



## 101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches, Enquiries and Experiments.

Positive Psychology Chapter: Technique 61 (pages 204-206)

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### Personal Strengths Review

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Where can this be used?				Typical Level of Supervisee Experience Required	
 Individual Supervision	 Group Supervision	 Peer Supervision		 All levels	

#### When is this used?

This is a useful approach when a supervisee has a tendency to appraise their skills as a gap analysis, focusing on their lack of expertise. It can help boost confidence to consider what strengths they already have that they can bring to their coaching.

It might be especially useful when working with a new supervisee to build rapport with a positive focus by asking about their strengths in coaching, rather than starting with their issues or a simple bio. Because this approach builds positive rapport it can be valuable with groups in the early stages of their work together and would be suitable for peer groups with minor adaptation of the questions.

#### What is the technique?

The technique is based on an open discussion about the strengths they bring to coaching. Linley (2008, p.9) defines a strength as “a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that is authentic and energising to the user, and enables optimal functioning, development and performance”. Therefore, by revealing the supervisees natural strengths it is likely to lead to greater energy and authenticity in their coaching.

##### Step 1: Achievements.

Ask them to tell a short story about an achievement that demonstrates a key strength. Avoid asking simply “What are your strengths?” as this can be hard to answer and might lead to a superficial discussion. Use questions like:

- What would you describe as your most significant accomplishments?
- What key strength(s) does it highlight?



### **Step 2: Elicit strengths stories.**

Follow up with a more general discussion about strengths, some sample questions are shown below. You may want to explain what a strength is and why it is important. This section can also be done in small groups or pairs in group supervision as an icebreaker.

- What makes a great day for you? Tell me about the best day that you remember having?
- When would your friends and family say you are at your happiest?
- If you could plan a day that would leave you feeling energised, what would you do?
- What sort of everyday things do you enjoy doing?
- When you are at your best, what are you doing?
- What gives you the greatest sense of being authentic and who you really are?
- What do you think are the most energising things that you do?

Note: Adapted from Linley, P.A. (2008)

### **Step 3: Application to coach development.**

Invite the supervisee to consider what strengths they have noticed through telling their stories. Then consider how these could be applied to their coaching work.

- How can you apply these strengths in your coaching?
- What are the implications for your coaching practice?
- How might your coaching clients experience you utilising these strengths?
- What key strengths do you want to make more use of?

### **How to work with the technique...**

In a group setting this might need careful positioning and group management to ensure no one dominates the discussions and that all strengths are seen as equally valuable. It is best to introduce clear group contracting stating the unique nature of strengths and explaining the expectations from a group working perspective. You might want to set clear time limits for each speaker and say something like “obviously everyone may have very different strengths and it is important we each value the diversity”. You could then either set out some response guidelines or ask the group something like “How can we ensure as a group that we are supportive of each other’s strengths?”

### **A word of caution.**

Beware of a very superficial conversation that focusses on skills e.g. “I am very organised” the aim is to raise awareness of core strengths highlighting energy and transferable capabilities. You could continue probing through acknowledging what they offer initially, then inviting them to extend their thinking. For example, “OK, so when you are very organised, what other qualities start to reveal themselves?”

### **What other uses are there for this technique?**

This approach can be applied in a similar way to case discussions asking about how they can apply the strengths that they have used in previous accomplishments to the current situation.

### **Reference:**

Linley, P.A. (2008) *Average to A+*, Coventry: CAPP Press.