- e) *“Can you sense between these two emotions, moving from one to the other.....?”*
- f) *“Can you experience both emotions simultaneously in the body.....?”*

**Step 6:** Close out the exercise, for example:

*“When you are ready, come back to the breath, come back into the room, slowly opening your eyes, move or stretch in a way that feels natural as you reorient”.*

**Step 7:** Invite supervisee(s) to capture their immediate reflections in silence.

**Step 8:** Once the individual or group are ready, pose questions such as:

- How was your experience?
- How has it informed your dilemma/question/issue/relationship?
- What might you continue to enquire into?
- What action/s does it feel important to take?
- Are you aware of any patterns or themes that it’s important to acknowledge for future sessions?

### **How to work with the technique...**

As supervisor, it’s important you are able to ground yourself to hold the space, the silence, use intuitive pausing and pacing, tone of voice and utilise any emerging sounds to maintain the flow.

It is helpful to work with authenticity, avoid reading from a script and create your own ‘live’ narrative, based on the context you are experiencing. Additionally, sharing your somatic responses from the exercise (Step 8) may generate insight for individual and group process.

Initially supervisees might hesitate to close their eyes, closing yours might help to ease them in.

If working in a group, at Step 7 observe people’s behaviour and energy, and hold the silence until everyone is ready to move on.

### **A word of caution.**

If supervisees are not familiar with mindfulness or meditation they may experience frustration with the process, your voice etc. On the premise that their experience is their experience just as it is, encourage them to explore this in their reflections

**What other uses are there for this technique?**

Steps 1 – 4 can be used to ground a supervisee or client at the start or end of a session.

**Further reading:**

Kline, J. (1984) *The Ease of Being*. Durham, North California: The Acorn Press

Miller, R. (2010) *Yoga Nidra: A Meditative Practice for Deep Relaxation and Healing*. 2nd ed. Sounds True Inc.