EMCC
European Mentoring & Coaching Council

Supervision Techniques 5

FOUR SUPERVISION TECHNIQUES

EDITED BY MICHELLE LUCAS

DIALOGUE

THE TOMORROW QUESTION

SUPERVISEE-LED SUPERVISION

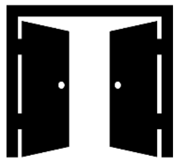
THE THREE CS

This resource is an extract from the book
101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches, Enquiries and Experiments by Michelle Lucas

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: DIALOGUE

Written by Linda Aspey

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

When is this used?

This can be useful when a supervisee would like to exchange thinking with another peer on a common topic; and could also occur after a Thinking Pair.

Alternatively, this approach can be prompted by a supervisor/supervisee when using the Thinking Environment approach to Supervision and they recognise/request an opportunity for sharing information

What is Dialogue?

Dialogue is, like Thinking Pairs, one of the ‘building-blocks’ of the Thinking Environment™, where two people support each other to generate independent thinking. The key differences here are that they each address the same question, and they share the whole time, for example, ten minutes, taking turns to go back and forth every couple of minutes as opposed to each taking a chunk of half of the time (e.g. five minutes each way). In supervision it can be used thus:

Step 1: The contract.

Agree the question for consideration, phrased succinctly and inviting broad and deep thinking rather than going straight to solutions, for example “What are your thoughts about…?” rather than “How can we…?”.

Together agree who will go first, and what the signal will be when the person speaking has finished so the other can have a turn. Typically, this will be by asking, “What do *you* think?” or “What are *your* thoughts?” They agree not to interrupt and to be succinct when it is their turn to speak. Sharing the time equally is key.

Step 2: The exercise.

The Listener asks “What do you think about … [insert the agreed question]?” The Thinker responds, safe in the knowledge that they may think on this question with a guarantee of not being interrupted. Meanwhile, the Listener listens with ease, fascinated Attention, with encouragement, and without interruption. The Thinker honours the other by being succinct and self manages so they don’t take all the time. They then invite the Listener to have a turn asking, *“*And what do *you* think?” or something similar. Being responsive to both oneself and the other, the pair establish a rhythm of thinking and listening, tuning into each other such that each person has a broadly equal share of the time over the period.

Step 3: The close.

When the agreed duration has elapsed, each person offers some words of Appreciation of a *quality* or strength observed in the other.

Note: Appreciation is not a comment on the content of their narrative or their actions.

How to work with Dialogue…

A professional or peer supervisor using this technique needs to adopt a genuine sense of enquiry as they engage in Dialogue. Both Thinker and Listener may hold different ideas or positions on the topic being given Attention. Whilst this building block invites each person to share information that might not be known to the other, the intention is not to influence the other. Rather it is an invitation to offer additional input and allow the other person to take or leave whatever they feel is in service of their thinking. The Listener listens with fascinated Attention to see how the Thinker's thoughts unfold, aiming to be more drivingly interested in what is real and true for the other person than they are in being right, or alternatively, frightened of being proved wrong. If during their turn, the Thinker responds to the others views from a defensive position, the Thinking Environment will be lost.

Dialogue can be used to bring the component of Information into a supervision session, enabling the Supervisor to fulfil their normative role. Sometimes a practice or ethical concern comes up, and the Supervisee or Supervisor can suggest a Dialogue. The Supervisor could use this approach to educate, provided they keep their input short and only for the purpose of generating more independent thinking in the Supervisee.

A word of caution.

See Thinking Pairs.

What other uses are there for Dialogue?

See Thinking Pairs.

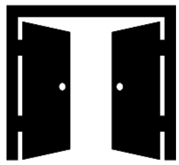
Further reading:

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 entitled "How's it going? Coach supervision in a Thinking Environment" pp. 191 -192).

TECHNIQUE 2: THE TOMORROW QUESTION

Written by Michelle Lucas

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

When is this used?

Useful when a supervisee is finding it particularly difficult to connect with their client and/or is feeling very 'stuck'. The supervisee might be finding it difficult to come up with ideas about what they can do or believe they have 'tried everything' without success.

What is the technique?

Based in the Solution Focused approach, a question is offered which serves to leapfrog the current dynamic and open up new areas of exploration to create a new way forward.

Step 1: Seek permission to experiment with a more future focused exploration.

Step 2: Discuss what would be a good outcome for the supervisee by asking example "What differences would you like to see in your working relationship with this client as a result of this supervision?"

Step 3: Help the supervisee craft a few words which capture the essence of this discussion, as you will use this in Step 4 e.g. [good sense of connection with this client].

Step 4: Support the supervisee to recall how resourceful they are… picking up on the output of Step 3 invite the supervisee to talk about other occasions (either with this client or any other) when their aspired future state was present.

Step 5: The supervisor asks *"If you woke up tomorrow and discovered that something had happened which resolved all the difficulties you are experiencing … that suddenly your [connection with this client] was exactly what you had hoped for…. What would be the first difference that you would notice?"*

Step 6: Continue the exploration in an iterative fashion considering how each difference noticed in one party prompts a noticing of difference in the other. For example:

- What might be the first difference that you notice in you?
- And if your client were to notice that, how do you think they would respond?

- So, when you then respond to your client, what other differences do you notice in you?

Step 7: Support the supervisee to connect with their aspired future state. For example; Following this conversation, imagine that you find yourself doing something different, however small, when you next sit with the client… what might it be? What else? And what else?

Step 8: Consider if it would be helpful to elaborate this by looking at how they will know if they have moved one point better (see SF Scaling Technique).

Step 9: The supervisor offers some words of appreciation, perhaps reflecting back those resources the supervisee articulated and which resonated for the supervisor. Where the supervisee has noted some improvement, the supervisor might reinforce what the supervisee had done to get to the current point. Additionally, offer appreciation regarding how the supervisee has engaged with this process.

Step 10: To close out the work check-in with the supervisee to see what they now need from the supervision.

How to work with the technique…

Once you have established a form of words that capture the desired outcome for the supervisee, it is important to use their words just as they are even if they feel awkward to the supervisor. Step 6 really helps the client to see something different and then to focus on how they would be different with the client. It may be helpful to continue this exploration – for example, if the supervisee says they will feel more confident, a follow up question like "What will that look like?" or "How will you know?", will typically elicit still further information. In Step 7 the supervisee may question what you mean by 'now' as often something will have already shifted within the session, compared to where they started. Interestingly, the questions about positive difference often prompt a shift in energy which yields a sense of resolution, the supervisee relaxes and is less occupied with what is causing the problem or what they might do next.

A word of caution.

This technique was adapted from de Shazer's work, who invited the client to consider how it would be if a 'miracle' had happened. Whilst intended as a metaphor the word 'miracle' can trigger more emotive reactions. Therefore, whilst alternative phrases might be useful, be careful to use neutral language.

What other uses are there for this technique?

Once familiar with the technique, this may be of use with coaching clients.

Further Reading:

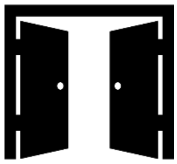
Connie, E. (2012) Solution Building with couples: A solution focused approach – "The most amazing thing I have ever heard a client say". *Context*. June 2012, pp.6-9.

de Shazer, S. (1988) *Clues: Investigating Solutions in Brief Therapy.* New York: Norton.

Ratner, H., George, E. and Iveson, C. (2012) *Solution Focused Brief Therapy: 100 Key Points and Techniques.* London: Routledge.

TECHNIQUE 3: SUPERVISEE-LED SUPERVISION

Written by Louise Sheppard

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

When is this used?

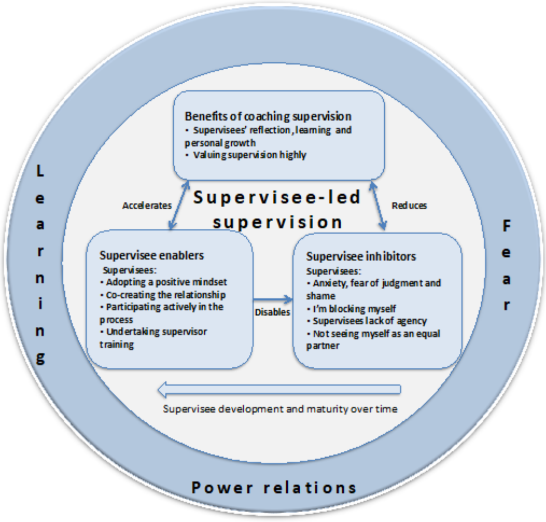
Supervisee-led supervision is a strategy that can be used throughout coaching supervision. Supervisors use supervisee-led supervision when they adapt, accommodate and attune to the supervisee's personal preferences and focus on maximising the supervisee's learning. Supervisees use it to take ownership for their supervision and engage fully with their learning.

What is the approach?

The concept of Supervisee-led supervision was introduced by Michael Carroll (2014) and developed by Sheppard (2016) who studied what supervisees do that helps and hinders them during supervision. She created a framework for how supervisees can get the most from the process (see Figure 4.1) along with guidelines for its use.

The framework is specifically designed for supervisees with an intention to become active participants in their supervision. Thus, 'supervisee-led supervision' is at the heart of the inner circle. The outer circle of the framework depicts the possible underlying mechanisms that affect coaching supervision – our natural desire for learning, power relations and fear. Inside the circle lie the benefits of coaching supervision, as well as what supervisees can do to enable or inhibit their supervision experience. The small arrows between the boxes illustrate that the benefits of supervision accelerate supervisees' desire to enable their supervision and reduce their tendency to get in their own way and inhibit their supervision. The larger arrow represents supervisee development and maturity over time.

Figure 4.1. Framework for supervisee-led supervision by Sheppard (2016)



Step 1: Both parties co-create the supervisory relationship by discussing:

- What assumptions and beliefs they are holding about their respective roles and responsibilities.
- How they can acknowledge power relations and establish an equal partnership.
- How they minimise the impact of fear in coaching supervision.
- Where the supervisee is in their development as a coach and how that might affect the work.
- How the supervisee's preparation can enable him/her to get the most from the session
- How they will review the relationship and effectiveness of supervision.

Step 2: At the start of each session, they:

- Focus on the supervisee's needs and gather any reflections since the last session.
- Identify the focus for the session and desirable outcomes.

Step 3: During supervision, the supervisor has the opportunity to role model being open and adopting an adult to adult communication style. Both parties will

- Create a safe space and own their anxiety and fear so that they can be vulnerable.
- Treat supervision as collaborative inquiry and be transparent about power dynamics.
- Disclose their experiences and share their reflections and learning.
- Review how they experienced the session – what was helpful and what could be done differently going forward.

Step 4: At regular intervals, they:

- Review the effectiveness of the supervision, how the supervisee's supervision needs are developing and how the sessions might change accordingly.
- Explore if the supervisee has outgrown the supervisor and/or would benefit from an alternative perspective.

How to work with the approach …

The framework is not intended to be a complete guide to conducting a supervision session rather a checklist for adopting a supervisee-led approach. The supervisee-led supervisor will set a tone of collaboration in every aspect of the relationship – from setting appointments to navigating the work.

What else might need attention

Using supervisee-led supervision does not prevent supervisors from fulfilling the normative part of their role and calling out ethical issues. The approach necessitates an adult-to-adult way of communicating, thereby enabling open and honest conversations about differences in perception, options and potential consequences.

A word of caution.

Using supervisee-led supervision is challenging and requires a high degree of self-awareness and courage for both parties. For example, where the supervisor is taking too much power, perhaps by being too ‘expert’, it is vital that the supervisee steps into their authority and points this out.

What other uses are there for this approach?

Supervisee-led supervision can be used in workshops, webinars and guidelines on how to get the most out of coaching supervision. It is also useful for supervisor training programmes as the current supervision models are often based on the supervisor perspective.
The principles of supervisee-led supervision can be applied in a coach-client context by contracting with the client about how to acknowledge and minimise the impact of anxiety and fear and power dynamics and maximise learning.

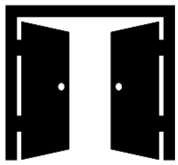
References:

Carroll, M. (2014) *Effective Supervision for the Helping Professions*. London: Sage

Sheppard, L. (2016) *How coaching supervisees help and hinder their supervision: A Grounded Theory study*, PHD, Oxford Brookes University.

TECHNIQUE 4: CONTRACT, CONFIDENCE AND THE CLIENT'S BEST INTEREST

Written by Marie Faire

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

When is this used?

When the supervisee expresses concern (or the supervisor is concerned) about whether they are overstepping their role as a 'coach' into a different helping practitioner role (counselling, therapy, mentoring, consultant) They might be seeking reassurance from the supervisor asking "Is what am I doing/want to do coaching?".

What is the enquiry?

While there are some situations that would be better suited to a particular helping strategy, the search for precise definition of what any given practitioner does, presupposes that we could produce definitions that would be isolated and separate. This technique offers three questions to help generate a more fruitful discussion concerning *how* we determine professional practice rather that *what* it is called.

Step 1: Questions relating to The Contract.

- Is what you are doing within the contract between you and your client?
- Is what you are working on what you agreed you both would work on?
- If not, is it appropriate and in your gift to re-negotiate the contract?

Step 2: Questions about Competence (Capability and Capacity).

- Do you have the competence and capability to work in this way?
- Do you have the capacity to address this issue appropriately?

Step 3: Questions about The Client's best interest.

- Is it in the client's best interest?
- Is it appropriate for this client to work on this issue with you?
- Is it appropriate for this client to work on this issue in this context?

Step 4: Close out.

- Explore what actions will be taken and the learning that can inform future situations.

How to work with the enquiry…

Explore the supervisee's answer to each question in turn, as well as holistically.

Much has been written about the importance of getting the contract right and then delivering what has been agreed. (Block 1981; Fielder & Starr 2008). So, while the supervisee may have answered questions two and three positively if the work is not contracted (or re-contracted) for, then the supervisee has no business going there.

The question about competency is more than what we are 'qualified' to do. I it about asking the supervisee as a professional to use their 'internal supervisor' (Casement, 1985) to check their own competency and capacity for doing the work. The work may be in the contract yet if the coach is not competent (skill) or not capable (i.e. without the resources, time, or energy) then they need to refer.

Finally, every client is part of a system and we need to ensure that what the supervisee does attends to the client's best interest in the ecology of that system So, the work may be contracted for and the coach may be competent, but it may not be right to proceed. For example, this may occur when both parties work for the same organisation and the issue is of a deeper or personal nature. In other words - just because we can, doesn't mean we should.

The metaphor of a three-legged stool works well, if one leg is missing, the stool falls over. Likewise, the answer to all three questions needs to be "Yes" If not, then it may be necessary to support your supervisee to consider how they will refer their client elsewhere or to boundary the work that they do with their client.

What else might need attention?

May want to discuss issues arising about re-contracting and what development issues might be helpful to work on.

A word of caution.

If the answer to Question 2 is "No" and the answer to Question 3 is "Yes", it would be necessary for the coach to refer. This can happen where the practitioner does not have the required expertise, but the client is insistent that they want to work with them on it 'regardless'.

What other uses are there for this enquiry?

This enquiry is specifically oriented to the coach : client relationship; it could in certain circumstance also apply to the supervisee : supervisor relationship. It does not easily have wider application.

References:

Block, P. (1981) *Flawless Consulting*, New York: Jossey-Bass.

Casement, P. (1985) *On Learning from the Patient.* London: Tavistock Publications.

Fielder, J. H. and Starr, L. M. (2008) *"What's the Big Deal about Coaching Contracts?" International Journal of Coaching in Organisations* 6(4), pp.15-27.

Further reading:

Faire, M. (2013) The Three Cs of Professional Practice. *AICTP Journal,* November 2013, Issue 6, pp. 13-15.