



101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches, Enquiries and Experiments.
Eclectic Chapter: Technique 41 (pages 119 - 123)
Edited by Michelle Lucas and Published by Routledge 2020.

WALKING THE LABYRINTH

Written by Jackee Holder

Where can this be used?				Typical Level of Supervisee Experience Required	
					

When is this used?

Most useful for reflecting on client sessions, for thinking through a supervision problem or dilemma. It is a useful tool for changing perspective on an issue and presents a different approach to supervision themes. It can also be used to reflect on broader matters for example, one’s coaching style or coaching development.

What is the technique?

The labyrinth is two printable templates which facilitate individual written reflection (see Resources below). Through completing each one in different directions different thinking is generated. *Writing into* the labyrinth you unravel your presenting issue. Then you explore solutions and new ideas through *writing out* from the centre back to the entrance of the labyrinth.

Step 1: Set aside some quiet time where you can work uninterrupted – allow a minimum of 20 minutes so that you can complete your reflections thoroughly.

Step 2: Using a pencil (or coloured pens if you prefer) begin with the page title ‘Writing In’ start at the entrance of the labyrinth and following the pathway write about the matter you are reflecting upon inside the labyrinth pathway. Be descriptive and include all the facets that come to mind, what you have done so far, current impact, include how you were feeling about it at the time. When you have exhausted all that you can write, if there is still space until you reach the centre, draw a line to take you there.

Step 3: Metaphorically ‘stand back’ and look at what you have written, digest it as though you were meeting it for the first time. Capture any new thoughts that emerge.

Step 4: Now turn to the ‘Writing Out’ page. Starting at the centre repeat the exercise this time working outwards. Write about your current thoughts and feelings and start to include



what ideas you have for solutions or alternative ways to progress or respond to your issue. When you have exhausted all that you can write, if there is still space until the entrance, draw a line to take you there.

Step 5: Repeat Step 3 then consider what you notice now and what sense you are making about the matter you reflected upon.

Step 6: Make a note of your thoughts and reflections along with any actions you intend to take, including what additional reflection or supervision could be beneficial.

Step 7: File your work so that you can add to your reflections over time. Periodically review a number of reflections to see what patterns you notice. Good questions to ask yourself could be:

- How is writing the labyrinth different to other reflective approaches?
- How does this help me shift perspective and generate new ideas?
- What do I tend to reflect upon most often?
- What do I tend not to reflect upon?
- What happens to my intentions to act / work differently over time?

How to work with the technique...

It often generates a sense of surprise and unexpected solutions tend to emerge through the active reflection of writing around the labyrinth. By working with it, individuals discover how they can best utilise it, many noticing a preferred direction of working.

It can be particularly useful as a preparation and reflection upon a supervision session itself. For example, the supervisee might complete it privately at the start of the session, then prior to session close use it to capture their learning.

What else might need attention?

This tool when used routinely or used alongside other reflective activities can help supervisees map what kind of issues they tend to reflect upon, or not. These themes provide useful insights for sharing with a professional supervisor to stretch their reflective practice further.

A word of caution.

Reflection is valuable, and our intention here is to prompt a difference in how we practice. Step 6 of reflecting back on what you have written is an essential component of the process.

What other uses are there for this technique?

This can be used in groups as an arrivals exercise with each group member clarifying what they would like to bring to supervision. If reflecting as a group at the end of a session you might invite individuals to share the impact of engaging in the exercise rather than sharing the content of their reflections. Groups often marvel at the cathartic experience of physically moving the paper as they complete the labyrinth, it serves to connect the group with a more reflective and creative energy.

The labyrinth template could also be offered to clients to aide their reflection.



Further reading:

Holder, J. (2013) *49 Ways to write yourself well: The science and wisdom of reflective writing and journaling*. Brighton: Stepbeach Press.

Holder, J. (2014) The Write Stuff. *Coaching Today*, January 2014, pp. 28-33.

Holder, J. (2014) Notes to Self. *Coaching at Work*, 9(2), pp. 38-41.

Holder, J. (2014) *Slow Hand*. London: MSLEXIA , pp. 18-19.

Holder, J. and Levin, S. (2016) *Writing with Fabulous Trees: A Writing Map for Parks, Gardens and Other Green Spaces*. London: Writing Maps.

Holder, J. (2019) Creative forms of reflective and expressive writing in coaching supervision. In. E. Turner and S. Palmer. Eds. 2019. *The Heart of Coaching Supervision: Working with Reflection and Self Care*. Abingdon: Routledge. Ch.7.

Turner, T., Lucas, M, and Whitaker, C. (2018) *Peer Supervision in Coaching and Mentoring: A versatile Guide for Reflective Practice*. Abingdon: Routledge. pp.34-35 & 46.

Resources:

Holder, J. (2011) Writing The Labyrinth - Guidance Notes. Download free template. [pdf] Available at: <http://www.jackeeholder.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Writing-the-labyrinth-April15.pdf> [Accessed 19 August 2019].