

# Supervision Partnerships





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**This set of readings has been put together to assist youth workers and their supervisors by a group of people who have practical experience in either or both areas.**

The booklet is particularly intended to help supervisors of Praxis students in youth work and community development.

To get more info find out more about other activities and resources of Praxis:

Phone	<b>(04) 4712747</b>
Website	<b><a href="http://www.praxis.org.nz">www.praxis.org.nz</a></b>
Email	<b><a href="mailto:neo@praxis.org.nz">neo@praxis.org.nz</a></b>
Post	<b>PO Box 6834, Marion Square, Wellington 6141</b>

## **Introduction**

Kia ora - if you are reading this book it means you are either looking at having a Praxis student or have taken one on for the year. We trust it is a great journey for you. This book is designed to give you the run down on the requirements and expectations of having a Praxis student, as well as the basic structure of the course. If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact us as we will be more than happy to help you.

## **About Praxis**

Praxis is a network of practitioners in youth and community work. Praxis operates in partnerships with community groups, churches, mission organisations

Our aim is to support youth workers to connect with, and serve their local communities. The course is focused around this goal. Once they are ready to start the course, we will ask you to discuss this balance, and draw up a job description that reflects it.

## **About the course**

Praxis is a private training establishment that has been granted registration by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority under Part 18 of the Education Act 1989..

NZQA has given Praxis an External Quality Assurance of Provider Category 2

- 8 October 2015: NZQA is Confident in the educational performance of Praxis
- 8 October 2015: NZQA is Highly Confident in the capability in self-assessment of Praxis

Praxis offers two courses.

- **A level 4 (1 year) Certificate in Youth Work**
- **A level 6 (2 year) Diploma in Youth and Community Studies (incorporating the National Diploma in youth work)**

We run the first year of the National Diploma and the Level four Certificate concurrently. Both first year Diploma students and Certificate students will attend the same lectures and have the same expectations regarding completion of the course. However each will have different workbooks and will be assessed at the level of the course they have opted for. There will be opportunity for students to change the level of the course they are on at certain stages in the year. Changes will need to be made in consultation with the course coordinator.

## **The Praxis ideas**

**Journeying with Jesus**

**Missional engagement**

**Learning in action and context**

**Ongoing communities of learning**

**Practicing what we teach**

**Centre to the margins**

**Partnership with indigenous peoples**

**Learning spaces of inclusion, grace and talanoa**

**Excellence and generosity**

## How does the Year work?

As mentioned above the Praxis course operates as a partnership between Praxis {which provides course content}, and an agency {church or community organisation} – which provides supervised practical experience. We believe that learning is most effective when it takes place alongside the experience of developing a youth work project in conjunction with a church or a community organisation. We encourage students to continue with their project after the course finishes.

### Course Design

Students will have five block courses over the course of the year. They will also meet with a tutor in their region for up to one day per week in between block courses, this is called a cluster day. Most lectures will be offered through these block courses, and they will be given assignment work to take home after each one. Outside of block courses, they are expected to work with their agency for around 16 hours per week. (see insert for course dates)

**Study Skills:** It is an expectation that students commit to a half day study skills tutorial per week for term 1. This will be reviewed on a needs basis for each student at the conclusion of term 1

### Agency Rep

In conjunction with the course coordinator an agency rep is expected to oversee the practical component of a student's youth or community work. Agencies will enter into a formal agreement with their student and Praxis during the student's years of training with Praxis. Agencies are obliged to meet the normal obligations of an employer, especially with regard to safety, supervision and support. **We have found that students that come from an agency with a highly supportive environment in all aspects of the year (including getting assignments done) are far more likely to succeed on the Praxis course and become effective youth workers.**

### Study

Students need at least a day a week to be able to complete assignments; so when agencies are working on their job descriptions with students they need to make sure there is room for this.

## What is supervision about?

***As part of a student's year with Praxis we expect them to meet with a supervisor every 2-3 weeks.***

Supervision meetings are to help them reflect on the practical work they are doing and to work through what is going on for them personally during the year. This is a really important part of the year, to complete the course requirements this must become a regular part of a student's life.

We strongly suggest that a supervisor is:

Older, faith based, the same gender, close to where the student is, committed to spending time with a student, a good listener, and able to provide suitable support and guidance. A choice of supervisor needs to be approved by the Praxis co-ordinator and agency rep. We will NOT approve someone:

- Who is the student's manager, or who we feel is too close to the structure that employs them.
- Who is a member of family or a 'mate.
- Different gender.

## What do we do first?

1. Part of their enrolment is giving this supervision booklet to you. Please have a look through this booklet and decide whether you are able to supervise this student and let them know.
2. If yes you will then need to have an introductory session with the student. During this session it is important that you:
  - Set the boundaries of the session together by completing the supervision agreement and application form. Read though the supervision guidelines together and at your second supervision session, year 1 students have a small assignment to complete about supervision (AT1) in their first workbook.
  - Fill in the supervisor's application and agreement form and post to  
**Praxis, PO Box 6834, Marion Square, Wellington 6141**
  - Once we have your details a Praxis team member will be in contact with you to make sure you have everything you need.
3. We ask each supervisor to take part in a review of the student, this is in the middle of the year with agency reps, course coordinators and student, who will have opportunities for input. The supervisor will meet with the student prior to the review to give them feedback on how they are doing so there are no surprises.
4. Attendance at a short get together with supervisors and Praxis staff at the beginning of the year to make sure everyone is on the same page.

## Who can I contact?

Everyone in Praxis works part time -and does other useful stuff in their church or community. So (right after we finish saving the world), we'll always call you back if you can't get us first time.

## National Office:

PO Box 6834, Marion Square, Wellington 6141

Phone: 04 471 2747

Email: [neo@praxis.org.nz](mailto:neo@praxis.org.nz)

Website: [www.praxis.org.nz](http://www.praxis.org.nz)

## Your Local Contact Person is:



## Praxis Code of Ethics for Supervisors

**As a supervisor we ask you to make a commitment to these values:**

We are not responsible for the personal choices that our supervisee makes

<>

We confront people about the choices that they are making, and their consequences, but we don't make anyone's mind up for them.

<>

We take responsibility to regularly uphold our supervisee in prayer.

<>

We agree to make supervision culturally safe by consulting others on issues that may have a cultural component and by being personally committed to our own ongoing learning in this area.

<>

We encourage, even in the most comprehensive mess!

<>

We don't use the weaknesses and failings of our supervisee as a basis for humour among our colleagues.

<>

We agree to keep each other (ourselves and our colleagues) open and accountable about the nature of our relationships with any person we are in a supervision relationship with.

<>

We agree to act with integrity, being faithful to do the things that we have promised. And where we fail in this, to seek forgiveness and reconciliation at the earliest possible opportunity.

<>

We agree to accept mediation, wherever this is requested by the supervisee.

<>

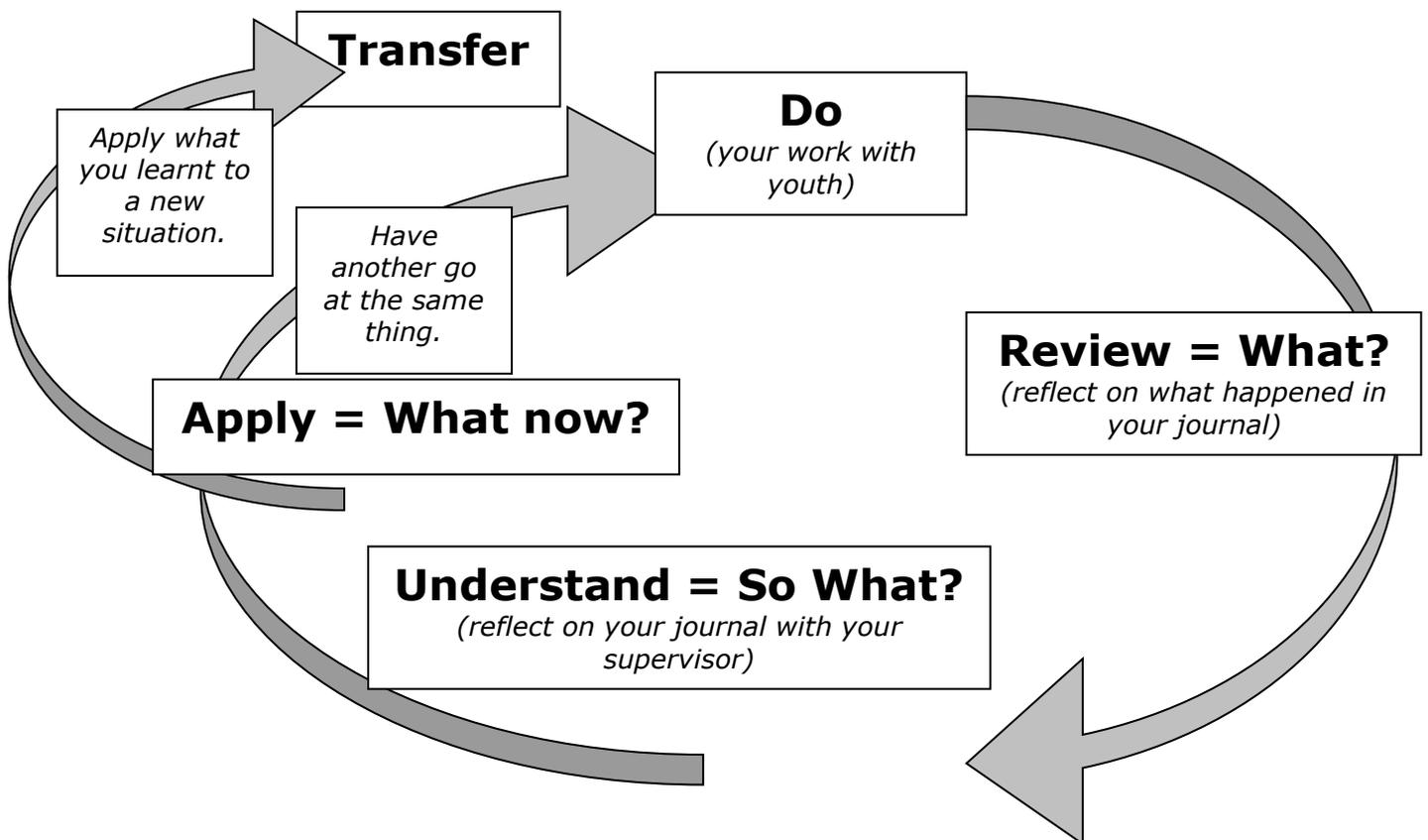
We don't discuss personal issues raised in supervision sessions with others unless we have the permission of the supervisee to do so. The exception to this rule is a situation where others are endangered by our silence.

## Experience –how we learn

### THE ACTION / REFLECTION CYCLE

The Action/Reflection cycle encourages you toward the lifetime discipline of consciously learning from what you do. Someone once said that those who are unable to learn from the mistakes of the past are doomed to repeat them.

For the Praxis course, you are required to consciously use this approach by keeping a journal of your practical work and then meeting regularly with your supervisor to discuss and reflect on what is in your journal.



## Supervision Agreement and Application form

The following agreement has been reached between

\_\_\_\_\_ (Supervisor) and  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Supervisee)

### 1. Practicalities

How often to we agree to meet:

Where will we meet:

Which one of us is responsible for organising appointments:

What is the understanding if one of us is running late or needs to postpone the appointment?

### 2. Content of Supervision

Have a look at the page called "Guidelines for Supervision" and talk through suggested theme's for your supervision. Are you both ok with this?

### 3. What values and attitudes do we both agree to bring to supervision sessions?

### 4. If one of us becomes unhappy with the supervision arrangement, what process do we agree to follow?

This agreement covers the period \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNED:

Supervisor ..... Date .....

Supervisee..... Date .....

## Supervisor Application

I am available to become a supervisor for \_\_\_\_\_  
(student's name)

My name is: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone/s \_\_\_\_\_

PTO

Email \_\_\_\_\_



- I have received a copy of the **Getting Started with Supervision** booklet
- I am able to make a commitment to meet with this student regularly

My relationship with them up until now (if at all) is (please outline briefly):

**Please give this to your local Praxis Course Co-ordinator or  
Photo Copy and send through to:**

Praxis National Enrolment Office  
PO Box 6834  
Marion Square  
Wellington 6141

## Guidelines for Supervision;

We ask that a minimum of 10 sessions to be completed by the end of the year.  
 Could supervisors, students and Praxis tutor please sign the guidelines form after each session.

Students are required to keep a journal, while studying with Praxis. A journal is provided on the next few pages, for you and your student to use if you want. This is a confidential document between supervisors and students. Praxis staff just need to sight this, but will not be reading content.

### Guideline form to be signed

Session 1		Date:	Session 2		Date:
<i>Suggested Themes</i>		<i>Done?</i>	<i>Suggested Themes</i>		<i>Done?</i>
1. Personal reflections (what's on top)			1. Personal reflections (what's on top)		
2. Review agreements and/ or action steps & set new ones.			2. Review agreements and/ or action steps & set new ones.		
3. What's going well?			3. What's going well?		
4. Work on's			4. Work on's		
5. How's practical work going?			5. How's practical work going?		
6. Assignment check in.			6. Assignment check in.		
<i>Student sign</i>	<i>Supervisor sign</i>	<i>Praxis sign</i>	<i>Student sign</i>	<i>Supervisor sign</i>	<i>Praxis sign</i>

Session 3		Date:	Session 4		Date:
<i>Suggested Themes</i>		<i>Done?</i>	<i>Suggested Themes</i>		<i>Done?</i>
1. Personal reflections (what's on top)			1. Personal reflections (what's on top)		
2. Review agreements and/ or action steps & set new ones.			2. Review agreements and/ or action steps & set new ones.		
3. What's going well?			3. What's going well?		
4. Work on's			4. Work on's		
5. How's practical work going?			5. How's practical work going?		
6. Assignment check in.			6. Assignment check in.		
<i>Student sign</i>	<i>Supervisor sign</i>	<i>Praxis sign</i>	<i>Student sign</i>	<i>Supervisor sign</i>	<i>Praxis sign</i>

Session 5		Date:	Session 6		Date:
<i>Suggested Themes</i>		<i>Done?</i>	<i>Suggested Themes</i>		<i>Done?</i>
1. Personal reflections (what's on top)			1. Personal reflections (what's on top)		
2. Review agreements and/ or action steps & set new ones.			2. Review agreements and/ or action steps & set new ones.		
3. What's going well?			3. What's going well?		
4. Work on's			4. Work on's		
5. How's practical work going?			5. How's practical work going?		
6. Assignment check in.			6. Assignment check in.		
<i>Student sign</i>	<i>Supervisor sign</i>	<i>Praxis sign</i>	<i>Student sign</i>	<i>Supervisor sign</i>	<i>Praxis sign</i>

<b>Session 7</b>		<b>Date:</b>	<b>Session 8</b>		<b>Date:</b>
<i>Suggested Themes</i>		<i>Done?</i>	<i>Suggested Themes</i>		<i>Done?</i>
1. Personal reflections (what's on top)			1. Personal reflections (what's on top)		
2. Review agreements and/ or action steps & set new ones.			2. Review agreements and/ or action steps & set new ones.		
3. What's going well?			3. What's going well?		
4. Work on's			4. Work on's		
5. How's practical work going?			5. How's practical work going?		
6. Assignment check in.			6. Assignment check in.		
<i>Student sign</i>	<i>Supervisor sign</i>	<i>Praxis sign</i>	<i>Student sign</i>	<i>Supervisor sign</i>	<i>Praxis sign</i>

<b>Session 9</b>		<b>Date:</b>	<b>Session 10</b>		<b>Date:</b>
<i>Suggested Themes</i>		<i>Done?</i>	<i>Suggested Themes</i>		<i>Done?</i>
1. Personal reflections (what's on top)			1. Personal reflections (what's on top)		
2. Review agreements and/ or action steps & set new ones.			2. Review agreements and/ or action steps & set new ones.		
3. What's going well?			3. What's going well?		
4. Work on's			4. Work on's		
5. How's practical work going?			5. How's practical work going?		
6. Assignment check in.			6. Assignment check in.		
<i>Student sign</i>	<i>Supervisor sign</i>	<i>Praxis sign</i>	<i>Student sign</i>	<i>Supervisor sign</i>	<i>Praxis sign</i>

**Journal for Supervisors/Students to use. Confidential**

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Reflections, Action points, Notes</b>
<b>Reflection &amp; what's on top?</b> <i>(From your Praxis journal)</i>	
<b>Review of last sessions agreements &amp; action steps.</b>	
What's going well?	
<b>How's practical work going?</b>	
<b>Work on's</b>	
<b>Assignments &amp; any other business</b>	
<b>Today's agreed action steps.</b>	
<b>Date of next supervision.</b>	

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Reflections, Action points, Notes</b>
<b>Reflection &amp; what's on top?</b> <i>(From your Praxis journal)</i>	
<b>Review of last sessions agreements &amp; action steps.</b>	
What's going well?	
<b>How's practical work going?</b>	
<b>Work on's</b>	
<b>Assignments &amp; any other business</b>	
<b>Today's agreed action steps.</b>	
<b>Date of next supervision.</b>	

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Reflections, Action points, Notes</b>
<b>Reflection &amp; what's on top?</b> <i>(From your Praxis journal)</i>	
<b>Review of last sessions agreements &amp; action steps.</b>	
<b>What's going well?</b>	
<b>How's practical work going?</b>	
<b>Work on's</b>	
<b>Assignments &amp; any other business</b>	
<b>Today's agreed action steps.</b>	
<b>Date of next supervision.</b>	

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Reflections, Action points, Notes</b>
<b>Reflection &amp; what's on top?</b> <i>(From your Praxis journal)</i>	
<b>Review of last sessions agreements &amp; action steps.</b>	
<b>What's going well?</b>	
<b>How's practical work going?</b>	
<b>Work on's</b>	
<b>Assignments &amp; any other business</b>	
<b>Today's agreed action steps.</b>	
<b>Date of next supervision.</b>	

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Reflections, Action points, Notes</b>
<b>Reflection &amp; what's on top?</b> <i>(From your Praxis journal)</i>	
<b>Review of last sessions agreements &amp; action steps.</b>	
What's going well?	
<b>How's practical work going?</b>	
<b>Work on's</b>	
<b>Assignments &amp; any other business</b>	
<b>Today's agreed action steps.</b>	
<b>Date of next supervision.</b>	

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<b>Reflection &amp; what's on top?</b> <i>(From your Praxis journal)</i>	
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What's going well?	
<b>How's practical work going?</b>	
<b>Work on's</b>	
<b>Assignments &amp; any other business</b>	
<b>Today's agreed action steps.</b>	
<b>Date of next supervision.</b>	

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Reflections, Action points, Notes</b>
<b>Reflection &amp; what's on top?</b> <i>(From your Praxis journal)</i>	
<b>Review of last sessions agreements &amp; action steps.</b>	
What's going well?	
How's practical work going?	
Work on's	
Assignments & any other business	
Today's agreed action steps.	
Date of next supervision.	

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Reflections, Action points, Notes</b>
<b>Reflection &amp; what's on top?</b> <i>(From your Praxis journal)</i>	
<b>Review of last sessions agreements &amp; action steps.</b>	
What's going well?	
How's practical work going?	
Work on's	
Assignments & any other business	
Today's agreed action steps.	
Date of next supervision.	

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Reflections, Action points, Notes</b>
<b>Reflection &amp; what's on top?</b> <i>(From your Praxis journal)</i>	
<b>Review of last sessions agreements &amp; action steps.</b>	
What's going well?	
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Assignments & any other business	
Today's agreed action steps.	
Date of next supervision.	

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Reflections, Action points, Notes</b>
<b>Reflection &amp; what's on top?</b> <i>(From your Praxis journal)</i>	
<b>Review of last sessions agreements &amp; action steps.</b>	
What's going well?	
How's practical work going?	
Work on's	
Assignments & any other business	
Today's agreed action steps.	
Date of next supervision.	

## Supervision –An Introduction

John Drower (JD)

One summer day Rabbi Harold S. Kushner was sitting on a beach, watching two children, a boy and a girl, playing in the sand. They were hard at work, by the water's edge, building an elaborate sandcastle with gates and towers and moats and internal passages.

Just when they had nearly finished their project, a big wave came along and knocked it down, reducing it to a heap of wet sand. He expected the children to burst into tears, devastated by what had happened to all their hard work.

But they surprised him. Instead, they ran up the shore away from the water, laughing and holding hands, and sat down to build another castle.

All the things in our lives, all the complicated structures we spend so much time and energy creating, are built on sand. Only our relationships to other people endure. Sooner or later, the wave will come along and knock down what we have worked so hard to build up. When that happens, only the person who has somebody's hand to hold will be able to laugh. Supervision is not about having the answers; it is about being slow to speak and quick to listen, being there for the student to bounce things off, someone to share issues and situations with. Supervision aims to encourage maturity of life and effectiveness in ministry.

*Two people are better one. They get more done by working together. If one person falls, the other can help him up. But it is bad for the person who is alone when he falls. No one is there to help him up... Ecclesiastes 4:9-10*

I think I was attracted to the White Rabbit out of Lewis Carroll's classic *Alice in Wonderland* because I saw so much of him reflected in my own style of ministry, running around at a frantic pace. Also 'Ministry' can begin to resemble a circus performer's plate-spinning act. He starts by spinning a few plates on a couple of long, thin wooden poles. Quickly he adds more poles and plates as he runs back and forth to keep the original ones going.



Most youth and community workers are busy, hard-working men and women. They are in the ministry because they have a deep love for others and a desire to reach them for Christ. The tragedy is that after a little while without the right training and support many of them begin to resemble the White Rabbit, or a plate spinner.

***Supervision is a vital role in the development of a person towards a fruitful, satisfying, effective and fulfilling call of God on their lives.***

### What it is...

Supervision literally means to 'over-see', in this case, to over-see someone else's work. However it should not be confused with 'boss' or 'employer'. In fact it is best if the supervisor is neither of these people. Within a supervision relationship there are a variety of functions that a supervisor can take:

#### 1. **Administrative** – Helping the person:

- with the quality of their work
- to meet the goals and performance requirements of their job, course or mission involvement
- to deal with emergency situations (for example the crisis of a client)

2. **Spiritual Discipling** – *Helping the person to:*
  - explore and understand what God is doing in their lives
  - see how they can apply to their lives what has been learnt
  - discover what it means to follow or honour God in different areas of their lives
  - develop and reflect on their spiritual disciplines
  
3. **Educational** – *If you are proficient in the same or related field, helping the person to:*
  - refine and develop new skills
  - grow in knowledge of their work
  - engage in an action/reflection process as they develop
  
4. **Personal (Life coach)** – *Helping the person explore the bigger questions such as:*
  - where am I going for the longer term?
  - coping constructively with their personal history and emotions
  - focusing on their relationships and personal development outside of their work
  
5. **Mentoring** – *Helping the person:*
  - as a role model by involving them in your own life.
  - by using your own network of contacts to help them advance in their work
  - as a sounding board for their ideas.

It is unlikely that a single person will be able to focus effectively on all of the possible areas of supervision outlined above. The person being supervised should clarify in their own mind which areas are of most importance to them, and choose a supervisor who will be able to help them the most in those areas. As a supervisor, it is important to clarify the priorities and expectations of your supervisee as you begin the relationship.

## 'Super' vision

Michelle McConnell

Supervision is a way to make sure you have 'SUPER' 'VISION' in your youth work practice.

There are many reasons why our own 'vision' may not be clear enough to rely on.....

- We may be working with young people when they are at their most vulnerable, distressed or needy.
- We may choose, or be required, to work with youth who leave us puzzled and confused.
- We may become hardened or burnt out without realizing it – failing to communicate empathically, respectfully and helpfully.
- We may develop haphazardly, and not realize we have lost sight of our core values and ideals.
- We may be at risk of taking advantage of the youth we work with – emotionally, financially or sexually – without realizing it.

There are many different forms of supervision – for this course you are required to have *individual, external* supervision. This is one to one supervision, with a person who is outside of your work situation (external). You will also provide and receive *peer* supervision with each other in your process groups. You should have regular *inhouse* supervision from your agency rep – this may be as an *individual* or as part of a *team* staff meeting. Some other forms of supervision that may be useful for you in the future are; *group supervision* – where several youth workers (from different projects) meet with a supervisor as a group. *Team* supervision is similar, but it involves youth workers from the same project. *Tandem* supervision is where two youth workers supervise each other. Different forms of supervision will be useful for you in different situations and stages of your youth work career, so it's important to understand what they are so that you can have the best and most useful form of supervision for you.

Supervision serves many purposes for you as a youth worker, for your agency and employer, for the young people you work with, for the communities you work in and for youth work as a profession.

One important purpose is **accountability** (this means 'being responsible to' someone else)- that is making sure that you are operating safely as a youth worker and that you are transparent about your work with young people. Those that your supervisor should make sure you are accountable to include: accountability to young people, accountability to the youth work agency, accountability to yourself and your own development, accountability to youth work colleagues.

Another important purpose is **identification** (this means connecting to and understanding) – that is putting the work that you are doing into a 'big picture' and not operating in isolation. Your supervisor should make sure you are identifying with the vision and procedures of your youth work agency and with other colleagues in youth work.

**Supervision is a chance to:**

- Explore the way we do youthwork.

- Stand back and get a different perspective on the young people we are currently working with.
- Become more aware of the way we affect and are affected by the youth we work with.
- Express frustrations, let out emotions and recharge energies and ideals.
- Feel supported in our effectiveness, abilities and confidence as a youth worker.
- Receive feedback and challenge about the youthwork we are engaged in.
- Monitor and develop ethical decision making.

# Choosing a Supervisor

Marie Cribb

## Introduction

*The term 'supervision' is used a lot these days in the helping professions (counselling, youthwork, social work, mental health) It is better understood now than it was a few years ago when it was often used with little real understanding. The following page or two may help to unravel the term a little, and help to get you started in the process of finding someone to be your supervisor.*

## What does it mean?

A specific meaning for the term "supervision" sometimes varies a bit depending on which field or agency a person works within. In youthwork it does not mean the same thing as "Boss" -while in some other jobs this is exactly what it **does** mean. Your BOSS is the person responsible for rostering hours of work, allocating tasks on the job, checking up on you and organising pay and time off. He/she is the on site representative of the owners of the firm... (the Big Bosses) and has been appointed by them to ensure the workers meet the requirements of the job within set times and standards. This is **not** the kind of supervision we are discussing.

## A Process

Within the Helping professions, supervision is understood as a formal process (a process is the way something happens). It involves a special relationship between two people who have agreed to meet together for a specific purpose. That purpose is for the supervisor to help the supervisee (youth-worker, counsellor,) to perform his /her job competently and safely, and to help the clients of that person get the very best service they can.

## Helping the Helper help the clients

That heading sounds really jargony, but it is a really good way of understanding the nature of supervision. Think about a trapeze artist in a circus. Usually there is a safety net slung underneath the performer. He/she completes the show confidently and usually completely independently of the net, but (usually) wouldn't think of not having it there in case it was needed. It offers reassurance, security and a safe boundary to the work of the artist. The performer can try new things and discover what works and what don't. The net protects the audience from the odd bit of dangerous flying debris, and the well being of the performer and the spectators is assured.

In youthwork good supervision is like that net. The clients well being and safety is assured, as is that of the helper.

## How does Supervision work?

Usually a supervisor and supervisee will meet for an hour or so once a fortnight to discuss the supervisee's work and reflect upon issues which may arise. The supervisee will usually bring a list of things to discuss to the meeting time. These may include things that have worked well, things that haven't, frustrations they are having, difficulties they are experiencing, things they wish to do, and maybe some personal issues which may be relevant in some way to the work. The supervisor will listen, question, encourage, teach new skills, help them to reflect, and explore new avenues, and even challenge from time to time.

Obviously none of this is going to happen unless there is a fair degree of trust between you and your supervisor. Not only do you trust them with yourself and your issues; you also bring your clients to them. They have a kind of overview of your work. You remain the person responsible for your practice, but its like having a built in consultant available to you once a fortnight (usually without the high fees associated with a consultant).

When used properly, supervision is a wonderful gift for the youth worker. It is now a **requirement** of many jobs in the helping professions to have regular ongoing supervision. As well as being a necessity, it is a luxury to have this kind of support available when the job you do is very demanding. It is a way of helping to keep you and your client safe.

How do I get a Supervisor?

Usually you choose. You shop around, meet people, ask others for recommendations and keep at it until you “gel” with someone.

You need to choose someone you respect and trust and who has a reputation of being a sound practitioner in the field in which they work. Sometimes your supervisor is assigned to you by the agency you work for. This can often work, but can sometimes be a bit complicated, especially if that person is also a “boss”. Feel free to discuss it with the agency, as there may be a different understanding of the term supervision operating in that workplace. Ask what is understood and what is required, and then decide if you still need someone outside of the organisation as well.

A good supervisor is someone who is respected and trusted within his/her field of work. He /she should be non-judgmental and have a sound range of knowledge and skills in the area you work or one associated with it. Familiarity with and competence to deal with ethical issues is important, as is the ability to strictly maintain confidentiality. Some people wish to have a supervisor of the same sex, for others this is not an issue.

The idea of accountability is sort of built into supervision. A supervisor may be viewed ethically to be at least partially responsible for what you do or do not do in your work. So it is no good choosing someone you will not listen to when the going gets tough. Once you have chosen a supervisor, you give that person the right to question, challenge and speak into your working...and at times your personal life. So that’s why it’s important to be open with your supervisor about what is going well and what you are struggling with. They may need to be an advocate for you with your agency, speak up in a court of law on your behalf, or speak with your boss about work or personal issues. So choose wisely.

A good supervisor does not **always** criticise, challenge, ask about personal issues, miss meetings, become your close buddy while they remain a supervisor, gossip, try to tell you what to do, take over your practice, or make you feel uncomfortable in an ongoing way.

After you finish your course with Praxis, there is usually a cost for supervision. Sometimes that cost ...or parts of it...will be met by your agency, especially if they have made regular supervision compulsory. Some supervisors (bless their hearts) see it as part of their job to accept the role (there are very few of these people). Sometimes the cost will need to be met from your pocket. Sometimes a koha at the end of the year is all that will be asked for. From my experience it is important to make that koha a generous one if you have received good supervision.

Once you have a meeting with a person set up, the main aim is to see if you “gel” with them. See how you are welcomed, met, spoken to and whether you feel that this person and you could possibly work together. Some people have a trial period of maybe a couple of supervision sessions to see how things are settling down. If they don’t.....then leave and find someone who does work for you. Supervisors are used to this and there are no hard feelings if it is discussed at the time as to why it would be better to end. If you get stuck, talk to someone in the field you know. Often a phone call to one person will get a couple of names for you to try later.

**Good luck and happy hunting.**

# The Supervision Session

Lloyd Martin

Let's start with you (the supervisor). When you agreed to this particular appointment with your supervisee, you didn't realise how crazy things would be this week. A child who has to be picked up as soon as you finish, expecting an important call from a client, or an assignment that is due tomorrow. To make it worse, your supervisee missed your last appointment together. You're feeling frustrated about that, and are wondering if it's all really that important to them. And to cap it off, one of his/her co-workers has contacted you with one of those dreaded calls that begin with... 'you're x's supervisor aren't you?' About some issue to do with their driving that your supervisee obviously hasn't got around to telling you about yet.

Does it get worse than this? Sometimes. But usually it's a lot better. In this section we are looking at some practical guidelines for a supervision session. On the way we will pick up some of the elements of the scenario above and make some suggestions about it.

A foundation to supervision is the principle of ownership. Supervision belongs to the supervisee; it exists as a service to them. You are there to dialogue, to help them reflect and to explore options. Most importantly you are there to listen. At no stage should you make choices for them<sup>1</sup>, coerce them, or encourage a relationship in which the ownership of their decisions is undermined, and they begin performing to your expectations.

*An outline for a supervision session:*

## 1. Space and Time

A supervision session normally takes about an hour. It is an hour in which your supervisee can expect you to be free of interruptions including; children, phone calls, and people popping in 'for just a minute'. Unless you have a great secretary, a café may work better than your office<sup>2</sup>. It has the added advantage of feeling like more of a treat in your day for both of you. It can help to break down the employee/boss relationship implied in a work setting (if you have to use your office, don't sit behind your desk). We don't generally recommend across gender supervision. If you do choose to work with someone of the opposite sex, a public place is advisable, and supervision from home is definitely a 'no no'.

As well as taking care of the externals, it is helpful to run through an internal checklist. Remind yourself that this time, and your full attention, belongs to your supervisee. Switch off those other concerns (and your cell phone!). If you are sitting in a public place, let your supervisee sit facing the distraction (such as a window where people pass). It is quite disconcerting talking to your supervisor as you watch their eyes follow a shapely waitress/waiter behind you!

## 2. Start with their story

You may have paperwork that you need to get done, questions you would like to ask. You may particularly want to follow up about that complaint about their driving! Let them start. A very general question such as 'what's been happening for you?' is a good way to begin.

A supervision session is not an interrogation. If you begin with your own agenda you assume a position of power. Part of your role is to help your supervisee to learn openness and accountability in the supervision relationship. If things have gone wrong, give them the opportunity to bring it up. If they do so, it's usually wise not to reveal everything you know about the situation. Let them tell you, give them the opportunity to be honest, and if you feel that they have not told you the full story, you can always encourage them to talk a little further with a few innocent sounding questions. If you have arrived with feelings of frustration about some episode you have heard about, another reason for allowing them to start is to allow them to reveal other reasons for what happened.

For example, you are feeling frustrated that your supervisee missed her appointment last week, and forgot to tell you until later. You want to let her know how frustrated you were about that. By holding off you may discover that she was feeling depressed and suicidal last week. Her decision to leave town and stay with her cousin instead of going on a chemical bender was perhaps the most healthy decision that she could have made at the time. Your missed appointment pales in significance. If you had started with the missed appointment, you may have missed the bigger picture, or at least made her feel defensive about it. After everything else has been processed, you could then mention how the missed appointment affected you.

## 3. Process one or two situations in more detail

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<sup>1</sup> See ethics for some situations in which you may be obliged to break this principle.

<sup>2</sup> I generally use café's to supervise in, we take turns at 'buying', although if one of us arrives late, that person usually 'shouts'.

If your supervision role has an educational emphasis, you may spend more of your time in this area. Your supervisee may have bought a reflective journal<sup>3</sup> with them, or they may simply review 'what's happening' in their practice verbally. Whether it is from their journal (which is better) or their memory, get them to 'unpack' one or two situations with you.

They are not necessarily doing it to get advice from you, but to get your help to think through what happened and why. Go beyond 'it was fine', or 'it was terrible' and help them do some analysis. If you have become aware of a work related incident through other sources that they have not brought up, this might be the time to get them to talk about it.

#### **4. Review agreements and action plans from previous sessions**

I keep a page in my (ring binder) diary. If either of us agree to do something during our session, I will note it there as well as actually putting (my own tasks) in the main part of my diary. Obviously anything you record should be fairly cryptic if there are issues of confidentiality. At the next meeting we will open to that page again and review what got done.

A lack of integrity to complete an agreed course of action plagues Christian and secular youthworkers alike. If you follow this process early in your supervision relationship, you will help to focus both of you on the importance of following through on commitments. Again, language is important, 'did you do this?' is more confrontational (and less helpful) than 'how did you get on with this?'. Welcome failures as opportunities for learning and growth rather than for recriminations. It's often more worthwhile to explore why they failed to do something than talking about what they are going to do to fix it up. You can usually bet that if they have reneged on commitments made in supervision, they will be operating the same way towards young people and their fellow workers. Again a non-judgmental, problem-solving<sup>4</sup> approach on your part is essential to encourage honesty and constructive responses on theirs.

#### **5. Don't neglect the broader questions**

As part of your initial agreement to supervise, you have hopefully been given permission to ask your supervisee about how they are going in areas of life beyond their work (yes there are some!). For example; their health; relationships/marriage, sexuality, money, faith or church involvement. Don't cover every question every time, but over half a dozen supervision sessions you should try and touch on each. Sometimes people carry around burdens in any of these areas. A simple 'how are you getting along with...?' can give a person permission to talk about issues that they may not feel able to bring up themselves.

Many Christians feel obliged to be coping and 'victorious' in their personal lives. Those involved in leadership especially so. In your manner (unsurprising) and in the tone you set in your supervision relationship, it is important to create a non-judgemental climate where to be 'not coping' is okay and can be talked about without shame. Christian leaders regularly 'stumble' publicly, hurting many in the process. For many, this is simply because there is no where that they can be accountable and honest about these very 'human' areas of life.

#### **6. Reschedule**

Finish by planning your next meeting. It is often helpful by getting them to briefly sum up the outcomes/agreements from your meeting.

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<sup>3</sup> All Praxis students are required to keep a journal of their practice (see the Journal Writing Guidelines section).

<sup>4</sup> Remembering that the real issue is not what they didn't get done, but why they didn't.

## Summary

In reality you may rarely get through the six steps as outlined here in a single supervision session. More commonly, a major 'issue' will emerge during one of the steps, and you will spend the bulk of your time on that. Obviously you will have to make a judgement call at the time on whether the issue that comes up should be allowed to dominate the session. Be wary of a trap in which the same issues are filling up your time in each session, with little evidence of progress. If you feel that this may be happening, consider if the issue may be bigger than what can be handled in your context. Be open to calling others in, for mediation for example. Or to referring your supervisee on for specialised help in areas such as counselling or budget advice.

A useful 'rule of thumb' suggests that if you have a reoccurring issue that your supervisee seems unable to make headway on, there are likely to be other issues behind it. Always look for the 'why' behind the situation or behaviour before you attempt to problem solve on a practical level.

### **Promises and Goals –How do you eat an elephant?**

We can easily become paralysed by big goals and extravagant promises; 'I will *never* do that (bad thing) again'. Be cautious about allowing your supervisee to make promises that they cannot keep. It can simply kick them from over optimism into a spiral of failure and guilt. However, it is useful to discuss 'big picture' directions in life and personal goals. One of your roles is to help your supervisee identify and reach their own goals.

When a goal is a big one paralysis can occur we simply don't know where to start. As goals for the future begin to emerge in your sessions, your role is to help your supervisee break them down. The answer to the elephant question is 'one mouthful at a time'. Together, transfer the bigger goals into smaller steps. Something that can be done this week, or between supervision sessions. Use step 4 in the process above to help you both stay on top of them. Sometimes the act of achieving the first few steps of a goal is enough to motivate and give confidence for them to carry on.

Spontaneously celebrate achievement together. If you don't have something to celebrate at least every 3-4 sessions (e.g. with lunch, a card, flowers), your supervision times may soon fall into the same category as visits to the dentist. Celebrate the small steps!