

## **Introduction – Overview of Coaching Supervision**

### **Vision for ‘Full Spectrum Supervision’.**

I was fortunate that shortly after qualifying as a psychotherapist many years ago, I found a supervisor who would walk with me, get me thinking about my work in new ways and who would support me when I came to the edge of my competence or was overwhelmed. The main ingredients of our conversations stand out now – engagement and joy. It was clear that we both enjoyed the fortnightly delving into the work, my struggles with aspects of that work and the celebrations that followed successful sessions or increased competence. Joy is sometimes overlooked – it is a key ingredient of learning and this was truly a learning partnership. Other supervisors followed and I became fascinated by the range and depth of the conversations that supervision offered. Eventually I trained as a supervisor and worked with senior managers, business leaders and psychotherapists for many years.

When I began to coach (1999), I fully expected to continue this level of professional development and support but at that time, there was little supervision for coaches and it was some time before I found good coaching supervision for the new work. It was not long before I too, began to supervise coaches and to learn – sometimes through difficult feedback – what kind of supervision served the coaching profession. Others in the field were also developing a supervision fit for purpose and it is marvelous to see how quickly coaching supervision has become the main form of CPD for many coaches -

and how much care, and original thinking has gone into creating the multi-disciplinary practice that we recognize to-day as coaching supervision. The Coaching Supervision Academy (CSA) was established to meet the vacuum we had identified and it has developed in to a worldwide community of CSA qualified supervisors whose inspired learning journeys have helped us to develop the ideas in this book.

The practice of supervision is still evolving and coaches across the world are now training in coaching supervision. The International Coach Federation (ICF) recently accepted the role of the coach supervisor and in an important statement said:

*‘Coaching Supervision is the interaction that occurs when a coach periodically brings his or her coaching work experiences to a coaching supervisor in order to engage in reflective dialogue and collaborative learning for the development and benefit of the coach and his or her clients.....*

*Coaching Supervision is distinct from Mentor Coaching for Credentialing.*

*Mentor Coaching focuses on the development of coaching skills mainly in the context of initial development. Coaching Supervision offers the coach a richer and broader opportunity for support and development. In Coaching Supervision, the coach is invited to focus much more on what is going on in their process and where the personal may be intruding on the professional.’*

ICF Webarchive 2012

**WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?**

This book is for anyone who is interested in the practice of supervision. It is for coaches, coach supervisors, mentors and those who employ coaches and supervisors. However, much of what is written in these chapters is relevant to any session in which one professional is in conversation with another, with the express purpose of creating a reflective space for learning, support and development. It is for anyone who wants to know what happens in supervision and how it brings a rigorous, on-going developmental process to professionals at all levels.

Although the key focus of these chapters is on the work with coaches, it also relates to supervision with therapists, social workers, managers and public sector workers. Supervisory process is used in many other contexts too: in board rooms, with HR professionals, business leaders, educators and health professionals. We hope that practitioners in many contexts will benefit from reading about the practice of supervision. The words 'coach', 'practitioner' and 'professional' are used interchangeably throughout the book.

The book takes the reader into the heart of the practice of supervision – its methods and models and its magic. Using case study focus and the Full Spectrum Model of Supervision as a guide – see below - the book brings supervision to life and shows how this transformative professional conversation supports and develops anyone who works closely with other practitioners. Readers will discover how the practical and profound enquiry of supervision frees up practitioners to work more intelligently - with humanity and skillfulness. Supervision offers a unique space – a space in which

practitioners reflect on their work and become more effective in taking care of their organizations, their teams, their clients and themselves. The book will illustrate how supervision draws on adult learning theory, systems theory, the art of reflection, mindfulness, relational psychology, neuro-science, advanced dialogue process, psychology, spirituality and more. These provide a rich resource for the reflective practice known as supervision; they bring depth and richness to classic supervision maps and models.

Recent publications on supervision and coaching supervision have highlighted key elements of supervisory enquiry and explored some of the tools that are used by supervisors. We will add to that list, but we will also focus on aspects of a supervisor's work which draw on skills such as mindfulness - a powerful and practical methodology - embodied presence, transpersonal psychology, and heart-to-heart work, now underpinned by discoveries in contemporary science. This book will also demonstrate some of the domains which support enquiry in supervision:

- clean language
- metaphor and imagery
- use of visualization
- full body presence
- working with the unconscious and with parallel process
- collective consciousness

- field theory
- relational skills
- quantum physics
- systems theory
- reflection in action
- the nature of skilled accompaniment

All of this supports the important supervisory responsibility of ensuring that practice is ethical and that professional standards are upheld. *The buck stops with the supervisor* and it is their responsibility to ensure that professionals know how to meet their contractual obligations. A skilled supervisor can do this without becoming oppressive, through engaging the coach's interest and commitment to best practice and by imaginatively drawing the coach into enquiring into their own skills and capacities.

### **What is Coaching supervision? What does it do?**

In chapter one, Alison Hodge usefully defines supervision as:

*'A co-created learning relationship that supports the Supervisee in their development, both personally and professionally, and seeks to support them in providing best practice to their client. Through the process of reflecting on their work in supervision, the Supervisee can review and*

*develop their practice and re-energize themselves. It offers a forum to attend to their emotional and professional wellbeing and growth. Through the relationship and dialogue in this alliance, Coaches can receive feedback, broaden their perspectives, generate new ideas and maintain standards of effective practice.” (Alison Hodge 2011 – see chapter 1)*

Supervision involves working skillfully with: generating new ideas, honing interventions, understanding relational dynamics, reducing fear and shame; it increases generative dialogue, growth, commitment, competence, engagement, new ideas, heart work. The specifics of this work ensure that practitioners have support with:

*Clear Contracting – including multi-party contracting*

*Establishing good boundaries*

*Enhancing reflectivity – working with content and process*

*Attending to the coach’s personal development*

*Creating the Working Alliance.*

*Deepening practitioner presence*

*Building the internal supervisor*

*Gaining new perspectives.*

*Developing meta-skills*

*Increasing interventions and tools*

*Learning about relational psychology*

*Working with parallel process*

*Working within systems*

*Ensuring professional standards*

*Increasing professional range and competence*

In this conversation, the full range of the self is engaged – thinking, feeling, body. Supervision is potentially a transformative conversation. It invites both parties to move into the unknown with confidence, in order to learn together. It is a conversational space full of possibilities - and of risk. At its best, it encourages profound attention, full body/mind/spirit presence and ensures deep learning. At its worst, it can be practised as a tick-box activity, policing in its intentions and in this mode, it can easily narrow the capacity for learning and development. Good supervision enables supervisees to slow down thinking and increase observation, to notice the whole field in which their work is unfolding. It also enables them to be excited by the emergence of new ideas, new perspectives. It returns the practitioner to their work, resourced, empowered and fully engaged in self-observation and in their own learning.

In his early work, Otto Sharmer outlines some of the key features of successful conversation: co-sensing, co-creating, and co-evolving and seeing from the emerging whole. He suggests a quality of presence in conversation where you, 'attend with your mind wide open'. This perfectly describes the nature of supervisory exploration and this quality of attention is amply illustrated in the chapters of this book. These chapters show how supervision lifts the coach from the minutiae of a coach's individual sessions, to the open spaces where ideas can flow and new learning can emerge. Here a coach can experience a significant increase in professional capacity. The knock-on benefit is that as professionals develop through supervision, so do the systems in which they are working.

The robustness of supervisory exploration and its key role in coaches' learning and development are what give protection to coaches and to commissioning agents. It ensures that internal and external coaches are not only practising in ways that meet their contractual obligations, but are also growing, not stagnating. The field conditions that govern this level of conversational activity mean that where the individual coach and the system meet, there is an exchange of information. In this way, organizations absorb the coach's learning, either directly as feedback or indirectly as the result of informational exchange in the energetic field.

**“Who you are is how you supervise”**

One of the catch phrases associated with CSA is: ‘Who you are is how you coach’. This emerged many years ago in conversation with my colleague, Aboodi Shabi with whom I have had many vigorous conversations about how we show up in a relational profession. I can now also say: ‘Who you are how you supervise’. My experience is that operating alongside all of our professional trainings, our thinking, tools and models, is the personhood of the practitioner - our humanity matters, as does our maturity, our open-heartedness and our generosity of spirit. All of these are so important in the learning environment of supervision; they serve to build a quality of relationship that enables transparency from both parties and thus has the potential to create a real shift in the supervisee's practice.

Supervision is essentially a conversation about other conversations - conversations between buyers, managers, sponsors, coaches and coachees,



board members, HR personnel. There are professional and business conversations, contractual conversations, financial ones, fruitful and difficult ones, truthful and tricky conversations – all the usual conversational activity that is part of the fabric of every large or small organization. The challenge to every professional is: Who am I in this conversation? And to every supervisor: How do I enter the field of this conversation so that my supervisee becomes better at what they do?

### **Field conditions**

These conversations are further affected by what Ervin Lazlo, philosopher and Nobel Prize winner, describes as the living field of energy out of which everything arises and within which we live. In the world of quantum physics, we are all connected, all the time and in every place.

*'At this level we discover that ALL matter is energy - the desk, the car, you, and me. There is no solid boundary between matter and non matter, and both are made up of the same thing - energy, or quantum particles.'* Miriam Orriss 2006. See 'Resources' at [www.coachingsupervisionacademy.com](http://www.coachingsupervisionacademy.com)

Lazlo says that the Field is one vast interconnected field of information. So, when we begin to work with an individual or a group, we enter into and increase the energetic space that contains our creativity, thinking and intentions for the work. This begins to happen from the moment a potential employer or supervisee contacts a supervisor and it continues as we

converse and contract for the work. Knowing how to utilize this in supervisory conversation, greatly increases the impact of that conversation.

### **Full Spectrum Model of Supervision**

(see [www.coachingsupervisionacademy.com](http://www.coachingsupervisionacademy.com) for image of model)

The Full Spectrum Model (FSM) of supervision has been developed by the Coaching Supervision Academy to show the multi-layered activity that is supervision – in any professional context. As we know, maps and models are not the practice but they can highlight processes and guide our practice. This model can be used by the supervisor as a means to inform their practice and also as means of exploring with a supervisee the full range of the conversation they can have in supervision. It also points to tools and techniques that enhance practice both practically and creatively.

The creation of the *Full Spectrum Model* of supervision was in part a response to the awareness of 'Who you are is how you coach'. My colleagues, Miriam Orriss, Fiona Adamson and I wanted the model to highlight the centrality of the relationships in supervision – those between the supervisor and the supervisee and those that operate in the wider system and have impact all the way into the supervision session. This relational field, as it is sometimes

known, has significant influence on each professional conversation. All the perspectives on the Full Spectrum Model touch the core relational circle, because they influence or are influenced by, the supervisor/supervisee relationship.

The Full Spectrum Model (FSM) of Supervision offers supervisors a powerful range of professional development tools and insights, which span 20th and 21st century knowledge, and it combines traditional and contemporary methods and models. It utilizes knowledge gained through attending to classic models of supervision as well as to the body, mind and spirit. This holistic and integrative model also rests on ancient wisdoms, a sense of our shared humanity and what it is to be human in practice and in the work place. This perspective brings lively, energetic and radical understanding to all the relationships that are at the centre of coaching and establishing coaching contracts. The model amplifies the need for supervisors to work skillfully with psychology, energy, parallel processes and to be attentive to the conditions necessary for adult learning. This multi-layered framework moves the field of supervision firmly into the 21st century, making it relevant to a wide variety of professional practice.

Full Spectrum Supervision benefits supervisees by opening new fields of awareness and knowledge, attending to the coach, the client and the system that they are in. Above all, it places relational skills and multi-layered “presensing” at the centre of supervisory practice, as these chapters amply illustrate. This ensures that supervision goes beyond linear thinking and problem solving.

The approaches at the heart of The FSM are dynamic, systemic, cognitive and contemplative. Each perspective in the model offers the supervisor areas to explore with their supervisees and indicates the breadth and depth of this work.

**Conceptual tools include:**

- Karpman drama triangle
- The seven-eyed model of supervision
- Transpersonal psychology
- Relational psychology
- Organizational psychology
- Building the internal supervisor
- Advanced dialogue process
- Neuro-cardiology and learning
- Gestalt processes
- Working with the unconscious

**Meta skills include:**

- Developing presence
- Understanding energy
- Reflective learning
- Accessing intuition
- Field theory
- Advanced dialogue process
- Systemic thinking
- Mindfulness

- Clean Language – working with voice, image and metaphor
- Creativity in supervision

### **Overview of chapters**

The FSM is a robust model; it includes left and right brain modalities and points to the full range of supervision tasks. In these chapters, the reader will find many references to the FSM and how it is used in sessions. For example, there are chapters that highlight the relevance of mindfulness, of contemporary sciences and others that show how the supervisor's understanding of unconscious process greatly aids learning for the supervisee. Readers who want to know more about what it means to be a reflective learner or about the importance of keeping the conversational space 'clean' will enjoy chapters that look at these core aspects of reflective practice.

Many coaches work with executives, leaders and senior personnel. Much of that work explores leadership and/or business development, themes such as engagement at work or simply ensures better performance. Currently, executive coaches are finding that they are also addressing the fallout from global economic uncertainty and its profound impact on businesses and the people who work in them. A supervisor who holds a transpersonal perspective can resource the supervisee from this field of understanding and practice, as the chapter on transpersonal supervision illustrates. The chapter on Ethics opens up the domains of standards and competence and the importance of paying attention to ethics in supervision is made abundantly clear. It is also clear that encouraging a practitioner to be more ethically aware does not

close down thinking or practice, but enables them to work more insightfully, with greater care - and safely.

The FSM respects many approaches and perspectives – including the importance of the Intelligent Heart. At its core, a supervision session is a meeting between individuals and the chapter ‘Heart to Heart’ beautifully illustrates the importance of what Martin Buber call “I-Thou”, in the learning environment that is supervision.

It seems appropriate to end this introduction by owning our indebtedness to Martin Buber whose insights have given so much to our understanding of how to be with each other, to have skilful dialogue and to relate richly in our professional communities. This applies as much to ‘who we are’ in our families as in our organizations – and certainly it applies to how we are in the conversation that is supervision. Buber says that:

*“All real living is meeting”* (Buber 1958: 24-25)

He speaks of a quality of dialogue that arises from first:

“taking (our) stand in living mutual relation with a living Centre, and second, (our) being in living mutual relation with one another. The second has its source in the first, but is not given when the first alone is given. Living mutual relation includes feelings, but does not originate with them. The community is

built up out of living mutual relation, but the builder is the living effective Centre. (Buber 1958: 65)

It is not surprising then to read of how Aubrey Hodes experienced his meetings with Buber and how their conversations began:

*“He would meet me at the door and lead me into his study. Neither of us spent much time on the usual social preliminaries. Our minds were already on the coming talk. After sitting down there was always a silence - not a tense silence, uneasy as between two people who were not sure of each other, but a silence of expectation. This was not consciously agreed between us. It was a flow of peace and trust forming a prelude to speech. The silence was the silence of communication. Hodes, A. (1972) *Encounter with Martin Buber*, London: Allen Lane/Penguin. 245 pages. (Also published as *Martin Buber: An Intimate Portrait*, Viking Press, New York, 1971).*

Expectation, peace and trust – qualities that ground the supervisory relationship. Our hope is that in reading this book, you will be encouraged to be a more engaged supervisor or that you will rush out and find someone who will support your work, your team or your organization with the skills and qualities written about in these chapters. We are only at the foothills of our understanding of what supervision can offer in the workplace. Those involved in supervision already know how it can open, develop, protect and inspire. It seems obvious that the 21<sup>st</sup> century environments of business, politics, media, education, health and family need the quality of connection and of dialogue

that are offered through supervision.

**Edna Murdoch**