



101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches, Enquiries and Experiments.

Existential Chapter: Technique 46 (pages 140-143)

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Working with Shame Using Embodied Coaching

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Where can this be used?		Typical Level of Supervisee Experience Required	
 <p>Individual Supervision</p>		 <p>Peer Supervision</p>	 <p>Experienced Supervisees Only</p>

When is this used?

Useful when there may be a shame process in the supervisory system. This way of working can be used to increase the supervisees awareness of their shame triggers and discover a place of Self-Acceptance.

What is the approach?

The Embodied Coaching method expands awareness by addressing implicit, non-conscious knowledge; something we 'know' but cannot easily express in words. This knowledge can be accessed through two primary pathways; body process and exploring emerging images and metaphors through the use of the Arts.

Step 1: Contract appropriately for the depth of work.

Step 2: Ask the supervisee to imagine a situation of Shame. For example:

“What is your image or metaphor for this situation? What do you notice in your body as you describe it?”

Step 3: Invite the supervisee to choose a place in the room to represent the situation of shame and go there. Ask the supervisee to adopt the 'body shape'/posture that represents being there. Ask:

“What do you notice in your body?”

Step 4: Invite the supervisee to move away from the place of shame and 'shake off' the embodiment Ask:

“What did you notice about that experience? What was the trigger that took you into this situation?”



Remember their shame trigger could be non-verbal, e.g. a facial expression or tone of voice.

Step 5: Now ask the supervisee to imagine a place/situation of Self-Acceptance. Ask:

“What is your image or metaphor for this place? What do you notice in your body as you describe it?”

Step 6: Invite the supervisee to choose a different place that represents Self-Acceptance and go there and put their body into a shape that represents being there. Ask:

“What do you notice?”

Step 7: In the place of Self-Acceptance, invite the supervisee to remember a time when they achieved an important objective. Ask:

“What did you learn about your skill, abilities and what you are capable of achieving?”

Then ask them to take up a body position of fulfilment and/or satisfaction and to make some statements from that position.

Step 8: Moving away from both positions. Ask:

“Thinking about the original issue now, what is your understanding? How has this changed your view? What would you like to take away with you?”

How to work with the approach...

It can be hard to know how to begin this work. The impetus may come from the supervisee becoming aware that they are feeling shame but more likely the supervisor might wonder aloud if it is present. There needs to be a safe, trusting and ongoing relationship between the supervisor and supervisee. The attitude of the supervisor needs to be one of unconditional positive regard and empathy for the supervisee and the system in which they work.

Convey that shame is a feature of our human existence - a collapse of self-esteem - which may impact our relational patterns. Shame is often triggered by self-talk from the Inner Critic, and this approach encourages an exploration of the experience of shame without necessarily seeking to reduce or remove it, rather to examine its 'being there' and what that might illuminate. On occasion it might be entirely appropriate to feel shame. Additionally, connecting with a more positive self-image can provide further understanding of the supervisee's process.

Through parallel process shame can be mirrored in the coach:client relationship and echo shame in the wider system. When the supervisee understands how shame manifests for them and how to manage it constructively, they are in a much clearer position to identify and work with any shame in the client system.

It is important for the work to end in the place of Self-Acceptance. Where appropriate the supervisor could start at step 5.

What else might need attention?

The origin of shame is often laid down in early life. Further personal work may be needed outside the supervisory relationship.



A word of caution.

Shame is often experienced in the coaching supervision relationship, but it can be difficult for the supervisor to notice, as we all strive to keep shame hidden. The supervisee may use protective strategies e.g. withdrawing contact, being overly compliant, self-critical or aggressive. There are often non-verbal clues which may help the supervisor identify shame e.g. the supervisee looking away, blushing, change of posture and energy level.

In this embodied way of working the supervisor needs to notice how the supervisee is reacting in the different positions. The supervisor's skill is in bringing this into attention without inadvertently shaming the supervisee. Offer neutral observations and questions such as: "What are you noticing in your body now and how does it feel?"

What other uses are there for this approach?

This approach can be expanded by using the Arts. Simply ask the supervisee to draw or find an image to represent both places.

An image can offer a tangible representation of the unconscious dynamics and shame triggers in the supervisory process. It can give a different perspective and offer 'super' vision.

References:

Lederman, T. and Stacey, J. (2014) Embodied Coaching: pathways to implicit knowledge using the arts and somatic process. *Coaching Today*, Issue 11, pp.6-9.