

Supervision Techniques 13

FOUR SUPERVISION TECHNIQUES







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SELF PREPARATION

BUILDING CONFIDENCE


WORKING WITH OUR SUB-PERSONALITIES

WORKING WITH GESTURE

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: ‘Self-preparation’ for Supervisors

Written by Helen Reuben

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

When is this used?

This technique aids the supervisor to increase their focus, self-compassion and presence in order to remain effective. It is therefore useful as part of your preparation for a session.

What is the technique?

This technique allows us to access an appropriate state for being the best supervisor we can be. Some of this approach is inspired by ‘Spiritual Intelligence’.

You will need at least 5 minutes before a session. Find a quiet place, without interruptions.

Step 1: Ground yourself by putting your feet on the floor feeling the ground beneath your feet. Allow your eyes to close. Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth – breathing ‘out’ any unwanted tensions, concerns – just let them go. Allow yourself to access peaceful feelings.

Step 2: Now, trusting your imagination, allow yourself to go to a place of beauty and positive change – experience this place in detail - colours, shapes smells, feelings – be there fully and completely

Wait peacefully, you are about to meet a wonderfully skilled person, this is the best of you, your ‘Higher Self’ (see pages 316-317). Perhaps the you connected to a ‘higher power’? - Whatever that may mean for you?

See them walking towards you, notice how they walk, move, what they wear.

They wish to offer you guidance and support to help you prepare effectively - when you open your eyes you may want to write this down.

Today, your highest self, recognises you may need to let go of something – a belief, thought a feeling that may block your effectiveness - What is that? How will you release it right now?

Take a moment and trust you will gain a sense of how to do this – perhaps you can wash it away in a beautiful waterfall. Perhaps a gentle breeze to blow away this unwanted thought or feeling.

Your ‘Higher Self’ offers you a gift – a resource that will help you supervise – even more powerfully. What might this gift be? They also offer you words of guidance – what do they tell you about who you really are?

Step 3: Where in your body might you feel blocks or discomfort? Allow these to be released. Breathe away tension in any part of you.

‘High Self’ also asks – “What is diverting your mind right now?” – trust that you will receive a helpful answer. When your answer comes just let it go; like holding a balloon on a piece of string – release it *now*.

Return to the present by listening to any sounds in the room, perhaps your own breathing.

Step 4: Perhaps you will consider an affirmation saying to yourself – “I am enough” or “I trust in my supervision abilities”.

Note: An affirmation is a positive statement said as if it is true, now.

How to work with this technique?

Before engaging with this technique consider; what your effective supervisor state would be?

Perhaps:

- Being present (your mind focused on the here and now) – not distracted?
- Compassionate, patient?
- Free of the unconscious desire to fix or rescue?

Done regularly – before each session, you will become effective at creating a positive calm and present state. The script given above is an example and over time you will notice what metaphors and cues are most useful to you.

A word of caution.

If sharing this, you may want to adjust how you phrase the notion of a ‘Higher Self’ to reflect the other person’s belief system. You may ask, “When you are the best of yourself who are you?” or “When you are connected to a positive and powerful energy - what might that be?”.

When using this for the first time, and immediately prior to a supervision session, allow ample time to process what emerges. Also, this technique generates a relaxed and reflective energy, so do not practice this directly before driving.

What other uses are there for this technique?

This technique could be of use to both coaches in advance of their session and to their clients in advance of key meetings. Once you are comfortable working with it for yourself, you may offer guidance in its use to others.

Further Reading:






Wigglesworth, C. (2014) *SQ21: The 21 skills of Spiritual Intelligence*. Select Books.

Resources:

For more information on Mindfulness visit the Oxford Mindfulness Centre. Available at: <http://oxfordmindfulness.org/> [Accessed 7 September 2019].

Technique 2: Building Confidence: Authority, Presence and Impact

Written by Julia Menaul

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

When is this used?

Useful when the supervisee specifically asks to work on their own confidence, perhaps following a client session where their ‘imposter syndrome’ drew their energy away from their client.

Confidence is central to the model and helps supervisees reflect on where they are strong and where they might need development. Balance of all three positions equally is the key.

What is the enquiry?

The model is based on the work of Hawkins and Smith (2006) and uses physical placement and somatic information to help generate increased confidence.

Step 1: Contract appropriately for sharing a framework to guide the work.

Step 2: Offer a brief description of what Authority, Presence and Impact might mean within a coaching context. Check in with the supervisee to shape and craft a description that has meaning for them.

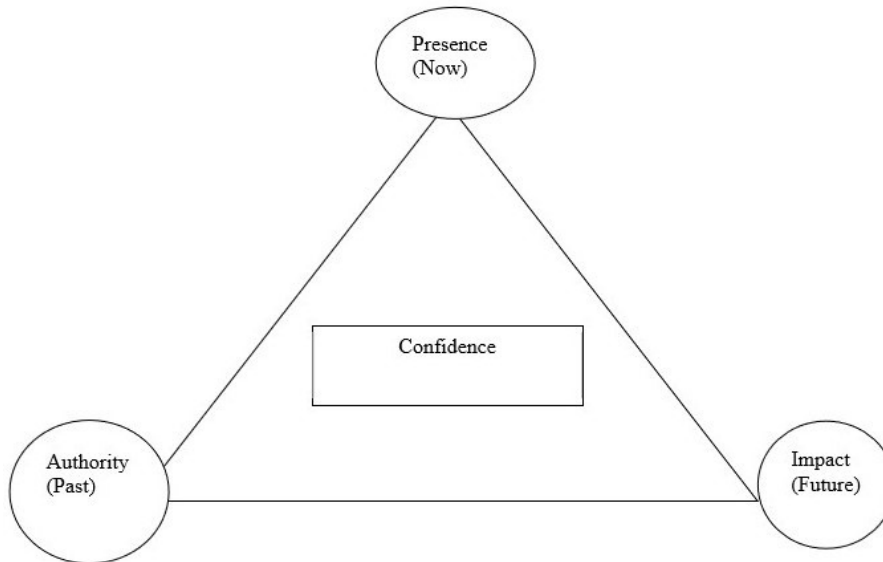
Authority - This often comes from what you know; what you have achieved in the past – typically qualifications, accreditations, experience, knowledge, job title, status. Using authority can be advantageous but on its own it's not enough to create lasting change or build a deep relationship. Overusing authority can look like showing off and people may wonder why you are promoting yourself so hard. Others may see this as a compensation for deficiency in the other two areas.

Presence - This is the ability to build rapport with people quickly and to command attention easily. People with presence have an immediacy to them plus poise and grace. They are aware of many things at the same time i.e. thoughts and feelings of self, but also what is happening for others.

Impact - With impact comes the ability to create shifts and change mindsets; influencing the emotional climate in a session. They use interventions that shift emotional energy like a focussed challenge or encouraging unexpressed feelings. They generate more candour and directness by expressing often what others may be feeling but fear to express.

Step 3: Create a triangle on the floor using four labelled post it notes, **See Figure 1.1.**

Figure 1.1: The API Model.



Step 4: Invite the client to step into one corner that feels like a strength for them.

Step 5: Ask them “What is your reason for starting there?” “What are you doing from that position that makes it a strength for you compared, to the other areas?” “What do you notice about yourself as you stand there?”

Step 6: Invite them to move to one of the other corners and ask, “What are your reasons for picking that corner next?” “What do you notice as you stand in that corner?” and “How do you feel right now?”

Step 7: Invite them to move to the final corner “What do you notice about yourself here?”

Step 8: Finally ask them to step into the centre (Confidence) and reflect on what they have become aware of in each corner. A useful question may be “What’s been important to you from all this?”.

How to work with the enquiry...

The best way of working is for the supervisee to explore the model somatically and for experiential learning to emerge from moving physically around the triangle.

Often the supervisor may have to encourage the supervisee to slow down in each position and notice what is happening in their body as well as what they might be thinking or feeling. For more cognitive practitioners, they may need more specific prompts for example “Tell me about a time when you created a felt shift in a client and how you did that?” or “When have you underplayed/overplayed your credentials as a coach?”

What else might need attention?

This technique may prompt a great deal of reflection with no obvious and immediate actions. It can be helpful to enquire in future supervision sessions if it would be helpful to re-contract for working on any development areas.

A word of caution.

Novice coaches may have a focus on building their Authority through gaining additional knowledge, more qualifications, more tools. Encourage the supervisee to step into the other areas of Presence and Impact and help them embrace the uncomfortableness of growing these more subjective and personal qualities.

What other uses are there for this enquiry?

This can be used with managerial coaching clients, as this model is equally applicable for professional confidence.

Reference:






Hawkins, P. and Smith, N. (2006) *Coaching, Mentoring and Organisational Consultancy: Supervision and Development*. McGraw-Hill: Maidenhead. p.32.

Further reading:

Estacio, E.V. (2018) *The Imposter Syndrome Remedy; A 30 day action plan to Stop Feeling Like a Fraud*. South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Technique 3: Working with Our Sub-Personalities

Written by Hetty Einzig

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

When is this used?

This is a popular and effective approach to deal with dominating emotions or repetitive reactions or tendencies.

What is the enquiry?

The Sub-Personalities concept was created by Roberto Assagioli (1965) and has been adopted and adapted by several authors since (see e.g. ‘mini-selves’ Bachkirova, 2011). All philosophies and wisdom traditions recognise the tension between unity and multiplicity: we are unique *and* we have many parts to our ‘self’. What we call our ‘personality’ is not singular but multiple and changeable. Holding the truth of ‘both/and’ during the supervision work helps us find a more balanced expression and collaboration between the different parts, or ‘sub-personalities’, within us.

The technique focuses on bringing to life our many 'sub-personalities'. This is a helpful way to work with difficult, over-used, or dominant feelings and behaviours: e.g. my frightened child, my caring helper, my bully, my compassionate self, my warrior, my upholder of justice, my inner-critic. Every sub-personality has its gift and its limitations; its light and its shadow.

Step 1: The contract.

Contract appropriately for the depth of work that follows, position the work as an enquiry or experiment. Be light and even playful.

Step 2: The enquiry.

When the supervisee feels dominated by a particularly strong or repetitive response to their client, or especially when they express a dilemma between a 'part' of themselves that feels or wants to do X and an opposing part that feels or want to do Y. We explore by asking for example: "What part of you feels this?" or "Whose voice is that saying this?". We might add "And I hear this other voice which is saying something different"... You can be light and playful: "Let's bring this part of you alive: what triggers them, what do they say and do? If this part of you were a person, what would you call them?" and "Now let's explore the other voice/part – who is this, what are they like?" etc.

We help the supervisee uncover the wants and needs of this 'sub-personality' or 'mini-self' within them. By naming the 'sub-personality' the supervisee is helped to first gain perspective on this part of themselves, to understand it is not the whole of them. The work then focuses on helping the supervisee accept and eventually transform potentially blocking parts of themselves (like their inner critic or anger at their client) into higher expressions through the lens of compassion, or in the case of 'positive' parts (like their caring self) into more nuanced and balanced expressions. The metaphor of the orchestra is useful as it emphasises the point that no one instrument or part of ourselves is better than another nor should be suppressed. All are inter-connected. The task is to seek to play more harmonious music and to act from a place of choice (the conductor) rather than react to whatever comes at us.

Step 3: The close.

The ultimate aim is to move through the four phases of harmonisation i.e. Recognition; Acceptance; Collaboration; Integration – with a 'sub-personality'. However, achieving the first two phases can bring about significant changes in attitude and approach. This can have the effect of the supervisee taking a more observational stance and avoid being submerged or over-identified with one aspect of themselves, one approach or a single emotional tone.

How to work with the enquiry...

First get to know the 'sub-personality': you can enquire into how it looks, its name, posture, dress, likes... Then the key questions we work with are:

- What *triggers* this sub-personality'?
- What does it *want*?
- What does it really *need*?
- What is its *contribution*/gift?
- How does it *limit* you?

Those familiar with Gestalt chair work (see pages 162-165) could set up two chairs for the supervisee to represent two 'sub-personalities' which may be in opposition to each other.

A word of caution.

Avoid getting rigid with this technique or to press the phases of harmonisation. Often awareness is enough. Acceptance and integration may come later.

What other uses are there for this enquiry?

The capacity to access and integrate our many selves is a marker of maturity and a critical component of both leadership and coaching capacity. Through exploration of the multiple parts of themselves the supervisee gains skill in bringing this technique to their coaching clients.

References:

Assagioli, R. (1965) *Psychosynthesis: A Collection of Basic Writings*. Wellingborough: Turnstone Press.

Bachkirova, T. (2016) *The Self of the Coach: Conceptualization, Issues, and Opportunities for Practitioner Development*.






Further reading:

Einzig, H. and Whitmore, J. (2015) *Transpersonal Coaching*. In J. Passmore. (Ed.) *Excellence in Coaching: the Industry Guide*. London: Kogan Page

Ferrucci, P. (1982) *What We May Be: the Visions and Techniques of Psychosynthesis*. Wellingborough: Turnstone Press

Technique 4: Working with Gesture

Written by Alison Whybrow and Julie Allan

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

When is this used?

This approach is used to augment psycho-physical awareness, the dynamic link between the mind and body. Perhaps as a supervisor you have noticed a particular lack of movement or a repetitive movement by your supervisee, perhaps around a certain topic. The intention is to

illuminate the impact of posture and gesture on the landscape of perspectives and energy available to the supervisee.

What is the experiment?

One way of experimenting with gesture is to strengthen the link between physical action and/or physical sensation and a specific psychological intention or psychological awareness. For example, a supervisee might find they are leaning forward and focusing narrowly; almost becoming ‘stuckness’. In expressing the intention to take a wider perspective, the supervisee might slightly shift to be more upright with a more open gaze. Picking up on this, augmenting and cementing the link between body posture and mental focus, can assist the supervisee to intentionally shift their physical stance on other occasions – and this may result in a different energy and focus with clients. Noticing and working with a tiny, almost imperceptible gesture can be transformational.

We share one way of working with gesture, purposeful anchoring below, and suggest another in the notes at the end.

Step 1: Notice a pattern that your supervisee wants to change. Building on the example above, the supervisee may report finding themselves becoming narrowly focused on their client or their client’s context, being drawn in. They might notice that this results in them losing perspective, ‘getting lost’ in the detail. Notice your supervisee’s posture as they describe this pattern.

Step 2: Ask your supervisee what they want to happen instead of the ‘getting lost’, what is their psychological intention.

Step 3: Pay close attention to the small physical movements that your supervisee makes as they focus on this new intention.

Step 4: Ask, “What is the physical movement or gesture that captures this intention?”. Alternatively, you can demonstrate the physical movement you have noticed and ask them to repeat it.

Step 5: Test out the movement a few times. How well does it fit with the psychological intention? What happens as a result of the movement? Ask your supervisee to pay close attention to the sensations evoked.

Step 6: Ask your supervisee to identify a way to experiment with this shift. It might be in any kind of conversation with others rather than only in a coaching session. This helps dissipate an old habit in favour of other options, making the gesture more easily accessible.

Step 7: The supervisee may need to adapt the moment to one that is smaller, one that is meaningful to them, but not distracting in an everyday context.

How to work with this experiment...

As with all gestalt work, this a co-created experiment with the aim of generating greater awareness.

In Step 5, you might need to invite your supervisee to really augment a physical gesture in order to fully experience the sensation, before making the gesture small enough to be easily incorporated into a day to day movement.

A word of caution.

Be constantly guided by your supervisee. It's important not to judge or impose your own perspective; the movement is the right movement for your supervisee, even if you would have made a different choice in that or a similar situation.

What other uses are there for this?

This approach can also be used as described above with coaching clients.

Another way of working with gesture is to support your supervisee to become aware of any physical gestures that accompany a particular thought or situation. In this sense you're using the same link between physical movement and psychological impact, the difference being that you are working directly with gesture, rather than expressed intent. For example, you might notice your supervisee using a vertical chopping motion each time they describe a particular coaching client. Replaying the gesture and linking it with the events or phrases they are describing can help them explore the sensory and psychological impact of the gesture. In this example, they may become aware of a critical emotion or pattern, potentially an unintended display of anger. Quite what the gesture is associated with will emerge through attending to the gesture and enquiring into it. This enquiry into their own gestures might also help them understand their client's response.

Having raised awareness, there might be a further experiment to devise, going back to the seven steps outlined above - or raising awareness might take the supervision into a different direction.

Further reading:

Leary-Joyce, J. (2014). *The Fertile Void: Gestalt Coaching at Work*. St Albans: AOEC press. Ch.7.