



# Supervision and Coaching

*Growth and Learning in Professional Practice*

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Hilary Cochrane & Trudi Newton

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# Supervision and Coaching

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What is supervision, and what is distinctive about supervision for coaches?

This book has a dual purpose: to explore the value of supervision to both giver and receiver in a transformative relationship, and to offer practical guidance for both beginning and experienced supervisors.

In *Supervision and Coaching*, Hilary Cochrane and Trudi Newton create a story of supervision, beginning with a challenge: how can we find an understanding of what happens in supervision, and what is it that we do that enables learning in this relationship to be both a source of professional growth and personal development? The authors identify what goes on in the process of supervision, whatever the field of application, and look at the role of being a supervisor as separate and different from being a master practitioner or mentor. With clarity and through real-life examples, the book explores the relationship and the developmental impact of supervision, using transactional analysis and other models to understand and discuss its psychological basis. *Supervision and Coaching* includes current theories of adult learning and sections on creating effective contracts, supervision with groups and working as an external supervisor for internal coaches.

Combining practical guidance for both beginning and more experienced supervisors with reflection on the underpinning ‘roots’ of supervision, *Supervision and Coaching* will be an essential resource for coaches in practice and in training, coach supervisors and other professionals working in a supervisory role.

**Hilary Cochrane** has been a leader in the field of coaching and coach supervision for more than 20 years. She supervises, coaches and develops individuals, groups and teams both in organisations and working independently.

**Trudi Newton** is an educational trainer and supervisor in transactional analysis with a passion for supervision as a resource and means of co-created learning. She works worldwide in a wide range of learning contexts, including as a coach supervisor.

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Hilary Cochrane and  
Trudi Newton

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# Contents

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<i>List of figures</i>	vi
<i>List of tables</i>	viii
<i>Abbreviations</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
Introduction	1
1 What is supervision?	10
2 Ways of looking, ways of seeing: Perspectives on supervision	25
3 Relational needs: The supervision triangle	50
4 Learning in relationship	65
5 Creating effective contracts: Empathy and rigour	82
6 Success and safety: The context and ethics of supervision	100
7 Supervision in practice: Courage and vulnerability	121
Reflections – what next?	142
Competencies for coach supervision	146
Codes for ethical practice	150
Further reading	151
Bibliography	153
<i>Index</i>	157

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# Figures

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1.1	Practice analysis	16
1.2	Supervision, mentor coaching and coaching: differences and similarities	17
1.3	Functions within supervision	20
2.1	Cycles of development	29
2.2	Egostates and functions	31
2.3	Relating structure and function	32
2.4	The triangle of social roles	33
2.5	The drama and winners triangles	33
2.6	The eight-eyed model of supervision	36
2.7	Convergent process	39
2.8	Imago diagrams	41
2.9	The group's group imago	42
2.10	Assessing quadrant	44
2.11	Self-awareness framework	46
3.1	The supervision triangle	55
3.2	The balance of supervision functions	55
3.3	Roles on the supervision triangle	56
3.4	Dimensions of supervision	61
3.5	The autonomy triangle	62
3.6	The developmental supervision triangle	62
3.7	An example of flow in supervision	63
4.1	Experiential learning cycle	70
4.2	The learning spiral	70
4.3	Script formation and the learning cycle	71
4.4	The transformation line	72
4.5	Developmental processes	74
4.6	The relational field in supervision	77

5.1	The three-cornered contract	91
5.2	Multiple contracts	91
5.3	Psychological distance	93
5.4	Concentric contracting	96
6.1	Integrated egostates	103
7.1	Contracting continuum	125
7.2	Tactile imagos	133

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## Tables

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1.1	Comparing mentoring, supervision and coaching	18
2.1	Stages of development summary chart	28
3.1	The functions of supervision	53
4.1	Storyboard template	76
6.1	Personal ethics; an example	102
7.1	Leader behaviours (a)	134
7.2	Leader behaviours (b)	134
7.3	Leader behaviours (c)	135
7.4	Leader behaviours (d)	136
7.5	Leader behaviours (e)	136

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# Abbreviations

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EATA	European Association for Transactional Analysis
EMCC	European Mentoring and Coaching Council
IARTA	International Association for Relational Transactional Analysis
ICF	International Coach Federation
TA	Transactional Analysis
TAJ	Transactional Analysis Journal

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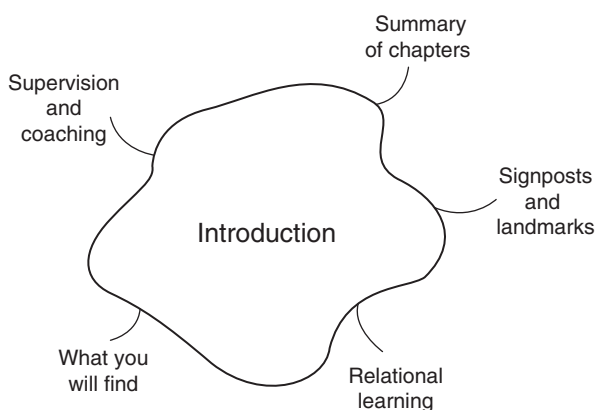
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# Introduction

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*Learning is a meeting point between intentionality and surprise.<sup>1</sup>*

What makes supervision special? Why is it different from other relationships? And what is particularly distinctive about coach supervision?

These are the questions we were asking ourselves in a kitchen in Portugal, as we prepared supper with a group of coach supervisors taking part in a residential workshop in the spring of 2015. The group had been working together for nearly five years, teasing out the issues we encountered in our practice and learning. Being together for a few days as a small community, sharing the same space and ethos, cooking and eating together in a fresh, peaceful and beautiful environment, we had lots of time to pool our discoveries as we asked, ‘What are we talking about when we talk about supervision?’

We began to realise that our practice as coaches was changing: the experience of becoming a coach supervisor meant becoming a better coach – the reflective approach involved in supervising others is valuable for the supervisor as well. And we wanted to explore more than simply, ‘how to do supervision and how to be effective’. As we talked about what we were learning and how we were learning it, bringing together our resourcefulness and experience, we found we were

creating something new and significant for ourselves, for the coaches we work with and for their clients.

We are all creating a new paradigm as we go: ‘We make the road by walking’.<sup>2</sup>

Coaching is a relatively new field of ‘people work’, and supervision within the coaching profession is even more recent. Understandings of coach supervision are still very varied (in one recent survey, nearly half of respondents claimed to use a peer arrangement for their supervision; the same study showed that in the USA less than half of coaches have any form of supervision on their work<sup>3</sup>).

Professional supervision for coaches has often been a choice between business consultancy and psychotherapy-based models. Both of these have their value, but our intention in our work and in our writing is to develop something different: first by answering the general question of what supervision is, and then by identifying what goes on in the process of supervision – in all its fields of application. We also consider the role of supervision to be distinct from being a master practitioner or mentor.

So this book is not just about coaching and supervision in practice; it is about the internal changes that happen, for ourselves and others, and how we deal with them. It is not only about the ‘function’ of being a supervisor, but about the process of becoming a supervisor; not just the learning involved, but the internal growth, the shift in focus, that enables the supervision relationship to be a resource, a model, or even sometimes a refuge and a safe haven for others.

We have a dual purpose: to go beyond a sociology of supervision to explore its ethos, the ‘story behind the story’, and to offer practical guidance for both beginning and experienced supervisors: a philosophy of supervision with practical guidance embedded within it. At the same time it will become, we hope, a biography of a profession in development.

### **Where are we coming from?**

Part of this ‘biography’ lies in thinking about what we have learnt since we became engaged in training coach supervisors. All that follows has been developed out of training courses and professional development groups that we have designed and delivered in the UK, Portugal and South Africa over the last ten years.

Our own practice as supervisors, the ideas we developed for use with coaches as well as other people-work professionals, led us in 2011 to self-publish a resource manual for coach supervisors.<sup>4</sup> Further thinking, more practice (and the many reflective responses of our students and supervisees) has resulted in us deciding to move beyond the ‘how’ of coach supervision to ‘why we do it – and why this way’.

The two of us come from very different professional backgrounds. To introduce ourselves: Hilary works widely in the corporate arena as a coach and as a supervisor with individuals, groups and teams. Trudi is an educational transactional analysis supervisor and trainer, working worldwide in a wide range of learning contexts, including as a coach supervisor, while focusing on writing and

research. We met on the first coach supervisor training programme that Trudi ran, and have worked together in many different ways since then. Both of us are passionate about working co-creatively to develop what we see as the power for change and beneficence in supervision.

Increasingly, the good news of the last few years is that supervision for coaches has been much more widely thought about, debated and accepted. There is now quite a lot of development going on in the field; this is a reason for us continuing to develop our thinking, co-creating with each other and with those we've trained, getting stuff back 'into the system' for an immediate and positive impact.

## **Where are we heading?**

As we 'make the road by walking', we have found a few signposts on the way:

### ***How we work is who we are***

This is important for our thinking: what we can most powerfully offer our supervisees is a relationship with a real person; someone who is present, alive, responding emotionally and intellectually, using themselves in the service of the work ... very firmly and clearly working out current and real issues in as straight, effective, honest and caring a relationship as is possible (Shmukler 2010).<sup>5</sup>

The more clearly we can be ourselves, the more we can bring this quality to the relationship; a relationship in which we can assume that this is a place

- of possibility and safety, without personal judgement; where learning is noticed and recognised and competence is brought into awareness;
- where both partners can be truthful; where there is joy in learning and no shame of disclosure;
- where there is an authentic collegial relationship, a balance of power, and both parties are absolutely accepted.

### ***The dialogue between courage and vulnerability***

Supervision means developing as a professional within a learning relationship that has at its heart courage and vulnerability, in equal measure on both sides. The truth of this understanding emerges from the responses we've had: 'I can learn without feeling bruised', 'I've learnt so much, but haven't gone away feeling ashamed', 'it was such fun – we laughed a lot – how amazing is that!' ... and so on.

### ***The value of not saying much***

A more recent signpost shows us how much we've learnt about not saying much – and the impact of silence on self and other. Recognising that we are highly skilled and professional doesn't mean we have to have all the answers!

Sometimes we need to be asking ourselves:

- What am I doing?
- By what right?
- How am I doing it?
- And why?

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves ...<sup>6</sup>

### **Relational learning**

This interrogation of experience and learning leads to an exploration of ‘what goes on’ in supervision when it is seen as relational learning – as a connectedness, beneficial not only to participants but to the wider context: a positive approach that demonstrates a belief in people and persons, and – beyond self – a dynamic that ultimately ignites, sustains and gives meaning to the work that we do.

Supervision demands a shift from isolation and stasis to connectedness and development; a process of continual, shared, spiritual reflection.<sup>7</sup> We want this approach to permeate all we do, teach and write about while staying aware that people sometimes need information, guidance and protection.

As you will see in the chapters that follow, we believe in supervision as an equal (not a top-down) relationship: in itself, the term ‘supervision’ is questionable – it can imply control or management. Some writers prefer the term ‘consultation’, emphasising a peer relationship where both parties bring their own observations and skills to the process, reflecting the desirability of ongoing professional learning, questioning and support (Cornell & Shadbolt 2007).<sup>8</sup>

While this is close to our own thinking, we still call both the process and the relationship we are describing ‘supervision’: first, because the term is in general use in the coaching world, but also because we want to address ‘beginning’ as well as more experienced supervisors – and those engaged in the development of less experienced coaches.

### **Understanding supervision**

In this book we are looking at the philosophy, the theory and the working practices of a profession which is still in a highly volatile developmental phase. For example, there is not, as yet, any agreement between the major professional bodies which represent supervisors on the definition of what a supervisor is or what supervisors do. We therefore invite you to enter into a dialogue with us: to accept the challenge to think about what we want to achieve in this emerging profession, what our hopes and expectations are for its continuing development.

Having said that, we are clear that the particular path we are on has some fundamental, underpinning beliefs. Our view of supervision can be described in several ways, which are also a collection of the principles that we adopt:

### ***A co-creative approach***

We have learnt a lot from an approach that is present-focused, that engages all parties in the exchange and development of ideas, and understands that, in doing this, we are together making something new – a truly co-creative practice. It is the opposite of the deterministic attitude that says, ‘This is how it has to be.’

In ‘What is supervision?’ (Chapter 1), we give an overview of supervision: our own perspectives and ways of working. We consider supervision in different fields with a focus on coach supervision, its particular context and requirements. This offers a practical approach to the ‘why and how’ of co-creative supervision and the person of the supervisor, and sets the scene for the chapters that follow.

We will distinguish supervision from mentoring, mentor coaching, counselling, consultancy and practice analysis, looking at their similarities and differences; each of them has an important place in the coaching world, but in this book we consider the role of supervision in locating how and where ‘the personal intrudes into the professional’ – and how this relates to a supervisee’s growth and needs.

### ***A psychological base***

All kinds of ‘people-work’ can benefit from a framework for understanding what goes on for us and between us and others – how we communicate (or maybe fail to), what drives us, and how various interactions impact us. We can call this psychologising or mentalising – or simply think of it as discovering what makes us tick, or ‘figuring it out’.

The International Coach Federation considers that the following are essential features of professional supervision: that it

- provides an opportunity to better understand self, the client, the client’s system and the choices made within the engagement;
- raises awareness of personal reactions to the client and/or the system and provides a safe place for exploring these;
- serves a restorative and iterative function.<sup>9</sup>

In ‘Ways of looking, ways of seeing’ (Chapter 2), we explore ways of seeing and ways of being with others. Our key framework is Transactional Analysis (TA), which we describe along with examples and illustrations from practice. We explore how beliefs and philosophies influence what each practitioner does, the range of how we choose to work and relate to our supervisees, including a