

THE A-Z OF GOOD SUPERVISION

A Advocacy - a great supervisor knows when to be an advocate for service users but doesn't lose sight of the need of every social worker to have their own advocate.

B Being present - committing to the space and time for supervision and being 'present' intellectually and emotionally in the supervision session.

C Confidentiality underpins trust in supervision and nothing undermines a supervision relationship more than low trust. Be clear about the limits of confidentiality.

D Depth - a 'once over lightly' run through the active 'cases' is not supervision. That's case management. It is very important but isn't going to develop the supervisee's practice.

E Emotions - accepting and valuing expression of emotions, including unpleasant ones like fear, guilt, revulsion and shame
(Davys & Beddoe, 2010).

F Feedback - an essential part of a good supervision relationship is the provision of regular, constructive, balanced (positive and negative) and generous feedback on work done.

G Giving - committing space for supervision offers time, feedback and challenge as gifts.

H Honesty and transparency, in both supervisor and supervisee, builds trust and mutual confidence.

I Intellectual powers are applied in supervision - it is an analytical practice.

J Justice - critically reflective practice comes from maintaining a clear focus on social justice for the children, adults and families with whom we work
(Noble, Gray & Johnstone, 2016).

K Knowledge - each person in supervision brings their knowledge to bear on the work in focus, including formal, personal, cultural and experiential forms of understanding.

L Limitations - know your limits and recognise when you and your supervisee are stuck and it's time to consult an expert.

M Mutuality - supervision is grounded in a relationship and it takes two to make it useful.

N Non-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice applies in supervision too, be aware of cultural biases and stereotypes
(Beddoe & Davys, 2016).

O Observation - making time to observe practice and give collaborative feedback, especially for students and NQSWs. Also important for mature practitioners who will value observation-based feedback along their professional journey
(Davys & Beddoe, 2015).

P Power - in effective supervision any power differentials between supervisors and supervisees is named and transparent, misuse of power sits behind much harmful supervision
(Beddoe, 2017).

Q Questions - the art of supervisor is not directing - it is about having a repertoire of great questions that promote deeper reflection.

R Reflection - don't just say it do it! Reflection comes from unpacking social work practice in depth and includes thinking deeply about what sits beneath our reactions and judgements when working with people.

S Strengths-focused - in our deficit-driven and risk-saturated practice climate remember to look for strengths and assets as well as problems. Supervision in practice education creates space to model this effectively with students.
(Beddoe & Davys, 2016).

T Training - supervisors need more than one-day workshops on motivating workers to meet timescales and targets. Seek training that focuses on promoting critically reflective practice.

U Uninterrupted time - while there will always be justified exceptions supervision time should be protected.

V Values - keeping the core social work values and principles at the forefront of supervision.

W Wellbeing - an attentive, genuinely interested supervisor is aware of supervisee wellbeing and the emotional load they carry in their day-to-day practice.

X expectations! A good supervision contract is essential and will clarify mutual expectations of the working alliance, the limits of confidentiality and boundaries.

Y 'The second unknown quantity in an algebraic expression, usually the dependent variable' (Oxford dictionary) - being open to and able to tolerate uncertainty - the unknown possibility.

Z Zealous - keep supervision focused on the aspirational. Start with what we aim for in any aspect of practice and work back from there to now. What can we do now to make this better?

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