



101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches, Enquiries and Experiments.

Eclectic Chapter: Technique 11 (pages 35-37)

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Exploring Boundaries

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Where can this be used?				Typical Level of Supervisee Experience Required	
 Individual Supervision	 Group Supervision	 Peer Supervision			 Experienced Supervisees Only

When is this used?

To help the supervisee mentally step outside the coach : client relationship and explore wider perspectives. It invites consideration of contexts and boundaries beyond the immediate 'in the room' information. Rather like exploring through the lenses of the seven-eyed model (Hawkins and Shohet, 2012), this process reframes the situation / relationship within a continually widening frame.

This can be particularly useful where the coach notices boundary issues, or if they tend to be rather introspective or narrowly-focused. Especially useful when all appears to be okay, yet something outside of the immediate system seems to be getting in the way.

What is the technique?

Clean Boundaries* (Developed by the late David Grove and adapted for use in supervision). The questions are clean, enabling supervisees to think for themselves and encourages insightful breakthroughs. This could be a follow up to the Exploring Relationships with Clean Networks technique (Number 12).

Step 1: Begin by inviting your supervisee to share the client situation they would like to explore and the question they have for supervision.

Step 2: Ask the supervisee to draw a representation of their client and also themselves (as they are when they are coaching this client).

Step 3: Explore what the supervisee puts on their paper with a series of Clean Language questions (up to six):

- What kind of client / coach is that?
- Is there anything else about that x?



Invite the supervisee to put anything else they want to on their paper.

Step 4: Explore the space around the supervisee and the client:

- What kind of space is the space around you both?
- What are the qualities of that space? And how far could that space go?
- And what kind of boundary or edge does that space have?

Show that on your paper (the supervisee may at times need to re-draw and rescale their picture to be able to place the boundary on the paper).

Step 5: Ask questions of the boundary:

- What kind of boundary is that boundary?
- Is there anything else about that xx boundary?

Step 6: Expand awareness still further by asking;

- And what's beyond that boundary?
- What kind of space is that? etc (same questions as before).

You can continue to explore the spaces and boundaries until the supervisee has reached a space of infinity.

Step 7: At each boundary, invite the supervisee to re-draw / rescale their picture to fit the boundary of their paper.

Step 8: Invite the supervisee to understand more about the client and their situation from the position of each space and boundary. Ask:

- From this boundary/ space, what do you know about your client/ you?
- And what does this space know about your client / you?

Step 9: Continue to ask about each boundary and space coming back from the outermost place right back to the centre representations of the client / coach again. At the end ask, "And what do you know now?" to conclude with key learnings.

Step 10: Complete by re-grounding the exploration into the supervision space. For example, ask "And how does what you know now make a difference to your clients / coaching work?"

How to work with the technique...

Those unfamiliar with the technique may be fearful that the repetitive questioning is experienced as irritating. In fact, supervisees typically report experiencing the question differently each time – probably because their thinking has moved on and so they place different meaning to the same words.

When posing questions within a clean language context, we need to be particularly conscious of intonation, pace and inflection of our voice. As far as possible keep your voice neutral, and deliver the questions slowly, emphasising each word clearly and with a slight pause between each word.

A word of caution.

The technique encourages expansiveness, so you may need to find a way of helping *you* stay on track without placing your own interpretation to your supervisee's work.



What other uses are there for this technique?

With group supervision, as the questions require no content, you could pose the questions, then invite everyone to explore their client silently, before sharing final reflections (and their drawing). The technique can also be applied with coaching clients, especially exploring the wider picture around any relationship.

References:

Hawkins, P. and Shohet, R. (2012) *Supervision in the Helping Professions*, 4th ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Resources:

'*' Clean Boundaries is covered in-depth on the Clean Coaching training programme, as part of Module Three. For general information see our website www.cleancoaching.com [Accessed 6 September 2019]