



101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches, Enquiries and Experiments.
Eclectic Chapter: Technique 1 (pages 7 - 10)
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3-2-1: A REFLECTIVE WRITING TECHNIQUE

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

When is this used?

This short, timed reflective writing exercise can be used at several points of the supervision cycle and can be a particularly pragmatic way of introducing reflective writing. Before a session it can help the supervisee prepare their thoughts and decide what to bring. During a session it can enable a supervisee to explore their feelings and thoughts around a particular client, challenge or success. After supervision it can assist the supervisee to gather their learning and identify any actions they want to take as a result of their supervision time.

What is the technique?

This technique encourages freeform reflection for a short, timed period in order to uncover thoughts and feelings surrounding a particular topic or situation.

Step 1: Choose somewhere comfortable to write and gather paper, pens and a timer.

Step 2: Decide what you want to reflect on. This might be a client, a conversation, a feeling or something else about your practice that you'd like to explore.

Step 3: Set a timer for *three* minutes (you could use your phone).

Step 4: Start writing, remember:

- Write quickly.
- Don't worry about spelling, punctuation or grammar.
- Keep your hand moving.
- Write whatever comes into your head.



- Don't sensor what goes on the paper.
- Stop when the timer sounds.

Step 5: Briefly read back through your writing, then write for a further *two* minutes using one of the stems below:

- As I read this:
 - I notice...
 - I am aware of...
 - I am curious about...
 - I feel...
 - I am surprised by...

Step 6: Stop writing when the timer sounds.

Step 7: Finally set the timer for *one* minute and write a list of:

- Items you want to discuss in supervision, or
- Learning you have identified, or
- Actions you want to take, or
- Interventions you could use with that client...

How to work with the technique...

Using a short, timed method can introduce reflection in a very practical way to coaches who find reflection difficult or assume it takes up too much time. This technique only needs ten minutes and works particularly well for the first time when incorporated into a supervision session so that the supervisee experiences the power and ease of using it. They are then more likely to adapt and use the technique in their own time.

When used within a session, it is helpful for the supervisor to time the three writing sections and give instructions for each phase. For example: "Take three minutes to write about whatever comes to mind when you think of that situation". Then "As you read what you've written, take two minutes to write what you notice" and finally "Now take one minute to list all the interventions you could potentially use with that client".

Some supervisees like to use different coloured pens for each of the three writing sections and keep their reflections together in a journal or folder so they can look back on them and reflect further if wished.

Once the technique is understood, supervisees can adapt it to their own needs, doubling or tripling the timings of the writing stages for more in-depth reflection and choosing topics, stem statements and lists that are pertinent to their practice.



A word of caution.

The power in this technique relies on completing all three writing stages. Supervisees who err towards spending time on free writing at the expense of stages two and three can sometimes find themselves continuing to feel stuck and lacking any additional insight.

What other uses are there for this technique?

Although an individual reflection technique, this can be used successfully within groups, either to plan the supervision agenda or to personally reflect on learning gained.

It is also an intervention that coaches can use with their clients. It can help clients identify what they'd like to work on in a session or assist them to see what they've gained or learned. It has also been particularly beneficial for clients who feel overwhelmed because of its ability to get thoughts down on paper, explore feelings and identify actions or strategies within a short space of time.

Further reading:

Adams, K. (2011) The Journal Ladder: A developmental continuum of Journal Therapy. [pdf] Available at: https://journaltherapy.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/CJT_Journal_Ladder-FINAL.pdf [Accessed: 4 September 2019]

Hay, J. (2007) *Reflective Practice and Supervision for Coaches*. Maidenhead: McGraw Hill.

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