Reflective Supervision: Model of Accountability and Ethics in Working with Children and Families

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“Reflective Supervision is a relationship for learning.”

(Emily Fenichel 1992, Rebecca Shahmoon-Shanok 2007)
Goals & Objectives

**Integrate traditional supervision practice with relational – reflective principles**

- Learn the basic tenets of reflective supervision
- Build skills specific to reflective practice
- Develop skills in augmenting reflective practice into supervisory relationship
- Observe and reflect on own supervisory skills and style

**Use reflective supervision/practice to strengthen skills related to ethical standards of practice**

- Increase understanding the role reflective supervision can play in enhancing compliance with ethical requirements
- Develop skills to integrate ethical practice touchstones into supervision practice
- Develop skills to enhance supervisee’s skill set with ethical decision making
Outline of the Day

**Session I**  
(11:15am-12:30pm)  
Reflective practice  
Ethics  
Parallel process

**Session II**  
(1:45pm-3:00pm)  
Historical perspective of reflective supervision  
Tenets of reflective supervision  
Accountability and ethics

**Session III**  
(3:30pm-4:45pm)  
Building a reflective supervision practice
Session I

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE
ETHICS
PARALLEL PROCESS

Start At The Beginning, With Introductions
What We Have in Common

- Work with children that have families
  - Requires broadening our focus

- Work with parents that hope that they are good enough parents
  - Valuable assumption to hold onto in the face of behaviors that might indicate the contrary

- Work with parents that hope their child is going to be okay
  - Fundamental to remembering the state of despair and anxiety parents might be experiencing

What We Have in Common (ect...)

- Parents that have to live in the space between what they hope to be true and the reality that they are currently experiencing
  - We are seeing a moment in time that might have a lot of uncertainty

- Children and families with histories of love, attachment and connectedness
  - Children come with a lot of history

- Children and families with histories of unresolved separations, trauma, loss
  - There is a lot that can interfere with healthy development
Practicing Reflective Practice

- Voice your thoughts about today’s learning
  - What are you most excited to take back to your agency?
  - How will you remember?
  - Who will you tell?

Reflective Practice

- Process of stepping back from immediate experience to sort through thoughts and feelings about what one is observing and doing
- Process of thinking out loud - the mind having a conversation with itself
- Process of wondering – tap into your curiosity
- Process by which short circuit your reactivity
- Process by which we can push past cheap, superficial understandings of what we are seeing
Reflective Practice

- Engaging in a dialogue of words and actions in which a two-fold process occurs and there is integration of:
  
  Substantive practice – professional knowledge which relates to theories, facts, rules, ethical standards, procedures

  &

  Reflection in action – refers to applying theoretical constructs to ongoing moment to moment experiences

Reflective Practice & Ethics

- Substantive knowledge related to ethics:
  - Do no harm,
  - fidelity and responsibility,
  - integrity,
  - justice
  - Boundaries,
  - confidentiality,
  - informed consent
  - self determination

- Reflection-in-Action
  - Donald Schon (1983)
Reflective Practice

- Consider the possible implications of their interventions while in the midst of their work
- Slow down, filter their thoughts, and more wisely choose actions and words
- Deepen their understanding of the contextual forces that affect their work
- Take time afterward to consider their work and the related experiences in a way the influence their next steps

Reflective Supervision and Leadership in Infant and Early Childhood Programs (2010)

Reflective Practice

- Process by which we take care of ourselves
  - Learn what we need to bring our ‘A’ game to the work
  - Identify signals that we are feelings depleted or ‘burnt out’
  - Process by which we learn to balance personal and professional livelihoods
Reflective Practice

“A dialogue of thinking and doing through which I become more skillful.”

“The power of reflective thinking is the way it thrives on the complexity of educational life.”
- Joelle Jay, Untying the knots: examining the complexities of reflective practice
Parallel Process

Foundational aspect of relationship-based work

"...parallel process means the way in which the supervisor interacts with the supervisee models for the supervisee what he/she should do with his or her clients."

(Shulman, l., 2008)
Parallel Process

- When staff experience positive workplace relationships, they are likely to build positive working relationships with parents.

- If staff experience being heard and respected while being reflective in supervision, they are prepared to offer that same process and respect to families.

“Do unto others as you would have others do unto others”

Jeree Pawl (2001)
Parallel Process

“Emphasis is on the practitioner’s ability to listen and wait to allow the child (parent or child/parent) to discover solutions, concepts, perceptions on their own without interruption from the practitioner.”

“Emphasis is on the supervisor’s ability to listen and wait to allow the supervisee to discover solutions, concepts, perceptions on their own without interruption from the supervisor.”
Session II

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE
REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION PRACTICE

Historical Roots of Reflective Supervision

• Psychoanalytic model
  o Anna Freud, Margaret Mahler
  o What happens to us early in life creates a foundation for how we experience the world
  o Unconscious: feelings and experiences that can remain hidden to us, but can be seen and felt in our behaviors and relationships

• Attachment theory
  o John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth
  o Growth and learning take place in the context of an ‘other’
Historical Perspective

- **Developmental Model**
  - Eric Erikson, Jean Piaget
  - Development occurs over the course of a lifetime as we pass from one stage to the next

- **Infant Mental Health**
  - Alicia Lieberman, Mary Ainsworth
  - Michael Trout, Selma Frailberg (*Ghosts in the Nursery*)

My Historical Heroes

Lev Vygotsky
Zone of proximal development

T. Berry Brazelton
Neonatal Behavioral Assessment Scale; Touchpoints

Stanley Greenspan
*Floortime*

Fred Rogers
Messages to children and parents embedded in psychoanalytic paradigm

Dan Siegel
Mindsight Institute

Judith Bertacchi
Mentor, author, practitioner
Infant Mental Health Theoretical Foundations

- Attachment theory, family systems theory, trauma-informed approaches, transactional model
- Babies exist in the context of their caregiving relationships and within the cultural context of their family
- Experiences during pregnancy and in the first three years lay the foundation for all future development
- Relationships are critical: best way to support babies is to support their parents/families to build/strengthen nurturing relationships with them
- There can be both ghosts and angels in the nursery that will impact the emerging attachment relationships

Traditional Supervision

- Focus on teaching
- Didactic
- Focus on discipline
- Maintain neutrality and objectivity
Traditional Supervision ...the downside...

- Impulse to find a solution immediately
  - Hydroplaning – skimming over the surface of an issue; promote a tendency for rapid action
  - Doesn’t allow for a healthy respect for the complexity of children and their families and communities

- Allows for avoiding or downplaying serious issues, troublesome feelings, conflicts, potential problems
  - Message is to keep the hard stuff out of the supervisory relationship

Downside continues...

- Little attention to the centrality of relationships
  - If you work with children, relationships must be in the forefront of our work

- Incongruence between supervisor’s theoretical perspective and supervisee’s actual clinical experience
  - Substantive practice and reflection-in-action practice

- Supervisee takes more passive role
  - Supervision must be an arena for developing confidence
  - Mastery and sense of agency requires practice
Downslide continues... (not a slip)

- Focus tends to be on the client to the detriment of supervisee’s development.
  - Missed opportunities for supervisee to learn about themselves, to grow and to wonder what they bring to the work and who are they in the work
- Avoids supervisee bringing their ‘worst work’ to be explored and understood
  - Harder to grow if we have to hide our mistakes and our worries about our professional selves
- Little attention paid to the emotional well being of the supervisee
  - Cheerleading versus deeper look into what it feels like to do the work

"I would like you to be more self-reliant, show more initiative, and take greater personal responsibility — but check with me first!"
Ethics and Reflective Supervision

- A place in which ethical practice is developed and reinforced
  - Model sound ethic and legal practice
  - Place for ethical issues to arise and be addressed
  - Place where ethical practice is translated from concept to a set of behaviors
  - Develop a skill based process of ethical decision-making that can be used throughout their work

Reflective Supervision

- A trusting relationship between supervisor and practitioner
  - Central to the work (think attachment)

- A process by which you slow down to attend to nuances and details – thus increasing opportunity of learning, understanding and integrating
  *The art of 'stepping back' to examine what one is observing and doing;* - Alicia Lieberman (2002)

- A place to frame a child and family’s community and the relationships therein to give the family some cultural context
  - Practice the art of inquiry
Reflective Supervision

- Attention paid to parallel process
- Non-traditional ideas that often appear in reflective supervision
  - Containment
  - Holding in another’s mind
  - Issues of control
  - Using one’s inner experience to understand another’s experience
- Feelings matter
  - Place for intersubjective focus
  - Caretaking of supervisee
  - Place to start to explore the deeper meaning

Reflective Supervision

- Strength Based
  - Learn about supervisee’s strengths
  - Make them very relevant to professional development
- Allow for conflict and anger to be expressed and processed
  - Balance monitoring and mentoring
  - Demonstrate tact, diplomacy and grace under pressure
  - Interfere with the traditional either/or dynamic
- Creates a space for honestly assessing the quality of one’s work
  - Checking the boxes of completed paperwork doesn’t assess the quality of relational work with families
  - Conversely quality relational work without the completed paperwork won’t pay the bills
All practitioners are taught how to observe – but what to look for is either “trained into – or out of – each discipline”

(Shahmoon–Shanok, Henderson, Grellong & Foley, 2006, p. 399 – 400)
Reflective Supervision Framework

- Regular
- Collaborative
- Reflective

Regularity

- Protect a time, place, and space
- Provide full availability without interruption
- Move toward calmer (regulated) providers, directors, and programs
“I didn’t give her my thoughts.”

“What did you give her?”

“My time and attention”

Collaborative

- Supervisor to provide relational security
  - ....and be the boss
  - Transactional – pay attention to the supervisory ‘fit’
  - Model intersubjectivity
- Move away from evaluation and correction
  - Ghosts of supervisors past
  - We will learn/explore together
  - Draws on the resources of both participants
- Shared power and relationship
  - Promoting a sense of agency and confidence
- Develop true sense of partnership
  - Shared investment in the work and in professional development
Bridge Between Collaboration and Reflection

“The collaborative approach to problem solving is really at the heart of reflective supervision, since the process, by which we stop, stand back, slow down and start to ask questions. In order for this process to be effective, it is essential to establish an atmosphere of trust, respect and safety.”

Implementing reflective supervision in non-clinical settings: Challenges to Practice, Judith Bertacchi and Trudi Norman-Murch

Reflective

- Develop and exercise supervisee’s capacities to reflect on her/his work
  - Question first impressions
  - Internal experiences have meaning

- Promote continuous conceptualization of what one is observing and doing in hopes of creating a clearer vision of the work in progress
  - Give full consideration to a multiple perspectives and possibilities
  - Reframe the ‘problem’
  - ‘Things are not always as they seem to be’
5 Key Supervisory Roles

- Supporting staff member’s development
- Providing a secure base where staff can safely explore the meaning of their work
- Maintaining program ethical standards, mission, quality assurance and safety
- Facilitate open communication and effective team functioning
- Providing program leadership

Reflective Supervisory Practice

- Establish an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect, safety, collegiality
  - Trust
    - Do what you say you will do
    - Tell the truth; don’t make promises you can’t keep
    - Attunement – hear what is being said and not said
  - Mutual respect
    - Be on time
    - Respond empathically
  - Safety
    - Confidentiality
    - Be considerate and careful around vulnerabilities
  - Collegiality
    - Engaged, friendly, member of the same team
### Reflective Supervision Practice

**Contract with supervisee**
- Say out loud what the supervision will entail
- I will attend to both who you are in the work as well as how our supervision is going

**Remember, recall and make connections**
- Look for patterns
- Connect the dot

### Reflective Supervisory Practice

**Supervisor cultivates an atmosphere of curiosity and openness**
- Discussions are imbued with questions, wondering, humor, warmth

**Supervisor brings sound and relevant knowledge and information**
- Good information is invaluable to the work – theoretical, policy related, developmental
- Training – vital to success
Reflective Supervisory Practice

- Establish paradigm for problem solving
- How do you know where the problem lies?
  - Inside the system, the family, the person, the dyad – how to identify where to enter the system

- Developmental in nature
  - Both the supervisee/supervisor and the supervision will continue to grow and develop over time
  - Learning clinical skills has a beginning – but not an end
  - Needs to be tailored to the knowledge base, skills, experience, and assignment of each supervisee
  - Every supervision provides an opportunity to assess how supervisee sees and understands their work from a technical, discipline specific, relationship-based perspective
Developmental

Reflective Supervisory Practice

- Balance between mentoring and monitoring
  - R/S must attend to ethical, contractual, financial required of the supervisee

- Integrating ethical dynamics into supervisory discussions

- Discipline
  - Context of a collaborative relationship
Reflective Supervisory Practice

- Allow for supervisee to see who they are in the work
  - Start with the basics
  - What experiences and relationships have you had that influence your work with infants and families?

- Explore and better understand their explicit and implicit biases
  - Complex; requires a safe/non-judgmental place to explore
  - Tunnel vision

Reflective Supervisory Practice

- Safe place to discuss the good, the bad and the ugly
  - Have to have the experience of looking at hard stuff if we want practitioners to help parents/children take the lid off of Pandora’s Box (parallel process)
    - What can be learned from mistakes
    - If we want staff to be curious about the mistakes, bad decisions they made, we must be the same way.
“Try not to be interesting, but rather to be be interested.”

Mooli Lahad PhD

Supervisory Skills

- **Know yourself as a supervisor**
  - What do you love about your role as a supervisor
  - What do you miss about your clinical work
  - Tender spots – what are your reactive buttons

- **What are your strengths a supervisor**
  - What aspect of RS are you excited about
  - What kind of learner are you
Reflective Supervisor

“Learning that our own feelings and behaviors are important sources of information and have a major impact upon interventions.” - Alicia Lieberman

- Both commit to remain emotionally present
- Teach/guide
- Nurture/support
- Apply the integration of emotion and reason

Implementation

- Agency support
  - Bring colleagues on board
- Form a group to talk about the work
  - Supervisors within the agency
  - Supervisors from other agencies
- Read
  - A lot of books and literature about reflective practice and reflective supervision
- Write and journal
  - Reflective work
How to implement

Practice

Practice

Practice

Expand your thinking:
What Tickles Your Imagination?

- Imagery
  - “annealing,” the act of heating something so that all its molecules dance around wildly and then slowly cooling it back down so that it assumes a new and more stable state.

- Metaphors and analogies
  - Metaphors can be used creatively to explain complex or uncommon concepts.
  - Promotes creativity and playfulness
Expand your thinking:
What Tickles Your Imagination?

Cog-wheeling

- **Current Events**
  - Proposed national budget might make resources tight
    - Could impact tension between agencies that must collaborate on behalf of children and their families

- **Websites and/or blogs**
  - [https://www.brainpickings.org/](https://www.brainpickings.org/)

- **Mindfulness and Meditation**
  - Not proselytizing – but the process of how you taught yourself to meditate might be informative
Expand your thinking:
What Tickles Your Imagination?

• Sayings

  o People don’t care what you know until they know that you care
    • Theodore Roosevelt or John Maxwell....
  
  o “Blues is easy to play but hard to feel.”
  o “Knowledge speaks but wisdom listens.”
    • Jimi Hendrix
  
  o A party without cake is just another meeting
    • Anonymous

Expand your thinking:
What Tickles Your Imagination?

Poetry
To My American Gardener, With Love
E.B. White

Before the seed there comes the thought of bloom,
   The seedbed is the restless mind itself.
Not sun, nor soil alone can bring to border -
   This rush of beauty and this sense of order.
Flowers respond to something in the gardener’s face –
   Some secret in the heart, some special grace.
Yours were the rains that made the roses grow,
   And that is why I love your garden so.