



# Making the Transition to Being a Supervisor: Foreseeing, Understanding and Navigating the Road to Supervisory Excellence

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## ABSTRACT

*The transitional process that takes place when a Child and Youth Practitioner moves into their first supervisory position is one that presents many challenges and a number of exciting opportunities to increase their impact on quality care for children and families. It also presents an opportunity to help others grow and develop their practice. The new supervisor should keep in mind that the process of becoming an excellent supervisor is a developmental one which will take some time and parallel much of the developmental process they experienced as a direct practitioner. The new supervisor should be aware that excellent supervision is rooted in relationship and the same foundational practices and values of the Child and Youth Care Profession in general. This article will present a framework to help the newly appointed supervisor better understand and make this challenging and exciting transition in their career.*

## What is “Supervision”?

As the new supervisor begins their developmental process in the new role it is important to develop a clear but flexible conceptual sense of what supervision actually is. There are many definitions and frameworks out there. The new supervisor should try to examine a cross section of as many as possible in order to establish what best fits them and their program. Garfat (1992) suggests it is an “S.E.T.” format using support, education and training to view supervision as a learning process in the context of the overall process of providing quality care to children and families. Austin, (1981) defined it as a process with designated functions involving relationships to produce best possible services. Kobolt (1999) views it as a “reflective process”. Kadushin (1985) defined it as having a responsibility for administrative, supportive and educational functions.

We have developed a working definition of supervision that might be used as a model to develop supervisory practice (Delano and Shah, 2009). That definition is:

*Supervision is a professional relationship that provides support, education and monitoring of*

*quality, while creating a safe forum to reflect on professional practice. It should encourage constructive confrontation and critical thinking that informs and improves the practice of all parties. Respecting the inherent hierarchy in the relationship, it should accept the ethical responsibility to use power in a thoughtful manner. The dynamics in the supervisory relationship can create a parallel process in all other relationships including that of the client/worker.*

*Ultimately, supervision should be the vehicle to create dynamic growth, establish high professional standards and enhance quality and culturally competent services.*

If a supervisor chose to use this as a model it could serve as a guide to what skills and processes they would start to develop in their journey down the road to excellent supervision. We will work through many of the components of this definition in the remainder of the article. However, it is important to point out early that there was a large amount of thought put into being sure

the word “relationship” was in the first five words of the definition. The foundations of Child and Youth Care work are built on relationship and the supervisory role should also have a strong foundation in the relationship between the people involved.

## A Parallel Process

There are general expectations of the Child and Youth Care worker’s way of being in relationships with children (Fewster, 1990) which parallel ways in which we might expect the supervisor to be in relationship with the worker. In talking about the parallel of the direct CYC practitioner’s relationship with a child to the relationship of supervisor to CYC worker we are touching on just one of the ways that there should be the same parallels in the supervisor/worker relationship as in all other relationships throughout the program. The new CYC supervisor should bring to their new supervisory relationships everything they have learned and experienced about being in relationship with children based on foundational Child and Youth practice and values. They should be consistently aware of the parallels that should be there. In talking about the idea of parallel process in our definition we were referring to the idea

that “as the supervisor treats the worker, the worker will tend to treat the child or family”. Michael (2005) also points specifically to the importance of the supervisor role modeling good CYC practice toward the direct practitioner they are supervising.

### **Making the Decision**

Gilberg and Charles (2002) point out that the skills that make one a great Child and Youth Care practitioner serve as an excellent foundation, but will not necessarily make them a great supervisor. One of the most important steps in transitioning to being a supervisor is actually making the decision as to whether or not to accept the offer of a promotion to this new role. Far too often a program will look at a very talented and invested direct CYC practitioner and conclude the best way to reward this worker, and create an organizational message of staff development, is with a promotion. Sometimes not enough thought is given as to whether or not the skills and attributes that make the worker an excellent CYC practitioner match up well with the skills and attributes most connected to being an excellent supervisor. The result can inadvertently set up the

new supervisor for failure. Many times this is compounded if a worker that is unsure about making the move hesitates to turn down the promotion for fear of appearing ungrateful, or unmotivated, thereby possibly eliminating themselves from future offers of promotion.

Good supervisors can give answers, but the excellent ones ask the pertinent questions to elicit critical thinking. A practitioner offered a promotion to supervisor should begin practicing that quality before even accepting the position. When the offer of promotion is made known the CYC practitioner should self-reflect on the questions below and then ask for a meeting to explore these questions with the appropriate program people:

- a) What do you see as my strongest and weakest qualities as a direct practitioner and how will they match up with the new responsibilities I will have?
- b) Can you explain what kind of supervision I will be receiving in my new role and how often regular meetings will take place?
- c) What training will be available to me to help me grow in my new role?
- d) What new concrete

responsibilities and expectations will I have in my new role that might impact my daily lifestyle? Will there be on-call responsibilities?

- e) If I accept the position when will I actually make the move into the new role? Will I have the opportunity to meet extensively and talk with the person currently in that position to help me transition?

There may be other questions that are specific to individual programs but it is essential to get some clarity on the pertinent questions before making a final decision to accept. After getting some clarity on these the CYC practitioner should reflect on what the change in role will mean for them emotionally, as well as in their perceptions of what is important to them about the work. Lorraine Fox has talked about the distinction between “moving around” and “moving on” in our careers (Fox, 1989). Before accepting the new position a CYC worker should consider how their new role with children and families will fit them. Do they see it as “moving on” and farther away from direct practice, or merely “moving around” to a new role in caring for children and families? Many times

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one of the most difficult transitions is being able to not do the practice as much, but to help others grow in their direct practice with children and families. Before accepting, the direct practitioner should have a good feel for how their interactions with children and families will change and if that will still be fulfilling enough for them.

Before making a final decision to accept, the worker should take a cold hard look at whether or not the extra money in the new job will be acceptable to compensate for the extra responsibilities, hours, and impact on their lifestyle. In some programs a promotion can actually mean less money as the supervisor may no longer be compensated monetarily for overtime hours because those hours would now be part of their regular job description. Taking a clear-eyed look at this before accepting can help avoid feelings of resentment down the road as the reality of the new role sets in.

If the worker accepts the promotion to be a supervisor, attention should be given to when and how that is announced. There should be careful planning with the program to coordinate the announcement so that youth/families, co-workers and others across the program find out at a similar

time. In addition to any meetings set up and informal discussions to acknowledge the transition, a thoughtfully worded announcement should go out to all pertinent parties, both inside and outside the agency, to clarify the change and outline the role of the new supervisor. Ideally the new supervisor will have input regarding how the announcement is framed. The announcement should clarify the concrete changes in role, new responsibilities, and have a congratulatory tone. If the new supervisor is to be promoted from within perhaps a letter to parents to explain the new role would be in order and, as best as possible, explain how the old role will be filled.

### **Following in the footsteps of ...**

An often overlooked facet of the transition for a new supervisor is the impact that the person they are replacing will have on their new role. Once accepting the new position consideration should be given to the following:

- a) How did the previous supervisor leave? Fired? Resigned? Retired? Promoted? No predecessor... A new position?
- b) Was the previous supervisor well-liked? Not liked? Feared?

Respected? Image in the agency?

- c) Are they still in the agency? In what role? Are they now supervising you?
- d) Did someone you are now supervising want your job?
- e) What is the program culture you are inheriting? Values? Ethics? Tone?
- f) Administrative inheritance: Meetings? Evaluations? Paperwork? Policies? Progressive discipline plan and reality?

There are no magic answers for any of these situations but it would be a good idea to make this assessment, and where appropriate the new supervisor and their supervisor should engage in discussion about possible strategies for any of these situations that apply. For instance, if a previous supervisor was extremely well liked and the program culture is positive it should signal moving at a slower pace to make changes. If the previous supervisor was unpopular the new supervisor should be careful not to feed into, or engage in, any negative discussions about their predecessor but can assume the group may be open to changes more quickly.



### **Entering a “New World”**

In many ways the transition to being a new supervisor can feel like one is entering a new world. If someone is joining a program for their first supervisory job they will have a new set of skills to learn, new responsibilities, and will also need to learn about the culture of the program they are entering. If the new supervisor is being promoted from within, many of the surroundings and dynamics will be familiar but they will require a new perspective in the supervisory role. Garfat (2001) and VanderVen (1979) point out the importance of seeing the Child and Youth Care practitioner as one who is in a relatively predictable developmental process. Phelan (2006) further suggests that this process will tend to mirror the process the new CYC supervisor goes through. The beginning CYC supervisor should view themselves in a developmental process and be patient with themselves as they learn and adjust to the new position. To help adapt to the new world they are in, a mantra for a new supervisor should be to be patient and ‘make a plan’. Some of the dynamics of this new world might entail changes in the following areas:

a) **Professional relationships:** If a person was promoted from within they will likely already have relationships and a large number of experiences and perceptions of the former peers they will now be supervising. It will be crucial to assess and re-contract those relationships. There will be a need for appropriate boundaries to be established. The new supervisor should be careful if they already have a negative view of a former peer who they will now be supervising, and ensure that they give them a fair chance to change that perception in the new relationship. The new supervisor should also assess ‘what is in their closet’. People that are promoted are usually not perfect CYC workers, so they may have to address issues they were once dealing with themselves with workers they are now supervising. There is a developmental moment that most new supervisors experience. It is the first time they walk into a room of people they supervise and everyone shuts up! It likely feels awful emotionally but it is a good developmental

sign in that people are starting to accept the new role. It might add some insult to injury, but it would be an even better sign if it was you they were talking about! The new supervisor will need strategic and emotional support for these shifts and should be open with their supervisor about these issues to plan how best to address them. It might also be an opportunity to begin to develop some new peer relationships and solicit support from other supervisors in the program.

b) **Social relationships:** There are many differing views as to whether it is possible to have a sound professional relationship with those you are friends with. It would be simplistic to say that the ethical concerns created by these blurred boundaries should rule out friendships with those you supervise. For the new supervisor it would be highly impractical and unwise to say to former peers “Now that I am supervising you we can no longer be friends!” The entire CYC field is built on relationship and these social relationships

should go through a transition that entails greater self-awareness on the supervisor's part and that pays attention to new confidentiality responsibilities, potential for abuse of power, charges of favoritism, holding expectations unfairly high or low for your friends, and self-disclosure. This shift is quite tricky and can be very stressful. The new supervisor should use their supervisor as a resource to discuss and monitor the process for this. Additionally, the new supervisor will now have a new peer group. While not abandoning their former peers and friends there should be a focus on a transition to new socialization patterns with the new peer group (i.e. going to lunch, after work social gatherings, etc.)

- c) **Meetings:** Meetings are status arenas. Meetings are places where cultures can be established and many judgments are made. The new supervisor is likely to be in the position of having to facilitate a variety of meetings. Facilitating a meeting at an excellent level is a very

sophisticated skill and takes much time to learn. The new supervisor should carefully structure their meetings with an agenda that is simple and realistic. They should also request training in facilitating meetings to help in their skill development. As they settle into the position they should talk with their supervisor and assess the inherited meeting structure to see where changes can be made to make the meetings more of their own. This can be a vehicle for the new culture they wish to establish. This might include changing the names of meetings, changing meeting times, reviewing attendance and content, etc. It is a good process for any organization to review their meeting structures every year and a new supervisor can begin this process early. The new supervisor will also be attending a number of new meetings at the management level as a participant. They should give special attention to how they present themselves here. They should be sure to be prompt, well prepared, and see the experience as a great

learning tool to adjust to their new world. The new supervisor should volunteer to do a meeting analysis of their impressions of each meeting which they can explore with their supervisor. This would include structure, but also a look at the regular or informal interactions going on. Just as we stress the importance of Child and Youth Care practitioners using daily life events as a way to help children learn and change their way of being (Fulcher and Garfat, 2009), the new supervisor can use the daily life events analysis of a meeting as a vehicle for their own learning. It is also a good idea to approach each facilitator of the new meetings you attend and ask how you can be most useful in them. It will show initiative and also create more forums for learning in the new role.

- d) **Time management:** When someone is promoted to supervisor one of the new dynamics is the increase in the amount of discretionary time they will have. The new supervisor should try to take training in time management to develop





some basic skills and tools. In the first few months of the new role they should keep track of the amount of time they are spending on specific tasks. After a two or three month period the supervisor should engage in the following activity with their supervisor that should serve to be very helpful. The supervisor should list ten or twelve tasks that they regularly do on a blank sheet of paper and make a copy to give to their supervisor. Then they should independently assign a rank of 1 (low importance) to 10 (crucial) for each task in terms of how they view its importance. They can then compare the results to observe if they are in agreement as to which tasks the supervisor should be spending most of their time on. Aside from the practical help this might be in helping the supervisor prioritize their time it also has the collateral benefit of forcing dialogue between the supervisor and their supervisor about time management skills and tools. Moreover it is an activity the new supervisor, once they are more settled into their new

role, can use with staff they supervise to help them with their time management skills.

- e) **Evaluations:** One of the primary purposes of supervision is to monitor the quality of service that clients are receiving (Fant and Ross, 1979). The personnel evaluation process is the key administrative tool to structure that monitoring. For the first time supervisor the responsibility of formal, written evaluations of those they supervise is another new look at the world and can seem quite daunting at first. It is a good idea for the supervisor to make a request to Human Resources to see old evaluations of those they now supervise to get a sense of previous views of their performance. It is crucial that these be used for overview purposes and the new supervisor not make pre-conceived judgments based on another's view, much in the same way they would caution a worker when reading a case history before actually meeting a child or family. This process will also alert them if evaluations have not been done

as required before, and allow them to notify Human Resources and consult with them to generate a plan going forward. Beginning the formal evaluation process with supervisees also presents an excellent opportunity for the new supervisor to establish themselves and start to build a strong professional relationship in their new world. Garfat argues that supervision is a shared responsibility and should be a mutual process (Garfat, 2007). In the first few weeks in the new position the supervisor should get copies of blank evaluation forms and in their individual sessions with workers talk together about each category they will be evaluated on. The supervisor can share their expectations in each area as a way to begin to introduce the standards they plan to bring to the program. This creates a foundation for a fair grading process because the new supervisor is clearly stating their expectations (though evaluations should be much more than just grading, they should be significant growth tools as well as

evaluative ones). They should also let the worker have time to self-evaluate in each area. This process will be an excellent vehicle to get collaborative supervisory discussions on the fast track.

- f) **Confrontation:** One of the more uncomfortable events for a direct service CYC practitioner would be deciding if, and how, to confront a co-worker if they observe behavior they feel is inappropriate or not in the best interests of the children. However, once the worker becomes a supervisor there is no other option and it becomes part of their job responsibility. New supervisors often struggle with their newfound power and responsibilities and will tend to either avoid confrontations with workers, or be too forceful in a directive way. In support of the collaborative approach to supervision we published an article (Delano and Shah, 2007) in which we created a working definition of confrontation for supervisors that might be helpful to make it more palatable to do, and

create another forum for a mutual supervisory process. That definition is:

*A proactive intervention to intercept and redirect behavior that may require change*

and

*To create a forum to better understand and guide the judgment/practice of both parties in order to ultimately improve quality and culturally competent service.*

A key point for a new supervisor to consider is that a confrontation should be framed in a way that is professionally packaged. This means it is framed around a professional standard, and not around someone's personality or perceived work habits. This will tend to de-personalize the interaction to some extent and create a common basis for discussion that hopefully both can agree on: a commonly accepted standard of practice. We also suggest that each confrontation begin with the words "Help me understand..." For instance, "Can you help me understand why you chose that intervention?", "Can you help me understand what you thought the program expectation was?", "Can you help me understand what other

options you may have been able to choose?", or "Can you help me understand what you were trying to accomplish with that?". As you can see this type of approach is not accusatory and creates an open forum for discussion of practice. The worker is put in a position to think about, explain, and justify their practice which, in many ways, is exactly what excellent supervision is about! If the supervisor was present during the interaction they are confronting, it can become an excellent opportunity for the process of "meaning making" (Garfat, 1998, Krueger, 1998, Fulcher and Garfat, 2011) to take place for the worker to look at the effectiveness of their practice. Mastering this method will take some time but the new supervisor can begin the process of making confrontation easier to do and supportive of the collaborative relationship they hope to build. This does not preclude a supervisor giving a hierarchical directive when necessary, but those will be much more effective if they are seldom, and after a fair and collaborative effort to process the issue through the "Help me understand..." confrontation model.

### **Supervisory Sessions**

Ainsworth and Fulcher (1985), James Freeman





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(2013), and numerous others have pointed out how important it is for the CYC practitioner to use daily life events as a focal point to capitalize on learning moments in order to foster growth and build relationship with children. Garfat (2003) stresses that the supervisor also needs to see the worker in action to be able to supervise, effectively supporting the idea that the life space approach to working with children is also crucial to effective CYC supervision. There is little question the new supervisor should place using these life space events very high in their approach to building their supervisory style. However, there is also a significant need for private time and space to create that safe forum needed for the worker to be able to reflect on their practice (Delano and Shah, 2009) and to talk about their struggles, frustrations, etc. In addition the supervisor should be thoughtful when selecting appropriate learning material to develop their workers' practice and growth (Maier, 1985). The new supervisor should set up regular supervision sessions with each worker as quickly as possible so that valued and protected time can be spent together. The supervisor should value these sessions by being con-

sistent in having them, limiting interruptions (a sign on the door simply saying "Supervision in session" is an excellent symbol), and structuring the sessions as a collaborative learning and relationship building process. We suggest a simple model of a '1/3, 1/3, 1/3 agenda' (Delano and Shah, 2009) to support this process. In this model 1/3 of every agenda is the responsibility of the direct CYC practitioner to compose. This might include struggles or observations regarding a particular child, areas they want to grow in, successes they wish to share, questions about the bigger picture of the program, etc. The supervisor should also be responsible for composing 1/3 of the agenda. This could include elaboration on things they have observed in the life space, skill areas they want to enhance, congratulatory discussions for excellent work, etc. In respecting the inherent hierarchy in the relationship the supervisor retains discretion for the last 1/3 of the agenda. This space could be for discussion of administrative issues, extension of time for some of the discussions earlier in the session, giving more time to the supervisee if requested, or possibly ending the session early if all needed has been covered. We suggest

the worker hand their part of the agenda in one day ahead of time. This will give the supervisor time to assess it and a chance to remind the worker if it is not done, as well as allowing the new supervisor time to prepare for the session. The decision as to whether the supervisor should give the agenda to the supervisee early should depend on how the supervisee might handle that in regard to anxiety or preparation. This structured, shared agenda model will help avoid what is sometimes referred to as the "dreaded supervision sessions" (Murray-Ireland, M., 2005) that begin with "So, how is it going?", which often elicits a reply of "Fine." and then entails little else. The supervisory session should be a staple for new supervisors as they develop, helping them share knowledge and build a collaborative and supportive relationship with direct practitioners.

### **Power**

One of the most daunting, confusing and tempting things for the new supervisor is their newfound acquisition of power! There are many examples of direct practitioners talking of all the power their supervisor has and then, when they get promoted to be a supervisor and see

how challenging the transition is, they start to wonder “*What* power?” and often feel quite power-less! Austin (1981) points out that there is a significant difference between ‘positional power’ and ‘expert power’. A new supervisor will often struggle to come to grips with their new positional power and often tend to either over or under use that power as they try to become more comfortable with it. While they may have some ‘expert power’ credibility based on their experience in direct practice with children and families, they will start with very little ‘expert power’ in their new role as supervisor. It is essential for the new supervisor to remember that becoming comfortable and skilled with the power the transition has brought them is a complicated process and should be seen as part of their long term developmental growth as a supervisor. The crucial component is to be self-aware of the tremendous ethical responsibility that power brings and for the new supervisor to use power in a thoughtful manner (Delano and Shah, 2009).

We have developed a basic guideline for supervisors to better understand the types of power they have (Delano and Shah, 2007) and offer some suggestions for

new supervisors to be thoughtful about as they become more comfortable with that power:

- **Assigned authority:** The supervisor has assigned authority in that they can give a directive and the supervisee is required to comply or be considered insubordinate. New supervisors are often tempted to over use this power as a way to feel in control or get things done quickly. It is important to be aware of this tendency and to wield this power as seldom as possible as you try to build a collaborative relationship and enhance workers’ growth. It should be reserved for safety or clearly bad practice type scenarios.
  - **Influence in hiring, firing and salary increases:** There are checks and balances on this power in organizations which is helpful to the new supervisor. One should try to learn the protocols early and assess how to best use their recommendations in these areas. One strong suggestion to counteract the frustrations many new supervisors have with staff they inherit (usually unlike inheriting a million
- dollars!), is to try to get training in interviewing skills as early as possible and lobby to have as much influence as possible as to who is hired into your program. Then you will no longer be *inheriting* but will be *choosing* to help build the program culture you want.
- **Lifestyle impact:** Supervisors make schedules, give permission for time off, and set a tone for the workplace. Try to be as considerate as possible to help people have as comfortable a lifestyle as they can within the context of keeping the program moving along safely and efficiently. Unless there is a significant counter indicator try to approve all time off/vacation requests and approve them with a smile. Be aware of your emotional tone in the workplace and try to role model as civil a tone as possible in dealing with others.
  - **Power of access:** The supervisor controls access to many things for the worker. This might include access to more senior management, outside community people,



learning opportunities and resources. We often refer to this as 'real power' since it is not as definable, and is less monitored than other types of power. The supervisor should give much thought to how this power is used. It is a good practice when giving an assignment to a worker to ask "Do you think you have enough resources to complete this at a standard of excellence?" Resources are often scarce so the answer might not always be yes, but the question is crucial in terms of re-thinking the expectations and not setting the worker up to fail. The question also forces a discussion about what a standard of excellence is. The more a supervisor talks about standards with a worker the more a culture of excellence can be established.

- **Impact on self-esteem and sense of competency:** Workers often look up to supervisors and as a relationship builds the worker will become more invested in what the supervisor thinks of them. The new supervisor should remember the importance of framing things in a strengths

based manner and providing opportunities for competencies to be developed and praised.

- **Expectation of the supervisee to reveal more about themselves:**

The supervisor has structural access to much more information about the worker than the worker does about them. Bluntly said, the supervisor likely knows the worker's salary, home phone number, where they live, what is in their human resource file, and many other things that are probably not something the worker can know about them. A supervisor should be subtle in getting a good feel for how much to encourage the worker to disclose about their practice, which is crucial to excellent supervision, but not put the worker in a position to disclose things about themselves that may cross power and professional boundaries. A new supervisor should be careful not to put the worker in a position to disclose why it is important to them to want a day off (it may be something personal and the worker will resent disclosing it later) or ask

for details when someone calls in sick. It should be the ethical responsibility of the supervisor to monitor and limit the self-disclosure that goes on between the two parties.

- **The power to create an image, inside and outside the agency:** We believe the image making power of a supervisor to be at the highest level of 'real power', and one that they should be extremely self-aware of, and ultimately cherish. On the negative end the supervisor may be unaware, or sloppy, in creating that image in informal conversations. For instance a supervisor at a large agency is at lunch with a Human Resource Director in the agency. They mention a new worker and the supervisor says nothing but clearly rolls their eyes in a negative manner. In a large program the HR Director may never have met the worker but now has a clear negative image of them. When will the worker have a chance to counter that image? It is very unlikely they will, and they don't even know it has happened. Is the supervisor formally responsible for the

creation of the negative image? Not at all, as nothing was written or even said. When one considers all the other potential informal forums a supervisor has for damaging images (social gatherings, informal discussions, overheard conversations, etc.) the ethical considerations grow. The new supervisor should be very mindful of this power and, if they are going to communicate negative things about a worker, only use formal professional vehicles where they are willing to stand behind their opinion. Conversely the supervisor should value and take advantage of all the opportunities they now have to create a positive image for those they supervise when it is deserved. One of the true joys of transitioning to be a supervisor is that it opens up many more options to create positive images and opportunities for people that help them grow and succeed in their careers and lives!

When the power is not well balanced unhealthy 'games' can develop in the relationship between supervisor and supervisee (Kadushin, 1968, Delano and

Shah, 2007). Two of the games a new supervisor might be particularly prone to would be 'the easy button' game and the 'crying game' (Delano and Shah, 2007). In the easy button game the worker is not highly motivated to get something done and continually comes complaining to the supervisor. The supervisor, who is a perfectionist, and probably has the skills to complete the task quickly, gets frustrated and simply does it themselves. Hence, the 'easy button' was pushed and the worker avoids their responsibility. In the crying game the worker continually brings so many of their personal issues up in supervision that it begins to change the relationship from supervision to counseling as the supervisor gets caught up in lessening responsibility for the worker because of sensitivity to the personal issues. The new supervisor is particularly vulnerable to this game as they are likely very skilled in counseling and not yet that skilled in supervision, so they revert to what feels most comfortable for them. Of course, all the 'games' have health in them until they cross the boundary into manipulation and the supervisor needs to be aware of this dynamic when processing them. It is good when a worker brings their struggles

to supervision, but unhealthy when it is manipulative and meant to change the core roles of the relationship.

Since this self-awareness about power will take time to develop, the importance of open discussion and help in monitoring it is crucial. As the new supervisor begins to understand and digest the power they now have they should be talking with their own supervisor about ways to balance the power effectively with those they supervise. There are a number of ways a new supervisor can begin on the path of keeping a healthy balance of power in the relationship. In order for supervision to be effective, the worker and the supervisor must be clear about their expectations of each other (Michael, 2005). The supervisor should consistently set clear expectations for those they supervise and check in to see if there is agreement on the parameters of them. The power can also be balanced better with the use of shared agendas in supervision, regular evaluations, encouraging of confrontation and critical thinking in the relationship, and a regular focus on using the power in an ethical and thoughtful manner.

## Owning Your Own Supervision

Henry Maier (Maier, 1987, p. 119) stresses that it is only if caregivers are nurtured and have ongoing care and support themselves that they can deliver quality care to others. This would apply for direct CYC practitioners in their care for children and families, but also for supervisors in their responsibility to provide support and nurturance for those they supervise. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to provide the opportunity for quality supervision and also the responsibility of the supervisee to take advantage of the opportunity for supervision...both responsibilities are of equal importance (Garfat, 2007). In the article 'If I Could Supervise My Supervisor...' (Delano, 2002) I point out there is space for the supervisee to vent about the quality of their supervision, but quickly shift the focus for the supervisee to develop strategies to own their own supervision, and not simply wait for quality supervision to find them. We refined a number of strategies (Delano and Shah, 2007) which a new supervisor can use to better manage upward and to be pro-active in getting more of the quality supervision they need and deserve to enhance their

ability to provide it themselves. Some of these strategies would be:

- a) Politely insist on having regular supervision sessions with your supervisor and suggest the same 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 agenda model mentioned earlier to drive at least 33% of your learning.
- b) Get in the mode of 'Ask, ask, ask ... then ask some more'. Contract with your supervisor simply to tell you if you are asking too many questions, then ask freely until they do.
- c) Without breaking the hierarchy try to widen what supervision means. Try to be in positions to ask and learn from senior managers, peers, outside colleagues, psychiatrists, etc.
- d) Develop a 'teaching diagnosis' of your supervisor. Zoom in on when and how they teach most comfortably and be there to learn.
- e) Before concluding anything about something you don't understand coming from above you in the hierarchy learn to ask the two magic questions: What information do I have that they don't that will help them see it my way? What information do they have that I don't that will help me see it their way?
- f) Ask for and take as much training on supervision as you can. Knock on doors about this!
- g) Remember supervision is primarily about relationship. Build trust with your supervisor, keep them informed, and be comfortable with the ups and downs that come with any relationship...just as you hope your new supervisees will do with you.

## Conclusion

The transition from direct CYC practitioner to supervisor is a challenging, complex and exciting one. The new supervisor should see adjusting to their new role, and moving along the road to becoming an excellent supervisor, as a developmental one with similar stages to those they faced as a CYC worker. They will need to have patience with themselves and the process as it moves along. They should see the supervisory relationship as the core of their journey to excellence, and understand that the rela-

tionship they develop with those they supervise should have parallel dynamics to the relationships workers develop with children and families, as well as overall quality Child and Youth Care practice. The new supervisor will need to have a large amount of self-awareness, training, peer support, and support from their supervisor as they adjust to the new world they have entered. The new supervisor's journey to becoming an excellent supervisor should be rooted in the foundational practices and values of the Child and Youth Care profession.

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