

On Being a Supervisee Creating Learning Partnerships

Second Edition

Michael Carroll & Maria C. Gilbert

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A Vukani Publishing Book

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Preface to Second Edition

We are delighted our manual has survived and thrived through its birth, childhood and adolescence and is now an adult. A second edition must be some sign of maturity. The first edition has sold out both here and in Australia where it was published separately. Developments in the world of supervision, education and neuroscience have added substantially to the literature and practice of supervision. We wanted to integrate up to date insights into the manual.

So, this is the turbo charged version. We have updated it throughout and added two new sections. The first is a new supervisee skill: learning from experience. We now have seven supervisee skills. The second area of development is a larger and much more elaborate section on reflection than was included previously and in particular the six levels of reflection. In many ways these two sections have paralleled our own development where we are more aware than ever that supervision is about reflection on our experience and being facilitated to engage in reflective and collaborative dialogues on the experiences that arise from the work itself.

As ever, we continue to be educated by our supervisees and enriched and fed by our annual BASPR (British Association for Supervision Practice and Research) conference. To our colleague Paul Hitchings (on the organizing committee) we dedicate this second edition. He has been solid in friendship, unwavering in commitment and a wonderful and enjoyable colleague with whom to organise conferences. We would also like also to remember Terri Spy who retired last year from the BASPR organizing committee after many years of unstinting hard work. We wish her well in her post BASPR life.

It is often only in looking back that we all realise the joys of childhood and growing up. Being in the middle of it is hardly the time to appreciate it. It is true that "youth is wasted on the young". So with being supervisees. Sometimes it is in hindsight that we remember and enjoy the learning, struggling, experimenting and making mistakes of those early days. We believed we never could enjoy it while it was happening. Enjoy being a supervisee – it will soon pass. We hope this manual helps you in that enjoyment.

Michael Carroll & Maria Gilbert
June 2011

The Student's Prayer (Umberto Maturana)

Don't impose on me what you know,
I want to explore the unknown
and be the source of my own discoveries
Let the known be my liberation, not my slavery

The world of your truth can be my limitation
your wisdom my negation
Don't instruct me: let's walk together.
Let my richness begin where yours ends

Show me that I can stand
on your shoulders
Reveal yourself so that I can be
something different

You believe that every human being
can love and create.
I understand, then, your fear
when I ask you to live according to your wisdom.

You will not know who I am
by listening to yourself.
Don't instruct me; let me be.
Your failure is that I be identical to you

(Quoted in Zohar and Marshall, 2001)

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 stakeholders in the supervisory arrangements e.g., the families of clients, clients themselves, taxpayers, your profession, training courses, organisations (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, disability, 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).

Why this Manual?

“Though supervision is anticipated, there is little preparation for the experience” (Berger and Buchholz, 1992:86).

“Despite both the overt and historical importance of supervision, new supervisees often have little formal preparation for the role” (Vespa, Hechman-Stone and Delwith, 2002).

There are lots of books on supervision, many of which are supports and helps to supervisors. There are almost none for supervisees, arguably the most important person in supervision. We will come back to that in a minute. But first, let us go directly to supervision.

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 a better quality of 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 spotlight 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 organisations, 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 focal points for 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 and directors of training programmes 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 the manual may help them 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 are 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 "drivers" and developing emotional literacy skills, amongst other themes). 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.

Our hope is that this manual will be a guide to you to make the best use of supervision. However, we are aware there are lots of areas within supervision that will not be covered, or if dealt with, will be done so in a short and concise way. Not because these areas are not important – some of them are essential to effective supervision – but because they may not be of direct immediate concern to you, the supervisee. However, finally we have no way of actually knowing what is of interest to you and what is not in the area of supervision and we do not want to confuse by being too "all-inclusive". So here are a few pointers to further information and reading if you find them interesting and helpful to your supervisory journey:

1. Is supervision effective? (Milne, 2009; Bambling, 2009)
2. Theories and models of supervision (Carroll, 1996)
3. Forms of supervision (Hawkins and Shohet, 2009)
4. Research in supervision (Ellis, 2010)
5. Setting up Supervision (Inskipp and Proctor, 1993; 1995)
6. Group supervision (Proctor, 2008)
7. Supervision in Context (Carroll and Tholstrup, 2001; Carroll and Holloway, 1999)
8. Training supervisors (Henderson, 2009)
9. Creative Supervision (Lahad, 2000)
10. Developmental models of supervision (Stoltenberg, McNeill and Delworth, 2010)
11. Pastoral supervision (Holton and Benefiel, 2010)
12. Supervision in organisational settings (Copeland, 2005)
13. Coaching supervision (Carroll, 2007; Hawkins and Smith, 2006).

We (the authors) are happy for you to contact us if there are other areas of supervision you would like to read up or know more about. See our biographies at the end for email contact.

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 organisations 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, organisations, 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 supervisees will become reflective practitioners who reflect-in-action (think about the work as they do the work) and build on that reflection to do even better work.

Connor and Pokora (2007) have a chapter in their book on coaching on how to be an effective coachee (or client). We think their summary is worth remembering as a fine guide about what to keep in mind in order to get the best from your supervision and we have adapted their suggestions to the area of supervision.

1. Getting the right supervisor
2. Knowing yourself
3. Having realistic expectations
4. Negotiating a working agreement
5. Thinking ahead and being strategic
6. Being proactive
7. Learning from support and challenge
8. Using reflective space
9. Developing your imagination
10. Identifying your resources and working smart
11. Setting goals and making action plans
12. Developing skills, making changes and delivering results

(Connor and Pokora, 2007:54).