SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIPS

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Making Meaning of Supervision

- Supervision is...
- When I was a child, supervision was...
- To my parents (guardians), supervision...
- In my first job, supervision...
- In school, supervision...
- Supervision in mental health...
- When supervision is problematic...
- When I am being supervised, I...
- When supervision works well...
- When I am a supervisor, I will...

Characteristics of Supervision

- (More experienced) AAMFT Approved Supervisor or supervisor candidate in **face to face conversation** with (less experienced) trainee
- Continuous relationship over extended time period
- Systemic focus on trainee’s clinical competence and quality service to clients using raw data

Supervision Characteristics, cont’d

- Clearly **differentiated from personal therapy and administrative supervision**
- Evaluative, with gatekeeping responsibilities
- Collaborative and structured relationship
- Includes **socialization into the profession of CFT**

Positive & Negative Role Models

[Lee & Everett (2004). The Integrative Family Therapy Supervisor, p. 2.]

- Picture a supervisory session with a supervisor you really found helpful. What was s/he doing in that session? What were you doing? List and prioritize the items.
- Picture a supervisory session where the experiences were not helpful. What was the supervisor doing? What were you doing? List and prioritize these items.
Confidence in First Year of Clinical Contact

MFT master’s students reported that supervision had the most enduring influence on the development of their self-confidence:

• "...therapists who believed their supervisor trusted their emerging skills could better trust themselves."

• Therapists valued supervision that highlighted their specific in-session behavior (helped them build a reservoir of clinical experience).

• Self confidence increased when suggestions for improvement were accompanied by observations of strengths.

• Self confidence increased when anxiety was normalized as part of the developmental process.

Authors suggest that beginning therapists rely on their supervisor’s reservoir of experience while building their own.

Supervisees’ Views on Power in the Supervisory Relationship

• Supervisors model appropriate uses of power by openly discussing “power” at the beginning and throughout the supervisory relationship.

• Supervisors create a safe environment by explaining limitations of confidentiality.

• Supervisors actively collaborate with supervisees.

• Supervisors are transparent about evaluations by making their expectations explicit.
Hierarchy in the Supervisory Relationship

Some degree of hierarchy is inherent in the supervisory relationship.

Supervisory Relationships Continuum


How hierarchical versus collaborative do you think you are or will be as a supervisor (scale of 1-5: 1 = hierarchical, 5 = collaborative)? What might this mean for your relationship with your trainees?

Relational Risk-taking in Supervision


Interpersonal risk-taking from a respectful position is likely to lead to the development of collaborative trusting relationships. Consider the following:

• Your relationship with owning authority and how has this affected how you see your supervisory role
• How you do or will help your supervisees take risks in raising and exploring difficult issues
Relational risk-taking, cont’d

- Issues or feelings you might be pulling back from addressing with trainees you supervise
- How your preferred theoretical ways of seeing may both aid and/or constrain your ability to take risks as a supervisor
- What you do that enables your trainees to take risks in raising and exploring difficult issues

Best Supervision Experiences


In best experiences, there was a sense of openness in the supervisory relationships.

BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS


- ...qualities of warmth and support, empathic listening, acting genuinely, and expressing humor and optimism.” [p. 234]
- Authors recommend that supervisors create a supportive learning environment and “proactively seek and respond to supervisee feedback” [pp.235-236]
Overview of Supervisory Roles

Morgan and Sprengle (2007) identified four supervisory roles:
- Coach
- Mentor
- Teacher and
- Administrator.
Other roles could include advocate and gatekeeper.

Some Goals of Supervision

- Creation of a strong working alliance in a safe, trustworthy environment
- Negotiation of a clear, specific contract
- Development of a competent, professional, contextually aware and ethical clinician who has an integrated “map” for her/his work.
- Exploration of self-of-therapist as indicated by impact on clinical work
- Focus on interactional dynamics/process rather than content
- Focus on trainee development rather than serving as therapist to the trainee’s clinical families

Developmental Aspects of Supervision

- Picture what you want and need from a supervisor now. If you were to contract with a new supervisor today, what would you want from him or her? List and prioritize these things.
- How are your current wants and needs different from when you were starting out? Picture your first supervisory experiences as a new therapist. What did you want and need then? List these needs and wants; then prioritize them.
Developmental Stages

The supervisory relationship changes as the supervisor and trainee simultaneously move along their personal & professional life paths. Assumption made that both the supervisor and trainee change recursively in regard to biological, social, psychological, and physical or contextual dimensions.


Supervisee Developmental Levels

[Adapted from Lee & Everett (2004). The integrative family therapy supervisor, pp. 45-49.]

At the beginning level, supervisors may notice the presence of learning and performance anxieties and a desire for authoritative guidance. The supervisor will be developing a working alliance with the supervisee while helping him/her integrate systemic concepts with clinical skills training.

At the intermediate level, the supervisor may notice greater openness in supervision and a more settled presence with clients. The supervisor will need to support supervisees’ growing autonomy, focus on their skill development, and cultivate their ability to reflect more objectively on their personal clinical roles in the therapy system.
At the advanced level, the supervisor may notice the supervisee’s clearer personal boundaries with cases and in supervision as well as requests for consultation instead of close supervision. As the supervisee’s professional personality starts to emerge, the supervisor will support the supervisee’s emotional separation and autonomy, act in a more consultative role, and deal with his/her own separation issues.

Supervisor Developmental Stages


• **Beginning**: supervisor may experience a sense of self-consciousness and may tend to focus on supervisory techniques.
• **Intermediate**: supervisor starts to see supervision as a professional activity and supervisee learning takes priority.
• **Advanced**: supervisor feels more confident in terms of knowledge and supervisory skill; there is less worry about the supervisory relationship and more relationship per se.

Supervisory Dynamics Influenced by Evolving Developmental Stages

Configurations can include:
• new therapist, new supervisor
• new therapist, advanced supervisor
• advanced therapist, new supervisor
• advanced therapist, advanced supervisor
Best Practice Recommendations

- Supervisors should **individualize their supervision** to the unique needs of each supervisee. [Storm, Todd, Spremkle and Morgan (2001). Gaps Between MFT Supervision Assumptions and Common Practice: Suggested Best Practices. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 27, p. 234.]
- Keep in mind that developmental trajectories are **not linear**; development proceeds through transitions, during which supervisees can appear to be resistant & unsettled. [Lee & Everett (2004). The Integrative Family Therapy Supervisor, p. 43.]
- **These transitions can be viewed as stepping stones** for clinical and professional growth. [Lee & Everett (2004). The Integrative Family Therapy Supervisor, p. 44.]

The Training System as an Intergenerational Family System

![Diagram of the Training System as an Intergenerational Family System]

Applying General Systems Concepts to the Supervisory System


A family system is part of a larger system and in turn is composed of many subsystems

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts

A change in one family member affects all family members
General Systems Concepts, cont’d

The family creates a balance between change and stability

Circular causality

Equifinality

Isomorphism in the Training System
[Lee & Everett (2004). The Integrative Family Therapy Supervisor, 34 – 36.]

• Dynamics between the supervisor candidate and supervisee may mirror similar dynamics between the supervisee and client family – and vice-versa.
• Isomorphism can also involve mirroring of affect or style.
• Supervisor can use isomorphism to effect change in the training system which ripples across subsystem boundaries.

Isomorphism

• Bi-directional parallel processes that replicate in the training system.
• Interactions can be altered and shaped by intentional supervisory intervention.
• Highlights the importance of supervisor’s and therapist’s self-awareness as signs of a well functioning supervisory system.
Respectful Supervision

Respectful Supervision, cont’d.

• What changes in you would you want me to notice if you were getting what you wanted from therapy/supervision?
• What stories can you tell me about your life/your clients’ lives that would help me understand your/their lived experience?
• How is this therapy/supervision getting in the way of you achieving what you want?

Triangles in Supervision

Triangles are useful when:
• They preserve homeostasis and are flexible, thus allowing for the flow of process without undue anxiety.
• Temporarily allow for relief of uncomfortable levels of emotional tension between two individuals followed by the creation of more meaningful contact.

Questions supervisors can ask supervisees about their supervision that they in turn could ask their clients:
• What strengths do you have as a client/therapist that I should notice?
• What do you want me to know about your expectations for this therapy/supervision experience?
• What would you like to get from this therapy/supervision?
Triangles in Supervision, cont’d

Triangulation can be disruptive when:

• One person in a tense dyad moves toward a third person — e.g., trainee who feels criticized moves toward client.
• One person in dyad isolates to point where other member is pushed toward third person — e.g., client withholds information, pushing supervisor and therapist into collusion.
• Third person in triangle (supervisor) is involved in the tension filled dyadic relationship.

Triangles in Supervision, cont’d

Using triangles in supervision:

• Form an alliance: two members of triangle work together to help third resolve problem
• Supervisor as mediator: mediates trainee’s perceptions of and feelings about client, moving from fixed perception to alternative views.

Boundaries

Supervisor has the responsibility to define and appropriately maintain boundaries within and between each training subsystem.
Exercise


Brainstorm ways that you, as supervisors, will assess for and help trainees learn systemic concepts.

Guidelines to Promote the Long-term Goal of Self-Supervision


- Make self-supervision an overall goal
- Inventory trainees’ assets and skills
- Understand trainees’ learning styles
- Achieve a coherent, congruent therapy approach
- Encourage well-formed goals & questions
- Have trainees self-select material for supervision

Self-Supervision, cont’d

- Stay focused
- Seek client feedback for fine-tuning
- Encourage learning through small increments
- Be transparent
- Generate alternatives vs. answers
- Promote generalization
- Model genuine curiosity and “not knowing”
- Solicit feedback on the supervisory process
Personal Philosophy Paper

Take Away for Philosophy Paper

In one to two paragraphs, describe what you see as the goals of supervision and your main roles as a supervisor. What will you expect of yourself as a supervisor? What will you expect from your trainees?

Take Away for Philosophy Paper

Describe an actual or potential situation of triangulation in supervision. As the supervisor, how did you or might you resolve the situation?