







# Supervision Techniques 9




FOUR SUPERVISION TECHNIQUES  
EDITED BY MICHELLE LUCAS

SUPERVISION WITH LEGO  
MAPPING WHAT IS  
GIVE YOURSELF AN 'A'  
FEEDFORWARD

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: Supervision with LEGO®

By Dr. Damian Goldvarg

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

### When is this used?

For supervisees who have difficulties expressing verbally, LEGO® provides an opportunity to explore issues in a creative space.

### What is the technique?

LEGO® Serious Play® enables three modes of communication: verbal, auditory and kinesthetic, providing opportunities for enhanced expression, and deeper listening (Blair and Rillo, 2016). LEGO® Serious Play® is a systematic method to help solve problems, explore ideas, and achieve objectives. It is a structured process where participants proceed through a series of steps to think, build, tell a story, reflect, and refine to develop a shared understanding of the issues at hand.

#### Step 1: The Warm up.

Help the supervisee become familiar with the LEGO ® pieces. For example: ask the supervisee to quickly build a tower (allow just 2 or 3 minutes). Once built, invite the supervisee to share a brief story about the tower. Playing background music can help mask the silence while the build progresses, it also provides a creative environment.

#### Step 2: Develop the supervision question.

LEGO® Serious Play ® can be used in different ways to explore issues such as, the world of the client, the relationship with the client, the desired outcome of the relationship with the client, the supervisees reactions to the work with the client. Use your judgment to suggest a focus for the supervision LEGO ® play. For example: “What if you built a model that represents your inner world, i.e. what was in your mind as you worked with this client?”

#### Step 3: The build.

Allow the supervisee a short amount of time (probably no longer than 5 minutes) to build a model.

#### **Step 4: The story.**

Invite the supervisee to share their story about the model. The story is very important because it generates the material that will be discussed in the session.

#### **Step 5: Embellish the story.**

Help the supervisee explore their creation – for example:

- Tell me more about the pieces you chose...
- What significance are the colours you have used?
- What did you notice about the tactile process of building your model?
- How satisfied are you with what you have created?

#### **Step 6: Developing a desired future (optional).**

Offer the opportunity to make changes to the model based on the learning or discussion. For example, the supervisor may ask “If you could change anything in the model, what would that be?”

The process of Steps 3 and 4 are repeated.

#### **Step 7: Close out the work.**

Invite the supervisee to take a picture as an aide memoire of the session.

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

LEGO® offers many different products. For supervision work, the Windows Exploration Bag that contains 48 pieces is recommended. This technique can be used in person or virtually. However, when working virtually regular LEGO® might be more accessible and can also be used to good effect. Ideally virtual work will include video – so that the supervisee can visually share their models. However, it's not essential for the supervisor to see the model; questions can be posed from a place of genuine curiosity instead. e.g. “What does it look like? Describe what you have created for me? How colourful is your model?”.

The steps above are modelled on an individual supervision. With group supervision the supervisee and the group members work simultaneously to build a model that is connected to the supervision question. Everyone shares a story about what they have built, generating alternative insights for the supervisee about the work with their client.

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

Working with LEGO ® is often a catalyst for a discussion, there may come a point where the LEGO ® has served its purpose and a different approach to the supervision discussion feels more appropriate.

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

Some people may initially find working with LEGO® naive or childlike and become resistant. The supervisor may need to create a more logical argument to explain the usefulness of creative and kinesthetic learning. Remember, just because you enjoy experimenting with LEGO® you need to use the technique judiciously, it may not suit everyone.

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

LEGO® serious play offer a range of toolkits and training for facilitators. See [www.lego.com](http://www.lego.com).

**Reference:**






Blair, S. and Rillo, M. (2016) *Serious Work. How to facilitate meeting and workshops using the LEGO® Serious Play® method*. ProMeet.

**Resources:**

Lego® Serious play starter kit. Available at: <https://www.lego.com/en-gb/product/starter-kit-2000414> [Accessed 18 August 2019]

**Technique 2: Mapping What Is**

**Written by Maren Donata Urschel**

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

**When is this used?**

All systemic constellations start with mapping ‘what is,’ in line with *Acknowledging* what is, the beginning of any systemic intervention in supervision.

We all carry an inner image of everything and everybody we have been in relationship with. Mapping enables supervisees to create a three-dimensional, embodied representation of their inner image of a relationship dynamic. Mapping enables supervisees to access hidden or unconscious information about an issue in the context of the wider system.

**What is the practice?**

Mapping 'what is,' is an intervention in itself and it can often be enough. Being a somatic technique, it usually reveals different information in comparison to thinking through an issue.

You could introduce 'mapping what is' as follows: "Bring to mind a relationship system in which you feel challenged, stuck or sense some kind of difficulty. We are going to map out the most important people and elements in that system to enable you to access the benefits of a three-dimensional representation of your issue."

The supervisor talks the supervisee(s) through the exercise as follows:

**Step 1:** Find a space with a boundary, for example, a blank sheet of paper on a table-top.

**Step 2:** Identify the most important people, elements or events relating to your issue. Keep them to as few as possible (maximum six). Select an arrow-shaped post-its or other representative objects with a sense of direction to identify each of them. Make sure you include yourself.

**Step 3:** It might be useful to identify an orientation to map against. If useful, place a post-it/object representing an 'outcome' or a 'purpose' on the bounded space ('the map').

**Step 4:** Tap into your intuition and somatic sense of the situation as it is right now, slowly place the objects representing 1) yourself and 2) the next most resonant person or element. Pay attention to the distance between them and the direction they are facing.

**Step 5:** Slowly add the remaining post-its/objects one by one. Trust your intuition and your body's sense of where each would be best placed. Make sure the map represents the 'what is' not what you would like it to be.

**Step 6:** Articulate in as few words as possible what you notice or want to acknowledge about the map created. For example, 'this is difficult,' 'I am too close,' 'I feel stuck,' etc. Resist the temptation of changing the map to 'resolve' or 'fix' anything.

**Step 7:** Supervisor and supervisee work with what emerges, supervisor asks *'systemically-oriented questions'* (see pages 287-289) and supervises as appropriate.

**Step 8:** Find a way of internalising the map, e.g. by taking a photo.

**Step 9:** Respectfully dismantle the map.

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

It is important that supervisors do not get seduced into the supervisee's 'story.' Signs of that might include:

- Taking a personal position or stake in the supervisee's story
- Judging the supervisee or any other person, element or event in the system represented
- Feeling like being treated or addressed as someone from within the system by the supervisee, e.g. a previous boss they disliked
- Focusing only on the individual rather than including the dynamics in the whole system

When the supervisor becomes aware of any of the above, they might try the following:

- Encourage the supervisee to stay with the facts
- Be present to the truth of what is
- Treat everything as information

- Focus on the dynamics held within the whole relationship system
- Walk round the map with the supervisee (to avoid becoming caught up in their projections and identifications and to get a different perspective)
- Look at your own systemic connections to hold a safe space for the client without getting entangled
- Agree to everything as it is (not the same as agreeing *with* everything).

**What else might need attention?**

In our experience, using people (rather than objects) as representatives in a system is best reserved for experienced practitioners, especially when it is appropriate to go beyond the initial map of what is and start to illuminate relationship dynamics and sources of resolution.

**A word of caution.**

The exercise works best without too much explanation upfront. Usually, once participants have started mapping, they become fully immersed into the process. Mapping what is with representative objects on a table-top, even in this simple context, elicits a somatic response in the supervisee and the supervisor. Therefore, it can be very useful for supervisors to have the somatic experience of being a representative in a constellation workshop with other live representatives.

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

Once supervisees have experienced the exercise in supervision and tried it out in self-supervision they can use the exercise with their clients.

**Further reading:**






Whittington, J. (2020): Systemic Coaching and Constellations. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: Kogan Page.

**Resources:**

Available at: [www.coachingconstellations.com](http://www.coachingconstellations.com) [Accessed 2 October 2019]

**Technique 3: Give Yourself an ‘A’**

Written by Clare Norman

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

**When is this used?**

This technique is used at the start of supervision, typically after the first session, to enable the supervisee to set their intentions for what success would look like for them at the end of the programme.

### **What is the technique?**

The supervisee writes a letter, looking back over their supervision series, stating why they got an A. Zander and Zander (2000) wrote about the technique in their book *The Art of Possibility*; Benjamin Zander had used it at the start of term, telling his students that they had already got an A, and the only requirement was for them to write him a letter, dated the end of term, outlining why they deserved this grade. By the end of the term, they had met or exceeded their own expectations of success.

#### **Step 1:** Brief supervisees as follows:

You will 'get an A' for the 6 months of this supervision series. There is one requirement that you must fulfil in order to earn the grade. Write me a letter dated [end of supervision series], which begins with the words...

"Dear XX, I got my A because...."

Share as much detail as you can, the story of what will have happened to you as a coach by that time which is in line with this extraordinary grade. Place yourself in the future, looking back, and report on all the insights you acquired and milestones you attained during those months, as if those accomplishments were already in the past. You are part of multiple systems, so tell me about the impact that you will have on those systems and how will you be achieving that. Phrases like "I hope", "I intend", "I will" must not appear. I am especially interested in the person you will become by then and the attitude, feelings, and world view of that person who will have done all you wished to do or become everything you wished to be. I want you to fall passionately in love with that person you describe in your letter. You can choose to send it to me, but more important is that you keep it for yourself, as your commitment to yourself. You'll be amazed at what happens as a result

Note: Based on Zander and Zander's *The Art of Possibility* – see pages 25-53.

**Step 2:** At the end of the supervision series, ask supervisees to look at their letter and compare where they are today to where they had started.

#### **Step 3:** Debrief with additional questions such as:

- Who are you now as a coach?
- What has changed in the way you feel as a coach?
- What is your attitude now towards your work?
- What is your world view now as a coach?
- What is the impact you now have on the people you work with?
- And the impact on their systems?
- And the impact on the world?
- What have you learned about yourself as a result of this exercise?
- What is possible for you as a coach now?

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



Supervisees choose whether to write this letter or not. However, we can reassure them about its value, in visualising the future they desire and the likelihood that it will come to pass once they have articulated it. On the rare occasion that they fall short of their A, encourage them to consider what they could do differently to make supervision a success for them.

**What else might need attention?**

The original technique is individually focused and yet we work with people who are part of larger systems, so the version here makes reference to this systemic perspective. You may wish to debrief further about how else the supervisee, intentionally or otherwise, has an impact for example:

- How does your philosophy of life have an impact on your coaching?
- How much do you challenge your clients about the impact of their choices on, for example, diversity and inclusion?
- What is your ethical stance regarding the impact of your client’s actions on society and the world, for example climate change?

**A word of caution.**

Where there is a lack of resonance with some of the words in the briefing (for example “falling passionately in love with yourself”), adapt them accordingly.

Bear in mind also that this is not literally about the supervisee receiving an A from the supervisor; it is a personal quest, a striving to be the best coach and making the most of the supervision opportunity.

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





You can use this for any programme that takes place over a period of time, whether that is individual work or team coaching, teaching etc.

**Reference:**

Zander R. and Zander B. (2000) *The Art of Possibility*, Boston: Harvard Business Press.

**Technique 4: FeedForward**

Written by Carmelina Lawton Smith

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

## **When is this used?**

This technique uses positive past experiences to raise awareness and draw lessons from other contexts which can then be related to the current situation they are facing. It draws on the idea of when they are 'at their best' and how to leverage that knowledge by taking positive lessons from similar experiences. It can be used to help supervisees deal with issues or to engage in self-care by identifying the conditions that need to exist for them to achieve the desired aim.

## **What is the technique?**

The approach relies on the supervisee being able to recount a past success, that might have been in a different context when they were 'at their best' in relation to the topic. For example, a supervisee might explain that they do not feel a connection with a particular client. The supervisor might elicit a story about when they 'did' experience a strong connection with another person to identify what might be required to bring about this state. This raises self-awareness and lessons can be drawn to inform the actions the supervisee feels it is appropriate to take forward, or maybe just increase understanding and self-acceptance. The approach is taken from the work of Kluger and Nir (2010) which was adapted for coaching by McDowall et al. (2014).

### **Step 1: Elicit a success story.**

Working with the topic the supervisee has brought, ask for a story of when they felt 'at their best'. This story might be from a work or a personal context. Ask questions that focus on positive emotions, encouraging them to re-live the experience in as much detail as possible.

- When do you feel you have been 'at your best' in your coaching work?
- Thinking back, including other contexts, when have you felt frustration, yet been able to manage it?
- When have you previously successfully managed your anxiety when approaching an unfamiliar task?

### **Step 2: The peak moment.**

Draw attention and focus to the 'high-point', concentrate on positive self-evaluation and emotions.

- What made it a high point?
- How did it feel at the time?

Follow up with questions like:

- Tell me more about that experience – what did you see, or hear or sense?
- What else was happening?

### **Step 3: Clarifying the conditions.**

Ask questions that engage the supervisee in an evaluation of the facilitating conditions, such as the environment, their own state or the involvement of others.

- How was this achieved?
- What was the most important factor for you at the time?
- What skills and attributes helped you achieve that?

### **Step 4: FeedForward to the future.**

Now that there is an understanding of their optimal performance conditions, the supervisee can be encouraged to make comparisons with the current situation. To move towards personal action planning based on the learning, the supervisor might offer questions like:

- What could you borrow from your prior experience which could be useful to you now?

- What would need to shift in your current situation to mirror more closely your prior experience?
- Which parts of you contributed to your success before, which need to be harnessed for you now?

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

The essence of this technique is helping the supervisee to re-live their experience in order to identify key factors. Therefore, in both Steps 1 and 3, minimise the focus on dates times and facts, rather help them to re-experience that event, so ask questions about emotions, senses, such as sight or smell. Ensure your enquiry is holistic – consider all the possible ways of experiencing and all the possible sources of knowing as we need to be mindful that our supervisees preferred processing style may be different to our own.

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

If the supervisee cannot elicit a past success it is appropriate to question about the wider context and experiences but if no examples are forthcoming move on to an alternative approach. To labour their lack of success in this topic will otherwise only serve to de-motivate them even further.

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

It is possible to draw attention to this process as a technique the supervisee can use with clients especially when clients get stuck or seem to be overlooking their resourcefulness.

### **References:**

Kluger, N.K. and Nir, D. (2010). The FeedForward interview. *Human Resource Management Review*, 20, pp. 235-246.

McDowall, A. Freeman, K. and Marshall, S. (2014) Is FeedForward the way forward? A comparison of the effects of FeedForward coaching and Feedback, *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 9(2), pp. 125-146.

### **Further Reading:**

Itzchakov, G. and Kluger, A. (2018) *Giving Feedback: The power of listening in helping people change*. [online] Harvard Business Review (Published 17 May 2018). Available at: <https://hbr.org/2018/05/the-power-of-listening-in-helping-people-change> [Accessed 2 September 2018]