



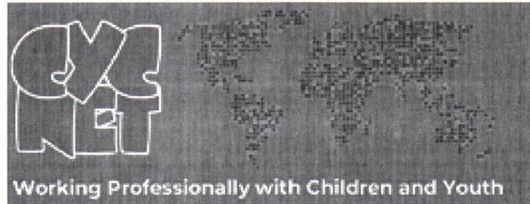
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“If I could supervise my supervisor...”: A model for child and youth care workers to “own their own supervision–”

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Abstract: The current “workforce crisis” in the child and youth care profession highlights the importance of quality direct line supervisors. In recent years much more attention has been paid to providing more training and support for direct line supervisors. Yet, although this has begun to move in a positive direction, the inherent nature of child and youth care work makes it clear that many supervisors are still significantly undertrained and ill-prepared to provide the necessary supervision to direct line workers. This article presents a working model for child and youth care workers to better “own their own supervision” and to significantly add to their process of being accepted as a professional.

In the early 1990s part of my role as the associate director of Hawthorne Cedar Knolls, a large residential treatment centre near New York City, was to coordinate the in-service training program for child care staff at Hawthorne and other residential centres of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services. As the training classes progressed I became acutely aware of a very interesting phenomenon taking place. Any attempt to focus on conceptual issues was met with persistent questions from the group to bring the issue



back to their own kids and their own daily work situations. On a few occasions we paid a handsome fee to bring in trainers from outside the agency with significant expertise in a particular area. Most of those trainers walked away very frustrated as the group tried to get them pinned to dealing with specific kid and case issues.

Fighting the temptation to simply label this group of child care workers as non-academically inclined, or "resistant" to learning about conceptual material, I began talking with the group to take a look at their perceptions of the issue. One of the child care workers from a different division in the agency met with me and shared a thought that confirmed my own sense of the issue. She suggested that although I thought I was doing "training," I was really providing "supervision" to a group that clearly sensed they weren't getting enough. As trainers we are very aware of the differentiation that is necessary between training and supervision, but I found myself struggling to meet a need that seemed to be being expressed by the actions of the group yet keep the structure and boundaries of our training program intact. The child care worker who raised the question with me was a bright, young, energetic worker who began to deal sensitively with her perceived needs by raising the specific issues less in class but by arriving early and staying later after class to get "advice" on concrete situations with kids.

A positive professional relationship was developing between us, and one day she called with a dilemma that led to a very important learning experience. She had just received her performance evaluation from her supervisor and was extremely upset. She asked if I could help her write a formal reply to the evaluation. Concerned about potential boundary issues, role issues in the agency (her supervisor was not in my program but I did vaguely know who he was), and potential ethical issues, I called the director of her program and asked if he felt it was appropriate that I help her with the reply. The director was comfortable with the idea, and the child care worker and I met to compose the reply.

When this worker met with me I looked at her evaluation and, making a classic mistake, said, "It looks like a pretty good evaluation to me." Curtly she replied, "But it is not *your* evaluation!" As we looked at the evaluation together it became clear that, although everyone wants to be perfect, she essentially did not object to the content of the evaluation other than the lack of specific examples of some of the points her supervisor was making about her work. What she was strongly reacting to was the process. It turned out that the



supervisor stopped his "group supervision," which in practice resembled a team meeting structure, with about 15 minutes left and gave out performance evaluations to each of the seven child care workers in this unit. He asked the group to read them, saying he was reserving the last five minutes of the meeting in case someone wanted to discuss their evaluation with him - stressing that they had to be signed and returned by the time the meeting ended. As we kept talking I learned that the program was being audited in a short time and the supervisor was required to get all the evaluations in the file before the audit. Our continued discussion painted the picture of a generally competent and concerned supervisor. However, the nature of residential work with children led him to fall into a number of the classical "traps" that haunt the supervisory process for child and youth care workers. Given valid "program issues," he cancelled nearly 90 percent of his scheduled supervisions with this worker. Many of the 14 child care workers he supervised directly reported the same level of cancellations. He almost always used "group supervision" time to cover necessary administrative issues. He often was perceived as "meddling" in issues with the workers and children when he was on-floor in the unit - likely a reaction to the fact that he himself was formerly a child care worker in that program. He was still struggling with the ability to "delegate" decisions to people he viewed as less skilled than himself - even though he had now been in the supervisory role for a number of years. He was so overwhelmed with daily tasks that he fell far behind in getting his performance evaluations done on time. When pressured to do them in a quick time frame he was resentful and unsure about his ability to do the evaluations in a thorough and professional way - resulting in the process this worker experienced. As we discussed these issues the frustrated child care worker blurted out, "If I could just supervise my supervisor, I would help him deal with these things." A little startled at first, we then chuckled, realizing we probably had the basis of a workshop that might be very useful to child and youth care workers.

If I could supervise my supervisor...

As we developed the workshop we decided that we wanted to create a forum for child and youth care workers to better understand the complex and difficult nature of supervision in residential settings for children, to better understand and empathize with the issues their supervisor was facing, and to develop strategies to better "own their own supervision." We were very clear that if child and youth care workers simply wait for "good supervision" to come to them, the many factors working against this happening in most agencies would likely lead them to much frustration - and for many of the more talented and



knowledge-thirsty ones, on a road out of the field of child and youth care. We wanted to provide a model for child and youth care workers to pro-actively take responsibility for their part of the crucial supervisory relationship, and to feel comfortably empowered in doing so. However, in order to enact that process we felt it important to let some of the feelings drain. So we began the workshop with the provocative thought referred to above. Participants were asked to write down their responses, which were then read out loud (as anonymously as possible) as a way to begin the workshop. Some of the common themes and more poignant replies to *If I could supervise my supervisor I would...*

- Tell them not to take out their frustrations on me
- Start supervision on time and have no interruptions
- Help them learn to be more empathic
- Ask them to learn the difference between supervision and therapy
- Tell them to do more direct supervision of me and less of their opinions about other workers
- Ask them to realize a mistake is just a mistake and not personal
- Empower my supervisor to attend several supervision trainings to better supervise me
- Teach them better time management techniques - they are always late for our session
- Demand they prepare for supervision
- Ask them not to take phone calls during supervision
- Limit discussion of "bread and butter" administrative stuff - do it through memos or team meetings
- Insist they give their supervisees a list of their duties so they know what is expected of them
- Always say something positive before something negative
- Actually have supervision "what is it?"



- Ask them to allow me to vent after a crisis
- Ask them to be more caring and less confrontational
- Provide more feedback - positive and negative
- Try very hard to keep their personal beliefs to themselves
- Point out how a negative attitude is contagious
- Ask her to trust me more
- Ask why he says yes to everything I ask
- Suggest the relationship be more professional than being a "buddy"
- Have them explain exactly what this agency is supposed to be doing with kids - if they know
- Tell her to guide, not judge
- Give them a big raise - for putting up with me
- Give more informal perks for jobs well done
- Tell them I don't always need an answer - sometimes I just need an ear
- Tell them to do a better job of getting what we need from top administration and the system
- Talk more about my feelings about my work
- Tell them to listen attentively and with empathy
- Work part of the holidays with me - I need support - it is hard to be away from my family
- Just be respectfully honest with me

What begins to emerge from these types of answers is just what a large volume and complicated set of expectations are placed on supervisors in the child and youth care field. More importantly the concept of supervision as a "relationship" between two people and not just a part of an organizational, hierarchical structure begins to be seen rather clearly.



So, what exactly is supervision?

A crucial part of the process to enable child and youth care workers to better own their own supervision revolves around them getting a better understanding of what supervision entails. One of the stated goals of our workshop was "to give the worker a chance to understand what good supervision is, to be able to recognize it when they are getting it." The premise here is to suggest that workers may be getting more, and better quality, supervision than they think and to introduce their responsibility to recognize it and seek it out. An interesting dynamic of this workshop has been that although it was originally geared to direct care child and youth care workers the percentage of supervisors taking the course rose to nearly 50 percent of each workshop over time. The workshop is most useful when supervisees and supervisors are brave enough to attend together. However, I think the significant increase in attendance by supervisors more closely reflects the lack of basic training most supervisors are exposed to. The quality of supervision can only improve when both members of the relationship are on the same page as to the definition of the relationship.

Robert Ireland defines supervision as "the process by which the goals of individuals are met and meshed to ultimately meet the needs of the agency. It is primarily an administrative tool concerned with quality assurance and quality control in the delivery of the agency's services" (Ireland, 1994, p. 1-1). When this definition is introduced, it often evokes a lukewarm response from child and youth care workers. They point out it sounds too "cold." Ireland goes on to say, "Supervision is a link in the agency through which the chains of accountability must pass. It is primarily concerned with getting work done through others" (p. 1-2). It is crucial for the child and youth care worker to understand that this is a relationship in which the supervisor is accountable for the supervisee's work - ultimately as it connects to service to children. It should help supervisees see that they must be seen as "trusted" enough for the supervisor to delegate the work to. They must earn and own that respect.

Alfred Kadushin's work is extremely important in helping the child and youth care worker to get a better grasp on concretizing what is involved in this relationship. Kadushin believes effective supervision is made up of three tracks: (a) administrative, (b) educational, and (c) supportive (Kadushin, 1985). In child and youth care work the administrative tasks are crucial to allowing the worker to do their work. They include:

- scheduling



- evaluations
- distribution and interpreting policy and procedures
- assurance that logs and paperwork are completed in a timely fashion
- time sheets
- program scheduling
- resource distribution to staff and children

The implications here are enormous on a very basic level. The schedule of many child and youth care workers has a dramatic impact on their lives. They are already working odd and long hours and have to balance their work schedule with family life, second jobs, further education, and a reasonable social life outside the agency (I am not including after-work socializing with peers as "social life" here). What can be more basic than getting the time sheets in on time? Yet, not getting them in affects when that usually much needed overtime pay shows up on the child and youth care worker's cheque. The child and youth care worker may then better understand why the supervisor seems to take up so much of supervision time with administrative issues. It is also a beginning to the understanding of how sensitive the concept of power is in this relationship. An undesirable schedule, or not getting overtime pay promptly, can dramatically affect a child and youth care worker's life in a number of ways - and make it tempting for the worker to interpret the supervisor's "mistake" as personal, or a misuse of power, when it may just be a mistake.

The educational track includes:

- teaching skills
- providing opportunities for training
- developing an "educational diagnosis" for the supervisee
- creating an atmosphere in which honest mistakes are OK and offer opportunities for learning
- using evaluation as a teaching tool - with measurable goals



These expectations can also place a great strain on the relationship. The supervisor is expected to “teach skills” “providing they have them! The child and youth care worker must be able to accept that the supervisor may not have skills in a particular area. The supervisor must accept that the worker may have better skills than the supervisor in some areas. The issue of allowing for “mistakes” as a way to learn gets entangled with the part of the definition that speaks to accountability.

The supportive track includes:

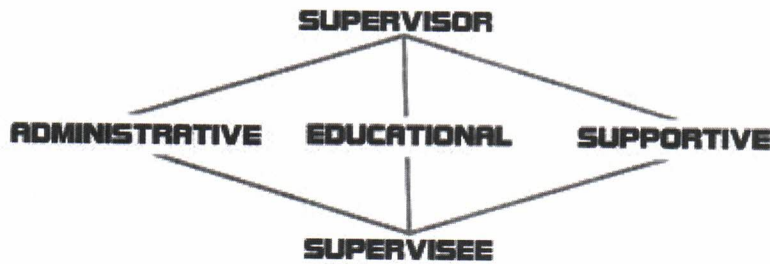
- encouragement
- empathy
- backing “reasonable” decisions
- "hands-on help"
- investment in growth - personal and professional
- lifestyle considerations
- evaluations that are perceived as supportive.

The supportive tasks, while least definable concretely, probably play the most important role in determining whether or not the worker perceives the supervision as “good.” We all know the old adage: “Everyone wants a hands-on supervisor - until you get one!” The supervisor and supervisee must come to some balance on where the delicate line is between availability / on-floor support and “interference” with the worker’s role with the kids. It is probably among the most difficult things a supervisor must assess. The workers always want to have their decisions backed by their supervisor - but what if the supervisor assesses the decision as against the best interests of the child or the program? Again, that delicate line is a very difficult assessment for a supervisor.

By now it is hoped the child and youth care worker is getting a strong sense of what a far-reaching set of expectations is placed on a supervisor and how intricate and complicated the relationship with their supervisor is. Even more important is the worker’s understanding that Kadushin's model is recreated through all the levels of the agency - including their relationship as “supervisor to the children (supervisees). In this model the “supervisor” is also a



"supervisee" in another relationship so the expectations are recreated up and down the agency organizational ladder.



To get the most from "supervision" the child and youth care worker has to understand that supervision is not just a relationship between two people. It is a relationship that is intricately linked with many others in the agency and that must function in an incredibly complicated and stressful set of situations. The child and youth care worker should be clear that one person alone has little chance of managing a relationship like this. The supervisor cannot be the only one responsible for ensuring good supervision "the worker must be willing to own their own part of that equation.

Power

I remember sitting in a meeting a few years ago where a large number of sophisticated professionals were trying to devise an outline for a curriculum for training for supervisors. Ten minutes passed as people tried to think of an alternate word for power. Finally, I couldn't take anymore, pounded my fist, and said there is no better word for power! The supervisory relationship is laden with power, and despite the inherent discomfort with that word in the values of the caring professions, any attempt to have a positive and productive supervisory relationship must deal with that power. The most obvious thing about power in this relationship is that it is structured to favor the supervisor. The supervisor:

- has "assigned authority" - when the going gets rough they can pull rank
- mediates the "image" of the worker, both inside and outside the agency
- has a key role in firing, promotions, and salary increases
- has more access to agency information
- has an expectation for the supervisee to "reveal" more about themselves
- has power and influence that extend indefinitely into the future.



The potential impact of power in this relationship is staggering. In regard to agency information at a very basic level, the supervisor can look into the supervisee's personnel file. The supervisee certainly has no such reciprocal right. A supervisee may want a day off and is told that it has to be denied because of program needs. In an effort to convince the supervisor the request is "important," the supervisee may start to reveal things about their personal life as a reason for the day off. Even if the technique works, the result is usually a worker who is angered at the vulnerability the experience presents. I have always defined the impact the supervisor can have on the supervisee's image as "real" power. For instance, in my role at Hawthorne it would be very normal for me to be in a lunch meeting with the agency's director of human resources, or other central office executive staff. Between bites, it might be very tempting to simply drop into the conversation, "By the way that worker, Mr. X, is a real jerk." It is "real" power because of the informality and the lack of accountability for the statement. Nothing is written, no action is requested, and there is limited flow of information - yet it creates a very important "image" of the worker in the agency. Of course, the real power is compounded when it goes outside the agency (usually in the form of informal references or discussions at events) ,and with the realization it extends into the future, including when the formal supervisory relationship ends. Two years ago I received a call from an agency in Atlanta, Georgia, asking for a reference on a woman I had supervised for two months while she was in college *12 years ago*. The power a supervisor has was brought home very vividly with that call.

So, how can a relationship with such an unbalanced structure in regard to power ever hope to succeed? The child and youth care worker can hold the key. The first step is to digest the fact that power is usually only negative in a negative relationship. Power can also be used very positively. The supervisor can create a positive image as easily as a negative one. One of the biggest sources of satisfaction I have as a supervisor is being able to write recommendations for people I have supervised to help advance their careers or enrich their lives. The child and youth care worker must resist the temptation to "take" the power in a negative way. The most common form of this would be for the worker to "hold back work" to show the supervisor who "really" has the power. This is especially tempting in settings with acting-out children. How many child and youth care workers have never thought to themselves, "Just let those administrators have to manage these kids for a day or two"? The obvious problem is that no one benefits. At best the worker doesn't grow and creates a



negative view of themselves. At the most destructive end, service to children, or safety, suffers.

So, what can child and youth care workers do that is constructive? They can accept their responsibility to develop pro-active strategies to balance the power through the development of a more positive and balanced relationship with their supervisor and by putting themselves in a position of demanding the accepted ethics in the supervisory process in a constructive way.

Dealing with the “games”

Much has been written about the “games” that go on in the supervisory process. Far too often the assumption is that the supervisee plays the games. However, supervisors play games in supervision, too. In her article “Games Supervisors Play,” Lillian Hawthorne (1975) divides these game into two categories.

Games of abdication:

- “They won’t let me” - The supervisor passes the buck to higher management. I would like to, “but *they* won’t let me.” It is an extremely self-destructive game for supervisors, because it denies that part of their role is to convince the agency to let them.
- “Poor me” - The supervisor justifies not meeting expectations by emphasizing how overwhelmed they are.
- “One good question deserves another” - The supervisor avoids giving direction or advice by putting the question back to the worker: “What do you think will work?”

Games of power:

- “Remember who is boss” - The supervisor gives constant subtle, and not so subtle, demonstrations of their assigned “power.”
- “I’ll tell on you” - The supervisor uses the threat of “writing up” the worker. Often attached to the game statement, “I don’t want to do this but they are insisting”.
- “Father / Mother knows best” - The supervisor doesn’t use their competence or knowledge to support a point or decision, but uses their assigned role in a patronizing way.



Child and youth care workers must realize they cannot simply stop a supervisor from playing these games. One thing they can do is to focus on the reason for these games in the context of the relationship. The supervisor who plays games of abdication is likely uncomfortable with their responsibility and is attempting to avoid demonstrating it. The supervisor using games of power is likely perceiving a threat to their authority. The worker should, to the extent possible, make a conscious effort not to end up "trapped" in these games. Given the understanding that they cannot "control" the games supervisors may play, child and youth care workers must be extra careful to own their responsibility not to initiate the games that are so tempting for supervisees to play. Kadushin (1968) divided the games supervisees tend to play into two basic categories:

Games to lessen demands:

- "You are the best supervisor!" - The supervisee handles the relationship by "yessing" the supervisor to death and never missing an opportunity to publicly compliment the supervisor.
- "Protect me / treat me" - The supervisee attempts to avoid responsibility by sharing personal issues with the supervisor as a way to get the supervisor to provide "therapy" and redefine the relationship.
- "Evaluations are not for friends" - The supervisee tries to become, or remain, socially friendly with the supervisor in hopes of compromising the hierarchical structure of the relationship. This is particularly effective with supervisors promoted from within who may be wrestling with their changing role with former peers. Remember "friendly" is different than "friends."
- "You remember, don't you?" - In the fast-paced world of child and youth care the worker tries to get the supervisor to believe the issue has already been dealt with, hoping the supervisor will be so overwhelmed they will not remember.
- "What do you really know about the front line (anymore)?" - A dangerous (few easier ways to evoke a supervisor's ire!) but effective game with supervisors who are not comfortable in their new role but were excellent direct care workers.

Games to control the situation:



- “Head it off at the pass” - When there are uncomfortable issues to deal with, the supervisee floods the supervisor with current “crises” to respond to.
- “What you don’t know won’t hurt me” - The worker constantly says things are fine, not willing to risk raising questions or concerns about the program or their work.

It is crucial that the child and youth care worker be aware of these games and the natural tendency to fall prey to them. Although the workers cannot “control” the games a supervisor may engage in, they do have a great deal of control over what games they initiate. The workers should realize that engaging in these games is tempting because they often have a perceived, or real, short-term benefit. However, the workers need to accept that in the long run these games will not allow for growth in their work or in the relationship with their supervisor. The games are meant to redefine the relationship, not to add depth to it. Avoiding these games is a true test of child and youth care workers' investment in owning their own supervision.

Managing your “boss”

Gabarro and Kotter (1980) defined supervision as a relationship between two fallible human beings based on mutual dependence. It is an important definition for child and youth care workers to add to their repertoire if they are to make the best use of supervision. Workers need to accept that the supervisor doesn’t have unlimited time, information, knowledge, expertise, and resources. The workers need to use the supervisor’s resources judiciously but to not expect good supervision to come magically. They need to be willing to be assertive and creative in seeking out the resources and to put themselves in the best position to receive the “goodies” that are available. It entails the child and youth care worker understanding the supervisor is only half the relationship, and not the half they can best control.

The art of learning to “manage your boss” entails the supervisee making an effort to understand their supervisor’s goals/ objectives, pressures, strengths, weaknesses, and preferred work styles. For instance, some supervisors prefer to receive information in writing as opposed to orally. Some prefer to hear non-critical but important information immediately while others may prefer waiting until the team meeting. The list may be endless, but the workers increase their efficiency by being aware of the preferred styles and meeting them where possible. The workers should also assess their own strengths and weaknesses,



personal styles, and predisposition to authority. The child and youth care worker should then work hard to develop and maintain a relationship that:

- accepts it is normal for each person's needs and styles to be different and tries to mesh them when possible.
- functions on mutual expectations and responsibilities - each person in this relationship significantly needs the other.
- keeps the supervisor informed. Remember that your supervisor is ultimately responsible for your work and also has a supervisor to report to.
- is based on honesty and dependability. It will lead to the delegation of responsibility and independence you seek in your work. It is also the basis of virtually all positive relationships in life.
- selectively uses the supervisor's time and resources.

No doubt the average child and youth care worker may say, "Why should I have the responsibility to manage my supervisor? Managing is their job - and they are paid for it!" However, more sophisticated workers will hopefully be able to see the benefits of this approach and appreciate how much it can simplify their job - and contribute to their professional and personal growth. If child and youth care workers are to complete the journey to be accepted as professionals, they must be able to accept more responsibility and a more pro-active and fully integrated role in all aspects of the profession of caring for children.

A model to "own your own supervision"

When Jill Goldstein and I (1992) first developed the workshop "If I Could Supervise My Supervisor..." we knew it was important to go beyond the process of having child and youth care workers identify what they would do if they could change roles with their supervisor. We felt the workers needed to better understand the concept of supervision and get a better understanding of what their supervisor was supposed to be doing. They needed to understand supervision enough to have a better sense of what they should be receiving. Most importantly, we felt that if child and youth care workers were to move along the line of professionalism they had to be expected to accept responsibility for their role in getting the appropriate supervision. Over the



years the following model has emerged as a guideline for the child and youth care worker to "own their own supervision."

1. Ask! Ask! Ask! - The most direct and efficient way to get information is to ask questions. Child and youth care workers must be willing to ask the questions, and develop the skill to do so in a positive way, for the information they need. For example, I have often heard child and youth care workers complain they don't like the jargon that psychiatrists use in team meetings. This model suggests the worker is responsible to politely stop the psychiatrist and ask for a definition of any jargon they don't understand. Conversely the worker should invite other team members to ask about terms the child and youth care worker may use that others don't understand. Asking someone his or her opinion is flattering. Every supervisor claims they would like energetic, idealistic, inquisitive supervisees who want to learn. Test that standard. The crucial piece to all this is building the relationship necessary for "asking" to be comfortable.

2. View supervision as a way to grow personally and professionally and not as a threat - The child and youth care worker needs to be willing to "risk" to grow. The mind set has to be that supervision is good, not merely a monitoring device.

3. Seek out "supervision" anywhere you can and from anyone willing - This is tricky and potentially dangerous because it has the potential to contradict agency structure to be threatening to your assigned direct supervisor. It is a process that must be done in the true spirit of redefining "supervision" for yourself. The worker should see supervision as a natural part of all aspects and relationships in their work. Just as the child care worker in our agency used in-service training to get more "supervision," the worker should take advantage of all opportunities to grow while not damaging the formal supervisory relationship. Another example of this might be a worker who sees an open door to a psychiatrist's office, or a social worker's office, and asks to come in and chat about a couple of the kids for a few minutes.

4. Remember to ask the two "magic questions" - There are many times when a child and youth care worker is frustrated by a decision or intervention the supervisor may make. The worker is sure the decision or intervention is a bad one. The decision may well be a mistake, but before concluding that and allowing frustration to creep in the worker should ask:

- "What information do they have that I don't that will help me to understand this better?"



- "What information do I have that they don't that will help them see it my way?"

5. *Learn and be willing to practice the art of constructive confrontation with your supervisor* - Confrontation is often uncomfortable. However, if done respectfully and constructively it can add crucial depth to a relationship. Rather than sit angrily with an issue, try to find a way to constructively confront your supervisor about it. Keep in mind that constructive confrontation entails dealing with behaviour and its effects and not "attitude." Remember that a successful confrontation should get the desired change but also preserve the self-esteem of everyone involved. Be willing to accept this as a valid process if your supervisor confronts you.

6. *Bring an agenda to supervision* - Direct the flow of your own learning. One way to help structure the consistency of individual supervision is to bring an agenda each time. Try to contract the "one-third" model with your supervisor. Supervisory sessions will be one third your agenda, one third the supervisor's agenda, and one third current or hot issues. Give your agenda to your supervisor at least one day in advance so there are no surprises. You are establishing yourself as a thoughtful professional invested in learning and building trust with your supervisor.

7. *Participate in "group supervision"* - Whatever form "group supervision" takes in your program, be willing to talk and participate. It is sometimes tempting to "hide" and not risk this process, partially because most direct line supervisors are not very skilled or comfortable doing group supervision. Often when they start to overcompensate with too much focus on administrative tasks your appropriate and constructive questions help can them get back on track.

8. *"Insist" On an evaluation, and use your option to respond* - All agencies have structured times for evaluations to be done. Learn when your time is due and respectfully remind your supervisor you are looking forward to getting it. If you are a new worker, ask for a blank copy of an evaluation so you are aware of what you will be evaluated on. If you receive an evaluation you are uncomfortable with, use your option to respond. However, ask for an appropriate, objective person to help you with the response so you keep a balance on your emotions.

9. *Training: take all you can and be seen as one who will* - Your supervisor is not an endless source of knowledge and skill. Use training as a way to help yourself grow in areas not covered in supervision. Create an image of yourself



as a "thirsty learner." It enhances your growth and helps establish you as a professional. You also increase your opportunities to get "supervision" from peers in your classes.

10. Establish a "teaching diagnosis" of your supervisor - Supervisors are trained to be responsible to develop a "learning diagnosis" for supervisees. That is, they have an obligation to assess how a supervisee best learns and then attempt to teach that way. But most supervisors, particularly under stress, revert to teaching in the way they are most comfortable. Make an assessment of what that style is and try to better learn that way. For example, a supervisor may not be very skilled at explaining concepts in an individual supervision session but is very good at direct practice with children. Watch them on the floor and then, in supervision, say, "Hey, I watched you do this with Johnny. It really seemed to work. Can you tell me about why you handled it that way?" It is also flattering and will likely open doors to more discussions.

11. Be empathic with your supervisor's issues and pressures - Supervisors are people too! Besides, you may be in their spot one day soon.

12. Learn to "manage your boss" - Buy into the idea of going against traditional top-down management. Rise above seeing this as "apple-polishing." It is your best chance of creating a relationship in which you feel empowered. You are not going to change your supervisor - but you certainly can develop the skills to better manage your relationship.

13. Remember: It's a relationship! - Like any other relationship in life it is not perfect, nor is it an "answer" to your problems and needs. Be honest, consistent, and dependable, and work hard to build trust. You will have to work together to make it successful - and be patient and understanding during the process.

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