

BENCHMARK PERSONAL SUPERVISION MODEL

Benchmark Personal Supervision Model Assignment

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Abstract

This work will be a brief look at Solution Focused Supervision as a foundational theoretical approach, Integrated Developmental Model as a developmental approach, Discrimination Model as a supervision process model, and thinking about how a Biblical Worldview could be integrated in the supervisory process. My growth as a counselor educator supervisor and one who is well equipped to be an equipper of future counselors is enhanced by the journey of this writing. The content below points supervisors towards fulfilling their role as a tool for growth that takes on various characteristics throughout the duration of the supervisory relationship to best enhance the strengths of the supervisee and to promote the supervisee's abilities to best serve their clients as they develop their professional identities.

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Foundational Theoretical Model

Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) is the modality I align with in my counseling work. It seems a natural progression that Solution Focused Supervision (SFS) is my ideal model as I grow into my supervision work. SFBT was the product of many years of work and research by Steve deShazer, Insoo Kim Berg, and their team at the Brief Family Therapy Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It began as “Brief Therapy: Focused Problem Resolution (deShazer, 1986, pg. 1). Selekman and Todd (1995) took the valuable work of SFBT and saw a need for a supervision competent leading to the birth of SFS.

An aspect of SF that is powerful is the idea of “collaborating with supervisees for solutions” while also giving unambiguous feedback that is helpful to the supervisee (Shelton & Zazzarino, 2020, pg. 6). Shurts (2015) talks about SFS as being a “prominent model for contemporary clinicians and advisors” due to the potential benefit of needing less time to accomplish its goals (pg. 12). Selekman and Todd (1995) shared they found Steve deShazer’s (a key founder of Solution Focused Brief Therapy) miracle question and skeleton key concept, of do something different, as a real value in the supervisory relationship.

The miracle question helped by asking the supervisee if a miracle occurred between now and the next session that brought about change, what difference would you expect to see and what helped the difference to have occurred? The skeleton key concept of do something different helped to prompt the supervisee to think outside of the box and do something different even if it

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seemed a little strange. Selekman and Todd (1995) gave a great illustration where Selekman swapped roles with a client and began to ask the client for expert advice on the very issues the client was struggling with (pg. 26).

Selekman and Todd (1995) shared a thought regarding a potential limitation of the SFS modality. They posed the dilemma of using a positive reinforcing of strengths approach if a supervisee had the wrong goals, a lack of clinical knowledge, or had the “tell me what to do” mindset. When these situations arise, Selekman and Todd (1995) said the supervisor should not assume the supervisee does not have the knowledge and utilize SFS skills to draw the supervisee’s strengths out or it becomes apparent to the supervisor there is a deficiency to be addressed (pg. 28-29).

Presbury et al. (1999), talked about the desire for supervisees to become self-monitoring, collaborative in the supervision process, developing a curiosity about the therapist they can become and are becoming through their professional development, and to see the supervisory relationship as a tool of discovery rather than the typical fear of being negatively judged that is often associated with supervision (pg. 148). One of the authors of Presbury et al. (1999) (McKee) often shares with supervisees, “What you are doing seems to be working well; now you just need to do it on purpose” (pg. 150). This idea is right in line with SFS ideals and is a great example of being strengths based in the supervisory process. Some additional valuable thoughts from Presbury et al. (1999) was 1) a thought on opening a supervisory session with, “I am wondering what about your work with your client would be most productive for us to focus on today?”; 2) a thought to steer the supervisee towards their strengths, “What aspects of your counseling have you noticed getting better since we last met?” or “Tell me about the best thing you did with your

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client this week”; 3) in the area where the supervisee wants the supervisor’s assurance ask, “As you begin to get better at dealing with this situation, how will you know that you have become good enough at it so you can take it on your own?” then asking, “What will you be doing differently” or “When you get to the point when you will not need to deal with this issue in supervision anymore, how will you know?” (pg. 151). These authors share lots of great thoughts to help the supervisor to promote growth in their supervisees using great questions.

An additional thought that is powerful from Presbury et al. (1999) is the directive to use presuppositional language rather than using subjunctive language. They give the example of “Can you think of a time...” verses “Tell me about a time when...” The subjunctive language indicates it may or may not have occurred where the presuppositional assumes it has taken place, and I need you to tell me about it (pg. 152). Presbury et al. (1999) ended their work by stating that “Solution-focused supervision, characterized by collaboration, encouragement, illumination, and discovery, encourages supervisees to develop an inner vision” (pg. 154). Helping supervisees to have an inner source of strength that is not built on the supervisor’s personality or strengths is key to the supervisee’s ongoing success.

Developmental Approach

Integrated Development Model (Stoltenberg, 1981) is the developmental Approach that I have chosen to think through. Stoltenberg and McNeill (2010) bring this approach to the attention of supervisors in their work. They have developed an approach where there are Levels of progression (i.e., 1, 2, 3, & 3i). Level 1 is where a practitioner may be a novice generally as a counselor or may be learning a new skill where their knowledge and expertise is strong in other areas of practice but not in the new modality or skill. While in a Level 1 status, a practitioner is

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typically dependent on the guidance of their supervisor until the supervisee develops their own confidence in their competence regarding the subject matter being learned. A Level one supervisee is often very motivated to accomplish the goal of supervision to progress and achieve their independence to practice solo (pg. 52).

McNeill and Stoltenberg (2016) see eight areas where supervisees will need to demonstrate skills (i.e., Intervention Skills Competence, Assessment Techniques, Interpersonal Assessment, Client Conceptualization, Individual Differences, Theoretical Orientation, Treatment Plans and Goals, and Professional Ethics). The *Intervention Skills Competence* considers the ability of the supervisee while considering their theoretical orientation and familiarity with a modality being learned and the dynamics of their client (pg. 39). The *Assessment Techniques* considers a supervisee's comfort with utilizing assessment tools (pg. 39-40). The *Interpersonal Assessment* looks at how well the supervisee can use their own personality to prompt a response to help gauge aspects of the client (pg. 40). The *Client Conceptualization* helps to get a feel for the supervisee's abilities to have a well-rounded understanding of who their clients are and what steps will be needed to affect change (pg. 40). The *Individual Difference* idea is to help gauge the ability of a supervisee to be aware of variations between themselves and their clients and then to see what steps they take to mitigate those differences (pg. 40). The *Theoretical Orientation* of a supervisee will drive what stances and actions they take. It is important to understand where the supervisee is coming from and that they have a grasp of the modalities being used (pg. 40). The *Treatment Plans and Goals* are useful to gain an understanding of how the supervisee sees a case and in what direction to go to move the client towards their preferred future outcome (pg. 40-41). The area of *Professional Ethics* is one

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of crucial importance to ensure the supervisee is working to integrate ethical practice with their clients (pg. 41).

In Level 2 Stoltenberg and McNeill (2010) talked about when confidence levels have increased, this allows the supervisee to move from solely focusing on being proficient with a skill to beginning to see the personalities of their clients and to pick up on the individual nuances that exist from client to client. Noticing these differences will help the supervisee to develop better case conceptualizations. An interesting thought shared was that sometimes ideas may seem too simplistic as a supervisee progresses through Level 2 and be a missed opportunity that would most likely have been utilized as a Level 1. A true dilemma that may be present in Level 2 is a supervisee's desire for independence and therefore fail to report certain uncertainties to their supervisor. This has potential of leading to a mistake with their clients (pg. 52).

In Level 3 Stoltenberg and McNeill (2010) talked about a supervisee beginning to utilize "insightful self-awareness". When this is combined with the client awareness developed in Level 2, there is an increase in efficiency and effectiveness. Level 3 supervisees are now able to develop an individualized personality about their work, have a confidence that is supported by having developed their skills and knowledge base, and move into the realm of consultation rather than that of instruction from their supervisor (pg. 53). Level 3i (integrated) is a level of expansion of personal understanding and growth (maturing) that allows the therapist to begin to see things through their own creative lens and put pieces of the counseling puzzles together on their own in with their clients (pg. 53). As Bernard and Goodyear (2019) pointed out, it is crucial that supervisors be aware of the level a supervisee is at and to help them to continue a path of growth (pg. 36)

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Supervision Process Model

The supervision process model I align with most currently is the Discrimination Model. Bernard (1979) puts forward that supervisors need a range of roles to accommodate the relationship with their supervisees, framework from which to operate, and guidelines to assist the supervisor in making decisions regarding what role is needed from them in each moment of supervision and from what approach the supervisor should be interacting with their supervisees (pg. 67). Bernard (1979) introduced the supervision world to the Discrimination Model and said that utilization of all three roles (teacher, counselor, and consultant) as key components throughout the supervision process is needed. Supervisors are often apt to find one of the three roles they are more confident in and may tend to approach supervision from this angle alone. Without being prompted to actively look for the specific role that best serves the supervisee and the supervisee's clients may lead to a situation where a supervisor is shortsighted and not fulfilling all aspects needed by their supervisees (pg. 64). Bernard (1979) discusses the counselor's roles as having three main areas that are called 1) process ((aspects that separate counseling from a casual conversation) pg. 61-61), 2) conceptualization ((understanding what the client is saying with immediacy and in the interim between sessions) pg. 62), and 3) personalization (communication style, interactions with clients, helping supervisee to be comfortable in the development of their counseling style) pg. 62-63). Brejcha (2021) helped their readers to consider that personalization helps the supervisee to become better aware of how their personhood may influence the "therapeutic relationship" (pg. 11).

Bernard and Goodyear (2019) point out the need for the various categorical aspects, regarding the discrimination model, are fluid and the supervisor will vary in what dynamics are

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being used throughout supervision sessions and within various moments of each session (pgs. 47). Crunk and Barden (2017) share a similar thought by stating that the foci and roles “might change within a supervision session and across sessions” (pg. 65). Bernard and Goodyear (2019) make a valid point about supervision saying that the variance of techniques between supervisees is crucial because what may bore one supervisee may distress the next, so using the appropriate foci and roles for individual supervisees are important to the success of supervision and client outcomes (pg. 47). Crunk and Barden (2017) describe the discrimination model as having a duality of purpose (i.e., assessment of supervisee’s skills and meeting them where they are to meet their needs and goals) (pg. 65).

Borders and Brown (2022) speak to the various roles that a supervisor utilizes in the discrimination model and shared that there are various aspects that exist within each. They mentioned that the teaching aspect is indeed a critical part of the supervisory relationship. A good supervisor is not typically using “lectures or tells” but draws the supervisee into a thought process of discovery and a variety of teaching skills to help the supervisee to gain the improvements desired (pg. 8). The utilization of various learning theories and remembering that individuals can only retain so much within a session are also important ideas to remember (pg. 8). In the counselor role, the supervisor makes use of counseling skills to promote growth in their supervisee while not being in the role as the supervisee’s counselor. The counselor role may consider the emotions of the supervisee but only as it pertains to the supervisee’s relationship to the clients and their role as counselor (pg. 9). The consultant role is often used to help the supervisee from a coming-along-side stance rather than taking on the authoritarian position in the relationship. The consultant role allows the supervisee to be actively engaged in a collaboration

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of forward momentum they will be able to use when the supervisor is not present. A truly authoritarian stance by a supervisor may leave the supervisee without a much-needed ability to individually reason through events that will arise in counseling sessions (pg. 10).

Biblical Worldview

In my private practice as a counselor, I have a section in my intake that states that I am a Christian...It is not only some place I go or something I do but who I am. I then ask clients to check a box beside 'Please include Christian principles...' or 'Please only use counseling theory...' Even when a client checks to 'Please include Christian principles' in our sessions together, I begin our first session with a scaling question (i.e., On a scale of 1-10 (1 not important with 10 being the most important) where do you see yourself currently and where do you desire to be on this scale regarding Christianity) to ensure they meant to check to include Christian principles on their intake form. When a client confirms their desire to have Christian principles included in our session, I ask them if they would like for us to begin our time together with a prayer and if there is something specific, they would like me to pray about, if they would like to pray for us, or if they would like me to handle it.

I have taken this same stance in the supervision process. When a supervisee sees the world through the lens of a Christian Worldview, it is a reasonable expectation that a supervisee would desire and benefit from being encouraged from their faith system that is strengths based. It should be an oddity for a person who identifies as a Christian to not want encouragement from their Christian Worldview. If non-inclusion were the desire of the Christian supervisee, then acting in accord with their desires, with no judgement, and encouraging them with supervision techniques, such as those found within SFS, would be the appropriate stance to proceed with in

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the supervisor/supervisee relationship. However, if the Christian supervisee does indicate a desire to have Christian principles included in supervision, it can be an asset to the supervisor/supervisee relationship.

An aspect, that cannot be overstated, of the Christian supervisor/supervisee relationship is the capacity to draw upon the power of being Spirit filled and empowered by God's Word. Holeman (2002) said, "Through competent training and supervision, Christian counselors learn how to bring the power and compassion of Christ to bear on their clients' dilemmas and life" (pg. 659). This is not an effort to teach a Christian counselor to use the counseling relationship to evangelize, however, it is to help the Christian therapist to be better equipped to assist a client who is a fellow Christian to be empowered through the client's worldview system. Training with Spiritually grounded strengths is powerful to help the Christian supervisee to utilize their attributes as a follower of Christ to stand before their clients with confidence and compassion.

Hebrews 6:1a "Therefore we must progress beyond the elementary instructions about Christ and move on to maturity..." (NET). The Hebrews writer had just told his audience that many of them should be teachers who are eating the meat (more advanced knowledge) of the Word of God but had remained immature and were still on the milk (simple knowledge). A real value of having a fellow Christian as a supervisor is to allow for opportunities to help supervisees see their strengths in Christ (growth and maturity individually as a believer and as a practitioner) and to have the foundation for mutual respect, integrity, growth, empowerment, etc. (in both the supervisory relationship and their relationships with their clients) that goes far beyond any ethics codes, expectations of a governing body, or of a counseling field affiliated organizations.

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Some key foundational attributes of the Christian that will affect their work as supervisors, teachers, and therapists are found in Galatians 5:22-26 (“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also behave in accordance with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, being jealous of one another” (NET)). When viewing these verses, it becomes apparent that the attributes such as love, joy, peace... are strengths that all would desire were present in their therapist who would be equipped with an integration of the strengths foundationally supported by the Christian faith and who are also well versed in counseling theory. The supervisor/supervisee and the counselor/counselee relationships would be well equipped for success when both areas are well nurtured. Both areas being nurtured will promote growth and positive change that will help the supervisee move towards their preferred future desires and for the supervisor to be well equipped to come-along-side of their clients to help the counselee to move towards their preferred future desires.

Conclusion

This has been a brief look at Solution Focused Supervision as a foundational theoretical approach, Integrated Developmental Model as a developmental approach, Discrimination Model as a supervision process model, and thinking about how a Biblical Worldview could be integrated in the supervisory process. The overarching idea seen in this work is to help grow my development as a counselor educator supervisor so I will be skilled to come-along-side of my supervisees and help them develop their strengths to be well equipped and empowered for a strong professional presence of care and compassion as they work with clients.

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