

# Contracting and Feedback

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# Aims of the session

- To consider why having a contract is necessary and what this may involve
- To consider feedback with trainees, methods of providing feedback, and examples.

# Building a purposeful supervisory relationship

- The contracting *process* is one of the most important tasks in the development of the supervisory relationship
- Doing it well strongly links to the quality of the subsequent relationship (Lawton, 2000)
- The contract should be negotiated early in the relationship but reviewed on a regular basis- written or discussed over time
- It may be formal and written or informal and not recorded

# A partnership

Bond and Holland (2010) Table of the Rights and Responsibilities of:

- The Supervisee
- The Supervisor e.g.
  - Right to be treated with Respect
  - Right to say no to inappropriate demands
  - Personal and professional boundaries

# Why have a contract?

- Scaife (2019) gives a number of reasons to contract for example:
  - To clarify the expectations of all parties-formal, contractual and psychological
  - To set a context of openness and negotiation
  - To set a context of shared responsibility
  - To encourage supervisees to think about the conditions that help them learn
  - To model exploring process and content
  - To clarify the evaluative role

# Contracting

In contracting a new supervisory relationship, you may want to consider the following (Hughes, 2012):

- The developmental stage of the supervisee (Stolenberg model)
- The interpersonal/relational style and learning style of the supervisee
- The supervisee's needs and preferences within supervision
- The supervisee's previous experience of supervision
- Do I have an evaluative or managerial role?

# Practicalities

- At some point during contracting process, you will need to negotiate practicalities, such as:
- How often will we meet?
- Where will we meet?
- How long will our sessions be?
- Over what time period will we meet?
- What resources and methods will we use?
- How can we let each other know if we need to cancel a session?

# Contracting (cont'd)

- Individual session contracting- responsibility, number of clients/issues to be discussed, etc.
- Clarity about the reduction of harm as paramount and my need to act if necessary
- Ways of developing mutual trust (e.g., ‘My image of successful supervision is.....’, ‘What I fear happening in supervision is....’)



# Contracting (cont'd)

- Ways of constructively challenging when appropriate
- Transference and countertransference issues- how we can deal with personal issues that arise (for both of us)
- Confidentiality boundaries
- Working with differences
- Negotiation regarding the use of the parallel process e.g. supervision models
- How to give feedback...

# The ‘psychological contract’

- “The perceptions of the two parties... of what their mutual obligations are towards each other” (Guest and Conway, 2002).
- May often be informal and imprecise: they may be inferred from actions or from what has happened in the past
- These are the implicit expectations of supervisor and supervisee towards each other – these are the most important issues to be addressed if supervisory relationship is to be effective.

# The Psychological contract

- Role relationship and supervisory alliance
- Heading off problems:
  - Evaluation and review
  - The busy supervisor
  - Differences of opinion
  - Personal characteristics
  - Supervisor preferences and characteristics

# The 'reluctant' supervisee

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfWvWDymehY&t=62s>

# Reflections in groups

I'm interested in your ideas and thoughts about:

- What sort of relationship has developed between the supervisor and supervisee?
- How well do you think the contract has been negotiated in this relationship?
- To what extent do you think the 'psychological contract' has been missed out?
- What are you curious about as a supervisor/ what do you think would be helpful to know more about this relationship or context?
- What assumptions do you make about the supervisor or supervisee's context?
- Would you make different assumptions if you changed the participants gender/ ethnicity/ perceived class?

# Pitfalls (Bond and Holland, 2011)

- Copying a contract
- Making 'heavy weather' of it
- Forgetting about it
- Not making a contract
- Vague comments
- Avoidance of discomfort?

What do trainees say?

# Preparation and collaboration

- I think that contracting can be forgotten and so gets tacked on the end of the first supervision session and not given appropriate/dedicated time to. It can take longer than you think if you want to do it properly and so it's been helpful when supervisors have acknowledged this. It also makes you feel like they are taking it seriously and you are valued when they dedicate time to complete it properly.
- I personally think that the contracting bit can be a bit awkward, because at the point when you're first doing it you don't really know your supervisor (which I guess is the point). ...It doesn't work so well when supervisors totally rely on the trainee to complete the contract and bring the discussion points.
- ..have a pre-defined structure - it helps to ask some of the questions that you might find a bit more difficult to ask at first This also makes you think about things you might not normally ask too.



# Thinking about the relationship

- ..having a conversation about what annoys a supervisor. And honest reflections back about what I find difficult in a supervisor (although appreciate not everyone might be as comfortable to have those discussions)
- ..if I felt we weren't working well together or if I was really worried about something. We spent time during contracting thinking about how I might bring up that conversation and how they might notice if something was wrong.
- I also like the explicit permission and encouragement to honestly feedback about my supervisory experience, before placement is over!

# Openness to differences

- I have found it really helpful when supervisors have shown self-awareness about their usual style of supervision and maybe feedback they have had in the past and sounded out how I felt about this and if this seemed as if it would work for me or if I foresaw any likely difficulties. It helped me to navigate potential differences in our styles and think about how we managed it before problems occurred.
- ...it is really respectful when supervisors are genuinely open and reflective and willing to adjust to accommodate the trainee on both a theoretical and practical level.

# Conversations about diversity and anti-racist practice- what helps?

Supervisors taking the lead...

“Supervisors naming & acknowledging the similarities and differences between myself and them (e.g. gender, ethnicity, class, age). This opened up the possibility of reflecting and considering how they impact our supervisory relationship, clinical work, and position within the team”

“Contracting to have space in supervision for PPD issues. For example, to spend time both doing a genogram or ecomap which helped create a safe space to understand aspects of diversity & how the personal and professional influence each other”

“Contracting to discuss and reflect on the origins and ideologies of the psychological theories I am using - gives social and historical context & awareness of their limitations for different, often marginalised, groups in society.”

# Conversations about diversity- what gets in the way?

Avoidance or tickboxes..

“Neither myself or my supervisor bringing up the discussion about about diversity, cultural differences and racism in relation to specific cases or more generally.”

“Although there is a point about diversity on the supervision contract, I think often supervisors and I have taken this as the diversity of clients you are working with, so it’s been quite a tick box exercise.”

“Not naming the differences/similarities between my supervisor and I and how that might impact our relationship & work.”

# Feedback

*‘When supervisees reflect on their supervision, what comes to mind most often is the quality and quantity of the feedback they received.’*

Bernard and Goodyear (2013, p. 215)

# Feedback on the Development of Competence

- Key issue in effective supervision
- Needs to be included in contracting – power, evaluative position
- Can be ‘tricky’ to get ‘right’
- Needs attention throughout the supervision of psychologists in training
- Formal and informal
- Implicit and explicit
- Linked to self appraisal
- Both a source of stress and of profound learning

# How not to give feedback...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YsaEC9QTTkA&t=236s>

# Reflections on the video

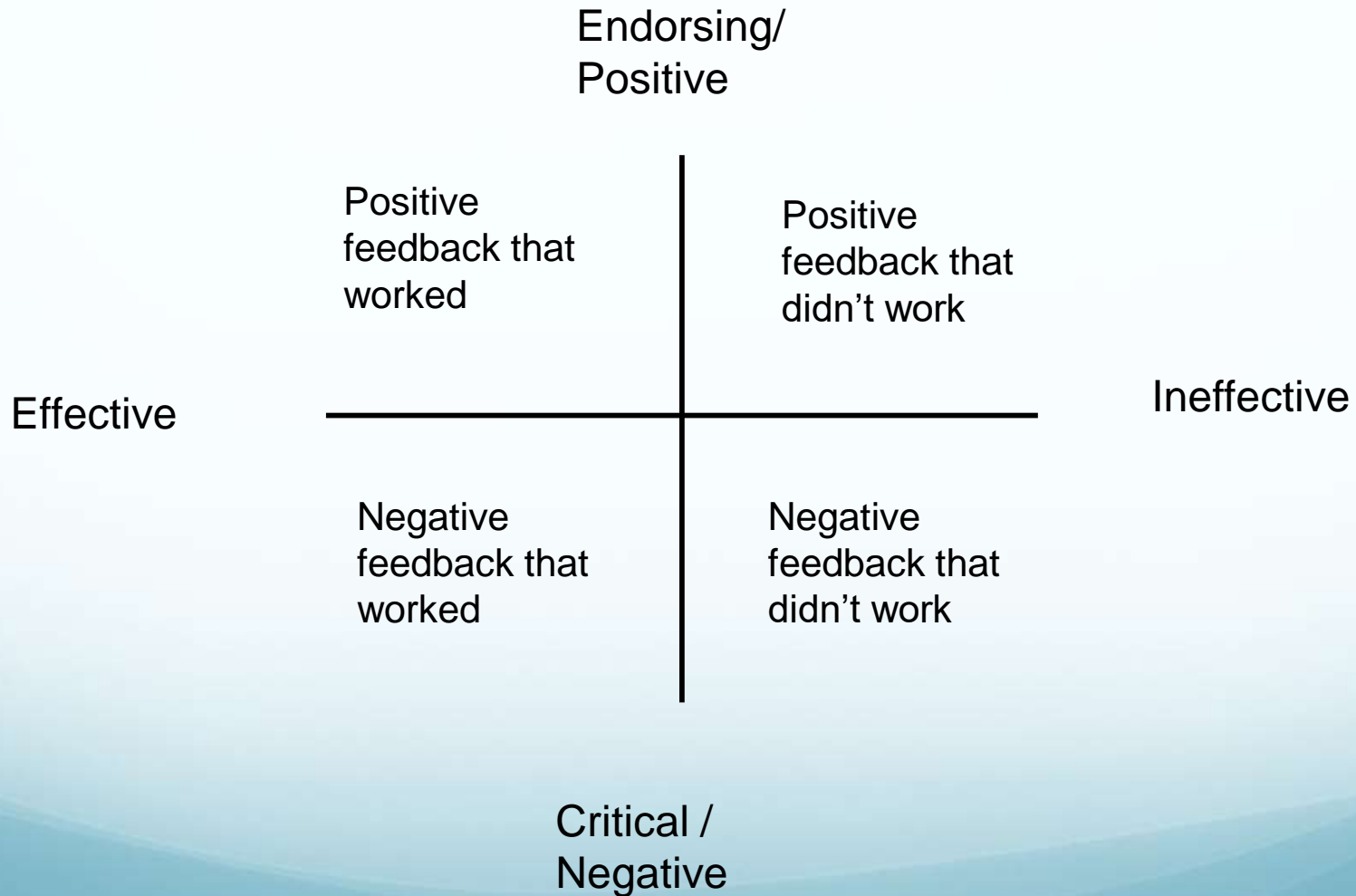
- What assumptions or biases may be being played out in this relationship?
- How might Gender differences or other aspects of Diversity have been explored at the contracting stage?



# Group Exercise: Feedback

- Think about your experience of giving and receiving feedback
  - Positive feedback – effectively given
  - Positive feedback – ineffectively given
  - Negative feedback – effectively given
  - Negative feedback – ineffectively given
- 15 mins in groups of 4 please write down examples of practice in each area

# Feedback exercise



# Pulling it all together...

‘My image of successful supervision is.....’

What do I hope for in supervision?

What do I fear in supervision?

What makes me feel uncomfortable or what might I avoid talking about?

What might help or enable those conversations?

Write down some responses to these questions as a supervisor and what I want for my supervisee

# Skills practice

What would you need to talk about at the contracting stage that would enable you and the supervisee to be in the quadrants of feedback that made a difference?

- 1 supervisee, 1 supervisor and 2 observers
- How are you going to negotiate the discussion about feedback?
- What would you like to see in the contract to reflect this discussion?
- 10 minutes to begin to negotiate your contract, 5-10 minutes to reflect together as a group. You can use the observers to ask advice mid session

## Feedback – Key Practice Recommendations (see Milne, 2009)

- Clarity (clearly positive or negative)
- Specificity (grounded in examples)
- Regularity
- Reciprocity (opportunity for 2 way feedback)
- Reflexivity (feedback to self)
- Foundation (fits with status of supervisory relationship)
- Balance (neither wholly positive nor wholly negative)
- Rectify (provides a way of making better)
- Revisit the contract where appropriate

# Another model of feedback

- CORBS (Hawkins and Shoheit, 2012)
- **C**lear
- **O**wned – owning your perception, not the truth
- **R**egular - timely
- **B**alanced – positive and negative feedback
- **S**pecific – observable examples
- And...
- **M**utual
- **R**espectful

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