






101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches, Enquiries and Experiments.

Person Centred Chapter: Technique 54 (pages 177 – 180)

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Exploring Congruence

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

When is this used?

This enquiry is likely to be offered when the supervisor notices a persistent somatic discomfort in response to a supervisee's account of their client work. The intention is to prompt a normative discussion exploring how the supervisee is enacting their espoused approach or model of coaching.

What is the enquiry?

The supervisor surfaces their own sense of discomfort (practitioner congruence) to raise the supervisee's awareness of possible inconsistencies between their model and their practice (task congruence).

Step 1: Bring the sensation of discomfort into awareness.

While keeping a non-directive stance, the supervisor invites a pause for the supervisee to 'rewind' to an earlier part of the discussion. For example:

"... might we pause for a moment? When you were talking about xxxxx I noticed the sensation of something tugging at my belly, often that signals to me something in the system may have been overlooked. How would you feel about re-visiting this to see if anything else comes into our awareness?"

Step 2: Invite a more granular review.

Once the moment is captured and located by both supervisor and supervisee, the supervisor poses gentle questions, such as:

- What is your sense of how xxxxx that came about?
- What were you aware of at the time, that you may or may not have attended to?



Step 3: Consider how their practice maps to their coaching approach.

Paradoxically, it is not necessary to know your supervisee's coaching approach. In fact, when it is known, a supervisor can be drawn to a more interrogative position. So, pose questions from a position of genuine discovery –

- Can we explore what you tell your clients about how you work?
- Which aspects of your coaching approach would you say most influenced you in that moment?
- Which parts might not have been attended to?
- What's your sense of why your work unfolded in the way it did?
- As you hear yourself talk about how you worked on that day, how might you describe your coaching model now?

Step 4: Allow a new equilibrium to emerge.

For most experienced supervisees, this type of enquiry will bring into their awareness a need for adjustment. Unless an ethical issue has surfaced which needs more direct attention, simply allow space for fuller independent reflection.

How to work with the enquiry...

When working with this enquiry, offer the fullest respect for your supervisee. Remember, you were not in the room at the time. Honour your supervisee and trust that they were working with good intent and to the best of their ability. With this as an over-arching attitude, questions are framed in a gentle way, helping the supervisor to be experienced as someone seeking to facilitate a fuller understanding, rather than to highlight poor practice, or to diagnose or problem solve.

When inconsistency is identified it can provoke a tussle for the supervisee, considering how they wish to work and how they work effectively. Many coaches aspire to be 'pure and non-directive' and yet in truth they offer their clients an effective blend of coaching, mentoring and consultancy. Through using this enquiry, we help supervisees to be more accurate and more articulate in how they bring value to their clients. A supervisor will of course have a duty to their supervisee's clients (are they getting what they were promised?), but additionally they have a duty to the coaching profession (are coaches properly explaining what they do?).

What else might need attention?

In order to check for consistency, the supervisee needs to have considered how to articulate their coaching approach. If not already done, it could be developed as part of the supervision work.

A word of caution.

It is for the supervisee to decide whether they want to *change the way* they work or *change what they say* about how they work. The role of the supervisor is only to highlight the difference (and where agreed, hold the supervisee to account for creating greater consistency) not to direct what needs to change.



What other uses are there for this enquiry?

This could be adapted to work with coaching clients who have developed a personal leadership brand and who want to review how they are embedding new ways of working.

Further Reading

Counselling Training Liverpool (2015) *Being Congruent - what does it mean?* [online] 23 November. Available at: <https://www.counsellingtrainingliverpool.org.uk/blog/being-congruent-what-does-it-mean#> [Accessed 7 September 2019].