Spectrum Supervision

"Who you are, is how you supervise"



Edited by

Edna Murdoch and Jackie Arnold

Full Spectrum Supervision "Who you are, is how you supervise"

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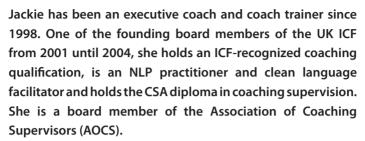
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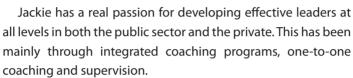


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Mind, body and metaphor

- Jackie Arnold

Abstract

THIS CHAPTER explores the way in which coach supervisors are able to create a safe space for supervision and nurture a genuine quality of present moment attention. This sits largely in the green part of the Full Spectrum Model where the focus is on energy management, presence and the internal supervisor. We attempt to show ways to be present in the here and now coming from a place of acceptance and non-judgment. By increasing our levels of attention it becomes possible to co-create a deep thinking space for the supervisee to reflect and grow. Research proves that mindfulness boosts happiness and wellbeing (Brown and Ryan, 2003).

It can also increase levels of attention and empathy for both supervisor and those seeking supervision.

This chapter will also cover the importance of our voice tone and pace in addition to the alignment of our body as coach supervisors. Case studies are provided to illustrate these key areas and to show the power of non-verbal language.

Finally we will introduce the clean language questions and the symbolic modeling work of psychotherapist David Grove, and of Penny Tompkins and James Lawley, who have been at the forefront of developing and promoting the application of Clean Language. A powerful intervention and a valuable skill for coach supervisors, it enables us to stand back from our work with as little interference as possible. It enables us to avoid making assumptions and allows the supervisee to explore his or her own unique worldview. In this way we can have the essential overview and contemplative approach needed when building strong relationships as coach supervisors. This forms part of the yellow spectrum of the FSM where we are focusing on building the supervision alliance. Together we will discover the power of exploring the metaphorical landscape that supports those we supervise. In this journey of discovery we have a unique glimpse into the world of our supervisee, creating a strong bond and a true supervision partnership.

TIP

When supervising at our best we need to create a connection with supervisees at a fundamentally deep level. This enables us to work on the true nature of the issues that arise and to achieve insights by means of safe exploration.

"The inner self is revealed in the unconscious language and symbolic landscape of the supervisor and their supervisee."

- Jackie Arnold, 2011

What you will discover in this chapter:

- ▼ how to create a safe space and mindful presence
 - for self and supervisee
- ▼ the power and importance of your voice
- **▼** the body and gestures in supervision
- ▼ clean language and symbolic modelling in coaching supervision.

A first discovery of true presence and stilling of the mind in action

I lived in Switzerland for fourteen years from 1972 to 1986. In Switzerland, high in the mountains, there are incredibly agile mountain goats. They climb in crevices and along ridges that would seem impossible to those gazing from below. In fact many people are unable to see them as they are so far away and so well camouflaged. In addition, there are tiny deer leaping from rock to rock and grazing on the rich grass far away from human habitation. Marmots are also hiding in the undergrowth, so shy that people often do not realize that they exist. There are, however, people who have no trouble hearing and seeing these creatures. The mountain people have trained themselves to practice a kind of mindful stillness. They are so aware of their own body, presence and surroundings that they are able to see and hear with a sharpness so elusive to others. It is this kind of stillness and acute connection with nature that creates this special bond. It is the energy of nature and all it offers us, if we just take the time to listen and observe. This is the kind of calm awareness that coach supervisors need when attending to the challenges and issues brought to our sessions. It is this kind of intense listening that is needed when practicing clean language as without it we may miss vital information and subtle nuances.



I was fortunate in that my father-in-law Toni had been a Swiss mountain guide from a very early age. From the first moment I met him I noticed how he observed and listened to anyone who spoke to him. He responded to the present moment with a profound sense of calm and deep awareness. He seemed to know instinctively what you needed without asking. If you were sad or happy, if you needed space or company, he would know, and with few words he was able to convey his love and quiet presence when needed.

He took us to the mountains on many occasions and his connectedness with nature was astounding. I remember feeling frustrated when I was unable to see and hear what he so easily saw and heard. Animals in the shady crevices, tiny mountain flowers, birds high in the sky, trickling water – he had no better hearing or sight, just mindful presence and oneness with all that surrounded him. Slowly I dropped my wanting to see and I saw a tiny movement. Quietly I observed emotions in my body and noticed my surroundings, just as they were and not as I had imagined. I became still and curious with less expectation. Images, sensations, feelings and sounds all began to have a clarity I had not known before.

TIP

In our work as coach supervisors being in this space of gentle curiosity, paying attention to what is present in that moment without internal 'chatter' is when the real shifts for the supervisee can occur.

It is in this space that we are able to develop our own intuition for good practice in supervision. We create the conditions to understand and learn what is effective and what may need our attention.

"The success of an intervention depends on the inner condition of the intervener."

- Senge et al., 2004

In the Swiss mountains I began to discover a real moment-to-moment awareness of how everything was connected – a realization that all was as it needed to be, in that particular space and time. It was fascinating to realize that aspects of my own way of being had obscured what I felt, saw and heard. I wondered how many people walking through these mountains had missed seeing these delightful creatures in the wild or, if they had seen them, had taken the time to listen and observe.

Ideally as coach supervisors we are trained to sense and tap into another person's energy field. At the same time we need to be acutely aware of our own patterns of thought and energy flow. Only then are we able to put aside intrusions and focus entirely on the other person and their landscape, co-creating a particular transformative mindful space. We pay respectful attention to the body movements, the sighs, the breathing and the voice tone of the supervisee. This allows us to access our own intuition and to self-manage and trust that what arises in the session is there for a reason. Expectation and preconceived ideas about how the session should go are left at the door. We are patient and able to allow for the emergence of what comes. This can be challenging when the supervisee brings situations we can also identify with. It is useful to remember that no two people ever feel or experience similar

issues in quite the same way. It is at these times that we need to refrain from entering into the content of the session and remain open to what unfolds. We also know that long after the sessions this transformative relationship is carried further. Supervisees are better able to reflect on their own learning and discoveries and take away new understanding to their own coaching practice. Only when nurturing this special connection, keeping out our own ego and intrusive thoughts, can our supervision be truly effective.

The practice of 'mindfulness' is one way that supervisors can increase awareness of what is present and be non-judgmental in sessions with supervisees. The Full Spectrum Model of supervision is aligned with the sentiment of 'mindfulness' in Theravada Buddhism, which is described as *Satipathana – Sati* being the element of awareness and Pathana being the element of keeping present.

So how do we as coaching supervisors access these elements, maintain their presence and rekindle the spirit of transformation? How do we manage to create safety for both coach and clients in the multiple relationships that often exist when supervising in large organizations?

When we tap into the silence that quietens us down, it enables us to go deeper into the soul of our sessions. It gives us the capability to 'hold' the different parts of the system and to be acutely aware of what is often *not* said. It insures that contractual boundaries are not crossed and that all stakeholders are respected.

How often do we feel the need to respond to the specific pain or challenge of our supervisees and in so doing do we intrude on *their* own way of being and coping? In this way we merely interrupt our supervision relationships, which form such a crucial part of the Full Spectrum Model. We can prevent this by increasing our awareness of how are we sitting with our clients - still, relaxed and open to whatever turns up, paying attention to our gestures and noticing how they fit with our words and emotions, noticing how our supervisees use words and noticing how their gestures and non-verbal language inform the emerging knowledge. It is this quality of attention that shows respect and that allows for an unconditional positive space for supervisees to explore and grow. It enables us to better notice and understand the intricacies and often multilayered relationships involved, to keep a broad overview of what goes on in organizations and how the different parts relate to one another and understand the different personality types and behaviors that affect standards, performance, wellbeing and core values. I liken this to the eye of a golden eagle hovering over the relationship, at a distance, acutely aware and holding the wider picture. Yet, being able to swoop down at a moment's notice to support when needed.

When we pay attention and are present in the 'now' of the session we can support supervisees to clarify their own understanding of those sometimes very complex contexts.

"The key to 'seeing from the whole' is developing the capacity not only to suspend our assumptions but to 'redirect' our awareness towards the generative process that lies behind what we see."

- Senge et al., 2004: 42

It is the quiet and respectful attention we show when listening to a wonderful musical performance. It is the kind of tingle that goes up the spine when the music fills our soul and the sound enables our mind to soar to unknown heights. When we consider all that supervisees bring to the sessions and how present with them we need to be, it is helpful to remember those times when we have also been moved and when we have been truly at one with our thoughts and emotions – to recall those moments that have touched our hearts and allowed us to go deeper to listen to the rhythm of the soul.

Is there a distinction between quietening our mind and presence? In the case study above my father-in-law was *mindful* of all that surrounded him. He was able to take in the sounds, sights, smells and touch and to be in tune with his feelings. He was *present* with his body and his breathing was totally grounded in the moment with no internal chatter or invasive thoughts.

Try this relaxation exercise

Sit in a straight-backed chair and feel the chair against your back and legs. Keep your hands relaxed on your knees and do not cross your legs but keep them planted on the floor, knees slightly apart. Breathe a little more slowly and deeply using your 'out breath' to let chatter and intrusive thoughts float away. Use your 'in breath' to take in new calm energy. Do this slow breathing for a few minutes.

Now stiffen every muscle in your body. Start with the feet and work up the legs. Increase the tension in your arms and upper body. Feel the neck tighten and the muscles of the face contract. Realize that you are probably holding your breath. Also notice how much effort is going into keeping the muscles tight and the tension that is building. Now take a deep breath and relax your body, but only a little. Keep the tension in your face, neck and shoulders. Feel how uncomfortable this is. Be aware of the energy that you are using to keep these muscles tense.

Now breathing evenly, starting from your face muscles gradually relax your body. Take some deep breaths from the diaphragm (just under your rib cage). Relax your shoulders and arms as you breathe and feel the tension draining out of you as you slowly move downwards through the legs and feet. Feel the clothes on your body. Be aware of the material as it moves against your skin. Feel the hard back and seat of the chair. Are you sure that your shoulders have remained relaxed? Are your neck and throat soft and free of tension?

If you find it hard to relax, try visualizing yourself in a calm place that you know well. 'Take' yourself there in your mind and feel the atmosphere, smell the air, see the surroundings. Allow yourself to just 'be' there in this familiar place for a while. Close your eyes or look out of the window. If any intrusive thoughts enter your mind let them float into the rubbish bin, or out of the window. Feel and notice how it is to be in this calm and easy state. Enjoy the freedom of your own 'present' minutes. This exercise will help you to manage your own energy (FSM) before meeting with your supervisees.



Supervision session three – the place of 'not knowing'

In this case study we will look at one of a series of three coaching supervision sessions (session three of six) that will illustrate the importance of bodily presence and 'staying with' the supervisee.

This coach was a highly experienced business executive wishing to develop her own coaching practice. She was also managing the transition to coach from a successful career as a lawyer. She was motivated and wanted to use supervision to enhance her coaching style and build her practice. After the first two sessions where clear contracting had been agreed and the sessions planned with a suitable venue identified, a pattern began to emerge.

Supervision session 3

Full Spectrum Model in practice

We had built a trusting relationship over the first two sessions and this was demonstrated by the coach being able to use the space for reflection and thinking time. At the beginning of the third session it was apparent, however, that the coach had not been able to align her previous role with that of her new role as a coach. She was fearful (her words) of stepping out of her 'safe' environment into one that appeared totally new and unknown. It is often challenging to 'stay with' a supervisee in the space of not knowing. However, in my experience it is at these crucial junctions that mindfulness and presence are at their most powerful. Exploring the fear and staying out of the supervisee's way using clean language during this exploration proved to be a real turning point. As I listened I allowed my thoughts and feelings to float around and above the supervisee and just noticed what was occurring. (The eye of the eagle hovering above.)

Using a basic clean language question (see below for clean questions) I asked if there was *anything else* about this fear she had identified and if it had a size or shape (prompting her to move to a symbolic perception). There was a long silence and then she told me that the fear was a pink blob at the front of her forehead

(I remember noticing a fleeting thought that (for me) pink was a strange color for a fear and later reflected on how wonderful it is to be constantly surprised by others' views of the world, so different to our own – perhaps I came out of presence for a moment ...)

I breathed deeply, re-centered myself and asked her what kind of blob this was when it was 'pink and at the front of her forehead'. She replied that it was like a piece of 'rubber' that could be different shapes. As I listened I had no idea where she was in her thoughts or feelings, all I did was stay with her

in her metaphorical landscape, both with my energy and the slow pace of my voice. She explored her fear and noticed more about it in response to my questions. With some reflecting back of her own words she began to realize that she had control of the 'pink rubber'. She could take it and put it where she chose. She moved her hands as if she was taking the pink blob and placing it in front of her. As I directed her attention to her gestures she said it felt as if this had given her back the power that she had lost. The fear was no longer 'looking over her shoulder' as before but out there in front where she could see it. To explore this metaphor further I asked her when the pink blob was where she could see it, and it was no longer looking over her shoulder, and she had the power back ... what happened then? After a longish pause and a few further questions she said that her fear was no longer in control of her. She realized the only person who was able to hold her back was herself. She then spoke about her coaching practice with renewed enthusiasm and identified specific ways forward for the coming weeks.

In this session the space of 'not knowing' created a catalyst for a real shift of energy for the supervisee. This was unfamiliar territory in that she was encouraged to visualize her fear as something tangible/visual and to explore it in a totally new way. She had no notion of where the pink rubbery fear had come from. She had merely discovered that she had a choice: to allow it to stop her from moving forward or to put it where she could see and control it.

At the end of the session I asked myself, "Was I at ease during this supervision session in my place of not knowing?" and "Was there a time when I wanted to know what was going on for my supervisee?" as well as "How did I manage to 'just be' during this session?"

I recall a quote from Eckhart Tolle in *The Power of Now* where he says that if we "remove time from the mind – it stops", in

essence saying that being present in the now is all we need in order to still our thoughts. We experience the kind of stillness in unknown territory that captures the brief moments so vital in our work with others.

In this case study the power of investigating the metaphorical landscape of the supervisee allowed essential new knowledge to emerge.

TIP

In our work as coach supervisors being in this space of gentle curiosity, paying attention to what is present in that moment without internal 'chatter', is when the real shifts for the supervisee can occur.

The use of voice and body

Being present also means paying calm attention to your voice and gestures. Voice plays a key role both in our coaching and our supervision sessions. The stress we put on words and the specific intonation can reveal so much about the intention of the facilitator. If we use a neutral tone of voice and sensitive inquiry, it enables the supervisee to decide for himself/herself where to put the emphasis or intonation. It keeps us from making assumptions. There are a variety of ways to say, for example, "What exactly do you value most about this situation?" or "What kind of intervention was helpful to you?"

Our voice can be gentle and curious or it can have specific emphasis on 'what' or on 'you' in either question. Sometimes the stress or intonation is unconscious and our feelings or opinion show through even though we may not realize it. The neutral tone and calm inquiry enables the supervisee to decide for himself/herself where to put the emphasis or intonation.

When supervising as natural *listeners, we open our inquiry from the inside out, from a genuine place of* curiosity. We show through

our voice and gestures a non-judgmental tone that encourages easy thoughts that flow unhindered.

Try this the next time you supervise (with the permission of your supervisee):

The best way to hear how we sound is to record our voice during a session. This has astonishing results and can really reveal hidden nuances. It shows clearly where we put our emphasis and can transform our way of connecting in sessions. Next time you supervise let your supervisee know you are recording the session and emphasize that this is for your own learning and growth.

We often hear in supervision that coaches can be fearful of asking the 'right' questions or using the 'correct' models. This fear can seriously damage the relaxed relationship between coach and client and the voice and body language will also suffer. When we are fearful our vocal cords tighten and our body stiffens. Often we are not aware of these small changes. Taking a breath and getting used to the silence, staying with the unknown and stilling the mind can go a long way to staying relaxed and calm. (See the previous exercise on relaxation.)

Try this now:

These breathing exercises will enhance breathing capacity and create a relaxed and easy body flow. We can do these alone or ideally with a colleague:

1. To help abdominal awareness, person A lies on his or her back on the floor. (Some people may need a small book under the head.) The other person, person B, places a book on A's diaphragm. A relaxes his or her whole body and concentrates on the book as it rises and falls with each breath. A flattens the abdomen as much as possible on the 'out' breath. B watches to make sure that the whole body is relaxed and the only movement is the book on the abdomen. Change places and repeat.

2. Stand next to your partner and check that your shoulders are relaxed. Inhale only, with five short gasps (HA HA HA HA HA) with your mouth open. Notice the movement in your diaphragm. Then exhale with five quick puffs (HU HU HU HU HU). Next try the same exercise with your mouth closed and taking the inhale gasps and exhale puffs through your nose.

Note: It may be easier to place your hands on your diaphragm – also watch that the shoulders stay soft and relaxed.

- **3.** Now, facing your partner, exhale all your breath until you feel completely empty and then inhale taking a full deep abdominal breath. (Try to stay relaxed.) Repeat three times each. (Partners should watch for moving or stiffened shoulders.)
- **4.** Inhale to half your capacity and hold your breath for 20 seconds and then exhale gently. Repeat this over several days increasing the time until it reaches a full minute. This will strengthen your breathing and the related muscles.
- **5.** Exhale with a laugh. HA HA HA HA. Feel this in your abdominal muscles, then gently inhale and repeat. (Keep a watch on your partner for any stiffness or raised shoulders. Test this by placing your hands on his or her shoulders as he or she laughs.)
- **6.** Stand with your hands on your hips. Lean slightly back and look up towards the ceiling. Let yourself yawn and feel your waist expand and your diaphragm flatten. As you exhale say, "AH" for as long as you can remain relaxed and at ease.

Done regularly we can enhance our vocal tone and be more relaxed before and after sessions.

TIP

Professional singers do these exercises as a matter of course. As coaches and supervisors we use our voice as a vital part of our job and thus for us they are also essential.

CASE STUDY 3

I recently had the privilege of attending a demonstration by Monty Roberts, the famous 'horse whisperer'. Monty has spread his unique, non-violent method of breaking in horses throughout the world and his voice is a vital part of the process. He is truly in the moment as soon as he approaches the horses and his voice takes on a calmness and a gentle persuasive edge at different moments during the process. He uses his voice and his gestures in such a way as to keep control, while at the same time allowing the horses their own time to 'ioin up' with him.

In this demonstration the first horse he works with is a big, seventeen hands, truly wild stallion. He needs to remain totally in the moment as one false move could be dangerous. Every movement and gesture he makes is deliberate and he mirrors the horse so that the connection between them develops and grows before your eyes. Monty calls it understanding their language and their world. He is mindful of the horse's eye and ear movements and the angle at which he holds his body so the horse feels safe. He creates a place of strong presence and calm. As you watch you can see the relationship growing and the horse beginning to trust.

As the horse becomes aware that Monty poses no threat and is behaving in a way he understands he starts to connect. He slows his pace and allows Monty to approach, and before your eyes you witness a large stallion taking the bridle for the first time. This is a truly magical experience and one I will never forget.

Gestures and non-verbal clues mirror our innermost thoughts. Our gestures give away what we really feel and so paying attention to them in the here and now can help us to relax and become centered. Often supervisees are not aware of the gestures they make and our gently bringing their attention to them can have dramatic results. One supervisee kept looking and unconsciously nodding at a corner of the room while he was speaking. When I mirrored his movement and asked him what he was nodding to in the corner, he was surprised and realized that it was his partner who he wanted to involve in his coaching business going forward. When we delved further and I slowly asked what kind of involvement this would be, he became animated as he revealed several clear ideas for collaborative discussion.

It has long been accepted in the coaching and supervision world that voice and gestures play a vital part in sessions. Vocal tone and stress can be used consciously both to calm and to motivate coaching clients and supervisees. In NLP we are aware of how revealing eye movements and body language can be, but how do we express awareness and presence through voice and gestures?

Being aware of how our voice sounds in different situations, recording and listening to our own voice during sessions can be really revealing. When we are breathing and in the moment, our voice will attain a rich quality unlike the tones we use in everyday speech. We will naturally match those of the supervisee and blend in so that our voice becomes unobtrusive and yet supportive in tone and rhythm. We will unconsciously use the curious tone of voice that aids gentle inquiry, reflecting and staying with the language of the supervisee. In this way we need to do very little, merely listen and create that flowing energy that allows our supervisee to choose his or her own path forward.

The human voice is the primary medium of communication in human beings. It is an expression of who we are and how we feel. In the timbre of a person's voice you can hear the subtle music of feeling and thought – the ever-shifting collage of emotions to which we are all prey.

- Developer of voice movement therapy Paul Newham

Clean language

Clean language was devised by psychotherapist David Grove, as a way to keep his assumptions out of his interactions with his clients, as far as possible, so he could work directly with their perceptions. It consists of 30 or so questions, asked in a curious way and with a particular tone of voice. The pace and timbre of the voice is a key element in the effectiveness of clean language questions. When faced with strong feelings or emotions our physiology changes. Our breathing is shallow and our thoughts can become muddled. The slow pace and brevity of clean questions enables supervisees to delve safely into the situations they bring to sessions. It frees the chatter and allows for mindfulness to occur. This slowing down and coming into the present moment is enhanced by the pauses between our questions and the reflecting back of the supervisee's exact words. It is as if the supervisor and supervisee are floating on the same wave, matching the other as the session flows back and forth. It is also very challenging for the supervisee as he or she is required to take ownership of his or her thought patterns and own metaphorical landscape.

We deliver clean language questions slower than at our normal pace and use a slightly deeper tonality. If when recording our sessions we feel that the tone of our voice could be deeper the vocal exercises above will help. When I worked for BBC radio I needed to lower the tone of my voice for broadcasting and I managed to do this quite easily, which I found surprising. When we use clean language there is an implied sense of curiosity and we match the supervisee's *idiosyncratic* pronunciation and emphasis without seeming forced or intrusive. We can also use the NLP practices of pacing (matching the vocal pace of the supervisee) and leading (sometimes using voice and tone to bring a supervisee to a more productive/creative/quiet or reflective space) in a very sensitive and intuitive way.

It is worth noting that all the clean language questions begin with 'and' and they focus on the supervisee's 'perceptual present'. This allows the supervisee to continue the train of thought without interruption. (See the case study and diagram below.)

The 'nine-question compass' model (see Figure 2.1) was first published in the spring 1997 issue of *Rapport*: It is now published in *Metaphors in Mind* by Penny Tompkins and James Lawley (2005).

LOCATING IN SPACE

Where/whereabouts?
Does ... have size or shape?

EVOLVING TIME

What happens next? Then what happens?

DEFINING ATTRIBUTES

What kind of ... ?
Anything else?

What happened just before? Where did ... come from?

That's a ... like what?

PULLING BACK TIME

SHIFTING SYMBOL

Figure 2.1 - The original nine-questions compass (Note: "..." are the client's exact words.)

As clean language is very flexible, what started out as a therapeutic process is now used in many contexts including coaching supervision. If you have heard of clean language before then it's likely that you'll also have heard of symbolic modeling. This is the name given by Penny Tompkins and James Lawley in their book *Metaphors in Mind* to the model they devised after working with and observing David Grove over several years. They wanted to discover what he was doing to achieve such good results. They combined David's ideas with ideas from the fields of cognitive linguistics, systems thinking and NLP to produce a model that could be taught to others to enable them to achieve the same kinds of results as David.

When using clean language in coaching supervision it is particularly useful to develop the metaphors that supervisees use naturally as they speak. By asking coaching questions it helps to slow the supervisee down and enables them to think about the meaning and words they have used. When the supervisor reflects the words of the supervisee it subtly builds the special relationship that underpins the Full Spectrum Model as the supervisee feels supported in his or her own space. Their metaphors are unique and as they are developed the supervisee unconsciously feels understood. He or she feels that his or her own view of the situation has been acknowledged.

Linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson wrote in *Metaphors We Live By*: "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another."

We all use metaphors as part of our daily lives. They are very familiar to us and form part of who we are. It is very revealing to notice the metaphorical world you inhibit and how that differs from those around you. You may be unaware of how frequently you use metaphors on a daily basis.

Here are some metaphors that you may be familiar with:

- ▼ I'm banging my head against a brick wall.
- We're up against it this month.
- ▼ Take your time over that.
- ▼ He got a glowing report.
- ▼ She's full of confidence.
- ▼ I need to build my skills.
- ▼ Coaching supervision is growing.
- **▼** Which branch of the business do you work in?

It is when you develop these metaphors that supervisees really delve deep into their visual landscape. Often their perception of the problem or situation begins to change. They come up with ideas and solutions that have previously *lain* hidden and are suddenly *in the spotlight*. Sometimes supervisees use their metaphors to notice how they deal with others or use specific language. It can be most illuminating. One supervisee described his situation in a company as that of "a lion trainer trying to tame the lions". When he noticed and investigated this further, he realized that his vision of his clients may not have been helpful or appropriate.

Try this now:

If you have a recording of a one-to-one meeting or supervision or coaching session listen to it, paying specific attention to your metaphors. Then ask yourself the clean questions in the diagram above to see what new knowledge emerges. Then repeat the process listening to the metaphors of your supervisee and see what clean questions you may have asked of their metaphors.



Sarah Green is the managing director of a local web design and marketing company. Sarah has built this business over the past 10 years and has had to face considerable challenges along the way. She trained as a coach to enhance her leadership skills and to enable her to coach her direct reports.

I first supervised Sarah (using some clean language) two years ago. During one session, she spoke about one of her staff as "buzzing all over the place". I decided to ask a few questions to develop this metaphor.

QUESTION: "And when buzzing ... what kind of buzzing is that when it's all over the place?"

RESPONSE: "It's like there are ideas like bees flying round his head and they're out of control. I like the ideas he brings but feel he needs to be more in control, focus on one at a time before we all get stung."

QUESTION: "And you like the ideas he brings and feel he needs to be more in control ... and is there anything else about that control?"

RESPONSE: "Yes, I'd like to feel more in control when he comes with so many bees but it's also supporting him to stay focused."

I then asked clean language questions of each subsequent response and each symbolic representation was explored. This helped Sarah to continually expand her awareness of her metaphoric landscape.

Developing this metaphor further led Sarah to take more time with her direct report in his next coaching session.

She realized that she had been rushing the sessions at the end of the day and in a subsequent supervision session she told me: "I like getting his ideas now. While some bees are still flying about, they are fewer and he can catch them. He also came up with the idea of sending me bullet points and now I am nowhere near as worried about coping with his ideas as I was."

And in the next session: "I am eager to find out how I can support him further. The bees are still a little bit elusive. I need a hive to contain them, more structure. He is such a rich source of inspiration and I do not want to dampen his enthusiasm; however, we could all get stung if the bees aren't contained."

I asked Sarah what needed to happen for "the hive to contain them and have more structure so she could support him further without getting stung" (taking care to use her own words and to match her voice tone).

She sat for a few minutes thinking and it was obvious that she needed time and space. During this time I was hovering above (using my eagle metaphor) and mindful of my breathing, keeping still yet attentive. She finally responded: "I need to get more organized in the office and to put a structure around the way we handle meetings. I need to delegate some of the work so that I can devote more time to the one-to-one coaching sessions and to team meetings. They need to feel I am taking time to listen to them. Then I can motivate them to take on more responsibility. Yes that feels right and that way we will definitely avoid getting stung."

I encouraged her to speak about the above plans in more detail – and with these in place Sarah felt more in control of what was happening while giving her direct reports the coaching support they needed.

In this next example of clean language the focus is on the body language of the supervisee and how often small gestures or facial expressions can be explored.

In a subsequent supervision session with Sarah she was describing a period where she had been team coaching. She spoke about how the team was beginning to communicate more effectively, yet progress had been slow. During her explanation Sarah was unconsciously tapping her fingers on the table to her left, and as it was guite frequent and noticeable I asked her a clean language question about her hand movement, so I asked... And when (and I tapped on the table as she was) is there anything else about (and I tapped again) Sarah looked down at her hands and there was guite a long period of silence. "Oh was I tapping my fingers? Yes ... I suppose that shows how frustrated I am that they are not putting these strategies into practice as fast as I had hoped. Umm ...perhaps I have been unconsciously demonstrating my impatience! However, I know that people need time to embed new ways of working so I need to allow them time, yes that's been useful bringing that to conscious awareness."

I asked Sarah if there was anything else about 'being patient'. She explained that she is someone who is an activist and realizes that others need time to think things through. She said that actually seeing herself

tapping on the table had made her aware of her feelings of frustration and that she needed to grant her team a little slack.

We then explored what kind of 'patient' that was when it gave her team 'a little slack'. Sarah identified how she may encourage the members of her team without the pressure she had previously been putting on them. As I had noticed how she changed her facial expression from a frown to a smile when she used the word 'encouraging' I shared this with her by asking: "And when you (I frowned) and then you (I smiled) is there anything else about that smile when you are encouraging and giving them slack?" Sarah responded: "Oh – did I do that. Umm ... actually I am probably not encouraging enough generally. This has really made me think about my own communication. I know I show on my face what I am feeling – I'll have to watch that from now on."

I then asked Sarah what it was that she felt she was like when she was working at her best with her team (encouraging her to think about a possible metaphor for her working at her best). She surprised herself by saying: "I really think that I am like my dog. He is very patient but is no walkover and he enjoys company and having people around him. He can motivate people by gently nudging them if he needs something without being aggressive. Oh and he is a very good listener."

The session ended with a lighthearted exploration into this metaphor to really embed the feeling of what 'working at your best' really meant for Sarah.

TIP

Getting fluent in clean language and symbolic modeling takes time and patience. Just use what you feel comfortable with and keep it simple.

The benefits of using clean language in coaching supervision are that we enable supervisees to think and reflect on their behavior and actions without language interference. We help them to own the metaphors they come up with and take them away for further reflection. The ideas that supervisees generate through the use of metaphor are generally quite inventive and idiosyncratic. They stay with the supervisee who generates them and provide an anchor a long time after the sessions. Supervisees get to understand the structure of their own thinking and behavior patterns and how this impacts on their clients. After a while, they learn how to pay attention to their own patterns and behavior as they occur, and they can work out ways to change those particular patterns that are not serving them. They glean knowledge about their own subjective experience and ways of being. In addition, since as a supervisor you are only using their words combined with the clean language questions, there is nothing for them to resist. You are just co-creating an energy and exploration that feels right for them. It increases their self-awareness and provides the support for exploration into the complex areas of their work covered by the Full Spectrum Model of supervision.

Try asking your supervisees this question slowly:

"When you are coaching/working at your best, you're like ... what?"

- Working at Your Best, Caitlin Walker Training Attention Ltd

TIP

My own experience

When I had my own metaphors explored by my clean supervisor Marian Way of Clean Learning, I often came up with circles. Quite often the sun was part of the picture and I frequently mentioned yellow and gold. Nature played a part in my symbolic landscape, for example, the sea, its tides and its variety of moods. On one occasion I used a tree as the basis for building my new website. The tree had extended branches and I cut them down from six to three. These images have stayed with me and enabled me to relate to my experiences on a much deeper level.

As a coach supervisor I keep my image of a golden eagle. I visualize myself hovering above, keeping the bigger picture and yet being able to swoop down to support and challenge when needed. This helps me to keep my distance and reminds me to stay calm and focused. It also allows me to focus on all that surrounds my supervisee so that I am operating above the issues, not directly involved in them.

As a supervisor, try asking yourself this question: "When I am supervising at my best, what is it that I feel I am like?" See if you can create a powerful image for yourself as a supervisor.

When we ask Clean Language questions it encourages a heightened state of self-awareness, a sense of connecting with uncovered aspects of ourselves. If we can show others how to tap into the richness of their unconscious in a balanced mindful state, this is where real transformation happens. Supporting others to find their own metaphors is infinitely fascinating and revealing. It takes them to previously unexplored places, as in the case study above. It enables them to take away a powerful image that is a part of their own identity.



My supervisee is the owner of a coaching and training business. He employs several coaches/trainers and has developed a very close relationship with one of his staff. They have been close friends for more than 10 years. Now that my supervisee is downsizing he needs to let his close friend and employee go. He wants to be supportive but he feels that it will be difficult for his friend to find other employment as he is in his mid-50s. As his supervisor I work mainly with the challenges and client situations he brings but also with the management of his business and staff

I asked my supervisee (Alan) if he would like to try a different approach using image and metaphor.

I explained that this way of working could throw a different light on the relationship and may assist him in his exploration. He was very willing to do this and I then explained a little about how clean language worked by asking questions in a specific way to encourage the use of metaphor.

I asked him several clean questions about the relationship between himself and his employee (Tom). We continued the session for about half an hour and then, using his words, I asked, "As the relationship is close and you need to let Tom go, that's a relationship like ... what?" (encouraging an image to emerge).

Alan looked off into the distance and slowly replied that the relationship was like two bikes riding side by side but that he felt that they were about to go down different paths. He could see that one path (his own) was fairly smooth and easy to ride down while the

other (Tom's) was full of stones, was overgrown and was generally difficult.

I noticed how he had really frowned when describing the difficult path and how this had made him tense. He also used gestures to show the stony path. After reflecting back his words and gestures, yet wanting to encourage a desired outcome, I asked Alan what he wanted to have happen in this situation. His answer surprised him. He said that he wanted to clear the path for his friend so that he could ride on easily. He began to explain various ideas he had that he felt he could put in place so Tom would feel supported. His face lit up and he said he could also ask a member of his team to give him some exit coaching. He realized he had been focused on his idea of a tough ride in the future for Tom and had not seen what was possible for him right now.

During the session we developed more specifically how he may clear the path as well as how he would involve Tom in the clearing process. Alan said that this image of how they would clear the path would help him to let Tom go. He realized that instead of focusing on the redundancy he would listen to Tom's concerns and find out what ideas Tom had going forward. We developed his metaphor further to discover what kind of path he would provide for Tom. The path then became smoother and longer as he saw them co-creating an exit plan. Alan decided that he would be encouraging while ensuring that he did not take on all of the responsibility. This redundancy no longer felt as if he was pushing his

friend along a rough path. Instead Alan recognized it as an unavoidable decision that had arisen due to the economic climate and felt that together they would see it through.

This more meditative approach to supervision allows images and reflections to come into play that may otherwise remain hidden. It offers another dimension to our work by encouraging the supervisee to enter a more contemplative state. In this state the unconscious mind can reveal images, allowing transformation to occur. By inviting the supervisee to enter into this mindful state and by explaining the process we will both enjoy a rich, rewarding experience.

It is worth mentioning here that one of the joys of this approach is the deep learning experienced by the supervisor. As professionals we learn and grow from our supervisees as we observe their challenges and discoveries. We will never know for sure how the minds of our supervisees are working. They inhabit different realities and they are influenced by different beliefs and cultures. The way we deal with an issue may not be the right method for those we supervise. It would be intrusive to impose our own ways of working and being mindful and present allows us to take a more objective stance. Just to notice their inner experience, withholding judgment and our own ideas allows us to develop our own skills further. It broadens our horizons and shows us ways of being we have never before encountered. It is indeed a privileged position and we can always be surprised by the paths we are led to discover.

A coaching supervision tool

One NLP technique is useful for allowing supervisees to see things from different perspectives. In this way we can allow the supervisee to view the situations, relationships, challenges, and so forth from a variety of positions. This enables the supervisee to 'place himself/herself' in the positions described below. It allows him or her to get an objective view and to reflect and inhabit the different perspectives.

The first position is the perceptual position of ourselves: what we see, hear, feel, taste and smell, plus what we believe, our capabilities, our behaviors, and so forth.

Here we ask the supervisee to place himself/herself where he or she feels comfortable and to describe the situation from the coach's viewpoint.

The second perceptual position is that of another. The 'another' can be a person, an animal, a vegetable or a mineral and it can be real, imagined or remembered. It could be a character from a novel or a movie, a supportive mentor or a coach, or any number of archetypal roles.

Here we ask the supervisee to position himself/herself as if he or she was the 'another' – usually the client – in relation to where he or she has placed himself/herself. Then we ask him or her to reflect on and describe the situation from this viewpoint. It is important that he or she *becomes the 'another'* and speaks as if he or she were the 'another' – not as an observer.

The third perceptual position is of an observer. An observer can be a fair witness, real or imagined, with the ability to perceive in a non-judgmental and well-intentioned way. Here we again ask the supervisee to take on the persona of the observer and to reflect and describe what he or she sees, feels, hears and knows about the situation/issue/challenge from this position.

The forth perceptual position is of the larger system or systems. The system (that can also be the organization) can see all of the other positions at once, as in the bigger picture, and they can perceive such things as relationships between other positions, effects on the system itself and systems within systems to any level of magnitude, large or small.

Once the supervisee has taken the first three positions we encourage him or her to take a helicopter view and to notice and reflect on what he or she can now see, hear, feel and know about this situation (that could be from the organizational perspective or whatever he or she feels is appropriate).

The final step is to take the supervisee back to his or her first position as coach and to ask him or her what he or she now sees, hears, feels and knows from here.

This is a very effective tool for coaching supervision as it allows the supervisee to experience and embody the client situation. It gives him or her an insight into the world of the client and the organization and often throws light on otherwise hidden corners of the issues/situation/relationships/ethics/contract.

Finally letting go of our own fear of making the right intervention or asking the right question will greatly enhance the process. When we are mindful of our own chatter and when we are able to relax and let go to let come, we become physically still and more attuned to the present moment. Our confidence returns and we produce the quiet energy highlighted by the FSM that is so vital to the coaching supervision process. Using clean language is masterful in allowing us to stand back, observe and respectfully challenge when appropriate.



If we focus on our own anxieties and constantly wonder if we are 'good enough' as supervisors we will stifle our growth. Instead we should focus on the incredible learning journey that supervision provides.

The questions and interventions all arise from the supervisee and his or her words. When this is done with courage and moment-to-moment awareness, there is a fluidity and simplicity in the way that images occur. We journey together, co-creating this safe, reflective space while discovering other landscapes and while adding new learning and perspectives.

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Full Spectrum Supervision

This book is written by qualified, experienced professional supervisors; their wisdom and skill is evident in every chapter. Full Spectrum Supervision takes the reader into the heart of reflective practice and provides fascinating insights into the complexities of this transformative work. The book offers the reader a unique view of what actually happens in supervision and shares many new and practical exercises; these can be used by a wide range of professionals and adapted to make your practice stronger. The case studies illuminate key skills that have emerged from mature practice.

Through exploring the Full Spectrum Model in these chapters, the reader will take away new ways of relating to and developing people. If you work with people and want to build your professional skills and your capacity to engage staff or clients, then this is the book for you. The book is generous, offering many new perspectives on supervision, new interventions, new maps and models which demonstrate the authors' original thinking and their commitment to best practice.

"Supportive, generative, stretching and energising - regular supervision is simply essential for any coach who's serious about developing deep understanding, professionalism and effectiveness with their clients."

Linda Aspey, President of AICTP (Assoc. of Integrative Coach-Therapist Professionals)

"The ability to reflect carefully on one's work with an expert third party is crucial to maintaining coaching and mentoring standards.

I see it as a professional duty to both clients and oneself."

Peter Neville Lewis,

Founder - Principled Consulting. Director. Board & SMT advice Ethical & Risk Culture & Strategy.

"Who you are, is how you supervise"





Edna Murdoch is an experienced coach and a pioneer in the field of coaching supervision. She is founder and director of the Coaching Supervision Academy, which runs an accredited and internationally successful, supervision programme. Her conference

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