



101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches, Enquiries and Experiments.

Positive Psychology Chapter: Technique 59 (pages 199 - 201)

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Give Yourself an 'A'

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

When is this used?

This technique is used at the start of supervision, typically after the first session, to enable the supervisee to set their intentions for what success would look like for them at the end of the programme.

What is the technique?

The supervisee writes a letter, looking back over their supervision series, stating why they got an A. Zander and Zander (2000) wrote about the technique in their book *The Art of Possibility*; Benjamin Zander had used it at the start of term, telling his students that they had already got an A, and the only requirement was for them to write him a letter, dated the end of term, outlining why they deserved this grade. By the end of the term, they had met or exceeded their own expectations of success.

Step 1: Brief supervisees as follows:

You will 'get an A' for the 6 months of this supervision series. There is one requirement that you must fulfil in order to earn the grade. Write me a letter dated [end of supervision series], which begins with the words...

"Dear XX, I got my A because...."

Share as much detail as you can, the story of what will have happened to you as a coach by that time which is in line with this extraordinary grade. Place yourself in the future, looking back, and report on all the insights you acquired and milestones you attained during those months, as if those accomplishments were already in the past. You are part of multiple systems, so tell me about the impact that you will have on those systems and how will you be achieving that. Phrases like "I hope", "I intend", "I will" must not appear. I am especially interested in the person you will become by then and the attitude, feelings, and world view of that person who will have done all you wished to do or become everything you wished to be. I want you to fall passionately in love with that person you describe in your letter. You



can choose to send it to me, but more important is that you keep it for yourself, as your commitment to yourself. You'll be amazed at what happens as a result

Note: Based on Zander and Zander's *The Art of Possibility* – see pages 25-53.

Step 2: At the end of the supervision series, ask supervisees to look at their letter and compare where they are today to where they had started.

Step 3: Debrief with additional questions such as:

- Who are you now as a coach?
- What has changed in the way you feel as a coach?
- What is your attitude now towards your work?
- What is your world view now as a coach?
- What is the impact you now have on the people you work with?
- And the impact on their systems?
- And the impact on the world?
- What have you learned about yourself as a result of this exercise?
- What is possible for you as a coach now?

How to work with the technique...

Supervisees choose whether to write this letter or not. However, we can reassure them about its value, in visualising the future they desire and the likelihood that it will come to pass once they have articulated it. On the rare occasion that they fall short of their A, encourage them to consider what they could do differently to make supervision a success for them.

What else might need attention?

The original technique is individually focused and yet we work with people who are part of larger systems, so the version here makes reference to this systemic perspective. You may wish to debrief further about how else the supervisee, intentionally or otherwise, has an impact for example:

- How does your philosophy of life have an impact on your coaching?
- How much do you challenge your clients about the impact of their choices on, for example, diversity and inclusion?
- What is your ethical stance regarding the impact of your client's actions on society and the world, for example climate change?

A word of caution.

Where there is a lack of resonance with some of the words in the briefing (for example "falling passionately in love with yourself"), adapt them accordingly.

Bear in mind also that this is not literally about the supervisee receiving an A from the supervisor; it is a personal quest, a striving to be the best coach and making the most of the supervision opportunity.



What other uses are there for this technique?

You can use this for any programme that takes place over a period of time, whether that is individual work or team coaching, teaching etc.

Reference:

Zander R. and Zander B. (2000) *The Art of Possibility*, Boston: Harvard Business Press.