







Supervision Techniques 10





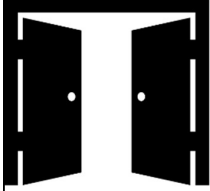
FOUR SUPERVISION TECHNIQUES
EDITED BY MICHELLE LUCAS

GIVING AN OBJECT A VOICE
HARNESSING SELF DOUBT
SPARKLING MOMENTS
RUSH WRITING

| 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: Giving an Object a Voice

Written by Michelle Lucas

| Where can this be used? | | | | Typical Level of Supervisee Experience Required | |
|---|---|---|--|---|--|
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When is this used?

This can be useful where the supervisee might benefit from taking an observer perspective such that they distance themselves from their own experience and in doing so open up their thinking. It can therefore be particularly useful when there is some ‘stuckness’ to be explored.

What is the experiment?

Influenced by the work of Joyce Scaife (2010) supervisees are invited to consider what objects are typically present as they work which could bear witness to what happened. The idea is a perceptual positions experiment – playing with the notion that if we take a different position (even that of an inanimate object!) we might access new information.

Step 1: Create a supervision focus for the enquiry in a way that is authentic for you. The approach could be used both with very specific client situations or when seeking to understand themes or patterns in a supervisee’s work.

Step 2: Invite the supervisee to consider which objects are routinely with them as they work, then choose one.

Step 3: Ask the supervisee where their chosen object was when the topic being explored was playing out; use some visioning techniques to help bring this to life. So if they chose their pen, you might invite them to consider where was the pen at that point in time? How were they holding it? What was the colour of the ink that was flowing onto the page? What sounds could they hear as they used it or held it?

Step 4: Become playful – invite some exploratory questions along the following lines:

- What might [object] have noticed that you might not yet have noticed?
- If the [object] had a voice what might it be saying? To who? And how?
- What advice might the [object] be giving you right now?

Step 5: Allow some reflection time and encourage the supervisee(s) to consider what is emerging for them now that might not have been attended to before.

Step 6: Bring the exploration back to the original supervision focus if this has not naturally happened within Step 5.

Step 7: Invite the supervisee(s) to reflect on the process, what did they notice about their response to this approach.

How to work with the experiment...

This requires an 'out of the box' mind set and for that reason it can be helpful if the supervision relationship is firmly established. It will work best when the supervisor takes an emergent approach, working with what is generated in the moment. For example: one supervisee felt their phone would advise them "to take a break, to stop being so serious all the time" ... so the supervisor built on this and enquired "so if your phone sent you on holiday, where would it send you?". Interestingly the prospect of going on holiday without the phone, even hypothetically, evoked anxiety ...and in noticing that, laughter. This visceral awareness prompted the realisation of how enmeshed they had become with their work. The supervisee then committed to resolve this through engaging in peer coaching.

The experiment intends to help the supervisee to think more speculatively and hypothetically, so the supervisor's question needs to be posed tentatively. In Step 4, notice the use of the word "might" rather than "would" – this encourages possibility and options rather than implying certainty or any assumption that an answer should be known.

What else might need attention?

Some supervisees can struggle to engage with this kind of abstract activity, and this is useful information. Where rapport is good, it may be possible to enquire how the struggle with this approach might say something about what they struggle with in their client work. For example, How do they manage ambiguity? How easily do they play? This could then become a topic for the supervision discussion or a matter for individual reflection.

A word of caution.

Despite its playful nature it is not suitable as an ice-breaker – it can prove disorienting for those more comfortable with logical and analytical approaches. Even in more established groups it needs careful positioning and contracting to ensure supervisees are open to new ways of working and to seeing this as an 'experiment'.

What other uses are there for this experiment?




The idea of tapping into external perspectives could be used in many situations. It could be used with coaching clients provided that it is contracted for clearly and the practitioner feels that the client would enjoy seeing what it might bring.

Reference:

Scaife, J. (2010) *Supervising the Reflective Practitioner: An Essential Guide to Theory and Practice*. Routledge: East Sussex. pp. 98-99.

Technique 2: Harnessing Self-Doubt

Written by Michelle Lucas

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

When an experienced supervisee appears to be seeking reassurance. At a practical level, perhaps something didn't go as well in a session or something feels elusive. Energetically, perhaps a more child-like quality manifests in the supervisee.

This approach diverts the energy away from a normative conversation towards a deeply personal and developmental one.

What is the approach?

While creating an environment where the supervisee feels 'safe enough', the intention of the supervisor is not to reassure nor to help the supervisee remove their self-doubt, rather to embrace the potential of the self-doubt for the learning it may hold.

Step 1: Often the work begins when the supervisor is directly asked or notices the supervisee seeking reassurance from them.

Step 2: The supervisor surfaces their felt sense of the encounter and seeks permission to work at a deeper level, contracting carefully to clarify how each of you will know if the boundary of unhelpful discomfort is reached.

Step 3: Invite the supervisee to describe in more detail the sense of doubt they are experiencing. Useful questions could be:

- What kind of doubt is it?
- Which part of you notices the doubt the most?
- What might the doubt want you to know ... perhaps something you hardly dare hear?
- If there was a nugget of truth in the doubt, what might it be?

Step 4: Deepen the enquiry by helping the supervisee articulate their experience of exploring their doubt. Useful questions could be:

- How are you experiencing this work right now?
- What are you noticing about your awareness? What's already known to you? What is not yet known?
- How far away is the boundary of your discomfort? How might we get closer to it?

Step 5: Offer a pause for the supervisee to rest and to process the emerging information.

Step 6: Check how the supervisee would like to use the remaining time and respond accordingly.

How to work with this approach...

This is a particular way of holding the supervisee in their sensation of uncertainty and perhaps their rising anxiety too. The steps above are therefore an approximation to how a dialogue will unfold. While not offering reassurance, it is helpful to offer a supportive presence, as often the questions land with a forensic quality.

The supervisor can facilitate the dialogue by role modelling their own self-doubt and uncertainty. This requires a language which holds both credibility and not knowing in equal measure. A parallel process or resonance may also occur. If, when offering questions, you are using tentative language and you notice a gentle anxiety in your own somatic response, then you are probably working in a helpful space.

Resist the temptation towards the end of the exploration to move the discussion to what may feel like a safer, lighter more positive space. The point of this approach is to sit in the discomfort, to describe the experience such the discomfort is processed more fully and to see what learning emerges.

What else might need attention?

Often this enquiry raises awareness of personal narratives that have the potential to impede the supervisee's client work. Sometimes the connections happen within the session but more often it will occur following further reflection or work. Therefore, encourage the supervisee to continue to process the experience while also highlighting that fuller awareness may not yet be within their grasp. You may need to prepare them to sit with that discomfort too.

A word of caution.

The importance of contracting cannot be underestimated – so give it the time it takes. Re-contracting can be an interesting piece of work on its own, i.e. clarifying how the supervisee manages the boundary of their comfort and discomfort. Hold your own curiosity lightly and ensure you always work in service of your supervisee.

This approach navigates the edges of the supervisees awareness and therefore should only be done in the context of an established and ongoing relationship. The work requires a developmental not an intellectual shift. Awareness cannot be rushed, it will occur in its own time and in the context of a supportive and developmental relationship.






What other uses are there for this approach?

When used within a group setting, it may generate an additional level of vulnerability. This should be reserved therefore for mature and established groups with a supervisor who holds deep experience of group dynamics. By exception this could be useful for coaching clients – conditional upon psychological safety in the relationship.

Further Reading:

Lucas, M. (2017) From Coach to Coach Supervisor – a shift in mind-set. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 15 (1), pp. 11-23.

Technique 3: Sparkling Moments: Instances and Exceptions
Written by Evan George and Denise Yusuf

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

Used when the supervisee feels stuck and is asking the supervisor for ideas about what to do. This is a way of liberating the supervisee to generate their own useful ideas even when they are complaining of feeling stuck and asking for help.

What is the technique?

This technique assumes that even in the most difficult situations there will be some variability, there will be times when the work is going a little better, or the supervisee is feeling a little more hopeful. Sparkling Moments assumes that at these times the supervisee is likely to be doing something different and that doing more of this difference is likely to prove useful.

Step 1: Acknowledge the supervisee’s experience of stuckness, for example “...it sounds like things are pretty tough right now and that you are not clear about the way forward”.

Step 2: Elicit permission to ask some questions, “Would it be OK for me to ask some questions to see if we can find any clues as to what might be useful in moving forward?”.

Step 3: Ask about the Sparkling Moments. “Tell me about the times when you feel a little bit more hopeful’ or ‘tell me about the times when he does seem to cooperate a bit better” or “Tell me about the times that you have seen a little progress”.

Step 4 (a): If the supervisee can bring to mind more hopeful times or times when the work is going better ask the supervisee what they are doing at these times that is working, even a little.

Step 4(b) If the supervisee cannot identify times when there is a little more hope or co-operation or progress, widen the field to other pieces of work where the supervisee has felt similarly and when they have nonetheless found a way forward.

Step 5: Ask the supervisee to identify in as much detail as possible what they were doing at these Sparkling Moments, either in the present piece of work or in these other similar pieces of work. Ask, for instance, “Tell me 5 (10) things that you were doing at these times that may have been useful”.

Step 6: Invite the supervisee to identify which of the things that they were doing at these ‘better’ times it might be useful to repeat and increase.

Step 7: Once the supervisee has chosen, suggest to the supervisee that they experiment with amplifying this aspect of their work.

Step 8: Ask the supervisee to watch out for evidence that what they are doing is working.

How to work with the technique...

The Solution Focused approach takes the view that supervisees are more likely to make effective use of the ideas that they themselves have generated rather than ideas provided by the supervisor. When working with this technique, this belief is a central component to its effectiveness. Without it the Supervisor will be drawn to ‘rescue’ and either offer their solutions or engage in joint problem solving. A genuinely Solution Focused mindset will create a generative energy in the supervision space. Should the stuckness continue, the supervisor’s role is to broaden the enquiry, to help the supervisee think more laterally until some Sparkling Moments are found in different but nonetheless transferable situations.

What else might need attention?

If the supervisee is unable to identify any Sparkling Moments in the work or in their broader experience, the supervisor can use a SF Scale Question (see pages 260 -263), focusing on the supervisee’s confidence in the possibility of change. Alternatively, the supervisor might ask the supervisee “So in your work with this client what can you say for certain does not work and is not worth repeating?”. Once this is known, then anything else might be worth trying.

A word of caution.

Before asking about Sparkling Moments it is important to acknowledge the supervisee’s feelings of stuckness, that they feel that they really do not know what to do. Failing to acknowledge the stuckness reduces the supervisee’s capacity to scan for and to identify the Sparkling Moments.

What other uses are there for this technique?






This technique works well in personal coaching and in group coaching.

Further Reading:

Iveson, C., George, E. and Ratner, H. (2012) *Brief Coaching: A Solution Focused Approach*. London: Routledge.

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

Technique 4: Rush Writing
Written by Clare Norman

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

At the end of a supervision session, as a means of reflecting on what they are learning.

What is the technique?

Rush writing requires a person to write continuously for a short period of time, perhaps 3 minutes, without stopping and without editing. A question or series of questions are posed at the start for the person to write about. The idea is to access the non-editing part of their brain, to access thoughts and ideas that may be underneath the surface.

Step 1: Ask supervisees to write for 3 minutes on a question or questions that you pose to them such as:

- What stands out most in your mind about the session?
- What really worked well and added value?
- Looking back, what would you have done differently?
- How might you be of greater service to your peers?
- In this moment of reflecting, what are you noticing that you may not have noticed before?
- How do you feel about the session now?
- What creative or intuitive thoughts are you having about how you might work in future in this group?

Write the question(s) on a flip-chart so that they can refer to them as a reminder while they are writing.

Step 2: Brief them to continue writing, no matter what comes into their mind. They can edit later. If their mind goes blank, instruct them to doodle until a new thought comes to mind. Explain that the pen must keep moving at all times to access their sub-conscious thoughts. Reassure them that the rush writing is for their personal use, they will not be asked to reveal their writing to the supervisor or to the group.

Step 3: Time them and stop at three minutes.

Step 4: Ask supervisees what they notice as a result of writing in this way?

Encourage them to add a few notes to the end of their written piece

Step 5: Ask them what learning they wish to share with the group.

How to work with the technique...

Occasionally, people freeze at the start of this exercise, so encourage them to doodle until a thought pops into their head. You may decide to do the exercise yourself at the same time to role model how to focus.

Encourage them to do this after each session and to keep their notes over time so that they have the opportunity to collate their work and carry out a meta-reflection.

What else might need attention?

It is entirely possible that new thoughts might come up at the end of the supervision that need attention. In that case, encourage supervisees either to self-supervise to continue the learning or to reach out for additional support.

A word of caution.

Keep the question posed to a single question. If you offer many questions at once, the brain will simply work through the questions rather than going deeper on any one. It can be helpful to repeat the question a couple of times before starting the clock to ensure it has been heard.

What other uses are there for this technique?

This can be used any time an individual wants to reflect or get to deeper thoughts about an issue or opportunity. It can be useful for coaching clients and could act as a more meaningful 'aide memoire' than generating a list of actions.