

Supervision Techniques 12

FOUR SUPERVISION TECHNIQUES







EDITED BY MICHELLE LUCAS

METAPHOR MAGIC BOX

SYSTEMICALLY ORIENTED QUESTIONS





WRITING THE LABYRINTH

WORKING WITH SHAME

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: Metaphor Magic Box

Written by Lily Seto

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

When is this used?

This creative tool is especially useful when a supervisee gets stuck or needs to identify patterns or is interested in accessing what lies outside of current awareness. The choice of symbols encourages the use of metaphors which act as a conduit for different kinds of knowing.

What is the technique?

The work is carried out using a small box of approximately 21-30 mixed charms and can be used alongside other supervision tools.

Step 1: Start by asking “What question or client scenario would you like to examine today?”

Step 2: encourage the supervisee to handle the charms in the magic box in an unhurried fashion, noticing their weight and texture.

Step 3: Brief the supervisee along the following lines:

- *“I invite you to choose an item/s that best represents your client and place it/them on the mat.”*
- *“Choose an item/s that represent you in the scenario and place it/them on the mat.”*
- *“If there is anyone else who needs to be represented; choose items to represent them and place them on the mat.”*

Step 4: Encourage description for example:

“Please describe the item(s) that you chose to represent each of the elements (your client; yourself; other representative) and how it or they represent that element.

- *What else?*
- *What else?*
- *What else?*

Repeat these questions for each of the remaining elements.

Step 5: Encourage the supervisee to take a meta-position, being guided by their sense of flow.

- *“If you stand and look at the system that you created, what do you notice? There is no need to try to interpret the system yet, perhaps consider..."*
- *...Patterns that you might notice, what colours you are drawn to, how you laid the items out, e.g. What came easily, what order felt right.*
- *...Where you laid the items out I.e. their relationship to each other, e.g. How near or far are they from each other.”*

Step 6: Build awareness through unpacking the metaphoric landscape they have depicted and by making connections to other models and modalities:

1. Referencing the Seven-Eyed Model:

- (Eye 3) Describe the relationship between client and coach/other relationships in the system.
- (Parallel process) What might be happening now between you (coach) and myself (supervisor) that is mirrored in your creation?

2. Referencing alternative modalities:

- (Emotions) What feelings are you present to in the moment?
- (Kinesthetics) What sensations are you noticing now?

3. Alternative lines of enquiry:

- What do you think the client would want to discuss about the system that you have depicted?

Step 7: Check in on learning. Ask:

- What is emerging for you and what are you present to right now?
- What are your learnings?

How to work with the technique...

Respect the supervisee's ownership of their creation, so refrain from naming the item(s) until the supervisee has done so and do not touch items until supervisee has deconstructed the field.

In Step 3, repeating “What else?” invites deeper exploration. Initially, the supervisee goes to a place they already know. After 3 or 4 repetitions, they will likely come to new discoveries. Pay attention to your pace and tone, allowing for lots of silence and notice when the supervisee is ready for another question.

What else might need attention?

Strong emotions may emerge, so allow sufficient time for processing this heightened awareness. Occasionally some unfinished business is evoked and so referral to an alternative helping professional may be appropriate.

A word of caution.

Avoid offering what may be intended as subtle prompts, they have the potential for contaminating the process. Simply holding the space and asking succinct, curiosity questions allows the supervisee to do the work they need to do in the moment.

What other uses are there for this technique?

When using this tool in group supervision, pose a common question e.g. How do I best resource myself? This allows everyone in the group to work independently, answering the questions by journaling their responses. Alternatively have the group ask questions or make observations about the system that the supervisee has built. The supervisee listens to all the questions or observations and chooses which questions or observations resonate and create emergent thoughts and learnings. It has also been adapted to other settings including professional coaches, leaders and counsellors.

Further reading:

Seto, L. and Geithner, T. (2018) Metaphor Magic in Coaching and Coaching Supervision. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 16(2), pp. 99-111.

Resources:





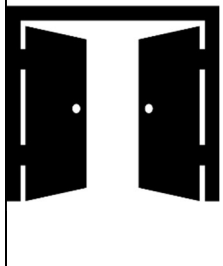
For more information or to purchase or be trained in using the Metaphor Magic Box, please contact Lily directly. Available at: <http://www.lilyseto.com/> [Accessed 6 September 2019]

Acknowledgements:

Thank you to Edna Murdoch and the Coaching Supervision Academy for introducing me to the power of metaphors in supervision.

Technique 2: Systemically Oriented Questions

Written by Maren Donata Urschel

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

When is this used?

Systemically-oriented questions based on the systemic *Organising Principles, Time, Place and Exchange* (see *Philosophy pages 252-272*) enable supervisor and supervisee to ‘diagnose’ and acknowledge which parts of a relationship system are in and out of balance. As a result, energy, flow and clarity for the supervisee and the system they are working in are restored.

What is the practice?

Systemically-oriented questions enable a shift from a person-centred towards a system-centred perspective by moving beyond focusing solely on the supervisee towards taking the entire relationship system into account.

To illustrate the power of systemically-oriented questions in a coaching context, here are some examples around each of the *Organising Principles*. These are the sort of questions that the supervisor might ask the supervisee in other Systemic Techniques for example ‘mapping what is’ (Step 7) – see page 280 and ‘step towards better (Step 10) – see page 283.

Time

- **Purpose:** asking questions about the order of time acknowledges contributions, people and events in the past to clear the present and future from entanglements and hidden loyalties.
- **Examples:** who served the longest in this system? Who was the last person to join? Who are the founders of this system? Is their original intention known and acknowledged? What were the key events in the history of this company? How many people held this role before you took it up? To what extent has their contribution been acknowledged?

Place

- **Purpose:** asking questions about the extent to which everybody and everything has a safe and respected place in a system, keeps energy, flow and focus in the system that would otherwise be diverted.
- **Examples:** whose contribution to the company is excluded or has been forgotten about? Are difficult events in the company’s history known and talked about? To what extent is the contribution of people who left the system acknowledged? Does everybody have the same right to a safe and respected place in the system? Are there roles that seem particularly difficult to fill?

Exchange

- **Purpose:** asking questions about the balance of exchange in a system highlights the extent to which there is a dynamic balance between giving and taking over time, a precondition for enabling all system elements to take full responsibility for themselves and their contributions.
- **Examples:** who in this system gives too much, who gives too little? Who earns the money to pay for the coaching assignment? What is your sense of what you give/receive and what your client gives/receives in the coaching assignment?

How to work with the practice...

Systemically-oriented questions naturally integrate into any supervision conversation. They are useful in untangling complexity and in exploring inertia, stuckness and conflict in relationship systems. Examples of when a supervisor might ask them follow below.

- A supervisee feels unusually drained by a client assignment without knowing why

- A team displays challenging behaviour without any obvious cause
- An organisation struggles to keep a leadership role filled despite each role holder's skills and experience
- A pattern of withholding key information from decision makers - for no apparent reason – surfaces
- An organisation avoids talking about the people who left the organisation and about what they contributed

A word of caution.

Systemically-oriented questions often reveal fresh or hidden information about a relationship system. This might be surprising or even unsettling for the supervisee. It is most useful to treat any reaction in the supervisee as information, acknowledge it and encourage them to allow it to settle so that it can integrate and unfold.

What other uses are there for this practice?

Once supervisees have experienced systemically-oriented questions in supervision they can safely use them with their clients to gently introduce them to the *Organising Principles* and to a more systemic perspective on their issue.

Further reading:


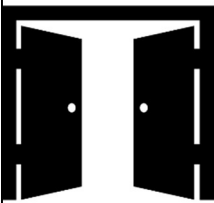
Whittington, J. (2020) *Systemic Coaching and Constellations*. 3rd ed. London: Kogan Page.

Resources:

Available at: www.coachingconstellations.com [Accessed 2 October 2019].

Technique 3: Writing the Labyrinth

Written by Jackee Holder

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

When is this used?

Most useful for reflecting on client sessions, for thinking through a supervision problem or dilemma. It is a useful tool for changing perspective on an issue and presents a different

approach to supervision themes. It can also be used to reflect on broader matters for example, one's coaching style or coaching development.

What is the technique?

The labyrinth is two printable templates which facilitate individual written reflection (see Resources below). Through completing each one in different directions different thinking is generated. *Writing into* the labyrinth you unravel your presenting issue. Then you explore solutions and new ideas through *writing out* from the centre back to the entrance of the labyrinth.

Step 1: Set aside some quiet time where you can work uninterrupted – allow a minimum of 20 minutes so that you can complete your reflections thoroughly.

Step 2: Using a pencil (or coloured pens if you prefer) begin with the page title 'Writing In' start at the entrance of the labyrinth and following the pathway write about the matter you are reflecting upon inside the labyrinth pathway. Be descriptive and include all the facets that come to mind, what you have done so far, current impact, include how you were feeling about it at the time. When you have exhausted all that you can write, if there is still space until you reach the centre, draw a line to take you there.

Step 3: Metaphorically 'stand back' and look at what you have written, digest it as though you were meeting it for the first time. Capture any new thoughts that emerge.

Step 4: Now turn to the 'Writing Out' page. Starting at the centre repeat the exercise this time working outwards. Write about your current thoughts and feelings and start to include what ideas you have for solutions or alternative ways to progress or respond to your issue. When you have exhausted all that you can write, if there is still space until the entrance, draw a line to take you there.

Step 5: Repeat Step 3 then consider what you notice now and what sense you are making about the matter you reflected upon.

Step 6: Make a note of your thoughts and reflections along with any actions you intend to take, including what additional reflection or supervision could be beneficial.

Step 7: File your work so that you can add to your reflections over time. Periodically review a number of reflections to see what patterns you notice. Good questions to ask yourself could be:

- How is writing the labyrinth different to other reflective approaches?
- How does this help me shift perspective and generate new ideas?
- What do I tend to reflect upon most often?
- What do I tend not to reflect upon?
- What happens to my intentions to act / work differently over time?

How to work with the technique...

It often generates a sense of surprise and unexpected solutions tend to emerge through the active reflection of writing around the labyrinth. By working with it, individuals discover how they can best utilise it, many noticing a preferred direction of working. It can be particularly useful as a preparation and reflection upon a supervision session itself. For example, the supervisee might complete it privately at the start of the session, then prior to session close use it to capture their learning.

What else might need attention?

This tool when used routinely or used alongside other reflective activities can help supervisees map what kind of issues they tend to reflect upon, or not. These themes provide useful insights for sharing with a professional supervisor to stretch their reflective practice further.

A word of caution.

Reflection is valuable, and our intention here is to prompt a difference in how we practice. Step 6 of reflecting back on what you have written is an essential component of the process.

What other uses are there for this technique?

This can be used in groups as an arrivals exercise with each group member clarifying what they would like to bring to supervision. If reflecting as a group at the end of a session you might invite individuals to share the impact of engaging in the exercise rather than sharing the content of their reflections. Groups often marvel at the cathartic experience of physically moving the paper as they complete the labyrinth, it serves to connect the group with a more reflective and creative energy.

The labyrinth template could also be offered to clients to aide their reflection.

Further reading:

Holder, J. (2013) *49 Ways to write yourself well: The science and wisdom of reflective writing and journaling*. Brighton: Stepbeach Press.

Holder, J. (2014) The Write Stuff. *Coaching Today*, January 2014, pp. 28-33.

Holder, J. (2014) Notes to Self. *Coaching at Work*, 9(2), pp. 38-41.

Holder, J. (2014) *Slow Hand*. London: MSLEXIA , pp. 18-19.

Holder, J. and Levin, S. (2016) *Writing with Fabulous Trees: A Writing Map for Parks, Gardens and Other Green Spaces*. London: Writing Maps.

Holder, J. (2019) Creative forms of reflective and expressive writing in coaching supervision. In. E. Turner and S. Palmer. Eds. 2019. *The Heart of Coaching Supervision: Working with Reflection and Self Care*. Abingdon: Routledge. Ch.7.




Turner, T., Lucas, M, and Whitaker, C. (2018) *Peer Supervision in Coaching and Mentoring: A versatile Guide for Reflective Practice*. Abingdon: Routledge. pp.34-35 & 46.

Resources:

Holder, J. (2011) Writing The Labyrinth - Guidance Notes. Download free template. [pdf]
Available at: <http://www.jackeeholder.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Writing-the-labyrinth-April15.pdf> [Accessed 19 August 2019].

Technique 4: Working with Shame Using Embodied Coaching

Written by Tsafi Lederman and Jenny Stacey

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

When is this used?

Useful when there may be a shame process in the supervisory system. This way of working can be used to increase the supervisees awareness of their shame triggers and discover a place of Self-Acceptance.

What is the approach?

The Embodied Coaching method expands awareness by addressing implicit, non-conscious knowledge; something we 'know' but cannot easily express in words. This knowledge can be accessed through two primary pathways; body process and exploring emerging images and metaphors through the use of the Arts.

Step 1: Contract appropriately for the depth of work.

Step 2: Ask the supervisee to imagine a situation of Shame. For example:
“What is your image or metaphor for this situation? What do you notice in your body as you describe it?”

Step 3: Invite the supervisee to choose a place in the room to represent the situation of shame and go there. Ask the supervisee to adopt the 'body shape'/posture that represents being there. Ask:

“What do you notice in your body?”

Step 4: Invite the supervisee to move away from the place of shame and 'shake off' the embodiment Ask:

“What did you notice about that experience? What was the trigger that took you into this situation?”

Remember their shame trigger could be non-verbal, e.g. a facial expression or tone of voice.

Step 5: Now ask the supervisee to imagine a place/situation of Self-Acceptance. Ask:

“What is your image or metaphor for this place? What do you notice in your body as you describe it?”

Step 6: Invite the supervisee to choose a different place that represents Self-Acceptance and go there and put their body into a shape that represents being there.

Ask:

“What do you notice?”

Step 7: In the place of Self-Acceptance, invite the supervisee to remember a time when they achieved an important objective. Ask:

“What did you learn about your skill, abilities and what you are capable of achieving?”

Then ask them to take up a body position of fulfilment and/or satisfaction and to make some statements from that position.

Step 8: Moving away from both positions. Ask:

“Thinking about the original issue now, what is your understanding? How has this changed your view? What would you like to take away with you?”

How to work with the approach...

It can be hard to know how to begin this work. The impetus may come from the supervisee becoming aware that they are feeling shame but more likely the supervisor might wonder aloud if it is present. There needs to be a safe, trusting and ongoing relationship between the supervisor and supervisee. The attitude of the supervisor needs to be one of unconditional positive regard and empathy for the supervisee and the system in which they work.

Convey that shame is a feature of our human existence - a collapse of self-esteem - which may impact our relational patterns. Shame is often triggered by self-talk from the Inner Critic, and this approach encourages an exploration of the experience of shame without necessarily seeking to reduce or remove it, rather to examine its ‘being there’ and what that might illuminate. On occasion it might be entirely appropriate to feel shame. Additionally, connecting with a more positive self-image can provide further understanding of the supervisee’s process.

Through parallel process shame can be mirrored in the coach:client relationship and echo shame in the wider system. When the supervisee understands how shame manifests for them and how to manage it constructively, they are in a much clearer position to identify and work with any shame in the client system.

It is important for the work to end in the place of Self-Acceptance. Where appropriate the supervisor could start at step 5.

What else might need attention?

The origin of shame is often laid down in early life. Further personal work may be needed outside the supervisory relationship.

A word of caution.

Shame is often experienced in the coaching supervision relationship, but it can be difficult for the supervisor to notice, as we all strive to keep shame hidden. The supervisee may use protective strategies e.g. withdrawing contact, being overly compliant, self-critical or aggressive. There are often non-verbal clues which may help the supervisor identify shame e.g. the supervisee looking away, blushing, change of posture and energy level.

In this embodied way of working the supervisor needs to notice how the supervisee is reacting in the different positions. The supervisor's skill is in bringing this into attention without inadvertently shaming the supervisee. Offer neutral observations and questions such as: "What are you noticing in your body now and how does it feel?".

What other uses are there for this approach?

This approach can be expanded by using the Arts. Simply ask the supervisee to draw or find an image to represent both places.

An image can offer a tangible representation of the unconscious dynamics and shame triggers in the supervisory process. It can give a different perspective and offer 'super' vision.

References:

Lederman, T. and Stacey, J. (2014) Embodied Coaching: pathways to implicit knowledge using the arts and somatic process. *Coaching Today*, Issue 11, pp.6-9.