



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

Thinking Environment Chapter: Technique 89 (pages 306-308)

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### Dialogue

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Where can this be used?			Typical Level of Supervisee Experience Required		
		 <p>Peer Supervision</p>		 <p>All levels</p>	

#### When is this used?

This can be useful when a supervisee would like to exchange thinking with another peer on a common topic; and could also occur after a Thinking Pair.

Alternatively, this approach can be prompted by a supervisor/supervisee when using the Thinking Environment approach to Supervision and they recognise/request an opportunity for sharing information

#### What is Dialogue?

Dialogue is, like Thinking Pairs, one of the 'Building-blocks' of the Thinking Environment™, where two people support each other to generate independent thinking. The key differences here are that they each address the same question, and they share the whole time, for example, ten minutes, taking turns to go back and forth every couple of minutes as opposed to each taking a chunk of half of the time (e.g. five minutes each way). In supervision it can be used thus:

##### Step 1: The contract.

Agree the question for consideration, phrased succinctly and inviting broad and deep thinking rather than going straight to solutions, for example "What are your thoughts about...?" rather than "How can we...?".

Together agree who will go first, and what the signal will be when the person speaking has finished so the other can have a turn. Typically, this will be by asking, "What do *you* think?" or "What are *your* thoughts?" They agree not to interrupt and to be succinct when it is their turn to speak. Sharing the time equally is key.



### **Step 2: The exercise.**

The Listener asks “What do you think about ... [insert the agreed question]?” The Thinker responds, safe in the knowledge that they may think on this question with a guarantee of not being interrupted. Meanwhile, the Listener listens with ease, fascinated Attention, with encouragement, and without interruption. The Thinker honours the other by being succinct and self manages so they don’t take all the time. They then invite the Listener to have a turn asking, “And what do *you* think?” or something similar. Being responsive to both oneself and the other, the pair establish a rhythm of thinking and listening, tuning into each other such that each person has a broadly equal share of the time over the period.

### **Step 3: The close.**

When the agreed duration has elapsed, each person offers some words of Appreciation of a *quality* or strength observed in the other.

Note: Appreciation is not a comment on the content of their narrative or their actions.

### **How to work with Dialogue...**

A professional or peer supervisor using this technique needs to adopt a genuine sense of enquiry as they engage in Dialogue. Both Thinker and Listener may hold different ideas or positions on the topic being given Attention. Whilst this building block invites each person to share information that might not be known to the other, the intention is not to influence the other. Rather it is an invitation to offer additional input and allow the other person to take or leave whatever they feel is in service of their thinking. The Listener listens with fascinated Attention to see how the Thinker’s thoughts unfold, aiming to be more drivingly interested in what is real and true for the other person than they are in being right, or alternatively, frightened of being proved wrong. If during their turn, the Thinker responds to the others views from a defensive position, the Thinking Environment will be lost.

Dialogue can be used to bring the component of Information into a supervision session, enabling the Supervisor to fulfil their normative role. Sometimes a practice or ethical concern comes up, and the Supervisee or Supervisor can suggest a Dialogue. The Supervisor could use this approach to educate, provided they keep their input short and only for the purpose of generating more independent thinking in the Supervisee.

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

See Thinking Pairs on page 311-314.

### **What other uses are there for Dialogue?**

See Thinking Pairs on pages 311 – 314.

### **Further reading:**

Kline, N. (1999) *Time to Think: Listening to Ignite the Human Mind*. London: Cassell Illustrated.

Kline, N. (2015) *More Time to Think: The Power of Independent Thinking* (2nd ed.) London: Cassell Illustrated. (See chapter entitled “How’s it going? Coach supervision in a Thinking Environment” pp. 191 -192).