

# Supervision Techniques 17

FOUR SUPERVISION TECHNIQUES

EDITED BY MICHELLE LUCAS

STRENGTHS CARDS

CONTRACTING USING FOUR P's







USING THE OUTDOORS

DEVELOPING COURAGE

This resource is an extract from the book  
*101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches, Enquiries  
and Experiments* by Michelle Lucas





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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: Strengths Cards

Written by Carmelina Lawton Smith

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

### When is this used?

This technique can help supervisees define their personal coaching style as they often find it hard to formulate an explanation of their coaching philosophy for prospective clients. Using cards to talk about their strengths can be a valuable starting point.

It can also be a good way to address unhelpful behaviours or traits by describing ‘strengths taken to excess’ rather than weaknesses. This approach helps them be true to their core nature but to appreciate the need for balance in the application of key strengths. The conversation may then inform a development plan.

### What is the technique?

The technique uses a set of cards or words to facilitate a discussion about ‘strengths’. One of the best-known is the Values in Action Inventory (VIA) that lists 24 strengths, shown below.

1. Creativity	9. Enthusiasm	17. Modesty
2. Curiosity	10. Love	18. Prudence
3. Open-mindedness	11. Kindness	19. Self-regulation
4. Love of learning	12. Social Intelligence	20. Appreciation of beauty
5. Perspective	13. Teamwork	21. Gratitude
6. Bravery	14. Fairness	22. Optimism
7. Perseverance	15. Leadership	23. Humour
8. Integrity	16. Forgiveness	24. Sense of purpose

Create or buy a set of cards, one strength should be listed on each card. Some of the words may not be appropriate for your context so they can be substituted accordingly. The key value is in the supervisee explaining what the specific term means to them.

### **Step 1: Selecting and discussing strengths**

Spread the cards out and ask the supervisee a set of questions such as:

- Which are your top three strengths? How do you apply these? How do they serve you?
- Which strengths most influence your coaching practice? What are the implications of this?
- Select one and articulate the key value of this to your coaching.
- How might your clients experience this strength?

### **Step 2: Developing strengths**

- Which strength(s) is needed but is lacking in your current coaching? What makes this important?
- Which strengths might be most useful to you in your coaching? How could you develop these?
- Which of your other strengths could facilitate this development?
- Which strength might you sometimes over-do?

### **Step 3: Summary**

- How would you now describe your coaching philosophy or style?
- What are the most important strengths for you to focus on?
- How could you use your strengths in new ways?

### **Step 4: Process review**

- How did you feel talking about your strengths?
- What do you take from this conversation?

### **How to work with the technique ...**

Be sensitive to the depth of conversation as it can uncover deeply held core values. If in a group setting this may mean advising the supervisee that the issue may be better addressed in 1:1 supervision. For example, a conversation about the importance of Integrity can easily reveal an example where the supervisee did not display the integrity they would have liked, or would aspire to.

### **A word of caution.**

If a supervisee has a tendency to overstate their capabilities with limited critical reflection this may not be a useful approach. It may simply confirm and inflate their ego by focussing only on the strong points, not revealing any blind spots because they cannot identify when a strength has been taken to excess.

### **What other uses are there for this technique?**

When a supervisee is having a crisis of confidence due to a particularly challenging client session, this approach can encourage them to consider which strengths they leveraged despite a sub-optimal experience. For example, the client may have been evasive, and yet they maintained an enquiring mindset, or tenaciously looked for new angles to explore.

This can also be used when the supervisee feels they are stuck with a client or with a situation.

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- Which strengths are needed for this situation?
- Which strength do you have that you are not using?

Strengths picture cards can also be useful to move people out of their cognitive pattern and offer a more creative approach.

This approach can easily be adapted for the supervisee to have a strength discussion with their coaching clients. It could be particularly useful to build confidence, to define a leadership philosophy or to support personal branding work.

### **Further Reading:**

Buckingham, M. and Clifton, D. (2001) *Now, discover your strengths*, London: The Gallup Organization.

Seligman, M. (2003) *Authentic happiness*. New York: The Free Press.

### **Resources:**




There are extensive resources on-line and many psychometric-style assessments that focus on strengths if this is an area you wish to take further. Strengths cards can be obtained from:

<https://mindspring.uk.com/collections/strengths> [Accessed: 28 October 2019]

<https://atmybest.com/strengths-cards/> [Accessed: 28 October 2019]

## Technique 2: Contracting using Four P's

Written by Michelle Lucas

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

### When is this used?

This is particularly helpful at the start of a group supervision relationship. However, it can be used in any setting where detailed contracting would be beneficial.

### What is the approach?

The approach uses a model to help structure and develop the group's contract. The model see Table 6.1 stems from Julie Hay's (2007) work. Prompted by working in an organisational context, a fourth 'P' was added to help discuss the political influences on the supervision work.

**Table 6.1: The Four P's of Contracting Adapted from Hay (2007)**

<b>PROCEDURAL</b>	<b>PROFESSIONAL</b>
<p>E.g. Logistics, protocols for time-keeping, managing distractions</p> <p>How will we determine the order we work in? Is it essential that everyone brings a scenario each time? What happens if someone misses a session?</p>	<p>E.g. What is the purpose of our work?</p> <p>What expectations do we have of each other? How do we want to behave?</p> <p>What might support and challenge look like here?</p>

<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL</b>	<b>POLITICAL</b>
E.g. How will we handle comparisons with our peers? What level of trust do we have so far? What previous good and bad experiences of supervision do we bring here?	E.g. What power positions may we wittingly or unwittingly occupy? How will we make this transparent? What else could get in the way of the work?

**Step 1:** Generate discussion about the individual's experiences of supervision and what influences the quality of the supervision work.

**Step 2:** Using post it notes, ask each group member to list what they want from the group to enable them to do their best work. The rule is one idea per post it.

**Step 3:** Reproduce the 2 x 2 model on a flip chart. Explain what goes into each quadrant, some suggestions are given in Table 6.1

**Step 4:** Facilitate the group so that one idea is shared at a time, allowing the individual to decide where their post-it fits. Invite them to clarify their idea, then other group members add any of their post-its that feel similar. Each individual is invited to clarify any nuance in meaning.

**Step 5:** The supervisor then invites a contribution that is different from what has gone before, and Step 4 is repeated.

**Step 6:** Continue until every group member has 'led' an idea; or all the ideas are exhausted; or a time boundary has been reached.

**Step 7:** Invite reflection on the pattern of ideas – are they spread equally across all four quadrants or are their gaps?

**Step 8:** Step 7 may then generate additional ideas for the contract, or the observation of pattern may simply be acknowledged.

**Step 9:** Check on each group member's degree of comfort with the contract created. Where some elements cause discomfort these could be highlighted for further discussion, either in the session or at a later date.

**Step 10:** Take a photo of the populated flip chart for circulation amongst the group.

### **How to work with the approach...**

To do this fully can take an entire group session, so the supervisor needs to evaluate how much detail is appropriate with each group. It can be done more quickly if everyone places

their post-it notes at the same time, then whole group reviews the output. The supervisor then scans the contributions, seeks clarity and encourages others to do similarly.

### **What else might need attention?**

Typically groups need encouragement to talk about the professional and the political quadrants. Sharing some personal anecdotes can highlight the subtlety of how psychological and political influences can be present. This level of vulnerability helps to role model how group members might 'say the unsayable'.

### **A word of caution**

Some groups just want to dive into the work. Perhaps counter-intuitively, this can be a useful strategy, simply signal the need for 'spot contracting' as and when you notice an opportunity for further clarification. For example, wait for someone's phone to ring, then use this as a prompt for discussing how they want to manage distractions.

Note: Hay (2000) in her original work included a fifth "P" for Perceptual – the topics she works with are different from those offered here.

### **What other uses are there for this approach?**

The model can guide dialogue in individual supervision. The approach could also inform client discussions when considering difficult relationships, the four quadrants might hold some clues about what underlies the difficulty.

### **References:**





Hay, J. (2000) *Organisational TA, Some Opinions and Ideas*. Transactional Analysis Journal, 30 (3), pp.223-232.

Hay, J. (2007) *Reflective Practice and Supervision for Coaches*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill. pp.121-122.



### Technique 3: Using The Outdoors

Written by Liz Ford

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

#### When is this used?

**Coaching outdoors is a wonderfully powerful approach to use when your supervisee is feeling stuck or you sense that movement would be helpful to gain a different outlook. Other times when this technique could be advantageous are when the supervisee has been busy, feels flat and a break is needed or when fresh air and the natural environment might bring a fresh perspective.**

#### What is the approach?

**This approach aims to draw on the environment to stimulate new thinking, make connections and provide solutions.** It is more than doing what you normally do in an outdoor setting, it involves being mindful of the space around you and what information it might hold. Although often used in countryside or parkland locations it also works well in inner city locations.

#### Step 1: Preparation.

- Ask the supervisee if they'd like to work outdoors.
- If arranging this for a future session, ask them to bring suitable clothing and footwear.
- Plan where to go.
- If it's a spur of the moment choice, choose a place that suits the weather and their attire – using the garden or a park can work as well as hills, woods and river walks.
- Before setting off, take time to identify the supervision question or issue to be explored and their desired outcome.

#### Step 2: Developing insight.

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- Hold the supervision question in mind as you walk.
- Encourage the supervisee to stop whenever they want to look closer or take in the view.
- Ask questions to help the supervisee explore their surroundings and how what they notice relates to their supervision question / issue to explore. For example: “What do you see or hear in this place that connects with your thoughts/feelings about this client?” Then follow up with clean questions such as “Is there anything else about...?” or “and what do you know from this place here?”.
- Encourage the supervisee to also notice how their body feels as they walk, being curious as to what it might be telling them. For example: “As we walk, what are you noticing in your body?” or “And you notice your breathing has slowed and your stride is getting longer, what might that be telling you?”.

### **Step 3: Consolidation.**

- Near the end of the walk or back at base, take time to:
  - Reflect on the walk.
  - Notice what’s shifted.
  - Explore insights and learning.
  - Capture actions.

### **How to work with the approach...**

Pay attention during the walk to pace, what is said and not said as well as what the supervisee notices about themselves and their surroundings. Tuning in to this helps the supervisor to decide when to ask questions, when to stop and notice, when to ask the supervisee to choose the way and when to take the lead

Consciously noticing the environment and asking how it relates to the supervision question or issues, helps to maintain focus and stops the session turning into a chatty walk.

Depending on the contract, the supervisor might also ask permission to share what they notice, such as a change in their posture during the walk or a tendency to march onwards without pausing to notice, being curious as to how this might link to the topic of focus.

Walking supervision is easier on an individual basis although groups can also gain from working in a stimulating outdoor environment, it’s easier to manage at locations like a park or city square. Encouraging the group to take time to notice their surroundings through a mindful senses exercise can be a good way to draw on the wisdom held by the space.

### **A word of caution.**

It is important to keep an eye on the time and ensure you are back at base by the end of the contracted session. If setting off on longer walks ensure one of you knows the area and that you are well prepared and safety aspects have been considered including the fitness of yourself and the supervisee. Carry a phone just in case any difficulty arises.

### **What other uses are there for this approach?**

This approach works well for individual coaching as well as supervision and can be delivered using the same process.

### **Further reading:**

Oppezzo, M. and Schwartz, D. L. (2014) Give Your Ideas Some Legs: The Positive Effect of Walking on Creative Thinking, *Journal of experimental Psychology*, 40(4), pp. 1142-1152.





### **Resources:**

National Trust (2019) *A beginner's guide to forest bathing*. [online] Available at: <[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lists/a-beginners-guide-to-forest-bathing](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lists/a-beginners-guide-to-forest-bathing)> [Accessed 7 September 2019]

Street Wisdom (2019) Street Wisdom: Answers are everywhere. [online] Available at <https://www.streetwisdom.org/> [Accessed 7 September 2019]

## Technique 4: Developing Courage: Naming Elephants and Speaking Truth to Power

Written by Marie Faire

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

### When is this used?

When the supervisee is aware that something ‘in the room’ was not named and wishes to explore further. Alternatively, when it occurs to the supervisor that something may not have been named and has permission to challenge their supervisee.

### What is the technique?

A series of questions which help the supervisee to gain an evolving sense of their own courage, to knowing its limitations and to decide what action is possible.

**Step 1:** Ensure that there is an appropriate level of safety.

**Step 2:** Within the session explore with the supervisee these questions in order:

1. If you had been guaranteed that it would have ‘landed well’, what would you have liked to say to your client that you didn’t?
2. How come you didn’t say it?
3. If an appropriate opportunity were to arise, or be created, how could you say what you wanted to say, and minimise the risks you identified in 2.

**Step 3:** Once familiar with how the questions unfold, the coach may be able to reflect upon these questions immediately after a client session. They would ask themselves:

1. If I had been guaranteed that it would have ‘landed well’, what would I have liked to say to my client that I didn’t?
2. How come I didn’t say it?
3. If an appropriate opportunity were to arise, or be created, how could I say what I wanted to say, and minimise the risks I identified in 2.

## **How to work with the technique...**

Explore each question in turn. Question 1 helps to articulate the 'elephant'. Question 2 is the challenging and big question, and it will typically require the supervisor to explore some deep issues such as fears, self-limiting beliefs, conflict management styles. It almost always results in the supervisee exposing their own patterns in relation to speaking truth to power, which are usually as a result of limiting beliefs that have been established in early childhood. Examples of what emerges are fear of:

- upsetting someone,
- speaking out
- being 'seen'
- risking conflict
- loss of rapport
- not being liked
- losing business
- and so on....

Most of the time, when a supervisor helps their supervisee name the elephant and to consider what blocked them, a more liberated awareness and energy emerges within the session. The supervisee is able to determine what they will do (or indeed what they deliberately choose not to do) in future with their client. Occasionally the supervisee is only able to 'begin' the work within the session, and further independent reflection may be required. The supervisee may reflect upon the questions in Step 3 post-supervision, or once familiar with the approach, directly after a client session.

## **What else might need attention?**

When insight and alternative actions are elusive, this may indicate that the supervisee needs additional and alternative support to deal with the realisation that a deep-rooted issue exists.

## **A word of caution.**

Although this is written with the supervisee in mind, a supervisor may use the same process for how they managed the supervision session. Especially useful because parallel process may abound. These questions are usually challenging to ask and be asked, the questions will likely provoke in the supervisee, what they fear may be evoked in their client, and for the supervisor likewise.

## **What other uses are there for this technique?**

With experience, this framework becomes useful for a coach to develop their own 'internal supervisor' (Casement, 1985) by using it for an immediate post session reflection.

Because of the nature of the challenge it may need to be used with discernment within group supervision with a professional supervisor.

Subject to appropriate contracting and sufficient rapport, this approach could equally be used by coaches with their clients.

**Reference:**

Casement, P. (1985) *On Learning from the Patient*. London: Tavistock Publications.