EMCC
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Coaching Council

Supervision Techniques 11

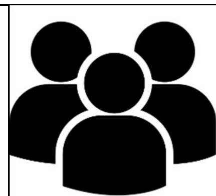
FOUR SUPERVISION TECHNIQUES
EDITED BY MICHELLE LUCAS

EXPLORING CONGRUENCE
REFLECTIVE WRITING
SELF SUPERVISION CHECKLIST
SOLUTION FOCUSED SCALING

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: Exploring Congruence
Written by Michelle Lucas

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

When is this used?
This enquiry is likely to be offered when the supervisor notices a persistent somatic discomfort in response to a supervisee's account of their client work. The intention is to prompt a normative discussion exploring how the supervisee is enacting their espoused approach or model of coaching.

What is the enquiry?
The supervisor's surfaces their own sense of discomfort (practitioner congruence) to raise the supervisee's awareness of possible inconsistencies between their model and their practice (task congruence).

Step 1: Bring the sensation of discomfort into awareness.
While keeping a non-directive stance, the supervisor invites a pause for the supervisee to 'rewind' to an earlier part of the discussion. For example:

> "…. might we pause for a moment? When you were talking about xxxxx I noticed the sensation of something tugging at my belly, often that signals to me something in the system may have been overlooked. How would you feel about re-visiting this to see if anything else comes into our awareness?"

Step 2: Invite a more granular review.
Once the moment is captured and located by both supervisor and supervisee, the supervisor poses gentle questions, such as:

- What is your sense of how xxxxx that came about?
- What were you aware of at the time, that you may or may not have attended to?
-

Step 3: Consider how their practice maps to their coaching approach.
Paradoxically, it is not necessary to know your supervisee's coaching approach. In fact, when it is known, a supervisor can be drawn to a more interrogative position. So, pose questions from a position of genuine discovery –

- Can we explore what you tell your clients about how you work?
- Which aspects of your coaching approach would you say most influenced you in that moment?
- Which parts might not have been attended to?
- What's your sense of why your work unfolded in the way it did?

- As you hear yourself talk about your worked on that day, how might you describe your coaching model now?
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Step 4: Allow a new equilibrium to emerge.
For most experienced supervisees, this type of enquiry will bring into their awareness a need for adjustment. Unless an ethical issue has surfaced which needs more direct attention, simply allow space for fuller independent reflection.

How to work with the enquiry…
When working with this enquiry, offer the fullest respect for your supervisee. Remember, you were not in the room at the time. Honour your supervisee and trust that they were working with good intent and to the best of their ability. With this as an over-arching attitude, questions are framed in a gentle way, helping the supervisor to be experienced as someone seeking to facilitate a fuller understanding, rather than to highlight poor practice, or to diagnose or problem solve.

When inconsistency is identified it can provoke a tussle for the supervisee, considering how they wish to work and how they work effectively. Many coaches aspire to be 'pure and non-directive' and yet in truth they offer their clients an effective blend of coaching, mentoring and consultancy. Through using this enquiry, we help supervisees to be more accurate and more articulate in how they bring value to their clients. A supervisor will of course have a duty to their supervisee's clients (are they getting what they were promised?), but additionally they have a duty to the coaching profession (are coaches properly explaining what they do?).

What else might need attention?
In order to check for consistency, the supervisee needs to have considered how to articulate their coaching approach. If not already done, it could be developed as part of the supervision work.

A word of caution.

It is for the supervisee to decide whether they want to *change the way* they work or *change what they say* about how they work. The role of the supervisor is only to highlight the difference (and where agreed, hold the supervisee to account for creating greater consistency) not to direct what needs to change.

What other uses are there for this enquiry?

This could be adapted to work with coaching clients who have developed a personal leadership brand and who want to review how they are embedding new ways of working.

Further Reading
Counselling Training Liverpool (2015) *Being Congruent - what does it mean?* [online] 23 November. Available at: https://www.counsellingtrainingliverpool.org.uk/blog/being-congruent-what-does-it-mean#> [Accessed 7 September 2019].

Technique 2: Reflective Writing

Written by Michelle Lucas and Christine Champion

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

When is this used?

This process of capturing systematic, tangible written reflections will deepen insights into the coaching practice of supervisees and can also help access relational dynamics. For this reason it is helpful in preparation for Accreditation.

It can be used between supervision sessions to prepare written reflections in advance, and equally during one to one and group supervision sessions. Encouraging supervisees to engage with this regularly and systematically helps them create a robust and professional coaching practice.

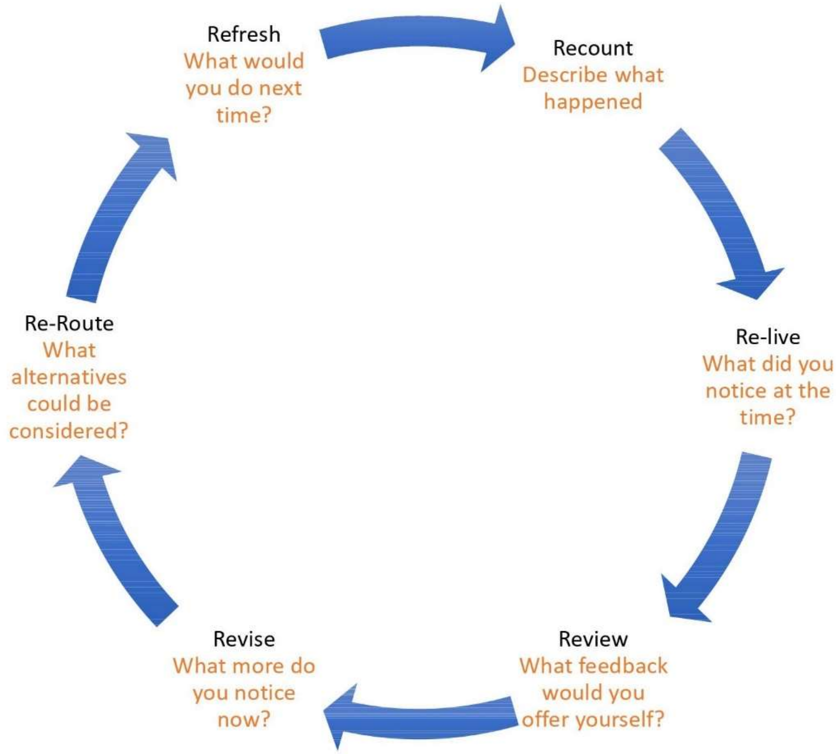
What is the approach?

Based on Gibbs (1988) model of reflection the supervisee revisits a written reflection through three increasingly complex lenses of description, analysis and reflexivity.

Step 1: Invite the supervisee to consider a moment or a theme in their client work – this could be something that was perplexing, or equally something that had a positive outcome for the client.

Step 2: Using Gibbs model of reflection as a guide (see figure 1.5) invite them to write about the moment or theme. There are no particular time boundaries for this. It is important, that they can fully engage with the approach.

Figure 1.5: The Reflective Cycle, based on Gibbs (1988) and adapted by Lucas and Champion



Step 3: Pause and ask the supervisee to consider how they felt about the writing activity; making notes to capture this.

Step 4: Individuals naturally write at different levels of complexity, typically in the first iteration the writing is broadly descriptive and factual. For example: "I did X and upon reflection I realise that Y might have been more useful."

Step 5: Invite the supervisee to review the written reflection with the aim of becoming more analytical. For example, consider:

- Which coaching competencies can be identified in the reflection? Are any missing?
- Consider a framework e.g. seven-eyed model… which eyes do you tend to focus on? Which seem to be absent? Why might that be?
- Which of your reflections are subjective I.e. About how you are experiencing the moment? Which of your reflections are objective i.e. Have a detached, observational quality reviewing the client and their wider context?

Step 6: Pause for a moment and capture any feelings emerging from the writing activity – make a few notes.

Step 7: Revisit the written piece with the intention of being more reflexive. For example, consider:

- What senses were evoked in you by reflecting on the moment?
- How does your practice align with your coaching philosophy/model? What level of intentionality was in evidence?
- What can you learn about yourself from this work?

Step 8: Pause and consider how you felt about the reflective writing activity – make a few notes.

Step 9: Over time gather a collection of reflections and see what you notice. This meta-reflection may highlight a journey into greater maturity of writing and coaching approach. It can reveal strengths and also new opportunities for exploration and growth.

How to work with the approach…

Reflective writing can feel challenging for some. For those who are reluctant it can help to be experimental and to write in shorter, focused bursts. Typically, the act of reflective writing is a developmental experience, bringing greater depth and breadth of insights thereby raising consciousness. It can be helpful for supervisees to share their reflections with their supervisor and this can deepen levels of reflexivity still further.

A word of caution.

The writing process may surface fears of uncertainty and ineptitude. Therefore, it will be important for the supervisor to blend encouragement and creative challenge such that the process leaves the supervisee feeling 'whole'. Similarly, it is important to create a constructive experience and to celebrate developmental success for novice supervisees engaging in written reflection on practice for the first time.

What other uses are there for this approach?

When working with a supervision group, peers can work in pairs to review examples of reflective writing and offer observations and feedback to help deepen each other's reflection. The approach is equally useful with coaching clients – perhaps using leadership competencies as an analytical frame.

References:

Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Further Education Unit. Oxford Polytechnic: Oxford.

Technique 3: CHECKS Self Supervision Checklist
Written by Lynda Tongue

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

When is this used?
After the supervision session, as a reflective exercise. When done routinely it also provides an interesting reference point for evaluating the processing preferences of the supervisee and also the supervision partnership.

What is the technique?
A self-monitoring checklist in the form of the mnemonic 'CHECK'.

> **Step 1:** Familiarise yourself with the the symbols and what they stand for. See Figure 6.4.
>
> **Step 2:** After the supervision, work your way through the CHECKs checklist. Focus on each element in turn in a considered fashion.
>
> **Step 3:** Notice when you are inclined to give yourself a tick in a box to indicate you are satisfied with your supervision experience or experience of supervision. Before making a tick consider what evidence you have that would support your decision.
>
> **Step 4:** If there are are boxes you cannot tick, consider why that might be. Typically these items could then form an agenda for your next supervision session.

Figure 6.4: The CHECKS-list for Supervision
Adapted from Clarkson (1991) and useful for reflection after the supervision session. This can be used by both supervisor and supervisee.

C

Contracting
- Was the contract clear?
- Was it met?

H

Here and now
- Was the process modelled?
- Did supervisee notice parallel process?
- Did supervisor stay out of parallel process?

E

Equal relationship
- Mutual respect shown?
- Supervisor offered I'm okay, you're ok approach – how did that manifest itself?

C

Challenge for growth
- Developmental guidance
- Challenge the supervisee in their learning

K

Key issues
- What were the key issues?
- Have they come up before?

S

Safety
- How was protection offered
- To the supervisee?
- To the client and client system of the supervisee?

How to work with the technique…
Although CHECKS is presented as a 'tick list', it is intended as an aide for reflection. Therefore it is important to allow sufficient time and space where you can engage in a full and thoughtful response. It is not just a list of things that should be ticked off.
When done routinely over time, it is useful to keep your completed CHECK's and any notes you made whilst completing them. On a regular basis look at all them all side by side to see what patterns are emerging.

Additionally, it can be useful for both supervisor and supervisee to use the CHECKS list to review their partnership after a particular session (or series of sessions). It can be informative to notice which elements you saw similarly and which you saw differently . Exploring this helps both parties understand the other more fully and could identify elements of the relationship that you would like to experiment with in future.
Once familiar with the CHECKS list, the supervisor may want to add elements not listed here. Make it work for you, but at the same time make sure you are encompassing all the important elements.

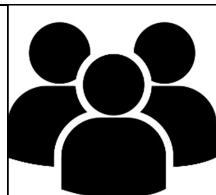
What else might need attention?
Often there is a sense that something on the list is satisfactory, and yet when you consider the evidence for forming that view it is hard to pin point it. This is information in itself and could be material for future supervision. Perhaps there were some significant moments in the historical supervision relationship prior to the session being reflected upon that are getting 'carried forward'; perhaps you are making some assumptions which might benefit from more rigorous inspection; perhaps it highlghts an uncertainty about how a concept actually shows up in practice.

A word of caution.
Self-supervision is a very useful process and very good practice – however, it is not a substute for live supervision with your supervisor, either face-to-face or online.

What other uses are there for this technique?
Applicable for use in the coaching relationship.

Reference:
Clarkson, P. (1991) Through the Looking Glass: Explorations in Transference and Countertransference *Transactional Analysis Journal,* 21(2), pp.99-107.

Technique 4: Solution Focused Scaling Questions
Written by Evan George and Denise Yusuf

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

When is this used?
When supervisees identify work as stalled and failing to progress, the progress already made can be obscured, making it harder for supervisees to recall what they have done that has been useful. Solution Focused (SF) Scaling Questions can highlight the progress already achieved, providing a framework within which that progress can be accessed and leveraged.
This approach offers a flexible conversational framework which can serve to highlight and to clarify the key elements of the change process, such as:

- Coach and client resources.
- Effective strategies.
- Progress made.
- Indicators of further progress.

What is the technique?
The most generic formulation of the question, used in supervision is "On a scale of 0 to 10 with 0 representing how things were when you started working with this client and 10 representing confident and successful closure where would you put things now?"

Step 1: Ensure that the scale is anchored, that the points 0 and 10 have been clearly defined.
Step 2: Elicit the supervisee's view on how far the work has reached.
Step 3: Consider using any or all of the following frequently used subsidiary questions:

- What tells you that you have reached that point?

- What have you done that has been helpful in reaching that point?
- What have you noticed about your own capacities in reaching that point on the scale?
- How will you know that the work has moved just one point up on the scale?
-

Note: The client's perspective is also routinely incorporated by re-framing the above questions – for example question one would become "Where would your client say that the work has reached?"

Step 4: In each of these areas of focus, continue to elicit greater detail for example, "So what else have you noticed that puts things at 6 and not back at 0?"'. It is in the supportive persistence that supervisees are likely to generate and to articulate new thoughts about their work.

Step 5: At the end of supervision invite the supervisee to pay particular attention to tiny evidences of change in forthcoming sessions and to what they are doing that is associated with this progress.

How to work with the technique…

Choice of language is significant, particularly in the framing of the 'one point up' question. Choosing the more 'strategic' framing "So *what do you need to do* to move the work up by just one point?" consistently proves less effective (Ratner et al. 2012 pp. 125 - 126) than an alternative 'evidential' framing of the question. The strategic framing risks reminding the supervisee that they do not know what to do, whereas the evidential framing "*How will you know* that the work has moved …." has an embedded suggestion that the supervisee is capable of knowing and that the work will move up, thereby tending to engage the supervisee's imagination and creativity. Typically, this will open up a range of new potential options for action, allowing the supervisee to choose the most appropriate of those possibilities in the moment.

Supervisors new to using the SF Scaling question are often tempted to quickly move towards a description of 'one point up' on the scale. Experienced practitioners will spend twice as long 'unpacking' where the work has already reached before describing how the supervisee will know that the work has progressed by a further point.

Word of caution.

The SF approach chooses to assume that both clients and supervisees are at all times giving of their best to make the conversation useful. Therefore, if the supervisee is struggling to answer the supervisor's questions, or struggling to provide detail, then the SF supervisor's assumption is that they are asking the wrong question, or moving at the wrong pace, or have not made the purpose of the questions sufficiently clear. If what we are doing does not seem to be working *the onus is on the supervisor to do something different*.

What other uses are there for this technique?

Scale questions can be straightforwardly re-framed to focus on, for example, the supervisee's confidence in the likelihood of change or the supervisee's professional development. Once familiar with the approach it can equally be applied in one to one coaching and in team coaching. Teams can, for example, be asked to scale “How effectively are we communicating?” or “How well we support each other at times when things are tough?”.

References

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

Further Reading

Iveson, C., George, E. and Ratner, H. (2012) *Brief Coaching: A Solution Focused Approach.* London: Routledge.
Meier, D. (2005) *Team Coaching with the Solution Circle: a practical guide to solutions focused team development.* Cheltenham: SolutionsBooks.
Thomas, F. (2013) *Solution-Focused Supervision: A Resource-Oriented Approach to Developing Clinical Expertise*. New York: Springer.