

# Supervision Techniques 2

FOUR SUPERVISION TECHNIQUES  
EDITED BY MICHELLE LUCAS

TREE PERSPECTIVES  
GUIDED VISUALISATION  
DRAMA TRIANGLE  
THREE CHAIRS

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: TREE PERSPECTIVES

Written by Jackee Holder

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

### When is this used?

The reflective nature of the exercise is explorative, intuitive and reflective. It can be applied to almost any theme or issue. In the example below the questions are focused on a developmental exploration of the supervisee's coaching or supervision practice.

### What is the technique?

Inspired by the quote from St. Bernard of Clairvaux

“Trees and stones will teach you that which you can never learn from Masters.”

Taking time to stand back and reflect is a positive practice to embrace. Trees, nature images and metaphors provide particularly stimulating writing prompts. Trees remind us of the natural elements of growth and are associated with generative metaphors including balance, alignment, rhythms and cycles, loss and resilience. They serve to ignite right brain thinking allowing exploration of issues and themes from a more organic and intuitive perspective.

**Step 1:** Collect ten or more varied images of trees (see Figure 1.7), and create picture cards. Lay out the images so that all are in view.

**Figure 1.7:** An example image of tree for use as a picture card



**Step 2:** Invite the supervisee to select an image that appeals to them. Help them move into a reflective space. For example; “Consider what parallels, connections, similarities or differences the tree stimulates in relation to your practice...”

**Step 3:** As you notice the supervisee moving into a more creative space move the discussion towards the focus for supervision. Typically, the supervisee may need only one or two prompts; here are some examples:

- What aspect of your practice does this tree remind you of and why?
- Metaphorically how is this tree a reflection of how you currently feel about your practice? How would you like to be feeling? What specific aspect of where you want to be is reflected in your tree?
- What is the tree reflecting back to you about the issue you have chosen to focus on?
- Imagine your tree sharing its wisdom with you what ideas does it have of how to grow your practice and how to nourish your well-being?
- If your inner wise self was next to you on a branch of this tree what would they be saying to you right now that would be encouraging and motivating about your progress and growth?
- How could this tree be a resource to you in the future?

**Step 4:** Encourage the supervisee to free write in an unhurried fashion, allow their thoughts and ideas to unravel. Note: Once in flow one’s sense of time evaporates, set an alarm if a time boundary is important.

**Step 5:** Make some additional time and space to reflect afterwards on the writing along with any thoughts and ideas that are sparked by the tree image. Make a note of these.

### **How to work with this technique?**

The approach is organic and fluid intentionally connecting supervisee's to their personal power and resourcefulness and strengthening the internal supervisor. You may need to remind the supervisee to suspend the need for 'right' answers.

This exercise could be done as pre-work, post-work or an activity with an individual or group session. When working virtually share the images on screen. You can adapt the exercise for example the image could be chosen at random or consciously. Have some fun with it! Perhaps place a random tree image in an envelope and stick it under each chair?

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

A short free writing exercise can help people to warm up. Be explicit about not worrying about grammar or punctuation. The prompts help provide focus and direction but also freedom to go with whatever emerges.

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

Set up is important. Before offering this to a supervisee, be sure to try it out yourself to get a feel for how it works and to notice any resistance. A break away from logical thinking can create anxiety for some people so introduce the exercise with a light touch.

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

This technique can be used as a prompt with almost any supervision discussion. It is a way of mining for different insights and perspectives on an issue using language, imagery and visualization. It stimulates the imagination and encourages thinking outside of the box. The technique can be adapted for use with individual and team coaching clients.

### **Further reading:**

Holder, J. (2013) *49 Ways to write yourself well: The science and wisdom of reflective writing and journaling*. Brighton: Stepbeach Press.

Holder, J. (2014) Imagine A World Without Trees. [online article] 28 August. Available at: < <https://welldoing.org/article/imagine-world-without-trees> > [Accessed 6 September 2019]

Holder, J. (2014) The Write Stuff. *Coaching Today*, January 2014, pp. 28-33.

Holder, J. (2014) Notes to Self. *Coaching at Work*, 9(2), pp. 38-41.

Holder, J. (2014) *Slow Hand*. London: MSLEXIA, pp. 18-19.

Holder, J. (2015) The wisdom of trees. [online article] 29 July. Available at: < <https://welldoing.org/article/wisdom-trees> > [Accessed 6 September 2019]

Holder, J. and Levin, S. (2016) *Writing with Fabulous Trees: A Writing Map for Parks, Gardens and Other Green Spaces*. London: Writing Maps.

Holder, J. (2019) Creative forms of reflective and expressive writing in coaching supervision. In. E. Turner and S. Palmer. Eds. 2019. *The Heart of Coaching Supervision: Working with Reflection and Self Care*. Abingdon: Routledge. Ch.7.

Turner, T., Lucas, M, and Whitaker, C. (2018) *Peer Supervision in Coaching and Mentoring: A versatile Guide for Reflective Practice*. Abingdon: Routledge. pp.34-35 & 46.

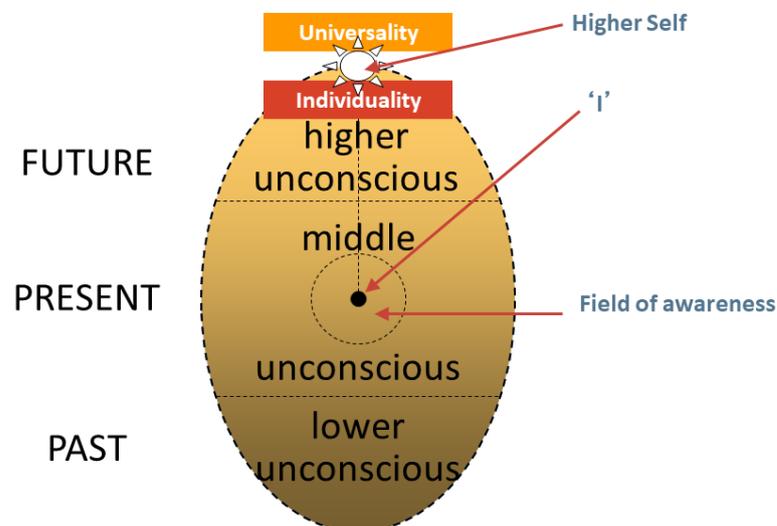
## TECHNIQUE 2: WISE BEING GUIDED VISUALISATION

Written by Hetty Einzig

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

### When is this used?

This guided visualisation is useful when a supervisee wants to connect with the wisest dimension of themselves. It helps enable wise decisions especially at times of dilemma, anxiety, paradox and complexity. It can also help build the supervisee's confidence in their intuition and in their 'Higher Self' (see Figure 10.1) as a principle instrument in the coaching relationship.



### What is the technique?

The supervisee is encouraged to use their imagination as a route to access their inner wisdom. It is well known that envisioning something helps us work towards it. Images have what we call 'motor force' – they act like a magnet, propelling us to achieve what we imagine (Lakoff, 2004).

**Step 1:** Contract to use this technique. To guide an appropriate journey for your supervisee, find out where they feel most fully alive, joyous, connected, clear sighted, at peace. Wisdom is generally seen as transcendent, so the typical journey goes towards height and light eg. up a mountain. However, for many people wisdom is intrinsic, their journey goes inwards, into the ocean, the mountain's heart, the forest. Always in connection with Nature.

**Step 2:** Settle the supervisee with a brief relaxation breathing technique.

**Step 3:** Guide them on a journey towards their Higher Self. Here is an example:

- “You find yourself in a beautiful meadow...”
- “What can you see, hear, feel, smell...?”
- “You will be going on a journey...what might you take with you...?”
- “You are traversing a wood, the light is dappled, you find your way ... there is a clear pathway... {or divergent pathways to choose from} ....”
- “You see ahead a mountain which you will climb (or descend)...notice the features of the path you are on... the view... the quality of the air you breathe” .
- “As you climb (descend) you meet {natural obstacles, or magical animals, symbolic of their challenge} ...and you overcome them....”
- “Now you have arrived; what do you see, hear, feel?”
- “You notice there is someone {perhaps human, perhaps animal} coming towards you, welcoming, benevolent. It is your Wise Being and they have come expressly to meet you and support you”.
- “You engage in conversation with your Wise Being. You might wish to ask them e.g. What should I do in this situation? What is my first step?...Listen for the answers which may not come verbally, trust what comes without judgment.”
- “Your Wise Being gives you a gift. It is a symbol of your solution to your issue. Note how you feel on receiving this gift. You put it somewhere safe and within reach....”
- “Express your thanks and goodbyes, and take leave of your Wise Being, knowing you can meet with them again at any time.”

**Step 4:** Bring the supervisee back to the here and now.

**Step 5:** Invite the supervisee to describe key moments and especially the encounter with their Wise Being. This could be done verbally or through drawing.

**Step 6:** Capture key points, insights and any actions the supervisee wishes to take. Perhaps source a real object that symbolises their quality of wisdom, represented by the gift.

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

While you will craft the journey to suit your supervisee, it is common for the journey to go through similar stages,

- 1) Start in a safe place
- 2) Go on a journey
- 3) Make a transition
- 4) Meet and overcome challenges
- 5) Encounter the Wise Being
- 6) Conclude the journey

In stage 4 guiding them to overcome obstacles helps instil confidence they can do so in real life. Importantly, let them imagine how they overcome them. Be light, be creative and keep the pace fairly brisk, ensure the narrative elements are connected to the supervisee's issue, and encourage them to tap into all their senses.

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

See Ideal Model.

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

You can also introduce the concept of a wise being into an ordinary conversation without a guided visualisation, e.g. "What would the wisest person you know do/say in this situation?"

### **Reference:**

Lakoff, G. (2004) Don't think of an elephant: Know your values and frame the debate. Chelsea Green Publishing Co.

### **Further reading:**

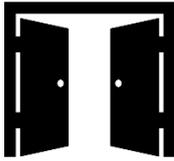
Assagioli, R. (1965) Psychosynthesis: A Collection of Basic Writings. Wellingborough: Turnstone Press.

Einzig, H. and Whitmore, J. (2015) Transpersonal Coaching. In: J. Passmore. Ed. 2015. Coaching: The Industry Guide. London: Kogan Page. Ch.9.

Ferrucci, P. (1982) What We May Be: the Visions and Techniques of Psychosynthesis. Wellingborough: Turnstone Press.

## TECHNIQUE 3: RELATIONSHIP CONFLICT AND THE DRAMA TRIANGLE

Written by Julia Menaul and Lynda Tongue

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

### When is this used?

This model is from Transactional Analysis. It can be used to examine and explore with the supervisees any ‘hot buttons’ or transference around their relationships with clients. It is especially useful when supervisees notice familiar patterns with particular clients.

### What is the technique?

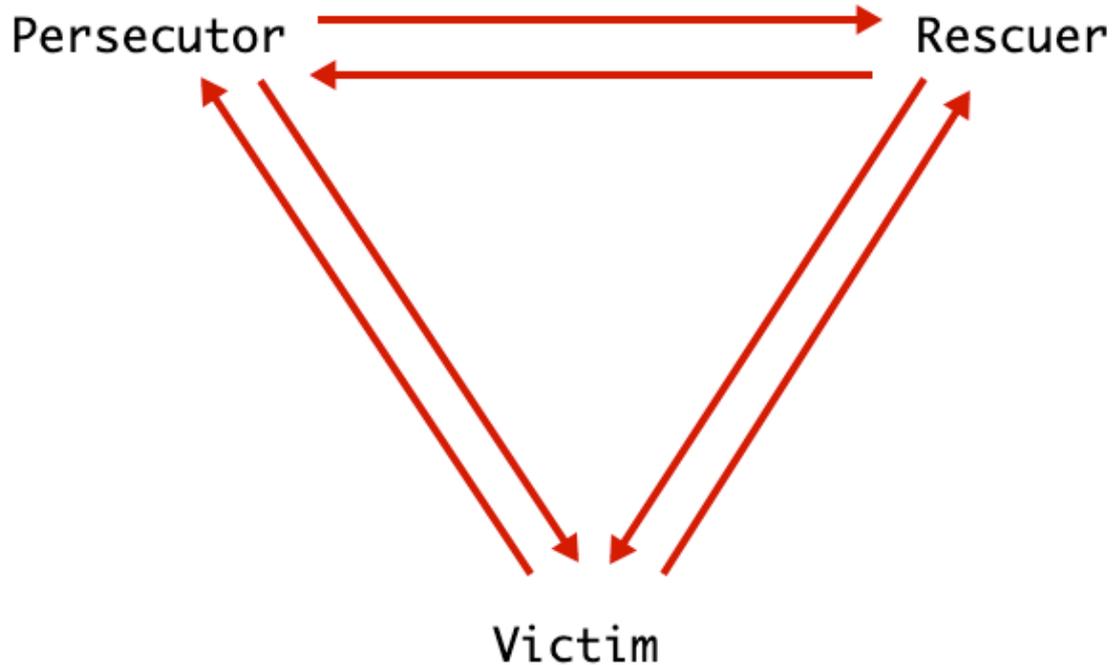
The supervisor offers a short explanation of the Drama Triangle, clarifying how it works and the roles of Victim, Rescuer and Persecutor. Supervisees are then encouraged to engage with experiential learning around the Triangle using a technique that helps them to understand the dynamics and to explore more positive ways of behaving.

The supervisor needs to emphasise that we adopt these roles unconsciously and we can either start what is known as a psychological game or we can be invited into one. We ‘switch’ roles or positions and feel a negative emotion in the process. The steps below will help the supervisee to analyse where they or their client might start the game, and what happens next.

**Step 1:** Invite supervisee to think about a conversation that is causing some ‘heat’ for them.

**Step2:** Plot a triangle on the floor using post-it notes with the three positions written on them, ensuring that Victim is at the bottom (See Figure 6.6).

**Figure: 6.6 The Karpman Drama Triangle (2014)**



Note: Ensure the triangle is big enough for supervisees to really feel themselves making definite moves from one position to another, whilst also seeing the other positions clearly

**Step 3:** Ask them to identify where they entered the Drama Triangle and to stand on that position. Did they start the game from here? Or did they accept the ‘invitation’ of the other player and enter the game here? Where is the other player?

**Step 4:** Stand alongside them (outside of the triangle) and not in their eye line.

**Step 5:** Encourage them to think about what was said next, and as they are doing so, to move to the relevant position, moving the other player to their corresponding position. At each move, ask: “What are you feeling right now?”

**Step 6:** Ask them to return to their starting position:

- a. For the Victim corner, ask what could they do instead of Victim?.
- b. For the Persecutor corner, ask what could they do instead of Persecutor?
- c. For the Rescuer corner, ask what could they do instead of Rescuer?

**Step 7:** Invite them to step off the Drama Triangle then pose these questions:

- What has emerged from this?
- What do they know that they didn’t before?
- What first action do they need to take to achieve the best possible outcome?

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

Ask permission to introduce the model.

When working in small groups: the owner of an issue to stand on their entry point, another person to stand in the relevant place, and yet another if necessary, to take up the third role. Using the above questions; another member of the group facilitates the process. Debrief in trios between scenarios, before bringing together the large group to focus on emergent learning using questions such as:

- What tends to be your 'default' starting role, what sensations do you notice when this is happening?
- As a coach, how do you stop yourself getting into a game with a client?
- What on-going support can you arrange for yourself?

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

Supervisees may feel vulnerable in this activity for the personal revelations it may generate, and also the questions it raises about their relationship with the client. Emphasise that all human beings play games and this model helps us find ways of playing fewer games. This may prompt a need to explore the original contract to surface how and why this 'conflict' is occurring.

### **A word of caution**

It can be helpful to do some spot contracting and gain permission for doing something different that may provide more challenge (albeit with support).

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

Small objects such as buttons could be used instead of physical movement.. These can then be moved around the Drama Triangle - a good option for those with mobility issues.

This technique can also be used with coaching clients instead of supervisees.

### **Reference:**

Karpman, S. (2014) *A Game Free Life: The New Transactional Analysis of Intimacy, Openness, and Happiness*: San Francisco:Drama Triangle Publications.

### **Further reading:**

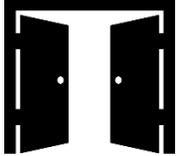
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Karpman, S.D. (1973) *1972 Eric Berne Memorial Scientific Award Lecture* [pdf] Available at: <https://karpmandramatriangle.com/pdf/AwardSpeech.pdf> [Accessed 30 September 2019]

Weinhold, B.K, and Weinhold. J.B. (2014). *How to Break Free of The Drama Triangle and Victim Consciousness*. South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

## TECHNIQUE 4: SIT IN THREE CHAIRS

Written by Fredrike Bannink

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

### When is this used?

What is nice about this creative technique is that supervisees can both look forward and backwards in reflecting on their life and work. It is useful when looking at their understanding of where they are in their journey. This could relate to their development as a coach or where they were, are, or will be in the future in respect of an issue at hand.

### What is the technique?

Using three chairs to represent the past, the present and the future, the supervisee is encouraged to explore an issue, considering three different moments in time.

**Step 1:** Create a focus for the topic being brought to supervision.

**Step 2:** Set out three empty chairs to represent the past, the present and the future. Invite the supervisee to clarify the time frame they are working with.

**Step 3:** Explore with the supervisee which of the empty chairs they would like to sit in first.

**Step 4:** Once the supervisee is sitting on one of the chairs start exploring through questions like:

- What's good about being in this space?
- What is making you happy or satisfied?
- How do you manage to achieve that?
- What are your best hopes?
- What are you doing that will enable that?

- What will be the next (small) step or sign of progress?

**Step 5:** Once all three chairs have been visited, check if the supervisee thinks it would be helpful to visit any of them again.

**Step 6:** Return to the original focus of the supervision and invite the supervisee to tell you what they think has been useful.

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

Allow the supervisee to dictate pace and sequencing of the exploration. Whilst logically you might expect supervisees to work through the time moments in chronological order, often the supervisee will start in ‘the present’ and it is of interest to notice which direction they then choose to move in. This might provide useful information for further reflection – are they most concerned with understanding what caused the issue (looking backwards) or more concerned with how they can move forward.

When considering the time frame being explored, invite the supervisee to decide what period is best. For example, if it is about a developmental journey, they might want to span one year previously and one year into the future. Time frames can range from one week, one month, to even several years.

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

When sitting in the past chair it is possible that unfinished business emerges. In a Solution-Focused approach, rather than diving into this, it is helpful to move to the future chair before exploring further. For example, you might pose questions like, “Two years from now, when this issue might be resolved, what positive differences will you notice?”, “What will you be doing differently?”.

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

Never use this technique as individual supervision dialogue whilst being observed by the remaining group members (Bannink, 2012).

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

The technique is very flexible as the concept of the passage of time can be applied to many situations. Once familiar with the technique, a coach could use it with their clients.

With some variation it could be used with group supervision or team coaching; here you might invite people to work in a co-ordinated fashion – each visiting the past, present and future of the team. Be careful not to answer questions yourself, ask group members to talk answer, react and help each other. Stimulate the growth of relationships in the group and find strengths, competences and resilience factors of all group members.

### **Reference:**

Bannink, F.P. (2012) *Practicing Positive CBT*. Oxford: Wiley.

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**Further Reading:**

Bannink, F.P. (2015) *Handbook of positive supervision*. Boston: Hogrefe Publishing.