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Learning from Failures, Faults & Fiascos

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Learning from mistakes and failure is an essential part of personal growth and development. It is often said that we learn more from our failures than from our successes because mistakes provide us with valuable feedback and insights that we can use to improve our future performance. Professional failures can be unpleasant and demotivating, but they are also an important opportunity for personal and professional growth. By taking responsibility, reflecting, identifying the lessons, applying them and also learning from the mistakes of others, we can improve our knowledge and skills to achieve better results in the future.

In this issue of the ANSE Journal we look at the learning opportunities in the context of mistakes and mistake culture and discuss this in the context of supervision and coaching. Life planning and career paths may have disruptions that could be seen as failures at first glance. But it is precisely these supposed detours and painful experiences - cracks in life - that provide a great opportunity to learn and discover something new. A number of contributions address this issue and point out that it is exactly these life experiences that make us stronger or more resilient. The fact that the unconscious plays

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a role in our so-called parapraxes is also discussed in this issue and illustrated with examples from supervision. In further succession, a number of articles deal with the learning processes and enormous potential for development - the focus is always on the practice of supervision and coaching. One's own perspective on mistakes is crucial, as is finding strategies, and this is where supervision can come in. With this issue, we will gain insights into the experiences of supervisors, who tell us in a very lively way about their view of errors and error culture. The European perspective is also explicitly represented in this issue, asking about the knowledge society in Europe.

With this issue, a few changes in the Editorial Board are to be noted. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Sijtze de Roos for his wonderful work for the ANSE Journal!

New to the ANSE editorial board is Gerian Dijkhuizen - welcome, we are very happy to have you in our circle. Gerian is already well known to us through her columns. This part of the ANSE Journal has been taken over by Sveindis Anna Jóhannsdóttir from Iceland. We are looking forward to your columns and thank you very much. Since the beginning of 2023, I have been able to take over the position of Chief Editor and thank the community for the trust they have placed in me.

There are two innovations since this issue: firstly, we have set up a book corner. Books on supervision and coaching will be presented here on an ongoing basis. We are happy to receive suggestions and recommendations. Secondly, we have created a rubric with the title:

Did you know?. Here we want to inform briefly and concisely about results and events in the ANSE community.

By the way, did you know that in the summer of 2023 the Summer University will take place in Budapest with the title "With Words and Beyond - Values and Identity in an Incomprehensible World"? More information can be found at <https://anse.eu/activities/summer-universities>.

See you there and remember, learning from mistakes and failure is a lifelong process. So, let's go for it!

On behalf of the Editorial Board,

Agnes Turner



“Failures, faults and fiascos”

■ Sveindis Anna Jóhannsdóttir

Who will buy the bottle in the end?

Is it okay to be afraid and fear failure or fiasco? What qualities and processes are behind being able to run? How do your straw jacket bottle look like? See what Sveindís, the new columnist, thinks about failures, faults and fiascos.

I was truly honored when I was asked to take over Gerian's Dijkhuizen column in the ANSE Journal and I didn't have to think long before accepting the request. I love writing but when the topic of the issue “Failures, faults and fiascos” was sent to me, I lost faith in myself and thought that my first column would surely meet all the criteria for the topic. It is Gerian's shoes I am stepping in to and I was overwhelmed. I struggled with writer's block for weeks, but I started to think more and more about these three words and trying to put them into context.

Philosophers have said that failure is connected to the notion of an omission. Omissions and actions can be seen as opposites where omissions means not doing something while actions means doing something. Failures can also have different meanings depending on the context and individuals. What one person considers to be a failure, another considers to be a sign of success. The development of each person from cradle to grave includes what we learn from failure. We don't learn to walk unless we first fall quite often and we don't start running unless we can walk.

Faults can be seen as an abnormal condition or defect that may lead to a failure but also as blameworthiness or responsibility. We know the one who wants to blame others „It is not my fault” and are willing to point out who to blame and the opposite. How responsible people act „It

is my fault, I take full responsibility”, even when it is not at all their fault or responsibility.

The word fiasco has its roots in Latin (flasca) and Italian (flask). The „failure” sense comes through the French phrase „faire fiasco” and Italian slang „far fiasco” literally meaning „to make a bottle”. One idea is it means to bet on a bottle, the loser will buy the next bottle or round of drinks. Today, the meaning of the word is a total mess, a terrible mistake, ridiculous and humiliating situation but also a wine bottle in a straw jacket. It is possible to wonder endlessly, for example, whether governments reacted correctly to the Covid-19 virus, who is to blame for the beginning of the epidemic. What failures were made that lead to the big fiasco of the war in Ukraine and who's faults is it? We have to face the fear and find a way to move forward, learn from mistakes, contribute to a better life whether it is in our near or far environment. We work with these elements in supervision/coaching. I have made mistakes by losing supervisee evaluation sheet. I felt like a careless supervisor, what to do? I decided to tell her in all honesty.....and she sent me the sheet again. When I was free from the writing block, I was also free from the fear that this column would be considered total failure, my personal fault or fiasco. The bottle in the straw jacket can be half full or half empty, yours is the choice and if this is my fiasco I will by the next bottle. ■



Photo: giulio nepi - originally posted to Flickr as fiasco di chianti // monteriggioni, December 31, 2007

Sveindís Anna Jóhannsdóttir (1969):

Sveindís has a master's degree in Social Work and a diploma in Supervision from the University of Iceland. She is accredited specialist in Social Work with emphasis on healthcare services and is also a mediator. She is a director of Social Work in rehabilitation center, has a private practice and is a part time teacher in Social Work and Supervision in the University of Iceland. She has written many articles, some book chapters and has been on editorial board of books publications, the last book Supervision – for professional empowerment (2020). She is a board member of The Icelandic Association of Supervision and a chairman for the ethics committee. Within the Icelandic Association of Social Workers she is a spokesperson for department of rehabilitation.



Failure becomes the norm - On career disruption counselling

■ Heidi Möller

Abstract

Today, linear career paths are the exception rather than the rule in professional biographies. Breaks in professional development, such as losing one's job, not being promoted, failing in a function or while self-employed are critical life events in biographies that require professional reorientation. Competent counselling may boost employees' and managers' optimism, self-efficacy and sense

of coherence in order to ensure their employability. This article gives concrete indications on how a counselling process can be designed in such a way that it activates the resources that support coping with occupational crises. The emotional work needed in this specific counselling segment will be discussed as well as the specific task profile for coaches dealing with professional failure.

Counsellors and coaches have to deal with career disruptions more and more often.

But how must a counselling process be designed so that it activates resources that contribute to overcoming career crises?

Nowadays, linear career paths are the exception rather than the rule in professional biographies. Normal employment relationships are becoming fewer, patchwork careers (alternating phases of work and other activities such as further education, child-rearing periods or a circumnavigation) and combination biographies (several activities in parallel), on the other hand, are increasing. One consequence of this is an increased demand for career counselling. Losing one's job, not being promoted, failing in a function or as a self-employed person as well as unsuccessful training and further education are critical life events in biographies that make professional reorientation necessary. Managers have to face the challenge of designing increasingly open careers. Although these provide great flexibility, they also carry the risk of failure. Competent counselling can help to secure employability and maintain adaptability to constantly changing demands as well as increase optimism, self-efficacy, proactivity and a sense of coherence.

In the discourse on career counselling, one speaks of protean developments in this context. Here, careers are understood - in reference to Proteus from Greek mythology

- as the ability to actively adapt to ever-changing working conditions and to safely manage the resulting different identities. Disruptions, critical life events, failures and also personal defeats can be found in almost every biography. A crisis that has been overcome increases the resilience of the person concerned and strengthens them for future crises and challenges. The targeted use of counsellors or coaches during career disruptions therefore has a psycho-hygienic function for the person seeking advice and for their future employment relationships. After all, it is a matter of working through grief, anger, powerlessness, indignation, disappointment, mortification and thus feelings that can inhibit a reorientation if left unprocessed. Accordingly, the guiding questions are: What emotional work is needed in this specific counselling segment? What is the task profile for coaches when dealing with professional failure?

The changing task profile

Although leaving and starting over have become an integral part of professional careers, coaches prefer to work on developing their clients' careers. By searching for talent and balancing fits between potential jobs and competencies, they are involved in system building rather than system decay. Since counselling for system building promises significantly more narcissistic gratification, there are often blind spots among counsellors here and they - just as mistakenly as some system members - adhere to the strategy of "preservation at all costs". Counsellors - like their clients - develop resistance to change. Those who bring their own experiences of separation at the workplace before their inner eye will probably quickly realise how difficult it can be to say goodbye and how essential the question of the voluntary nature of the departure is. In order to accompany career disruptions, personal sensitisation to the topic of leaving is just as necessary as the systematisation of separation experiences such as

job cuts, work in temporary projects, change of location and much more. Counsellors should visualise successful change processes (What conditions made this possible?) and analyse failed processes (What went wrong?). And they should reflect on their own experiences. How did I experience my own departures from companies? What was conducive? What hindered?

The accompaniment of emotional processes

The burden on the coach can be outlined as follows:

- Often, there is anger about the changes demanded. But anger also arises as a response to the mortification that commonly results from being confronted with the reality principle (e.g. the impending insolvency of a company). Feelings of degradation and powerlessness are expressed through anger. A solution is sought in the process of rebelling or clinging to the existing. Attempts to shift the inner conflict are typical and manifest themselves in negative images about the old organisation, the "evil" system environment and the colleagues or superiors who do not show solidarity. This aggressive mourning energy must be turned around productively in the counselling process.
- Paranoid fantasies can occur in addition to these grieving reactions. Not infrequently, delusional processing modes, which express themselves in delusions of impoverishment and exaggeratedly perceived existential threats, can be found. Sometimes denial of reality, numbness and avoidance of confrontation with the changing systemic environment prevail. These reactions also need to be resolved.
- Sometimes one also finds phenomena that can be described as a "flight into activism". Here, for example, the crisis is attempted to be overcome by quick application activities that have not been thought through. Here, too, it is important to direct energy appropriately.

Guiding ideas for process support

The distinction between explicit requests for counselling during professional crises and counselling during critical professional life events in the course of a coaching process seems central. The former are much easier to plan and thus less irritating. The coach gets the chance to decide for or against such a contract. Basically, in professional crisis situations such as termination or insolvency of the company, the counselling client's individual resonances to the topics of parting, separation, death are evoked and can thus be worked on.

The coaches first need help in becoming aware of the crisis. The coach's task is to "decelerate" the emotional processes that are often quite affectively charged. It is crucial to listen with maximum respect. The coach's attitude resembles an exploration of the inner state in which they should allow as little pleading as possible. In this form of crisis intervention, it is often necessary for the coach to show a higher level of activity than usual, to provide active emotional support and to show affection. Depending on the client's affective state, cathartic reactions need to be facilitated and supported, i.e. helping to express grief, anger, pain and guilt. In the case of imminent affective flooding, on the other hand, the focus should be on communicating possibilities for containment and self-control (cf. Möller & Prantl, 2006). In this first phase of counselling, the focus is not on interpreting or explaining, but on providing support in confronting reality in order to counteract denials, distortions of reality and

What emotional work is needed in this specific counselling segment?

harmful regression in the form of addictive substance use or imploding withdrawal. The “victims” first need space to complain. Blame should also be allowed to a limited extent, although the coach must be aware that, in this mode, clients are still in an old frame of reference that can be described as rather clinging. The coach can diagnose the client’s strategy for dealing with parting and make suggestions for change if necessary.

When working with career disruptions, the client’s personal history of loss, farewell and separation is evoked almost automatically. Unprocessed terminations of professional and personal nature emerge. Terminations instead of farewells are reawakened. An appropriate accompaniment of such processes in the here-and-now certainly offers the chance of making emotionally corrective experiences in the there-and-then. Successful separation work can have a healing effect retrospectively, since earlier separations can also be processed retrospectively through the processing of present separations. Successful separation experience can lead to crisis immunisation, and coping with current partings can have an anticipatory effect. The confrontation with one’s own finiteness, the recognition of a complementary affect to growth orientation and the constant pursuit of peak performances, the experience of the one’s own limited feasibility can certainly lead to personal growth and strengthen a defence formation needed for the modern working world.

The coach accompanies mourning processes and detects which hopes, expectations and wishes have been disappointed. In doing so, they should be careful to interpret fruitless arguments as such and to use productive coping strategies against them. It is crucial to maintain the dialogue and to ensure that communication does not break down. This can also be done by naming displaced conflicts as such. Coaching is also about identifying trans-

ferences, i.e. shadows of the past that are not related to the current situation but are powerful at distorting current perception. Working on transference, which is typical for coaching, can enable coachees to distinguish here-and-now from there-and-then and thus to regain sovereignty in the current situation. Only then will it be possible to develop tolerance to ambiguity. The client can increasingly face the career disruption in a more rational way: What have I really lost and which loss may represent a relief, a discharge or even redemption of one’s own hardships?

For the constructive processing of career disruptions, it is important, against the background of appreciating one’s achievements, to also confront one’s own shares in the failure along with the accompanying feelings of shame and guilt. Disappointment over unrealised visions and fantasies must be expressed, the unfinished must be named: Unsaid and undone things, missed opportunities have to be looked at and the impossibility of making amends has to be endured together. This phase of work is sometimes marked by enduring depressive phases in the counselling process.

Only then can new perspectives be developed and promising new tasks be sought. The coachee gradually begins to write a new story about themselves. Once this turn is completed, the role of the coach changes and they can now offer help in decision-making. If this constructive change remains unsuccessful, regardless of whether internal or external reasons are to be blamed, it will be a matter of placing the radical change in a larger context of meaning (Mintzberg 1991) and thereby achieving acceptance of the changed situation. The life cycle model of management professor Henry Mintzberg can be helpful here: organisations form, develop, mature and decline. Career researchers Kornelia Rappe-Giesecke and Michael Giesecke 2000 put particular emphasis on how impor-

What is the task profile for coaches when dealing with professional failure?

tant it is for counsellors to have the courage to clearly express that, for example, a certain service is simply no longer in demand because clients have changed. Years ago, for example, countless educators were “laid off” because German courses for ethnic German resettlers were no longer needed. Today, changes in the subsidies for solar energy are leading to a massive crisis in the solar industry, with thousands of jobs being cut. Service positions become redundant or financial resources are redistributed.

Rappe-Giesecke and Giesecke believe that it is crucial for advisors to adopt the attitude that destruction and development belong together. New orders are always needed, as we have learned in chaos theory, whether at the global level of cultural ecosystems or the micro level of financing highly indebted cities. They refer to Mintzberg, who proposes the distinction between the preservation of a species and the preservation of an individual. According to this, birth and death are necessary conditions for the preservation of a species. Generational change is only possible through decay or demise. They recommend a counsellor’s attitude of considering the decay of the organisation or group as a probable development. Through the development of a meta-theory, which can be described as species-oriented and ecological, new perspectives that facilitate trust in the new emerge.

Proactivity, optimism and self-efficacy

Proactivity, optimism, self-efficacy and a sense of coherence are dispositions that are assumed to be essential for personal adaptability in a dynamic work environment. Proactivity is seen in close connection with personal responsibility and initiative. According to J. Michael Crant, "people with a high level of proactivity look for opportunities for action, show initiative to change given situations and maintain their intention for action until a change that makes sense from their point of view is achieved" (Lang von Wins & Triebel 2012, p. 26). In contrast, people with little pronounced proactivity tend to adapt passively to newly changed conditions, which generally entails reactive patterns of action.

Psychologist Martin Seligmann understands optimism as the antithesis of pessimism, which he considers a result of what he defines as learned helplessness. While pessimists "tend to generalise the loss of control and also transfer it to other situations in which they do, however, actually have opportunities to exert influence" (Lang von Wins & Triebel 2012, p. 26) and lapse into passivity hoping that a state or situation will change even without their intervention, optimists use the opportunity to look beyond given situations. They assess their own experience of previous lack of influence as insignificant for their further actions and repeatedly try to improve displeasing conditions or situations.

The construct of self-efficacy is similar. Psychologist Albert Bandura describes it as one's assessment of how well difficult situations can be handled. People with higher self-efficacy are convinced that they can successfully master demanding challenges and, as a consequence, often consciously choose ambitious goals that they then pursue persistently. On the way there, they do not let difficulties stop them. In psychology, a high level of self-efficacy is generally regarded as a sign and a prerequisite for successful adaptation.

For the sociologist Aaron Antonovsky, sense of coherence is a basic personal orientation. It expresses the extent of a comprehensive, lasting and at the same time dynamic feeling of confidence that the course of one's life is seen as structured, predictable and explainable from the interaction of factors originating in the internal and external environment (understandability) and that resources are available to meet the demands (manageability). Demands represent challenges that are worth an effort, an intervention and a commitment (meaningfulness). Increasing the sense of coherence can therefore be considered the essence of a salutogenetic perspective and is thus also the guiding principle of career disruption counselling. ■

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Can we learn from errors and faults? Freudian slips as a learning opportunity in supervision

■ Gerald Poscheschnik, Gianluca Crepaldi

Abstract

Although the concept and theory of Freudian slips was often criticized, it was also defended with rigorous empirical studies. Sigmund Freud tried to show that errors and mistakes happening in everyday life are not only a product of chance and circumstances. He assumed that the so called parapraxes (Fehlleistungen) are an unconsciously motivated attempt to temporarily cast

out unpleasure by finding a compromise solution to an underlying conflict. Such faults are often embedded in a social context and can be analyzed by means of free associations. The authors try to show that an examination and reflection of these phenomena can be very fruitful to foster a deepened understanding of clients, supervisees and supervisors.

1. Introduction: Freudian Slips – Only chance and circumstances?

Although errors, failures, setbacks, and fiascos have accompanied humanity since its beginnings, most people still feel uncomfortable when making a mistake. This is likely a result of perfectionism and the perceived discrepancy between the ideal of a flawless self and the reality



Are errors and faults a source of embarrassment to quickly wipe away?

of being an imperfect person. Sigmund Freud, probably not only the most famous, but also the most notorious psychologist of the 20th century, made things even worse. He argued, by rigorously analyzing a plethora of mistakes happening in everyday life, that most errors are neither a result of circumstances nor pure chance. He rather underlined the idea that typical everyday mistakes are - to put it simply - unconsciously motivated (Freud 1901). In his view, a parapraxis is a certain kind of error that is defined by an unintended deviation from a planned action, which normally can be executed without error. Contrary to the public perception of psychoanalytic concepts, Freud did not restrict Fehlleistungen to slips of the tongue but also discussed other kinds of missteps such as missteps regarding forgetting or losing something and even self-inflicted injuries.

Since then, a lot of argumentative energy has been invested into proving this idea false. One of the most influential claims was published by Timpanaro (1976), who tried to demonstrate that at least slips of the tongue are only the result of a phonetic similarity between two words. Given the fact that there is always a word that sounds similar to another, the question arises why misspeaking is not an even more common phenomenon. Freud (1901) emphasized more than once the importance of unspecific-contextual influences in the formation of parapraxes. Illness, fatigue, intoxication, and the similarity of words increase the possibility of producing a parapraxis, whe-

reas full concentration acts as a kind of remedy reducing the likelihood of such phenomena. Nevertheless, Freud claimed that all these unspecific factors are not sufficient to explain the formation of parapraxes.

In a classic psychological experiment by Michael Motley and Bernard Baars (1979), some of the Freudian assumptions were tested empirically. These researchers wanted to figure out if a mere similarity of words is sufficient to explain the formation of the so-called Freudian Slips. They showed their participants a number of spoonerisms and instructed them to read them aloud without making a mistake. The participants were divided into three groups. In a neutral group the mindset of the subjects was not manipulated at all and they were just told to read aloud the spoonerisms. The second group was instructed by a provocatively dressed female investigator in a sexually exciting way. The third group was told they would occasionally receive electric shocks. There were three different types of spoonerisms the subjects had to read. They either had a neutral or a sexual connotation (e.g. "lood gogs") or they were regarding electricity (e.g. "shad bock"). The principal idea of this experiment is that the spoonerisms should generally facilitate the production of slips of the tongue because of the linguistic similarity of the words. If the formation of a parapraxis is the only result of a similarity of words, all the groups should make the same amount of missteps in all three connotational types of spoonerism. However, the opposite was the case. Situational manipulation significantly raised the incidence of verbal slips connected with sexuality or shock. However, this applied only to errors that were also germane to the particular situation. In short, the sexual situation did not provoke slips connected with shock and vice versa. By way of contrast, the test subjects involved in the neutral group (male test leader, no electrodes) were generally less prone to verbal slips.

In another paper we (Poscheschnik & Crepaldi, 2022) reviewed this and further replications and other experiments regarding Freudian slips. Although it is still not definitely clear if Freud was right in all points regarding human error, there is definitely a psychological influence on the formation of errors, mistakes, and accidents. Psychological experiments even indicate that they indeed have to do with the influence of unconscious processes, inner tensions and conflicts, associations, and priming. There is also empirical evidence that this may also be true for missteps like the momentary forgetting of words and little accidents.

2. Psychodynamic perspectives on human errors

So, it may be worthwhile to take a closer look at the Freudian understanding of errors (Freud, 1901). We will shortly explain the underlying theoretical principles and illustrate them with examples. Of course, the theories have a higher degree of complexity than we are able to explicate here due to reasons of compactness. And since these theoretical elements are complementary, you will find all the aspects in any Freudian slip. Nevertheless, we picked some examples that illustrate the theoretical element more obviously.

- a. Parapraxes are the result of repression and the return of what has been repressed: A young woman wanted to communicate the newly released rules of conduct from the Austrian Government regarding Christmas during the COVID-pandemic to her family group via WhatsApp. The number of persons allowed to celebrate together was more severely restricted when unvaccinated persons were participating. Instead of sending the message to her family group, she sent it to her relatives group, also including unvaccinated persons who had even criticized her for being vaccinated. As this and similar examples illustrate, the hidden motives are often not deeply unconscious but

- only momentarily repressed and remain capable of becoming conscious under certain circumstances.
- b. Parapraxes are the result of the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of displeasure: A young man, who was becoming increasingly annoyed by emails from his work as well as political tweets he did not agree with on his day off, accidentally threw his mobile phone in the rubbish bin while he actually wanted to dispose of an apple core. This example shows that a parapraxis can help to temporarily get rid of unpleasant emotions. The range of unpleasant emotions can include everything from shame, guilt, and fear to envy, jealousy, and anger.
 - c. Parapraxes are the compromise solution to an underlying conflict: A Viennese psychoanalyst who has been teaching at an Austrian university approximately 200 miles away for many years is becoming increasingly annoyed at the amount of travel involved. One day, he misses the correct highway exit three times in a row. He then needs to take a long detour to find his way back, and his arrival at the lecture auditorium is severely delayed. This example emphasizes a “counter-will” (Freud, 1901, p. 171) that represents a person’s hidden or overt wish. It resists a duty that is perceived as a constraint imposed from the outside. In a Freudian slip, you can often recognize a compromise solution where both sides of a conflict are taken into account.
 - d. Parapraxes have an associative link with uncomfortable memories and can be analyzed by means of free association: During a conversation about his coworker in a health center, a psychologist suddenly cannot remember her name. The only name that comes to his mind is that of his mother-in-law. Although there is hardly any phonetic similarity between the two names, he realizes that there is an optical similarity between the two women. He perceives his mother-in-

law as crooked and cranky, and he has had more than one negative experience with her. Freud explains that a forgotten word is often harmless in itself, but there is an associative link with memories of an unpleasant, insulting, frightening, or even traumatic character. Since parapraxes are formed on the basis of associative interconnection, free association of sincere and uncensored communication represents a method of reversing this process (Freud, 1901).

- e. Many of Freud’s (1901) examples contain hints at a relational-intersubjective dimension of parapraxes, but he did not systematically elaborate on this idea. In modern psychoanalysis, the embedding of all psychic phenomena in relational contexts plays an important role (Mitchell, 2000; Orange et al., 2001). Even Freudian slips occur in intersubjective contexts and do not only contain information about intrapsychic psychodynamics but also interpsychic relationship dynamics. In this view, a misstep is not only the product of psychodynamic processes within one person, but also an act co-created by the unconscious interplay between at least two persons (Crepaldi & Poscheschnik, 2021a). In a family, everyone is participating in driving the youngest daughter to and from her appointments at college and with friends because she had a panic attack while driving a car herself and cannot do it anymore. One day, she begs her older sister to make it a top priority to pick her up from college on time because she has a rendezvous with her boyfriend afterward. After the end of the working day, the older sister sets out to chauffeur her younger sibling but unwittingly misses the turnoff in the direction of her sister’s college and finally arrives late. This example demonstrates that a parapraxis is embedded in a social realm and often also carries an implicit message for others.

3. From theory to practice – Can we work with Freudian Slips in Supervision?

If you are not an exuberant and proud anal character (Haslam, 2011), who strives for utmost perfection in every situation of his life and is completely knocked out by even the slightest form of imperfection, you would rather agree that it has become commonplace to say that you can learn from failures and mistakes. This is even true for learning such different kinds of things as new vocabulary, making Wiener Schnitzel, and aviating an airplane, although a mistake will probably have different consequences in the mentioned activities. It only takes a certain openness to look at one’s own failures instead of ignoring and denying them. Whoever is capable of accepting that he is fallible and willing to engage in his mistakes, is able to learn from them.

Every practitioner in psychotherapy, counseling, coaching, and supervision can use his own mistakes to reflect and think about what they could mean and why they happened with the help of the theoretical principles we presented in section 2 of this paper, but for now we will focus on mistakes clients report in supervision. In the following vignette, we will try to illustrate how a supervisor can make use of a client’s failure by stimulating a process of reflection, respectively mentalization (Allen & Fonagy, 2009). We will present you with a failure reported by a social worker in her supervision. This failure primarily affected her clients and herself, although at first glance, it just looks like a rather unspecific result of stress. The analysis of the misstep helped her to gain a deeper understanding of the current situation.

A social worker, let’s call her Ms. Diligent, who ironically defined herself as a little old-fashioned in her lifestyle, still refused to use an electronic calendar on her laptop or smartphone. She preferred a pocket diary, where she re-

corded all her appointments manually. This calendar was always carefully stored in her handbag. Before leaving a place, she always checked the whereabouts of her diary. But one day, when she took her routine look, she was shocked a little bit because she realized it was not there anymore. According to her account, she turned her whole house inside out, but nevertheless could not find it. She finally had to give up and was completely embarrassed because she had to telephone all of her clients to confirm all the times and dates anew. Only after finishing this task and realizing that she only missed one of her many appointments, she found her pocket calendar lying in the cabinet where she stores her cat food. In supervision, she at first mentioned this occasion of misplacing her calendar only casually in one short sentence and attributed it to her high level of stress. When her supervisor tried to find out more about the misplacement of her pocket calendar, she wanted to refuse the conversation, considering it to be pointless and fruitless.

The supervisor already knew that this client refused psychoanalytic thoughts and that she attended him not for but despite his psychodynamic background. Nevertheless, he persuaded her to venture a little thought experiment and asked her if she thought the temporary loss of her calendar had any benefit for her, although such a benefit may admittedly be beside the point. She answered that she had a lot of stress on this day and admitted that on the one hand, the loss of the calendar bestowed some kind of pause upon her, but on the other hand, she had to pay a price for it by calling all her clients. The supervisor then asked what was the first thing coming to her mind regarding the benefits of her mistake. A little humiliated, she said that she had felt a little relieved that she had missed the session with Mr. Grumpy, her most annoying client. This opened up the opportunity to talk about this client of hers, whom she had successfully avoided talking about until now. She revealed her fear of this client, whom she coaches within the frame-

work of probation service. In the course of the conversation, she could understand that this man had similarities to her own grandfather, who was her family's tyrant and often used physical violence to sustain his power. This apparent resemblance tapped into her own traumatic memories and evoked strong feelings of fear and denial she had troubles processing. Due to her ethical standard to always help others and to never give up, she additionally felt ashamed and guilty because of her fears and the resulting wish to get rid of the client.

The supervisor tried to work on this conflict by supporting her to mentalize the meaning and message of these affects. Finally, the social worker could clearly recognize the cumulative role of unspecific stress as well as the pinpoint role of her specific conflict relating to this special client in the misplacing of her diary. Although it happened while she was alone at home, it transpired in an intersubjective-relational field between her and her belligerent client. In the next session, she told her supervisor that she was able to have a very open and honest conversation with the client about their relationship. Her disclosure of countertransference seemed to open up a door for the client to talk about his emotions, especially his fears of being cancelled and shoved around by others, which probably emanated from similar experiences during his own childhood. At least in this case, the analysis of an incident, which at first glance can easily be seen as a frivolous and petite whoops, not only helped a professional to gain a deeper understanding of the working relationship dynamics between her and a certain client but even yielded some progress in the work with him.

4. Resume – Some benefits of analyzing Freudian slips

Although it is understandable that humans prefer to ignore, belittle or rationalize little mistakes and errors due to the

uncomfortable emotions they evoke, engaging with such phenomena in supervision can have potential benefits. This applies to reported parapraxes as well as parapraxes that occur in the process between supervisor and supervisee, regardless of who is the originator.

First of all, it can help supervisees gain a deeper understanding not only of themselves but also of their clients by analyzing parapraxes reported in supervision. Parapraxes offer a low-threshold approach to mentalize pre- and unconscious psychodynamics and relationship dynamics. An in-depth analysis of the situation, discussing emotions, cognitions, and fantasies happening before, during, and after the slip has proven productive. This is not only true for supervision and other psychosocial professions but also for everyday life (Poscheschnik & Crepaldi, 2021; Crepaldi & Poscheschnik, 2021b). In a single case study, Heck (2019) demonstrated that a young man gained a better understanding of his personality and social self by writing a diary about his own missteps for a week.

Secondly, the supervisee's parapraxes during the process of supervision towards the supervisor may also be an indicator of the relationship dynamics between the two participants in the process. For example, when a psychotherapist undergoing supervision once had to cancel a session via email and the supervisor confirmed it, the supervisee answered with a little slip of the pen by writing: "Thanks for your un\$derstanding". As they discussed in the next session, the supervisee was actually dissatisfied and had the wish to receive more targeted work from the supervisor for his money.

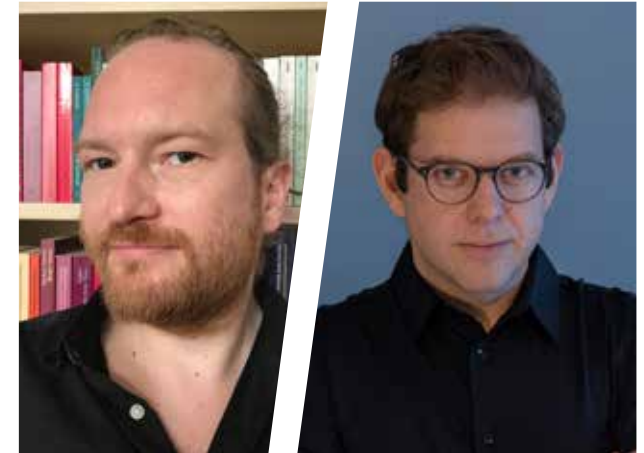
And finally, it can support supervisors to understand themselves better by detecting, reflecting, and mentalizing their own parapraxes in relation to their clients. Using free asso-

ciations as an access path is often fruitful, but it can also be helpful to use more targeted strategies by researching the consequences and functionality of a slip. Such possibilities include asking if a certain slip has an advantage or if it guards the client against something. To thoroughly and honestly look at such minor missteps and learn from them may even be an effective prevention of incidents and fiascos much worse. Even though a slip may be embarrassing, it is still a minor deviation from normal functioning and may serve as a signal at a time when a process of change is still easily possible.

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Did you know?

The Editorial board of ANSE Journal took the initiative to create a new item in this Journal. We would like to ask the National Organisations to share, in a short way, their 'news' in our Journal.

It can be news that will be actual in the future (e.g. Conferences or books to be published) or news that is important for other NO to know and maybe to inspire for own structural actions. You can send your news to geriandijkhuizen@gmail.com until november 1st 2023.

In the last edition of ANSE Journal (december 2023) we will publish this. An example of how this can look like is below. The new item is called:

DID YOU KNOW...?

Inspiring 'faits divers' from National Organisations for Supervision and Coaching. For inspiration or just to know what is going on in other National Organisations.

- At the GA of the LVSC, in december every year, an election is organised for the best thesis of a supervision student, graduating from the education that year;
- PSF Accreditation Commission includes four accredited members, renewed every two years. With the support of former accredited members, these members constitute ad hoc accreditation panels for the supervisor's accreditation process for several months. A testimonial document is requested to support the accreditation process, and two interviews are spread over three months.

A new Supervisor Accreditation Process is now operational at Professional Supervisor Federation (PSF). Complete information will be available on the PSF website soon: <https://www.professional-supervisors.org/l-association/accreditation/>

- The ANSE research book (based on the 2015 ANSE research conference, published in 2017): Brigitte Geißler-Piltz, , Sijtze de Roos (ed): "Inspire and Be Inspired. A Sample of Research on Supervision and Coaching in Europe" is available on the publisher's (L'Harmattan) open access database, free for download as PDF.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56037/978-2-343-12798-9>
- Budapest, beautiful city in Hungary will be more beautiful: from 14-18 August 2023 the ANSE Summer University will be in town! The theme: With Words and Beyond – Values and Identity in an incomprehensible World. Organized in cooperation with MSZCT (Hungarian Association of Supervisors and Coaches) and KRE (Károli Gáspár University). See you there!
- All information: <http://ansesu23.szupervizorok.hu>

You can send your news to: geriandijkhuizen@gmail.com

Gerian Dijkhuizen, June 2023 ! ■



Looking kindly at mistakes means, first, paying special attention to what deviates from the expected course of events. Yes, mistakes should be appreciated and taken seriously. Not because they are mistakes. No, because they enable real learning opportunities.

"You can learn from mistakes," as the saying goes. This means: learning, being prepared to accept failure, understanding and questioning in order to generate new knowledge and new insights.

But then it's not really about being error-friendly, but about being learning-friendly - isn't it?

Barbara Baumann





There is a crack, a crack in everything - That's how the light gets in (« Anthem » Leonard Cohen, 1992)

■ Olivier Laval

Listening to Leonard Cohen sings, I thought to myself: this is precisely one of the missions of the supervisor with coaches and leaders: to accompany them to see the crack, the blind spot: this will allow the light to enter and illuminate what needs to be inspired (in the coach/leader, in the client, in the system...) Let's see how mistakes, failures, and fiascos are/enter the cracks!

Based on my experience, client cases (Leaders and Coaches' supervision) and a matrix, I propose to share my

wanderings with you (the etymology of the word error) and booties¹ (etymologically linked to the word failure). Suppose in your eyes, this article-testimony is a "fiasque" (a bottle surrounded by straw to try to hide the lousy wine it contains - the etymology of fiasco). In that case, I will happily exchange and move forward with you!

A few milestones in the wanderings and explorations that I propose: after presenting the matrix, I propose to focus on each of the dimensions based on practical cases before

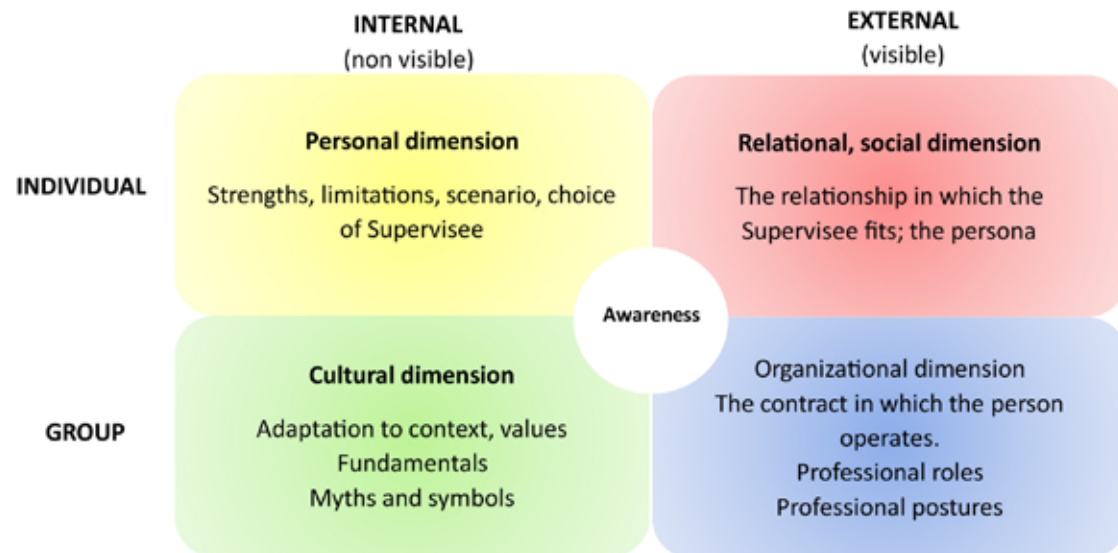
Abstract

Wandering with the client is undoubtedly the most beautiful journey to experience in a supervision session:

1. Based on personal experiences, the error sheds light on the shadowy areas of our personalities and allows our clients to grow in self-awareness.
2. If I am not allowed to make mistakes culturally, I may be tempted to be in control. What if comfort (in my habits, in my ways of doing things) was nothing but a way of not leaving room for error, for questioning?
3. Any "error" in the supervision relationship (misunderstanding, postures, etc.) can reveal an issue in the system being supervised. The error reveals a focus to work on.
4. Accepting errors in the system, as a self-regulating mechanism, is a non-intrusive posture from the supervisor.

To learn from our mistakes, we need to be aware of the tensions we are going through in these four fields: the personal, the cultural, the inter-relational and the organizational.

A tensional matrix to understand the accompaniment of a person in an error, failure, or fiasco.



Apuleius Matrix (©Jacques Moreau)

¹In French Etymology of Erreur/Error is Errement=wandering / Etymology of Echec/Failure is butin/booty

concluding how the awareness of complexity can allow us to take mistakes into account, to learn, and even to unlearn thanks to errors and failures.

Jacques Moreau (TSTA Organisation) named his tool "Apuleius's Matrix" within his Tensional Approach to Transactional Analysis. It is a simple tool that allows us to understand complexity without trying to simplify it.

Let's take an example of a manager who told me during a supervision session: "I don't want to take up too much space". In a non-exhaustive way², let's see how the Apuleius matrix allows us to apprehend different paths of support or questioning.

At the individual level and in a non-visible way, this person supports this statement on history; he has developed a belief ("I am fine when I don't take up too much space") which has undoubtedly been helpful in his life and could be re-examined.

In what way is this belief helpful or limiting today?

At the individual level and in a visible way, this translates into a relational behaviour of constant smiling, of withdrawal in the relationship.

How does this behaviour impact his relationships?

At the group level and not visibly, this manager evolved in a « Jansenist³» culture where putting oneself forward

Let's see the crack, the crack in everything - That's how the light gets in, and our client grows.

is not valued. She landed in an international group, initially American, where successes are "stories to tell".

How can the transition from one culture to another create tensions?

At the group level and visible, this leader steps aside in front of members of her management committee and regularly hears, "Who runs the company?" or "We don't know where we are going".

How does her withdrawal impact the organization of her company?

Linking four approaches that could be taken in isolation allows global awareness. For example, how will my belief create tension in our relationships?

Changing the tensions between the dimensions will generate a difference if necessary.

What does an error or failure reveal as tension in each dimension of this matrix?

At the level of the individual and in a non-visible way - the personal dimension

What a supervisee said: "I just did an individual coaching session with X; she talked about her new job for the whole hour, and I didn't manage to get a contract. This isn't the first time, and I can't get it right. Where did my mistake come from?"

As a supervisor⁴, I can have multiple analysis grids related to personality profiles, drivers, beliefs, etc.

In the first few seconds, I have this inner questioning, which speaks about me and my wish to be reassured by relying on the known. I welcome this questioning that I know about myself because I have been able to identify that it assures me, like a mountaineer who is going to

discover a wall; I can then launch myself into the unknown, the emerging, and I go on to wander. Let's wander together with our clients to help them see how the question they ask us speaks about them.

Going deep into the emergent process, here is one aspect of his work:

- Like his client, he was not looking to make a contract with me, and I told him it was ok: we could go off on an exploratory agreement during our early session.
- Following a long development to answer the question, "How does this speak about you?" I ask him where he is: "Well, nowhere!" I then offer him another rendition: "I, too, can't see where he's at, where this is going, and that's ok."
- The following question, "Tell me about your 'nowhere'; what is it like?" allows him to touch on a solid existential issue he can explore with his psychotherapist.

- » The awareness of what is at stake in the error (in the example presented, it is an awareness of an existential issue; it could have been on another level using the parallel process etc.) is a learning process. Transactional Analysis speaks of the first ingredient of autonomy when there is awareness. To use Leonard Cohen's image, freedom is when I can detach myself from the problem, the error, and let the light pass. I accept to look at what the error illuminates; the wandering allows me to create a space between the problem and myself and show the flaw.
- » What if, especially when his client talks about the error, the supervisor gave himself the right to error, namely "the right to wander"? It seems that this posture can favour being non-knowing and letting our client fully explore what he must explore in this fault that he shows us, that he dares to show.

² Multiple paths are possible. I describe this leader's approach to illustrate how I use this Apuleius's Matrix to accompany my client.

³ Jansenism is a religious movement born in the 17th century that opposes rigour to laxity.

⁴ In this example, as in the following ones, I do not try to show all the possible ways of accompaniment. I am using a case of accompaniment that allows me to illustrate our issue.

At the group level and not visible - the cultural dimension

What a supervisee says: "During the last Mentor Coaching sessions with you, it was challenging for me! I've been doing this job for 20 years, and to see that I still have areas for improvement undermines my self-confidence. It's like a personal failure."

I propose here to address the cultural dimension of error. Let's see how mistakes are perceived in American, French and Inuit societies.

In his book *Les "Vertus de l'échec"*, Charles Pépin⁵ evokes the notion of "fast fail". Let us cite the example given by Pépin: the trajectory of two tennis players, Gasquet and Nadal. At 13 years old, the first one beat Nadal badly, in particular, thanks to a precise stroke (taking the ball very early, with maximum aggressiveness). He continued to win until he was 18. In the meantime, Nadal was working on a shot, a way of playing that looked strangely like Gasquet's in 1999.

Linking four approaches that could be taken in isolation allows global awareness. For example, how will my belief create tension in our relationships?

⁵ Les Vertus de l'Echec - Charles Pépin - Allary Edition 2016 pages 15-17

⁶ Example quoted by Jacques Moreau

We can hypothesize that Nadal's "fast fail" allowed him to re-examine his shots and his way of doing things. This is a direct link with the culture in which the child, the adolescent, evolves:

When a person grows up in the United States, the child may be valued in class for failing, and the educator emphasizes risk-taking.

A friend who teaches at a music conservatory in France told me about auditions that could be experienced as failures, even fiascos (a term that is even more relevant here because it originally comes from the "fours" of shows given by Italian troops). She saw how the French system gave little room to valorise the risk of playing a piece in front of an audience but insisted on "no false notes" and guilt (the fault) of not being up to par.

Finally, in Inuit society⁶, a child who breaks the ice is mocked. As this is a vital element (breaking ice puts one in danger of death), the mockery has an educational purpose for the whole group that witnesses it.

With these three examples, we see to what extent the society in which we grow up will forge us a glance at the failures. My personal experience of the error of failure differs depending on my culture.

With the mentor coaching example mentioned above, I became aware of another dimension: comfort. "I have been practising for 20 years". And, in 5, 10 or 20 years, we develop recurring gestures or postures, and it becomes difficult to question them. The gaze of a third party then becomes disturbing: it can reveal and highlight the motion or posture.

- » The culture of the person being assisted influences how they will experience the error and the possible feeling of failure.
- » Comfort can prevent us from letting the light of error shine through. Settling into a comfortable way of functioning, into established ways of doing things, can lead to a kind of control that does not allow for the emergence of error.
- » As a supervisor, what do I systematically put in place that I don't think is relevant to the question again? What can I regularly put in place during my supervision or other occasions to leave room for the flaw that will shed new light on these practices?

At the level of the individual and in a visible way - the relational dimension

A supervisee said: "I have been supervised in the past, and the problem was that the supervisor did not understand me, and there was a lot of misunderstanding".

My answer was: "I wish you to relive these misunderstandings with me, and I suggest you reconstitute them to me because what is happening here will offer decoders on what is happening in your professional life and possibly in your life in general".

Here we are dealing with the relational part of the matrix, starting with the accompaniment of a single person in supervision: the supervision sphere can be a space of failures, and from there, the supervisee will leave with a booty, the etymology of failure, for them and the accompaniment of the client.

What happens in an accompaniment is significant and can be questioned. "You indicate that I don't understand you: explain that to me. "How does this speak about you?" "About your client? About your team?".

I sometimes hear, "If I fail, I fail", which can become "I'm

a failure" or "After this work session, I told myself I suck at this job". I have frequently encountered this shortcut, this narcissistic flaw which certainly lets the light in but lets it in on a particular object: the ego. It is then a question of introducing an "alter" into the "ego", a reflexive space that allows for awareness.

While there are many ways to accompany this situation, I choose here to present two tools to accompany this vulnerability: the 3Ps method and the signs of recognition.

The 3Ps as:

A space of Protection to be installed to welcome the vulnerability thus revealed or perceived by the supervisor, an area of Permission to be developed, mainly from the supervisee to the supervisee himself which will generate a Power of accompaniment, new links that the coach can weave with his Power.

We can then propose to him to distinguish between a negative Unconditional Sign: "I am a failure", and a negative Conditional Sign: "When I made such and such a professional gesture, it had such and such a consequence for my client, and my mistake made me feel x, y or z". This approach seems essential when our client tells us about a fiasco, a failure known to all, which could even make the headlines, really or in a fantasized way. The spotlight comes from the glance of others, from what we could call the "reputation". Our vigilance is then that our client succeeds in naming what the relationship has revealed about the system (in what it was potentially a support of projection), what has been touched in him and, if necessary, invite him to take care of this wound with a psychotherapist.

Still in the relational part of the matrix, when I supervise a duo of facilitators (who intervene for team coaching or or-

ganization coaching), the fact of observing their relational skills at the time of the supervision is a very significant entry point: I have in mind the example of one who takes much more space than the other. Mirroring what I observed, the one in the background said: "a bit like the HRM in the system which takes up a lot of space".

How does this duo of participants experience this during supervision? In what way does it give them keys to read for their accompaniment?

In this case, the one in the background lived it "in a comfortable way", and the one who talked a lot "did not want to be in this position: it is not my place to take over in a co-facilitation".

From these two observations, they were able to question their resonances (here, for example, the tension between "taking one's place" and "dominating"), their co-facilitation contract, and to make hypotheses for accompaniment around this notion of contract.

- » Supervision reveals relational failures, between the supervisee and the supervisor, between supervisees. This highlighting allows us to make hypotheses for our client and will enable him to make hypotheses for the system he is accompanying and the approach he is managing.
- » The supervisor, a watchman of a space of Protection and Permission, accompanies his client to find his Power.

At the group and visible level - the organizational dimension

What a supervisee says: "I am working in organization X, and it is not going well; it is not taking".

We have already seen above how the relational or cultural

aspect could be linked to the organizational part of the matrix. What is played out during supervision can be a parallel process to what is played out in the system being supervised and thus give keys to the organization of this system, I propose to focus here on the "Organization of the intervention" part of the person being supervised. Let us take up the autopoiesis introduced by Francisco Varela: "In the phenomena of life, there are not only spatial movements but also interactions with the environment, self-regeneration of damaged parts and even bodily self-transformations such as those that can be typically observed in vegetation"⁸

An organizational system can be approached as a self-organization that regenerates itself and sometimes remains for a long time in a dysfunctional situation. What is sometimes experienced as a failure by the leader or the coach can be understood as the strength of the system that resists any change coming from the outside, significantly when these changes affect critical elements of the system. The leader or the coach in this system can both try to transform the system from these elements while the processes of the system are at the origin of the very presence of these elements.

"It may become an element of the system to be respected, and it is a matter of accompanying the supervisee to deal with it, to "surf" on this element without trying to "make them move" because it is the system itself that will find the elements of its self-regeneration. The failure to transform becomes a success, respecting the system's rhythm.

"What if the system self-regulates in error?" allows us to avoid having a "project on" the system.

- » Accompanying a system requires a great distance from the traditional "tools" of accompaniment and a

⁷3P and Unconditional Sign / Conditional Sign (strokes) are Transactional Analysis approaches.

⁸ H. R. Maturana, F. J. Varela, Autopoiesis and Cognition, D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1980, p. 78-79. Quoted by Autopoiesis and the "individual" in the making. Hideo Kawamoto In Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger

posture of acceptance of error as a process of self-regulation of the system. This process could be harmful to try to modify.

Do we learn or unlearn from our failures?

By choosing to evoke errors and failures through the matrix of Apuleius, as planned, I fail to be exhaustive, to show a whole part of the possible reflections around this question. By failing, I unlearn to be fulfilled if I control myself and am perfect.

So, my learning begins by unlearning what my drivers, beliefs, values, etc., can create as inferences.

How does this duo of participants experience this during supervision? In what way does it give them keys to read for their accompaniment?

How are we supported in our unlearning? How are they valued so that they become learnings?

This involves studying our awareness processes: the central part of Apuleius' square.

I propose to illustrate this last issue with an example that we know well at Coheliance⁹, the support of family businesses and, particularly, our speciality, the help of the transmission process of family businesses.

⁹ my own firm www.coheliance.com

¹⁰ Peter Koenig and the Process of Reappropriation / Peter Koenig System

The manager accompanied in supervision is generally led to discuss elements that are much more extensive than the company's perimeter, and they become aware of the different forms of transmission. For each form of communication, he can then build a risk map, the rational risks (potential legal, economic, governance failures, etc.) and the subjective risks (potential failures linked to conflicts, power, authority, loyalty, etc.).

Among the four types of wealth transmission for family businesses, family wealth, social and organizational wealth, cultural wealth linked to know-how, and emotional wealth, we will limit ourselves here to the first two and see the associated potential failures:

1. A family heritage: It is significant when the company bears the family name. Whether the company is old or new, the "legend" of its foundation has regularly been told at family dinners: an implicit pride is shared. The failures of transmission are often linked to the following:
 - For the donee, a "duty of loyalty" or a "conflict of loyalty" (depending on whether they want to take over the business)
 - For the other children, a possible feeling of jealousy
 - In any case, a significant risk of conflict between children.
2. A social and organizational heritage: with the company, it is the "status of leader" that is transmitted with all the symbolic elements linked to power, such as sometimes the integration in a particular club of leaders: Here, the symbolic loss of control can be experienced as a personal failure for the transferring manager.

If we supervise the manager wishing to transmit his company, we can see here how the four dimensions of Apuleius' matrix(es) potentially intertwine in a complex way:

Two matrices

The family matrix (the personal history of each child & parent, the relationships between them, the family culture, for example, explicit or implicit speech, the official or unofficial roles in the organization of the family) and the company matrix (in which we find part of the family matrix). Very often intertwined, distinguishing between them makes it possible to become aware of the issues that need to be untangled.

Projections

"It is certain that success is a lot of sweat. From this projection (success = sweat, effort), unlearning through awareness allows managers or children to detach themselves from the projections they may have made and thus reappropriate their approach to the company. Unlearning is then a process of reappropriating projections¹⁰.

Symbols

The use of symbols (symbolium) to look at a failure together and overcome it will bring the different parties together. They can then overcome/unlearn what separates them (diabolum) around a new project.

Through this example, it seems relevant to accompany the leader to get out of the shackles (we mentioned above the comfort that can prevent wanderings and explorations), of the non-conscious learnings from history, education, relational experiences, etc.

All these awarenesses are relevant to avoid failures or find a ritual that will use a symbolic process in the case of failures. The ritual that takes on a symbolic meaning and that allows gathering again.

Ring the right bells, those that are not necessarily perfect

Ring the bells that still can ring

Forget your perfect offering

There is a crack, a crack in everything

That's how the light gets in

Part of the art of being a supervisor is to accompany the coach or leader in identifying the bells that could still ring or ring differently through awareness, to get out of the perfection and dare to enter the richness of the wanderings, of the flaw that will illuminate differently the tension experienced.

And why not dare to ring the bells of fiasco? Look how wrong I am, and it's okay! ■

Olivier LAVAL
Coheliance France

During 15 years as an Administrative & Financial Manager and/or HR Director, **Olivier Laval** has accompanied teams. Starting from 2009, he worked as an organizational coach before creating his company "Visions Croisées" in 2012 and merging with Coheliance in 2016.

Trained in didactic supervision and coach trainer for five years, he relies on everyone's potential. He is convinced of the relevance of "opening the lid of the pot" so that each person can, at their own pace, become aware of the ingredients that are inside and those that need to be added so that individuals and collectives function smoothly. While operating within a Transactional Analysis contract, he places a lot of importance on being open to different approaches and postures.

His clients also tell him that he has the art of confrontation that makes it possible to move forward: Coheliance has invented the neologism "Tensionaute", a posture and tools that allow coaches and leaders to identify virtuous tensions and dysfunctional tensions.

Starting in 2023, he will be a trainer in the Executive Supervisor program at HEC Paris.





■ DeBorah (Sunni) Smith

Abstract

How do we define the word “fail?” What it means to fail is personal to each one of us. Where did our idea of failing come from? Neuroscientists, social anthropologists, and communication experts agree that words can even ... “change our brain.” The word “fail” carries negative connotations and neuro-linguistic associations. Research supports the fact that “words,” whether spoken, heard, or thought can have both short and long-term impacts on how we see our world. The reflective nature of coaching supervision often brings social, systemic, and cultural dynamics of failure to the surface. This article invites readers to consider ways of reframing what it means to fail and introduces alternative mental models that can facilitate appreciative inquiry into societal assumptions that are deemed, “Failures, Faults & Fiascos.”

To fail or not to fail is not the question

Reframing “failure” as a new mental model in Coaching Supervision

The root word for failure is “fail.” But what does it mean to fail? The word and its related concepts are readily apparent in our everyday lives. For example, financial institutions are too big to fail. Leadership advocates speak about “failing forward” and what it means to “fail fast.” In academia, we are taught that either you pass or fail from the earliest grades. How do coaches interpret or characterize failed attempts in coaching and coaching supervision?

A particular paradox is presented when considering failure in the context of the recent newly-presented *critical reflective practice*. Coaching Supervision is among the highest forms of learning in the coaching profession. While many profess that failure is an essential learning component, failure should not be in the learning process. It is frequently suggested that the experience of coming back from failure can seed wisdom, build confidence, and develop resilience. When you fall, never quit; instead, get up and try — try again. As some say, “Fake it till you make it!” Although I find some value in these platitudes, let’s look at the underlying belief system that supports them and the harmful premise they perpetuate.

Social anthropologist and Conversational Intelligence® expert Judith E. Glaser emphasizes that “words shape our world” throughout her work (Glaser, 2019). Neuroscience studies reveal that words affect us deeply psychologically, impact how we live our lives or experiences, and determine our reality (Psych Central, 2023). Perhaps words can influence how we coach our clients. To pa-

raphrase Pam McLean in *Self as Coach, Self as Leader*, “Who we are is how we coach” (McLean, 2019).

Most of us have experienced what it means to fail, and when it occurs, we are taught, or we reluctantly learn, to accept that it’s a necessary pit stop on the road to a successful finish. This response can also create a dynamic of avoidance, resistance, and fear. Not only of failure but fear and discomfort around ambiguity, uncertainty, risk, criticism, judgment vulnerability, difference, etc. A recent McKinsey & Co. study found that some companies are developing deliberate ways to counter this negative mindset by instilling pro-risk and experimentation cultures. Ed Catmull, the co-founder of Pixar Animation Studios, stated, “Human nature being what it is, risk aversion [even



This New Yorker cartoon illustrates how words, spoken, heard, or thought, can contribute to stress and long-term anxiety.

fear] will rule people's actions if they don't actually believe it's safe to fail" (Have you made it safe to fail? 2020).

In Coaching, whether in an individual or group context, supervisors are accountable for holding a space that is as free as possible from judgment, apprehension, discomfort, and risk of failure. Therefore, I invite coaches to consider eliminating the word fail, including its various contexts (Failures, Faults, and Fiascos) from your vocabulary and professional characterizations. In its place, I suggest that we prospectively reframe the word. For instance, F.A.I.L. could be *First Attempt In Learning, Forever Acquiring Important Lessons, or Flawlessly Ascending In Life!* (The Free Dictionary, 2023)

Back in 2007, Stanford psychologist Carol Dwek introduced the concept of "Growth Mindset," which (in opposition to "Fixed Mindset") advocates the belief that one can grow by using experience and challenges to overcome failure. Her extensive research has shown that most people with fixed mindsets avoid challenging situations when given a choice because they are very concerned about failing (Dwek, 2022). Today, this approach might be seen in having a *Possibility Mindset* (Jain, 2022). The

term possibility mindset was first applied in 2017 by Judith E. Glaser and Debra Pearce-McCall, who observed this attitude exhibited chiefly by Millennials. They described this mindset as one that springs from "a nervous system made more familiar with uncertainty and differences...". These two adaptive mind qualities work synergistically. "Unpredictability (uncertainty and difference) becomes an invitation for curiosity, connecting, and co-creating. Feeling part of a trusting team with shared power makes approaching dilemmas easier" (Glaser and Pearce-McCall, 2017).

In the book *In Love with Supervision*, Robin Shohet and Joan Shohet (2022) ask coaches to "see the possibility of failure from many different perspectives." They point out that not achieving specific standards, aka failing, is integral to learning. They suggest that coaches examine how their "unacknowledged fear and vulnerability in the system might be contributing to the [seeming] failure."

As Coaches and Supervisors, it comes down to awareness and being in a constant state of appreciative inquiry. How can we be increasingly more mindful of our language and how it potentially affects others in scaling up our emotional intelligence capacity in the reflective supervision space? ■



Sunni Smith provides professional transformational coaching for C-suite executives and for entrepreneurs that she dubs "Consequential CEOs." As a thought partner, she works from a broad-based business background, along with advocacy expertise, and lived experience that provides her clients with creatively curated space to become and maintain their best selves. Her executive coaching and consulting style focuses on identity imperatives that seed effective communication and emotional intelligence while fostering leadership emergence and professional empowerment. Sunni has considerable experience in change management; Conversational Intelligence®;

... being able to stay comfortable and thoughtful, in the face of differences, the unknown, and all the other forms of uncertainty we face each day, requires an update or override to our automatic nervous systems' responding to uncertainty with discomfort or confusion, experiencing it as a stressor or a threat (Glaser & Pearce-McCall, 2017).

Team Advantage™; ethics; and cultural competency including, bias, equity, and inclusion. Her client list is global and is an adjunct coach and facilitator with the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL). While serving as an affiliate with the Ariel Group/Executive Coaching Connections (ECC), she provides expert coaching for Mindful Leadership Consulting and Leading Edge. Among multiple coaching certifications, Sunni holds a Professional Coaching Certification (PCC) with the International Coach Federation (ICF), and certification in Individual as well as Group Coaching Supervision, with an EMCC Supervision Quality Award.

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Risk and resilience of ethical principles and standards in supervision

■ Kristina Urbanc

Abstract

During the past twenty years supervision has taken an important position in the professional community of helping professions in Croatia, but it seems that alongside with its increasing popularity, the risk of its inappropriate application has also increased due to adjustment of its quality standards to the needs and frameworks of various tenders, projects and programmes. This paper gives some examples of these risks in the design of projects and programmes which embedded supervision, such as:

supervision groups that are too large, insufficient hours, lack of respect for the process, violating the right of participants to have supervision within working hours as well as generally unacceptable conditions in which supervision is conducted. Responding to these challenges it is important not to lose sight of basic ethical principles and values when deciding whether to follow project procedures and guidance or to use professional discretion in circumstances where the supervision standards are jeopardised.

Supervision in Croatia – current situation

The Croatian Association for Supervision and Organisational Development (HDSOR) was founded in 1998 with the support of a group of experts from the European Association for National Organisations for Supervision in Europe (ANSE). From 2001 the HDSOR was an associate member, and as of 2004 it has been a full member of the ANSE. Today the HDSOR gathers more than 130 active members (<http://www.hdsor.hr/>).

The key incentive for the development of supervision in Croatia and for the HDSOR activities was a three-year project of the Society for Psychological Assistance entitled Education in supervision for social welfare system employees which was conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Department of Social Work of the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb with the financial support from the Swedish Developmental Agency (SIDA). Furthermore, the introduction of a specialist postgraduate study in supervision of psychosocial work at the Department of Social Work at the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb on 2006 was instrumental for the HDSOR mission. Since that time, the study has been open for the education of future supervisors, experts in various fields. So far five generations of students completed the study, and following the completion of their studies they joined the HDSOR and started acting as licensed supervisors. Additionally, supervision became an integral part of the curriculum of the undergraduate and graduate study of social work and is represented in theoretical and experiential forms of teaching in various courses, as well as in students' practice (Ajdukovic, 2005,; Ajdukovic and Cajvert, 2003; Cicak and Urbanc, 2020).

Today supervision in Croatia is conducted within the social welfare system, social work education, health care

system, education system, justice system, civil sector, volunteer work and pastoral care, but increasingly also in various organisations and companies with the aim of preserving the quality of service and care for mental health of their employees. The needs and possibilities for the development of supervision are greater than it is recognised in individual systems. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic and earthquakes in Croatia during the last two years influenced a clearer recognition of the needs for supervision and the benefits that supervision may offer, so that an increasing number of individuals, teams and organisations is turning to the HDSOR for the organisation and conduct of supervision (Banks et al., 2020). During the previous period of crisis, HDSOR supervisors made a significant volunteering contribution by conducting individual and group supervision for the professionals from different areas, civil sector and volunteer (Urbanc and Vlašić, 2022).

The Social Welfare Act of 2011 (OG 7/11) defined supervision as a right and obligation of professionals in social welfare system for the first time in Croatia. Although this legal formulation could be examined, since supervision is based on voluntary and collaborative approach of its participants (and not on their obligation), this Act for the first time mentions supervision as an important resource of professional support and learning which enables professionals to develop new knowledge and skills and to gain professional and personal insight through the process of experiential learning, with the aim to improve the quality of their work with clients.

A particularly significant boost to the increase of the interest for supervision was the Social Welfare Act (OG 157/13) which recognized the right of professionals to supervision as a means of ensuring quality service to their clients, professional development and co-operation with

the competent ministries for the areas of social welfare and justice. In line with that, in 2014 the Croatian Chamber of Social Workers recognised supervision as one of the ways to earn professional (re)licensing, and some other professional chambers agreed with that.

Nevertheless, in spite of that, so far supervision has not been systematically introduced into the area of social welfare, nor in the areas of education and training, justice or health care.

Nevertheless, in spite of that, so far supervision has not been systematically introduced into the area of social welfare, nor in the areas of education and training, justice or health care.

Examples of risk and resilience of ethics and standards in supervision

During the past twenty years supervision has taken an important position in the professional community of helping professions in Croatia, but it seems that alongside with its increasing popularity, the risk of its inappropriate application has also increased due to adjustment of its quality standards to the needs and frameworks of various

tenders, projects and programmes (Berc et al., 2022). Thus we often witness these standards being jeopardised in the design of projects and programmes due to planning supervisory groups that are too large, insufficient hours, lack of respect for processuality and violating the right of participants to have supervision within working hours as well as generally unacceptable conditions in which supervision is conducted, all of which disrupt the principles and values that supervision represents. In that respect, several examples will be mentioned:

Supervisory expectations and outcomes

The experience that is frequently repeated in the Croatian context is related to unrealistic expectations from supervision by the management in a work environment where the working conditions are inadequate (unclear roles and responsibilities, understaffing of specialist services, expectations that the staff will be at disposal even after working hours, inadequate spatial conditions), non-transparent human resources policies (relating to employment, promotion and training) and/or poor interpersonal relations (horizontally or vertically). As a sort of panacea, a cure for all or at least most of difficulties, in a critical moment the employees are offered supervision in order to 'silence' them, 'calm them down' and to prevent second-class changes (these are the reasons from supervisees' perspective). In some of the experiences that I had as a supervisor, a paradoxical effect happened – at the end of the supervisory cycle, empowering themselves for the "second-class changes" (see Watzlawik et al., 2011), a part of the group decided to quit and seek another employment. This was certainly not the outcome that the manager had in mind while planning supervision for their employees.

What have we learnt from this? We learnt that prior to supervision, it is important to enable an orientation meeting with potential supervisees and the supervision contracting entity, as well as the managers, with the aim of informing and negotiating the aim of the supervision, the expectations of all those included in it and which of those could be the subject of the supervision, and which of those might demand some other forms of intervention. In that way it would be possible that all potential stakeholders, from their different roles and perspectives, gain a common understanding of the supervision from the same source and at the same time and place.

Project priorities vs. supervisory priorities

HDSOR representatives applied to the call for conducting supervision for the teams that had worked in the institutions and associations in the area of psychosocial work with different groups of users. The call was announced on the regional level and it anticipated group and individual supervisory cycles in the duration of the projects within a year. HDSOR had the task of collecting the necessary documentation and the supervisors involved in individual and group supervisions. The supervisors who participated in the project, apart from being experienced in conducting supervisions, also had a rich experience in psychosocial work, especially in the area of work with the children, youth and families. Although the documentation was delivered on time and the supervisory groups were formed and ready, the beginning of the project was postponed several times, and it was lengthened several times and for several months, which the supervisees - experts, who had been informed that they would have supervisory support, found very hard. The delay

occurred due to the regional management's inability to properly handle the project administration, as well as the uncertainty related to the responsibility and vague expectations regarding who in the management was in charge of which part of the communication with the funders of the project etc. The consequence of this was that the supervisory cycle that was supposed to be continuous during an entire year was reduced to several months with the same number of supervision hours. In order to keep up with the project framework, supervisors and supervisees suddenly found themselves working on a tight schedule, which they could not be responsible for, as they were expected to complete the supervision schedule which was planned for the entire year in only a few months. From the perspective of the role and process of supervision, but also from the ethical perspective, it made no sense (Banks, 1998; Cicak, 2008 and 2015; Urbanc and Vlaši, 2021). An internal joke that was topical at that time was that a supervisor should more or less move into the homes of their supervisees and live with them for a while in order to be able to complete their work plan. Among the pressures of project deadlines, the realities of supervisors and the needs of supervisees there was a huge gap caused by the lack of knowledge about the fundamental role of supervision and the lack of logistic preparation of the regional self-government units that applied to calls. We decided to honour the duration and processuality of supervision, so we extended the supervisory meetings even after the official project completion. What have we learnt from that? We learnt how to present the process and activities to suit the project requirements and deadlines on one hand,

and to keep the values, sense and processuality of supervision on the other hand, primarily focusing on the needs of supervisees, i.e. the users who the supervisors work with (ANSE, 2012). This does not suggest in any way that project frameworks, rules and regulations should not be respected, but it suggests that as the supervisors, as well as project participants and/or managers, we should consider the needs of supervisees and the meaning of supervision when deciding about priorities. Our choice was in favour of professional, ethical discretion in circumstances where the organisational procedure and project schedule seemed inappropriate.

Selection of supervisors

A group of professionals in an educational institution entered a city project competition and got the funds which ensured them a one-year supervisory cycle. The head of the educational institution was informed about it and he had his own idea who should be the supervisor. The group wanted to choose their supervisor independently, while the head insisted on "his" selected supervisor, who also happened to be a close friend of his. The group pointed out that they did not want a friend of their immediate employer as the supervisor. After failed negotiations with the head of the institution, the group requested the HDSOR's opinion about it, and they received the written letter of support stating the fact that the group had the right to independently choose their own supervisor. In spite of the HDSOR's support, the dispute between the group and the head dragged until the project deadline expired and the funds intended for supervision were returned to the donor.

What have we learnt from that? We learnt how to present the process and activities to suit the project requirements and deadlines on one hand, and to keep the values, sense and processuality of supervision on the other hand.

What have we learnt from that? We learnt that the management's fear of supervision could jeopardise its conduct and lead to serious conflicts, accompanied by the demonstration of power and the failure to take into account the principle of avoiding multiple relations (such as a close friendship between a potential supervisor and the head of the institution who is in conflict with a group). From the head's perspective, this was a very lonely position and therefore, in order to achieve a long-term improvement of the team relations, it would be important to offer support to the managers in the form of individual supervision, consultations or some other form of professional support, with a possibility of a joint meeting of the manager and the team in some perspective. In the outlined case, they were divided into two camps, and the conflict continued to intensify.

"So, how was the supervision?"

In one of supervision groups that consisted of experienced professionals from the social welfare system, the group members reported that fairly regularly their superiors or work colleagues encountered them the day after the supervision with the question: "So, how was the supervision? What did you talk about? Did you criticise me?" Although the supervisees were familiar with the principles of supervisory work and the Code of Ethics for Supervisors (Cicak and Urbanc, 2020), they found these encounters to be highly unpleasant as they were placed in the position to "defend" their right to confidentiality. On such occasions some of them used humour, some explained the principle of confidentiality, and some tried to avoid that encounter "the day after", but for all of them the experience was extremely unpleasant and they felt that it was a form of abuse of the managerial position, which consequently damaged the relationship between them and the manager.

What have we learnt from that? That it is important that the managers whose employees begin with supervision are familiar with the supervisory principles and the manner of work on the meta level, and that it is important that the managers refrain from asking to be "reported" about the supervision, but also that they do not encourage their employees to behave in such a manner and to "stop" such conversations if they occur and to use them as an educational opportunity for ethical learning, establishment of better communication and clear definition of boundaries and their role in it. It is also important that supervision is available to the managers as well, in the form of group supervision for managers or as individual supervision, considering the fact that due to their specific responsibilities and position the managers are isolated in that role.

What have we learnt from that? We learnt that it is important that the managers whose employees begin with supervision are familiar with the supervisory principles and the manner of work on the meta level.

"We will not hire her, she is problematic"

Another example of abusing the knowledge that group members gain about each other within a group relates to a group member who applied for a job in an institution several years after the completion of a supervision group's work. One of the members of the selection board of the institution was a female colleague who was in the same supervision group with the candidate, and she shared her experiences and impressions with the president of the selection board with a negative connotation, hinting that "it would not be good to hire the candidate because during supervision it was obvious that she had many problems that she could not adequately cope with".

What have we learnt from that? We learnt that it is important to raise awareness about the ethical values and principles of work in supervision, particularly emphasising that the members have to adhere to the rules about confidentiality even after the completion of the supervision group's work, and that they should request exemption from situations in which they could be placed in such dual roles. From the supervisor's perspective, it is especially important for a supervisor to be in contact with their own value system and theoretical basis, and to continually raise their awareness and question their view of reality and how it fits into the principles of supervisory work (Banks, 1998).

Risk of reducing supervision to its individual functions

My experiences in conducting supervision and supervisory education, particularly those that relate to the social welfare system, have shown that in the Croatian context supervision is frequently (not always) focused on the support to professionals, and to a lesser extent on their professional activity and professional role. The reason for that is a high level of professional stress, even a high level of burnout, especially in the case of professionals

In supervision we nurture the relationship and the process, and the working environment is often focused on the outcome, very frequently an instant effect.

from social welfare system, so that they reach out to supervision which is most frequently the only "safe place" to unburden and restore their professional resources (Urbanc, 2020, Fitch et al, 2010). This manner of using supervision escalated during the previous period of crisis in which, apart from the consequences of the pandemic, Croatia was exposed to the consequences of devastating earthquakes, increased uncertainty caused by the pandemic and earthquakes, distress of clients, numerous losses and mourning, inability to bid farewell to the close departed persons, extended or altered working hours, work in prolonged shifts, combined work from home for which many people did not have requirements, aggravated or disabled working conditions due to the earthquakes, impeded direct contact with the users, inability of field work and generally, more difficult cooperation with other institutions and partners. Apart from the fact that quality supervision increases the capacities of professionals to answer the needs of their users, in the period of crisis it also represents a safe place where professionals can talk about their difficulties and gain support (Pope and Vasquez, 2007;). Pope and Vetter, 1992; Reynolds Welfel, 2005).

However, it is important to distinguish between a period of crisis (in which the professionals are at increased risk because they are deprived of adequate service due to isolation, earthquake and reduced availability of resources of help etc.) and regular, usual situations which are not a consequence of pandemic or earthquake, but only of frequent unplanned changes of laws, system structure and manner of work without empirical and professional foundation, and without competent change management.

In the past decades the social welfare system, within which I gained most of my supervisory experience, was particularly targeted by such frequent changes of

laws, manner of work and increasing expectations from professionals (Ajdukovic and Urbanc, 2009). The professionals speak about their experience of powerlessness that they bring to supervision in the following way (from the author's personal communication with supervisees):

- We want to prevent the wealth of knowledge and skills of direct work with the clients to be reduced to dominantly administrative contents.
- We want an opportunity to work with our clients processually, as we do in supervision, instead of being focused on an "instant" solution.
- We need visibility, keeping the profession's voice, cooperation of all stakeholders in the decision-making process about the reform of the system (from the author's personal supervisory communication with group members).

In such working conditions, professionals actually lack capacity to use supervision for promoting quality work with clients, as they must "put the oxygen mask" on themselves. After that, they are expected to be "ready and renewed" for continuing work because they "had their supervision" and there they "solved all their problems" (these are, in fact, the expectations of the supervision contracting entities, employers, managers).

How professionals describe the gap between the supervisory and working paradigm and what they "carry" with them from the supervisory meetings can be well illustrated by the statements made by participants of supervision groups during 2020 and 2021 (from the author's personal communication):

- In supervision we nurture the relationship and the process, and the working environment is often focused on the outcome, very frequently an instant effect.
- Supervision is focused on taking a look from another angle, multiperspectivity; in the working environment

there is “only one correct solution” and “only one truth”.

- “Clean air” in supervision, we breathe freely; in the working environment we are often flooded by toxicity, “air pollution”, so we breathe shallowly (toxic stress, toxic relationships, toxic managers).

Conclusion

The postmodern concept of help demands from the employees and the managers alike a different way of communication that is based on dialogical outlook, respect for personal experiences of individuals and for diversity. Supervisory democracy and constructivist approach in this context represent a solitary island in contrast to the increasing consumerist paradigm within which supervision is also perceived as an “instant product”, a panacea that can be offered to the professionals from different systems who are dissatisfied in order to stop them from “getting too loud” (De Trude, 2001). However,

Supervision is focused on taking a look from another angle, multiperspectivity; in the working environment there is “only one correct solution” and “only one truth”.

modern supervisory practice and theory (in particular the attachment theory in the field of supervision, relational approach to supervision and motivation theories), are not the key to solving inefficient change management, managers without adequate managing competences and inappropriate social, educational, healthcare and other public policies. However, they can inspire us not to withdraw and build “walls”, but to increase our motivation to maintain connection and communication, in spite of inequality and difficulties (Fosha, 2001; Schore, 2003 cited in Rožic, 2018). In that respect, the Croatian Association for Supervision and Organisational Development, together with the Social Work Study Centre, the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb (<https://hrcak.srce.hr/14433>) which conducts supervisory education, actively carried out informing and raising awareness of the professional public about the role, values, models and manners of conducting supervision, but also about its limitations, about what it is not and what it should not be turned into. Additionally, through research, education and publications it systematically promotes the right of professionals to supervision, and it takes care of preserving supervisory standards of quality in the dialogue with the ministries, institutions, professional associations and civil sector representatives (Urbanc, 2022). ■

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Confession Box

Fostering meaningful conversations to learn from error

■ Gerry Aerts and Kirste den Hollander

Abstract

In this article it is explained how to support the process of learning from error in supervision and intervision. Based on a real-life experience of how a well-intended intervention leads to an unexpected outcome, the choices a supervisor can make to support this process are illustrated. These choices are influenced by one's perspective on errors and the ten error handling strategies. Herein, it is argued that merely identifying and correcting errors

does not foster sustainable learning, for which the other strategies should be applied. Helpful questions to apply two of these strategies, analysing and discussing, are offered. Furthermore, the method of the Confession Box is explained as a vehicle to open up about errors and create the beginning of a learning journey. The reflective questions throughout the article invite the readers to become aware of their own perspective on errors in supervision.

Introduction

Learning from errors is something we all want to foster in supervision. However, despite all the best intentions, errors often feel like failure and not a great opportunity to improve. How to open up about mistakes in supervision and turn them into a learning experience is a challenge on its own.

In this article we explain how to support the process of learning from error by relating examples to the theory. Each theoretical part is followed by a reflective question. First, we give an (1) example of how a well-intended intervention leads to an unexpected outcome. Following, we describe our (2) perspective on errors. We proceed by describing (3) different error handling strategies and continue with (4) steps to turn errors into learning experiences. Next, we (5) illustrate the method of the Confession Box based on research of one of the authors. This method can be used in supervision and intervision to reflect and learn from errors. Consequently, we shift the focus to our (6) own intervision as supervisors. We conclude by (7) summarizing how you can create a safe and powerful learning environment.

1. An unexpected outcome

Case: Supervisees write a reflection report about last supervision, whereafter they give each other feedback or ask clarifying questions. In a supervision group the supervisor starts to invite the supervisees to give feedback on their reflections. By asking this question the supervisor aims to contribute to a positive start. The supervisor asks the supervisees: "Could you please give your reaction on the reflections of last supervision?". Usually, supervisees start with compliments about their work. However, what happens is that one of the supervisees starts to accuse one of the others that the reflection is not complete. The accused supervisee reacts very irritated. The supervisor is startled

by this. This is not what was intended at all. The supervisor thinks: "How can I stop this?" and feels blocked. Effect: two irritated supervisees and an agitated supervisor.

Reflection: Is this an error?

In everyday conversation we often refer to error as both the action as well as the following consequence (Homsma et al. 2009). However, in learning it is valuable to make a distinction between the two.

Actions can be seen as the goal-oriented behaviour to reach an outcome. Following this definition, an error is the unintentional deviation of the desired goal or outcome. This applies to both avoidable errors and unavoidable errors originating from experimentation and/or conscious risk taking (Cannon & Edmonson, 2005). These types of errors can be divided into two categories. The first category concerns slips and lapses. When these types of errors occur the idea or plan is good, but the following action is not in line with the intended outcome. In case of a slip the action is incorrect (e-mail sent to the wrong person) and in the case of a lapse the action is forgotten (e-mail isn't send). The second category is called mistakes. Mistakes are plans which are not suitable for reaching the intended goal (Reason, 1990). This relates to our case: the intention is to start on a positive note but instead the question yields criticism and agitation.

The consequences of an error can be wide-ranging, since the deviation itself does not imply anything about the nature of the consequence (Homsma et al., 2009). As such, an error can have various small or serious and positive or negative consequences depending on the situation or system in which the error takes place (Van Dyck, 2000). One of the positive consequences of errors is learning (Frese & Keith, 2015).

2. Perspective on errors

When our actions don't have the effect we intend, it creates hassle in the process. Since we are skilled in problem-solving, we often try to stop this hassling. However, what we would like to accomplish in supervision is that people react, reflect, and create meaningful learning experiences. In this way an unintentional outcome can create new opportunities. This means we sometimes must endure discomfort. It also means that we must be able to take a step back, look at the situation from a meta perspective and create a secure base for cooperation.

In our case the supervisor could intervene with a problem-solving skill:

"Wait, in supervision we don't accuse each other, but we accept each other's mistakes because we want to learn from it. So, let's continue with the feedback in a more positive way".

Or a reflective question:

"Sorry, I think I made a mistake by asking this question. My intention was to start with a round of compliments to learn from each other. Instead, I notice agitation and I feel disturbed. Shall we explore our irritation?"

The supervisor admits the agitation could be a result of her own action. By sharing her inner world, she models to be completely open. This is important because now, supervisees can also be invited to actively experiment with self-disclosure (Aerts, 2019). Learning to compare their own opinions and assumptions about, in this case, mistakes with those of others, helps to develop a multi-perspective view. Thus the learning process can continue by reflection and not by problem solving.

Reflection: What would be your reaction?

The way we react to errors is strongly influenced by our own perception towards errors and their consequences. Herein two dominant perspectives can be identified: error prevention and error management. In the error prevention perspective, errors are perceived as a loss of time or the cause of low-quality work (Gelfand, Frese & Salmon, 2011). People who predominately hold this perspective, mostly focus on implementing processes, tools, or systems aimed at prevention of errors (Frese & Keith, 2015). The first intervention is likely triggered by this view. In contrast, the second intervention is more likely to be promoted by an error management perspective. Herein, errors are regarded as an inevitable by-product of working which can never be completely prevented. The focus lies on minimizing the negative consequences of an error and maximizing the positive outcomes (e.g., learning and future prevention) after an error occurs (Van Dyck et al., 2005).

3. Strategies in error handling

When faced with error, we all have strategies to deal with error. These strategies entail: *analyzing* the error, *correcting* the error as quickly as possible, *improving* from the error in the long term, *communicating* about the error, *conscious risk taking*, *anticipating errors*, *concealing* the error and *stress* brought about by errors (Rybowiak, Garst, Frese & Batinic, 1999). The research of one of the authors of this article, on learning from errors in teams, found two additional error handling strategies, namely: *identifying* the error and *de-escalating* the emotions that the error brings about (Den Hollander, 2017). These strategies fall into three core strategies: mastery, awareness, and fear of error. As is shown in figure 1 (Van Dyck, 2000; den Hollander, 2017).

Core strategies	Handling strategies
Mastery	Identify De-escalate Analyse Correct Improve Communicate
Awareness	Risk taking Anticipate
Fear of error	Conceal Stress

Figure 1. Strategies of handling error

Research shows that the mastery core strategy is linked to reducing negative consequences of a mistake and developing better plans, while strategies linked with awareness help to recognize errors when they occur. The better you are in applying these strategies, the greater the chance that you will learn from errors. Conversely, fear of error is related to a negative attitude towards errors. This negative attitude can show itself in feeling a lot of tension and thereby wanting to conceal the error. These strategies are found when people spend longer periods of time in contexts in which experience judgment after an error (Van Dyck, 2000; Frese & Keith, 2015).

Reflection: Which strategies can help or hinder learning during supervision?

4. Learning from errors

Learning from errors necessitates a process of extracting insights from the unexpected result and modifying the future behaviour and/or processes accordingly (Cannon &

Edmondson, 2001). Such a process requires more than addressing the superficial symptoms or consequences, as otherwise only the underlying problem remains unsolved (Edmondson, 1996). Argyris and Schön (1978), describe this as single loop learning: the error is acknowledged and dealt with, without looking at the broader context in which it occurred. In situations like these the error handling strategy of identifying is only followed by correcting.

To facilitate sustainable learning, double loop learning is required: a form of learning in which the error is analysed in an integral manner (Argyris & Schon, 1978). Creating a context in which the underlying assumptions and beliefs can be changed. After the error is identified and possibly de-escalated, the error is analysed and discussed. These insights lead to improving and thereby create sustainable learning. Below we relate these steps to our previously mentioned example.

Step 1: Identify (and de-escalate)

In our example the supervisor identified the unexpected outcome through reflection-in-action: a powerful tool for learning (Schön in Peeters, 2015). The supervisor facilitates the creation of new experiences by exploring the irritation in a reflective way. Herein, it helps to de-escalate the emotions the action brought about, namely the negative consequence (irritation and agitation). The next step requires that all supervisees listen openly and without direct judgment. The more transparent the supervisor is about her own mistakes, the more the supervisees are willing to share their mistakes as part of their learning process.

Step 2: Analyse and discuss

When the emotions are calmed down, the error can be analysed and discussed. Creating a valuable shared experience to reflect upon in line with the learning princi-

ples of supervision. Using the context of supervision for moments of knowledge transfer, the supervisor provides expertise linked up with the experience in the situation. This means supervisees learn by connecting experience and reflection to concepts, in this case errors, explored with the supervisor (Bolhuis, 2009; Siegers, 2002; Kessels in Rigter, 1989 in Aerts (2019)). Allowing for investigation of what led to the unintended outcome. By working together in an open dialogue, you can give new meaning to an error, leading to the creation of space for new ideas and actions. Questions to aid this process (den Hollander, 2017) are shown in figure 2.

Objectives and plan	What was your plan and what was the expected result?
What actually happened	What was the actual result? How did it differ from the expected result?
Defining moments	What happened? And why did it keep you from the planned path?
Lessons learned.	What insights did you gain about what is essential to succeed in these kinds of situations?
Plan to apply lessons.	How will you apply these lessons in supervision or other future professional activities?

Figure 2. Reflective questions from error to learning

Step 3 Improve

Based on the insights gained in the previous steps, new experiences or experiments can be formulated. In our case the outcome of the problem-solving skill to continue with positive feedback could have an effect both ways: supervisees share more positive feedback and change their mindset. Alternatively, the irritation could grow because this intervention doesn't address the possible underlying emotions.

If the supervisor continues with the reflective question she can restart after exploring the underlying emotions. In this way supervisees experience the effect of using the supervision context as learning environment.

Reflection: What way would you prefer?

5. The Confession Box

When dealing with errors during supervision, context for the reflection on action and learning can be initiated relatively easily. However, while starting their research Verdonshot & den Hollander (2016) soon realised that it's often quite difficult to start a meaningful conversation about errors when it occurs without such context.

Reflection: Can you recall your last mistake and what you have learned from this mistake?

Challenged by this notion, they started an experiment with a Confession Box during Next Learning (congress for professional learning in the Netherlands). The aim of the Confession Box is to create meaningful conversations about error in a safe environment. Since, the participant and the listener do not know or see each other, the method uses a three-step process to guide this process. During each step the participant can choose a conversation starter. Thus, creating a situation in which they can start their own learning journey while being guided by the listener who asks deepening questions.

Note: The participant can also be translated to the supervisee and the listener to the supervisor.

Inquiring into the perspectives on error

In the first part, the participant chooses one out of six statements, whichever is most appealing. All the statements relate to perspectives towards error. For instance, "making mistakes is one of the most meaningful ways to success" or "the fear of error hinders the learning from error". The statements are intended to evoke discussion about attitudes towards error. An elaborating question could be: how does this statement relate to your work?

Detecting one's own frame of making mistakes.

In the second part, the participant selects a card which expresses a view towards errors most suitable to one's own way of thinking. In the following conversation, the participant is challenged to think about situations where this way of thinking helps or hinders. This step in the supervision learning process is known as generalisation: in what other situations have you come across this behaviour. The purpose is to raise awareness of their own values. The views are related to the error handling strategies mentioned before. Examples are: 'I'd rather make mistakes than do nothing' (prevention), or: 'I think it's important to correct a mistake as quickly as possible' (correction).

From error to learning

In the last part, the participant chooses one of four questions they want to answer. The questions are all indirect ways to inquire about mistakes in real-life situations, since questions about errors that are put too directly, usually stimulate going back to negative associations with

errors (Verdonshot & den Hollander, 2016). Examples of questions are: "When did you do something that turned out differently than you expected?", and: "How do you and your colleagues ensure that you continuously adjust your approach and getting smarter by doing?"

As such, the use of the confession box method and the conversation starter cards provide a "slide" to create meaningful conversations and learning about error. Furthermore, by specifically questioning the beliefs and values prior to inquiring into an error, double loop learning is facilitated.

Reflection: How will you be inquiring into the perspectives and beliefs while inquiring into a mistake?

6. Intervision as a vehicle to support learning from error among supervisors

In the Netherlands, intervision is used as part of the qualification system for registered members of LVSC to ensure the quality of professional guidance. One of the requirements to renew registration is to have participated in at least 15 intervisions in the last five years. During such meetings, the central focus lies on expertise development of professional guidance of attendees.

A group of at least three LVSC registered peers comes together to unravel challenges they come across in their daily practice as professionals. Using different methods of dialogue and reflection, a deeper contribution to professional development is made. Within intervision methods used can vary, since the group is autonomous, deciding how they want to work and learn together. Of course, learning from our errors requires a safe learning environment. As such, the Confession Box is a very helpful method to guide the process of learning.

In our example, the supervisor can bring in her "error" as a case. By reflecting on her beliefs and values which led to the error, the method helps to develop learning at the

double loop level. Additionally, the 'conversation starters' of the confession box can be used as a foundation to start an open conversation to learn together, in situations without a predefined error. Metaphorically they are "the slide" to dig deeper into the conversation. The group can help each other by sharing their concepts of error, how to cope with various errors and what they have learned from their experiences with errors in supervision.

7. Summary

In this article our ideas how to learn from errors were pointed out and how this process can be facilitated during supervision and intervision. To explain the perspective on errors an example of the professional practice of a supervisor was used. Different error handling strategies and steps to turn errors into learning experiences were worked out. The method of the Confession Box was further elucidated in how to facilitate a safe and powerful learning environment. A way to make this method suitable for intervision was described. Each theoretical part was followed by a reflective question to stimulate development of individual perspective on errors. From our experience there are various possibilities to use the confession box method in supervision as well as in intervision. Hopefully you are inspired to experiment in your own groups using (parts of) this method. ■

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Kirste works in the field of Learning and Development as senior advisor and team leader. She previously worked as an external consultant and researcher. During this time, her research focussed on the process of learning from errors in teams and organizations. In her work she often uses these insights in developing and guiding team coaching's, training programs and intervision.

Interested in all conversation starters from the Confession Box? Let's link: : <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kirste-den-hollander/>

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Gerry is registered member of LVSC and experienced (meta) supervisor and lecturer. She has been working in a Supervision Training program in the Netherlands for almost 20 years with focus on experiential learning. She uses the here-and-now experiences and focused reflection. She is co-developer and trainer of the ANSE module "Dealing with Diversity & Multiculturality as a Supervisor ". Nowadays she contributes to ANSE as a member of the Quality Expert group and as national editor of the ANSE journal in the Netherlands. <https://www.geosupervisie.nl>



Kirste den Hollander



Gerry Aerts

When does an Experience become a Failure? When you do nothing about it ... Testimonies from Lithuanian supervisors ...



■ Donatas Petkauskas, Irina Šiaudvytienė, Laima Abromaitienė, Nomeda Jerochova

Have you ever wondered what it takes for a mistake to become a lesson, and at what point it doesn't become a lesson? Four supervisors from Lithuania, Laima, Nomeda, Irina and Donatas, decided to share with us their mistakes in professional practice. Donatas even created a map to understand better, where we went wrong. We hope, You get inspiration from our stories and can use the map for Your own professional development.

Abstract

Have you ever wondered what it takes for a mistake to become a lesson, and at what point it doesn't? We seem to know the answer—we just need to talk about mistakes and learn from them—but do we truly do that? Or are we trying to sweep them deep into oblivion? As Nietzsche once said: 'I have done that, says my memory; 'I could not have done that, says my pride and remains unshakeable. *Finally—my memory yields'...*

Four supervisors from Lithuania decided to share their mistakes from personal practice, which in turn inspired them to create a map, a useful tool for everybody to check the "location" of their mistakes with useful questions for reflection. I am delighted that writing this article has become a process of growth, learning and acceptance of each other.

Supervisor and editor, Ligita Jakučionytė

STORY No 1: Supervisees Don't Need To Be Pitied, Instead They Should Be Believed In Subsection "Dynamics" in the Map Laima Abromaitienė

In September 2022, I started supervising a group of Ukrainians who were fostering children in Ukrainian foster homes. A social care centre in Kaunas, Lithuania, accommodated a group of 35 children and employed 17 staff members to accompany them. It was a difficult period for both—those who arrived and those who hosted: reconciling different competencies, attitudes, and skills, adapting to new requirements and regulations, and forgetting previous statuses or positions, all against a backdrop of sensitive and even painful experiences. After all, when you are thinking about your loved ones – whether they are alive or well, whether the house is still there, and so on – the quality of your work is not a big concern at such times. That is why the mana-

gers of the Social Care Centre suggested that some of the Ukrainian workers should try supervision.

The group I started working with consisted of 10 people – 9 women, and 1 man, from different Ukrainian cities with different professional backgrounds. Not all of them had known each other before. However, all of them unanimously emphasised that they care about the children they have adopted.

As a supervisor, I was challenged. We were communicating in Russian, which is not my mother tongue, and for them, although linguistically close, it is nowadays the language of their enemies. However, the participants did not highlight this as a disadvantage because it was the only opportunity available for all of us to communicate with each other. The format of supervision was a new experience for them, and reflection, and open expression of opinion in the group had not been common. The mood of the group changed with the news from Ukraine: positive news brought hope, and attacks and the bombing of cities caused anxiety and tears. Every time I had to assimilate and accept such emotional background. There were many sensitive stories about here and there, before and after... I often felt that questions about work, and professional life, were meaningless in this context. (“When the arm is broken, no rules will make it work right” – a thought heard later on in meta supervision).

The biggest challenge though was my attitude toward the supervisees. I felt pity that they had been forced to be in these circumstances – they were like “comrades in distress”. The consequences of this pity were caution and “protecting” the participants by asking questions and responding to the group dynamics and their behaviour. Remembering that this article is about mistakes, I could identify this attitude as a mistake, because in supervision it prevented me from developing an equal relationship with

the group. However, it has helped me, in my 15 years as a supervisor, to understand very clearly the importance of the attitude toward the client.

Fortunately, I had the opportunity to talk about my experience and receive reinforcement in an international intervision group, and I was accompanied in this process by a colleague from Ukraine, a supervisor and a psychologist. Our distant individual meta-supervision meetings strengthened me a lot. I started to pay more attention to what my supervisees are strong in, and what decisions they have made themselves under the circumstances. I did put more emphasis on the structure – when there is a lot of uncertainty and obscurity around, the clear structure gives security back. I started to see the supervisees not as “comrades in distress”, but as partners, who are trying to work together to protect the children.

After two months I saw my supervisees as strong and capable of making many difficult and responsible decisions. Far from being victims, they were heroes. Each one found their way to survive this uncertain period, to survive the unusual situations. This spreads a lot of hope and positivity. This was my learning from them and with them.

STORY No 2: How Much I Hold Within Me
Subsection “Professional Identity and Style”
in the Map
Nomeda Jerochova

I don’t see mistakes, I see deeds, actions, decisions and consequences. Therefore, I am not afraid of making mistakes, I am even happy if it happens because then I know that I am capable of learning. I associate the phenomenon of “not making mistakes” with expertism – thinking that you are perfect and infallible, not admitting your mistakes and avoiding analysing them.

I am neither shy nor scared to talk about my mistakes because I take them as opportunities for improvement. Although in my family it was not acceptable to talk, analyse or reflect upon mistakes in any way, I have noticed that such avoidance leads to all kinds of fears—fear of doing something new or unknown, being embarrassed or rejected, etc. So I created my own culture of mistakes because fear and doubt were holding me too much back, and that was something I wanted to get rid of. I started to talk about what I was afraid of, what I was ashamed of, and what I didn’t dare. And I realised that nothing bad happened. On the contrary, I was relieved. Now I think I can talk freely about my mistakes, just as I can talk about my successes.

In the context of mistakes, I would like to share my experience of role integration, and blending. I have been a lecturer for many years, and this role is very much my own. I have come a long way in discovering my style, developing the courage to teach the way I want, and breaking free from stereotypes, black suits and slides.

The role of the supervisor is still new to me, so every time I discover something new and it stirs something in me – inner conflicts, old experiences, sometimes resonating or contradicting with other roles. This is neither good nor bad, and I like the way this role is finding its place through my new practice and old experiences.

Several times in the group supervision I have caught myself transitioning, getting excited by the group’s curiosity about certain topics, and starting to lecture instead of supporting their discoveries. I was open about this in the group, sharing my discovery of my role conflict and asking their view on it. The group replied, my lecture was very interesting and useful. So I suggested, they should look for the answers and similar experiences in their practice, and answer the questions – why is this relevant for me? Or what am I

learning? I realised that my consciousness is trying to escape or switch to a more familiar role in a way. My learning from this experience was – I don't have to feel comfortable when I learn/find out/accept/retain something.

I have chosen the path of open confession – to tell the supervisees about my experiences and keep supervision and lecturing processes separate. I found out, the honest feedback was beneficial for the supervision process. The focus shifted from me back to the participants, who started to analyse their own experiences and themes.

How important is it for me as a supervisor to reflect my feelings for the supervisees? This is part of the supervision process, and it is safe for me to say how I feel or where I think I have gone wrong. I received feedback from participants in one group that my acknowledgment of having made a mistake gave the participants themselves the safety to talk about their experiences. It is important to realise that the culture of mistakes in our society is not common – people need encouragement to talk about and accept mistakes.

Professionalism in my view is the ability to understand and accept mistakes, grow through and reflect on them. The supervision process is about me as a supervisor too, not only the supervisees. I am part of what is happening, and my experience cannot be detached and isolated from the group. I tell myself - as long as I follow the winding road, I am learning and growing. When I start going down the straight path, it is a sign that I am tired of learning and maybe even experiencing burnout.

STORY No 3: How Much Is It Clear What We Agreed On?

**Subsection "Contract and Interventions" in the Map
Irina Šiaudvytienė**

"So let's grab and do it!" – said the head of the surgery team in the third team session. When I heard these words, I felt both happy and angry. The second session was devoted to identifying the team themes and issues, where, among about 15 others, one team member's mental health disorder emerged as an issue that affected the team dynamics and the way the team worked together. Work schedules in this hospital were not just based on physical resources, but also on how to avoid conflicts, as not all colleagues could work together. In addition, as it turned out later, there was a high risk of suicide for the sick worker. Supervision was ordered at a very sensitive time, and they told me to "grab and do it," clearly underestimating the time factor of the supervision process. They want to do surgery immediately without having adequately diagnosed the disease. On the other hand, I was pleased because I had the idea that they knew the cause of the disease and were ready to treat it. Caught up in the emotion, I said the same thing – "Good! Let's get on with it! Where do you want to start?" And there was silence. No suggestions, despite the topics they had listed in the last session. I realised that there was nothing to be happy about yet.

In Lithuania, supervision in the health sector is new, just the second year for doctors at the suggestion of the Ministry of Health. It was my first time working with a surgical team in a supervision context. When I was debriefing with the head of the department, it seemed clear that there were several "problem" employees in the team who needed to learn how to work together. And it is important to mention that the hospital administration commissioned the supervision. They kept asking a couple of times during the process why their unit was chosen, and despite my response about the administration noticing the lack of teamwork, they still didn't seem to understand. They said they came to the supervision out of respect for me and a sense of duty, which the medical field has developed a lot.

There was strong resistance to supervision throughout the whole process. It seemed I established an open relationship with them, but the team did not give content to the supervision; they did not want to talk about themselves. I prepared various tasks to make it easier for them, but never once was I successful – I fell into the trap of discussing why they were "sitting there" or what was working well in their unit. Identifying and highlighting the strengths was very important, which I supported, as it helps to research the mistakes constructively and find solutions to move forward. I brought out that these traits are worth fostering to maintain and strengthen teamwork. The team was so committed to this task that they didn't let me touch the other side.

That was my first (and so far the only) process in which we did not discuss any specific situation about what they do daily. It was only at the end of the process, that one participant said she felt a lot of pressure from me to talk! It was from this feedback that I realised I had made a mistake...

A year ago, several of the staff in the unit had attended mediation training and were expecting a similar format in supervision. "So let's grab and do it" was an invitation to give them a theoretical overview that they could think of and perhaps apply if they identified anything meaningful. This did not mean, they were willing to share their experiences but they were ready to let me into their "kitchen". Another participant said it vividly: "we eat our porridge, but we shall give you something more delicious." So they had a lot of "desserts" for me.

All this time, I felt dissatisfied because we were not working according to the original agreement. The leader told me personally about the concerns of the unit, but she did not raise any of this in the meetings, so I tried to do it as much as I could. When the conflicting workers were

absent, I asked the others how do they feel about making the schedules only around some people. My aim was not to provoke anger but to encourage awareness in everyday situations and learn to talk about issues more healthily. I so much wanted them to experience the benefits of supervision (because I think it is essential for surgeons) that I didn't realise, I had chosen the wrong approach. I didn't even feel that I was pressuring them. I continued with my usual way of deep reflection. But in the last session, it turned out, the surgical ward was waiting for specific instructions, training or sharing experiences from other hospitals.

I call my working style *searching and deeply reflective*. I can see what lies beneath the words spoken, and to test my ideas, I check with the participants if they see my observations too. If not, I look further with care and curiosity. My questions often provoke opening up when I share my own experiences. In this surgical unit, I understood that this is possible only on an individual level, not in a team. I think they were not ready to reflect, or maybe I did not create enough safe space. They said they rather like to operate than interact with people. I didn't dwell on it because I had my objectives – to show the benefits of supervision, however vague it was at that time.

In the end, I asked about the benefits and the first answer was "I didn't receive any." They also said that supervision was a distraction from work, they heard the needs of the team members, and it was important to remember the history and to see the strengths outlined. For me it looked enough, but the team did not experience success. This process influenced me emotionally, physically and mentally, making me realise again how much we take for granted. My learning was, that in contracting I should communicate more clearly that I expect that privately shared information is also brought out during the sessions; and if the team chooses to "feed me desserts", then we should

review the contract. The contract should clarify that supervision is about the team, not training, the themes brought out are the centre of the process, and feedback is taken at every session. I need to take time to introduce different work cultures and styles and remember, that enthusiastic statements do not necessarily mean the participants are willing to deal with their issues.

STORY No 4: Hello, I Am Your Burnout!
Subsection "Life-Work Balance" in the Map
Donatas Petkauskas

I am working as an educator, experiential learning trainer, consultant, and coach for 20+ years. It means many travellings, hundreds of people from educational, social, and business areas. I love my work and I believe I am good at it, giving in 100%. In 2015 I started to shift my professional career from being a trainer to a full-time supervisor. This change took me 4 years. In 2021-2022 I had 34 groups, 5 individual clients and 5 teams, 50000 km of driving around Lithuania, 2 groups per day, contact or online, as you wish. Often I was working on the weekends and I was feeling strangely proud when I had no time to eat. I think it is important to mention that I am a father of 3 young citizens and currently building our first family house.

In 2021, during my birthday, I received a question from my wife: "what do you wish for yourself?" My instant response was: "when my body will send me a signal about my too-fast life, I wish that it won't be fatal". Four days later I was diagnosed with Bell's paralysis—half of my face suddenly got paralysed, followed by panic attacks and anxiety...

I stopped, cancelled commitments, which were "impossible to cancel" and had a "wonderful" time for reflection. *Rethinking priorities, taming my vulnerability, acknowledging my limitations, learning to read signals of my body...*

getting to know myself again. I am back on track now, but differently. What is my "recipe"?

For me, well-being is a matter of planning, the same way as planning my work. I have booked all my Mondays for 2023 as "free". First I calculated how much I will not earn during my free time, and then laughed at this curve of thinking with my psychotherapist. Sleeping a minimum of 8 hours per night, eating 3 times per day and sweating 3 times per week. Sounds so simple? For me it takes effort, but my body tells me that I am on the right path.

MAPPING the "FAILURE(s)"

Dilemmas and various tense situations can lead to failure if they are not recognized and reflected upon. The authors of this article propose the *not-perfect tool* to reflect on being and performing as a supervisor. This map was a helpful resource to write the current article. It is divided into 2 chapters – Performance and Well-Being – and 8 subsections. We hope it could be useful and inspire also our readers.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS TO THE MAP

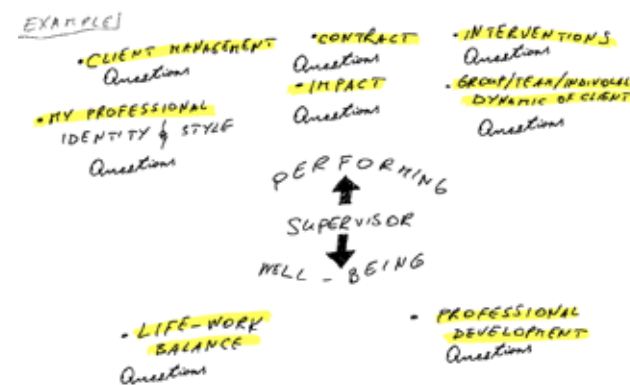


Figure 1. Visualised Framework of the Failure Mapping Tool

PERFORMANCE

Client management

Too less?

Too much stress in finding clients?

Getting involved in questionable terms, just to get a client?

Struggling with pricing? Underpricing your professional services?

Having just one or two clients per year? What does that say about my supervision quality?

Too much?

Do I have too many clients? Am I losing track of what is going on?

Am I overestimating my services? How does this affect my work?

Contract

How understandable is our contract? Is the contract achievable within an agreed framework?

Do we understand the contract the same way as the client?

Do the participants have the same idea about the purpose of supervision as I do?

Am I here for supervision or a quick fix to managerial problems?

Is it time for re-contracting?

Interventions

How well do the chosen methods and approaches work with this client?

Am I using the interventions wisely or blindly?

To what extent am I able to accept the participants' limitations?

Is there a balance between support and challenge? Am I challenging the client enough? Am I providing enough support?

Is the learning process happening? Do I feel accountable for the clients' progress?

Professional identity and style

Am I a Supervisor? Coach? Expert? Consultant? Teacher? Lecturer? Therapist?

How do my roles get along with each other?

Am I able to reflect on what I am doing?

Is it still supervision?

What 'kind' of supervisor am I? What are my strengths and weaknesses?

Impact

How satisfied am I with my work?

Is the client satisfied?

Do I and the client share the same understanding about what happened in the supervision?

Are the results tangible?



Donatas Petkauskas

Certified supervisor, certified coach, experiential learning trainer, expert in non-formal education. Areas of expertise: training of trainers, training of youth workers, leadership, communication and co-operation, teamwork, experiential learning and intercultural learning.

Currently supervises teams of business companies and non-governmental organisations. 20+ years of experience in international training projects in more than 32 countries.



Laima Abromaitienė

Supervisor and mediator. Since 2007 provides group, team and individual supervision in social, educational, health protection etc. fields. PhD of Educational sciences. Partner at Family support centre "Darnūs namai".

Dynamics

Is my relationship with a client supporting the process of supervision?
To what extent am I able to build trust and rapport?
How conscious am I in my relationship?
Do I take a time to reflect on it? Do I use this relation as a tool?

WELL-BEING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Life-work balance

Am I recovering enough after the work I do?
Do I choose the way of recovering consciously?
Do I know what helps me?
To what extent is my workload affecting the quality of my services?

My professional development

Do I have a professional development plan?
Is my learning planned or accidental?
Am I learning while performing?
Do I know the ways I learn the best?
How am I using my mistakes/failures/fiascos to improve my practice? Do I share them with colleagues?

These was our journey, what's yours? ■



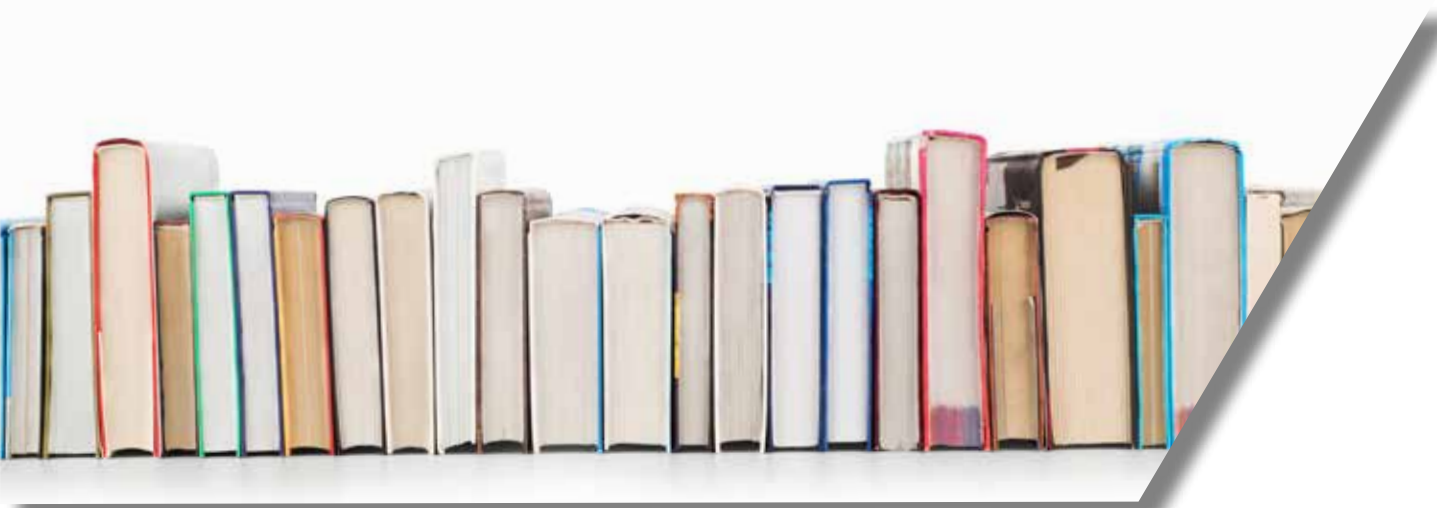
Nomeda Jerochova

Certified supervisor, trainer, social worker, CEO of training center „Patirtys ir idėjos“.



Irina Šiaudvytienė

Certified supervisor-coach, medical social worker, member of family medicine policymaking task force, board member and head of Lithuanian Association of Professional Relations Consultants.



Knowledge society - European trade unions - supervision and coaching: challenging links

Knowledge society - European trade unions - supervision and coaching: challenging links

These three phenomena seem to be at first glance totally different worlds. Their connecting lines are the focus under which the master thesis “How do trade unions conform to the European knowledge society?” will be presented. The article refers to the main aspects of the theoretical background of Europeanisation and European social dialogue including the impacts on knowledge workers, and to the empirical section, the quantitative and qualitative analysis of Eurocadres’ activities.

■ **Gerald Musger**

Abstract

These three phenomena seem to be at first glance totally different worlds. Their connecting lines are the focus under which the master thesis “How do trade unions conform to the European knowledge society?” will be presented. The article refers to the main aspects of the theoretical background of Europeanisation and European social dialogue including the impacts on knowledge workers, and to the empirical section, the quantitative and qualitative analysis

of Eurocadres’ activities “balancing knowledge workers’ interests in scientific identity, European and global solidarity and individual sustainable development”, so the thesis subtitle. Additionally and concerning some details, the topic of this issue of the ANSE Journal, “reflective learning from faults, failures and fiascos”, might serve here as a red thread through the text.

Generally, the “master thesis examines the specific intrinsic quality of knowledge work, consequences for interests, labour markets and research policy as well as the inclusion of these heterogeneous groups of employees in social dialogue and trade union representation, especially at the European level. After various factors have been prepared and explained in the theoretical section, the empirical section of the thesis examines the concept and the almost three decades of activity of Eurocadres, the Council of European Professional and Managerial Staff that represents knowledge workers of all sectors and countries as a recognised social partner in the European social dialogue. It deals with the key issues and focuses on essential instruments, communication and cooperation networks.” (Abstract¹, p. 4)

The personal approach

Let me start with a personal note on the subject of my thesis. It is an analytic view back to more than twenty years of activities within a European trade union organisation representing managers and knowledge workers until 2015. Success and failures, many ups and downs, remarkable developments and deep disillusion had called for analytic reflection in a scientific sociological format, and to realise this project I could benefit both from my personal experience in the field and my supervisory competence as well as from time and personnel distance to the analysed activities of Eurocadres in the frame of knowledge work and society, European social dialogue and the difficult process of Europeanisation of trade unionism. The discussion of these terms, especially the debate how Europeanisation

¹Page numbers (p.) refer to the text of the master thesis: Musger, G. (2022). How do trade unions conform to the European knowledge society? - Eurocadres balancing knowledge workers’ interests in scientific identity, European and global solidarity and individual sustainable development. (Master thesis). Universität Wien. <https://phaidra.univie.ac.at/open/o:1594483>

works and can be influenced, forms the theoretical section of the master thesis, finally leading to the unique concept of Eurocadres and the empirical section which examines the realisation of the concept along activities of Eurocadres through quantitative and qualitative analyses, in particular regarding the European social dialogue.

Knowledge work boom drives the coaching market

“Knowledge society”, often called “knowledge-based society”, is a very complex scientific term: it “may be understood in the frame of historic development, from industry to service economy to knowledge society, in the frame of macro-economic analysis with the focus on the role of science and knowledge, or in a philosophic frame as a new step of Enlightenment, or with some more interpretations” (Introduction, p. 15) In order to keep the focus on the subject of the thesis, I concentrated the discussion on the terms of “knowledge work” and in particular on the “knowledge worker”, as knowledge workers are key persons who not only make the knowledge society run but are the object of organisational desire of trade unions which want to get influence.

The specific characteristics of knowledge work might be one of the most interesting aspects for supervisors and coaches. One feature is the tension between the fundamental importance of knowledge work for all sectors and activities in economy, society and daily life on one side and its limitations and contradictions on the other side: limitations in the development of the various sciences, limitations in the economic or individual appropriation, contradictions or even disasters in the consequences or interactions. In this context Popper’s postulate of continuous questioning of any theory, the challenge of falsification (or we could it call “failure”), is a prerequisite in the progress in knowledge. Therefore reflection of limits, failures, open ques-

tions, impacts of knowledge work is obviously essential, and there are various formats how knowledge workers perform this reflection: from professional team debates, discussions at congresses, in networks or scientific papers in which scientific interpretation and exchange are focused, to other formats more concentrated on the individual or interpersonal aspects: coaching for managers, improvement of team structures, visualising blind spots and overcoming blockages. All these questions strongly call for professional support and guidance through supervision and coaching.

From this point of view, the development of knowledge work should be a booster for the growth of the market for the coaching and supervision, in quantity as well as in diversity. But of course, the growth of the market is limited by budget considerations within the companies and organisations. It was quite difficult to answer the question about the figures. There is no generally agreed scientific term of “knowledge work”. Eurostat statistics do not know the term of “knowledge worker”. Therefore the master thesis had to go an approximative way to compare possible figures. The discussion and the proposed synopsis made chapter 2 of the thesis, the estimated figures are summarised on p. 28.

A second important feature of knowledge work is its relation to various and partly diverging interests, with consequences for identifying and organising collective interests in working conditions, the basis for trade union activities. Chapter 4 discusses the preconditions. Contrary to some exaggerated fantasies, even “if the upgraded importance of knowledge creates new possibilities for knowledge workers, management control over the working process is only modified, not eliminated”. (cit. p. 41) On the other hand, the strong “intrinsic interest of knowledge workers in the object and in the process of their work might be

the strongest element in the system of interdependencies, creating a criterion both driving and limiting activities to achieve goals concerning work and workplace which knowledge workers are interested in”. (p. 41)

Together with the structural conditions (e.g. economic sectors) and the European dimension of the labour markets, in particular that for knowledge workers, the master thesis presents the “hypothesis of the triangle of dilemmas and the triple barriers” (Introduction, p. 17). Among the barriers one is of special interest for coaching: “The mental or psychological one is closely linked to the self-conception of knowledge workers, in particular of academic scientists which often shows wide gaps to trade unions as well as gaps to collective activities in general and miscalculation of the individual chances on the labour market.” (p. 18) A strong plea for reflecting the best individual approach and to solve personal paradoxa and dilemmata between intrinsic enthusiasm, danger of self-exploitation and structurally based bad working conditions, in order to escape from negative impacts and fiascos! Chapter 4 of the thesis deals with the various aspects and impacts of knowledge wor-

The specific characteristics of knowledge work might be one of the most interesting aspects for supervisors and coaches.

kers' identities and interests in a theoretic scope, whereas chapter 10 summarises the results of an online survey among knowledge workers of a small European research project. They were asked about their interests and how they follow them individually and collectively, at domestic and European level.

Europeanisation: exploring terra incognita

The master thesis is based on assumptions that can be well examined. "Science and knowledge society are definitely global phenomena, but there are some aspects that justify speaking about European knowledge society, amongst others in particular the efforts and successes of the European Union in regulating, harmonising and subsidising a so-called European Research Area." (Introduction, p. 16) The two relevant elements are the important European structure and the high amount of European money for research and development, and on the other side but not less important the open European labour market from which knowledge workers benefit particularly strongly. Chapter 3 of the master thesis describes in detail why knowledge workers face specific labour markets and what this means for their chances and obstacles on the open European labour market.

This leads to the questions how the European knowledge society and its structures are embedded in the overall process of Europeanisation of the economy, the society, the politics, from the decisions within the European institutions to the impacts of our daily life. A theoretical understanding is necessary to have a basis from which to discuss the possibilities of trade unions to influence that processes and to play an active role defending their members' interests. And it might allow at least hypothetical answers why organisations like trade unions that have their roots at local,

regional or national level find it difficult to form competent and efficient European units, and why developments are differently interpreted as progress, success, failure or even fiasco, depending from the points of view.

The most useful theoretical background for this understanding I found in Heidenreich's concept of two different and at the same time interacting lines of Europeanisation: "While vertical Europeanisation focuses on the interaction between EU and national policies, horizontal Europeanisation focuses on the transnationalisation of social relations in Europe as comprising both societybuilding ("Vergesellschaftung") and community-building ("Vergemeinschaftung")". (p. 50, quoting Heidenreich²; German terms by Heidenreich). While the vertical is usually the focus of political debate, it is particularly worthwhile to look at the horizontal dimension well described in the following Heidenreich quotation: He "describes the complex developments of horizontal Europeanisation as the result of two analytically distinguishable, but empirically closely related processes - the Europeanisation of social fields characterised by strategic actors, specific issues, rules, resources and power relations, and the Europeanisation of social classes and the life-worlds of citizens as being determined by citizens' class position, common knowledge, collective identities, patterns of solidarity and frames of perception". (p. 50f. quoting Heidenreich)

One of the most famous and important actors of vertical Europeanisation, the former president of the Commission Jacques Delors, was clearly aware of the significance of the horizontal dimension, when he stated (quoted by Lapeyre³, p. 51): 'Croire à l'Europe, c'est d'abord croire en la capacité des acteurs de la construction européenne.

Bien sûr, il faut une volonté politique, des institutions, des instruments, mais cela ne serait guère suffisant sans l'engagement des forces sociales. L'Europe est avant tout une aventure humaine.'

Delors's statement not only shows the emotional dimension of the Europeanisation process, it clearly reminds us that Europeanisation is not only a development, a process, it is above all a political goal which is ambiguous in detail and controversial as a whole: from personal positions to national approaches and diverging ideas and activities at European level itself, including various debates and trends within the trade union communities reflected in different political and organisational concepts of how to organise and represent knowledge workers at European level, in particular in the social dialogue. Chapters 4.2 and 4.3 describe this diversity, chapter 6 discusses how Eurocadres tries to master and manage the diversity forming an organisational and content-related concept for an active role in the European concert.

A theoretical understanding is necessary to have a basis from which to discuss the possibilities of trade unions to influence that processes and to play an active role defending their members' interests.

²Heidenreich, M. (ed.) (2019). Horizontal Europeanisation. The transnationalisation of daily life and social fields in Europe. Routledge.

³Lapeyre, J. (2017) Le dialogue social européen. Histoire d'une innovation sociale (1985-2003). ETUI.

The master thesis describes not only the theoretical positions, it sheds light on an ongoing debate about the interactions between horizontal and vertical action of Europeanisation, about some contradictions and different interpretations of the impacts and perspectives of Europeanisation which we all experience and live with its waves of integration and disintegration, progress and regress, in institutions, politics, in daily life and in our minds. A chain of steps forward and disasters next moment, worth reflecting in various formats, not only but in particular for knowledge workers who want to play an active role within these processes and developments, to explore what Europeanisation could mean in detail and what could be the institutional, systemic or mere personal perspectives. Terra incognita!

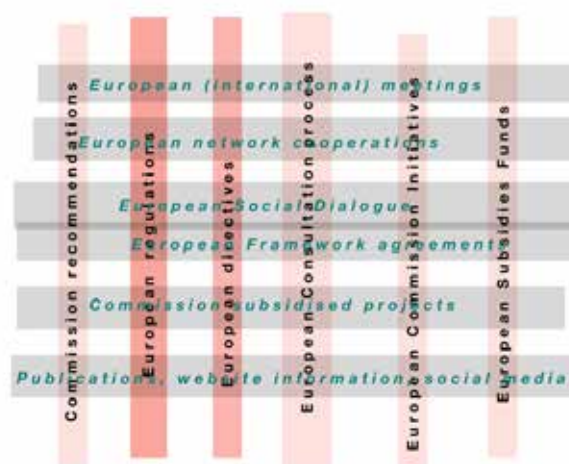
European social dialogue

The main field where interest organisations like trade unions try to influence the developments of Europeanisation, is the system and the institution of social dialogue. Within Europe, there are various formats of how employers' and workers' organisations interact, negotiate and agree collective agreements, partly directly bilateral, partly trilateral including governments or indirectly mediated by governmental procedures. Concerning the European level of social dialogue, it can be a tripartite or a bilateral consultation, both followed by the normal European legislative procedures for European regulations or directives, or followed only by not-binding recommendations.

Chapter 5 describes in detail the rules and the dynamic of the European social dialogue that is realised in two different formats. Sectoral social dialogues refer to the specific requests of regulating branches or economic sectors, they are performed by European sectoral interest or lobby organisations of employers and workers. Cross-sectoral social dialogue comprises all sectors and the whole workforce and is performed by a handful of Europe-wide

cross-sectoral organisations, on the workers' side lead by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). In order to represent the interests of professional and managerial staff, including the self-employed, Eurocadres takes part in the cross-sectoral European social dialogue, as a European social partner recognised by the European Commission. In the empiric section of the master thesis, chapter 8 analyses Eurocadres' activities most relevant for knowledge workers.

"Another factor is the cooperation with interested organisations which themselves do not have the role of a recognised European social partner but are interested in specific fields of trans-sectoral social dialogue. Besides some joint initiatives and projects with a range of European professional associations, there are two examples of successful permanent partnerships" (p. 62), with joint agreements with the European Council of the Liberal Professions (CEPLIS) and with ANSE. "These agreements are important because a majority of the concerned professions are practiced in one-person-companies or as freelancers, both usually neither represented by traditional



trade unions nor by employers' organisations. With their integration in the social dialogue through the partnership with Eurocadres these professions get a voice and at the same time enhance Eurocadres' representativity." (p. 63) Of course, this sort of cooperation needs regular consultation and evaluation of initiatives and activities to be efficient. In particular, chapter 8.3 deals with "cooperations: triangulation of networking, negotiating, lobbying" (p.88) and describes in detail the cooperation procedures with CEPLIS (p. 91) which also applies analogously to ANSE.

Navigating in the multi-layered multi-material dynamic fabric of Europeanisation

Chapter 9 of the thesis is a single case study about Eurocadres' endeavours for harmonising knowledge work conditions, in particular about European projects around this issue. The case allowed a detailed analysis in the horizontal sense of Europeanisation, i.e. multilateral project cooperations with trade unions, employers, experts and other stakeholders, combined with vertical initiatives by including experts and politicians from the European Commission and endeavours in direction of a European regulation or directive in order to harmonise working conditions for knowledge workers in all sectors and countries.

It was an excellent opportunity to examine what I called the model of a multi-layered multi-material dynamic fabric of horizontal and vertical Europeanisation. The elements shown in the chart (p. 134) are exemplary and not complete.

In addition, the case study also shows clearly how close initial success and final failure were close together, and a systematic reflection necessary to learn from the fiasco, in particular and in using the model, to consider how fragile complex initiatives for Europeanisation are and how important the communication and consensus with all stakeholders is.

Finally, when trying to apply the theoretic model to make an online survey to gather and analyse the practise of Eurocadres' national member organisations with communication and opinion building about European questions among knowledge workers, I had to experience double failure. Although supported by the Eurocadres leading team, some totally ignored, others explained why it was impossible for them to answer the survey questions (p. 175). I learned from this first failure, changed the level and took a new approach with chapter 11 of the thesis which I titled "The communication challenge for European trade unions" (p. 122) When I had, by invitation of Eurocadres Executive Committee, the opportunity to present the main results and recommendations of the master thesis, I experienced polite but distant interest and clear reservations to accept my proposition to evaluate the communication between European and national or regional level and the personal trade union members. A half failure, but also a half success as at least the thesis is now generally accessible on the Eurocadres website through a blog. A recent workshop shows that Eurocadres has started a deeper analysis and evaluation of the complex communication systems.⁴ "As

⁴"With over 20 trade unions represented, this two day workshop gave us the chance to analyse how our messages reach members, where common policy issues, insight into upcoming trends and an opportunity to share best practices." Eurocadres hosts first ever communications workshop. Trade union strategies and common approaches discussed over two days. (2023). <https://www.eurocadres.eu/news/eurocadres-hosts-first-ever-communications-workshop/>

a professional partner for research, as a single project or linked to a project regarding other issues, the European supervisors' association could be an appropriate choice." (p. 145) Or to end this article with the optimistic final sentence of my thesis: "Research on knowledge workers is performed by knowledge workers [...] Insofar both research outlook and recommendations can be seen as Europeanisation work in progress, or, in other words and returning to the title of my master thesis, as one more step to conform to the European knowledge society." (p. 146)

An appetiser cannot make you full

Such a comprehensive article might at the best touch main ideas of the master thesis and present some links of relevance for coaching and supervision of knowledge workers as well as for an efficient integration and cooperation of supervisors' organisations in the Europeanisation processes and the European social dialogue. And it might hopefully motivate to read the full text including a lot of detailed examples, deeper explanation of theoretical terms and positions, and last but not least a long list of references for a more detailed study of the topic. Bon appétit! ■



Gerald Musger has worked as trade union secretary for the professional and managerial member unit within the Austrian Trade Union Confederation, is certified supervisor and organisational consultant, represented Austria in the European Council for Professional and Managerial Staff Eurocadres, from 2009 - 2013 as its vice president, and benefited from these experiences in his sociological master thesis in the framework of his 2022 successfully finished studium generale at the University of Vienna. Personal approach: Musger, G. (2013). My Brussels Olive Tree. <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BzpJku4HvD8Q-ZnRUSk44R01CRFE>
Contact: gmusger@gmail.com



What Is Failure in the Context of Supervision?

Philosophical reverie

I was puzzled about the concept of failure in the context of supervision, as this is one of the professions, which is entirely based on reflection and learning. What does it mean then, when a supervisor is talking about failure? And how does this word end up in our professional vocabulary at all?

■ Helena Ehrenbusch

I am puzzled about the concept of failure in the context of supervision, as this is one of the professions, which is entirely based on reflection and meta-reflection. In my world, reflection is a tool to explore ourselves and get insights into our perspectives, and interactions. Reflection is about learning how to be solely human beings in the

impermanent world, where truth has a relative position and every experience is a possible way of being. The concept of failure, in turn, indicates that there are right and wrong ways of doing, thinking and being. Failure brings in polarisation, evaluation, the complexity of the human soul, emotions, and constructions within. Logic says, that the word “failure” cannot exist in the vocabulary of the supervisor.

At first I delved into linguistics to get guidance. Oxford Learner’s Dictionary¹ follows the path of polarisation - “failure” means “not successful”. As a coach, I might say it makes sense. For example, if an athlete is setting the goal to win the competition, and then doesn’t, she fails. But what if the coach sets the goal to win and the athlete fails, who is failing then? Did the coach set the right goal, or was the athlete not aware of the goal, or did they fail to evaluate, what it takes to reach the goal? (You are welcome to change the word “athlete” with “client”.) So I understand, that setting and achieving a goal, to succeed or fail, is seemingly a simple task, easily measured by “yes” or “no”, but being human is, fortunately, more polyvalent. There are many areas, where goal setting can be made on a “black or white” basis, like sports, politics, banking or similar, but how does it help to learn? We do live in a competing “winning-is-everything” society, which makes failure generally a huge fiasco. The question is, what can supervisor do with this knowledge? Can or should supervision step out of such world cognition? Would it make our service more qualitative or rather disconnected from the reality around us?

Can or should supervision step out of such world cognition? Would it make our service more qualitative or rather disconnected from the reality around us?

¹<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/failure?q=failure>

Merriam Dictionary² gives me more hints. Failure is an “omission of occurrence or performance”, “failing to perform a duty or expected action”, or “lack of success”. Failing to perform a duty makes me think, that perhaps the supervisor was sick, did not show up or had a nervous breakdown. Theoretically, it is possible to fail to perform an expected action, but doesn't it contain too many variables to make such a plain conclusion? For example, the most important action could be to create a safe space. If in this case, the client is showing negative emotions towards the supervisor, does it mean, the supervisor failed in her task or was she extremely successful, because the client felt safe enough to show these emotions? Does this kind of evaluation then have any relevance in the context of supervision, or who is qualified to evaluate the success rate? Is it at all the supervisors' role to answer the expectations? Lack of success raises the question, how much does supervision depend on success at all, or is more about education, experiences, and learning?

After the linguistic trip, I decided to dig in my memory to remember, at which moments did my colleagues bring up the word “failure” though most often I have heard my supervision students using it.

Fear of failure ahead

This is more common for novice supervisors, as I also recall myself in my first years being terrified, if I fail in the meetings with my supervisees, before I even met them or got any idea, what is going to happen. But it is not rare also among the more experienced supervisors. Probably this is the most understandable fear, though the causes have a very wide range. To start with the historic-developmental reasons, people should be more cautious about

²<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/failure>

the unknown. As a novice professional, you might be afraid if you can work with people, remember the structure, and recall the proper action at the right moment. This might come from just a lack of experience and in a way, it is even healthy to be a bit insecure, or better – in the not knowing position.

Lack of preparation for failure is the most common reason behind the fears.

The fear of failing might indicate a lack of self-confidence, self-awareness, gaps in learning (theoretical knowledge) or the general attitude of the “winners” society. Unfortunately, very few people have the following attitude: “It is so exciting – I can go and try out my new skills to see, if and how they work!” I have met such an attitude more among coaches, psychologists, but not often in supervision. But I also have not seen study programs, where failure is a focal point for learning, except in my other profession – clowning. The school system generally teaches us, that failure is not learning, but rather a punishment – to fail a test makes you an outcast, and we do carry this understanding along.

The immediate reaction of a client

The very general goal and understanding are, that any counselling process is successful, when the client gets a happy mood, satisfaction, and a deep understanding of his problematic situation or life goal, and is moving on as a changed person. Firstly, it puts a lot of pressure on the supervisor being in the role of omnipotent fixer. People would often rather be fixed by something outside than connect with the inner self that might be too frightening, too much energy consuming and not always nice. Secondly, such thinking makes people forget that changes arise over time, not just here and now miraculously. To change something, to learn, to develop, means self-discipline and focus, and it is not always pleasant, or easy to

take the role of such a guide. We are not enough prepared to accept negative feedback, to be a container, to understand the concept of time and space.

The exaggerated focus on minor errors

A supervisor might have done a good work (the goal was achieved, people gave adequate feedback or similar), but she forgets a minor detail (to bring tissues but the client started to cry; to perform one part of a central exercise, etc.) and this relates to the feeling of failure. It can mean, that people who come to study supervision, might just be more perfectionism-minded and achievement-oriented, whose world view generally might be labelled through successes and failures. Such people might often evaluate themselves (and sometimes also their colleagues) in a hardcore bullying way.

Fear of having not enough good or new exercises for the process

In my experience, this is a very popular reason for calling one's experience a failure. Maybe people think, that supervisors must always find a proper exercise for every

The fear of failing might indicate a lack of self-confidence, self-awareness, gaps in learning (theoretical knowledge) or the general attitude of the “winners” society.

problem or goal the client brings. A word that comes to my mind is consumerism, which is maybe weird in the context of supervision, but a possible explanation. The successful supervisor has the biggest and shiniest toolbox! It does make supervision a marketing product, but I do understand, this philosophy is gathering more popularity. By the way, supervision is by far the only discipline where I have spotted such a tendency.

I am glad, that through my reverie I did not reach the “one-and-only” correct answer. It supports my understanding, that supervisors should be able to ask questions in every situation and welcome the state of uncertainty not to get stuck in pansophism. I would like to see the supervision training programs integrating the concept of failure or clowning into the curricula, so could supervision as a discipline gain in quality and prestige. My conclusion comes from Charlie Chaplin: “Failure is unimportant. It takes courage to make a fool of yourself” ■



Helena Ehrenbusch, MSc, MA

Professional supervisor & coach with supervised practice, psychologist-counsellor, educator, artist and entrepreneur. President of the Estonian Supervision and Coaching Association from 2016 to 2022



The Emergence of Serendipity: Letting the unknown serve reflective practice

■ Jeanne-Elvire Adotevi Biliès

Abstract

Depending on our cultural beliefs, values, and the contexts we operate in, the meaning of Failures, Faults & Fiascos, is influenced by various factors, including upbringing, education, social norms, individual experiences, and perspectives. By remaining open to unexpected opportunities and connections, coaches and coaches supervisors and reflective practice practitioners can cultivate a container of creativity and possibility and tap into the power of “Serendipity” to achieve their goals with complete confidence.

Depending on our cultural beliefs, values, and the contexts we operate in, the meaning of failures or mistakes is influenced by various factors, including upbringing, education, social norms, individual experiences, and perspectives.

In some cultures, making an error is considered a fault, and individuals who make mistakes are subject to criticism or shame. Here, the highlight is to avoid mistakes at all costs to save face.

In other cultures, making a mistake is seen as one step among others in the learning processes we all go through.

Here, errors are encouraged, to learn from them, try again, and finally get better results by iteration or adopting a new approach we might not have thought about initially. In these cultures, there is less emphasis on pointing fingers toward failures and more on helping individuals improve and grow.

After many trials by former inventors, Thomas Edison, in his attempt to invent the lightbulb, was credited with saying, “I didn’t fail 1,000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps.”

Closer to us, Nelson Mandela said: “I never lose. I either win or learn”.

These two quotes must encourage us to hold “Failures, Faults & Fiascos” with lightness as these concepts negatively impact the steps we take. This mindset diminishes our ability to have courage in reaching our goals with trust and fluidity.

While the first quote highlights the many steps needed to journey in our learning curve to get to our goals; the second quote is an invitation to consider our failures as gifts so that they encourage us to learn and grow from our mistakes.

Therefore, we would gain by lowering the cultural pressure about fear of failure and by nuancing and reframing words like “Errors, Faults, Fiascos, & Mistakes”, etc... This will help empower us to learn and grow in a non-judgemental context as we move forward personally and professionally.

Worldwide, Cooking is a domain that illustrates an incredible number of innovations and creativities which would never have occurred otherwise. That is how many mistakes in that field were finally accepted as successes, and we still use them today.

Examples of serendipity in cooking

- Chocolate chip cookie story is a well-known example of learning from mistakes. The story goes that Ruth Wakefield, the owner of the Toll House Inn, was making a batch of chocolate cookies but ran out of baker's chocolate. She used broken pieces of Nestle's chocolate instead, hoping they would melt and mix in with the dough. The chocolate chunks remained intact, creating the first-ever batch of chocolate chip cookies.
- Tarte Tatin is a classic French dessert made with caramelized apples and pastries. The story goes that the Tatin sisters, who owned a hotel, were making an apple tart when they accidentally left the apples cooking in butter and sugar for too long. To salvage the dish, they put the pastry on the apples and finished the tart in the oven. The result was the now-famous Tarte Tatin which is delicious with vanilla ice cream.
- Caesar Salad was invented by Caesar Cardini, an Italian chef who owned a restaurant in Tijuana, Mexico, during the 1920s. The story goes that he ran out of ingredients one day and created the salad with what he had on hand, like romaine lettuce, Parmesan cheese, croutons, and a dressing made with garlic, lemon juice, and Worcestershire sauce.

Can "Serendipity" play a crucial role in helping coaches and supervisors gain new insights and perspectives in their practices with their clients?

These are only three examples among many others, and we can all relate to a recipe we now cook that became a success after being seen as a mistake.

While writing and proofreading this paper, the word "Serendipity*" kept coming back into my mind, so it helped me craft the title. "Serendipity" means: "the occurrence and development of events by chance happily or beneficially" once we stop judging ourselves or the outcome of what was accomplished. If "Serendipity" is the faculty or phenomenon of finding valuable or agreeable things not sought", I immediately drew a parallel with the numerous discoveries made in Cooking while they were not planned for.

So, when "Serendipity" hits, we need to feel it, see it and welcome it as an unexpected and happy discovery. That is what emerges from the unknown and defies all logic.

Can "Serendipity" play a crucial role in helping coaches and supervisors gain new insights and perspectives in their practices with their clients? I would answer yes, even if it cannot be relied upon as a primary method for growth and development in Coaching, Supervision and Reflective practice. Nevertheless, It can serve as a powerful catalyst for transformative change. By remaining open to unexpected opportunities and connections, Coaches, Coaches' Supervisors and Reflective Practice practitioners can cultivate a container of creativity and possibility and tap into the power of Serendipity to achieve their goals with complete confidence.

Ways to use serendipity in reflective practice

- One of the ways Serendipity can manifest in coaching supervision is by using metaphors or analogies. During a case that recently occurred in a group supervision, I was partaking in the first circle; and

I was asked to reflect and illustrate the point the supervisee wanted to clarify. While I didn't know the supervisee, I felt a deep connection with her from the beginning of the session when she shared the personal issue she brought to the session. I must admit that I am still surprised by the extent to which my contribution triggered a sudden insight into her and helped her start moving forward, totally aligned with her values.

- Similarly, a coach might share a story or experience with their supervisor that seems unrelated to their coaching work but provides a valuable perspective or insight.
- A coach's supervisor may also discover new approaches by chance during a supervision session that they can use to improve their practice. Alternatively, a coach may stumble upon a breakthrough insight or solution during a coaching session that they had not anticipated but significantly benefited their client.

These examples are not exhaustive. As a reader, you might relate to any of them to a certain extent, and if it is the case, not only am I not surprised, but it means that this is not new to you.

By facilitating serendipitous discoveries in Coaching, Coaching Supervision and Reflective Practice sessions, Coaches and Professionals of Reflective practice can hold a safe and supportive space that encourages open and honest communication. Instead of focusing on fear of failure, they will gain more fluidity by making more space for Serendipity in their work. For some of us, It might still be a missing link in our toolbox, and it is never late to start doing it.

A structured and intentional approach to supervision is still essential for coaches and supervisors to improve their

practice and ensure the best outcomes for their clients. Whenever we tell ourselves that things must be a certain way or that we must achieve certain things, we put ourselves under tremendous pressure, increase the likelihood of upsetting ourselves, and finally become subject to mistakes, failures, or fiascos. Letting things emerge and remaining open to “Serendipity” can be a crucial antidote.

* Serendipity: “Faculty of making happy and unexpected discoveries,” a rare word before 20c., coined by Horace Walpole in a letter to Horace Mann dated Jan. 28, 1754, but was not published until 1833. Walpole said he formed the word from the Persian fairy tale “The Three Princes of Serendip” (an English version was published in 1722), whose heroes “were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things they were not in quest of” [Walpole]. Serendip, (also Serendib), attested by 1708 in English, is an old name for Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka), from Arabic Sarandib from Sanskrit Simhaladipa “Dwelling-Place-of-Lions Island”.



Jeanne-Elvire Adotevi Biliès

With fluidity, I support CEOs, C-suite executives, leaders & teams to be intentional & courageous in their transformational journey within their organisations, helping them achieve sustainable change in line with their values, Emotional Maturity, and DEI.

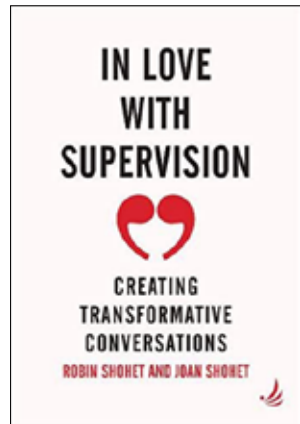
One of my passions is helping them grow & better handle today’s complex, volatile, ambiguous & sometimes conflict-ridden world, using co-created sense-making approaches and meaning-making innovative tools to lead in times of complexity*.

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- PSF (Professional Supervisors Federation France) Co-Founder, Board Member,
- International Vice President and ANSE* Delegate (2012 – 2021)
- ANSE Journal Editorial Board Member for France, Italy, Spain, and Overseas (2020 – 2023)

Book corner

2 Books summaries

suggested by Jeanne-Elvire Adotevi Biliès



“In Love with Supervision: Creating Transformative Conversations”

by Robin and Joan Shohet

“In Love with Supervision” is about the authors’ experiences as supervisors and their thoughts on the importance of supervision in the helping professions.

The book is divided into three parts:

- **Part 1: Sources** opens with the ‘23 principles’ that form the basis of their beliefs about the role and function of supervision. It describes in detail five of the courses they have been running for 40 years. In this first part, Shohet discusses his experiences as a supervisor and how his work with supervisees shaped his personal growth. He emphasizes the importance of self-awareness, humility, and willingness to learn from others in supervision.
- **Part 2: Courses** focus on the fundamentals of supervision. Shohet explores the practical aspects of supervision, discussing topics such as the different models of supervision, the role of the supervisor,

and the importance of ethics and boundaries in the supervisory relationship. He also provides guidance on how to establish a successful supervisory relationship, including building trust and rapport with supervisees, providing constructive feedback, and dealing with challenging situations.

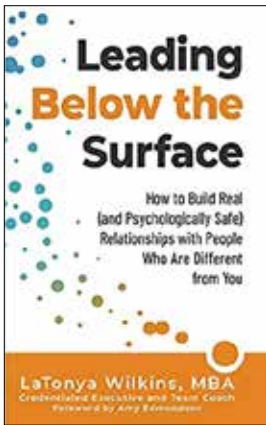
- **Part 3: Resource** is a collection of resources drawn from Robin’s published writings over the years. “These are bold, brave, sometimes raw and always candid accounts of the Shohets’ inspirational supervision training - each accompanied by one of Joan’s cake recipes”.

Throughout the book, Robin and Joan Shohet emphasize the importance of supervision in the helping professions, asserting that it is essential for personal and professional growth and maintaining ethical and effective practice. They also acknowledge the challenges and complexities of the supervisory relationship, emphasizing the need for ongoing learning and self-reflection for supervisors and supervisees.

Overall, “In Love with Supervision” is a thoughtful and insightful exploration of the importance of supervision in the helping professions and provides valuable guidance and advice for both new and experienced supervisors.

Robin and Joan Shohet

Robin Shohet is a pioneer of supervision. He co-wrote *In Love with Supervision* (2020) with Joan Shohet, which is a record of their 40-plus years of working together in this field. Co-author of four editions of *Supervision in the Helping Professions*, his edited works include *Passionate Supervision* and *Supervision as Transformation*. For details of his books, training in the seven-eyed model and more, see www.cstdlondon.co.uk



“Leading Below the Surface: How to Build Real (and Psychologically Safe) Relationships with People Who Are Different from You”

by La Tonya Wilkins

“Leading Below the Surface: How to Build Real (and Psychologically Safe) Relationships with People Who Are Different from You” by La Tonya Wilkins

Aiming at a wide range of professionals, Executives, Managers, Individual Contributors, HR, DEI Leaders, and other related professionals, the book focuses on building authentic and psychologically safe relationships with people different from us. The author argues that our differences can be a source of strength and creativity, but we often let our biases and assumptions get in the way. By reading this book, you will learn the following:

- Why coaching people different from oneself is a vital skill.
- Common missteps we take when interacting with people other than us; how to recognize and avoid them.
- The immediate tactic you can use is to dive below the surface and create a sense of belonging in your coaching practice.

L.T. Wilkins proposes a compass for “leading below the surface,” which involves understanding our biases and assumptions, developing empathy for others, and building trust through communication and vulnerability.

She also addresses challenges in diverse workplaces, such as microaggressions, stereotype threat, and impostor syndrome.

‘Real connections within teams can create a culture shift for an entire company. Leading Below the Surface illustrates this vision, taking a radical stance against the “surface-ness” of corporate culture and exploring how highly rewarded behaviours are destroying organizations, blocking us from creating genuinely diverse, equitable, and inclusive cultures of belonging’.

The book is intended for anyone who wants to build more inclusive and collaborative relationships with people different from them, whether in the workplace or in their personal lives. It offers practical advice and exercises to help readers develop the skills and mindset needed to lead below the surface and create a more equitable and inclusive world.

She said, “I wrote this book as a self-coaching tool to share these revolutionary principles with underrepresented individuals and established leaders in all types of organizations, large and small”.

LaTonya Wilkins

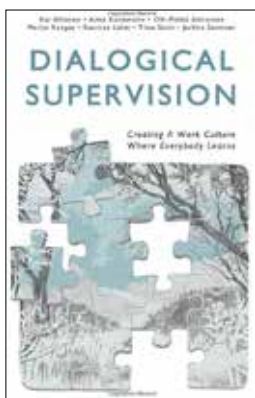
Founder of Change Coaches and author of Leading Below the Surface: LaTonya Wilkins specializes in coaching executives on leading “below the surface” to build psychologically safe relationships with their teams across differences. She is a sought-after coach and keynote speaker who has inspired audiences all over the world.

LaTonya has coached leaders at many well-known companies, including Google, Target, The New York Times, and several nonprofits. She built her career working in HR, talent management, and learning & development at Fortune 500 companies before teaching and taking on progressive leadership roles at the University of Illinois’ Gies College of Business

LaTonya has been featured in publications such as Fast Company, NPR, Well+Good, and Inc Magazine. She also gained industry recognition when she was recognized on the most inclusive HR influencer list in 2019.



Jeanne-Elvire Adotevi Biliès



**„Dialogical Supervision:
Creating A Work Culture
Where Everybody Learns“**

by Kai Alhanen, Anne Kanasanaho, Olli-Pekka Ahtiainen,
Marko Kangas, Katriina Lehti, Tiina Soini, Jarkko Soininen

Supervision is well established in Finland as a support „tool“ for people in their worklife. This year STORy, the Finnish Supervision Association, is celebrating its 40th birthday with a conference „Rooted in the Future“.

„Dialogical Supervision: Creating A Work Culture Where Everybody Learns“ appeared for the first time in 2011 in Finnish. The book is the result of the persistent professional work undertaken in the company Aretai, as well as the examination of and reflection upon the work. The authors strive to work consciously as a learning community and to pursue shared dialogue. In the current edition the authors have developed the original edition further and re-writing some chapters. The authors rely on constructivist learning theories, John Dewey’s philosophy of experience, and theories of dialogue.

The book is a solid guide to professional supervision in various fields of expertise. It is written especially for professional supervisors and students of supervision, and yet it also provides insights and tools for those team leaders and managers who act as “everyday supervisors” for their employees.

The first part of the book addresses the fundamentals of supervision: learning, reflection and dialogical interaction. In the second part the authors focus on the practical implementation and methods of supervision. The third part of the book goes deeper into different types of supervision relationships and their specific features.

The different chapters of the book also contain several practical methods which together form a “toolbox for supervisors”. The authors have added examples of supervision cases and that makes the books vivid and close to reality. The basic premise of the book is to emphasise the importance of dialogue in creating a fundamentally different work culture to that which predominates. In celebrating economic growth, ruthless competition and individual achievement, this culture has led to an increasing fragmentation of people’s experiences and the loss of their sense of agency. At the same time, we need to solve extremely complex problems that require unprecedented creativity. In order to deal successfully with the challenges of modern work, we need to utilise the skills and knowledge of every single employee. This book offers clear methods for this to be realised.

My personal favourite is the chapter about community supervision. It’s a fresh look on the modern organization where classic management structures and teams are hardly to be found.

The authors are describing the work community as a functional entity within the organization. The aim of community supervision is to help the work community to execute their basic task and to assist the employees in their mutual collaboration. The authors describe their way of working with communities and introduce their triangular model for work communities.

Piret Bristol. ■



Piret Bristol

All authors of the book “„Dialogical Supervision: Creating A Work Culture Where Everybody Learns“ work at Aretai. The experienced professionals at Aretai strive to promote the creative and humane development of Finnish working life. The core of collaboration lies in multi-voiced dialogue: listening to the experiences of all stakeholders and jointly developing the resulting thoughts and actions. They have worked with hundreds of individuals, groups and communities at all levels of the organisation through dialogical work, supervision, training, coaching and other development work. Their collective knowledge and experience is an important resource in the work.

Kai Alhanen, PhD in theology, philosopher, trainer and supervisor at Aretai and director of DialogiAkademia. He has written a publication on dialogue in democracy, “Dialogi demokratiassa”, and has been a consultant in the development of Timeout.

Anne Kanasanaho is a trauma therapist, certified psychodrama practitioner, work supervisor.
Olli-Pekka is Ahtiainen trainer and work supervisor.

Colophon

ANSE Journal Editorial Board



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