

How coaching supervisees help and hinder their supervision

Louise Sheppard, London, UK.

Contact: louiseshppard1@btinternet.com

Abstract

Coaching supervision is an emerging profession in need of developing its knowledge base. However, there is a lack of understanding of the supervision process from the coaching supervisees' perspective - a crucial element without which issues and debates about coaching supervision are incomplete. Furthermore, although most of the professional bodies that represent coaches in the UK require coaches to have supervision, they do not provide clear guidelines on how supervisees can use supervision effectively. This article describes research that aims to fill this gap, providing empirical evidence on how supervisees can help and hinder their supervision.

Key Words: Coaching; coaching supervision; learning; supervisees.

Introduction

The major professional bodies in the UK are developing their requirements of their members in terms of credentialing, adhering to codes of ethics and continuing professional development. They each stipulate in their codes of ethics that members should receive coaching supervision but they vary in the level of information they provide on how to go about arranging supervision; none of the bodies currently provide a separate code of ethics for coaching supervisors (Lane, 2011) or adequate guidelines on how best to use supervision effectively from the supervisee perspective. This is surprising as the professional bodies represent the interests of coaches as supervisees.

There is evidence that the use of coaching supervision has increased over the past decade (Hawkins & Schwenk, 2006; Turner & Hawkins, 2016). However, despite the increasing preference by organisations that executive coaches belong to professional bodies and have regular supervision, there is anecdotal evidence that coaching supervision is still currently under-utilised (Ridler & Co, 2016). There are multiple reasons for this including some coaches do not perceive the benefits and value that supervision can bring or know how use it effectively. It is not only the professional bodies that neglect to provide information about how to use supervision – when coaches are undergoing coach training, supervision is often provided as part of the training package and yet in my experience, there is too little input on how to make the best use of it. There is a need to gather empirical evidence about how supervisees can enhance and potentially hinder their coaching supervision to enable coaches to get more from their early supervision experiences and to encourage life long engagement in coaching supervision.

There have been a number of valuable, theoretically grounded texts related to coaching supervision published in the last decade focusing on the different contexts and approaches to supervision; the supervision process and various model and techniques that can be employed, however, these largely consider the effectiveness of supervision from the perspective of the supervisor rather than the supervisee. The first book written as a practical guide specifically for coaching supervisees

(Clutterbuck, Whitaker, & Lucas, 2016) is not research based and does not explore what is happening at a deeper level in coaching supervision. There has been limited empirical research on coaching supervision to date. Only two papers focus on supervisees – one on coaches' lived-in experiences (McGivern, 2009) and the other on the efficacy of coaching supervision (Passmore & McGoldrick, 2009), however, these papers do not look specifically at what supervisees can do to help themselves during supervision. In general, there is a lack of understanding of the supervision process from the coaching supervisees' perspective.

This study sets out to gather empirical evidence about how supervisees can help and hinder their coaching supervision so that supervisees at all stages of professional development can get more from their coaching supervision. It makes a contribution to theoretical knowledge by addressing three specific gaps identified in the literature. These are the:

- lack of empirical research on the lived-in experiences of coaching supervisees at all stages of professional development;
- lack of evidence about coaching supervisees in relation to some key themes in the literature, in particular, power differentials; how supervisees may sabotage their learning; supervisee anxiety; supervisee disclosure; how supervisees can contribute to good supervision; conflict, ruptures and repairs in supervision; and
- lack of an empirically informed framework with guidelines for how supervisees can get the most from their coaching supervision.

The next sections cover the methodology, findings, discussion and conclusions of the study.

Methodology

The main aim of the research was to explore how coaching supervisees help and hinder their supervision. The research was designed from a critical realist paradigm and the methodology was Grounded Theory; this enabled rich data collection about the participants' lived-in experiences of coaching supervision and uncovering the deeper mechanisms involved that help and hinder the learning and development of supervisees (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Kempster & Parry, 2014; Urquhart, 2013). A key objective of the research was to generate a theoretical framework with guidelines that enhances learning through coaching supervision at all stages of professional development.

Sampling was purposive (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and the participants were selected through adverts placed in two professional bodies (ICF and APECS) and the researcher's coaching networks. The participants were supervisees and supervisors; the latter were asked for their views on the supervisee perspective. The criteria for selecting supervisees were that they were required to have had formal, regular, paid supervision for at least a year and supervisors had to have completed a supervisor's training programme. The data collection started with a pilot study, followed by 19 semi-structured interviews with 12 supervisees and 7 supervisors. The participants were selected theoretically. The participants consisted of 15 women and 4 men and they all practised in the UK. The supervisees' experience as coaches ranged from 3-30 years, with an average of 13 years. The supervisors' experience of supervising ranged from 4-15 years, with an average of 7 years. The number of supervisors that the supervisees had had, ranged from 1-10, with an average of 3. Four of the 12 supervisees were trained as supervisors. The supervisees used a mix of one-to-one or group supervision with one third of the participants receiving both.

In line with Grounded Theory methodology (Glaser, 1992; Urquhart, 2013), a seven stage data analysis process was used (figure 1).

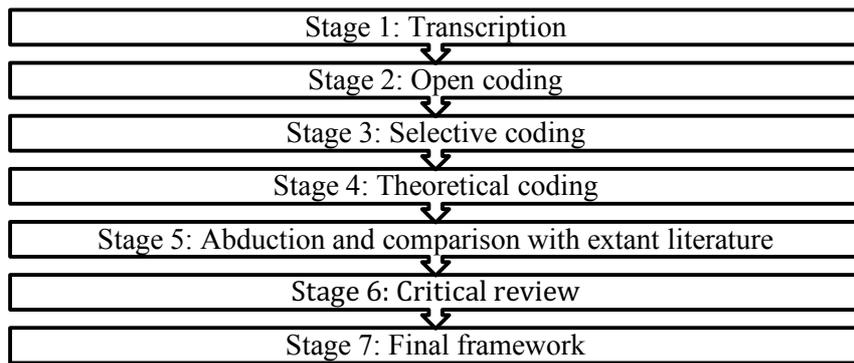


Figure 1: Seven stage data analysis process

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Data collection was balanced with depth of analysis and data collection stopped when no new conceptualisations emerged (Urquhart, 2013). During the analysis process memos were written to capture ideas and record the decisions being taken. In keeping with critical realist Grounded Theory studies, the researcher applied theory from extant reading and used abduction (Bhaskar, 2014) to redescribe the lived-in experiences of coaching supervisees in terms of characteristic causal mechanisms that serve to explain them.

Findings

The interviews generated a wealth of data and three core categories were identified - experiencing the benefits of coaching supervision, supervisee inhibitors and supervisee enablers (figure 2). An overarching theme emerged from the research, supervisee development and maturity over time. Where relevant, the findings are reported separately for novice supervisees, experienced supervisees and very experienced supervisees.

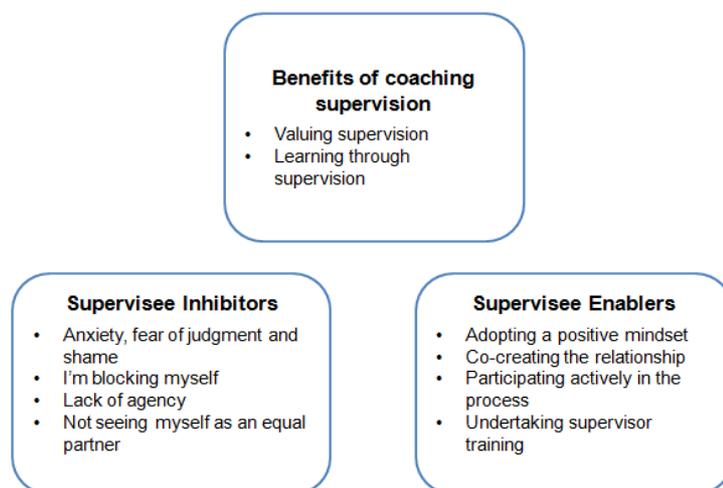


Figure 2: Core categories

The Benefits of coaching supervision

The benefits of coaching supervision encompass two themes: how supervisees value their supervision and what they have learnt through supervision. Both of these factors increased over time.

Valuing Supervision

Supervisees talked about valuing their supervisors and used many positive adjectives to describe the relationships that they have with them, for example, 'precious' and 'special'. Some supervisees described what they valued, such as the supervisor's empathetic nature or their willingness to disclose their experiences during coaching supervision. Others valued the accountability, availability, continued challenge and the professionalism of supervision, "*it's a sense that, when you are stuck with a client, you've got somewhere to take it*" (T16). Supervisees described how supervision left them feeling, "*lighter with a real clarity and peace*" (A11).

Supervisors and supervisees perceive the value of supervision to grow over time. Some supervisors described how novice supervisees rely heavily on supervision and come to sessions feeling desperate with a long list of questions, "*I've no idea what I'm doing and I need to speak to someone before I next speak to this particular client*" (S2). Experienced supervisees said that they felt that there was always much to talk about, "*there is always something to chew on*" (A7). Over time, very experienced supervisees saw multiple layers of complexity through reflection and they reported having deeper, more wide-ranging and insightful conversations about life with their supervisor. Several supervisees commented that they would continue with supervision even if it was not a professional requirement and described wanting to, "*get everything, every morsel I can out of it*" (B3).

Learning through supervision

Supervisees spoke about what they learnt through supervision, the different ways in which they learn, the impact of their learning and how this develops over time. Supervisees shared examples of developments in their coaching knowledge and skills, what they had learnt at an emotional level and what they gained from observing themselves and recognising their patterns. Supervisees benefited from new perspectives on their clients, "*so quite often I'll see the client in a slightly different way once I've had a session*" (F16). They also gained knowledge about how to accelerate their learning and professional development, "*the most important CPD I've done comes from my supervision because I get more learning working with my supervisor than from anything I go on, and I go on some good stuff*" (H16).

Supervisees also learnt in a variety of ways depending on their learning styles and preferences and the different techniques that their supervisors employed during sessions. Some enjoyed learning at a theoretical level, "*I'll go off and research topics we've covered*" (C19) and others from observing, reflecting and listening to recordings together. Supervisees learnt through the supervisory relationship by observing their supervisor's interactions and skills, "*my supervisor modeled being comfortable in her own skin and having the courage to say what is going on in the moment*" (R16). Group supervision provided an opportunity to learn through others' practices and experiences, "*you get a very deep and rich experience from everybody there, you'll get four different viewpoints really*" (N3). Supervisees also learnt through carrying out reflexive learning following supervision, "*what am I learning about myself here?*" (J21).

In addition, all of the supervisees, bar one, described a transition in their learning over time. Novice supervisees' development started with a transactional phase when they were keen to understand how they were doing, how to handle specific issues and learn basic techniques and approaches, "*give me the tools and tell me what to look at and I'll go away and figure it out*" (C20). Experienced supervisees described developing their internal supervisor, "*I'm developing my own internal supervisor although at the moment it has stabilisers on it*" (H17). Supervisees wanted to discuss particular cases and get advice when they were 'stuck'. Very experienced supervisees viewed learning in a more holistic way and described bringing themselves more fully into the supervision process, "*the issues I'm bringing are more about being a coach than doing coaching*" (N22). Supervisors noticed that very experienced supervisees start talking at a deeper level straight away in

supervision sessions, “with less wrapping paper” (G15). One supervisor described supervisees’ learning over time as like laying down layers of rice paper, “you can’t see any difference in the individual layer but over time, when you have a stack, you can see that your practice has changed” (Q26).

Supervisee inhibitors – “I’m getting my own way”

Four distinct themes were identified on how supervisees get in their own way during supervision - anxiety, fear of judgment and shame, I’m blocking myself, lack of agency and not seeing myself as an equal partner.

Anxiety, fear of judgment and shame

During the interviews participants spoke of a range of negative emotions that they experienced during supervision and theoretical sampling led to an investigation of anxiety, fear of judgment and shame as these came up most frequently and supervisees explained that these emotions can stop or slow down their development. Many supervisees reported feeling anxious when they first started supervision “I do remember being anxious about it and apprehensive about sharing what I did with someone and them critiquing it” (A5). Anxiety was present for some supervisees at the start of every new supervisory relationship and for others, anxiety was related to specific aspects of the supervision process such as when focusing on things that weren’t working well, “as I’m about to say something that I don’t feel proud of” (F6).

Many supervisees spoke about fear of judgment, “I felt a bit judged by my recent supervisor” (N5). A couple of supervisees commented that internal supervisors could be too close to the issues being discussed. Fear of judgment was felt to be greater in the group context as there was potential for judgment by peers as well as the supervisor.

I found the group very tense and some of that was probably about me and some of it was probably about other people in the room...not wanting to feel ashamed or embarrassed or kind of found out or badly judged (F1).

Some supervisees said that they judged themselves and a few supervisees commented that they were concerned that they were judging the supervisor and their peers too. Supervisees felt that the fear of judgment knocked their confidence, “If I feel that I’m being judged, it is crucifying because I’m already judging myself pretty badly” (A40) and could slow or stop their learning. They described the consequences of anxiety as being to edit the thoughts that they shared and the topics that they raised, “I don’t feel free to say what is going on in my mind” (B3), to be defensive, not allow themselves to be vulnerable and to protect themselves and their practice. One supervisor explained that shame can smother a supervisee’s ability to explore their vulnerability, “shame is like a wet blanket that sits on our vulnerability and stops us from seeing the light of day” (G9).

It is important to note that over half of the supervisees interviews did not report feeling anxious during supervision, “I’m not consciously aware that I get anxious about telling her stuff because I do actually trust her with it” (B9). There may be various reasons for this - some supervisees may be in trusting relationships with supervisors and others may not be aware of their anxiety and how it manifests itself.

I’m blocking myself

Supervisees were asked what habits they employed which can get in the way of exploring issues and impacted their learning during coaching supervision. Three specific areas emerged – lack of preparation, psychological diversion tactics and holding a limited view of the potential learning. Lack of preparation was the most common habit to which supervisees admitted. This could take the form of ‘winging it’, introducing too many issues or bringing superficial, generic or tangential material. Supervisees described how lack of preparation led to focusing on one perspective such as their clients, rather than multiple perspectives including their personal patterns and the wider system.

Supervisees provided examples of a range of psychological diversion tactics – asking the supervisor lot of questions so that they could hide, over talking, drawing the supervisor into their stories and getting lost in detail. *“I know that one of my supervisors will happily get distracted and doesn’t spot it” (P6)*. Many supervisees mentioned over rationalising. *“Let’s intellectualise it to death” (U4)*, being defensive and being self conscious about bringing familiar patterns and issues, *“I can’t bring this up again... the fear is, haven’t I learnt that yet? (N6)*. Some supervisees described being too polite to ask for what they needed from the session, saying too little and self-censoring. Group supervision increased supervisees’ self consciousness and could impact supervisees in a number of different ways, for example, some supervisees reported being overly concerned about being entertaining and not boring the group whilst others worried that there was not enough time to go into depth on their issue and so avoided bringing it.

Some supervisees said that they held limited beliefs about potential learning in supervision. This took a number of forms including overly focusing on finding solutions to issues, not reflecting after the session, not knowing how to capture their learning from supervision, not committing to actions afterwards and going through the motions to obtain accreditation. One supervisor explained how supervisors can get caught up in problem solving too, *“it starts with the supervisee but the supervisor gets hooked into it” (Q9)*. A couple of supervisees acknowledged that they were reluctant to consider what was going well in their coaching and held the limiting assumption that supervision is only for remedial purposes. In a group context, supervisees spoke about getting too involved in other members’ issues and not reflecting on how the discussion related to their own practice and learning.

It’s a bit of a mask so that you can feel that you are working, you feel that you’re being part of the group, but not actually getting into the stuff that’s important to you (G6).

Lack of agency

Lack of agency can take a number of different guises – supervisees being unsure about what coaching is about and how they can make the best use of it, being reluctant to discuss issues arising in their supervisory relationships and not changing supervisor when their needs are no longer being met. Novice supervisees reported a lack of understanding about what coaching supervision was and how it could add value to their practice, *“I didn’t even know what it was at that point. I remember thinking why do I need a supervisor?” (A4)*. Coaches described being ‘allocated’ supervisors on coaching programmes and therefore having no choice about who supervised them and receiving no guidance about how to use supervision to best effect; this provoked anxiety in the supervisees.

Four out of twelve of the supervisees had never discussed their supervisory relationship with their supervisor despite being with the supervisor for over five years. Some supervisees were unaware of the option to discuss the relationship and the supervisor had not asked for feedback, *“I’ve not even thought about that before and that’s quite interesting coming from a coaching perspective where I do review the coaching process with people” (C16)*. Others confessed to having issues that they would like to bring up with the supervisor but they did not want to hurt the supervisor’s feelings, *“It is just a small issue so...I have no intention of mentioning it, but sometimes she talks too much” (F14)*. One supervisee felt that a lack of trust prevented her from being willing to raise issues about the supervisory relationship because when she had brought up issues in the past, she had felt blamed for doing so, *“I think that he is very clear that he thinks that the process is good. I’m not sure that he’d be open to learning on that” (R15)*. By avoiding discussing relationship issues as they arise, supervisees miss additional data to discuss with their supervisor, *“ruptures as data” (T29)*, the opportunity to create a more balanced relationship and to benefit from mutual learning.

Five out of twelve supervisees in the study expressed reluctance to change supervisor and they had each been with the same supervisor for at least five years. Supervisees expressed different concerns such as: not knowing who else to approach for supervision; being unsure about how to select a new

supervisor; feeling afraid of ending their current relationship; worrying about selecting the ‘wrong’ supervisor; being without a supervisor; feeling nervous about how long it might take to build a new relationship and general fear of the unknown going forward.

You invest so much in a relationship that to find out two or three sessions down the line that it wasn't quite what you need is a real shame on both sides because that is quite hard to get out of then (S32).

Some supervisees gave positive reasons for not changing supervisor – they were experiencing high levels of trust, safety and connection with their current supervisor. The research process prompted over half of the supervisees interviewed to question whether they were getting too comfortable and ask themselves, “*am I getting enough out of the relationship?*” (U14).

Not seeing myself as an equal partner

All supervisees reported that the supervisor’s role is imbued with power and many supervisees did not see themselves as an equal partner. Novice supervisees felt particularly powerless. They depicted the relationship as parent-child, “*I think I probably went in as a child wanting some advice and being told what to do, it took away the responsibility for my having to decide*” (A12). New supervisees put their supervisors on pedestals and perceived the supervisor to have more responsibility in the process than the supervisor wanted, “*I think that I didn't challenge the process enough*” (R10). As supervisees gained experience, they perceived supervisors more like older siblings at different phases of their careers. Very experienced supervisees regarded supervision as partnership, “*it is more a conversation between two peers, I feel that is right for me at my stage of my coaching development*” (S14). At this stage, it could become a reversible relationship and the supervisee could supervise the supervisor, “*I have a sense that I could equally be supervising her on some of the work that she does*” (M16). At this stage supervisees expressed the importance of the supervisor maintaining an appropriate level of challenge and clear boundaries.

Supervisee enablers – “I’m driving the bus of my supervision”

Supervisees articulated how they have learnt to enhance their coaching supervision over time and these activities fell into four themes - adopting a positive mindset, co-creating the relationship, participating actively in the process and undertaking supervisor training.

Adopting a positive mindset

Supervisees described three aspects to adopting a positive mindset - being aware of how they think about supervision, managing their internal state during supervision and embedding learning afterwards. Before supervision, supervisees and supervisors considered it important to surface any self-limiting beliefs that they held about supervision and clarify how supervision might benefit them, their clients and the organisations that they work for. When preparing for supervision, supervisees spoke about identifying what in their practice is confusing or disturbing them and to be courageous and identify what they are editing out that needs to be aired. Supervisees and supervisors remarked on the importance of bringing what is working well too so that supervision is used to celebrate success as well as to focus upon development. During supervision, supervisees felt that it was important to manage their internal state, which included being willing to be vulnerable, being open to what is being said and letting go of unhelpful internal messages about the need to perform. Several supervisees said that acknowledging their anxiety and fear helped them, as did sharing their negative thoughts with the supervisor, saying when they felt judged, adopting positive beliefs around the supervisor’s behaviour, “*it comes from a place of good intent*” (N8) and challenging themselves, “*to take risks, have faith and to go to the edge of their learning*” (C14). After supervision sessions, supervisees felt it was important to continue to manage their internal state, translate insights into actions, be braver with clients and embed learning through practice.

Co-creating the relationship

Supervisees focused on three factors in co-creating the relationship – finding a supervisory relationship that works, sharing the driving seat with the supervisor and keeping attuned with the supervisor. Supervisees felt that it was important to find a supervisor that they could connect with as this enabled them to trust the supervisor and be open and vulnerable. Some supervisees participated in co-constructing the contract by stipulating what they were looking for, “*what I need from you is not to be shocked by anything*” (Q10), sharing how they can get in their own way during supervision and briefing the supervisor about their coaching framework, practice and learning style.

Supervisees had learnt to share the driving seat during supervision by being clear with the supervisor what they wanted from each session, taking ownership for presenting each item and taking responsibility for their learning and actions. Supervisees talked about being prepared to challenge the supervisor in order to get their needs met and voicing any concerns with the supervisor during the session. Over time as their relationship developed, supervisees kept attuned with the supervisor through reviewing the relationship and their shifting needs, “*making sure that we don’t collude and get too cosy*” (P3) and if their needs weren’t being met, ending the relationship, “*if it’s not giving you what you want, taking yourself away*” (G1).

Participating actively in the process

Supervisees increased their agency in the supervision process by participating actively throughout it, “*supervisees empowering themselves to manage their supervision process*” (H18). Before the supervision session, supervisees stressed the importance of reviewing their client relationships and identifying which clients they wished to talk about, “*going with a full plate to supervision*” (A15). Some supervisees reflected upon their issues beforehand through using a mind-map or journaling. During the session, many supervisees took responsibility for the agenda, being willing to explore issues through different lenses and share thoughts, feelings, patterns and insights. Supervisees and supervisors considered it a joint responsibility to ensure that time is given to review how the process is working. At the end of the session, supervisees felt that it was their responsibility to decide what to take forward and important not to force an action plan but to clarify their intent. After the session, supervisees talked about the importance of capturing and re-accessing their learning from supervision, “*I’ll make notes and then I put them in the client’s file*” (F20) and reflecting upon their learning in a reflexive manner. Supervisees commented that they were more likely to understand, empower themselves and undertake their responsibilities in supervision as they matured. Many of the supervisees and some of the supervisors were surprised by the amount of responsibilities that supervisees had, “*the big take away is how much more responsibility I have*” (R20). One supervisor remarked, “*I wonder if I take on too much responsibility and don’t require enough of the supervisee*” (Q30). For some supervisees, supervisor training acted as a catalyst for taking more responsibility.

Undertaking supervisor training

Having supervisor training increased supervisees willingness to have supervision and their experience of it, “*I’m more willing to have it and I use it smarter*” (M23) and has therefore been included as an enabling factor. The supervisees who had had supervisor training reported understanding more about the purpose of coaching supervision, taking more responsibility during it and knowing how to make the most out of it. Supervisor training reduced inhibitors, such as supervisee anxiety and lack of agency and made supervisees clearer about the quality of supervision that they desired, “*I would notice if I wasn’t supervised in a good way*” (F19).

Discussion

The findings describe the lived-in experiences of supervisees and how they mature over time. Critical realist grounded theory requires the researcher to go beyond the empirical data and describe

the social and psychological processes that might explain supervisees' experiences. Three underlying mechanisms are suggested as potential explanations: fear, power relations and the drive for learning.

Many of the participant responses indicate that fear is present in coaching supervision. Fear is a natural, unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain or harm and the threat can be psychological as well as physical. It comes from a sense that we are not safe in a situation and our response to this is anxiety and survival behaviour which often drives us away from another person physically and emotionally (Adamson, 2011). Fear can pose in a number of guises in supervision, including anxiety, fear of judgment and shame, and these defences are rarely useful and can create distance between the supervisor and supervisee. Human beings have a deep need to connect and when fear gets in the way it can be a major block to intimacy and communication. Meaningful learning occurs when emotional factors facilitate personal transformation and, if people are anxious, uncomfortable or fearful, they do not learn (Perry, 2006). Supervisors can also be affected by fear and the literature describes how fear in supervisors manifests itself as telling, judging and advising (Shohet, 2008). This study adds to the empirical evidence on the prevalence, contexts and consequences of fear (Butwell, 2006; DeFilippo, 2013; McGivern, 2009; Passmore & McGoldrick, 2009) and shame (Cohen, 2014; De Haan, 2016) during coaching supervision as perceived by supervisees. It provides new evidence about how fear and shame reduce as supervisees mature over time and what supervisees have learnt to do to move towards their fear, accept it and welcome their vulnerability and learning.

Power relations is the second underlying mechanism and can be defined as the extent to which a person had the potential ability to influence another person in a given setting (French & Raven, 1959). The participants in the study perceived power as both a supervisee and a supervisor phenomenon and described different sources of supervisor and supervisee power. In practice, the supervisor's higher levels of knowledge and experience, 'expert' power, gives them power that is only matched by very experienced supervisees. The impact of an imbalance in power was that supervisees were more anxious and took less responsibility within the supervisory relationship. Whilst the supervisor has a responsibility to manage their power appropriately and make power relations visible, it could be argued that supervisees have a responsibility not to subjugate themselves and to have conversations about power relations directly with their supervisors. Over time, as supervisees mature and the gap in knowledge and experience narrows, the relationship naturally becomes more equal and collaborative.

Learning is primal, it occurs instinctively and is key to our adapting and long term survival. Adults look for ways of understanding experiences as they are occurring, hoping to learn something applicable to interactions and challenges in life (Goffman, 1959). This view is supported by recent findings from neuroscience which explain that our brains go on developing throughout our life and we have the ability to develop new neural pathways, 'neural plasticity', in response to change or new situations (Siegel, 2010). In supervision, supervisees gain value through facilitated learning; supervisors have an important role to play in facilitating 'what' and 'how' supervisees learn. In spite of the presence of fear and the power imbalance, supervisees perceived the main benefit of supervision to be learning. A desire to maximise their learning drives supervisees to develop ways to enhance their supervision and reduces their tendency to get in their own way and inhibit their supervision.

Conclusion

There is a gap in the available guidelines, training and literature to support coaches to gain awareness of how to be effective supervisees (Clutterbuck et al., 2016; Hodge, Campbell, Donaldson-Feilder, & Admason, 2014). The aim of this study was to explore how supervisees help and hinder their coaching supervision and develop an empirically informed framework with guidelines so that supervisees at all stages of professional development can get more from their coaching supervision.

There are practical implications for other key stakeholders too including supervisors, supervisor training providers, coaching professional bodies and organisations that provide coaching supervision.

A framework for supervisee-led supervision has been developed that reflects the findings and analysis of this study (figure 3). The framework is specifically designed for supervisees with an intention to increase their awareness of how to become active participants in their supervision. Thus “supervisee-led supervision” is at the heart of the inner circle. The outer circle of the framework depicts the possible underlying mechanisms that affect coaching supervision – fear, power relations and our natural desire for learning. Inside the circle lie the benefits of coaching supervision, namely how supervisees value the process and learning, what supervisees can do to enable their supervision and what supervisees can do that inhibits it. The small arrows between the boxes illustrate the relationships between the categories. The benefits of supervision accelerate supervisees’ desire to enable their supervision and reduce their tendency to get in their own way and inhibit their supervision. The larger arrow at the bottom of the inner circle represents supervisee development and maturity over time. This does not mean that the pace of supervisee development should be forced. It is important to maximise the level of learning at each stage of supervisee maturation. Whilst the framework was designed for supervisees in coaching supervision, it can be used by other key stakeholders to understand the supervisee perspective. With this in mind, specific guidelines were developed for both supervisees and supervisors based on the findings.

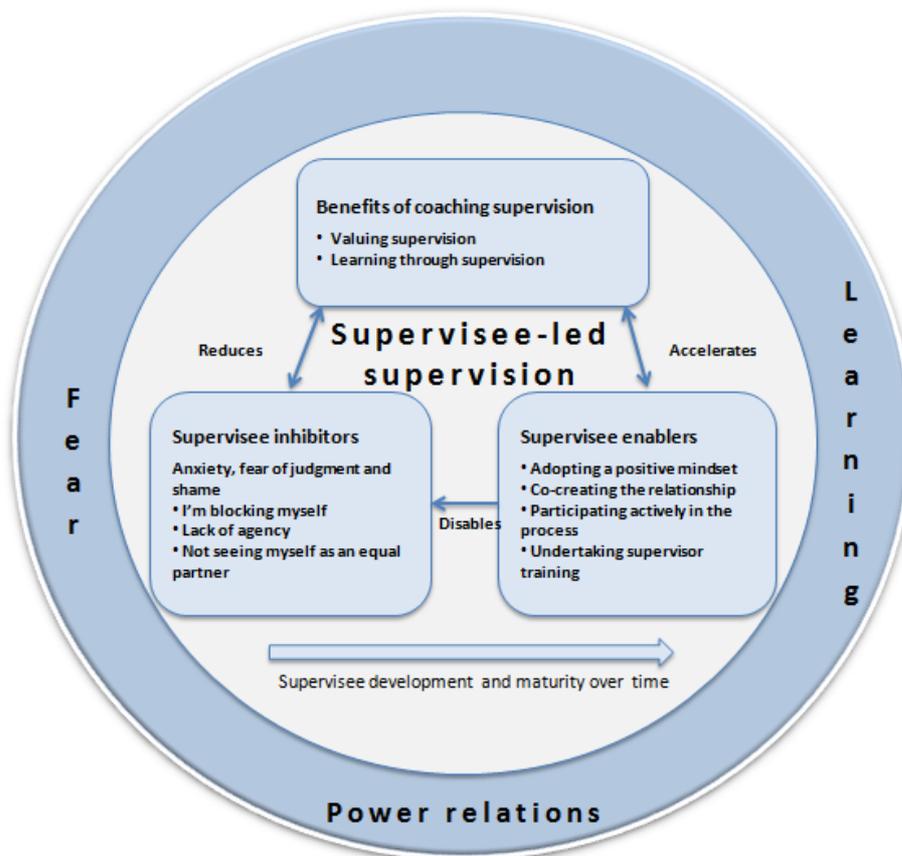


Figure 3: Framework for supervisee-led supervision

The enhanced role of the supervisee in coaching supervision needs to be reflected in how we define coaching supervisees going forward. I have developed a new definition that incorporates the supervisees' proactive and equal role in the process.

A coaching supervisee is a coach who co-creates an equal, collaborative partnership with a supervisor in order to share and reflect upon his/her work, gain perspective, learn, develop and resource themselves and ensure that their practice is ethical and effective for clients.

Coaching supervisors have a vital role to play in supporting and facilitating supervisees in their reflective practice and learning. Supervisors can adopt a supervisee-led approach to coaching supervision. Supervisor training programmes would benefit from including the supervisee perspective and novice supervisors will benefit from awareness about the underlying mechanisms of fear and power dynamics in coaching supervision so that they can discuss them explicitly with supervisees.

Professional bodies need to recognise the important role of supervisees in coaching supervision by developing guidelines, facilitating workshops and developing webinars on how supervisees can get the most from individual and group coaching at each stage of supervisee maturity. This could include how to select a supervisor, contract with them, how to manage anxiety and power dynamics during supervision and how to review the relationship.

Organisations that provide coaching supervision, such as coach training organisations and coaching providers, rarely give much information on how to get the best use from supervision. These organisations could include supervisee training and guidelines prior to coaches embarking on coach supervision for the first time. In addition, they could provide coaches with a choice of supervisors in order to increase supervisee agency in the process.

Learning and development practitioners who provide supervision services for their internal coaches could ensure that their internal coaches are able to select their supervisor and arrange supervisee training, in the form of a webinar or an interactive workshop for their internal coaches. In addition, they could seek feedback on the extent to which the supervision is supervisee-led.

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Dr Louise Sheppard supervises internal and external coaches on an individual and group basis. She is an executive coach with over 20 years of coaching experience in 50 organisations globally. Louise has an MA in Professional Coaching (i-coach academy) and is a Doctor of Coaching and Mentoring (Oxford Brookes University).