

The strength-based clinical supervision workbook: A complete guide for mental health trainees and supervisors

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Literature associated with supervision has grown considerably in the last ten years. This book has a particular focus around clinical training of mental health practitioners and their learning journey. The book provides a good resource to supervisors and students who are undertaking this internship experience together. An interprofessional frame is acknowledged throughout the book that includes psychology, family therapy, counselling and social work in mental health services. From the book's title, the focus is specific to mental health trainees and supervisors where a strength-based approach is utilised for clinical supervision. The book is written with a North American focus suggested by the terminology used and the key literature represented throughout. The term *clinical supervision* is used, which has a specific definition, whereas other modes of supervision are universally used elsewhere in literature. Although the text is useful to students and their supervisors, it may be more difficult to developmentally apply some concepts discussed with experienced practitioners and supervisors.

The book is presented in A4 paperback as a workbook for both the supervisor and trainee. The content in the workbook is an easy read and structured into three sections: foundation and framework for strength-based supervision; the first supervision session; and moving forward with the supervision session. At the commencement of each chapter are "chapter goals" outlining the purpose to "inform" and "engage" the

reader. Throughout the chapters are helpful boxes on each page summarising either the content, a quote or a main reflection. Theory is connected to practice with scenarios and helpful worksheets that can be used by both trainee and supervisor. At the conclusion of each chapter are key readings, "takeaway" comments and helpful learning questions for the reader to consider for their own practice. Relevant texts are also included for future reference.

Several forewords have been written by contributors in the area of clinical supervision within the United States. The author's preface introduces the text as a workbook to assist the supervisor and trainee to work collaboratively and use a strength-based approach throughout their journey together. The authors also acknowledge that the workbook has been written from their direct and relevant experiences. One author, on an "internship" while writing this book, gives a sense that the workbook has been written "first hand". Whilst the workbook has a sequential process associated with the supervision of mental health trainees, readers are also encouraged to explore specific aspects of the supervision process.

The first three chapters provide the foundation for strength-based approaches and their significance to clinical supervision. Defining clinical supervision at this point needed further clarification and its centrality to the workbook. A strong focus has been given to psychotherapy's influence to

clinical supervision. Different models and approaches of supervision were raised and their importance described. However, this discussion would benefit with mention of other key contributors and influences to supervision. Chapter Two raised that effective supervision has an evidence base—but a large body of literature is not mentioned due to a strong focus on North American literature. Strength-based approaches are given an excellent overview in Chapter Three, alongside positive psychology and explanations of flow and grit; character strengths; well-being; happiness and psychological capital. A helpful exercise is given to supervisors around how to conceptualise their own strength-based model.

Chapters Four to Seven explore the initial session in clinical supervision. The reader is reminded that using a strength-based approach allows us to look for “best hopes” for the supervisor and trainee relationship. Learning styles are identified as essential when starting the process. A checklist for the first supervision session and script for supervisor and trainee are provided—this presents to the reader as very prescriptive and does not allow for a range of relational or cultural ways of building rapport and commencing a working relationship. Multi-cultural supervision is addressed “out there” in Chapter Five, and could be critiqued as not embracing the culture existing *within* the relationship. Hays’s (2008) ADDRESSING (Age, Disability developmental, Disability acquired, Religion, Ethnicity, Socioeconomic status, Sexual orientation, Indigenous heritage, National origin, Gender) model provides a useful template to explore intersectional points of difference in supervision between supervisor, trainee and service user. There is little discussion of how strength-based supervision may be applied in relation to social justice, particularly in relation to oppression and privilege—and is often a critique of such an approach. Chapters Six and Seven provide a good overview of practical skills that both supervisors and

trainees can use to promote the relationship. The ROPES (Resources, Options, Possibilities, Exceptions, Solutions) model by Graybeal (2001) to facilitate solutions and future solutions and appreciative inquiry are identified in shaping goals with good examples provided.

Chapters Eight to Twelve discuss the ongoing supervisory relationship until the end of the internship. An adapted supervision learning cycle is used in Chapter Eight but does not utilise experiential learning and other important literature specific to supervision. Chapter Nine raises the importance of direct observation in supervision. There are some very useful worksheets for the supervisor and trainee—as well as a client monitoring sheet. Chapter Ten notes the value of feedback and amplifying strengths to address deficits. Some good examples for the supervisor and trainee of how to use feedback effectively are provided. Chapter Eleven discusses the four intervention questions to identify where the trainee is now and how they will move to where they need to be for remediation. These interventions are used in case scenarios. The text alludes to immediate and ongoing “additional” work needed in the scenarios and at the different levels of intervention suggested. These actual conversations are not described but are necessary for behaviour to stop immediately (and this is the challenge even for experienced supervisors). Some of the text throughout this section makes further assumptions. One aspect is the power of the supervisor (who can pass or fail the trainee) and the importance of measuring *fitness to practise*. Another is the support from the relevant training institute to ensure student goals are met and their role in remediation. Chapter Twelve talks about “ending well”, providing summative feedback and using appreciative inquiry to create deliberate practice. The book ends with some important final thoughts about the supervisory relationship being central, trainee observation as key and attending to strengths within relational work.

This workbook is a useful aid for new supervisors and students who work in mental health. Although there is a particular clinical and contextual focus, the workbook provides a solid reminder of the value of strength-based approach to changing practice in supervision and has many practical gems for how this can be applied for beginning supervisors and practitioners in other practice areas.

Reviewed by **Matt Rankine**, University of Auckland, New Zealand.

References

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