Book review


Cat Dunne
Sydney, Australia

Earlier this year, a group of my fellow coaching peers invited me to participate in setting up a peer group supervision session. As we wanted the sessions to be valuable, we were fortunate that my individual coaching supervisor lent me a copy of this book, just to help us on our journey. It turned out to be extremely helpful and worthy of review.

Our engagement in a peer supervision process seems consistent with the greater acceptance of supervision that appears to exist within the coaching community, and coaches’ increased participation in it. Interestingly, research has shown that peer supervision is the first experience of supervision for many coaches, principally because it is accessible and low cost (Lawrence & Whyte, 2014).

Despite these advantages, drawbacks exist (Gray, 2017). For example, many coaches report that peer supervision tends to be unstructured, and its value diminished by factors such as lack of self-awareness amongst participants (e.g. blind spots) and a lack of coaching experience (Bachkirova, Jackson & Clutterbuck, 2011). Anecdotally, the lack of structure in peer supervision appears to be a common experience amongst coaches, and I have direct experience of supervision sessions resembling informal chat groups.

Given this past experience, I found the book extremely helpful. In particular, I found Chapters 3 and 4 especially useful as they provided practical guidance on what ingredients and methods are needed to run an effective peer supervision session. For those looking to engage in one to one peer supervision practice, Chapter 3 provides insight into the mechanics of setting up an effective reflective practice. This chapter also discusses the critical factors in forming the relationship between a supervisor and a coach, the mechanics of the
coaching process (location, format, duration etc.) and the importance of contracting boundaries for the coaching relationship and process. Chapter 4 covers group supervision, offering additional guidance on meeting structures and group meeting techniques, along with sample group contracting processes and templates. In setting up our own peer group supervision session, the contracting discussion guide helped us to agree on our supervision scope, boundaries, meeting process and roles. The time we spent on the initial contracting has enabled our supervision time to be effective and focused.

In Chapters 5 and 7 the principles behind contracting and ethics are explained. Both are an important aspect of the supervision relationship, enabling the creation of a reflective environment that fosters, trust, openness and psychological safety. For those new to coaching supervision, it is not always clear what issues to bring along for discussion. To assist with this, Chapter 7 explores coaching and mentoring dilemmas and provides an extensive range of case studies and dilemma scenarios that a coach may experience within their practice. In our own peer group, we have used some of the examples to help us engage and share key learnings and reflections from our practices. The discussions enable a pragmatic way to explore common tensions and challenges us to examine our boundaries.

Drawing on extensive experience gained from coaching practice, coach supervision, and coaching scholarship, the authors have done a wonderful job of co-creating an informative, practical resource for the benefit of coaching practitioners, supervisors, and internal HR and OD managers. This book guides practitioners on how to build and develop a range of individual and group reflective learning practices in an evidence-based way. In this way, the book helps to take peer supervision practice to new levels, allowing coaches to experiment with their eyes wide open, to collaborate and to learn with peers in a purposeful and effective way.

References


purposes, practices, processes and desired outcomes of reflection in the learning and teaching contexts (for both teachers and learners, and others such as employers, peers, managers) • develop a clear picture of how reflection can enable you to continuously monitor and evaluate your teaching, and your learning and teaching environment • commit to an ongoing and strategic process of personal and professional reflection, and do. Peer/mentoring Peer observation and feedback Work based learning Systematic observation. Guided reflection: a framework to facilitate and assess reflective practice within the discipline of physiotherapy. Physiotherapy Theory and Practice, 16: 3-14. Howard, T. C. (2003). Reflective practice requires a certain degree of introspection from the coach and should be a daily activity. One could use a reflective journal, reflective cards, video, shared reflections, or an oral approach such as TA to implement a reflective practice. Writing down one’s actions and thoughts following an event or a day’s work in a journal or logbook quite often serves as an introduction to reflective practice. The high school coach’s practice and coaching record improved over these years. In the end, a reflective practice appears to benefit both professional and personal development in various fields, including coaching. Using reflective practice to improve one’s knowledge and coaching qualities, such as communication, also impacts the coach’s athletes. Mentoring is a long standing form of training, learning and development and an increasingly popular tool for supporting personal development. In our Learning and development survey 20081 we identified coaching and mentoring together. See the full results of our survey: www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/lnanddev/general/_lmgdevsvy.htm. However, mentoring is a distinct activity which has become a widespread development tool.