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Supervision Techniques 15

FOUR SUPERVISION TECHNIQUES
EDITED BY MICHELLE LUCAS

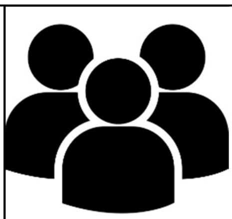
DEEPENING REFLECTION
GOOD NEWS
DEVELOPING BEHAVIOURAL FLEXIBILITY
TIME STRUCTURING

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: Deepening Reflection

Written by Michelle Lucas and Tammy Turner

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

When is this used?

Where a supervisee has already engaged in independent reflection or peer supervision and yet resolution is elusive. This technique generates a greater diversity of insights to raise and deepen the supervisee's self-awareness and explore the wider client system.

What is the approach?

Similar to some action learning methodology, the group combines their thinking to first help generate clarity and then to generate a range of reflexive prompts.

Step 1: Invite the supervisee to present their client scenario in three stages:

1. General overview and factual elements of the scenario.
2. A summary of the reflections they have had so far and asking them about their self-awareness, blind spots and understanding of personal reactions.
3. What they think they need in terms of feedback/observations or ideas/questions from the group.

Step 2: Brief the group to take a few minutes to pose any questions for clarification purposes to fill in gaps of information. Remind them that the first round of clarifying questions is intended to:

- Extend the group's understanding of the client scenario.
- Check accuracy of information already offered.
- Check understanding of the supervisee's supervision goals.

Step 3: Facilitate the group's clarification questions and remind the supervisee to respond factually, rather than defending their work.

Step 4: In the second round, alert the group that they will have a few moments to craft their probing questions, the intention of which should be to extend the supervisee's current perspective.

Step 5: Facilitate the group's probing questions, ensuring the supervisee has sufficient time to consider each question before receiving the next.

Step 6: Give the group a moment to consider all of the new perspectives in view of their own practice. Invite the group to offer any final thoughts for the supervisee and to declare what the discussion has caused them to reflect upon personally. If time, explore session themes to highlight future reflective practice for all group members.

Step 7: Bring the work to a close by returning to the supervisee and checking what the impact of the session has had on them in the moment. If appropriate enquire what has resonated with them most that they will continue to reflect upon.

How to work with the approach…

Having the supervisee prepare or read from their journal may help to keep Step 1 succinct. In Step 3 where questions illustrate 'What if…' thinking or hint at judgements being made, the supervisor may need to help supervisees refocus their questions.

Step 5 may unfold differently depending on the supervisor's facilitation style and the supervisee's learning style. It may be helpful to explain that there is no correct way for the supervisee to respond to a question. Perhaps they respond immediately – typically this happens when they have thought about it (or something similar) already. Perhaps they don't respond because they need time to process it. Not responding may also mean that they have discounted the question as they cannot understand its relevance right now. The supervisee does not need to defend or logic away how they respond (or not) to a question, although it may inform further reflection.

What else might need attention?

This approach provides a rich array of new perspectives for the supervisee to consider. It works best when the group's input provides a comparison rather than a substitute for independent reflection. If the supervisee cannot offer quality responses to Step 1 (b) and (c) it may be better to use a different approach which will require their active participation.

A word of caution.

Probing questions from group members that start with "Why….?" are likely to provoke a level of defensiveness. Support group members to start their question more gently … for example, starting questions with "How..?" or "What…?" can be used to create a more respectful but still powerful *enquiry*.

What other uses are there for this approach?

When used in peer group supervision, it can ease the facilitation task if in Step 5 the supervisee is briefed to reflect upon rather than to respond to each question in turn. An additional step allows the supervisee to choose one question to delve deeper and explore the entire system. See Line of Enquiry page 57-59.

The skills required to ask good clarification and probing questions are essential ingredients for any client conversations.

Further reading:

Turner, T., Lucas, M. and Whitaker, C. (2018) *Peer supervision in coaching and mentoring: A versatile guide for reflective practice.* Maidenhead: Routledge. pp. 100-102.

Technique 2: Good News

Written by Michelle Lucas and Carol Whitaker

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

When is this used?

This technique provides a counterbalance to our tendency to consider what could have been better and can therefore be useful in at least two scenarios. First, where the supervisee feels something went well and they would like to affirm and 'savour' (see Peterson, p.71) the experience. Secondly, where the supervisee lacks confidence, is being overly self-critical or is catastrophising.

Typically, a group technique, it can be adjusted to work with individuals. Originating from positive psychology it encourages the supervisee to look for what went well, even if overall the situation was imperfect. It prompts supervisees to generate both an affirmation and to dig deeper to consider how strengths developed.

What is the technique?

Step 1: As you listen to the supervisee notice what (small or significant) they did well. Remember even where there is room for improvement – many elements of the work are likely to be worthy of affirmation.

Remind the group that when they notice something the supervisee did well, consider why this might have been so? There are three potential sources:

1. It could be connected to an earlier action. For example, *"the client sounded really open with you, and I notice how well you contracted"*
2. Offer a hypothesis, *"the client sounded really open with you – I imagine you helped them feel safe"*
3. You have information from other sources. This is common amongst colleagues, for example, *"I've always thought you were very respectful, and it seemed that was how you were with this client"*

Step 2: The supervisee is invited to talk through the client case. Before other contributions are given, the supervisor encourages the supervisee to consider what they could celebrate in their work, and what they already know that enabled this

Step 3(a): Each group member is invited to offer an affirmation, where possible their best guess on how that came about. Reassure them that it is ok to have multiple endorsements of the same thing, repetition can be particularly powerful.

Step 3(b): The supervisee is invited to say "thank you" to each peer and to make a note of affirmations for future reference.

Step 4: The supervisor returns to the supervisee, a pause is helpful, allowing time for digesting the feedback. A useful question is "What's been the impact on you?"

Step 5: The intention is not just to receive affirmations, but to understand how strengths came about. Before closing this round of supervision, check which of the affirmations are best understood (i.e. Do they already know how this capability developed?) and which would be helpful to explore further.

How to work with the technique…

Step 2 can be challenging for self-critical supervisees. With encouragement people usually find something to celebrate. This principle reminds the supervisee that they have the capacity to recognise their own strengths and integrate external feedback. Without some foundation, the supervisee could discount affirming feedback as peers 'just being nice'.

Contributions should be statements not questions. We are seeking to affirm more than explore.

What else might need attention?

When a supervisee chooses this technique more often than anything else, particularly when working as a group, this may be an indication of defensiveness (not wanting to discuss mistakes) or that some power play is going on (a desire for others to know of their brilliance). This may indicate that a return to the contract may be timely.

A word of caution.

Cultural nuance can mean some people find this technique challenging, believing that ignoring areas for development would be foolhardy. If this occurs, try using Affirmations and Alternatives (see pages 10-12) as it provides greater balance.

Given this lack of balance the supervisor may not to offer their own 'Good News' as it could be perceived as favouritism.

What other uses are there for this technique?

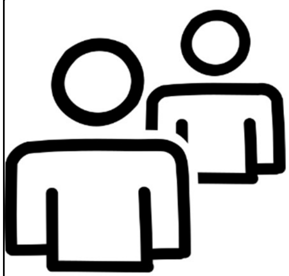
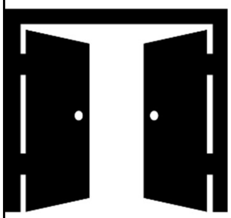
This can be a useful method for coaches to offer their clients, many people discount those qualities that come easily to them and this technique helps give greater awareness or 'conscious competence to the client.

Reference:

Peterson, C. (2006) *A Primer in Positive Psychology*. USA: Oxford University Press.

Technique 3: Developing Behavioural Flexibility

Written by Anne Calleja

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

When is this used?

Useful when the supervisee recognises a need to be more flexible in their approach or they want to change a behaviour.

What is the technique?

Developed from an NLP strategy, referred to as the 'New Behaviour Generator'. The supervisor systematically guides the supervisee to use all of their senses to create a confident base line state of mind. Partnering with the Supervisee, the process helps to create new behaviours by mentally rehearsing and 'acting out' future behaviour.

Step 1: The supervisee reflects on a client situation and identifies the behavioural change they wish to make.
Step 2: Together articulate a well-formed outcome or goal; which will typically clarify:

- How you will look, sound and feel with this new behaviour
- The effect on others – the client, the system, the organisation
- What you will have achieved in service of your client

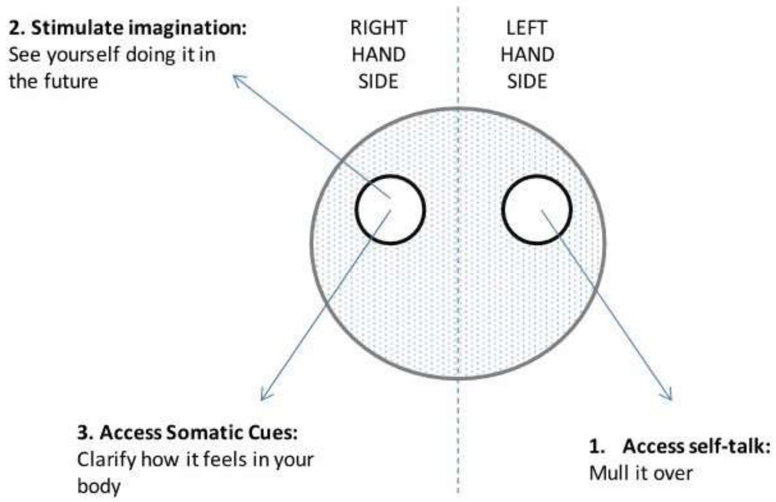
Step 3: Sitting side by side, the supervisor guides the supervisee as follows:

1. Look down left [to access thinking] and talk to yourself. Ask yourself, "What do I want to do differently?". Allow your thoughts to flow freely without criticism.

2(a). Then say to yourself, "If I could do that, would it look like?"

2(b). Look up right [to access imagination]. Watch yourself as in a video doing that new behaviour. Notice what happens to your state, how you are behaving and the effect upon any other people involved.
3. Look down right [to access somatic awareness]. Step into the experience and feel how it is. Feel what you feel, embody the experience, walk through the new behaviour experiencing how you feel.

Figure 1.3: Typical Eye Accessing Cues



Repeat the process at least three times, using the three steps systematically. The supervisee may make any necessary adjustments, modifications or embellishments as they work.
Step 4: Invite the supervisee to think of a time in the future, when they want to have this behaviour. Instruct them as follows:

> "Imagine yourself in that context, run through the new behaviour. As you watch yourself, notice what happens, and then fully embody the experience in the situation with your client in that future."

Step 5: Encourage the supervisee to set up the room, appropriately in order to act out the situation to embed the learning.
Step 6: Draw the work to a conclusion. Review the initial desired outcome. Then ask – and what is your next step, now?

How to work with the technique…

Ensure you are a witness to the process, follow the process systematically without offering any observations. Watch how the supervisee responds to your guidance – check that they are moving their eyes and body such that they locate the three senses, so that they see, hear and feel.

In Step 3 it is critical that they connect with their state – as this forms their evidence procedure. It enables them to evaluate the new behaviour and make any necessary adjustments. You are the guide to enable the supervisee to access all senses and fully embody the desired state.

What else might need attention?

If the supervisee does not obtain any new insight or behaviour, then personal work may be required to unlock what may be limiting them.

A word of caution.

Where there is genuine rapport between supervisor and supervisee the matching of response will happen naturally. However, as you learn the approach and are distracted by following the process, you may need to monitor and adjust your own presence more closely.
NLP practitioners understand that micro-movements will indicate which sense their client is using to process information. Where the supervisor's language contradicts the client's current processing modality, this can dent rapport. In order to work with this technique effectively some foundational NLP training is recommended.

What other uses are there for this technique?

This technique helps stimulate the neural pathways that are involved when performing an actual behaviour. The technique is widely used for improvement in music and sport, so can be applied broadly. It makes the new skill familiar and creates micro movements in the muscles that you will need in reality. The process helps an individual organize information in such a manner that they can develop these new skills rapidly.

Further reading:

Dilts, R. and Epstein, T. (1991) *Tools for Dreamers*, Capitola, California: Meta Publications.

To understand more about New Behaviour Generator Strategy: http://www.nlpu.com/Patterns/patt16.htm [Accessed 3 September19]
To understand more about eye movements: http://www.nlpu.com/Articles/artic14.htm [Accessed 5 September 2019]

Resources:
See website npl University: www.nlpu.com [Accessed 5 September 2019]

Technique 4: Using Time Structuring to Understand Intimacy in Relationships
Written by David Crowe and Michelle Lucas

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

When is this used?

Unless the supervisee is already familiar with Transactional Analysis (TA), this is typically an educative piece from the supervisor. It can be referred to where the coaching client is experiencing difficulties in their relationships and can help the client reflect on how they typically spend their time. Additionally, it can be a useful framework to explore where the supervisee experiences a difficulty in connecting with their client.

What is the enquiry?

Time structuring is a theory developed by Eric Berne (Berne, 1961) who suggested that human beings need to structure time as a process:

- Withdrawal (spending time emotionally withdrawn in the presence of others or staying out of contact with others)
- Rituals (structured ways of acting that involve acting in a pre-programmed way)
- Pastimes (polite 'safe' conversation between people on socially acceptable topics)
- Activities (doing things with others, as opposed to just being with others)
- Psychological games (interaction with others that involved a hidden agenda and bad feelings for those involved)
- Intimacy (authentic encounters with others with trust, openness and honesty including working through our emotional responses to them)

The order is important. The emotional intensity in our relationships increases step-by-step as we move from withdrawal to intimacy.

Step 1: Seek permission to share the model, working appropriately with the supervisee's knowledge of TA.
Step 2: Help the supervisee elicit the behaviours they have noticed in their client and where this might fit into the model. Check out their understanding of the model as you do so. Useful questions might be:

- What did you notice them doing?
- What is your sense of where they get stuck, according to this model?
- Help me understand how you linked their behaviour to the framework…
- Is this behaviour a regular pattern?
- Do you see the behaviour in the supervision relationship? What might be causing any differences in their response?

Step 3: Widen the discussion to explore this model in the context of the supervision question.
Step 4: Check out how useful the supervisee has found exploring the framework. Continue or change tack appropriately.

How to work with the enquiry…

The supervisee might openly state their difficulty understanding how their client relates to those around them (or to the coach). Or the supervisor may notice unhelpful patterns (often experienced as avoidance or neediness) in the relational dynamic under discussion.

When sharing the theory with the supervisee, check for understanding and use practical examples to bring the theory to life. Wherever the exploration starts there is the distinct possibility that the relational dynamic will be mirrored elsewhere (i.e. a parallel process, see pages 242-245). So if the supervisee brings the issue within the client's relational system eg. other organisational stakeholders; it is highly likely that the same relational dynamic will be repeated between the client and the coach. The opposite is also probable – difficulties in the coach : client relationship may mirror difficulties in other client relationships. Ensure the exploration is broad enough to identify what seem to be patterns of behaviour and what could be explained as one-offs.

The exploration elicits discussion – so keep the original supervision question in mind as you work.

What else might need attention?

The nature of the discussion is likely to be a deep one and through the exploration issues of Attachment (see pages 110-113) may well surface. Re-contract before continuing or signpost that alternative professional help might be more appropriate for either the supervisee or their client.

A word of caution.

Contract openly for this more educative intervention, revert to a more collegiate space once input has been given. Remember that we are using the model to help understand apparently confusing behaviour. Be prepared to let go of it, if it begins to divert attention from the supervision question in hand.

What other uses are there for this technique?

In a group setting, it can be helpful to check out where each member would locate the behaviour in the model. Relational depth is a very individual matter (and offerings may reflect where that participant is in terms of the group process) however a diversity of input on how withdrawal to intimacy behaviours are experienced can be illuminating; not just for the scenario under discussion but for the connectedness of the supervision group.

Reference:
Berne, E. (1961) *Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy.* New York: Grove Press

Further reading:
Crowe Associates (2019). *Time Structuring.* [online] Available at: https://www.crowe-associates.co.uk/psychotherapy/time-structuring/ [Accessed 26 September 2019].