



Supervision or Super Vision?

Gwiztraining CEO Melody Cheal asks whether supervision in NLP should become a standard way of working. Will it better protect the practitioner and the client?

In the Autumn 2004 edition of *Rapport* Dr Susi Strang Wood wrote a guide to Supervision in NLP.

Two years on supervision for NLP Practitioners still appears to be far rarer than in other psychological and coaching disciplines, why should that be?

To gain greater clarity I decided to poll a number of NLP Practitioners and Master Practitioners. The group I chose consisted of a mix of the newly qualified and those who have been practicing for some years. I posed the following questions: Are you familiar with the term supervision? What is your understanding of what supervision is? Are you currently receiving supervision? If you answered yes to the above question, what type of supervision do you receive and is it NLP related? As a ratio compared to the number of clients you see how often do you seek supervision? How important do you think supervision is for NLP Practitioners and Master Practitioners?

Of my sample group 16 per cent of respondents had not heard of supervision. Of those who had, many related it to experiences of supervision in other fields. One respondent voiced a concern: "I do have an aversion to the term supervision as it, for me, conjures up a sort of Social Service model and also feels quite controlling".

Similar concerns were raised by a number of licensed NLP trainers at a recent CPD event. Many of the concerns seemed to be attached to the term "supervision" which seemed to

have negative anchors for several people.

A small group of respondents were receiving some supervision but most of this was informal and ad-hoc. Only one person was receiving regular supervision with any form of structure associated to the practice.

What I found uplifting was the importance most of the respondents placed on receiving supervision. There were many similarities and a sense of connectedness coming from their shared need for support, for example: "For me, working on my own, supervision is important. Otherwise I get little time devoted to my skills – particularly practical aspects of coaching/specific things that happen with clients. A valuable opportunity to discuss issues and identify a course of action."

As part of a wider survey, the ANLP included questions about the kind of support and help practitioners are currently using. In answer to a question about what things practitioners would like to see in place to protect both practitioner and clients in "challenging" situations the responses at the time of going to press were: Mentoring, 17; Referral Bank, 12; Supervisor, 18; Supportive Forum, 19; Practice Group, 19; Guidelines, 16.

People were able to pick more than one answer to that question. Perhaps the most interesting fact is that 260 people chose not to answer this question at all.

One respondent from my sample made a very insightful observation: "I

think another essential element is for the practitioner to have a realistic view of their competence. Practice sessions and using the NLP techniques in non risk areas should provide a performance benchmark for the practitioner so that they can self assess when they need to seek help/supervision".

The referral system is also important for any one working as a Practitioner. The ability to recognise when it is time to refer a client to a more experienced Practitioner or to someone with a speciality is a sign not only of professionalism but also integrity.

In Susi's earlier article she explained the benefits of supervision for practitioners which she grouped under three main headings; educative, supportive and managerial. These headings pick up many of the themes highlighted by respondents to my survey and are very worthwhile.

There is also a serious business case to consider for those of you interested in working in organisations. Recent articles in *People Management*, the preferred magazine of HR professionals, advises it's readers to ensure that any coaches, executive coaches or mentors include details of their supervision plan in any business proposal.

NLP Practitioners need to remember that the place to start is in the client's map of the world. This is the one the client is familiar and comfortable with
Visit: www.gwiztraining.com