

How to be a supervisee

Dr Mish

Hello and welcome. You're listening to the craft of supervision. My name is Dr. Mish and I'm a psychotherapist and supervisor. And I have a real passion and enthusiasm for all things clinical supervision. So I thought I'd bring my enthusiasm for the subject to this podcast. And here I'll invite you to come on a bit of a journey with me to explore this wonderful world of supervision, through looking at the different models through the research, the debates, and any issues that come up when we're practising supervision. I'm really glad to be here. And I hope it will be useful for you too. So let's go. Welcome once again, to the listeners who are interested in supervision. Good to have you here. Today's episode is all about how to be a supervisee. This might seem like a little bit of a strange focus. But in my experience of being a supervising, when I did my core psychotherapy training, there was no guidance around what you needed to prep for or how to approach supervision, it was kind of just given to us as a, this is what you're going to do. As part of your day, you will go and have supervision. And I wonder if there was a assumption in there about what supervision was and how our supervisees we needed to approach it. Now bear in mind that I'd had an experience of supervision already. So when I did my core therapeutic training, I'd already had supervision when I was in a probation officer role. So luckily, for me, I knew some off supervision, but also bear in mind that I was approaching it from an entirely different professional perspective. On the one hand, with being in the probation service, I was approaching it from pretty much just looking after my well being, and talking to some of the challenges and successes I've had. But as a trainee counsellor and psychotherapist, it felt like a very, very different approach. And I've been thinking about why this felt so different. I think it's because at the time, I was learning a new skill sets of working therapeutically with people, I just started practising in a voluntary role. And I was acutely aware that being in supervision meant that there was a judgement element that came with it. So when we were on the course, the course tutors, were also supervisors. And there was clearly an element of evaluation that perhaps I hadn't necessarily prepared for and wasn't quite aware that that be the case. So I'm mindful that obviously, therapy chaining has changed, has adapted. But I'm also conscious that I'd still do here that some places don't really spell out how to be a supervisee. Not only what supervision is, but kind of how to do it. And this is why I thought it'd be a really good idea for me to spend a little bit of time with you today, discussing this. So as the supervisee, I would encourage you to start thinking about who you are, in terms of your learning, this is probably a really, really good place to start, because you need to know how you like to learn in order to get the most from your supervision. One of the difficulties with this, of course, is that a lot of voluntary agencies where you may be starting your practice as a training, and a lot of the training institutions may expect you to just be happy with whichever supervisor you get given. And I actually have a bit of a problem about this, to be honest, because I'm curious as to why supervise supervising doesn't have autonomy in terms of choosing their supervisor. So if wherever you are training, if they say you must have this supervisor, you can ask why and whether there are alternatives and what those alternatives are. So don't be afraid to stand up for your learning experience because essentially one of the first really crucial parts of your journey within the therapy world we We'll be your initial relationship with your supervisor, because one of the things that really helps form you, as a therapist are these supervisory relationships. So be really

careful about who that relationship is with. So when training providers, or places where you will be practising your to achieve your hours in supervision when they say this is who your supervisor is, and there you go, Yeah, I suppose I have a little bit of an issue about that. So I would encourage you to think about how you learn. So for your supervisees out there, just have a moment, and I think, hang on, how do I learn best? Do I learn in a way where someone shows me what to do? Where we discuss it? Do I need to go and reflect? Do I need to try things out in the supervisory space? And what's your experience in been like in learning environments before? Because one of the things that we must remember is supervision is a learning environment. So to this end, it's really important to have a think about what sort of supervisory relationship do you want? What sort of supervisory relationship do you need in terms of your professional development? Often, I found that as a supervisee, when I was in training, I needed a lot of encouragement, a lot of reassurance, some challenging as well. But I needed someone that kind of felt like they were on my side, and helping me through the learning process, rather than telling me off, and I have had the experience of feeling told off in supervision. And it was an interesting experience. And I may come on to that at some point. But really have a think about what sort of relationship do you want? Do you want a supervisor that is the same modality as your training in often this is something that's encouraged when you're a trainee. And I can completely say see why that that's the benefit of seeing someone who has a understanding of the modality that you're training in, but also can broaden your approach and broaden your view if you have some one off and opposing modality. So it can be really tricky. When you're first starting out to kind of know what you want. And I suppose for supervisees, who are more seasoned practitioners, they'll have a clearer idea of the sort of supervisor that they need to improve their work. So it really is worth thinking about that initial relationship, who you want. What sort of learning environment would you like to co create with your supervisor? And what approach? Do they have to be the same modality? Do you want some humour in the room? Do you want it to be quite regimented and have a really strict structure? And how are you going to ask for that when you arrive in the supervision space? Now, these may not have been things that you've initially thought about, particularly for anyone who's new to supervision. I think those that are a bit more seasoned may well have already thought about these things. But it really, really is important to think about what you need. And at this stage, I think it's really useful to draw your attention to a textbook that is absolutely fantastic. In situating supervision from the supervisee perspective, I will put the details in the show notes, but this is a book written by Mary Creaner and Mary Creaner is someone who's done research on supervision and is one of those fellow supervision enthusiasts, I would describe Mary Creaner as because the amount of research and publications and just influencing the world of supervision clearly marks Mary Creaner out as having a specialist interest. So Mary Creaner's book is called getting the best out of supervision in counselling and psychotherapy, a guide for the supervisee. And I have to say, I really wish I'd had this book when I was starting out. So if you are someone who is starting out in supervision, I'm speaking particularly to those that are in counselling and psychotherapy, trainee roles at the moment, I would really recommend that if you're unclear on what supervision is, and how you can approach it as a supervisee, I really recommend you get this book is a real good one. And there's one particular chapter that I wanted to highlight to you all, which is chapter eight. And in it Mary takes you through a process of how to prepare for a supervision session. And she does this through looking at a certain model, which is from Bridget Proctor, who in my opinion is total supervision legend, and it's Bridget Proctor's model of looking at the formative normative and restorative framework of addressing supervision For those who are not familiar with the Proctor's functions of supervision, the formative normative and restorative essentially, I won't go into it in too

much detail here. But essentially, formative is about education and supervision. Normative refers to the kind of accountability, good practice ethical and legal considerations. And restorative is about the supportive elements of supervision so that it's offering professional and personal support. And this is the bit which is about addressing supervisee well being. So what Creaner does really cleverly is she offers some reflective exercise is about attending to each of those different aspects of Proctor's framework. So there's some reflective exercises that are our prompts, really. So she takes you through some of the formative stuff, in terms of what do I think and feel about this client? What is the theory that underpins my understanding of this client? How effective do I feel my approach is, so she offers that and then she goes on to look at whether there are any ethical considerations or any more learning that needs to happen. She then offers a few normative learning needs reflective questions. So again, looking at how is this work structured with the client? Again, looking at any legal considerations? Is there anything around the kind of management boundaries, current record keeping that sort of thing? And then restorative aspects she looks at? How do I get best support in working with this client? And what are the things that I feel are most important to present related to my own understanding of this client, and what are the things that are being brought up for me, and this aspect is really, really important because essentially, for those working therapeutically with clients, we are our work. So as the supervisee, it's really, really crucial to the professional practice of your work to bring all of those things that are being brought up for you in supervision, because one of the problems that we have in supervision is that, as a supervisor, we only have the supervisors version of events. And so we have to trust that the supervisee is going to come in and be honest and open and transparent, and all the things that would enable them to have the best learning experience. However, I'm very well aware that it's not always easy to be transparent in supervision, there is a fear that a lot of supervisees have of being judged by their supervisor of being overly scrutinised or being assessed as not competent, or fit to practice. So I understand that there can be some issues around wanting to disclose some of the difficulties and the challenges in the work. Of course, one of the things that creates some of the difficulties in being honest and transparent about the work is our own issues, that can get tangled up all of that messy stuff that I've talked about before, the stuff that gets triggered off that is difficult for us to manage. So for supervisees, if you notice that things are getting too close to personal aspects of yourself, you do need to bring that to supervision. And it's a really tricky balance to strike. So I understand that as supervisee, we may not feel like we want to bring all of our ouch moments. But I'd really, really encourage you to do so. Yeah, I appreciate that. supervisees want to feel like they're doing supervision, right? And I'm doing the inverted commas here. What is right for supervision. And it's really important to have that discussion with your supervisor. So I'd encourage if you're a supervisor, and you're thinking I've not discussed how I like to learn and how it might be difficult for me to disclose certain things. Why not discuss that with my supervisor for a little while, I really, really encourage you to be brave to go into supervision and asked to have a discussion about how best you can use that space. So some of the questions that you may want to ask your supervisor and may want to consider in thinking about supervision is what are the expectations of your supervisor? What did they expect you to bring? And what are your expectations of them so how can they support you in your learning and development and your overall well being so you can continue to do the role that you want to do. How will the supervisor know about your signs of stress? Or when you need extra support? What does the supervisor need to know about you in terms of who you are? And by that I mean all the layers of intersections about what makes you what are the key things that are important for your supervisor to know and understand about you, so that they can provide you with the best learning environment? And,

you know, I was spoken about how you learn as well, what are the bits that the supervisor really needs to know about you and, and it's always making sure that you tell them this or that you facilitate. And your supervisor facilitates a discussion for that to be had in supervision. And also, what do you want to know about your supervisor, don't be afraid to ask them about their experience, that area areas of specialist interest and who they are, don't be afraid to ask them. Because fundamentally, what you're looking for is for the right supervisory fit. Now we talk about the therapeutic fit with clients and how important it is to have a, it's kind of so difficult to describe it almost without words, a sense that the person gets you or that they can help you in some way. And that is exactly the same in supervision. So I would really encourage you to have a think about how is this supervisory relationship fitting with my needs? It's really important to get this right. So don't be afraid to ask the questions. So to sum up, these are the top tips that I would offer you if you are a supervisee either embarking on your journey of becoming a therapist, or a supervisee that is a more seasoned practitioner and wants to just revisit your experience of supervision, I'd encourage you to really sit with yourself and know how you like to learn and really connect with that. And see if you can express that in supervision so that you're owning the learning space is really, really important. Own the space and get your voice heard in supervision. What does your supervisor need to know about you because it is a collaborative, co created space to learn to reflect to grow. And as a supervisor, you've got some of the responsibility to bring your stance on all of that to the supervisory relationship, as well as the supervisor has their responsibility to encourage you to bring yourself into the supervisory relationship. So remain open to learning. Be curious about the process in supervision, and not just the content, own the space, be heard in supervision and know how you like to learn and enter the supervisory relationship with that openness and curiosity. And hopefully, you'll be met with a supervisor that embraces that approach wants to help you get the most out of your space. So good look, all of you supervisees out there. And as always, I'd really welcome any of your thoughts and feedback and any aspects of supervision that you would really like me to cover on this podcast. I've got a lot of ideas about all the different aspects that I can start to explore with you all and take you on this journey. But I would really, really welcome any of your thoughts. And if you do want to be a guest on this podcast, do let me know because I'd love to invite you to talk about your experience or your take on some of the key issues in supervision. So for now, thank you very much for listening. Go carefully, and I'll see you next time.