

A successful supervisory relationship



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Supervision or supervisory relationship is a dynamic relationship allowing two professionals to share their professional and personal expertise and experience while supporting, educating and administrating the inner qualities, capabilities, strengths and weakness for the psychological, professional and social well being of the supervisee. It is a relationship which is based on trust and confidence; understanding and communication skills and openness and honesty. Along with the achievement of the long term goals, a short term and immediate goals are also expected to be accomplished from this relationship. The successful relationship is essential for not only the completion of the goals but is also important for career advancement, psychological support and the social well-being of the supervisee. Supervisor enables to blend supervisee's personal interest and knowledge to accelerate their learning process and thus is encouraging the supervisee to build professional values, ideology, and ethics and prioritise their long and short term goals. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to support, guide and understand and suggest to the supervisee by pinpointing the strength and weakness, without depriving the supervisee of his independence and personal space. The supervisor must then provide constructive support to the supervisee to diminish their weakness and encourage them to develop their professional and personal strengths keeping their professional and ethical standards. For a success of a relationship both the supervisor and the supervisee need to cooperate in good faith, adopt a sense of responsibility, listen and respect each other and above all have while faith and confidence in each other keeping their conversation etc confidential.

As a part of my profession, a supervisor could be a senior dentist who may have to supervise a junior dentist or a dentist supervising a dental hygienist, dental therapist, a dental nurse or a dental receptionist in a clinical set up. All the members of the team need to work cooperatively for the benefit of the dental centre. If a new member comes then the new member needs to be well informed about the procedures, daily routine, customer information, projects etc. The new member must get familiarised with the working scenarios and it is really beneficial for the supervisee if a senior member or more experienced supervisor is there to guide them and also show them the path for career development.

What is supervision or supervisory relationship?

Supervision is a sustained interpersonal and interactional relationship between two effective professional within the same workplace. It is a process where an experienced and an expertise of a particular subject area supports and guides someone either new to that particular area or in the middle of a transition phase of career development. “ Supervision is a disciplined, tutorial process involving transferring principles to practical skills” (Powell & Brodsky, 2004, p. 11) Supervision is a link between the knowledge gained from the theory and the practical aspect of the same theory. It is a process for the betterment of the workplace and creating a healthy environment within the workplace. Supervision is a method used to train the supervisee to attain the various skills required for the particular workplace and maintain a healthy, friendly, safe and a better environment to work. Its main aim is to create an atmosphere where a feeling of ownership and dedication towards the workplace is emphasised. It is a method to ensure the continuing

development of the supervisee through a continuous evaluation, awareness and commitment to teach and learn on behalf of both the supervisor and the supervisee. It is joint venture of both the parties to work together to meet their common idealistic goal and their desire to learn and achieve more.

Supervision involves a supervisor who is more experienced and is an expertise in that field and a supervisee who needs to develop and refine skills for future advancement or career development in a systematic and planned manner. To gain success in achieving their goals, both the parties need to adopt a sense of responsibility for learning. They need to have a hunger to learn and dedication to achieve. The supervisor is a role model for the supervisee, a teacher, a philosopher, a guide, a mentor, a supporter and consultant. The supervisor is a teacher who needs to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the supervisee and after evaluating them needs to help the supervisee in diminishing the weaknesses and improving the strengths. As a philosopher, the supervisor needs to help the supervisee to set up idealistic goals and also must help the supervisee to transmit the knowledge attained from professional institute into the practical use for the professional development. As a supporter, the supervisor must also prevent the burnout and the keep the morale of the supervisee up by providing a positive feedback. As a consultant and a role model a supervisor's foremost duty is to set an example for the supervisee to look at for the professional development and review and monitor the performance of the supervisee and if required to provide alternative suggestions or organise skill development workshops to attained the desired and aimed goals. A good supervisor needs

to provide a well structured aim and a continuous feedback along with moral support and encouragement to keep the morale of the supervisee high.

“ A good supervisor depends on the level of development of the candidate”(Ronnestad, M. H., & Skovholt, T. M. 1993, p 396). The supervisory relationships are the heart of any development within an organisation. The knowledge of supervisory relationships and competencies in establishing and maintaining an effective relationship plays an important in an organisation’s progress. The relationship should be structured according to several identified static and dynamic variables.

Expectations of Supervisory relationship and skills required for this relationship

Like every relationship there are few expectations associated with this professional relationship also. The deeper understanding and the accomplishment of the long and short term goals care for the social well being and professional growth of the supervisee, providing guidance and information along with social and moral support are some of the common expectations from any relationship. But to maintain a healthy professional relationship a supervisor should not only have personal traits and the knowledge of various programs implemented in the workplace but must have some facilitating, conceptual, interventional, management and supervision skills. Presence and acknowledgement of these skills in a supervisor will develop a respect and faith in the eyes of the supervisee.

Like all relationship, one of the important pillars of relationship is mutual respect between the supervisor and the supervisee. A deep respect which

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could be either due to experience or the knowledge towards a supervisor or a sense of respect due to the dedication and eagerness to learn or achieve in a supervisee, creates a healthy professional bonding in this type of relationship. Mutual respect within the workplace creates a soothing and relaxing environment where the fear of creating mistakes while learning is no longer present. Due to this respect towards the supervisee, a supervisor is not hesitant to suggest or show the correct procedure for certain rules and regulations. Due to this respect pillar confidence and faith starts developing between the supervisor and the supervisee. Another important aspect of this type of relationship is intercommunication skills-whether they are written or are oral. A regular, accurate and honest communication will benefit all the staff in carrying out their jobs efficiently and effectively.

Trust and honesty are two most important factors for the success of relationship (Webb, A & Wheeler, S, 1998 ' How honest do counsellors dare to be in relationship?). Both the supervisor and the supervisee must be honest with each other. They should be able to trust each to share their professional views, their thoughts and their judgements honestly. For the achievement of their goals, both the supervisor and supervisee discuss their professional and organisational issues honestly with each other. Supervisor must be honest while providing a constructive feedback and suggesting relevant solutions. Supervisee should be able to honestly raise difficult issues in front of the supervisor and also need to trust the supervisor for providing a honest response and solution to those issues. This trust and honesty has a positive impact on the effectiveness, quality and success of the supervisory relationship.

Another important factor in supervisory relationship is openness and sincerity, which are developed after the establishment of trust and faith. In this supervisory relationship both the parties should be able to negotiate an agenda which could be either the structure of this relationship or ideas relevant to the development of the supervisee. Both the parties need to be fair and open in their thoughts and views. They should be able to express their feelings, discuss their reactions on various agendas, reflect on the supervision relationship and interact with each other with openness and sincerity. Any sought of criticism must be dealt with an open discussion directly between the both parties in a frank and honest way. Sincerity towards the team and the workplace from both the parties is also essential to maintain a healthy professional relationship. In case of conflict of ideas they should be discussed openly in this relationship. Both the parties need to work together to improve personal and professional growth and thus needs to attain a stable, open, sincere, trustworthy and fair professional identity. While working in an institute as a team it is very important to be sincere, loyal and open with other members for the benefit and growth of that institute.

Discussing professional attributes, skills and learning needs with the supervisor enables the supervisee blend personal capabilities, interests, views in a broader picture to benefit the organisation as a whole and all this is possible with the presence of effective interpersonal skill. By using knowledge and understanding gained from either educational opportunities or experience helps in improving and gaining the desired outcomes for the working institute. Using one's interpersonal skills both the supervisor and the

supervisee must remove various milestones which are becoming a hindrance in the success of this relationship. To steer their own route through any profession, a supervisee will be able to settle smoothly and quickly with help of effective and efficient supervisor. A bit of professional advice provided in a friendly environment can do miracles. With excellent interpersonal skills any supervisor can minimise the fear of power differential. They can create a healthy and safe atmosphere which can further lead to creating an intrinsic workplace where well being and the social and professional life of all the employees is well looked after and thus provide a directed and positive workplace.

Beside the interpersonal skills both the supervisor and supervisee need to have excellent oral and written communication skills. They need to present all their information, feeling, views, thoughts, ideas and other relevant material to each other on daily bases. They also need to be committed and must be willingly to help and learn. Both the supervisor and the supervisee need to work cooperatively

Critically analysis

Supervisory relationship is merely a way of connecting a supervisor who is more experienced or an expertise, with a supervisee who lacks this experience. Both of them have some common goals and work together to achieve these goals. According to the Association of Counsellor and Supervision, supervisor's personal traits and qualities and facilitating skills play an important role than conceptual skills, intervention skills, intervention skills and management skills for the success of the supervisory relationship.

Some researchers believe that above mentioned traits cannot be taught and can be attained by lifelong socialisation (Dye 1987).

In dental supervisory relationship, to maintain high standard's and achieve the long and the short term goals one should be able to form and sustain that relationship irrespective of the personal characteristics of individual participants. No two individuals are same and neither have similar opinions, same view and same thoughts. They may have different personalities, backgrounds, motives and desires. It is very important that the supervisor and supervisee must work amicably. If the relationship attains positive criteria then a personal intellectual growth and professional development can be attained but if this relationship does not work properly then it becomes a headache for both the supervisor and the supervisee. Thus can be said that supervision is a vital for the supervisee but with limited training and support with regard to how supervision is conducted and where the focus of supervision should be placed (Campbell 2006). Negativity or authoritative approach can hinder the development of any relationship. A supervisor is more experienced and an expert in the field but if the supervisor tries to prove the superiority or is trying to make the decisions on behalf of the supervisee, then the mutual respect and understanding towards each other is lost. As due to these negative disagreements starts creating interpersonal conflicts. These conflicts can impact on a supervisor and supervisee work satisfaction, working ability, well-being and mental health.

Olk and Friedlander have identified role ambiguity and role conflict as important dynamic influence on the supervisory relationship (1993). They

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suggested that the supervisors must remain alert for signs of conflict. When the values of supervisor and supervisee are different, they may not be on same page with reference to goals. A sense of seniority in the supervisor and a fear of offending the supervisor in the supervisee can create a path of misunderstanding in them. Due to authority and the power a supervisee may be finding it difficult to raise any issue, which may lead to conflict in the future. The supervisee may have a personal agenda but to avoid argument may not be able to bring that agenda in front of the supervisor. On the other hand the supervisee may not be very supportive and may clinically incompetent, lack enthusiastic, not have educational objectives and may refuse to do as asked. All these factors minimise the success chances for this relationship. Another major issue which can be causing trouble in this type of relationship is the lack of trust and the faith between the supervisor and the supervisee. A possibility is that the supervisor may be discussing the various issues discussed between the supervisor and the supervisee with other supervisor or other colleagues. It is also that the supervisee may be talking to other members of the organisation about the supervisor in a negative way. It can also be said that they are discussing each other and showing the lack of faith, lack of trust and above all lack of confidentiality. Supervisees who view their supervisors as acting in an ethical manner report a strong working alliance. (Ladany, Lehman-Waterman, Molinaro, & Wolgast 1999)

Another major issue that arises between supervisor and the supervisee is lack of communication. Good communication, either in form of face to face or either through written method, is very essential. Sometimes the supervisor is lacking the active listening and understandings skills which can

lead to other problems. A supervisor may refrain from stating unreasonable views and opinions and must not offer incentives as all this may complicate the situation further. Although the goals, motives, attitudes, rules and regulations but still there is a possibility of clash in this relationship in the near future due to misunderstandings. Due to lack of communication or time to share the views on various issues or agendas can lead to interpersonal tension in an organisation. These tensions can result in unresolved stresses impinging upon the organisation.

One of the major aspects of supervisory relationship is the provision of feedback. It is important that the feedback must be based on the accuracy facts and performance but sometimes to personal disagreement, the supervisee may be offended. The supervisee may feel that the supervisor is trying to evaluate on the personality and the attitude of the supervisee. Due to supervisors negative comments and remarks on academic inefficiency the problem between the supervisor and the supervisee may escalate and the supervisee may feel helpless and bullied. Sometimes it is also observed that the trainee may not be satisfied or may have some questions regarding the feedback provided but will be hesitant to ask the supervisor for any clarification due to the fear and endure it to avoid jeopardising their career progress. ' Difference in power and status, and dependence on references, places juniors in invidious positions when they experience problems in their relationships with the supervisors' (Garelick, A and Fagin, L. 2004).

Sometimes minor and irrelevant difference can also cause a major drawback in any relationship. Some static factors can receive prominent attention such as gender and sex role attitudes, supervisor's style, age, race, and ethnicity,

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and personality characteristics (Borders & Leddick 1987: Leddick and Dye 1987). The supervisory relationship is an essential component and must be structured with the supervisor and the supervisee's consent and knowledge.

Conclusion

Supervision relationship is a prime mean where a supervisee gets a chance to nurture their capabilities and skills, develop new skills with the help from a more experienced supervisor. It is a dynamic program forte professional, mental and social well being of a new person in any organisation. The insights and experiences obtained in context to dental health of the community or individual patients are very relevant experiences for the new member of the dental clinic. It is also significantly clear that the in dental care working in a team ranging from 3 to 10 individuals is a major challenge. In this relationship a supervisor plays a significant role by creating a balance between individual aspirations and corporate needs. Supervisory relationship is influenced by personal characteristics and both the supervisor and the supervisee. The relationship is also affected by other variables such as personal clashes, poor communication, lack of enthusiasm and dedication, problem trainee or supervisor, lack of commitment and trust. These interpersonal conflicts have a significant influence on the relationship and eventually lead to a dysfunctional working relationship. A misunderstanding created due to lack of communication, appropriateness of the techniques using in various dental processes, amount of time spent to discuss goal and direction, willingness to resolve conflict and mutual trust, respect and confidence plays a significant role. Power inequalities, indecisive and disorganisation on supervisor and supervisee's part can lead to further

complications. The supervisor is more experienced and an expert in the role of a supervisor, and must take the responsibility for creating, maintaining and monitoring the relationship to provide a structural and idealistic goals that will benefit the dental clinic and the supervisee in the long run.