







Supervision Techniques 7






FOUR SUPERVISION TECHNIQUES
EDITED BY MICHELLE LUCAS

CENTRING
PERSONAL STRENGTHS REVIEW
EXPLORING BOUNDARIES
USE OF ATTACHMENT THEORY

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: CENTRING

Written by Paul King

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

When is this used?

Whenever anyone (supervisor, coach or client) desires to be present, resourceful and gain a non-judgemental and fresh perspective. It is particularly useful as preparation for a session or when stuck or stressed.

What is the technique?

Centring can be described as a neutral state that supports an open mind for clear perception, an open heart for compassion to self and other, and a strong and confident core. It is connected to what is often known as a ‘flow state’ (Huang, 2011). Centring is not a self-contained insulating experience, it is defined as “placing something in the centre of something else” (Lexico, 2019) and is a relational process.

Centring offers a state change, balancing our nervous system through physical and energetic reorganisation. We all naturally have a sense of what it is to be centred. It is part of our human evolutionary inheritance. Sometimes the mind cannot change the mind. The body can lead the way.

When stressed, stuck or troubled we typically hold increased levels of tension, we are contracted in body and mind and are emotionally negative. Centring is a body-based practice to physically, psychologically and emotionally resource us. When we are centred, we are grounded, uplifted and expanded, connected within and open to all that is around us. The body leads the way towards a shift in state and relationship to the context at hand. The way we organise the body impacts the way we perceive and behave.

Step 1: Sitting with feet fully on the ground and weight evenly balanced, breathe in as if from the base of the spine, up the back and out of the top of the head, giving a sense of lengthening uplift.

Step 2: Breathe out with a feeling of the breath moving down the front of the body and a sense of softening and lengthening downwards. Make the outbreath twice as long as the inbreath. The inbreath is an enlivening breath, activating the sympathetic nervous system, the outbreath stimulates the relaxation phase of the parasympathetic nervous system. Typically, we are 'switched on' by challenging situations. The emphasis on a longer outbreath helps to regulate and balance the nervous system.

Step 3: Expand your awareness from the centre of your being to all directions around you including who and what is within that space.

Step 4: Let your energy settle and quieten as you repeat Steps 1-3. Open, expanded, uplifted and grounded, centred in your core and the space around. Allow a sense of spaciousness outside and inside. Physically and energetically feel your length, breadth and depth.

Step 5: Your centred, open and expanded self can embrace the context with compassion to oneself and to others. You have shifted from being contracted and threatened in some way to a creative relational and resourceful state.

How to work with the technique...

Centring takes practice for it to be embodied and quickly accessible, especially to be able to do so when stressed or emotionally disturbed. With practice the process of centring can be streamlined and anchored for an individual to have access to being centred quickly, whenever wanted.

Centring utilises the power of how we organise our breath and body shaping to impact our psychological and emotional state to resource oneself in relationship to the context. Each psychological and emotional state has a uniquely associated physiological pattern of use and shape. Particularly under stress and trauma the deep patterns held in the body win out.

What else might need attention?

Working directly with the body as well as a client's thinking and emotions should be clearly contracted for. Some deep patterns are held in the body out of consciousness awareness.

A word of caution.

People are used to wanting quick wins, the body learns slower than the mind, it takes time and practice to embed new patterns.

What other uses are there for this technique?

Centring is a state into which we can invite resources from inside and outside. Inviting a quality that you already have or one you associate with an inspiring source, human or otherwise. Ask yourself what would it be like if you embodied just 2% more of that quality.

Note: The body works best through small changes. When the body experiences big changes it triggers a sense of threat.

References:

Lexico (2019) *Lexico powered by Oxford*. [Online] Available at:
<https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/centring> [Accessed 4 September 2019]

Huang, C.A. (2011) *Embrace Tiger, Return to Mountain: The Essence of Tai Ji*. Singing Dragon.

Further reading:

King, P. (2016) Somatic Intelligence: Working with and through the Body-Mind. *Global Perspectives*, 11, pp. 20-22. Association for Coaching.

King, P. (2017) Wellbeing – An Energetic Perspective. *Global Perspectives*, 13, pp. 36-38. Association for Coaching.





King, P. (2019) Coaching the Narrative of the Soma. *Global Perspectives*, 22, pp. 24-26. Association for Coaching.

Palmer, W. and Crawford, J. (2013) *Leadership Embodiment: How the way we sit and stand can change the way we think and speak*. CreateSpace.

Van Der Kolk, B. (2015) *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, mind and body in the healing of trauma*. USA: Penguin Random House.

TECHNIQUE 2: PERSONAL STRENGTHS REVIEW

Written by Carmelina Lawton Smith

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

When is this used?

This is a useful approach when a supervisee has a tendency to appraise their skills as a gap analysis, focusing on their lack of expertise. It can help boost confidence to consider what strengths they already have that they can bring to their coaching.

It might be especially useful when working with a new supervisee to build rapport with a positive focus by asking about their strengths in coaching, rather than starting with their issues or a simple bio. Because this approach builds positive rapport it can be valuable with groups in the early stages of their work together and would be suitable for peer groups with minor adaptation of the questions.

What is the technique?

The technique is based on an open discussion about the strengths they bring to coaching. Linley (2008, p.9) defines a strength as “a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that is authentic and energising to the user, and enables optimal functioning, development and performance”. Therefore, by revealing the supervisees natural strengths it is likely to lead to greater energy and authenticity in their coaching.

Step 1: Achievements.

Ask them to tell a short story about an achievement that demonstrates a key strength. Avoid asking simply “What are your strengths?” as this can be hard to answer and might lead to a superficial discussion. Use questions like:

- What would you describe as your most significant accomplishments?
- What key strength(s) does it highlight?

Step 2: Elicit strengths stories.

Follow up with a more general discussion about strengths, some sample questions are shown below. You may want to explain what a strength is and why it is important. This section can also be done in small groups or pairs in group supervision as an icebreaker.

- What makes a great day for you? Tell me about the best day that you remember having?
- When would your friends and family say you are at your happiest?
- If you could plan a day that would leave you feeling energised, what would you do?
- What sort of everyday things do you enjoy doing?
- When you are at your best, what are you doing?
- What gives you the greatest sense of being authentic and who you really are?
- What do you think are the most energising things that you do?

Note: Adapted from Linley, P.A. (2008)

Step 3: Application to coach development.

Invite the supervisee to consider what strengths they have noticed through telling their stories. Then consider how these could be applied to their coaching work.

- How can you apply these strengths in your coaching?
- What are the implications for your coaching practice?
- How might your coaching clients experience you utilising these strengths?
- What key strengths do you want to make more use of?

How to work with the technique...

In a group setting this might need careful positioning and group management to ensure no one dominates the discussions and that all strengths are seen as equally valuable. It is best to introduce clear group contracting stating the unique nature of strengths and explaining the expectations from a group working perspective. You might want to set clear time limits for each speaker and say something like “obviously everyone may have very different strengths and it is important we each value the diversity”. You could then either set out some response guidelines or ask the group something like “How can we ensure as a group that we are supportive of each other’s strengths?”

A word of caution.

Beware of a very superficial conversation that focusses on skills e.g. “I am very organised” the aim is to raise awareness of core strengths highlighting energy and transferable capabilities. You could continue probing through acknowledging what they offer initially, then inviting them to extend their thinking. For example, “OK, so when you are very organised, what other qualities start to reveal themselves?”

What other uses are there for this technique?





This approach can be applied in a similar way to case discussions asking about how they can apply the strengths that they have used in previous accomplishments to the current situation.

Reference:

Linley, P.A. (2008) *Average to A+*, Coventry: CAPP Press.

TECHNIQUE 3: EXPLORING BOUNDARIES

Written by Angela Dunbar

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

When is this used?

To help the supervisee mentally step outside the coach : client relationship and explore wider perspectives. It invites consideration of contexts and boundaries beyond the immediate ‘in the room’ information. Rather like exploring through the lenses of the seven-eyed model (Hawkins and Shoet, 2012), this process reframes the situation / relationship within a continually widening frame.

This can be particularly useful where the coach notices boundary issues, or if they tend to be rather introspective or narrowly-focused. Especially useful when all appears to be okay, yet something outside of the immediate system seems to be getting in the way.

What is the technique?

Clean Boundaries* (Developed by the late David Grove and adapted for use in supervision). The questions are clean, enabling supervisees to think for themselves and encourages insightful breakthroughs. This could be a follow up to the Exploring Relationships with Clean Networks technique.

Step 1: Begin by inviting your supervisee to share the client situation they would like to explore and the question they have for supervision.

Step 2: Ask the supervisee to draw a representation of their client and also themselves (as they are when they are coaching this client).

Step 3: Explore what the supervisee puts on their paper with a series of Clean Language questions (up to six):

- What kind of client / coach is that?
- Is there anything else about that x?

Invite the supervisee to put anything else they want to on their paper.

Step 4: Explore the space around the supervisee and the client:

- What kind of space is the space around you both?
- What are the qualities of that space? And how far could that space go?
- And what kind of boundary or edge does that space have? Show that on your paper (the supervisee may at times need to re-draw and rescale their picture to be able to place the boundary on the paper).

Step 5: Ask questions of the boundary:

- What kind of boundary is that boundary?
- Is there anything else about that xx boundary?

Step 6: Expand awareness still further by asking;

- And what's beyond that boundary?
- What kind of space is that? etc (same questions as before).

You can continue to explore the spaces and boundaries until the supervisee has reached a space of infinity.

Step 7: At each boundary, invite the supervisee to re-draw / rescale their picture to fit the boundary of their paper.

Step 8: Invite the supervisee to understand more about the client and their situation from the position of each space and boundary. Ask:

- From this boundary/ space, what do you know about your client/ you?
- And what does this space know about your client / you?

Step 9: Continue to ask about each boundary and space coming back from the outermost place right back to the centre representations of the client / coach again. At the end ask, "And what do you know now?" to conclude with key learnings.

Step 10: Complete by re-grounding the exploration into the supervision space. For example, ask "And how does what you know now make a difference to your clients / coaching work?"

How to work with the technique...

Those unfamiliar with the technique may be fearful that the repetitive questioning is experienced as irritating. In fact, supervisees typically report experiencing the question differently each time – probably because their thinking has moved on and so they place different meaning to the same words.

When posing questions within a clean language context, we need to be particularly conscious of intonation, pace and inflection of our voice. As far as possible keep your voice neutral, and deliver the questions slowly, emphasising each word clearly and with a slight pause between each word.

A word of caution.

The technique encourages expansiveness, so you may need to find a way of helping *you* stay on track without placing your own interpretation to your supervisee's work.

What other uses are there for this technique?

With group supervision, as the questions require no content, you could pose the questions, then invite everyone to explore their client silently, before sharing final reflections (and their drawing). The technique can also be applied with coaching clients, especially exploring the wider picture around any relationship.

References:





Hawkins,P.and Shohet,R.(2012) *Supervision in the Helping Professions*, 4th ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Resources:

‘*’ Clean Boundaries is covered in –depth on the Clean Coaching training programme, as part of Module Three. For general information see our website www.cleancoaching.com [Accessed 6 September 2019]

TECHNIQUE 4: USE OF ATTACHMENT THEORY

Written by Henry Campion

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

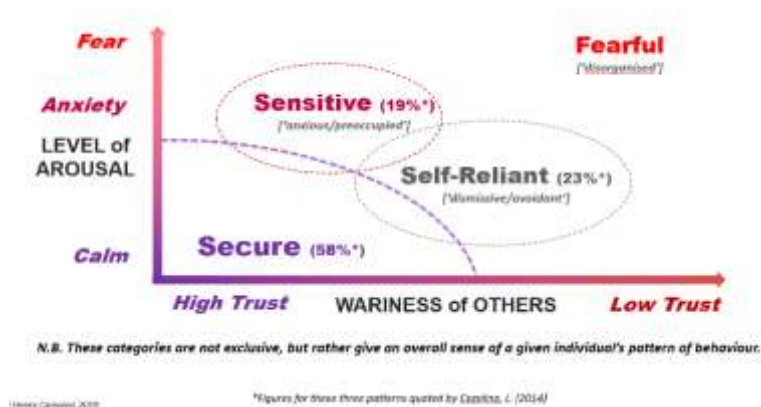
When is this used?

Relationship is core to a coach's work. Attachment theory provides a framework for the supervisee to understand both their own and their client's patterns of relating to those around them. It is for all supervisees who wish to deepen their understanding of themselves, their relationships with clients, and their clients' behaviour in the workplace.

What is the approach?

Our 'attachment pattern' develops in early childhood. It is internalised as a lifelong working model for relationship which, while it cannot be fundamentally changed, may be shaped by subsequent experience. Secure attachment is associated with self-confidence and trust in others. With the more insecure, wary attachment patterns (known as self-reliant, anxious and fearful – see Figure 1.8), there are respectively reduced levels of trust in others, or increased levels of anxiety, or both.

Figure 1.8 : Attachment Patterns in Adults



A secure attachment figure gives people a strong and pervasive feeling of security and so encourages them to value and continue the relationship. So, as supervisors it is worth exploring with the supervisee what it takes to be a secure attachment figure. This is useful for establishing a productive supervision relationship and in turn helps the supervisee do the same for their clients.

Step 1: Setting up an appropriate contract

Due to the potential depth of discussion and discovery, any use of attachment theory should be properly explained and covered by the initial supervision contract. While the supervisee will gain insights into their general patterns of relating (see Step 2) the purpose is to apply these insights specifically to their professional work as a coach. Set boundaries to reflect that.

Step 2: Understanding the supervisee's own pattern of relating

At the outset of the supervision, invite the supervisee to fill in a family history form briefly outlining their relationships with grandparents, parents, siblings, significant others and themselves. Reflect together on the patterns of relationship within the family system, how these have evolved over the three generations, and how this might have affected their own patterns of relating.

Step 3: Deepen the supervisee's awareness of how their attachment pattern impacts their clients

Help the supervisee understand more about attachment theory and the different patterns of secure and insecure attachment (Brown, Hasanie & Campion (2019). For an explanation available online, see Drake (2009) pp 49-54). Then prompt them to consider how their own attachment pattern might be reflected in their behaviour towards their clients.

Step 4: Explore client behaviours through the lens of Attachment

A coach modelling a secure attachment figure can provide a safe haven and a secure base for the client, enabling them to explore potentially difficult issues with greater trust and confidence. Depending on their background and experience, and on the nature and purpose of the coaching engagement, the supervisee may also be able to work directly with attachment issues by:

- reflecting on, making sense of and working with the attachment behaviours of themselves and their clients;
- understanding and managing the behaviour of an insecurely attached client, for example responding to 'resistance' by being curious about the need for it rather than trying to overcome it;
- being ready to help the client experiment with and develop new, more trusting attachment behaviours.

How to work with the approach

This work requires psychological understanding, well-developed self-knowledge and sensitivity on the part of the supervisor (see below).

What else might need attention?

This approach relies on the supervisee's ability to interpret the feelings and sensations they experience in the course of a coaching session, and to distinguish between those and the ones they are picking up from the client. It can therefore be useful to encourage them to develop their mindful awareness practice.

A word of caution.

- Attachment theory and its application is a huge subject. Yet even a basic understanding of attachment theory can be useful, as long as we remember it is not about labelling people.
- The supervisor's own attachment pattern can have a profound effect on the supervisory relationship. (Beinhart and Clohessy, 2017, p.38.) Supervisors need to be familiar with any insecurity of attachment in themselves and be able to take account of it in their supervision relationships.

What other uses are there for this approach?

This description applies to individual work. For group work, ideally it would be used where all members understand Attachment theory.

References:

Beinhart, H., and Clohessy, S. (2017) *Effective Supervisory Relationships: Best Evidence and Practice*. USA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Brown, P., Hasanie, S., & Champion, H. (2019) Neurobehavioural Supervision: Applied Neuroscience in the context of Coaching Supervision. In J. Birch & P. Welch (Eds.) 2019. *Coaching Supervision: Advancing Practice, Changing Landscapes*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Drake, D.B. (2009) Using attachment theory in coaching leaders: The search for a coherent narrative. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 4(1), pp.49–58. Available at: http://study.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/using_attachment_theory_in_coaching_leaders.pdf [Accessed 20th August, 2019]

Further reading:

Bowlby, J. (2005) *A Secure Base*. Abingdon: Routledge Classics.

Brown, P. and Brown, V. (2012) *Neuropsychology for Coaches: Understanding the Basics*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Cozolino, L. (2014). *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships: Attachment and the Developing Social Brain*. W.W Norton & company.

Mikulincer, M. & Shaver, P. (2016). *Attachment in Adulthood: Structure, Dynamics and Change*. 2nd ed. New York: The Guilford Press.