EMCC
European Mentoring & Coaching Council

Supervision Techniques 6

FOUR SUPERVISION TECHNIQUES

EDITED BY MICHELLE LUCAS

MY ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT

SELF-CENTRED SUPERVISION

ROUNDS

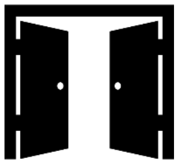
WORKING WITH THE SHADOW

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: WHAT'S MY ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT?

Written by Penny Walker

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

When is this used?

If there has been some conversation 'in the margins' about the state of the planet, climate change, plastics, wildlife or similar environmental issues, then the group may be interested to look at their individual and collective 'footprint' and explore what, if anything, they want to do to change it.

What is the enquiry?

Step 1: Before the session, invite the supervisee(s) to self-assess their 'environmental footprint' and bring their results to the session. For the results are comparable, everyone should use the same tool. For example:

WWF's environmental footprint quiz https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/#/
or the eco footprint calculator https://www.footprintcalculator.org/
or the Berkley Cool Climate calculator. https://coolclimate.berkeley.edu/calculator.

Step 2: Ask supervisees to line up in order of their results, from smallest / lowest to biggest / highest. Anyone who wasn't able to get a result can observe the line and join the conversation.

Optional – create a visual representation of the collective results. For example, an 'instant bar chart'.

Step 3: Debrief the results: What do people see in the line-up? What do they feel about the results? What do they think it means?

Step 4: Explore what they would they like to do as a result. It can be useful to divide this into:

1. Personal life.
2. Professional life (including non-coaching work, how they run their business)
3. As a coach (including whether they see opportunities for working on these issues with clients)

Step 5: For those who would like to take action point them to the resources in Further reading. Invite people to share the sources they have found helpful.

How to work with the enquiry?

Some skillful facilitation can be required to manage not just the content of the discussion, but supervisees' emotional responses to their results. Here are some typical reactions and how you might manage them:

- Critiquing the tool – acknowledge the indicative nature of these tools, giving space for some criticism before exploring their results.
- Get defensive – recognise that our wider society and the economy may have shaped our choices, so point to success stories to illustrate what might still be possible.
- Get despondent – especially likely when most of the group has footprints bigger than the 'one planet' sustainable level. Point them to the further reading which suggests some positive actions.
- Blame others – acknowledge the size of the challenge whilst encouraging supervisees to become part of the global movement which is creating change everywhere.
- Argue for a particular solution – affirm the particular passions of those present whilst also embracing a diversity of views. Remind supervisees that, just as in coaching, people need to discover their own solutions for them to stick.
- Get very angry or sad –bring your restorative skills to help supervisees face their emotions without being overwhelmed by them.

You will need to help the group move beyond these responses which may otherwise get in the way of looking at their impact, how they feel about it, what it means and what they want to do.

What else might need attention?

It is a good idea to do some background reading on the tool you are using to understand what it shows. Ideally complete the questionnaire yourself so that you can facilitate from an informed position.

Remember, effective action to reduce emissions and tackle environmental issues includes being an active citizen who engages in political activity and campaigning, as well as directly changing the way we live our lives. People can also support or lead change in their organisations. People may need help reflecting on and researching where they can have the biggest impact.

A word of caution.

This enquiry may prompt supervisees to consider working with clients to help them reduce their environmental impact. Indeed, there are coaches who specialise in this and clients who ask for this help. Before raising an issue like climate change with a client, remind yourself of the coaching contract. Is this your stuff or theirs? An open question like "What are the consequences of that choice?" may lead them to consider environmental impact, but equally it may not. If a coach discovers that their values or views are too far at odds with those of their client, then this may be a reason to discontinue the relationship.

What other uses are there for this enquiry?

This exercise can be adapted for individual use, missing Step 2.

Further reading:

Walker, P. (2007) Being the Change for Climate Change Leadership, *Organisations and People,* 14(4), pp. 9-14.

Whybrow, A., Cohen, Z. and Aspey, L. (2019) Call for multi-pronged coaching response to the global climate crisis. *Coaching at Work.* 14(5), pp. 12-13.

Resources:

Cool Climate Network (2019) *Start with a quick carbon footprint estimate.* [online] Available at: <https://coolclimate.berkeley.edu/calculator. > [Accessed 7 September 2019].

Global Footprint Network (2019) *What is your ecological footprint?* [online] Available at: <https://www.footprintcalculator.org/ > [Accessed 7 September 2019].

Ortiz, D. A. (2018) Ten simple ways to act on climate change. *BBC Future* [blog] 5 November. Available at: < http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20181102-what-can-i-do-about-climate-change > [Accessed 7 September 2019].

Project Drawdown (2019) Project Drawdown: The worlds leading resource for climate solutions. [online] Available at: <https://www.drawdown.org/> [Accessed 7 September 2019].

Walker, P. (2018) *Instant barcharts: a safe snapshot of opinion*. [blog] 12 September. Available at: <https://www.penny-walker.co.uk/blog/2018/7/18/a-safe-snapshot-of-opinion >[Accessed 7 September 2019].

WWF (2019) *How big is your environmental footprint?* [online] Available at: <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/#/ > [Accessed 7 September 2019].

TECHNIQUE 2: DELIBERATELY SELF-CENTRED SUPERVISION

Written by Michelle Lucas

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

When is this used?

This is for mature supervisees who are interested in exploring themes and patterns in their work. It relies on the tenet of the self being an instrument of our coaching work (Bachkirova, 2016).

What is the approach?

Building on individual reflection, the supervisor facilitates a meta-reflection to explore how their client work is shaping their identity and vice versa.

Step 1: Appropriate contracting is necessary if the entirety of the supervision session is held in this more developmental frame.

Step 2: Prior to the session, supervisee(s) are invited to reflect on the question “What is your client work telling you, about you?”. Typically, supervisees will notice patterns and themes arising in their work, they might also notice shifts and differences in their current clients compared to what they experience as their ‘norm’.

Step 3: Only the lightest of facilitation is needed. Each group member takes a turn to use the space to share their reflections in an unhurried manner.

Step 4: In a longstanding group once a member has voiced their reflections the other members tend to naturally respond. If needed, some useful prompts could be:

- What’s resonating for you?
- What are you noticing that you would like to share?
- How did you experience XX’s reflections?
- What dissonance or surprise did you experience?

Step 5: To help ensure there is space for all members the supervisor may interject at appropriate points, inviting the supervisee to summarise their learning. A useful question could be "So, where has that taken you to?".

Step 6: Signpost opportunities to move focus to another group member, seeking permission from the group to do so.

Step 7: At the end of the whole group session, pause to allow consideration of what implications the supervision work may have for their clients.

Step 8: Before closing prompt consideration of the group process. Some interesting questions could be:

- When did our encouragement or reassurance stray into collusion?
- Where did our empathy/resonance blind us from nuanced difference?
- When did we side-step challenge for fear of denting our relationships?
- How did we share the time today, what might that say about our group dynamic?

How to work with this approach…

This approach generates deep and personal work and so the set-up of the group and of the session needs to be considered and bespoke. Given this work is strongly connected to our authenticity, the set up cannot be scripted. Perhaps the supervisor may choose to role model vulnerability, sharing something of their current personal developmental journey as a lens for the upcoming supervision session. This is intended as a catalyst not a directive, with participants being at liberty to attend or ignore this prompt as they engage in their own reflections.

In order for the work to be unhurried, it can be helpful to contract for an emergent session, agreeing that while the time will be shared, it may not be equally divided. Mature groups tend to recognise the passing of time and self-regulate. With newer groups, the supervisor might be tempted to take more control, this is not recommended. It is better to let the session unfold in its own way, drawing attention to how time was attended to in Step 8.

What else might need attention?

The set-up of this work assumes that individuals will engage in other forms of reflective practice to understand and explore more practical client conundrums.

A word of caution.

To work at this depth – the group needs to establish a high level or rapport and trust. However, the supervisor needs to ensure that the group does not slip into collusion or group think. To ensure the work resides in the supervision rather than a 'coaching the coach' space; the supervisor needs to encourage the group to keep their ultimate clients in mind. Step 7 is therefore an essential part of the supervisor's 'due diligence'.

What other uses are there for this approach?

The question outlined in Step 2 may be used in a more traditional supervision arrangement. In these instances, spot contracting can be useful, seeking permission for the dialogue to move from a more client-focused discussion to a more introspective one.

This is not recommended for use with client work.

Reference:

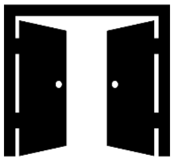
Bachkirova, T. (2016) The Self of the Coach: Conceptualization, Issues and Opportunities for Practitioner Development. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 68 (2), pp. 143-156.

Further reading:

Lucas, M. (2017) Applying the oxygen mask principle to Coaching Supervision. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching.* Special Issue October 2017, pp. 13-20.

TECHNIQUE 3: ROUNDS

Written by Linda Aspey

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

When is this used?

Rounds enable all group members to contribute and be heard. Useful as a check in, or as a way of sharing all views on a question, or generating new ideas, they help to ensure equality is honoured and create a level playing field in a diverse (communication styles, hierarchy, experience) group. When used at the end of a session it can offer everyone a sense of completeness and closure.

What are Rounds?

Rounds are one of the Building-blocks of the Thinking Environment™, underpinned by the Ten Components. Like the other applications, they start with a question to stimulate thinking, which will vary according to the purpose of the Round.

A significant benefit is that everyone knows they will have a turn to speak if they wish to. This can be particularly useful for those who may feel less able to speak in a free-flowing discussion. Equality creates courage. Turn-taking frees up the group member's energy for listening, and rather than jostle for position and airtime, or rehearsing what they will say, they can genuinely pay Attention to others.

Step 1: The contract.

Having agreed the question, the Supervisor/Facilitator briefly outlines the best way to benefit from the Round, as follows:

> *"Each person can have a turn if they wish, or they can skip. All group members are asked to give their complete Attention, to look at the speaker, and to not interrupt, verbally or physically (staying still and easeful). In return, the speaker needs to be succinct so that everyone can have a turn, encouraging Equality."*

Reassure group members that it is common for minds to wander at first, and upon noticing this simply refocus Attention back to the speaker. Reinforce the importance of Diversity and that all views are welcomed, even radical or unpopular ones. Difference is useful.

Step 2: The exercise.

The Supervisor/Facilitator states the direction of the Round (clockwise or anti-clockwise), reminds them of the question and invites anyone to start.

The first Supervisee responds, safe in the knowledge that they can speak openly and without interruption. Meanwhile the others listen with Ease, fascinated Attention, with Encouragement, and without interruption. Each person takes a turn and has the opportunity to respond to the question posed, each receiving full Attention from the others.

Depending on the question, the Supervisor/Facilitator may suggest another Round, perhaps asking "What's your freshest thinking?". With each new Round the direction reverses.

Step 3: The close.

Where Rounds are part of closing a meeting, the questions can invite reflection or appreciation, for example "What have you learned or re-learned today?" or "What have you most appreciated about this group today?" Once the Round(s) are complete the group can move on.

How to work with Rounds…

Questions for Rounds can be suggested and circulated before the session by the Supervisor/Facilitator, or a member of the group, or within the session by anyone. Thinking Pairs or Dialogue can be used to give people thinking time on questions before the group session (which is often appreciated by those who do not enjoy being "put on the spot") and then they can share their thinking in the Round. Typically, the supervisor will start and end sessions with a Round so that each person has the opportunity to speak and to finish, giving a sense of completeness. Questions are best phrased succinctly and inviting of people to share their thoughts rather than solutions, for example, "What are your thoughts about X?" rather than "What can we do about …?". Supervisees can also use Rounds to harvest new ideas, concerns, experiences and then bring this into the supervision work.

What else might need attention?

Groups new to this approach may struggle to contain the impulse to respond to others or disrupt the order of the Round. A gentle reminder from the Supervisor/Facilitator can be useful; people are often so used to interrupting or "getting ready to fire" they may not realise they are doing so. With practice they will become more easeful.

A word of caution.

Supervisors/Facilitators are often afforded a form of 'role power'. It is not unusual for people to address their answers towards you and not the whole group. If this happens, gently remind all members to address everyone, thereby creating Equality.

What other uses are there for Rounds?

The structure of the Round is a useful way of creating an inclusive way of sharing information. It could be useful to hear the groups thoughts on a client case brought to supervision. It could equally be useful to coaching clients as they chair a business meeting.

Further reading:

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

TECHNIQUE 4: WORKING WITH THE SHADOW

Written by Clare Norman

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

When is this used?

This enquiry would likely be used part way through a programme of supervision, or annually to keep sharp. It is typically offered as preparation for a supervision session, or to reflect on themes at the start of a supervision session. It is particularly useful where an existing relationship has plateaued or where the supervisor senses that the supervisee avoids (or excludes) certain themes.

What is the enquiry?

Our shadow can be something forbidden, taboo, or unwelcome…and it can equally be our talents, ways of being, artistry, intellect, athleticism. A set of questions is offered prior to a supervision session, to highlight what they tend *not* to bring to supervision, either consciously or unconsciously. They may then make a conscious choice about what to bring to supervision this time.

Step 1: The supervisor offers questions such as:

- What is in me that I don't want to own?
- What makes me unique, compared to other coaches?
- What would I not want my clients to know?
- What is sabotaging my efforts?
- What haven't I brought to supervision?
- Therefore, what will I bring to supervision this time that is really challenging for me?

Step 2: The supervisee(s) reflects on the questions.

Step 3: The supervisor asks the supervisee to reflect on the experience of working with the questions. "What was that like?". This gives an indication of how ready they are to explore in Step 4.

Step 4: The supervisor asks what insights the supervisee(s) has had, and what they would like to bring to supervision. This can be as light-touch or as deep as the supervisee(s) wishes to go. For example, you may go deep into exploring each question, and as a result of saying things out loud, the supervisee may get additional insights. Or you may simply get straight into the supervision question that has arisen.

How to work with the enquiry…

Supervisees often bring issues that are front of mind to their supervision. This approach works best where the supervisee has time to prepare. As such the questions might be provided as part of the joining instructions for a session. Step 2 can be illuminating as there is often significant impact for the supervisee simply through facing these questions. They tend to enable supervisees to go deeper, to discover some untapped potential for themselves and their clients.

In a group setting, the supervisor might ask each person in turn to share their perspectives to Steps 3 and 4. Where that feels overly challenging, start with a discussion in pairs, before sharing with the whole group. Or, the supervisor may choose to simply have them share with the group what this has prompted them to bring to supervision.

A word of caution.

Be sure that you pay attention to the psychological contract so that there is enough trust and intimacy between you and your supervisee(s) and between supervisees to allow for the vulnerability that this exercise may expose. It can be tough to admit to some of these things – and perhaps this is why they have not already been brought to supervision. For some, recognising their strengths is difficult; for others, it is the things they dislike about themselves. Empower your supervisee(s) to choose how much they wish to disclose at this time – while also challenging them to stand at the edge of their comfort zone or just outside of it.

Be willing to explore your own shadows so you don't get caught in your own projections and transference; parallel process can then be used in service of the learning for the supervisee.

What other uses are there for this enquiry?

Look for patterns so that you can tailor these questions to create balance in their supervision. For example, where someone seems overly self-critical, add a question like “What well-deserved praise is hard to hear?” or “What passion would you like to explore, but something holds you back?”.

The purpose here is to shine a light on aspects of themselves that they do not want to look at, but where it could be useful to their clients to do so.

With care this could also be used for some coaching clients. The coach would need to be highly skilled and the coaching client comfortable with their own vulnerability.

Acknowledgement:

Prentice, K. (2013) Me and my shadow. In: Oxford Brookes University, *3rd International Supervision Conference,* 20th June 2013. Wheatley Campus.