Reflective Supervision

a course for social workers and their managers

Independent Social Work Matters Ltd.

About this booklet

This booklet supports the training and aims to help practitioners and supervisors to understand the core components of good supervision and how these can be used to promote sound practice. It takes a pragmatic approach, with the intention of supporting supervisors working in challenging environments to deliver supervision that makes a real difference to their staff, and to people using their services.

The materials are based on the model of supervision developed by Tony Morrison (Morrison, 2005) as well as more recent developments of the model (Wonnacott, 2012 and Wonnacott, 2013). This approach to supervision has been used by numerous social care organisations in the UK, Ireland and overseas, has been positively evaluated and found to increase job satisfaction, worker retention and worker effectiveness (Carpenter et al, 2012).

This model of supervision has become colloquially known as the 4x4x4 model since it recognises the interrelationship between the four key functions of supervision, the impact of the quality of supervision on the four key stakeholders, and the use of the four stages of the supervision cycle to deliver reflective supervision. The importance of this is that the model moves beyond a static focus on functions, to a dynamic integrated approach that recognises the central importance of effective supervision across the whole system.

About this course

Course Aim:

To develop knowledge and skills in reflective supervision.

Outcomes:

By the end of this training, participants will have been given the opportunity to:

- Consider what constitutes effective supervision, the various definitions, and its functions.
- Understand how their previous experience of being supervised can impact upon their current supervisory relationship.
- Understand the importance of effective agreements within supervision.
- Understand the relationship between supervision and outcomes for service users.
- Understand the supervision cycle and how this can help in reflecting, analysing and action planning within supervision.
- Consider how supervisees can work with their supervisors to develop positive supervision practice.

Plan

|	
10.00	Introduction to the course
10.30	Introduction to the 4x4x4 model of supervision
	Understanding reflective supervision
11.30	*Break*
11.45	The Supervision Cycle – asking the right questions in supervision
1.00	*Break*
1.30	Supervising under pressure: working with emotions in supervision
	The impact of anxiety on supervision- compromised (red) and collaborative (green) cycles
2.15	What do we both bring to the relationship? – the role of the supervision history and developing effective agreements
2.45	Next steps
	Evaluation
3.oo	Finish

About the trainer

Rebecca Carr Hopkins is an experienced social work practitioner, manager and trainer with over thirty years' experience of working with children and families. She currently works independently and offers a full range of assessment services to Children's Services and the Courts throughout the UK and Ireland.

Rebecca delivers training courses on a wide range of subjects, including supervision, court skills, attachment and communicating with children. She is authorized by Family Relations Institute to train others in the following specialist assessment tools associated with the Dynamic Maturational Model of Attachment and Adaptation (DMM): Adult Attachment Interview (DMM_AAI), School-aged Assessment of Attachment and the Infant CARE-Index.

Rebecca is also an AVIGUK accredited Video Interaction Guidance (VIG) guider, supervisor and trainer.

The 4x4x4 Model
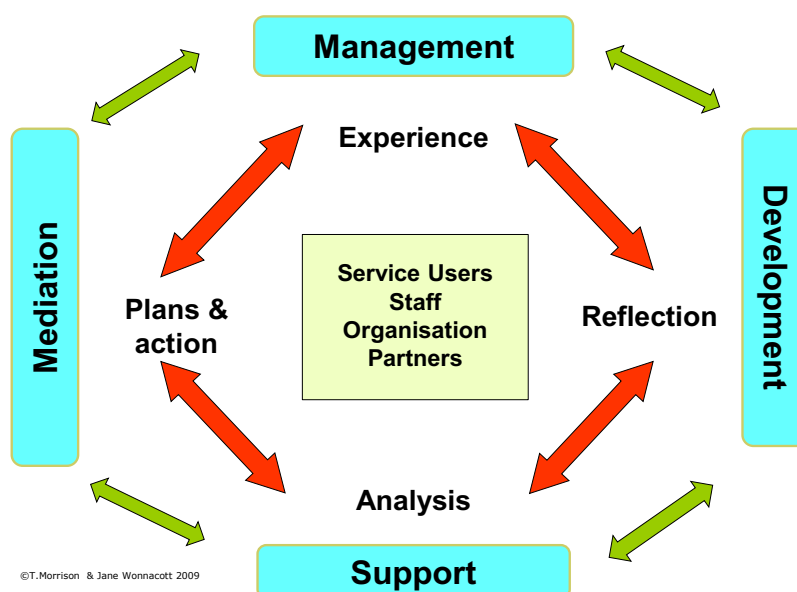
Definition of supervision

This course uses the following definition of supervision.

Supervision is a process by which one worker is given responsibility by the organization to work with another worker(s) in order to meet certain organizational professional and personal objectives which together promote the best outcomes for service users. These objectives and functions are:

1. competent accountable performance *(managerial function)*
2. continuing professional development *(developmental/formative function)*
3. personal support *(supportive/restorative function)*
4. engaging the individual with the organisation *(mediation function)*

Harries, M. (1987) in Morrison, T. (2005) *Staff Supervision in Social Care.* Brighton: Pavilion

Supervision Functions

The following lists are not exhaustive, but they may help workers and their supervisors to consider how far supervisory practice delivers across all four functions of supervision.

The Management Function Checklist

The aims of the management function are to ensure:

• the overall quality of the worker's performance is measured
• agency policies and procedures are understood and followed
• the worker understands his/her role and responsibilities

- the worker is clear as to the limits and use of his/her personal agency and statutory authority
- the purpose of the supervision is clear
- work is reviewed regularly in accordance with agency and legal requirements
- action plans are formulated and carried out within the context of agency functions and statutory responsibilities
- the basis of decisions and professional judgements are clear to the supervisor and the worker and made explicitly in agency records
- records are maintained according to agency policies
- the worker knows when the supervisor expects to be consulted
- the worker is given an appropriate workload
- time-management expectations of the worker are clear and checked
- the worker acts as a positive member of the team
- the worker understands the functions of other agencies and relates appropriately to them
- the worker receives regular formal appraisal.

The Development Function Checklist

The aims of this function are to assist the development of:
- the worker's professional competence
- an appreciation and assessment of the worker's theoretical base, skills, knowledge and individual contribution to the agency
- an understanding of the worker's value base in relation to race, gender etc., and its impact on his/her work
- an understanding of the worker's preferred learning style, and blocks to learning
- an assessment of the worker's training and development needs and how they can be met
- the worker's capacity to set professional goals
- access to professional consultation in areas outside the supervisor's knowledge/experience
- the worker's ability to reflect on his/her work and interaction with users, colleagues and other agencies
- regular and constructive feedback to the worker on all aspects of their performance
- the worker's ability to generalise learning and to increase his/her commitment and capacity to ongoing professional development
- the worker's capacity for self-appraisal, and the ability to learn constructively from significant experiences or difficulties
- a relationship in which both supervisor and supervisee provides constructive feedback from which both can learn from mistakes.

The Support Function Checklist

The aims of the support function are:
- to validate the worker both as a professional and as a person

- to clarify the boundaries between support, counselling and consultation, and to clarify the limits of confidentiality in supervision
- to create a safe climate for the worker to look at his/her practice and its impact on him/her as a person
- debrief the worker and give the worker permission to talk about feelings, especially fear, anger, sadness, repulsion or helplessness
- help the worker to explore emotional blocks to the work
- to explore issues about discrimination, in a safe setting
- to support workers who are subject to any form of abuse, either from users or from colleagues, whether this be physical, psychological or discriminatory
- to monitor the overall health and emotional functioning of the worker, especially with regard to the effects of stress
- to help the worker reflect on difficulties in colleague relationships to assist the worker in resolving conflict
- to clarify when the worker should be advised to seek external counselling, and its relationship with the monitoring of performance.

The Mediation Function Checklist
The aims of the mediation function are to:
- negotiate & clarify the team's remit
- brief management about resource deficits or implications
- allocate resources in the most efficient way
- represent staff needs to higher management
- initiate, clarify or contribute to policy formulation
- consult and brief staff about organisational developments or information
- mediate or advocate between workers, within the team, or other parts of the agency, or with outside agencies
- represent or accompany staff in work with other agencies
- involve staff in decision-making
- deal sensitively, but clearly, with complaints about staff
- assist and coach staff, where appropriate, through the complaints procedures.

Thinking about the stakeholders
The model identifies four key stakeholders:
- service users
- staff
- the organisation
- multi-agency partners

If you consider the impact of good or poor supervision on the stakeholders relevant within your own environment, you are likely to find that the impact of supervision goes way beyond the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee.
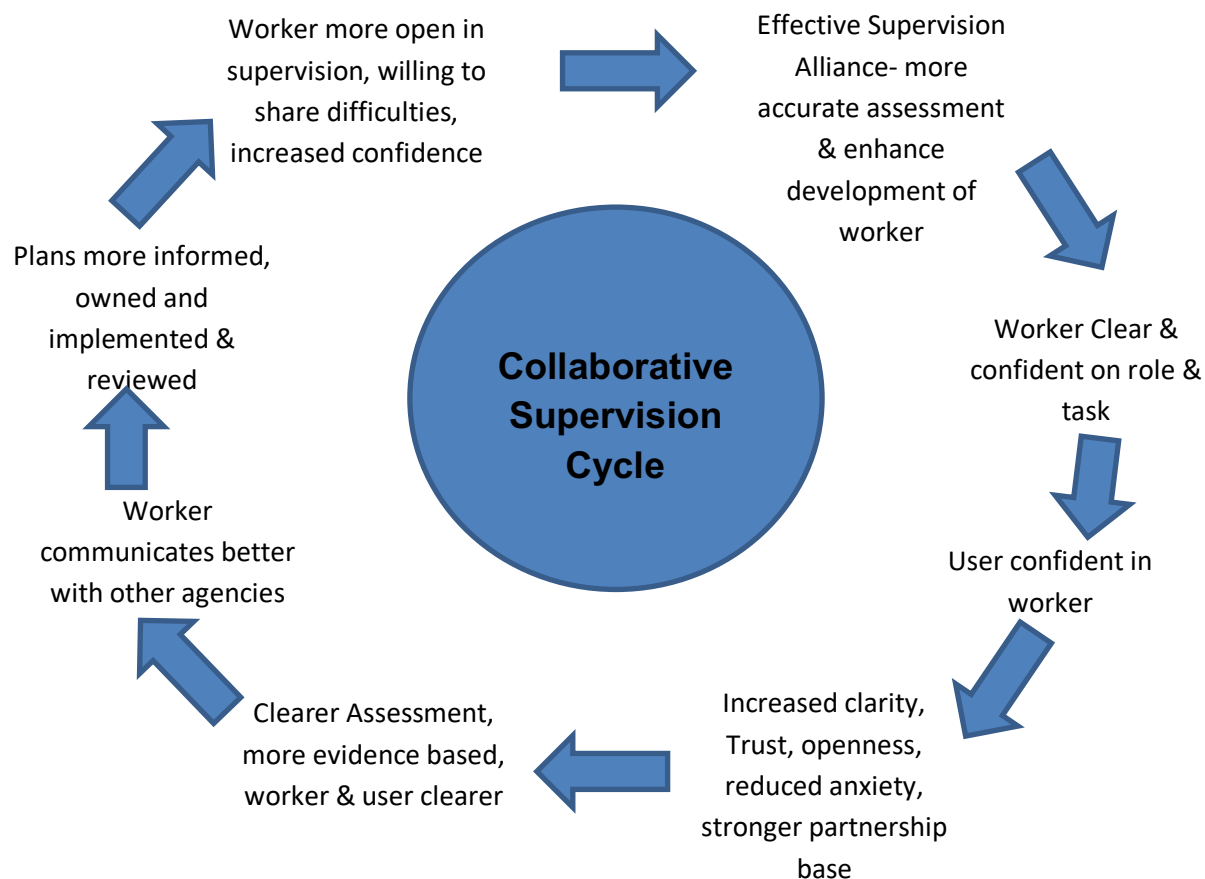
What difference can supervision make?

Thinking about the impact on stakeholders begins to make us think about the potential for supervision making a difference to the organisation, supervisee, partners and service users. However, although our practice experience and common sense will help us to understand this, there is a limited empirical research base underpinning our understanding of the link between supervision and outcomes (particularly for service users). However the limited research that is available does begin to confirm our practice knowledge. A review of the literature (Carpenter et al, 2012) identified that good supervision is associated with:

- job satisfaction
- commitment to the organisation
- staff retention
- employees' perceptions of the support they receive from the organisation.

In relation to impact on service users there are indications that workers who have the opportunity to reflect on the emotional impact of the work (Stanley and Goddard, 2002) and critically reflect on their practice (Munro, 2011) are likely to deliver a better service. The inter-relationship between supervision and practice and the difference that the style of supervision can make can be seen in the collaborative supervision cycle.

Collaborative Supervision Cycle

Worker more open in supervision, willing to share difficulties, increased confidence

Effective Supervision Alliance- more accurate assessment & enhance development of worker

Plans more informed, owned and implemented & reviewed

Collaborative Supervision Cycle

Worker Clear & confident on role & task

Worker communicates better with other agencies

User confident in worker

Clearer Assessment, more evidence based, worker & user clearer

Increased clarity, Trust, openness, reduced anxiety, stronger partnership base

The Supervision Cycle and Reflective Supervision

This is a central aspect of the 4x4x4 model and the means by which supervisors can promote reflective supervision and the critical thinking required for effective practice.

Gillian Ruch's work on Relationship Based Practice (2000) is useful to help unpack what is meant by reflection and the benefits of different levels.

The levels don't happen in sequence; at any one time we will be moving back and forth between the levels depending on the issue being discussed or the situation we are in. The key is for practitioners to use all four levels so critical reflection becomes part and parcel of the repertoire of social workers and supervisors alike.
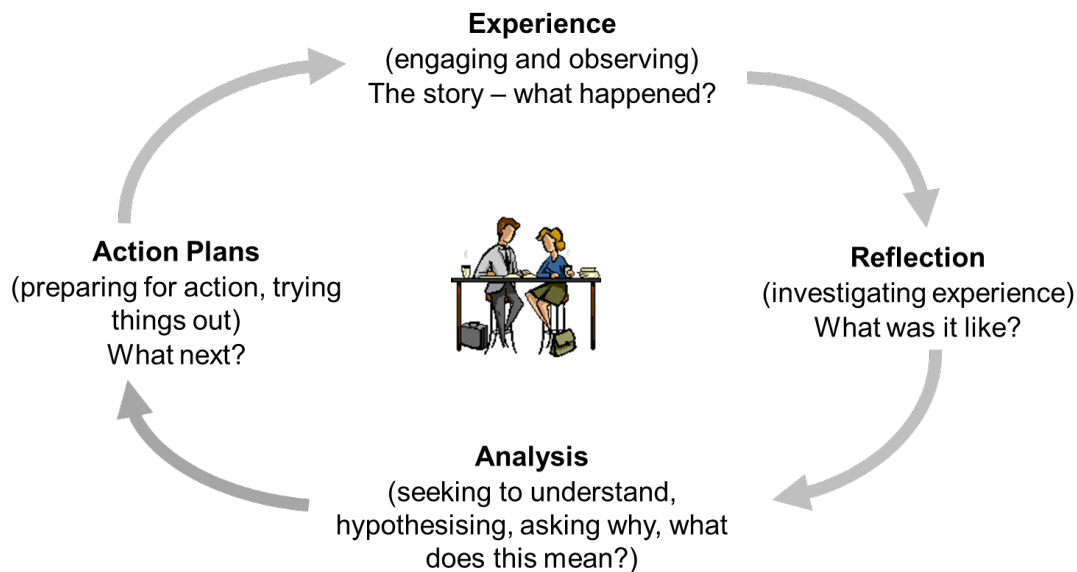
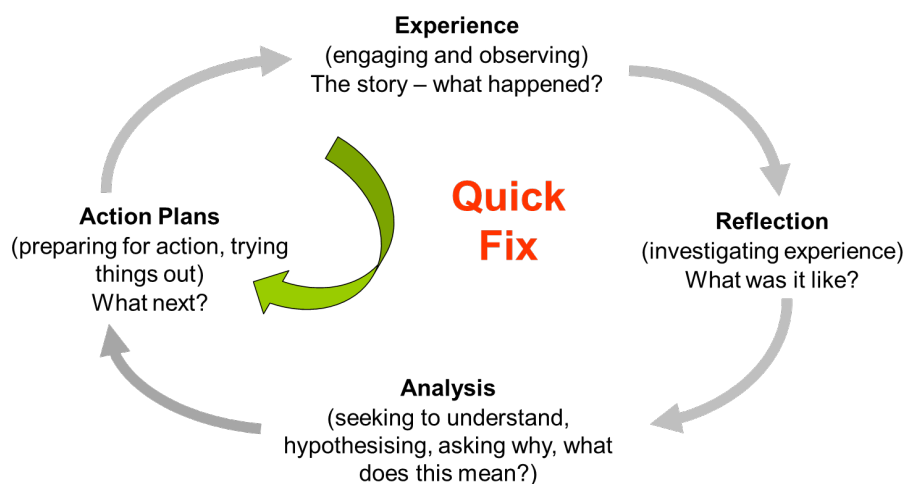| Technical/surface Pragmatic. Compares performance with knowledge of what should be done	Compliance	Normative. What should be done?	Organisation
Practical The practitioner's self-evaluation, insight and learning. Moving from 'reflection on action' to 'reflection in action'.	Problem solving	Descriptive, pragmatic. What is happening? How can it be solved?	Intervention
Process Awareness of the impact of unconscious processes and intuitive responses on professional judgement.	Self awareness	Interpretive. Why do things happen? What is my part in it?	Individual
Critical Questioning the influence of power relationships and assumptions underpinning our view of the world.	Transforming	Critical. Why are we doing this? What larger purpose do we serve?	Society

The supervision cycle

Reflective supervision is therefore the process by which the supervisor engages with the supervisee to:

- explore their practice and the factors that are influencing their responses (including emotional impact, power relations and social context)
- develop a shared understanding of the knowledge base informing their analysis of any given situation and the limitations of their thinking
- use this understanding to inform next steps (Wonnacott, 2014).

Experience
(engaging and observing)
The story – what happened?

Action Plans
(preparing for action, trying things out)
What next?

Reflection
(investigating experience)
What was it like?

Analysis
(seeking to understand, hypothesising, asking why, what does this mean?)

Morrison, 2005

Reflective supervision therefore engages with feelings, thoughts and actions and will automatically be promoted by effective use of the whole supervision cycle rather than the alternative short cut or 'quick fix'.

Experience
(engaging and observing)
The story – what happened?

Action Plans
(preparing for action, trying things out)
What next?

Quick Fix

Reflection
(investigating experience)
What was it like?

Analysis
(seeking to understand, hypothesising, asking why, what does this mean?)

Morrison, 2005

Using the Supervision Cycle (Adapted from Morrison, (2005) *Staff Supervision in Social Care*)

Below are some *examples* of questions that could be used to facilitate discussion about a family situation at each stage of the cycle. The list is not exhaustive, as each case is unique.

Focusing on Experience

Here the emphasis is on facilitating an accurate and detailed recall of events since a partial description of the situation will undermine the rest of the cycle. We can be assisted to recall more than we think we know if the right questions are asked.

- How do you see your role in this case?
- How do you think others (professionals and family) see your role?
- What did you expect to happen when you visited?
- What happened?
- What reactions did you notice to what you said/did?
- What surprised or puzzled you?
- What struck you? What were the key moments?
- What words, non-verbal communication, smells, sounds, images struck you?
- What did you notice about yourself/the service user/your co-worker?
- What was hard to observe?
- What went according to plan? What didn't happen?
- What changes or choices did you make?
- What did you say, notice or do immediately after the event?

These questions can be enhanced by using other methods, such as video or audio recording, observation, live supervision, learning diaries, incident logs or process recordings. Genograms might also be helpful at this point.

Focusing on Reflection

Here the emphasis is on eliciting feelings, partly because they bring out further information, or may reveal our underlying attitudes and assumptions. They may also give clues to other personal factors complicating the worker's experience. Reflection helps the worker make links between the current situation and his/her prior experiences, skills and knowledge.

- What feelings did you bring into the session?
- What is your gut feeling about this family?
- Describe the range of feelings you had in the session.
- What did the session/your feelings/this family remind you of?
- What previous work, processes, skills, knowledge are relevant here?
- Where have you encountered similar processes?
- What assumptions might you be making? For example, assumptions related to race, age, gender, sexuality.

- Does this situation challenge your feelings about acceptable/unacceptable behaviour?
- Where and when did you feel most or least comfortable?
- What feelings were you left with – does this always happen after seeing these kinds of cases?
- What metaphor or analogy would you describe your experiences of working with this situation?
- What was left unfinished?

Other methods to assist reflection include role play, sculpting, art work to draw out feelings and perceptions, further reflection on genograms and eco-maps to draw out context, roles and patterns.

Focusing on Analysis

Here the emphasis is on analysis, probing the meanings that the supervisee and the service user attribute to the situation, consideration of other explanations, the identification of what is known or understood, and the areas for further assessment.

- Taking account of your feelings – what does this tell us about what the service user may be feeling in this situation?
- How do you explain or understand what happened in the session?
- How would the session have been different if: the family had been female/black/disabled, etc.?
- Did power relations shift during the session – if so how and why?
- What went well, or not well, and why?
- How far did this session confirm or challenge your previous understanding or hypothesis?
- What new information emerged?
- What theory, training, research, policy, values might help you make sense of what happened in this session?
- How else might you have managed the session?
- What are the current needs, risks, strengths in this situation?
- What is unknown?
- What conclusions are you drawing from this work so far?
- How do you now define your role in this situation?
- How would the service user define your role?
- What expectations does your agency have of your role?

Other methods to assist analysis include sharing articles, references, case presentations, external speakers, attending training as a team, group supervision and action learning sets.

Focusing on Action Plans

The focus here is on translating the analysis into planning, preparation and action. This includes the identification of outcomes and success criteria as well as consideration of potential complications and contingency plans.

- In light of the reflection and analysis we have done, what is your overall summary of where things are at, and what needs to be done next?
- Can you identify what you are, and what you are not responsible for in managing this case?
- What training, supervisory, co-work and support needs have been raised for you?
- What information needs to be obtained from others before proceeding?
- What are your aims in the next phase of work?
- What is urgent and essential?
- What would be desirable?
- What is negotiable and what is non-negotiable in this situation?
- What would be a successful outcome from your perspective/family/other key agencies?
- What might be your strategy for the next contact with the family and other professionals?
- What are the possible best or worst responses from the family?
- What contingency plans do you need – what is the bottom line?
- Where do you feel more or less confident?
- How can you prepare for the next steps – mental rehearsal, flip chart map, reading, co-worker discussion?
- What can I do that would be helpful at this stage?
- When does feedback and debriefing need to take place?
- Are there any safety issues for you/others?
- What can be done to minimise any dangers?

Other methods may include role play, co-work planning, case planning, contacting other agencies involved.

Working with emotions in supervision

Anxiety and uncertainty are common emotions in health and social care settings. How to work positively with these emotions in situations of high stress is a crucial task for the supervisor.

Emotions promote safe practice because:
- emotion is critical to judgement
- leaders in high performing companies have twice as much emotional intelligence in those as low performing companies (Goleman, 1998)
- 'A system that seeks to ignore emotions is in danger of leaving them to have an unknown and possibly harmful impact on the work, and is also neglecting a rich source of data to help us understand what is going on' (Munro, 2008).
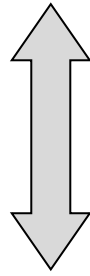
The Emotional Intelligence Paradigm (Morrison 2006)

Intrapersonal Intelligence

Interpersonal Intelligence

Self Awareness ⟷ **Other Awareness**

↕ ↕

Self-Management ⟷ **Relationship Management**

Values

A model for working with anxiety in supervision

Often referred to as the 'red' and 'green' cycles, this model has been extensively used to train workers and supervisors in both social care and health settings (Morrison and Wonnacott, 2009). The 'red cycle' refers to a compromised environment where anxieties are not managed and uncertainties are not tolerated. The result of this situation is that the organisation or individual is in permanent 'fight-flight' mode; practice becomes defensive and risk-averse, and there may be conflict with partner organisations.

In the contrasting 'green' cycle there is a collaborative environment where anxieties and uncertainties are acknowledged, any mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning, new ideas are encouraged, diversity is valued and there is cooperation and persistence in searching for shared solutions.

Organisations, teams and individuals may all be operating in either of these two cycles, and may move back and forth between them at various times. What is important here in relation to supervision is that where 'red cycle' behaviour is predominant, the effectiveness of the process will be compromised. The highly anxious, defensive practitioner is unlikely to be able to articulate a comprehensive account of her work in

supervision or to be honest about her feelings, or open to new thoughts, ideas and ways of working.

The pressures on supervisors are immense. Highly turbulent organisational environments, in which change and restructure seem to be (and certainly feel) continuous, should provoke questions about the role of supervisors (beyond the 'mediation' function) where red organisational behaviours predominate. Red and green cycles are a way of helping supervisors think about and reflect upon their own behaviours and roles within such environments.
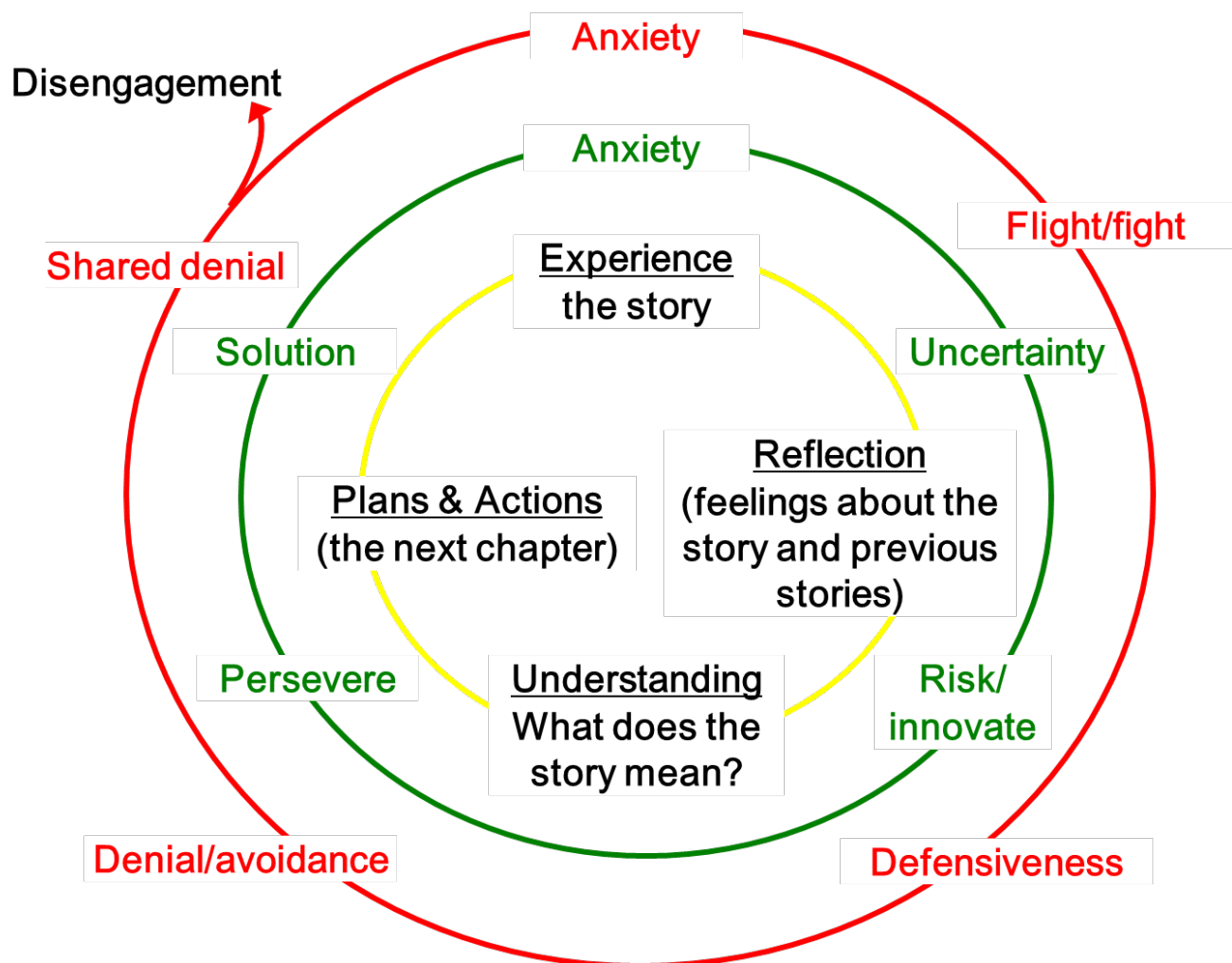
Adapted by Tony Morrison from Vince & Martin (1993)

Developing the Relationship
The role of the supervision history and supervision agreement

Developing the supervisory relationship will involve understanding the many factors that might affect the way in which it progresses. It is therefore important to find ways to begin to understand these from the start before any misunderstandings or problems arise.

It might help to first begin to try and identify all the factors that might affect supervision.

Amongst others these may include:

- the past experience of the supervisor and supervisee in respect of supervision
- the 'social location' of both parties i.e. gender, race, culture, sexuality, etc.
- the current experience of the supervisee i.e. are they new to the team/newly qualified, etc.?
- departmental expectations and supervisory culture
- workload pressures
- the learning style of the supervisor and supervisee.

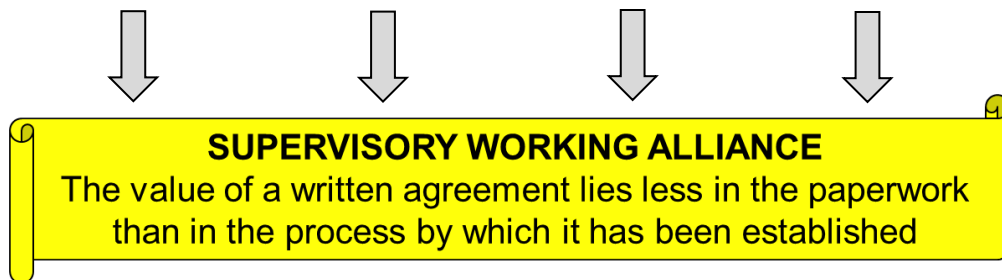## Why is a supervisory agreement important?

Because it:

- reflects the seriousness of the activity

- positively models partnership behaviour

- clarifies roles and responsibilities

- clarifies accountability and authority

- is a basis for reviewing the relationship

- is a benchmark for auditing the quality of supervision.

Three elements of the supervisory agreement

Administrative   **Psychological**

Professional
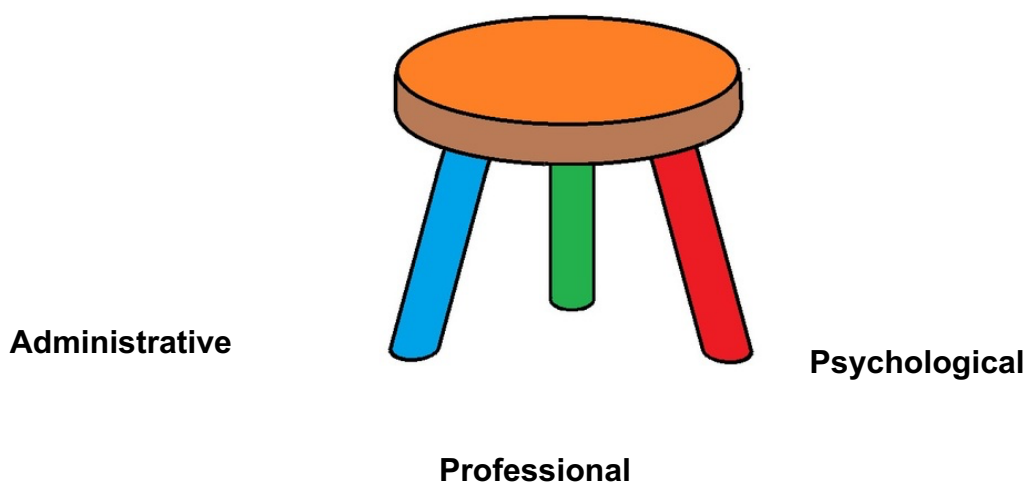
Developing the agreement – a 5 stage approach

1. Establishing the mandate
2. Engaging with the supervisee
3. Acknowledging ambivalence
4. Creating the agreement
5. Reviewing the agreement

SUPERVISORY WORKING ALLIANCE
The value of a written agreement lies less in the paperwork than in the process by which it has been established

The Supervision History

The supervision history is a very useful tool in developing the supervisory relationship. It acknowledges that the supervisee's experience of supervision will be affected by previous experiences and demonstrates that the supervisor is interested in them as a person as well as in what they are bringing to the current relationship. The supervisor's responses and style will be similarly affected by their own history and taking time to consider this is an important component of preparing to be a supervisor.

Reflecting on your supervision history

The following task is designed help workers and supervisors to reflect on the influence of previous experiences of supervision and how this influences their approach to supervision.

1. Using the form overleaf, write out a list of previous supervisors and/or managers.
2. Beside each one, make a brief note about their impact on you in terms of whether, and how they helped or hindered your development. Use the two columns to distinguish between helpful and hindering responses. The same supervisor may have responded in both helpful and unhelpful ways. Focus on those who had greater impact, and consider what it was about their style, focus, understanding, knowledge, skills, values, and use of authority, empathy or any other factors that affected you. Consider whether factors of gender, race etc. were significant.
3. Now reflect on how you responded to them: what responses did their approach generate in you? Our responses to positive and negative experiences of supervision are different. For example, where supervision is poor or undermining we may arrive late, be guarded about certain types of information, and reluctant to expose ourselves or take risks.
4. Finally, analyse the degree to which your approach to supervision now is influenced by any or some of these experiences.

My Supervision History

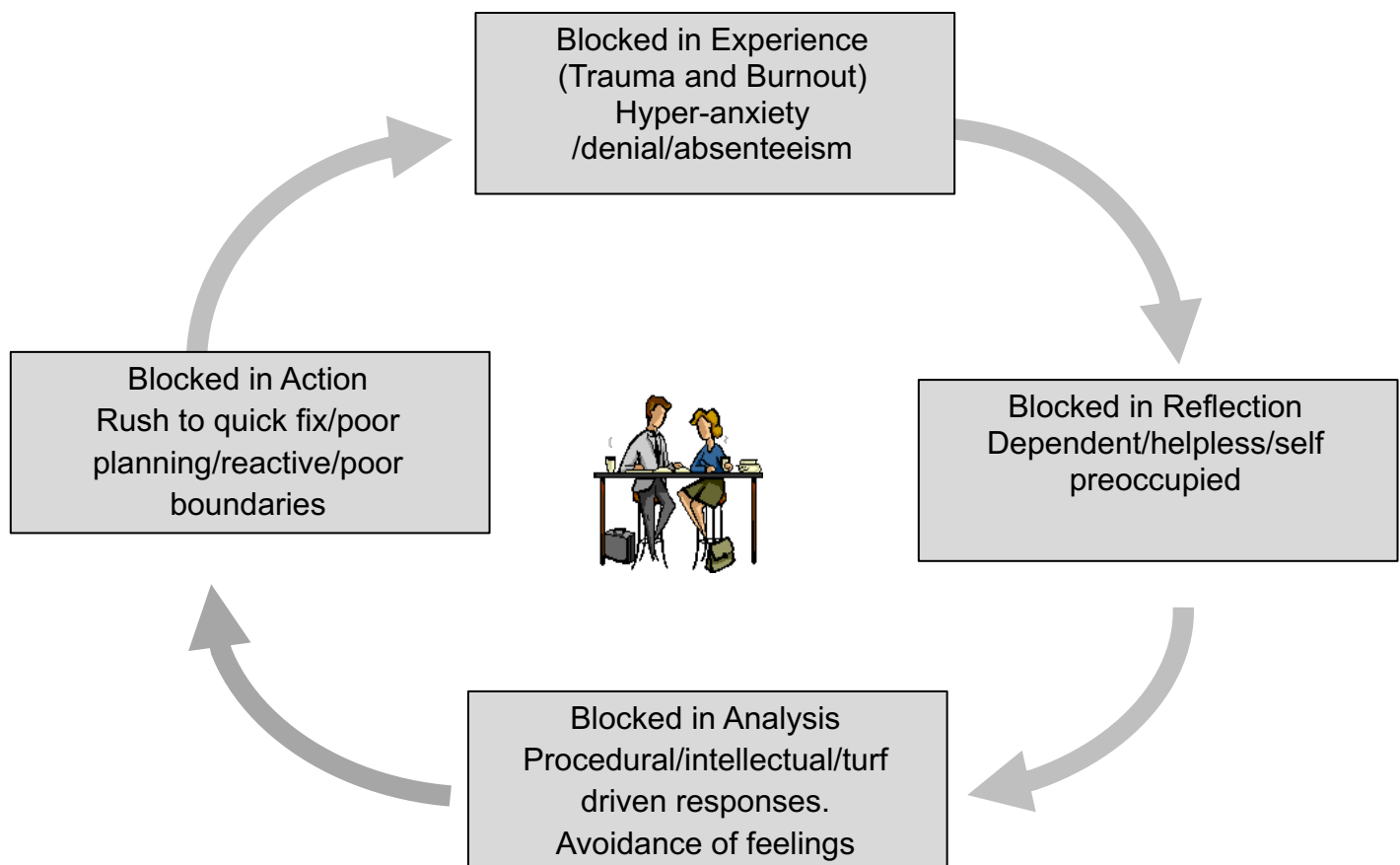| Previous supervisor	What helped?	What hindered	Response at the time	Influence on me now

Exercise devised by Tony Morrison.

Understanding "stuck behaviour" – the blocked learning cycle

In the blocked learning cycle (Morrison, 2005), which uses the Kolb learning cycle as a visual framework, draws on attachment theory as the basis for understanding more fully why some supervisees behave in a way that triggers concerns about their performance. Morrison develops Crittenden's and Claussen's (2000) outline of the functions of attachment behaviour to describe the supervisee's need to:

1. achieve safety under threat
2. elicit comfort when distressed
3. find proximity or closeness when alone
4. achieve predictability to regain control when the context is unpredictable or out of control
5. reframe job responsibility in a way that is tolerable.

Some concerns about performance may be understood in terms of the supervisee trying to fulfil these needs and in doing so becoming blocked in their capacity to move around the supervision cycle.

The Blocked Supervision Cycle

Blocked in Experience
(Trauma and Burnout)
Hyper-anxiety
/denial/absenteeism

Blocked in Action
Rush to quick fix/poor
planning/reactive/poor
boundaries

Blocked in Reflection
Dependent/helpless/self
preoccupied

Blocked in Analysis
Procedural/intellectual/turf
driven responses.
Avoidance of feelings

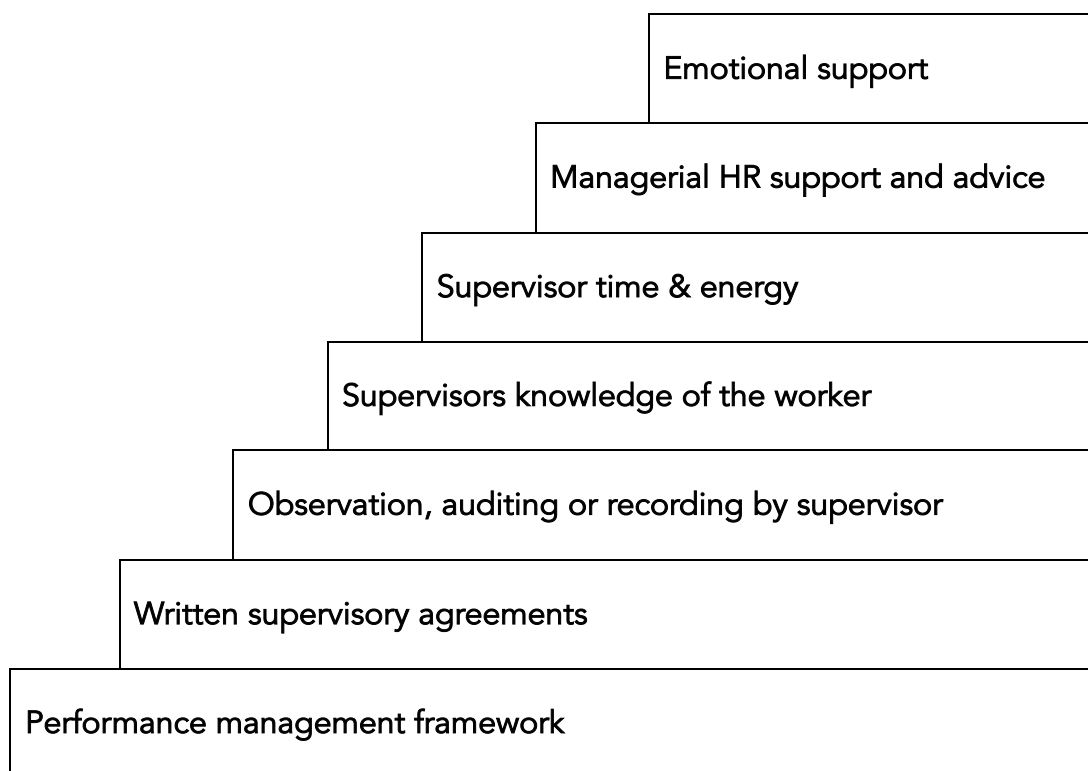The four stages of the cycle are described as follows:

Stuck in feelings. Instead of accessing and using feelings productively, the worker becomes stuck or mired in feelings, unable to think, analyse or plan clearly. This results in task delay and avoidance and leads to becoming much less productive. Focusing solely on feelings is self-protective for the worker because they become disengaged from observation and thinking and this reduces the amount of information they have to deal with. In doing so, the worker's engagement with other perspectives, such as those of the service user, the organisation or other agencies is also reduced so that the worker becomes self pre-occupied (i.e. 'it's all about me!'). In addition, the worker's high anxiety results in them seeking constant support from supervisor and colleagues to complete simple tasks, thereby gaining considerable attention for their plight. The worker's 'vulnerability' in turn makes it harder for the supervisor to insist on tasks being completed, and for the worker to carry an equitable workload.

Stuck in analysis. Here the worker becomes narrow, inflexible and judgemental in their practice, unable to access feelings. The social worker retreats to a bureaucratic mode of functioning, in which the outcome for a case seems almost pre-determined by the worker- (i.e. 'it's one of these….'). Whilst on the surface this may have the appearance of an efficient and productive performance by a worker who demands little of the supervisor, it is at the expense of real engagement with the service user, careful assessment and responsive planning. By avoiding feelings, resorting to procedural or 'checklist' responses, the worker regains a sense of control, safety and predictability and reduces the burden of professional responsibility and personal vulnerability.

Stuck in 'being busy'. Although excessive demands face all workers in social care, here, 'being busy' and 'being seen to be busy' become functional for the worker. The pattern is one of rushing around doing things for and to their service users, in a dependency creating and paternalistic manner. Caught up in 'rescuing' activity, they may miss what is important for the service user, or fail to address difficult issues with users, where to do so would create conflict and 'threaten' their relationship. Their 'busy-busy' and reactive style makes proper assessment very difficult. It also means the worker is unable to engage with more emotionally demanding or complex issues. It is often compounded by avoidance of supervision and lack of engagement with their team and colleagues such that they become 'maverick' and no longer reliably represent the organisation. Workers function like private practitioners in a public organisation. By creating dependency relationships, staying busy, not pausing to feel or think, the worker defines their role in a way that offers them a sense of public purpose and personal reward, whilst avoiding engagement with the real needs of their service users or the requirements of their organisation.

Stuck in experience. This describes situations in which the individual is overwhelmed by work demands or by the dynamics of a toxic work setting. In response, the worker turns down the volume controls of feeling, thinking and action due to their physical and emotional exhaustion. Another explanation is that this is a reaction to a traumatic experience. Sometimes, such a response may occur in the context of a relatively minor work event, but one that triggers the memory of an earlier unresolved experience. Alternatively, the reaction occurs at a time when the worker is facing other stresses, perhaps at home. Either way, the result is professional paralysis and personal distress. To protect him or herself against the loss of control, confidence and competence, the worker retreats from engagement both with the external world and their won distressed state. By doing so, the individual gains physical and mental respite, and the reduction of exposure to potentially overwhelming demands.

Managing Blocked Performance…What Supervisors need

Emotional support

Managerial HR support and advice

Supervisor time & energy

Supervisors knowledge of the worker

Observation, auditing or recording by supervisor

Written supervisory agreements

Performance management framework

Morrison, 2005. *Staff Supervision In Social Care* © Pavilion 2005

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LEARNING LOG AND ACTION PLAN

The purpose of this log is to capture the learning at the end of a course and record any actions you may wish to take before the business of everyday life takes over. You may wish to use this document in supervision or as part of your record of continual professional development.

My personal learning goals attending this course were....

1.

2.

3.

Key areas of learning for me on this course were....

1.

2.

3.

Aspects of the course that particularly challenged me were:

Areas I wish to explore further are?

One thing that I will take away from the training that I will do differently and will make a positive difference to service users is....

Other improvements that I want to make to my work   By when?

What will tell me or others that I have been successful in improving my practice?

Who/ what will assist me in making improvements?