

Coaching Supervision

Welcome to Coaching Supervision!

As you are reading this you may have already decided to embark on a coaching supervision partnership; you may be contemplating it for yourself or you may be contemplating it for your organisation's coaches. Whatever the reason for your interest, we hope that this document is useful and that you will contact us with any questions that it leaves unanswered.

Why this document?

Coaching supervision is an emergent practice and we are aware that many coaches and buyers of coaching do not yet have a lot of experience of how to get the most from coaching supervision.

We want you to get the most value possible from your investment in coaching supervision. If you are a coach then your coaching supervisor will be your learning partner for the duration of your relationship and for a partnership to be at its best, both members need to take responsibility for their own roles in the process. If you are an HR Professional buying coaching supervision services then you will probably have specific questions about the process too. If that is the case, then please do contact us to discuss this in more detail.

This document will help you to think through what you want from supervision and how to make sure that you get it in a way that is effective and enjoyable for you. We also want to support you in making sure that those people and organizations involved with your coaching get maximum benefit too.

Please do let us have your feedback on this document and any ideas you have for its improvement. Thank you.

What is Coaching Supervision?

This question is currently the subject of a fair amount of debate. Supervision has come from the therapeutic professions and the coaching governing bodies are currently looking at how best it should be applied to coaching. We will therefore share with you our own definition of coaching supervision and will update this document as and when the various working parties are ready to share their thinking.

Coaching supervision is a reflective practice of looking at that work which we do as coaches which is directed related to our client relationships. It is, if you like, a subset of coach mentoring – the elements of mentoring which directly impact the coachee and their organization. It is a learning forum where the coach has the opportunity to scrutinize their professional practices, think through their coaching interventions and make plans for even greater effectiveness in their coaching interventions.

Coaching supervision should feel like an equal relationship between fellow coaches where the supervising coach brings their own experience and supervisory skills and the coach brings their curiosity about their coaching practice and their openness to learning. In this sort of space, the coach will feel better supported, more creative and less judged and will therefore find it easier to be fully honest and open leading to deeper learning and better development.

A good coach supervisor will support you in developing your own style as a practitioner rather than try and turn you into a clone of themselves and will be open and able to work with you according to your previous learning and current style of coaching.

What might we work on in Coaching Supervision?

As with a coaching relationship, what you work on is an important starting question for you and your supervisor and potentially your line manager/HR Director or whoever is sponsoring the supervision. It may also be that what you want or need to work on shifts with time and a good supervisor will be open and flexible about that. Sometimes as you work on what you thought was most important it becomes clear that something else is currently more important. And if you appear to be very focussed on certain aspects of your work to the detriment of others, your supervisor may well challenge you to check in and see if that is indeed the case. For instance, many coaches are happy to look at their own personal development for hours and very reluctant to talk about ROI or organisational context.

Supervision may include:

Focussing on coaching strategies and interventions.

Time spent being coached on what you actually do/did as a coach in specific coaching situations; exploring the impact that it has/had and planning what might have an even greater impact.

Focussing on the coaching relationship.

Exploration of how you and the coachee **are** together can uncover a lot of development opportunities. Your supervisor will support you in taking a step outside of your coaching relationships so that you can look at them with curiosity and detachment and more readily learn about it.

Focussing on your own processes.

Here you and your supervisor will look at your own beliefs, values and historical discourse to see where as a coach you might be inadvertently shaping the conversation and actions created based on your own "internal software".

Focussing on the wider context.

A supervisor will challenge you on the wider context within which your coachees work and live. This is particularly pertinent in the corporate world where coaching can become very much coachee-centric to the detriment of the sponsoring organisation.

Building your repertoire of coaching interventions.

Particularly in the early stages of coaching, you may wish your supervisor to be ready to share with you other ideas and interventions for you to try. A really good supervisor will usually be demonstrating more coaching than teaching skills on balance – following the coaching philosophy of the client having the answers, good coaching supervisors will be much keener to coach from you how you want to be as a practitioner rather than share with you what they would have done. They will however be open to sharing different ideas with you and helping you to add to your coaching toolkit.

Focussing on specific coaching areas.

You may wish to explore how to challenge more effectively or how to use metaphor or how to reduce nerves when coaching senior people. A good supervisor will be able to move effortlessly between coaching scenarios and the coaching competencies, tying them together in ways that support your technical understanding and your effectiveness as a coach.

Building your knowledge of and expertise in the coaching competencies.

When working towards an International Coach Federation (or other coaching body) credential – or just to boost your technical coaching base – you may wish to base your supervision work around the core coaching competencies. Or do some work on applying in real situations the technical understanding that you already have.

Getting feedback and coaching on live coaching sessions.

Having your supervisor listen in to your coaching (in person or by recording) or being coached by you is a very important learning tool and some would say, an essential one.

**Getting the most from Coaching Supervision:
Before you get started:**

What do you want from coaching supervision?

You may be coming to supervision for a variety of reasons (you may even HAVE to come to supervision), but it is very important to be absolutely clear on what your reasons are. Many people come with vague ideas about this and your coaching supervisor will help you to clarify your success measures but you need to know:

How will you know that coaching supervision has been successful for you personally?

And for your clients/coachees?

And for any other stakeholders in your coaching practice?

What do you want from/in a supervisor?

Do you want a supervisor with corporate experience? An ICF credential?

Do you want support? Challenge? A sense of humour?

Take some time to jot down everything that you would like from your supervisor. If you haven't chosen a supervisor yet, then this will help and if you have then share this with your supervisor to help them to serve you best!

What are the logistics that would serve you best?

How often and for how long would you like sessions to take place? By telephone or in person? Individually or in a group? Again, your supervisor will ask you about this but it is useful to have thought it through in advance so you are clear on what you really want. A good supervisor is coach-centric rather than supervisor-centric but many people still remain supervisor-centric so watch for whether you are asked how you would like it to work or whether you are told that this is how they work.

Who are the stakeholders in your supervision?

Who do you need to consider when setting goals for your supervision time?

Coachees? Client organisations? Your employer? Having listed these, take a moment to revisit what you want from coaching supervision and see if anything else needs to be added to cover the needs of the stakeholders.

How will the confidentiality issues work?

Generally speaking, supervision sessions are confidential between coach and supervisor but this should be discussed for absolute clarity at the outset. The sponsor may for instance wish to receive general themes of feedback from a supervision programme that lead to organisational learning.

How will you know that the coaching supervision is working well?

Before you start, it is important to spend time reflecting but also agreeing with your coaching supervisor (and any other relevant stakeholders such as the business sponsor) how you will know that the supervision is a) going well and b) has been a success at the end.

During the coaching supervision relationship:

Designing accountability and ways of being together:

Your coaching supervisor will ask you a lot of questions about how you would like the relationship to work but remember that this is a learning **partnership** and it is vital that you take responsibility for this too. You have already thought about what you want from a supervisor so share that list with them – don't wait to be asked!

How would you like to be challenged for instance?

And how do you like to be supported? Your supervisor will almost certainly be supportive towards you but take some time to think about the shape that you would like that support to take and share it with them.

How do you like to receive feedback? Most people use the classic "sandwich" approach – something positive; something for development and then something else positive. But what works best for you when you are being given feedback?

Collating your learning.

We recommend that you keep a coaching supervision log of some kind that collates your learning and thinking and builds into a resource for you for future use. It is easy to forget to apply new thinking and then the thinking is lost and wasted. Journaling or just jotting notes about your new thinking often leads to deeper insight and bigger breakthroughs.

Be prepared for each session.

Before each session take some time to think through which coachees and which issues you would like to address with your supervisor. Write them down and bring along any relevant notes that you may wish to refer to. Think about what would make the session a great success and be as specific about it as possible. Then you can present to your supervisor a clear list for the two of you to work through.

After each session.

Add any new learning or action plans to your supervision journal – in the busyness of your working life it will almost certainly get forgotten or watered down.

Also, take a minute to scan through the session and be curious about worked well and what worked less well and feed those back to your supervisor. They may ask you about this themselves but as long as you deliver it in the right spirit, most supervisors will be more than happy to hear about how they can serve you even better.

Think about the level of accountability you would like.

We put this in the "during" part of the notes rather than "before you get started" because this is something to be regularly rethinking. In a supervision session it is easy to feel inspired into making changes that then get forgotten or seem scary or somehow too challenging when you go put it into practice.

Your supervisor will ask you how you intend to put any emergent thinking or new skills into practice, but you need to consider how much checking in you would like your supervisor to do. Some supervisors (like some coaches) tend towards the "fieldwork police" end of accountability and others like to trust their coachees to do whatever they said they would do and never check in. In coach-centric supervision it is important for you to think about what would work best for you and to ask your supervisor to behave accordingly.

Measure the success of the supervision as you go along.

We put this in the "before you get started" as well as "during" because it is all too easy to look back at what happened at the end of supervision and not be clear on whether it was a success. Also, supervisory relationships may go on for a significant length of time and it is therefore even more important that there are regular check-ins to ensure that time, effort and money are being well spent! We advise that you take some time to think about and discuss with your supervisor how things are going during the relationship.

How will you know it is going well?

What checks will you make along the way?

Looking at your objectives for supervision, how will you monitor along the way how successfully you are meeting them?

Again, please do share these answers with your supervisor before and during the supervision you do together.

The ICF Standards of Ethical Conduct

Professional Conduct At Large

As a coach:

- 1) I will conduct myself in a manner that reflects positively upon the coaching profession and I will refrain from engaging in conduct or making statements that may negatively impact the public's understanding or acceptance of coaching as a profession.
- 2) I will not knowingly make any public statements that are untrue or misleading, or make false claims in any written documents relating to the coaching profession.
- 3) I will respect different approaches to coaching. I will honour the efforts and contributions of others and not misrepresent them as my own.
- 4) I will be aware of any issues that may potentially lead to the misuse of my influence by recognizing the nature of coaching and the way in which it may affect the lives of others.
- 5) I will at all times strive to recognize personal issues that may impair, conflict or interfere with my coaching performance or my professional relationships. Whenever the facts and circumstances necessitate, I will promptly seek professional assistance and determine the action to be taken, including whether it is appropriate to suspend or terminate my coaching relationship(s).
- 6) As a trainer or supervisor of current and potential coaches, I will conduct myself in accordance with the ICF Code of Ethics in all training and supervisory situations.
- 7) I will conduct and report research with competence, honesty and within recognized scientific standards. My research will be carried out with the necessary approval or consent from those involved, and with an approach that will reasonably protect participants from any potential harm. All research efforts will be performed in a manner that complies with the laws of the country in which the research is conducted.
- 8) I will accurately create, maintain, store and dispose of any records of work done in relation to the practice of coaching in a way that promotes confidentiality and complies with any applicable laws.
- 9) I will use ICF member contact information (email addresses, telephone numbers, etc.) only in the manner and to the extent authorized by the ICF.

Professional Conduct With Clients

- 10) I will be responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern any physical contact that I may have with my clients.
- 11) I will not become sexually involved with any of my clients.
- 12) I will construct clear agreements with my clients, and will honour all agreements made in the context of professional coaching relationships.
- 13) I will ensure that, prior to or at the initial session, my coaching client understands the nature of coaching, the bounds of confidentiality, financial arrangements and other terms of the coaching agreement.
- 14) I will accurately identify my qualifications, expertise and experience as a coach.
- 15) I will not intentionally mislead or make false claims about what my client will receive from the coaching process or from me as their coach.
- 16) I will not give my clients or prospective clients information or advice I know or believe to be misleading.
- 17) I will not knowingly exploit any aspect of the coach-client relationship for my personal, professional or monetary advantage or benefit.
- 18) I will respect the client's right to terminate coaching at any point during the process. I will be alert to indications that the client is no longer benefiting from our coaching relationship.
- 19) If I believe the client would be better served by another coach, or by another resource, I will encourage the client to make a change.
- 20) I will suggest that my clients seek the services of other professionals when deemed appropriate or necessary.
- 21) I will take all reasonable steps to notify the appropriate authorities in the event a client discloses an intention to endanger self or others.

Confidentiality/Privacy

- 22) I will respect the confidentiality of my client's information, except as otherwise authorized by my client, or as required by law.
- 23) I will obtain agreement from my clients before releasing their names as clients or references, or any other client identifying information.
- 24) I will obtain agreement from the person being coached before releasing information to another person compensating me.

Conflicts of Interest

- 25) I will seek to avoid conflicts between my interests and the interests of my clients.
- 26) Whenever any actual conflict of interest or the potential for a conflict of interest arises, I will openly disclose it and fully discuss with my client how to deal with it in whatever way best serves my client.
- 27) I will disclose to my client all anticipated compensation from third parties that I may receive for referrals of that client.
- 28) I will only barter for services, goods or other non-monetary remuneration when it will not impair the coaching relationship.

Part Four: The ICF Pledge of Ethics

As a professional coach, I acknowledge and agree to honour my ethical obligations to my coaching clients and colleagues and to the public at large. I pledge to comply with the ICF Code of Ethics, to treat people with dignity as independent and equal human beings, and to model these standards with those whom I coach. If I breach this Pledge of Ethics or any part of the ICF Code of Ethics, I agree that the ICF in its sole discretion may hold me accountable for so doing. I further agree that my accountability to the ICF for any breach may include loss of my ICF membership and/or my ICF credentials.

