

On Being A Supervisee

Creating Learning Partnerships

Michael Carroll & Maria C. Gilbert

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Declaration Of Supervisee Rights

As a supervisee, you have the right to:

1. Be respected for being a professional
2. Become the professional you can be and want to be (and not a clone of your supervisor)
3. A safe, protected supervision space
4. A healthy supervisory relationship
5. Fair and honest evaluations and reports
6. See your supervisor's reports on you with opportunity to comment on the contents
7. Know what your supervisor thinks of your work
8. Make good any areas of development outlined by your supervisor
9. Clear and focused constructive feedback
10. Give clear and focused feedback to your supervisor
11. Ongoing, regular and systematic reviews of the supervisory arrangement
12. Your own learning style
13. Negotiate the supervision contract (and being aware, in advance, what is non-negotiable in the contract)
14. Mediation should the supervision relationship break down
15. Appeal decisions made in supervision with which you have problems.

Declaration Of Supervisee Responsibilities

As a supervisee you have responsibility for/to:

1. Your own learning
2. Preparing for supervision
3. Using supervision time effectively (managing time boundaries)
4. Presenting your work openly and honestly
5. Delivering the best service possible to your clients or client group
6. Creating learning partnerships with your supervisor and other supervisees if there is a group
7. Applying learning from your supervision to your work
8. Being aware of other stake holders in the supervisory arrangements e.g., the families of clients, clients themselves, taxpayers, your profession, training courses, organizations (where applicable)
9. Monitoring and evaluating your own work
10. Reflecting on your work
11. Feedback to yourself and to others (other supervisees and the supervisor)
12. Being aware of cultural, religious, racial, age, gender and sexual orientation differences between you and others
13. Creating ethical and professional environments for your work
14. Where appropriate, giving regular overviews of your work to your supervisor (the big picture).

Introduction

Why This Manual?

The focus of supervision is learning. Supervisees learn from their work and from their supervision where they present their work in order that they may give better quality service to their client group. Supervisors are facilitators of learning. They aim to create the kind of collaborative relationship and the sort of learning environment that sustains learning for supervisees. Supervision is for supervisees, not for supervisors. Too often we have had to put up with supervisor-based supervision where supervisors take most of the initiatives, are motivated by their own current hobby horses, dazzle with their wisdom and insights and take the spot light off supervisees. This manual is to empower supervisees to take responsibility for their supervision and for their learning and to persuade supervisors to allow them to do so.

This manual is primarily for supervisees. **We consider a supervisee to be anyone, of any profession, who brings his/her work experience to another in order to learn from it.** Supervisees come from professions such as psychology, social work, probation, nursing, psychotherapy and counselling (i.e., the helping professions) as well as from management, HR and Personnel departments. They may also be teachers, trainers, coaches, mentors, organisational consultants, tutors, spiritual directors and members of the emergency services or prison service. We are equally broad in seeing the focus of supervision as any aspect of the supervisee's work or professional development: direct coal-face contact (face-to-face contact) with individuals or groups, work with teams and organizations, programmes and training events, issues of continuing professional development as well as relationship issues, process issues and even strategic elements of the work. We are aware of the many influences that impact on the actual work itself – all those can be valid focus points of supervision.

Most of the research in supervision involves supervisees. They have been asked, in all sorts of ways, what they think of supervision, what it means to them, how they view its various forms and expressions, how they see supervisors and what are the features and characteristics of supervisors they find helpful and unhelpful. The number of questionnaires given to ascertain the views of supervisees is in stark contrast to the amount of help given them to use supervision effectively as a developmental tool. It is still rare for supervisees to receive help and instruction in being an effective supervisee. There is little literature to which supervisees can turn to help them make sense of, understand and be, a collaborative partner in supervisory arrangements, either one to one or in a group/team. The best help for supervisees we have come across is the work of Inskipp and Proctor (2001) and Knapman and Morrison (1998) which systematically brings supervisees through what they need to know to use supervision effectively. However, the first work on supervisees (while being the most comprehensive and the classic in the field) is nested in Inskipp and Proctor's two working manuals on "The Art and Craft of Supervision" and unless taken out and given them by supervisors, would scarcely find its way into supervisee hands. Knapman and Morrison's self-development model for supervisees is a good initial start on the basics of being a supervisee – this manual builds on their work and asks supervisees to move further into understanding their own learning approaches.

Hence this manual. For supervisees (and for supervisors who want to know about being supervisees), it will lead you through the various stages of understanding, setting up, contracting for, maintaining

and ending a supervisory relationship. The booklet agrees with the stances of Inskipp (1999) when she writes in her chapter on “Training Supervisees how to Use Supervision”, that there are three reasons for concentrating on supervisees:

1. To empower supervisees
2. To help supervisees be visible and transparent in supervision so that they are open and honest in what they bring (supervisors can only supervise what is brought to them)
3. To involve supervisees actively in all aspects of supervision so creating a collaborative learning relationship. To do this supervisees need skills, knowledge and practical ways of fulfilling their roles and responsibilities (Inskipp, 1999).

Our hope is, that this is a manual supervisors will give supervisees for the above reasons and also because there is not enough time spent on helping supervisees use supervision effectively either on training courses or within supervision itself. However, while primarily for beginner supervisees (those who are still in training), this manual will also assist those who have been supervised before. Indeed experienced supervisees might find it helpful to review how they take part in the supervisory relationship and look again at the various processes involved. It is too easy for all us, no matter how experienced, to follow meaningless routines in our work no matter what our profession. This manual will provide a springboard for discussion (it cannot be an end in itself) between/amongst supervisees and supervisors so that they end up with the same understanding of supervision and become invested in the same supervisory outcomes.

Reading The Manual

This manual is not intended to be read straight through from beginning to end. Different sections of it will be of help at different times in a supervisee’s life. We have divided the manual into three sections to make it more accessible. Section 1 is for beginning supervisees who may well be thinking through supervision for the first time and entering their first supervisory arrangements. It contains the basics of understanding supervision and being involved in choosing a supervisor (though some supervisees do not have that choice) as well as contracting and preparing for supervision. Section 2 contains material more applicable and of use to those who have begun supervision and have in place those elements discussed in Section 1. From the strength of a healthy supervisory relationship, they can now look to other elements within supervision to enhance their learning of secondary skills (learning about developmental stages in supervision, what are their “drivers”, and developing emotional literacy skills amongst others). Section 3 is an Appendix which includes a number of exercises and frameworks to help supervisees as they move forward in supervision. Choose whichever suits you and makes sense for you at your stage of being a supervisee.

While this manual hopes to “empower” supervisees in all aspects of supervisory arrangements, we are all too aware that many supervisors and many organizations will not be supervisee based. Quite the opposite, many supervisors will see no point in “negotiating” with supervisees and will consider it their task to tell supervisees what supervision is and how they (supervisees) should involve themselves in it. Some hierarchical-based organizations will have little interest in setting up “learning partnerships” but will work on the expert-beginner model of supervision i.e., that it is the task of supervisors to tell supervisees how to do their work and guide and monitor that work often concentrating on articulating weaknesses as a way of progressing personal and professional

development. We do not want to put supervisees in a “no-win” situation, pretending that they will be partners in a learning endeavour when there is little chance of that happening. Having said that, we want to outline an understanding of supervision that, in our view, is based on solid principles of adult learning and will add value to both supervisees and their organizations while making supervision a much more interesting engagement for supervisors.

Supervision is for the learning of supervisees (we repeat from above). Part of that learning is about accountability. Supervision is a process that accounts to whoever (clients, professions, authorities, managers, organizations, supervisors and supervisees) that supervisees take their work seriously enough to set up a reflective space where they review that work, learn from it and apply that learning when they return to it. Eventually, they will become reflective practitioners who reflect-in-action (think about the work, as they do the work).

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And finally, to supervisees – our own, others, beginners and experienced, across the helping professions and beyond – our aim in writing this text was to empower you to make supervision the best learning experience of your lives. We hope, at least, it goes some of the way in making your supervision experience unforgettable.