Reflective Practice: 
Skills for Supervisors

Objectives

• Define reflective practice and reflective supervision and discuss evidence of effectiveness
• Identify roles of the reflective supervisor in early care settings
• Delineate the structure of a reflective supervision session
• Identify and practice reflective supervision strategies that support staff

Agenda

• Defining and Connecting: Reflection, Reflective Practice and Reflective Supervision
• Why Reflection Matters
• Structure of RS Sessions: What We Do and When We Do It
• Break
• How to "BE" a Reflective Supervisor: Skills and Strategies to Try
• DVD Example and Discussion
• Self-Reflection: My Personal Strengths and Needs as a Reflective Supervisor

Tomlin, 2016
Some terms we use.....

• Reflective Functioning
• Reflection
• Reflective Practice
• Reflective Supervision

Reflective Functioning

• A human mental capacity.
• The ability to recognize mental states (feelings, intentions, beliefs) in yourself and others and to link them to behaviors.
• Has meaning making purpose: I/She/He did this behavior/action because of this feeling, want, belief.....

Reflective Functioning

• Innate capacity
• Grown through social experiences
• RF may underpin parent’s ability to take a child’s perspective, wonder about child’s experience
Reflection

• “Stepping back from the immediate, intensive experience of hands-on work and taking the time to wonder what the experience really means.” (Parlarkian, 2001)

Reflection is most possible when we:

• Have dedicated time
• Slow down
• Suspend certainty

Reflective Practice

• “Able to examine one’s thoughts and feelings related to professional and personal responses within the infant and family field.” (MI-AIMH)

• “A process of carefully considering the qualities and characteristics of one’s ideas and/or actions that goes beyond the simple application of professional knowledge” (Schon in Summers & Chazan-Cohen, 2012).
Why Reflective Practice Matters

Reflection

• builds relationships
• promotes self-regulation, problem-solving capacity
• promotes learning, self-awareness and personal growth
• builds skills—way of being, specific strategies
• provides Self-Care—Reduce burn out and provider turn over; vicarious trauma

In reflective practice we:

❖ Think differently so we can act differently
❖ Apply knowledge and skills
❖ Integrate in a meaningful way new knowledge and strategies (Gatti & Watson, 2011)

Reflective Supervision/Consultation

• “A collaborative partnership for professional growth that improves program quality and practice by cherishing strengths and partnering around vulnerabilities to generate growth.” (Shahmoon-Shanok, 1991).

• Or more, simply, “a relationship for learning”
The Reflective Supervisory Relationship is consistently structured, shown by:

- Regularity
- Collaborative Partnership
- Reflection

(Emily Fenichel)

The supervisor is safe and containing, shown by:

- Clear Communication/Honesty
- Dependability
- Respectful and Confidential with information
- Compassionate

Relationship-based Practice

“Values early developing relationships between parents and young children as the foundation for optimal growth and change; directs all services to nurture early developing relationships within families; values the working relationship between parents and professionals as the instrument for therapeutic change; values all relationship experiences, past and present, as significant to one’s capacity to nurture and support others.” (MI-AIMH)
Relationships….

are the medium through which intervention is delivered – change occurs through the quality of interaction (Kadija Johnston)

Parallel Process: Relationships in Early Childhood Work

Why is RS Needed?

Professional Development/Skill building/Ethical Practice
• Builds bridge from knowledge to applied skills
• Helps providers think more broadly; enhances practice
• Improves Service:
• Helps providers stay grounded; avoid being overwhelmed by the needs of the family, child
• Clarifies boundaries of work; scope of practice
• Lets us use emotion and cognition without overdoing either one
• Supports providers to reduce burn-out, turnover so they can support families
Does RS Work? What evidence do we have?

- In general, good evidence that PRF is connected to child outcomes
- Allows for self-exploration, insight (Forstadt, 2012; Virmani & Ontai, 2010; Weatherston & Barron, 2009)
- Skill building, new ideas (Forstadt, 2012; Watson, et al. 2014)
- Results in higher quality service (Heffron, 2005; Watson, et al., 2014)
- Reduce stress, improve thinking (Watson, et al., 2014)
- Increase in positive interactions with child (Virmani, et al. 2013)
- Increase in job satisfaction (Forstadt, 2012)
- Reduction in expulsion of young children (Gilliam & Shahar, 2006)

What happens in RS Session?

The supervisor and the supervisee work together in shared activities, including:
- Noticing: Observe, Listen, Focusing Attention
- Wondering: Being Curious, Suspending Judgment and Certainty
- Responding: Thinking and Feeling
- Reflecting: Slowing Down, Attending to experience of oneself and others
  (Weatherston)

Sample Formats

Example 1:
- Greeting and checking on immediate needs
- Observing the supervisee's general mood and tone
- Recapping discussion from last session
- Jointly set agenda
- Closing and Plan for next meeting
  (Heffron & Murch, 2011)

Example 2:
- Preparation
- Greeting/reconnecting
- Opening the dialogue/finding the agenda
- Telling the story/focusing on the details
- Understanding perspectives/generating hypotheses
- Considering next steps
- Closing and post supervision reflection
  (Gilkerson & Shamoon-Shanok, 2000)
Break!

See you back in 15 minutes

Five KEY ROLES for Reflective Supervisors
(Heffron & Murch, 2010)
• Support staff member’s development.
• Provide a “secure base” where staff can safely explore the meaning of their work.
• Maintaining program ideals and standards, quality assurance, and safety.
• Facilitating open communication and effective team functioning.
• Providing program leadership.

Video Example and Discussion

More skills to watch for:
• listen carefully
• demonstrate concern and empathy
• promote reflection
• observe and highlight the parent/child relationship
• respect role boundaries
• respond thoughtfully in emotionally intense interactions
• understand, regulate, and use one’s own feelings

(Gilkerson & Taylor Ritzler, 2005)
Getting Started with a Supervisee
(Heffron & Murch, 2010)

- Explore past experiences with supervision—what worked, what did not?
- Talk about how feedback will be given
- Be clear about differences—invite discussion
- Establish expectations—logistics about meetings, preparation for meetings, confidentiality
- Explain what supervision will be like!
- Model collaboration

Thoughts about Supervisee Feelings
(Heller and Gilkerson, 2010)

- Supervisor supports to increase awareness of one’s own internal states and triggers
  - What's going on inside you?
  - What’s being stirred up as you hear this story, situation
  - What was your “temperature” as this situation happened?
- Supervisor responses to modulate strong feelings of supervisee/group
  - I'd like to hear more about how being with this family is for you
  - I can tell you feel deeply about this work. Where might these feelings come from?

Evaluating RS/RC

- Rating scales
  - Supervisor
  - Supervisee
- Research
  - RIOS
Next Steps: My Plan for Future Learning

• What questions do you still have about reflection, reflective practice and supervision?

What specific strategies or concepts from this discussion about reflection, reflective practice, and reflective supervision were most helpful to you?

• Think about the skills discussed today that underlie reflective practice—which are strongest for you? Which skills do you feel you need to enhance?

• How will you apply what has been learned in your daily work?

• What do you need—knowledge, resources, other supports—to implement strategies discussed today?

• What kind of learning methods would you prefer—reading, DVD, additional face to face training, reflective supervision/mentoring experiences?

Questions

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Reading List/References


Reflective Practice: Skills for Supervisors

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