

Hughes, Lynette & Pengelly, Paul (1997) **Staff supervision in a turbulent environment: managing process and task in front-line services**
London: Jessica Kingsley pp.202

Summary

This book is aimed at anyone in a supervisory/managerial role in health and social services. The authors assert that supervision can be microcosm of how an agency responds to its environment and that the interaction between supervisor and supervisee is of central importance. Using a framework derived from psychoanalytic theory they give insight into the interactive process, organisational challenges and use of authority in supervision within the team and agency context.

Authors

Lynette Hughes works part-time as a child mental health practitioner in Manchester and as a psychotherapist, consultant and trainer in private practice. Paul Pengelly is an adult psychotherapist in Surrey and a visiting lecturer at the Tavistock Clinic.

Both authors have been senior staff members at the Tavistock Marital Studies Institute and worked on its staff supervision programmes.

Audience

First-line managers who supervise individual practitioners in health and social work; senior managers; non-manager supervisors; group supervisors.

Aims

To address supervision issues from the supervisor's perspective, giving central importance to the interaction between supervisor and supervisee. To explore a number of complementary conceptual models and frameworks to prompt practitioners to develop their practice.

Influences and Sources

The book's central principle is that effective supervisory work and promoting safe service delivery depend fundamentally on attention being given to the interactive processes in supervision and practice. It is asserted that supervision is potentially a microcosm of how an agency responds to its environment, including its service users.

The authors' own experience of being supervised and as trainers on staff supervision courses has influenced their thinking. The core practice examples given in the book are derived from these courses, with confidentiality and consent ensured.

Prior to writing this book the authors undertook research with 13 managers, supervisors and practitioners in a range of professional settings to enhance understanding of the changing agency context.

They draw on the tradition at the Tavistock Marital Studies Institute of applying psychoanalytic ideas, through research and training, to work in many frontline services. The application of psychoanalytic and open systems thinking to the study of group and organisational dynamics also influences the ideas presented.

Themes and Structure

- Chapter 1 – examines the contemporary turbulent conditions in which services must work and looks at the place of supervision in the team and agency context.

- Chapter 2 – explores the expectations of supervision, changing as services change and some of the pressures inherent in making supervisory contracts.
- Chapter 3 – introduces the concept of supervisory triangles to explore the interrelatedness of participants, and of functions, in supervision.
- Chapter 4 – addresses issues concerning the respective stages of professional competence and development and the respective working styles of supervisor and supervisee.
- Chapters 5 & 6 – employ psychoanalytic concepts to highlight the importance of attending to the emotional impact of work and the dynamic interactions of practitioner and supervisor, teams and agencies.
- Chapter 7 – explores how organisations become structured to contain or avoid work-related anxiety and the implications this has for supervision.
- Chapter 8 – examines how loss and change can effect supervision.
- Chapter 9 – explores the struggle to call a halt and face supervisory difficulties.
- Chapter 10 – considers the underpinning concepts of authority and containment in the current context and concludes that the way a supervisor is able to exercise authority is crucial in ensuring supervisory practice that promotes safe and effective service delivery.