



PSDP—Resources and Tools: Bells that ring: an overview of a systemic model of group supervision

Introduction

This tool gives you a brief overview of the ‘bells that ring’ systemic model of group supervision, designed to be used as a summary and / or handout during sessions.

Other tools focusing on this model are also available, including a short film that shows a group using it in practice, and a presentation that offers more detailed information.

This method of group supervision is particularly useful for helping people to:

think independently

feel positive about themselves, the people they work with, and their practice

be more open to learning by supporting them in their role and contributing to a culture of openness and transparency.

Rationale

The bells that ring method allows the participants of group supervision to experience acting in different roles so that different perspectives can be explored.

It is different from other models in that it aims to develop a specifically systemic and strengths-based stance.

Theoretical concepts

This is a method that draws on systemic ideas such as curiosity, appreciative enquiry and social GRRRAACCEEESSS (aspects of personal and social identity which include gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, education, ethnicity, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation and spirituality – Burnham, 2013). It also draws on feminist and narrative theory (Proctor, 1997).

Principles

The purpose of having a presenter in conversation with a consultant, with a separate observer group, is to create the conditions that will allow for division and difference of opinion to occur so that listening and taking an appreciative stance can lead to new understandings about a situation.

The process

1. The supervisor assigns roles

The supervisor is the leader of the session and assigns the roles of presenter, consultant, observers and action planner. The supervisor also keeps time and prompts the consultant to ask curious questions of the presenter.

2. The presenter presents an issue, dilemma or practice scenario

The presenter tells their story with the aim of establishing what they need help with and how the group can assist. They might want to use a genogram to describe a family, or team map or simply words to describe a colleague or supervisee.

The presenter must outline what has been done so far - strategies etc. - what worked, any goals, risks, issues and so on.

3. The consultant questions the presenter

As the observers watch, the consultant explores what would be useful for the presenter and, together, they help to clarify and deconstruct the issue.

4. The observers listen to the conversation

The observers watch and listen to the unfolding conversation between presenter and consultant, but do not engage directly, like thoughtful, constructively critical friends.

They note their thoughts on themes that arise, the role of the worker, what they liked and what they'd like to see less of, and what bells are 'ringing'.

Once the conversation is over, the consultant asks for feedback.

5. The action planner's role is to note:

- > what the presenter wants
- > what the challenges are.

The whole group then reflects on the process.



Reflective questions:

What themes did you notice?	What images or metaphors did you notice and what words stood out?	What do you feel and where in your body do you feel it?
What did you like about what you saw and heard?	What do you appreciate about the presenter and the other people in the presentation?	What would you like to see more or less of?
What relationships are getting constructed? How do they relate to each other?	What do they want from each other and how are they respecting each other?	How does what you have heard connect to you professionally or personally?
What rings a bell in your work context?	How has what you have heard changed you or your thinking?	

Ground rules

It's important that presenter and consultant have a discussion free from interruption from the observers. Similarly, when the observers discuss their observations, presenter and consultant should be invited to listen with curiosity.

References


Proctor K (1997) 'The Bells That Ring: A Process for Group Supervision; or What to do When a Client Slips From Your Grasp and Becomes Owned by Everyone in the Room!' *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy* 18 (4) 217-220.

Dugmore P, Partridge K, Sethi I and Krupa-Flasinska M (2018) 'Systemic supervision in statutory social work in the UK: systemic rucksacks and bells that ring'. *European Journal of Social Work*.



We want to hear more about your experiences of using PSDP resources and tools. Connect via Twitter using #PSDP to share your ideas and hear how other practice supervisors use the resources.

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