

Matching methods to supervisory questions

Creative methods can be used to explore a wide variety of supervisory questions. However, it is always important in the focusing and eliciting process to pay attention, not only to the selection of an appropriate method, but to the way in which the method will be used. If not given adequate guidance, some supervisees will rush ahead and use the method intuitively but not necessarily in ways that serve their question. Others will simply not know what to do. The role of the supervisor is to be clear about the way in which the various methods can work and to offer invitations to the supervisee to guide them in using the method in ways that serve their question.

Talking methods may be particularly important when a supervisee is full of the emotional impact of an event or situation. The supervisee may simply need to express what they are feeling or tell the story in order to process the impact.

The downside of using a talking method is that some supervisees will find it hard to condense the narrative and the supervisor may find it hard to follow. Other supervisees may find it hard to identify feelings or distil the heart of an issue this way.

Pay attention when using talking methods to embodied communication (stance, gestures, eye contact, silences, tone) and also to metaphors and images used. Reflected back, these can help a supervisee (and supervisor) interpret and find a thread through a dense narrative.

Projective Methods (e.g. small world, drawing, cards) are all useful when a supervisee is overwhelmed. Allowing objects, picture cards, or symbols on a piece of paper to stand for important aspects of a situation, feelings or options, provides distance, making room for the supervisee to be able to think about them more effectively.

Pay attention when using projective methods to the 'world' that the supervisee creates and the meanings they attach to it. The role of the supervisor is to help the supervisee represent the most important aspects of the situation so that they can see and explore it.

Role Methods (e.g. chair work) are useful for imagining what it is like to inhabit a role and the feelings that come with it. Immersive methods like this should not be used when a supervisee is already overwhelmed.

Pay attention when using role work to the feelings and small changes in body language of the supervisee. The role of the supervisor is to help the supervisee inhabit the key roles/options they need to explore and reflect on the emotions and body sensations they experience.

In the table below suggestions are made about how to match a limited number of supervisory questions with a limited number of methods. Practice looking out for these supervisory questions and offering the creative methods that match them before improvising on the spot. Talk aloud with your supervisee about the options.

For more detail on how to use creative methods see *Responsible Grace* 4.3-4.5

More extensive examples and further ideas are offered in Leach and Paterson 2015.

Need	Method	Invitation
1 Distilling The supervisee is struggling to keep focused in their narrative (or the supervisor is struggling to follow it) and you agree it would help to picture the situation.	Drawing	Can you map this for me?
	Small world	Can you choose some objects to represent the key people in this situation including yourself?
	Evoke cards	Can you tell this story in five cards?
2 Expressing Feelings The supervisee is struggling to name their feelings and you agree it would help to express them.	Evoke cards	Can you sift through this pack and find the 3-5 key emotions you are dealing with?
	Chair work	Would it help to imagine yourself in front of this person/group – to sit them in a chair, and tell them how you really feel?
3 Stuckness in a working relationship The supervisee is stuck in the dynamic of a relationship between themselves and another person or a group	Small world	Can you choose 3 objects to represent yourself, and three to represent the other person/group?
	Drawing	Can you draw this person as a building? Can you draw yourself as a stick person in relation to this building?
	Chair work	Would it be useful to set out 2 chairs and show me how the interactions usually go between you and them?
	Chair work	Would it be useful to set out 2 chairs and rehearse how to tackle the conversation you have to have?
4 Needing role clarity The supervisee is wanting to gain role clarity but they are struggling to separate out the different hats they wear	Chair work	Would it be useful to set out different chairs to represent each hat you wear and sit in each of them in turn and articulate what you are feeling/thinking in each role?
5 Exploring options The supervisee has to make a difficult choice	Chair work	Would it be useful to set out chairs for each of your options and sit in the chairs in turn and imagine what it would be like to have chosen that option?