



101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches, Enquiries and Experiments.

Systemic Chapter: Technique 88 (pages 297-299)

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Working with the Supervisee's Dilemma

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

When is this used?

Useful when a supervisee seems stuck; perhaps because they are faced with a number of different options and their 'head and heart' are in conflict. The scenario may relate directly to client work, and it can also be used to explore decisions about their wider coaching practice or CPD.

What is the technique?

Based on systemic principles, the supervisee creates a map of the options they want to explore in answer to a specific question. Through tapping into the group's somatic experience, additional information can be sourced.

Step 1: Begin the enquiry individually with the supervisee. Help them articulate their supervision question.

Step 2: Once articulated, check with the supervisee what kind of energy they have, while also noticing yours, then question, challenge or affirm accordingly.

Step 3: Invite the supervisee to identify how many options they would like to explore (recommend no more than 5). Using a separate piece of paper for each option (labelled with a letter A,B,C...) ask the supervisee to set up a map by laying out the paper in a way that feels true for them.

Step 4: Invite the supervisee to move each group member, guiding them by their shoulder blades until they reach a piece of paper, and to then stand on it. They now represent that option.



Step 5: Ask the supervisee to stand in a place that represents their relationship with each of the options.

Step 6: Brief the group members to settle into what they are representing, tuning into their somatic experience. Remind them that there is no right and no wrong, that there is no such thing as co-incidences and trust that whatever is emerging (or not), is information.

Step 7: With the supervisee observing, the supervisor visits each group member asking “What are you noticing as you stand here?” or “How are you in relationship with the supervisee?”.

Step 8: Check back with the supervisee to understand what meaning they are making of what has been offered and what they are noticing about their own embodied response.

Step 9: Repeat Steps 7 and 8 to see what new information is emerging.

Step 10: Return to the supervisee and enquire if their choices seem any clearer to them; check their own sense of congruence and rightness with each option. On occasion, they might find it helpful to ‘step onto’ their chosen option to tap into their own somatic experience.

Step 11: Invite the supervisee to reconfigure the pieces of paper from the strongest congruence with their question to the lowest sense of rightness. The supervisee then reveals to the other group members which option was represented by each letter. The Supervisor debriefs the supervisee’s response.

Step 12: Invite the group members to write down a piece of wisdom that came from their experience which they will give to the supervisee before Step 14.

Step 13: De-brief the supervisee by checking in with them how they are now.

Step 14: Check in with the whole group about the need to de-role; take a comfort break such that they can approach the next part of the session cleanly.

How to work with the technique...

The steps outlined above are a simplification of how this technique unfolds. The pace, structure and enquiry is crafted by the supervisor each time creating a bespoke supervision experience. For those supervisors experienced in systemic work, they might offer some narrative or the ‘voice’ of each element without any attachment, checking each time with the representative how true this feels for them and inviting the representative to adjust it as they speak it.

The options here are explored ‘blind’ ie. the group members do not know what each option represents, which can help group members to trust their somatic experience. However, in Step 3 the supervisee could identify what each person represents.



A word of caution.

With those new to systemic work, there can be a tendency to interpret the enquiry discussion in Steps 1 and 2, re-direct contributions which feel overly rational towards a somatic enquiry for example “And what are you noticing in you right now?”.

What other uses are there for this technique?

In individual supervision the supervisee could stand on each option in turn. With experience and systemic training the approach can be used with individual coaching clients.

Further Reading:

Stam, J, J. (2016) *Fields of Connection*. Uitgeverij Het Noorderlicht

Whittington, J. (2016) *Systemic Coaching & Constellations: The principles, practices and application for individuals, teams and groups*. 2nd Edition: London: Kogan Page.