

Supervision and NVC

Introduction

We are a group of people who came together to talk about how to preserve the integrity of NVC consciousness and practice in ourselves and throughout the NVC Network. We recognize that despite our decades of experience of integrating NVC into our work, there are times when we ourselves get stuck, or we are anticipating future challenges, and know that we benefit from talking things through with a trusted colleague. We believe this would be true for every practitioner of NVC.

We want to normalize the idea that some form of supervision is both helpful and necessary, describe ways of making this happen and encourage people to participate in ways that reflect the partnership paradigm and 'power with'.

And we tread carefully in talking about supervision, knowing that for some people, the very word evokes unwelcome notions of power-over and hierarchy.

What are we wanting to encourage?

We encourage everyone in the network to engage in a regular process of reflective practice with one or more fellow practitioners or a trained supervisor.

This means that a practitioner has a safe space in which to speak freely, in confidence, about any aspect of their work that is either interesting, challenging, affecting, undermining, or frightening and receive a supportive and appropriately challenging response.

It is an opportunity not only to reflect on what has already happened, but also to think aloud about upcoming aspects of work that may be stimulating old wounds or fears or that involve people about whom you have 'enemy images.' It also offers space for harvesting, mourning and celebration and reviewing learning edges. Hearing oneself reflect out loud, regardless of whether there's a problem to be explored, is in itself a valuable learning experience.

We believe that this is fundamental to maintaining the collective practice of NVC consciousness and will support the development of skills, widen mindsets, and encourage ongoing learning. It's a way of ensuring that our practice is true to the ethos and principles of NVC.

How might this happen?

This safe space to explore NVC-related work might:

- be a formal or informal arrangement
- happen regularly or when the need arises
- be supported by a peer, a more experienced practitioner/colleague, a counsellor, or therapist familiar with NVC or someone trained in supervision and with NVC awareness
- be 1-1 or in a group.

Each arrangement has its own advantages and limitations.

Informal support from a peer

Advantages

It's easy to organise. The individual practitioner will choose a peer they feel comfortable with. It will most probably be done on a mutual basis, with each offering support and challenge to the other when needed.

Possible limitations

Although talking out loud to someone is valuable, the chosen colleague may not be experienced enough to be helpful and there's a danger that the conversation becomes too cosy.

How to make the best of informal support from an individual

- Make it a regular event
- Agree a specific time and duration and be very clear with your supporter that you want to talk through an issue.
- If you are in the listener/supporter role, resist the temptation to mix your own challenges into the conversation.

Informal support from a peer group

Such a self-managed group would meet regularly to offer empathic support and challenge for each member's experiences.

Depending on the size of the group and the frequency with which it meets, not every participant will have their individual time to talk about their work.

Advantages

Having more than one person offering support, curiosity and challenge will increase the likelihood that you will think more widely and deeply and see things from different perspectives.

Possible limitations

The informality may lessen the rigour of the reflective practice.

How to make the best of informal support from a peer group

- Meet regularly
- Agree how the group will run and the way time will be allocated
- Decide who will have individual time and manage it with care
- Allow a minimum of 30 mins per person
- Find ways of building trust – for example by making a check-in a meaningful authentic experience, adhering to group guidelines on timing and roles
- Consider whether the group might allocate someone to the role of managing the time and activity
- Create an agreement about how to respond to conflict if it arises

Formal supervision

At the more formal end of the spectrum, are the occasional or regular scheduled individual or group supervision sessions, most probably involving payment, with either an experienced NVC colleague, or someone outside the NVC community, such as a therapist or coach supervisor who also has some knowledge of NVC.

Advantages

Someone trained in supervision may bring additional skills to the conversation

The degree of formality may give greater weight to the process of reflective practice.

Possible limitations

The request for payment may require extra energy to find ways of supporting those for whom payment would be an obstacle. For example, exchange, community support, concessions, fund raising, some people pay more

How to make the best of formal support whether it be 1-1 or a group session

Ensure that the structure remains flexible enough to maintain the aliveness of NVC consciousness.

Allow sufficient time to explore matters thoroughly. 60 minutes for an individual and 90 minutes for a group is usually needed.

Establish a contract with the supervisor. A good working alliance is built on trust, respect and goodwill between people, and a contract provides a holding frame in which the relationship can develop. This would be in the form of basic agreements on how, where, and how often the work would be conducted, and if any payment is agreed, how, how much, and when the supervisee would pay the supervisor. It would also outline conditions under which the work could be terminated by each party.

Agree a structure for sessions, based on the understanding that they are not a place for a chat nor for the supervisor to speak at any length about themselves.

The **CLEAR** model offers a helpful outline:

Check In + Contract

A brief **Check In** alerts the supervisor to any other factors affecting the work, for example if a supervisee is recovering from covid, or has a toothache, or a recent bereavement. This is the human connection side of the work, and key to the developing trust between the people.

The **Contract** is a brief outline of how the time will pan out.

Listening: This is where the supervisee lays out their issue and the supervisor listens

Exploration: The bulk of the session will be a joint exploration of what the supervisee has brought

Action: What learning will the supervisee take away and what, if anything, will they commit to doing differently.

Review: Allow a few minutes at the end of the session for the supervisee to reflect on their experience of the session.

Over to you

This is a working document; issue 1: 10/10/22

We anticipate updating and amending it. We would welcome your feedback and experience. We hope it will inspire more people to include supervision as part of their practice.

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