EMCC
European Mentoring & Coaching Council

Supervision Techniques 19

FOUR SUPERVISION TECHNIQUES

EDITED BY MICHELLE LUCAS

USING THE STEPS MODEL FOR SUPERVISION

FOCUS ON FEELINGS

EXPLORING WITH CLEAN NETWORKS

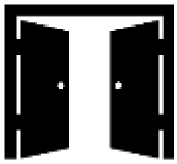
USING AI IN SUPERVISION

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: STEPS for supervision

Written by Lynda Tongue

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

When is this used?

This model is particularly useful to use during supervision; however, it could also be used to aid reflective practice after the supervision session.

What is the technique?

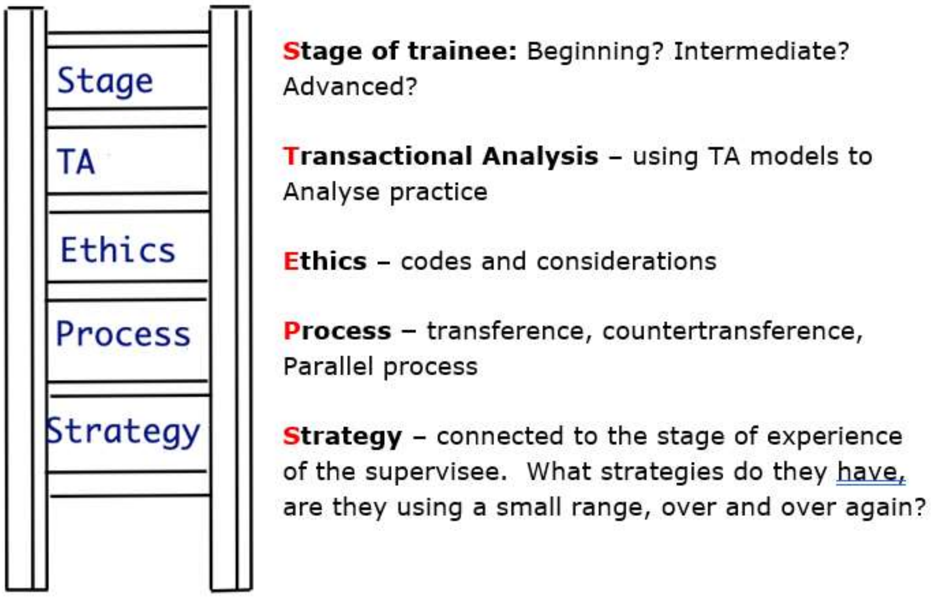
STEPS is a mnemonic to help the supervisor pay attention to various elements during the supervision. It comes from the psychodynamic body of concepts known as Transactional Analysis (representing the "T" in the model). However, this could be replaced by 'Technique' by supervisors using different modalities.

How to work with the technique…

Step 1: Prior to the supervision session, write 'S T E P S' down the left hand side of an A4 sheet

Step 2: Remind yourself what STEPS stands for (see Figure 6.8)

Figure 6.8: The STEPS model



Step 3: As you engage in the supervision work, keep the model in mind to keep yourself on track. If you take notes (and have permission to do so) you might jot responses alongside the relevant part of the model to map progress.

Step 4: Engage in reflection in action – for example, questions for you to reflect upon in the moment could be:

- What is your attention being drawn to?
- What has yet to be explored?
- Where is your sense of what needs to be attended to?
- What is going on for you as the supervisor?
- What else needs to be contracted for to ensure a comprehensive approach?

Step 5: Consider – has the contract been met? If not, surface this with the supervisee. Review your options, for example contract for additional time either within the session or to bring the subject back another time.

How to work with the technique

The STEPS framework is a meta-model rather than a technique to be worked through 'step by step'. However, once familiar with it the practice of writing the word 'STEPS' might help to focus the supervisor's mind.

As supervisors, to be our most effective, we need to stay in the 'here-and-now', and invite our supervisee into that space with us, in order to explore the issue using all our combined capacities. A visual reminder (until both parties are so familiar with the model, we do not need it anymore) will help with this process.

What else might need attention?

Over time with the same supervisee, a supervisor will notice patterns in their approach with clients. A Transactional Analysis supervisor will support the supervisee to see these patterns whether they are about Ego States, or Drivers, or their Rackets or Life Position which might be getting in their way, and once having recognised them, the supervisee can be supported to make the relevant changes.

A non-Transactional Analysis supervisor will of course also notice patterns and in the same way will seek to discover if the supervisee is aware of them. Once they have that awareness then the supervisor can once again help them to work through them and make developmental progress.

If you as the supervisor notice that you tend to emphasise the same part of the STEPS model across different supervisees – that would then need further exploration with your own supervisor.

A word of caution.

Always work to make sure you have good contact with the supervisee – do not let the model distract you. Be prepared to start with it in mind and also to let it go if something else becomes more useful.

What other uses are there for this technique?

Useful for the supervisor as a means of self-supervision. What might you have missed? How present in the process were you? What might you look out for during the next supervision session with this practitioner?

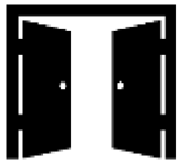
Coaches could also make use of this model. The nature of contract is different, and this will need to be taken into consideration. By keeping STEPS in mind, it may help the coach, to 'listen out for' aspects which might be blocking the client's progress, or where perhaps they might be managing boundaries better.

Further Reading:

Newton, T. (2012) The Supervision Triangle: An Integrating Model. *Transactional Analysis Journal,* 42(2), pp. 103-109.

Technique 2: Focus on feelings

Written by Michelle Lucas & Carol Whitaker

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

When is this used?

This can be useful where either there is a preference for logic or rational dialogue. The approach offers a deliberate counterbalance to a fact-based discussion. It encourages an exploration of somatic sensations – it is an invitation to dive below the surface into the experience of what happened not just the content of what occurred.

What is the technique?

Step 1: Brief the group along the following lines:

"As you listen to the supervisee try to see beyond the content of their story. Tune into what else you notice, the energy in their voice or to their body language. You may also connect with the impact that their account is having on your own emotions or somatic experience. For example, as a group member you may experience a sense of frustration or perhaps heaviness. Perhaps you will experience nothing in particular and that's a welcome observation too"

Step 2: Invite the supervisee to talk through their client scenario. It is most helpful NOT to ask the supervisee to offer a focus for their peers.

Step 3: Each member is invited to share their experience of hearing the supervisee's scenario. Contract for this to be offered to the supervisor, not the supervisee, this allows the supervisee to be an observer to the process

Step 4: Once all contributions have been offered, the supervisor returns to the supervisee. After a pause, a useful question to ask is "So where has that taken you?". It is deliberately vague because this technique is intended to prompt divergent thoughts.

Step 5: As this technique is rather open ended, it may be that there is no sense of resolution or completion within the time available. You may need to seek permission from the supervisee to close out the discussion. For example, "I'm conscious that I need to move the group on, would it be OK if we leave it there for today?"

How to work with the technique…

To help everyone (including the supervisor) move out of their heads and into their bodies, it can be helpful to prepare by engaging in short mindfulness exercise (See Quiet pages 71-73).

Channelling contributions through the supervisor, allows the supervisee distance should a contribution be psychologically challenging. For example, a group member may experience 'boredom'" while listening to the client scenario. This might feel impertinent, so to avoid offence the group member could be tempted to dress it up, however, this would dilute the information shared. At a practical level, it discourages the supervisee responding to and rationalising the peer's contributions. This gives the supervisee reflection time and reduces the amount of time needed for this technique.

What else might need attention?

It is not unusual for one of the group to feel nothing when others do – this may simply reflect a different part of the system. However, when a group member repeatedly feels nothing, this could be a sign that additional individual work may be needed.

A word of caution.

Sometimes a group member resonates with a person who has been overlooked in the system. So, a contribution which initially seems "off-track" might hold significant illumination. Should this happen enquire where or what in the system they believe their experience is connected to.

With people who are highly cognitive this approach can evoke a genuine performance anxiety. Some participants attempt to guess what emotions or sensations they should be experiencing. An alternative would be to invite them to notice if any images or metaphors occur to them.

What other uses are there for this technique?

With a group of mature practitioners, this technique can help access the parallel process. In this situation, at Step 3 include dialogue after each contribution so that the potential meaning can be considered.

This technique is not recommended for individual coaching clients who are highly rational. Where the client doesn't have a language for tuning in and naming their somatic responses, they are likely to resist. It is more useful in group coaching where some members are able to role model how to articulate their non-cognitive experiences.

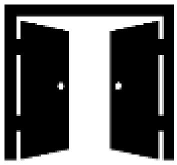
Further reading:

Turner, T., Lucas, M. and Whitaker, C. (2018) *Peer Supervision in Coaching and Mentoring: A versatile guide for reflective practice.* Abingdon: Routledge. pp. 125-160.

Whitaker, C. (2012) *Group Supervision Approaches for Coaching Supervision*. Available at: < http://www.whitaker-consulting.co.uk/resources-and-papers> [Accessed 2 August 2019]

Technique 3: Exploring the supervisee's client with clean networks

Written by Angela Dunbar

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

When is this used?

Useful in many situations, this can help the supervisee consider multiple perspectives whilst keeping supervisor input to a minimum. It may be a good way of starting an exploration before deciding what in particular to focus on.

What is the technique?

The technique involves representing the client on a piece of paper then exploring that from a number of different spaces and directions. It capitalises on the principle that where you stand affects what you know, and visually exploring the paper from different directions often reveals patterns unnoticed at the start. The process is facilitated using Clean Language which helps guide but not contaminate with the supervisor's own lens.

Step 1: Ask the supervisee to represent their client on a piece of paper, using words, symbols and/or drawings.

Step 2: Ask a series of simple Clean Language questions to explore further:

- What kind of client is this?
- Is there anything else about this client?
- What would this client like to have happen?
- And what would you call this client?

Invite the supervisee to add anything else that needs to be on the paper

Step 3: Ask them to place the paper in a space somewhere around them that represents where their client is. Encourage experimentation.

Step 4: Invite the supervisee to place themselves in a space that seems right in relation to where they have placed their client

Step 5: Ask a series of positional questions that help fine tune a spatial metaphor of how the supervisee sees their client and their relationship with them:

- Are you / the client in the right space?
- Are you / the client at the right height?
- Are you / the client facing the right direction?
- Are you / the client at the right angle?

Step 6: Conclude by checking for new understandings: "And what do you know, now?" Invite the supervisee to put that down on their paper too.

Step 7: Now, invite the supervisee to move around with the question "Is there another space that you could go to from that space, there?" then ask "And what do you know from that space there? Continue to invite the supervisee to move to more spaces, until the supervisee says there are no more spaces, or they have moved to a total of six spaces.

Step 8: Invite the supervisee to return to the space where they first started and ask, "And what do you know, now?". You can continue to prompt with further clean questions "Is there anything else you know now?"

How to work with the technique…

Due to the intentional 'vagueness' of the questions, you may need to give some explanation at the start on what the process will involve, for instance the repetitive nature of the questions. It is not unusual for the supervisee to reach an impasse after moving to 3 or 4 spaces. Continuing with the process beyond this point helps the supervisee push past the obvious and reach an insight / new understanding.

What else might need attention?

You may also choose to explore the space between the supervisee and their client using a similar set of questions. Should the supervisee seem drawn to notice something particular, you may also ask the occasional 'extra' clean question within any of the spaces, for example, "What kind of x is that x?"

Keep this exploration brief (no more than 2 further questions) so the whole 'network' of information stays active.

A word of caution.

Whilst there are some similarities between this technique and those in the Systemic section, they are distinctly different. This technique is informed by David Grove's work on Emergent Knowledge (Wilson, 2017). It is based around the theory of emergence which is defined as "the arising of novel and coherent structures, patterns and properties during the process of self-organization in complex systems".

What other uses are there for this technique?

Although most appropriate for one-to- one work, it could be adapted for group supervision, for instance by inviting supervisees to work through the questions silently.

For a coaching client, you could invite them to put on the paper a representation of their goal, or a significant other they wish to understand more about.

References:

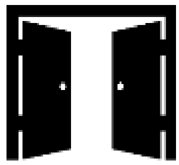
Wilson, C. (2017) *The Work and Life of David Grove: Clean Language and Emergent Knowledge.* Matador: Leicestershire

Further reading:

See www.cleancoaching.com (2018) *Emergent Knowledge – An Introduction to the Process.* Available at: https://cleancoaching.com/files/2018/04/Emergent%20Knowledge%20-20An%20Introduction%20to%20the%20Process.pdf [Accessed 7 October 2019]

Technique 4: Using AI in supervision

Written by David Clutterbuck

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

What is AI?

AI or Artificial Intelligence is a rapidly developing technology that supports, and in some cases may supplant, humans in carrying out a wide variety of tasks. Unlike coachbots, which simply employ algorithms to carry out routine, predictable tasks, AI learns from each interaction, constantly adapting to its environment.

AI is also different from virtual tools such as ProReal which uses the medium of virtual reality to facilitate the supervision discussion. Thinking is done by the human beings, not the technology.

When is this used?

AI generally still has many challenges to overcome before it can replace coaches or supervisors generally, but advances are happening rapidly. This is an emerging concept in both coaching and supervision, so what follows is extrapolation from current developments in the application and development of Artificial Intelligence.

What is the approach?

At more complex levels of interaction, like the coaching supervision partnership, practitioners will have to create working partnerships with AI systems – as if they had a shadow consultant in the room.

There are two main scenarios, where AI is used as an aide for the supervisee and the supervisor:

1) The coach brings his or her issue to the supervision session. The AI provides support by:

- Monitoring and sensing patterns in body language, conversational tone and repeated use of similar significant words or phrases
- Linking back to previous supervision sessions to identify patterns of issues
- Responding to references to literature or theoretical models by searching the internet and/or the supervisor's files to have them ready, should the supervisor choose to share them
- At the end of the supervision session, suggest themes for summarising (which can also be helpful for the supervisor's subsequent reflections).

2) The coach also has an AI assistant, which has been present at his or her coaching sessions. The two AIs may interrogate and support each other during the supervision conversation. One of the benefits of this arrangement is that the supervisee and supervisor can call up and replay at will the exact words a client has used. The two AIs may also look together for signs of, for example, parallel process, for example, body language of the coach in supervision emulating that of the client in the coaching session.

How to work with the approach…

Once both supervisor and supervisee genuinely see the AI as a welcome resource it should be possible for both human intelligences and artificial intelligences to work in harmony. Just as satnavs have become an accepted and welcome part of our driving experience, so too will we find a way of integrating additional input from AI into a supervision session.

Among the challenges of working with AI are:

- Being overwhelmed by information – having a 'voice in the ear' can be a major distraction, making it harder to be client-centred and fully present.
- Learning to trust the virtual partner.
- Balancing reliance on the AI's observations with reliance on our own instincts and wisdom.

A word of caution.

Learning how to work with AI will require a whole new set of yet-to-be-defined competences. But the potential to enrich every session is significant.

Whilst AI may at some point have the technical capability to hold a supervision session for a supervisee without human intervention, it is envisaged that for the time being AI will supplement rather than replace the coaching supervisor. We see supervision as a relational process and while humans may develop relationships with AI, knowing that the 'other' is an Artificial Intelligence will alter the quality of that relationship.

What else might need attention?

Given the newness of this way of working we are limited in knowing what working with AI might involve. However, we might assume that contracting will need to take into account that a third party (the AI) is part of the process. Where the AI stores information arising from the supervision work there will need to be clarity on how this data is handled and protected.

What other uses are there for this approach?

Experiments with AI therapists reveal that they can be more accurate in diagnosis and perceived as less judgemental than their human counterparts (Tieu, 2015).

Very basic coaching – predictable, relating to frequent patterns of circumstance and behaviour – can already be provided by coachbots and basic AI.

Reference:

Tieu, A (2015) We Now Have an AI Therapist, and She's Doing Her Job Better than Humans Can. [online] Available at: https://futurism.com/uscs-new-ai-ellie-has-more-success-than-actual-therapists [Accessed 25 September 2019]

Further Reading:

Birch, J., and Welch. P. (2019) Coaching Supervision: Advancing Practice, Changing Landscapes. Abingdon: Routledge.

Hall, M. (2017) Herts NHS Trust trials CoachBot digital coaching. *Coaching at Work*. 12 (6), p.7.

Whitehouse, E. (2019) Would you let a chatbot coach you? [online] Available at: https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/long-reads/articles/would-let-chatbot-coach-you [Accessed 25 September 2019].