



# Supervision

## What is it and how do I use the time effectively?

Supervision has many definitions and is used in varied contexts. This paper provides you with a broad picture of how I conceptualise supervision and what I value within a supervisory relationship. You are invited to use this as a guide when entering into a supervision contract with me. The suggestions below are intended to act as prompts for increasing the effectiveness of your supervision time, in the hope that your supervision experience will facilitate growth and bring beneficial change in your professional practice, your life and the lives of those you work with.

Ideally the supervision process is directed by you and the needs and hopes you bring to your session. Throughout, I seek to be empathically present, use attentive listening skills and make available to you my practical expertise and theoretical knowledge. I trust deeply in your capacity to make choices. I desire to offer space within supervision for you to explore, discover and take the next step in your professional journey, thus impacting those you work with.

## Defining Supervision

Inskipp and Proctor (1993), provide a starting point by defining supervision as “a working alliance between a supervisor and (*supervisee*) in which the (*supervisee*) can offer an account or recording of their work; reflect on it; receive feedback, and where appropriate, guidance. The object of this alliance is to enable the (*supervisee*) to gain in ethical competence, confidence and creativity so as to give their best possible service to their clients”. I conceptualise supervision as a ‘learning partnership’ (Carroll & Gilbert, 2006). In offering you supervision, it is my desire that our supervision time aids and assists you to:

- Be effective and empowered in your professional role
- Prioritise healthy choices and self care within your role
- Provide ethical, responsible, duty of care to those you offer services to, within the guidelines of your professional code of ethics
- Be well resourced and networked in your role
- Maximise your capacity to thrive long term in your role by minimizing burn out or compassion fatigue. (Adapted from SU Qld, 2008).

### *... defining Supervision (continued)*

**Metaphors** provide me with creative definitions of supervision. I encourage you to identify one or more images that inspire your engagement in our supervision process.

'Supervision is:

- A TORCH which illuminates my work;
  - A CONTAINER where I feel safe and held;
  - A MIRROR where I see myself and my work;
  - A PLAYPEN where we play with ideas, feelings, intuitions, hunches, theories;
  - A DANCE where we learn how to work together in harmony;
  - A CLASSROOM which contains two learners one of which facilitates learning.'
- (Carroll & Gilbert, 2006, p. 9-10)

Within our supervision time, I anticipate that we will incorporate discussion of professional, personal and organizational issues that impact the integrity of your fulfilling your roles and responsibilities (SU Qld, 2008). Supervision is not personal therapy, coaching, or management. Whilst elements of these may at times be present within our sessions, I am responsible for ensuring that these elements are integrated within the confines of the supervisory relationship (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006, p 52-53).

Supervision is a place where I will seek to meet you with empathy, congruence, unconditional positive regard and genuine relationship. I consider mutual respect, trust, warmth and genuineness requirements for ensuring a safe environment for productive supervision (Henry, 2010). It is my desire to create an environment that incorporates the presence of 'challenge, involvement, support, structure, feedback, innovation and integration' (Henry, 2010).

As a supervisee I encourage you to be an active participant in the process, taking responsibility for your own learning, whilst being open and hungry to grow. I respect transparency, a willingness to take risks and to confront reality (Henry, 2010). It is my hope that you will view our times together as a partnership into which you risk bringing the joys and challenges of your professional life.

# Suggestions for using your supervision time effectively

- Prior to your first supervision appointment:

You may wish to purchase this book as a resource for your supervision experience.

- Carroll, M. and Gilbert, M. (2006). *On being a supervisee: Creating Learning Partnerships*. Kew, VIC: Psychoz Publications.

From this text I highly recommend you read

- 'Overview of Supervision' (Carroll & Gilbert, 2006, p. 1-13)
- 'Exercise in Preparing for Supervision' (Adapted from Inskipp & Proctor, 2001) in Carroll & Gilbert (2006, p144). (Particularly helpful for Counsellors)

If you are an SU Qld Chaplain I recommend you download and read:

- 'SU Qld Chaplains & Professional Supervision' (SU Qld, 2008) from the Chappy Lounge at [www.suqld.org.au](http://www.suqld.org.au)

- Prior to each supervision session:

**Prepare** – In the 24 hours prior to your supervision appointment take 10-30 minutes to ask yourself some important questions and to plan for your supervision session. The purpose of this is to organise and prioritise what you want to achieve in the upcoming session. Preparation questions I have found helpful include (Carroll & Gilbert, 2006, p38-39):

- Are there any crisis/emergency issues you need to talk about?
- Are there any themes emerging for you in your overall work you would like to review in supervision?
- Are there any organizational/training areas you want to talk about in supervision?
- What do you want from this session of supervision? For yourself, your clients, your learning?
- Are there any areas of the supervisory contract/experience you want to review /re-negotiate?

Briefly plan the presentation of your supervision material. Consider how you will 'tell the story' of your concern or issue. For a possible supervision framework re-read and use: 'Exercise in Preparing for Supervision' (Adapted from Inskipp & Proctor, 2001) in Carroll & Gilbert (2006, p144). This may be particularly helpful for counsellors.

*... prior to each supervision session (continued):*

**Be Still** – I encourage you to arrive 5 to 10 minutes early for your appointment. Find a shady place to park and take time to slow your breathing, quiet your mind and still your body in preparation for supervision.

**Take a risk** – Come prepared to meet and connect with me. I am human, a fellow colleague, a student of life, and your current supervisor. I value the profession you are in. I honour the rewards and the costs of your commitment to work in the people helping industry. I want to hear the good, the bad, the parts you are tempted to edit out and the interventions you are most proud of. ***I am privileged when you take the risks involved in letting me really meet you and your professional work.***

- Within the supervision session:

**The CLEAR supervision model** – A supervision session typically will progress through a number of stages. This CLEAR model of supervision (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006, p 61) is one that I find helpful. It may be a useful tool for you to be aware of in our sessions.

- **Contract:** At the start of each session I will seek to establish your desired outcomes, gain an understanding of what you wish to cover and how I and the process might be most valuable. This may include clarifying our basic supervision contract and roles.
- **Listen:** Using active listening and reflection I will encourage you to engage in self-directed problem-solving in order to assist you in broadening your understanding of the situation in which you desire to see change. My focus at this time is to 'step into your shoes' and for you to know that you have been listened to and heard deeply. My reframing and offering you new connections is designed to help you hear yourself more fully.
- **Explore:** I will use questions, reflection and invitations to new insight and awareness as a means of working with you to generate new options for responding to the issue or relationship.
- **Action:** With a variety of options discussed and increased understanding of the complexities of the situations dynamics I will encourage you to choose one initial action and make a plan for implementing it. At this time it may be important to consider future repercussions or role play the outworking of this action.
- **Review:** In concluding the session, I will confirm with you the actions you are wishing to implement. I encourage you to name what has been helpful, difficult, or may still require further exploration. A future review of the action you are planning may be discussed. You are welcome to request changes in the process for future supervision sessions.

*... within the supervision session (continued)*

**Tell me about you** – My focus in any supervision session is on you and your responses within your professional role. Whilst discussing clients, exploring a situation, developing techniques and deciding actions are significant aspects of supervision, focusing on who you are and how you bring yourself into your work situation is often more likely to bring helpful growth and change into your work situation. I encourage you to use time in session to look at your own responses to clients. Feeling ‘stuck’ with a particular client can sometimes shift when you risk exploring your own reactions and interactions with them. Hawkins and Shohet (2006) remind me to ask you questions that explore your internal reactions. Does this person remind you of some part of yourself that you are uncomfortable / scared / critical of? Have you projected onto them your reaction to someone else in your life? Does their story trigger your story and cloud your ability to hear and see them?

**Be mindful and notice** – I invite you to be present in the here and now in our session and be aware of the interactions that occur between us. Notice your body in the session and its reactions. Be aware of your breathing, muscle tension, the speed of your thought processes, the level of anxiety or calm you experience. I practice mindfulness. At times I will invite you to bring your attention to your body responses or offer you an awareness I have of my inner reactions as we talk. Experience has taught me that not only will this enable us to talk more openly about our supervisory relationship; it will often reveal parallel processes at work for you in your work situations (Shohet, 2008, p98-101).

**Be proactive** – if you feel I am not hearing or tracking well with you, or you wish to use your time differently in the session. Let me know. This is your supervision session. Use your time in a way that meets your current needs. Throughout the session stay alert to any new theory, skill, technique that you wish to explore further.

**Book your next session** – Come often for supervision. Good supervision is an opportunity for growth and change.

- **After your supervision session:**

**Record your learning** – In the hour or two following your session I recommend you make a record of your significant learning’s and document the specific action or steps you will take as a result.

**Take action** – Act by taking the next step in your professional journey, and notice the impact it has on yourself and those you work with.

*... after your supervision session (continued)*

**Learning journal** – In order to consolidate this new action or learning you may wish to keep a learning journal and jot key challenges and discoveries about yourself and your work. You are welcome to bring this to supervision sessions.

**Go to counselling (if needed)** – If the session unearths evidence of your own unhealed wounds, then I encourage you to take them into a therapeutic space where you can process them further. I am happy to suggest a referral if this will be helpful. Who you are is your greatest resource. When wounds are untended you can also be the source of your greatest blind spots and leave both yourself and those you work with at risk.

**Enjoy life and laugh often** – I strongly encourage you to take time to be mindful; for self care; to build strong personal relationships and to enjoy your professional practice. If laughing and enjoying life is an area you struggle with, you may wish to put into practice some of the suggestions offered in this book:

Reynolds, S. (2004). *Better than Chocolate: 50 proven ways to feel happier*. London, UK: Penguin Books.

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