

Reflective Supervision Quick Guide



Reflective Listening

Definition: Listening, summarizing, and clarifying what you heard.

Purpose: Truly listening to staff allows them to feel understood on a deeper level. It can also clarify aspects of the work and increase communication to improve the quality of the work. Slowing down and mindfully listening, before jumping in with your response, can actually elicit more information from your staff.



"What I heard you say is _____. Is that correct?"
 "It sounds like _____. Is that about right?"
 "Can you help me understand? On one hand _____ and on the other _____."

Avoid: Problem solving, fixing or being too distracted



Emotion-focused Questions

Definition: The work that we do, can and will, evoke feelings. We can ask questions that focus on the emotions of the work in supervision.

Purpose: When there are strong feelings evoked in a staff member related to the work, it can be helpful to ask about what emotions are present for staff to support them in these difficult moments. For example, when a critical incident or a child death occurs, it can be helpful to check in with a staff member to see how they are doing emotionally and what supports they have during these difficult times.



"What was that case like for you?"
 "What feelings are brought up for you when you think about this case?"
 "I'm noticing that there are a lot of feelings going on. Can we focus on the parts that affect your work and also think about other people or supports you have to talk with?"

Avoid: Asking if you don't have the time, energy, or bandwidth.

Please note:

- Remember the boundaries of your role; you are not their therapist. Determine what is relevant to the nature of the work vs. what is outside your scope and role.
- If the difficulties appear to be outside of the work context, then refer to EAP.



"It sounds like there is a lot going on today, both at work and outside of work. I am happy to support you in areas that overlap with your work, but let's think about other resources that can support you outside of work. Maybe a supportive friend or the EAP that we have here?"

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Supervisor Modeling

Definition: Sharing your own emotions about a case with the purpose of helping staff open up and feel normalized and to reduce shame or guilt about emotions in the work.

Purpose: Providing examples from your own personal experience related to the work can provide staff a safe space to feel understood, normal, and validated. They won't feel so alone in their work. It can be helpful to put yourself in your staff's shoes and can increase your empathy.



"When I was going into similar case, I felt nervous for those home visits. I'm wondering if that is similar or different to what you were feeling."

"When I have those types of cases, I know I feel really frustrated. I'm curious to see how you are feeling about his case?"

Avoid: Sharing too much about your own experience or shifting the spotlight to yourself. Avoid "one-upping with war stories."



Compassion Satisfaction

Definition: Discussing the positive outcomes derived from your work

Purpose: Typically, we focus on the struggles or difficult parts of the work in supervision, yet it can be helpful at times to focus on the positives and joys of the work. This will help staff feel supported and boost their confidence and mood, which will remind them of their passion for this work. Eliciting the positives from staff, either individually or in a team meeting, can have great benefit.



"Where do you find joy in your work?"

"What were you proud of about this case?"

"What did you feel was successful about today/this month?"

In Team/Unit Meetings: "Let's go around the room and share one thing you are proud of this week."