

Supervision Conference UK
Cambridge
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ENCOURAGEMENT

&

ETHICS

An Essential Partnership in Supervision

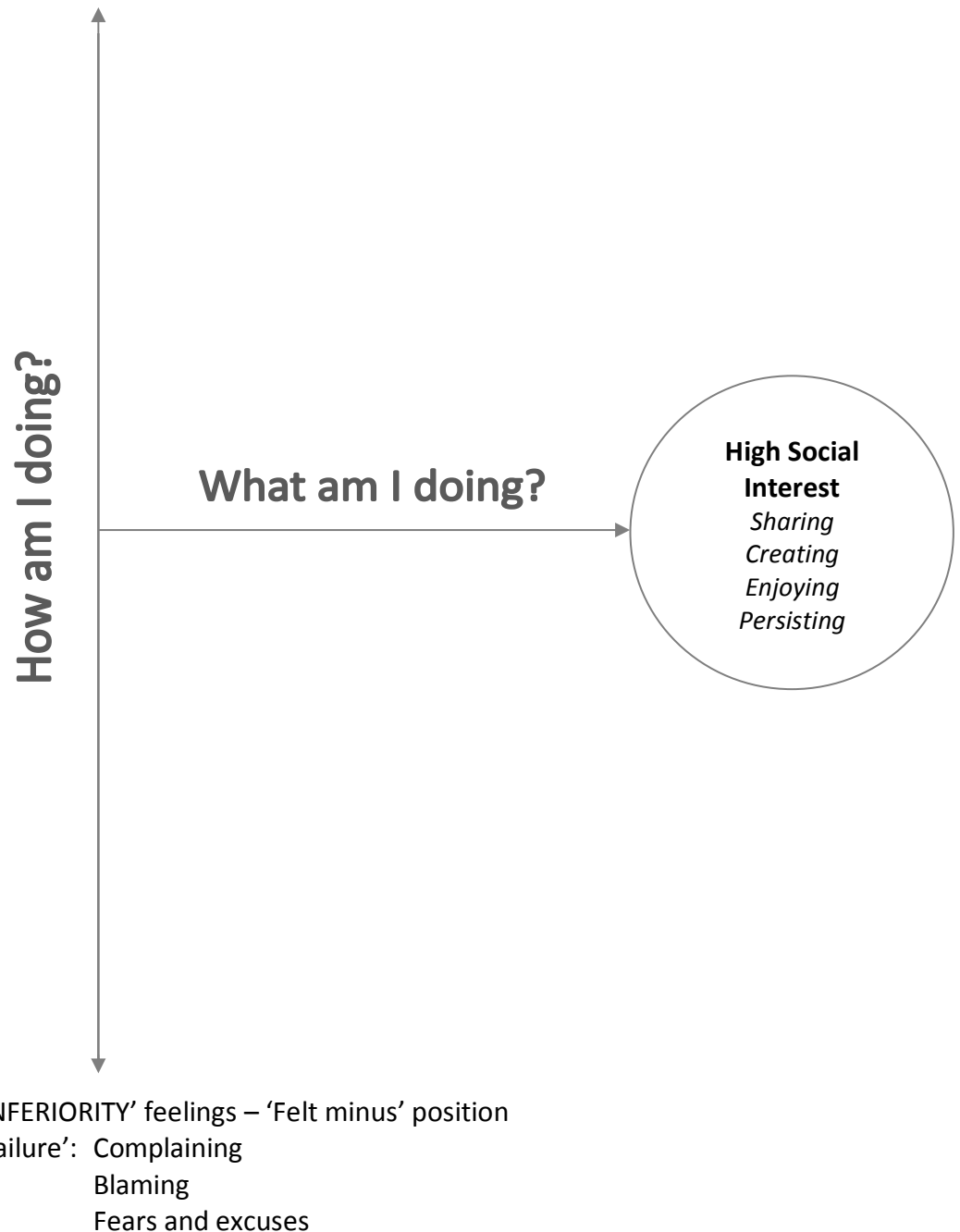
Presented by Anthea Millar

Inter- and intra-personal dynamics: 'The Slippery Pole' model

Low Social Interest

'SUPERIORITY' feelings – 'Felt plus' position

'Success': Power
Position
Possession



After Sweeney, T. J. (2009) *Adlerian Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Practitioner's Approach* (5th ed.) New York and Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge

The 'Crucial Cs'

Adapted from: Bettner, B. L. & Lew, A. (1990) *Raising Kids Who Can*. Newton, MA: Connexions Press

ENCOURAGED		DISCOURAGED
<p>I feel secure I co-operate</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CONNECT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I need to believe I have a place – that I belong</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The need is to feel connected positively to self, the client, peers and supervisor in order to establish constructive working relationships</i></p>	<p>I feel insecure I may try to get attention negatively</p>
<p>I feel competent I assume responsibility I develop self-reliance</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CAPABLE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I need to believe I can do it</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The need is to grow into a full sense of competence and self-discipline. If discouraged, the person is likely to act out in the dynamic with the client, peers and supervisor</i></p>	<p>I feel inadequate I try to control others or become dependent I seek power</p>
<p>I feel valuable I contribute</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">COUNT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I need to believe I can make a difference</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The need is to assume responsibility for self whilst enabling others to take responsibility for themselves. If discouraged, the person is likely to have difficulties in sustaining relationships with client, peers and supervisor, and possibly resulting in punitive interventions</i></p>	<p>I feel insignificant I show pain or seek revenge</p>
<p>I feel equal, confident, hopeful I face challenges, I am willing to have a go</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">COURAGE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I need to believe I can handle what comes</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The need is to build effective judgement and have the courage to take risks and make mistakes as means to learn and extend self</i></p>	<p>I feel inferior, cheated I give up I use avoidance</p>

Notes on Feedback and Encouragement

Ref: Anthea Millar (2007, 2009, 2012)

Having our practice exposed in supervision can mean revisiting old feelings of inferiority, shame and confusion. Developing the skills of being able to offer feedback in an enabling way as well as building an openness to receiving challenge and feedback are essential ingredients to good practice.

Supervisors (Sor) and Supervisees (See) need to make mistakes without shame and blame. Encouragement is central to this process.

'En-courage-ment', with the building of 'courage' at its heart, involves having our strengths acknowledged, alongside appropriate rigorous challenge. This provides a potent combination that helps us face our fears and have *'the courage to be imperfect'*

Different from praise, encouragement is largely non-evaluative, focusing on **what** the person is doing, rather than **how** the person **compares** with others. Verbal encouragement can be achieved by avoiding the use of adjectival labels such as 'good' 'unethical', 'clever', 'non empathic', and also by keeping in mind the underlying 'Crucial C' needs, along with identifying the assets and positive **intentions** of the supervisee.

Use descriptive language, paying particular attention to **verbs**, identifying very specifically what the See has actually been doing, without evaluating it. From this base, the Sor can invite the See's thoughts, add their own view, or provide educative information as appropriate.

Use respectful 'signposting'. eg *'I'd like to discuss the ethical issues that may be involved in this situation –can we look at this now?'* Further space can then be given for two-way discussion with the See. Eg:

'Near the end of the session with B you opened up some valuable exploration about her client's sexuality that helped identify some issues she hadn't previously addressed. What seemed harder to work with was B's feeling of stuckness in the counselling, which resulted in you also feeling very stuck. I have some thoughts about the dynamics that might be going on here, and possibly how this might be worked with in your future sessions – would you be interested to explore this further?What do you think about what I've said?'

The use of Socratic questions as a form of guided discovery can also help supervisees focus more deeply on their work, this also keeping a two-way flow of communication. eg:

'What do you appreciate about the way you handled that?'

'How might you do things differently in future?'

What do you plan to take away from our discussion?'

What has been useful from this feedback?'

What has been less helpful from this feedback?'

Equality: creating a climate of imperfection

'To be human means to have inferiority feelings' (Adler 1964 p54). Adler suggested that the development of inferiority feelings result in large part from subjective childhood comparisons with other family members. As these feelings are so uncomfortable, we compensate by striving to overcome them through such patterns as superiority and perfectionism. Experiencing inferiority feelings and then compensating for them through some form of 'acting out' response happens to most of us when under some stress. The challenge for us all is that if this dynamic is not

appropriately identified and addressed, a power imbalance is perpetuated. This in turn is likely to create problems in both the training and supervisory relationship.

As supervisors, we need to face our own fears and limitations, be ready to share both imperfections and capabilities, and also be open to the skills that supervisees bring with them. The way we observe others, and give and receive feedback commonly reflects our early experiences. Therefore openly sharing fears and fantasies about receiving and giving feedback is important at the beginning of a supervision contract.

Feedback as a meeting point

Feedback is a central activity of supervision. It supports therapeutic competence and safeguards client welfare.

Our actions are **socially embedded**. As such feedback can be seen as an interaction, or a **meeting point** between individuals, rather than something that one person gives another. Claiborn and Lichtenberg (1989) have identified feedback in supervision as an ongoing process between supervisor and supervisee, the quality of the relationship between the two parties being central to the way feedback is received. One sided feedback in supervision invariably creates a power imbalance.

Communication of feedback

Creating structures for regular feedback builds a learning culture. The feedback process then becomes a norm that is not attached to the individual's whole personhood but can become a valuable, rather than dreaded, part of their ongoing development.

Hawkins and Shohet's (2012) acronym 'CORBS' offers a helpful reminder to the participants of the key principles for giving feedback – it needing to be:

- Clear
- Owned
- Regular
- Balanced
- Specific.

Receiving feedback

Being able to receive feedback in a constructive way is a skill in itself. Whether in the role of educator or a course participant we are likely to experience some form of defensiveness in the face of feedback, but there are key differences in what we DO with this discomfort. Maybe we experience old feelings of shame and defend ourselves by shrinking and losing our sense of capability, or perhaps we compensate for our feelings of inferiority and become aggressive. Either way this destroys potential learning and growth. The challenge for us all is to be able to listen openly to the feedback, and identify how, if at all, this might support our future practice.

Receiving feedback is far from a passive process. Hawkins and Shohet (2012) emphasise that we also have considerable responsibility as 'receivers' and offer the following guidelines linked with their acronym 'CORBS':

- If necessary ask for the feedback to be more Clear, Owned, Regular, Balanced, or Specific

- Listen to the feedback all the way through without judging it or jumping to a defensive response, both of which can mean that the feedback is misunderstood.
- Try not to explain compulsively why you did something or even explain away positive feedback. Try and hear others' feedback as *their* experiences of you. Often it is enough to hear the feedback and say 'thank you'.
- Ask for feedback you are not given but would like to hear.

Challenges with giving and receiving feedback

A bottom line for supervisors is to ensure the well-being of the client.

When feedback is given ineffectively or supervisee is not able to receive it, there is danger of poor practice continuing, and this impacting on the client.

When supervisees seem unable to take on feedback given and there is real concern about their practice, it is often much harder to be direct and clear. This is particularly relevant when the relationship is not well established or we fear the extremes of our own judgements. To compensate for this we may push down our deeper concerns, resulting in feedback that comes over as vague, general or inconsistent. Even more serious is when we give positive feedback despite having serious concerns.

It is always important to identify course participants' strengths, but as discussed previously, encouragement is also about enabling personal growth through confronting the areas for further development. When offering more critical feedback in supervision, some of Munson's (2002) suggestions provide a helpful frame:

- challenge only in ways that promote personal growth, and that enables the course participant to use the feedback to their own advantage and benefit.
- focus only on behaviours that you sense can be changed and be specific in the challenge given
- offer the challenge as your opinion not a fact
- separate your personal feelings about the course participant from the need to challenge.
- avoid accusatory comments.

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