



101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches, Enquiries and Experiments.

Solution Focused Chapter: Technique 80 (pages 270-272)

Edited by Michelle Lucas and Published by Routledge 2020.

Transferring Competence

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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 helps supervisees to find their existing competences, so that they can be leveraged for the current supervision topic or a future desired state. The enquiry can be used in many configurations and is most helpful when intending to create a positive atmosphere while simultaneously capturing existing competence.

What is the enquiry?

Based on the work of Lamarre and Gregoire (1999), who described the notion of *competence transference*. The idea being that when you become stuck in one domain of your life it is probable that the qualities and skills you utilise in other domains (work, family, hobbies, sports, talents) could be of use to you. They describe how a client suffering from a panic disorder learned how to relax by applying his knowledge of deep-sea diving whenever he experienced anxiety.

Facilitate a semi-structured discussion along the following lines:

Step 1: Ask permission to experiment with some tangential discussion.

Step 2: Identify with them what other areas of their life they are successful at – useful areas to explore are typically work, family, hobbies, sports or special talents.

Step 3: Engage in a positive and exploratory discussion using questions like:

- “What competences do you have?” “How do/did you use those?” “How do/did you succeed in doing that?”
- “What would those around you in those moments describe as your competences?”



Step 4: Invite the supervisee to transfer one of those competences towards the issue at hand. This can be done explicitly, “How might you use this competence to manage the topic we were talking about?” or it can be done in a more positive way, “How can you bring this competence to bear in order to reach your goal?” Or it could be done in a more subtle way, “If they could speak, what advice would your competence offer you for this issue?”.

Step 5: Ask them to notice when and where else they have been able to leverage this level of resourcefulness. Talking about previous successes can help building self-confidence and remind them that their competences are a consistent part of them.

Step 6: Encourage the supervisee to consider what small next step they might take to move themselves forward on the problem or issue at hand.

How to work with the enquiry...

Experiment rather than simply dig deeper or try harder, this in itself can liberate the energy in the discussion. If you know the supervisee well, you might invite the supervisee to think about areas of their life that you have already heard from them as success stories. Steps 4 and 5 serve to support the supervisee to transfer their competence from one domain to another.

Solution-focused interviewing (Bannink, 2010) capitalises on the idea that all individuals have competences, despite life’s struggles, that can be marshalled to improve the quality of their lives.

What else might need attention?

Sometimes supervisees feel embarrassed to talk about their strengths and successes. Or they never really have given it any thought. If the supervisee cannot – or dare not - come up with their competences, ask them what those around them would say their competences are. “Suppose we were to ask your best friend what you are good at, what would they say?” Asking questions from other perspectives, such as the perspective of their best friend, makes it easier to name their own competences.

A word of caution.

Remember context may alter what behaviour is appropriate, so ensure you check that the behaviour being transferred is appropriate to the new context. Remember also that what works with one person may not always work for the next.

What other uses are there for this enquiry?

The enquiry can be used as an energiser and builds self-confidence and self-efficacy, perhaps pair work within a group. In this case begin by inviting partners to share what areas of their life they really shine in. It would conclude by inviting the pairs to consider when these competences have shown up in their work and how they might use them in a personal issue at hand.

The enquiry can be similarly applied to work with individual and team coaching clients.



References:

Bannink, F.P. (2010) *1001 solution-focused questions. Handbook for solution-focused interviewing*. New York: Norton.

Lamarre, J. and Gregoire, A. (1999) Competence transfer in solution-focused therapy: Harnessing a natural resource. *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 18(1), pp. 43-57.

Further reading:

Bannink, F.P. (2015) *Handbook of positive supervision*. Boston: Hogrefe Publishing.