**Task 2 – Single Session Case Study**

**Introduction:**

The purpose of supervision is to support the supervisee in their work and with their clients. For this reason the first and last sections of this case study focus on the supervisee and the feedback that they offered. Similarly the third section is devoted to describing what the supervisee was and was not seeking from supervision. These ‘ground rules’ and the contract for this case study were collaboratively developed at the outset of the supervision session. Sections on Session Structure and the Body of the Session paint with broad strokes the ‘landscape’ of the session. As the session evolved, what emerged was a brad but core theme: communication. This theme is addressed in the final section of the session and is transcribed and analysed in section five.

The structure of this case study reflects the structure of our supervision session and how this met the needs of the supervisee. I conclude the case study by highlighting the components of the process that best supported me to support my supervisee: S.

**1. The Supervisee and the Session Context:**

S provided written consent (see Appendix A) for both participation in and the recording of the supervision session. The contract S and I developed collaboratively for the session (see Appendix B) reflects the fact that this is a single supervision session. The session is an example of external supervision from a counsellor in private practice. S is a social worker and he has an internal supervisor who is responsible for his ongoing supervision and development. His internal supervisor is also counsellor trained. Her focus is principally on S’s work performance. Although she encourages S to “do extra” and to be “different”, nevertheless, monitoring his personal or professional development are given less priority.

S has a strong identity as a sixth generation “kiwi”. His European heritage is secondary. Both his father and paternal grandfather fought in a world war and S commented that should there be a world war in his lifetime he would continue this family tradition of military contribution.

S was raised in a small farming community that included one store and a school. S described the community as one where “everyone looked after everyone else”. S is the first generation of his family to live in a city area.

S is single and has his own home where he lives together with his brother. He has been a competitive runner for more than twenty years and has belonged to a tramping club throughout his life. These are the ‘soil and branches’ that S brings to his work (Meyer, D., Ponton, R., 2006).

S is employed by an organisation that provides support and housing for intellectually handicapped individuals ranging from twenty to fifty five years of age, and some of whom also have physical disabilities. A small number of S’s clients are living independently and are provided with minimal services. His client’s needs are varied and complex. One of his clients, for example, is both intellectually handicapped and almost entirely blind. This poses numerous practical challenges. Another is prone to epileptic fits if exposed to noisy environments. Some clients also have phobias that need to be accommodated such as his client with Aspergers Syndrome who becomes easily distressed in crowds.

S’s role is to help such clients to achieve a sense of social inclusion. He assists his clients in gaining experience of the work place, sports and hobbies. Therefore, S needs to understand clients’ individual disabilities and/or inherent limitations and what they need in order to feel secure. S needs to be aware of the prejudices they face and how he can skill his clients to deal with these.

Toward such facilitations, S is required to formulate short, clear instructions to minimise confusion. He works from a small office in his work place and also from locked office spaces in each of the managed homes in which his clients live. Within the homes he is responsible for monitoring client’s medication and the security of their money. S is provided with a company vehicle and enjoys the mobility his work involves. S considers his work environment supportive ‘fertile soil’ that provides him with a ‘strong trunk’ (Meyer, D., and Ponton, R., 2006).

Attending to S and his work context allowed me to personalise the supervision such that it was culturally sensitive and appropriate to his developmental level (Magnuson et. al., 2000, Carroll, 2009). With Stoltenberg and Oklahoma (2005), I believe that it is important to attend to a practitioners developmental level. I also find it judicious not to assume that such models will predict what any individual supervisee needs.

**2. The Session Structure:**

S is a social worker whose practice is governed by the New Zealand Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (NZASW, 1993), which I have reviewed. S has had varied experiences of supervision. Further, this session was specific to our joint educational process in which we acted as supervisors for each other for a single session, an atypical context. Consequently I started the session by thoroughly clarifying what S’s expectations were with respect to the supervisor-supervisee relationship and supervision process. Establishing these ‘ground rules’, like developing the contract was a collaborative process that I hoped would help build an effective supervisory alliance (Gard and Lewis, 2008).

In the body of the session we addressed three specific issues that fell into three areas: professional development, client work and work place dynamics. At the outset of the session S introduced the first two issues and the third surfaced after the others were addressed.

The theme of communication emerged from my experience of working with S and from the agenda items. Accordingly, the last section of the session was devoted to exploring communication and I chose to transcribe this because it embodies the rest of the session and is the section in which I am the most active (Omand, 2010).

I consider the session was well-structured and kept to the agenda established at the outset whilst simultaneously allowing sufficient flexibility to tackle the general theme of communication that emerged and the extra issue that arose (Proctor, 1991). The session was contained within the allotted time and S commented that he felt comfortable in my office space (Omand, 2010).

**3. Ground Rules:**

We both acknowledged the confidentiality of the session. In general, S requested that I supervise him with respect to professional development and self care and monitor sources of stress. S appreciates a supervisor who has skills and experience that he can learn from. He requested that I inform and guide him with respect to his practice, to ensure that he is practicing safely, that I address any potential ethical issues and facilitate him to tackle issues arising from his workplace. S also enjoys using supervision as an opportunity to celebrate his work. He values supervision that is reflective and attends to broader issues. S asked me to strike a balance between being comfortable and challenging, neither lacking in analysis or overly critical.

The personal characteristics S appreciates in a supervisor include openness and transparency, warmth and an easy rapport, a friendly demeanour, the ability to laugh, empathise, listen actively and focus; someone who is encouraging, supportive and nurturing, particularly when S is feeling vulnerable.

I was surprised by S’s request that I help with “wording things that I can’t word, so you being articulate”, as I tend to assume that a therapist will be verbally articulate. S articulates through his actions. This strikes me as entirely appropriate for a social worker and is a strong aspect of his individual style that needs to be respected (Vallance, 2004). This highlighted the difference between our principle modalities. Counselling is a clearly bracketed space separate from the rest of a person’s life where, principally, talking forms of therapy are engaged. Social work involves action interventions. A learning edge for me in supervising a social worker is learning to listen for the action content of their work. In Gary Chapman’s terms one of his principle ‘love languages’ appears to be ‘acts of service’ (Chapman, 2010). Perhaps it is no coincidence that S was raised in a community where ‘everyone helped each other’ (Wheeler, 2002).

S asked we not use this supervision session to explore any personal issues and agreed that personal issues would be addressed separately. He was happy to benefit from the cross-fertilisation that is available when working with a supervisor from another discipline. I appreciated S offering an attitude of openness and transparency and felt confident that S was comfortable enough to discuss any relevant aspects of his practice. I also requested that S come prepared for the session. Vallance (2004) comments that it is fundamental to good quality supervision that the counsellor knows what they want and that the supervisor allows the counsellor’s needs to ‘drive’ the process. These claims were equally relevant in the present context. I asked that S be willing to attend to any parallel processes, issues of projection or transference within our relationship and he asked the same of me.

**4. The Body of the Session: Agenda Items**

Gard and Lewis (2008) comment: “A corollary to this approach [compassionate supervision] is the establishment of an atmosphere of curiosity, respect, and excitement about the work that is most easily achieved when the supervisor involves the supervisee in the “fun” of investigation and exploration” (2008, p. 49) Throughout the body of the session I aimed to be curious and exploring rather than interrogative; to create an atmosphere in which S could feel comfortable and relate issues without a fear of being criticised.

My supervisor has taught me his strategy for consistently making work feel like fun: always focus on the positive. The first agenda item discussed was S’s desire to establish a peer-supervision group. Initially S made several negative statements. I encouraged S to ‘focus on the positive’ and affirmed his intentions and supported his vulnerability. I have found that encouraging myself, my clients and my supervisees to focus on the positive is a powerful way to counteract the “insidious, destructive, yet normative force of subjective negative self-appraisal” (Theriault and Gazzola, 2006).

I was able to inform S’s practice by offering him managerial and administrative suggestions with respect to setting up the peer-supervision group. I encouraged S to resource himself and facilitated an opportunity for S to engage in self-supervision by asking him what advice he would give someone in his position given the personal challenges he faced. Like Omand (2010) I believe that such independent learning is important to the development the supervisee’s skills as a practitioner and to enhance the supervisee-supervisor relationship.

An opportunity to be challenging in supervision arose whilst discussing the item of the agenda wherein S described a client as “resistant”. I listened actively, encouraging S to skill himself, engage in self-disclosure. I modelled my analysis processes garnered from similar clients and suggested S try a creative approach to this “resistant” client. This was an opportunity for me to highlight shared expertise. My IHC work experience and involvement with the Riding for the Disabled Association contributed substantially to my ability to provide S with appropriate supervision with respect to this client. Like my experience in management, these experiences form some of the branches that I can extend towards my supervisees to connect with their context (Meyer, D., and Ponton, R., 2006).

The third issue discussed was S’s discomfort with respect to feedback received from a colleague. I listened actively as S articulated his experience and decided not to intervene at this point as S was not requesting assistance with the issue at this point. This is the sort of issue I would make a note of for future reference, if necessary.

**5. Final Theme: Communication**

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| Verbatim transcript | Intentions during session | Retrospective reflections |
| 46.50 min: A: So coming back to some of what you were saying before and the motivation for setting up the peer-supervision, that your sense is that there are aspects of communication happening within your organisation it would seem that are missing. And you have talked about the lack of face-to-face direct interaction. Yeah?  S: Yip  A: Ah, I’m curious about what you need for communication to be successful. Some people have different communication styles. Some people need to see a person’s face to understand what they are actually conveying.  S:Yip  A: Other people don’t really need to see a person’s face at all. They listen to their voice and it’s the voice that conveys what’s important about the communication. What do you know about yourself in terms of what you need for communication to go well?  S: Oh, for me obviously it’s the face-to-face  A: face-to-face  S: Which is the peer-supervision thing. Um, in an ideal world  A: Yes  S: It would be all that (face-to-face communication) but obviously you can’t, you can’t have that. You know, you’ve got to send email some times, you’ve got to ring people on the phone. Um, yip, so yeah obviously the face-to-face-and you know, if there is any misunderstandings it can be dealt with straight away  A: aha  S: or you can get their meaning of what they’re saying  A: ok, so the setting up the peer-supervision will introduce more  S: mmm  A: face-to-face communication  within the organisation which is going to be of benefit to you.  S: Yes  A: Are there also ways that you can on an every day basis increase the amount of communication you get to do face-to-face with people.  S: (pause) That’s something I’d like to bring up at the peer-supervision of what we can do  A: ok  S: that, ah, that, you know even eliminating unnecessary communication, um, yeah, that’s what I want to explore so I haven’t got the answer but that’s the question I’ll be bringing to the peer-supervision, yeah.  A: ok  S: To get other ideas.  A: Ah ha, ah ha, so, you know, in my role as someone who is reflecting from a bit more of an objective standpoint then I’m hearing that one of the issues here is literally, just, communication. The nuts and bolts. How is communication functioning in our organisation or not? And, what does S need for communication to go well for S.  S: yip  A: One side of that is that you like face-to-face communication  S: mmhhm  A: You like to receive that and the other part of that can be perhaps there are ways that you can skill yourself so that you can be an effective communicator in other ways?  S: Yes, yip yip, yeah  A: It’s just a thought  S: So, um, yeah that’s something that’s worth exploring for me, um, and my challenge is to when I set up this group is to market that so other people see, yes, this is worth looking at  A; yip  S: yeah, mmm  A: and on that front, just a few weeks ago actually we had ah, breakdowns of communication occurring in my office environment and I had to sit back and go hmmm, you know on a meta-level what needs attended to here and so I did some poking around on the net and I asked some colleagues and I found um, a quiz on the net  S: Oh yeah  A: and it’s a quiz that someone can sit down and do and it only takes a few minutes and its designed by a chap called Gary Chapman (spelling): G A R Y C H A P M A N and he has what he calls the five love languages  S: Oh, right, so if I put five love languages  A: into  S: the computer  A: yip, I can also now give you some references  S: oh yip yeah  A: because I now know, I’ve tracked down his books and I’ve actually ordered them so I could  S: Ahh ah ha  A: lend you some of his books some time  S:yip  A: and um, Gary Chapman has come up with these five love languages. They are the five ways in which people easily communicate and feel heard and appreciated  S: mmhhm  A: so that might be some material that is of value in your situation as well  S: Oh yeah, I’ll initially look it up and I’m curious about that to look it up  A: do the quiz  S: do the quiz  A: mmm  S: and its not a two hour quiz I hope  A: no, no, literally just a couple of minutes.  S: oh yeah  A: I’ll give you the website when we’ve finished  S: yip, yeah, and that’s fine. I’ll try that and that would give me something to go into the peer-supervision with as well, um, yip, give me more resource  A: you can possibly make it something that everybody does  S: mmm  A: some people can choose to, can do the quiz and discover what their principle love language is  S: oh yeah, and something that sounds like a little bit of fun  A: yeah, yeah  S: so its not heavy heavy  A: that’s right  S: which I, I, especially in the first session, I wouldn’t want to make it too heavy like saying these things are wrong, your at fault with blah, blah, blah, so it might be a good sort of ice-breaker if you like, iimm, yip  A: great  S: sounds good  A: ok, so I’m wondering if there’s anything else that you would like to tackle. We’ve got about 8 minutes left.  S: mmm, um, no, um, I’m pretty happy. It all seems to slot in. The um, the clash, the peer-supervision, the professional development. It sort of, the jigsaw is sort of coming together. I mean I’ve still got a bit of work to do but, yeah  A: ok  S: all good  A: well I’ll look forward to um hearing any progress or um any ways in which I can offer any more support to you on any of those issues and, um, I’ll give you some references for Gary  S: mmm  A: and um, we can take it from there.  S: sounds good, brilliant  A: fabulous, thanks heaps S  S: that’s all right (recorder stopped) | I have been reflecting on my experience of working with S and the overarching themes that are emerging from the agenda items discussed. I chose to explore the theme of communication. First, I want to understand S’s experience of communication. I have observed that he reads my face and my body language closely and that having this visual information seems to assist his verbal articulation. I am actively avoiding judgement around the adequacy or otherwise of S’s communication skills. I want to demonstrate acceptance of difference (Pepper, 1996).  Here I illustrate communication through examples and ‘manufacture uncertainty’ to promote learning (Carroll, 2009). S has requested my help with articulation. By giving S examples I wish to support his reflective process about articulation and provide him with ‘vocabulary’ with which to express.  S’s body language suddenly relaxed, he let go of tension in his shoulders and hands, the tone of his voice changed and more colour came back to his face (Petitmengin and Bitbol, 2009). This was an ‘ah ha’ moment, an ‘opening’ in his awareness (Owen, D., 2008, Petitmengin-Peaugeot, C., 1999). Paradoxically, the importance of face-to-face is both obvious and surprising for S.  This moment has not occurred in isolation. It has emerged from the synthesis of material across and the deepening process of the whole session.  I am concerned that S is making an assumption that the “peer-supervision thing” is necessarily about face-to-face communication.  I am immediately reminded of an x-partner who had mild Aspersers and found communication by phone distressing. People have different communication needs. I refocus on S.  I am concerned to acknowledge the value of the peer-supervision group for meeting S’s needs. This is a genuine need. I want to avoid implying that S just needs to be more like others.  I want to encourage S to find ways to enhance his experience of his workplace by reflecting on how he can adapt his workplace and his way of being in that workplace to better meet his needs.  I personally relate to the issue of unnecessary communication. This is part of the communication frustrations S is experiencing.  I now have a sense of S’s experience of communication and chose to begin an educational intervention (Pepper, 1996) as part of being a supervisor who is reflective and addresses broader themes.  This is how I think S can grow (Gray, 2007). Even if some modes of communication are less natural for him I sense he could get considerable value from actively developing these less familiar modes.  I’m pleased at this positive response from S. It suggests that this is a useful intervention that has engaged him.  I offer self-disclosure to normalise S’s experience and to model (Gray, 2007) for him the processes I use to enhance his independence. I am facilitating learning ‘by example’ (Carroll, 2009).  I have been considering Marshall Rosenburg’s non-violent communication as potentially useful material for S. I decide Gary Chapman’s work is a more appropriate fit for S’s needs. S is relating a lack of communication or ineffectual communication rather than conflict.  S has engaged and extended my input. This is very positive feedback and an opportunity to celebrate potential new professional and personal growth.  I have checked that all agenda issues have been covered. Often people remember or think of things during a session so I have a routine of checking in about whether there is anything else that needs discussed. It is also an invitation towards completing the session.  The cycle of the session feels complete. S recognises this and I am also satisfied that there are no significant issues outstanding. I am also aware that S is beginning to look saturated. I close the session at 54 minutes total.  I will see S in other contexts so I am happy to receive feedback on his progress.  I want to acknowledge S for facing the challenges that teaming up with me for this work have involved: the recording process, organisational challenges and working with someone fast paced and intense. I am genuinely grateful for the effort S has made. | I find sessions involve a rhythm of opening, unfolding and closing. Often the early part of the session involves settling in and getting clear about what material needs attended to. The body of the session attends to specific issues and themes that unfold. ‘Ah ha’ moments, seem to arise throughout with insight and wisdom emerging towards the end of the session. Educational input tends also to occur later in a session.  When I reviewed the recording it sounded flat and like the communication S was more one-sided than I experienced during the session. In person the session seemed far more alive. On reflection I consider this is because much of the communication involved is not on the recording. S is a visual communicator. In future I would use video recording for sessions. This medium captures more of what is conveyed (Haggerty and Hilsenroth, 2011). To explain the use of a potentially more invasive recording technology I would stress that my experience suggests video represents the session more accurately.  Broaching the theme of communication asked me to ‘trust the wisdom’ that came. Sitting back and observing the broader picture, being prepared to step beyond *techne* and into *phronesis* (Smythe et. al., 2008, p.18).  Gard, and Lewis, (2008) comment “one way to facilitate a compassionate supervisory atmosphere is to decrease the power differential through judicious self-disclosure by the supervisor about his or her practice” (2008, p.48). Although I had no intention of creating a power differential, by virtue of the fact that I am supervising S this can arise. On reflection I see that self-disclosure helped S relax and become curious about me. This enhanced the supervisory alliance. I offered self-disclosure from a feeling of compassion and this enhanced the compassionate supervisory atmosphere.  Suggesting materials provided an opportunity for me to share my skills and experience. |

**6. Feedback**

S was relaxed and actively engaged throughout the session. His body language was open and positive. S’s willingness to explore the issue of communication, in particular, suggests that I struck an appropriate level of challenge. At several points S reflected back to me his intention to take up my suggestions and even extended them. These are instances within the session of positive feedback and they are mirrored in S’s words above at the closing of the session. After we had both completed and transcribed our sessions I suggested that, as supervisees, we review the recorded sessions and complete supervision evaluation forms (see Appendix C). This was a rare opportunity to receive feedback on my supervision from someone who had also acted as my supervisor. S’s feedback is generous and positive. S has run his first peer-supervision session successfully.

**Conclusion:**

My hope is that this session has contributed variety to S’s existing supervisory arrangements (Butterfield, 2001). Equally I recognise the value of consistent supervision (Butterfield, 2001). Only over a number of sessions could I genuinely assess whether communication is a key issue for S and whether the supervision offered has enhanced S’s practice. Conversely, the feedback available within the session and from the supervision evaluation forms was surprisingly useful (Duncan et. al, 2003, Carroll, 2009). This case study has highlighted the value of getting to know the supervisee and their work, establishing clear ground rules, maintaining a well structured session and also allowing the wisdom that comes to emerge.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

The Consent Form for this supervision session is included in a separate envelope with the assignment.

APPENDIX B: SUPERVISION CONTRACT

APPENDIX C: SUPERVISION FEEDBACK FORMS