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ABSTRACT

It has been stated that the supervisory relationship is as central to effective supervision as the therapy relationship is to effective therapeutic outcomes. Thus, being able to understand the elements of effective supervisory relationships, monitoring those relationships, and intervening as needed would be critical in effective supervision. This roundtable presentation discussed creating, assessing, and facilitating the supervisory relationship and presented supervisory relationship data from 2002-2003. Contains a copy of the "Supervision Outcomes Survey." (Contains 17 references and 7 tables.) (GCP)

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## Enhancing Supervisory Relationships

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Roundtable presentation conducted at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association. August 2003, Toronto, Canada.

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## Enhancing Supervisory Relationships

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## Enhancing Supervisory Relationships

### I. Introduction

It has been stated that the supervisory relationships is as central to effective supervision as the therapy relationship is to effective therapeutic outcomes (Bernard & Goodyear, 1998). Thus, being able to understand the elements of effective supervisory relationships, monitoring those relationships, and intervening as needed would be critical in effective supervision.

The supervisory relationship could be defined much like Gelso and Carter's (1985) definition of the therapeutic relationship "the feelings and attitudes that counseling participants have toward one another, and the manner in which these are expressed" (p. 159). It can also be divided into components such as Bordin's (1983) therapeutic working alliance model that has been applied to the supervisory working alliance. These consist of the *bond* between the supervisor and supervisee, the agreed upon *tasks* that will be a part of supervision, and the degree *goals* have been mutually derived and agreed upon.

There are hosts of mediating variables that can influence supervisory relationships and play a role in creating effective supervisory relationships or breach a relationship and cause harm. The following table may give you an idea of some of these variables:

Table 1.

Mediating Supervisory Relationship Variables

<i>Matching variables</i> (gender, culture, theoretical	<i>Developmental or experience level</i>	<i>Role induction processes</i> (Helping to set the tone and
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orientation, styles, developmental)		manage expectations)
<i>Settings for practice</i>	<i>Previous experience with the supervisor</i>	<i>Supervisee variables</i> (confidence, interpersonal style, pathology, etc.)
<i>Supervisor issues</i> (competence, style, pathology, experience, etc.)	<i>Dual role concerns</i>	<i>Evaluation issues</i>
<i>Cultural variables</i>	<i>Impression Management</i>	<i>Previous experience in supervision</i>

## II. Enhancing the Relationship

### *Creating the Relationship*

There are things that can be done to help the relationship get off to a good start. Role induction procedures can help establish clear expectations and assist in creating a sense of shared involvement. In a study of role conflict and ambiguity, Ladany and Friedlander (1995) concluded, “when the trainees perceived a stronger supervisory working alliance, they tended to experience less role conflict and role ambiguity” (p. 228). Others have also found that supervisees at all levels of experience desire clearly communicated expectations (Allen et al., 1986; Magnuson & Wilcoxon, 1998). These findings suggest that an appropriate role induction can help eliminate role ambiguity, minimize to some degree the experience of role conflict, and strengthen the supervisory relationship. Addressing the supervisory relationship, Bordin (1983) applied the notion

of a “working alliance,” which consists of three dimensions that have direct bearing on the tasks of role induction: agreement on supervision focus and goals, supervision tasks, and the emotional bond. Items to be covered in a role induction may include most of the issues related to informed consent and professional disclosure (Cobia & Boes, 2000; McCarthy, Sugden, Koker, Lamendola, Maurer, & Renninger, 1995).

### *Assessing the Relationship*

After an effective supervisory relationship has been established, it is important to assess the continuing effectiveness of the relationship. This assessment can be informal, such as periodic discussions of the pertinent relational issues as they may impact supervision, examining parallel process concerns, or sharing your own responses to the supervisee in a constructive and helpful manner.

It may also be helpful to introduce some formal assessments as well. You may use instruments to measure the supervisory relationships strength such as: the Supervisory Working Alliance Inventory (SWAI; Efstation, Patton, & Kardash, 1990), Working Alliance Inventory (Horvath & Greenberg, 1989), or other instruments that might be able to measure perceptions of supervision, outcomes of supervision, or other factors that could relate to the supervisory relationship.

### *Facilitating the Relationship*

There are a variety of strategies to enhance the supervisory relationship. We will highlight just a few:

- *Conduct an effective supervision role induction*
  - Facilitate role expectations for the supervisee and supervisor (expressed by both and including expectations, procedures, duties, and rights)

- Encourage goal setting
- Discuss how evaluation will be conducted such as criteria to be evaluated and method of evaluation
- Talk to each other about your theoretical orientations
- Make sure you cover the variety of content that will be focused on in supervision (i.e., client/session content, supervisees' interventions, the counseling relationship, counselor's emotional reactions, supervisory relationship, supervisor's emotional reactions, administrative details, etc.)
- Review operating procedures (i.e., dictation and note keeping, scheduling, referrals and consultations, informed consent for clients, how to reach supervisors in emergencies, communicating trainee status to clients and the fact that they will be receiving supervision, permission for taping, etc.)

A note of caution is necessary; although working out supervision details is important, supervision that is perceived as too “administrative” in nature often leads to less satisfaction (McCarthy, Kulakowski, Kenfield, 1994). Furthermore, although it is critical to discuss procedural issues, establish mutual goals, and initially structure the supervisory experience, it should be tailored to the experience level of the supervisee and in most cases quickly become the background of supervision to emerge at other times only as necessary.

- *Self-disclosure of the supervisor and supervisee*
  - A stronger supervisory working alliance has been shown to be related to supervisor self-disclosure (Ladany & Lehrman-Waterman, 1999)

- Effective self disclosures include the supervisors reaction to clients, past experiences related to your supervisees' experiences, your positive reactions to your supervisees work, and sharing similar struggles that your supervisee has been experiencing (normalizing).
- Less effective or problematic self-disclosures might include things from your own personal life, ill-timed negative reactions to your supervisee, your own successes (if they are perceived as boasting), or if the self-disclosures are designed to put the focus on you rather than your supervisee.
- *Effective Goal Setting and Feedback*
  - Better goal-setting has been associated with greater agreement on the goals and tasks of supervision as well as a stronger emotional bond (Lehrman-Waterman & Ladany, 2001)
  - Feedback has been associated with greater agreement on the goals and tasks of supervision and a stronger emotional bond (Lehrman-Waterman & Ladany, 2001)
  - Traditionally evaluation has been seen as adding anxiety to the supervision process. Anxiety can potentially disrupt the relationship in supervision. Evaluation that is explicit and ongoing with both formative and summative formats may actually strengthen the relationship.
- *Facilitative relationships skills*



- Empathy towards the supervisee has been found to be the most powerful predictor of effective supervision (Shanfield, Mohl, Matthews, and Heatherly, 1992).
- Most helpful supervision 44.2% was the supervisor's facilitative characteristics (e.g., empathy, trustworthiness, genuineness and regard) (McCarthy, Kulakowski, & Kenfield, 1994)
- Humor as in supervision has been correlated with satisfaction (Worthington & Roehlke, 1979). In one study pre and post Ph.D. supervisors were found to differ on only one of 48 supervisor behaviors, with humor being used more by experienced supervisors.
- Help set an environment where experimentation and "mistakes" are seen as learning experiences (Hutt, Scott, and King, 1983; Worthen & McNeill, 1996).
- Supervisees who view their supervisors as acting in an ethical manner also report a stronger supervisory working alliance. In fact 47% of the variance in the perceived working alliance was accounted for by adherence to ethical guidelines. (Ladany, Lehrman-Waterman, Molinaro, & Wolgast, 1999).

### III. Supervisory Relationship Data from 2002-2003

- Supervisory relationships and outcomes improved significantly over time.
- Supervisors and supervisees differed somewhat in their reporting of change with supervisees reporting more positive changes.

Table 2

Supervisory Working Alliance Inventory – Trainee Item Means			
	October	December	April
1. I feel comfortable working with my supervisor.	6.11	6.54	6.65
2. My supervisor welcomes my explanations about the client's behavior.	6.26	6.61	6.76
3. My supervisor makes the effort to understand me.	6.21	6.64	6.83
4. My supervisor encourages me to talk about my work with clients in ways that are comfortable to me.	6.26	6.61	6.62
5. My supervisor is tactful when commenting about my performance.	6.30	6.57	6.76
6. My supervisor encourages me to formulate my own interventions with the client.	6.12	6.21	6.28
7. My supervisor helps me talk freely in our sessions.	6.37	6.57	6.62
8. My supervisor stays in tune with me during supervision.	6.30	6.46	6.66
9. I understand client behavior and treatment technique similar to the way my supervisor does.	5.50	5.68	5.76
10. I feel free to mention to my supervisor any troublesome feelings I might have about him/her.	5.59	6.41	6.24
11. My supervisor treats me like a colleague in our supervisory sessions.	6.33	6.54	6.66
12. In supervision, I am more curious than anxious when discussing difficulties with clients.	6.19	6.32	6.55
13. In supervision, my supervisor places a high priority on our understanding the client's perspective.	5.85	6.29	6.45
14. My supervisor encourages me to take time to understand what the client is saying and doing.	6.19	6.36	6.45
15. My supervisor's style is to carefully and systematically consider the material I bring to supervision.	5.71	5.96	6.07
16. When correcting my errors with a client, my supervisor offers alternative ways of intervening with that client.	5.95	6.42	6.69
17. My supervisor helps me work within a specific treatment plan with my clients.	5.10	5.58	5.83
18. My supervisor helps me stay on track during our meetings.	5.90	6.12	6.14
19. I work with my supervisor on specific goals in the supervisory session.	5.38	5.93	5.93

Table 3

## SWAI Trainee Items Mean Differences

Subscale	Mean differences	<u>N</u>
Rapport (sum items 1 – 12, then divide by 12)		
	October – December = .35*	21
	December – April = .14	16
	October – April = .28*	14
Client Focus (Sum items 13 – 19, then divide by 6)		
	October – December = .41*	18
	December – April = .04	15
	October – April = .38**	12
<u>Note.</u> * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$		

Table 4

Supervisory Working Alliance Inventory – Supervisor Item Means			
	October	December	April
1. I help my trainee work within a specific treatment plan with his/her client.	4.19	4.72	4.43
2. I help my trainee stay on track during our meetings.	4.89	4.80	4.79
3. My style is to carefully and systematically consider the material that my trainee brings to supervision.	4.81	5.08	5.07
4. My trainee works with me on specific goals in the supervisory session.	4.67	4.82	4.96
5. In supervision, I expect my trainee to think about or reflect on my comments to him or her.	5.67	5.84	5.96
6. I teach my trainee through direct suggestion.	4.74	4.64	4.79
7. In supervision, I place high priority on our understanding the client's perspective.	5.81	6.00	6.14
8. I encourage my trainee to take time to understand what the client is saying and doing.	5.93	5.76	6.00
9. When correcting my trainee's errors with a client, I offer alternative ways of intervening.	5.48	5.28	5.64
10. I encourage my trainee to formulate his/her own interventions with his/her clients.	5.85	5.84	5.71
11. I encourage my trainee to talk about the work in ways that are comfortable for him/her.	6.04	5.80	5.82
12. I welcome my trainee's explanations about his/her client's behavior.	6.22	6.28	6.24
13. During supervision, my trainee talks more than I do.	5.00	5.12	5.32
14. I make an effort to understand my trainee.	6.11	6.24	6.21
15. I am tactful when commenting about my trainee's performance.	5.74	5.56	5.71
16. I facilitate my trainee's talking in our sessions.	5.48	5.60	5.54
17. In supervision, my trainee is more curious than anxious when discussing his/her difficulties with me.	5.08	5.50	5.61
18. My trainee appears to be comfortable with me.	5.50	5.67	5.86
19. My trainee understands client behavior and treatment techniques similar to the way I do.	4.74	5.17	5.11
20. During supervision, my trainee seems able to stand back and reflect on what I am saying to him/her.	5.38	5.96	5.75

21. I stay in tune with my trainee during supervision.	5.46	5.63	5.61
22. My trainee identifies with me in the way he/she thinks and talks about his/her clients.	4.88	5.00	5.25
23. My trainee consistently implements suggestions made in supervision.	4.92	5.58	5.64

Table 5

## SWAI Supervisor Items Mean Differences

Subscale	Mean differences	<u>N</u>
<b>Rapport (sum items 10 – 16, then divide by 7)</b>		
	October – December = .16*	18
	December – April = -.07	21
	October – April = .13	16
<b>Client Focus (Sum items 1 – 9, then divide by 9)</b>		
	October – December = .15	21
	December – April = .28*	18
	October – April = .46**	16
<b>Identification (sum items 17 – 23, then divide by 7)</b>		
	October – December = .33**	19
	December – April = .15	17
	October – April = .50**	15

Note. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Table 6

Supervision Outcomes Survey			
	October	December	April
1. My supervisor helps me develop by providing both challenge and support.	5.78	6.11	6.16
2. The supervision I am receiving has helped me grow as a professional.	5.96	6.18	6.48
3. My supervisor leaves me feeling strengthened and affirmed in my efforts to become a professional.	6.11	6.18	6.48
4. My supervisor helps me identify areas where I need to continue to develop by identifying my strengths and weaknesses.	5.43	6.14	6.00
5. Supervision helps me better see the complexity in my cases.	5.74	6.07	6.19
6. Supervision helps me improve my ability to conceptualize my cases.	5.70	6.00	6.32
7. Supervision helps me examine, modify, and refine my approaches to therapy.	5.89	6.14	6.23
8. Supervision helps me take risks that have led to professional growth and more effective therapy.	5.59	5.82	6.26
9. The relationship I have with my supervisor is characterized by acceptance, trust, and respect.	6.11	6.46	6.77
10. My supervisor's feedback encourages me to keep trying to improve.	6.07	6.32	6.58
11. Supervision helps me see my mistakes as learning experiences.	6.04	6.29	6.48
12. The modeling of my supervisor helps me learn more about therapy.	5.78	6.07	6.42
13. Self-disclosure by my supervisor helps to normalize my experiences as a therapist.	5.93	6.14	6.61
14. My supervisor helps me to be open and receptive to supervision.	5.96	6.32	6.61
15. I feel comfortable sharing my perceived weaknesses and failures with my supervisor.	6.11	6.29	6.55
16. Supervision helps me develop specific skills that have made me a more effective therapist.	5.78	5.96	6.19
17. Supervision is helping me better understand and facilitate effective therapy outcomes with my clients.	5.78	6.04	6.32
18. As a result of supervision I feel more confident and comfortable in working with my therapy cases.	5.81	6.04	6.52
19. I feel that supervision is contributing to my overall effectiveness in my therapy cases.	6.00	6.29	6.55

20. Overall, I feel satisfied with my supervision.	-	6.19	6.39	6.55
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Table 7

## Supervision Outcomes Survey

Mean Differences	N
October – December = 8.65**	20
December – April = 3.94	16
October – April = 9.00**	14

Note. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

IV. Case StudyV. Questions

- Do you think supervisors are pretty good at determining how well the supervisory relationship is functioning? What signs do you look for to assess whether the relationship is strong? Weak?
- What would you say are helpful in creating an effective supervisory relationship? What things are not helpful?
- What are the pros and cons to supervisor self-disclosure? What limitations or cautions would you state? How would you facilitate self-disclosure?
- How can evaluation (goal setting & feedback) positively impact the relationship? What has worked for you? What is problematic about evaluation?
- How do you use role inductions to help the supervisory relationship?
- What can you do when things aren't going well?

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