

**Presencing Issue 13A- Pointing Towards Supervision: Tao of Supervision
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A leader is best when people barely know he exists, not so good when people obey and acclaim him, worse when they despise him... But of a good leader who talks little when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say, "We did it ourselves." Lao Tzu

When I wrote my first article about supervision for bodyworkers many years ago... I received an email that stated "I became a bodyworker to get away from bosses. I certainly do not want someone to look over my shoulder and tell me what to do." I realized after writing that article that the word "supervision" has deep implications that come from the corporate world.

Supervisors in that world are persons who are set up to manage what we do. They work at the behest of the company and therefore are often not responsive to our needs and concerns. Their loyalty is to the corporate structure and to the stock holders. Their job depends upon getting the most output and highest quality from us.



Real supervision is a fine art that requires deep listening, into the presence. This form of listening is quite rare and must be carefully cultivated. Listening to another with full attention requires that we drop beneath our own thoughts and judgments. You can test this out by observing your own mind as you are listening to a friend, a client or a colleague. You will find your mind anticipating, projecting, making up stories, distracting, and looking for solutions. We rarely admit to ourselves or to others that this is happening. If you observe the body language of persons who are having a conversation, you can notice the revealing choreography that

accompanies the conversation; eyes out-of-focus, attention to cell phone or wrist watch, body turned away, foot tapping, yawning, and watching other persons or activities. All of these internal and external dynamics seem to happen whenever we listen. But there is another way.

When we develop the ability to listen inside into silence and stillness a different kind of conversation ensues. Something, some awareness, begins to emerge within both persons... I call it the emerging intrinsic. That something feels different... there is peacefulness... a cocoon of curiosity and meaning... and a willingness to be quiet. In this kind of listening supervisor and supervisee are participating in something quite surprising... vitalizing... spacious... and intimate. Nothing seems to separate thoughts and feelings... and close listening.

The listening becomes mutual; surprises can happen... because neither person knows what is coming next. There is a listening into presence itself, which seems to form the core of the conversation.



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If you are employed in a corporate structure like an HMO or being paid by an insurance provider, "supervision" can be required to support the interest of the corporation or provider. It can also be required by the massage board in order to ensure that practitioners remain accountable to the guidelines and edicts of the profession.



Most bodyworkers are self employed and independent of corporate structures. Most are self directed and responsible mainly to themselves. How can we look at supervision as a benefit for self-employed practitioners and their clients? We must start from a different premise; practitioners are accountable to themselves and their clients.

The practitioner-client relationship is the core of the supervision process. As with corporate organizations, supervision is still driven by goals and values, but the practitioners decide the goals and values jointly with their supervisors. Supervisors provide appropriate support and challenge in the interest of the practitioner and the client. They secondarily represent the interests of the profession.

Proposed principles of professional supervision for the self-employed practitioner:

Principle 1:

The main quality of the supervisor is "listening." Supervisors support practitioners and their client relationships by listening, questioning, challenging, and reflecting.

Principle 2:

We all have resources to discover inside as well as ways to express those resources. Part of the supervisor's role is to aid these discoveries and expressions.

Principle 3:

The supervisor is an advocate for practitioner and client and therefore needs to be committed to non-judgment... not judging, rescuing, qualifying, certifying, punishing, or rewarding the supervisee.

Principle 4:

Supervision is not about answering questions but exploring them together. Supervision is only secondarily about getting or giving advice or guidance. Supervisees need to learn to do their own work.

Principle 5:

The Supervisor witnesses and mirrors your questions and responses in order to awaken your trust in your ability to develop your own work and your own inner guidance.



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Principle 6:

In order to be there fully for the supervisee, the supervisor must be in supervision.

Principle 7:

The truth is that the answer to a problem usually lies within the supervisee. One art of supervision is to affirm that truth and empower practitioners to find their own answers inside.

Principle 8:

Supervisors serve to promote integrity and balance within the supervisee and the practitioner-client relationship.

Principle 9:

Supervision is about developing three relationships: practitioner/client, practitioner/supervisor, and practitioner/self.

Principle 10:

Supervision can become a life-long relationship. I call this a partnering into Being, a discovery of what lies within both persons. Some of the deepest relationships in human history have been based on the mutual commitment between supervisor and supervisee.

