



# Veritas Alliance Pty Ltd

*conscious leadership through truth and wisdom*

## The Veritas Framework of Coaching Supervision

NB. To be read in conjunction with the Profession's (ICF) Core Competencies and Ethics Statement

### *1. Coaching Supervision in Practice.*

Supervision is a process whereby the supervisor directs, coordinates, enhances and evaluates the on-the-job performance of a supervisee. This process is primarily to support the ongoing interest, curiosity, striving, mastery, and creativity of the supervised coach. In addition to the professional development of the supervisee there is also the dual task of ensuring the quality of care for his/her client. The quality of the *supervisory relationship* itself is central to the success of the supervision process. The relationship must be such that the supervisee feels heard and understood at a deep level. It must offer hope and the opportunity to talk about problems in an accepting and safe environment. Such a relationship requires of the supervisor personal qualities of:- empathy, credibility, authenticity, self-awareness, honesty, genuineness, flexibility, sensitivity, openness and objectivity.

Although supervision may require the exploration of personal issues, the purpose of this exploration is quite different to that in therapy or counselling. In supervision, the focus for discussion is on how the supervisee's personal issues and problems can affect the care and servicing of the client; the conceptualisation of client problems; the coaching process itself and the accomplishment of client goals. The goal of supervision is not to affect the deep structures of the personality (in self-psychology terms: the core or nuclear self) as it is in psychotherapy/psychoanalysis. Instead it is more towards the surface structures that determine a person's skills and cognitive capacities (ie. the peripheral self).

### *2. The Goals of Coaching Supervision.*

The goals, and indeed roles, of the supervisor are many and varied but are all related to providing clients with quality care and helping with the professional development of the supervisee. The main objective of supervision is to deliver to clients the best possible service. Supervision goals involve teaching, supporting, modelling, challenging, consulting, evaluating and mentoring. Supervision aims to increase trainees' comfort with their inner experience and their capacity to examine it compassionately and to grow in ethical competence, confidence and creativity. Another goal of the supervisor is to support supervisees to develop their own theory of coaching and use this in case conceptualisation and intentional interventions. It could be said the measure of success of supervision, is for the supervisee to "internalise" the supervisor.

### *3. Issues/ problem appropriate for a supervisee to bring to supervision.*

Supervision is a space for supervisees to think about their work and performance as a reflective practitioner. The supervisee brings to supervision instances of practice that disturb or worry them, intrigue or delight them, give them pleasure or a thrill of meaningfulness, puzzle or frighten them, or separate them from their sense of confidence. Supervisee can focus on work

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with a particular client or they may want to review work with a number of clients where themes are similar. It may be an aspect of the agency practice or a wider professional practice that draws their attention.

In the *Veritas* framework there is nothing that cannot be talked about or represented in the supervision session, at least in the first instance. This is primarily to see if something needs to be explored in supervision or whether it is more appropriately addressed elsewhere, eg. in the supervisee's own therapy/analysis or within their organisational hierarchy. In assessing what is appropriate to continue to address as a supervision issue, I would be guided by the following principles:

- a) does it relate to the supervisee's professional and personal development?
- b) does it have an impact on the supervisee's clients?
- c) would it enhance the relationship between supervisor and supervisee?
- d) is it an ethical issue that needs to be or would be better addressed elsewhere?

#### *4. Stages in the development of Coaches.*

There are stages in the development of coaches/counsellors and the supervision framework needs to accommodate and provide for them. Supervision should vary depending on the stage of development of the trainee. The supervisor should be able to add different elements to supervision as the trainee becomes more competent as a coach/counsellor. Also, the supervisor needs to take into consideration the nature of the trainee's personal style.

In essence there are three stages:

1. Initial Stage - this is where there is an assessment of the integration of knowledge from the supervisee's training, and a process of reinforcing and developing technical awareness. It is also where the supervisor/ supervisee relationship needs to be developed.
2. Middle Stage -guiding and partnering the supervisee to find their own model of coaching/counselling and ways of coping and growing.
3. Ongoing - further refinements. Providing support.

#### *5. Handling Individual differences*

Individual supervisees are very different and the supervisor is going to be different with each of them. Supervision is tailored to the individual in the circumstances they find themselves in at that time. Different personality types, history, organisational settings in which they work, current personal situation, and even world and local community events, can have a bearing on the intervention. It is often that interventions are decided upon, "moment by moment".

The experience level of the supervisee is a central mediating factor in deciding on what might be the appropriate structure of the supervisory environment. This is then modified on a continual basis as needed to match the growing clinical experience of the supervisee. A more structured

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and directive supervision is more likely to be suitable for beginning supervisees whereas collegial and consultative supervision is more useful for advanced supervisees.

The *Veritas* approach to supervision is to be open to diversity with respect to gender, race and cultural differences. A need to manage such differences would generally only arise if raised in the first instance by the supervisee. The approach taken would start by looking to understand from the supervisee's perspective what the difference might be and how it might impact upon the supervisory relationship.

#### *6. The structure and process of the supervision session*

Supervisees are generally invited to e-mail the supervisor before the sessions to outline just what they would like to cover. Some provide their process notes on progress with their work and their clients, which helps them focus on getting the most out of their session. Where supervisees do not provide this, the practice is to ask them early in the session just what they want to take away from that session.

It quickly becomes very clear whether a debrief is needed and appropriate or whether the focus is to be on some area of skill development or on the client. A debrief is not actually supervision but often needs to be done in a supervision session. If the supervisee does want to debrief, the approach is to seek to bring awareness to the fact that it is a debrief that we are doing and differentiate it from the supervision itself. Even in the debrief there is often something developmental being done.

Empathic attunement and being an effective self-object (in terms of the self psychology model) is very much the process of *Veritas* supervision sessions. There is a focus on language - what one says to oneself as well as what one says to others. Rarely would solutions or advice be given. What is sought is an opening to explore options so that the supervisee sees for him/herself what might best be done in the situation they find themselves. There is a strong emphasis on self-awareness, practising emotional regulation and empowerment for the supervisee.

There is honesty, openness and robustness in the sessions. Care is taken to be non-judgemental with a balance between support and challenge. With this approach, risks of course need to be taken and ruptures and disjunctions do occasionally take place. Repair of such disjunctions, when handled carefully, add to both the supervisor/supervisee connectedness and the level of effectiveness of the supervision. In effect, we co-create a safe place for "realness" so that both parties have the courage and skill to raise whatever needs to be discussed. There is a strong emphasis on authenticity, credibility and "walking the talk".

#### *7. The use of "therapeutic techniques" in Supervision.*

Empathic listening, debrief, exploring possibilities, practising self-awareness, creating a space for reverie - are techniques used in supervision. However, the use of these techniques is quite

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different to how they might be deployed with a psychotherapy/counselling client. In supervision we are not responding to pathology or focusing in any depth on one's past as is done in therapy. When a supervisee presents at supervision with deep personal issues such as depression, family problems, or anxiety attacks – guidance and direct is given to the supervisee to obtain the necessary support elsewhere.

Skills rehearsal is often done - sometimes subtly, sometimes overtly. It is usually in response to my asking, “how would you go about that? Then, “what if ... such and such... what might you then do, say, etc.”, “what seems like an appropriate response to that situation”. Encouragement is given to supervisees to sink deeply into that experience to get the most out of the skills rehearsal. Role-play is another form of skills rehearsal and is a very powerful way of changing behaviour and to bring awareness to how the “other” may be experiencing things.

Insight comes from what meaning we find in a situation. Asking questions like, “what sense do you make of that? - what meaning does that have for you?” Practice of this type helps build intuition.

Reinforcement and acknowledgment is often done through unsolicited affirming statements where the supervisee sees the connection. This helps the supervisee see what he/she has done well. It also “buys a licence” to be more robust in constructive criticisms of where things could be done better. Reinforcement plays a big part in supervisees feeling heard, valued and leaving the session feeling good.

Confrontation, particularly in the supporting frame of the supervision session, helps build assertiveness and forces supervisees to know more clearly and be able to articulate more persuasively, just where they stand on any particular issue. This is often done by asking the supervisee to help me reconcile “this” point with “that” and questions like, “how do you imagine he/she felt about you doing/saying that?” and “what else could you have done which may have avoided those negative consequences?”

#### *8. Duty of care Issues. To the supervisee's client/s; To the employing agency.*

This varies considerably depending on the contractual supervisory arrangements. Where I am contracted and paid by an organisation to supervise several internal coaches or counsellors, it is sometimes helpful to see “my client” as being “the system” with a clear duty of care to all parties involved; supervisee, end client and the employing agency. This can and often does involve a difficult and precarious balancing act.

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