



# PSDP—Resources and Tools: Intervision model of peer-led group reflection

## Introduction

‘Intervision’ is a form of group supervision. The term *intervision* is related to *supervision* but distinct from it. Rather than seeing others and their work from above (*super* = above or beyond), the perspective taken in *intervision* is from within (*inter* = between, among, in the midst of, mutually, reciprocally or together).

As the term suggests, *intervision* is a peer-led method that does not rely on an (external) expert acting as facilitator. The various roles are undertaken by all participants who will ideally swap roles from session to session. Therefore, *intervision* is defined by its group mode, a process with specified roles, the reciprocity and reversibility of all roles and the focus on professional practice situations or challenges.

The method is designed for peer-led reflective groups and practice supervisors who could support teams to use this method. If you would like to help create and offer a safe, reflective space for your team, or across teams, then this method would be useful.

The aims of the method are for participants to:

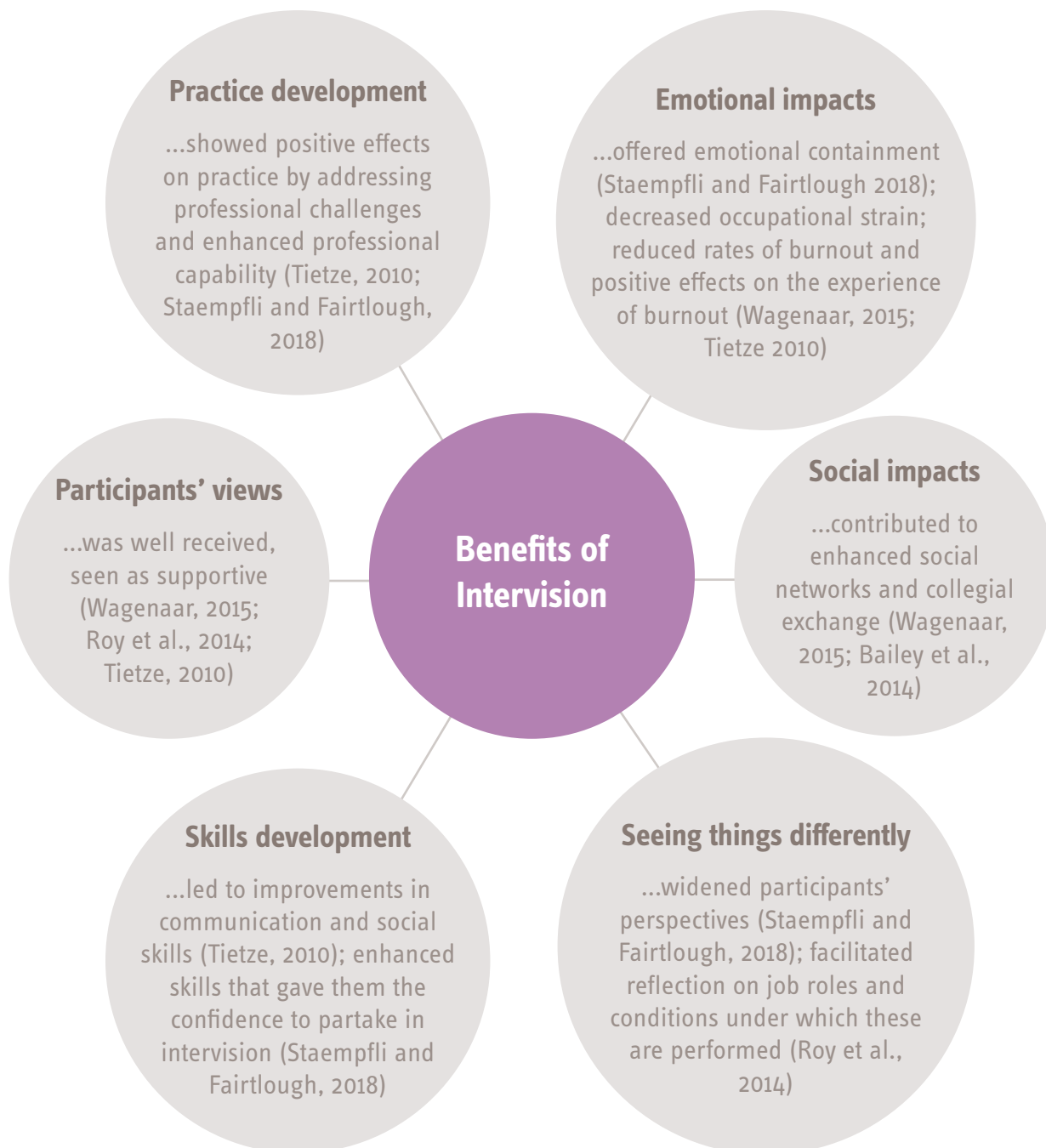
- > support each other
- > widen their perspectives (e.g. regarding professional challenges)
- > support and contain each other emotionally
- > develop skills in relation to questioning and expressing curiosity
- > develop a shared understanding, trust and openness.

Creating a space for reflection can help social workers take time out and slow down to consider their practice, get support with planning for tasks, or develop considered professional judgements.

The multiple perspectives created by the reflecting team are aligned with the concept of curiosity and ‘not knowing’ within family therapy, seeking to move from linear understanding to greater complexity, and from certainty to uncertainty (Staempfli and Fairtlough, 2018).

There is little research on *intervision*, and studies are small and qualitative in nature. But, so far, almost entirely positive outcomes are reported (Staempfli and Fairtlough, 2018; Wagenaar, 2015; Roy et al., 2014; Tietze, 2010).

## An overview of the benefits of using intervision



### Caution: integrating theory and practice

...little evidence of supporting participants to integrate theories and research with practice (Staempfli and Fairtlough, 2018)

## Principles

The basic principles are that one person presents, one person facilitates, one takes notes and the rest reflect as a team on the presented challenge. At no point is there direct interaction between the reflecting team and the presenter. The facilitator guards ground rules and time, and participants swap roles in subsequent sessions. We recommend that you plan for 90 minutes, even though the process below can, with experience, be undertaken in an hour.

## Ground rules

We are aiming to:

- > create an open, non-judgmental space and value curiosity (note the following kinds of statements, which are open, non-judgmental and express curiosity: I wonder whether...; I hypothesise that...; I think that...; Could this be a case of...; My understanding of [theory / research / value / policy / local practice, etc.]
- > consider multiple perspectives and value diversity
- > be respectful of each other and pay attention to verbal / non-verbal language
- > listen with curiosity and an open mind without interrupting other group members when it is not our turn to speak
- > pay attention to who has or has not spoken (including yourself) and allow others who have not yet expressed their ideas to speak
- > be mindful of differences within the group regarding culture, ethnicity, race, age, experience and gender - the power dynamic which results or plays out from this may need acknowledging in the group.

## The process

### Roles

Case presenter, facilitator, note taker and reflecting team.

### 1. Group: deciding on roles (2 minutes)

Who wants to present a situation? Who facilitates and who takes notes? It is helpful if participants can think of a challenging situation in advance.

**Tip:** Remember, practice situations that left you with a feeling of unease, or generated more questions, than answers, could enable the most valuable learning.

### 2. Presenter: presentation of a challenging situation (5 - 10 minutes)

The person presenting the situation, describes their challenge: What exactly happened? What was difficult? How did I feel? What would I have liked?

### 3. Presenter: my question for the intervision session (2 minutes)

The presenting person notes a main question in relation to the situation on a flip chart or whiteboard.

**Tip:** The participants should be able to see this throughout the session.

#### 4. Participants (without presenter) - reflections on situation (15 minutes)

Each participant shares their observations, suppositions, fantasies or insights: Why might this situation have evolved the way it did? What underlying issues might play a role? Why did the people involved behave the way they did?

The minute taker notes briefly the ideas (one sheet of paper per participant – ideally different colours) and puts these in the middle of the group).

**Tip:** The presenter may find that they remember additional information, or the group members have more questions. Hold on to these and, as a group, work with the information you have (as in practice, this tends to be incomplete).

#### 5. Presenter: feedback on reflections (5 minutes)

The case presenter chooses the notes that resonate the most with them and gives a rationale for this choice. The remaining notes are removed.

**Tip:** Remember, this is not about the people who have provided the ideas, but about the ideas themselves. Which ideas would you as presenter like the group to explore further?

#### 6. Participants (without presenter) - reflection on the question of the presenter in relation to the key points they chose (15 minutes)

Following up on the ideas that resonated with the presenter, each participant shares their ideas in relation to answers or solutions to the question posed. The minute taker notes briefly the ideas (one sheet of paper per participant – ideally different colours) and puts these in the middle of the group. Again, the note taker takes short notes (see above).

### **7. Presenter: feedback on ideas (5 minutes)**

The presenter chooses the notes that resonate most with them and explains why. The remaining notes are removed.

### **8. Summarising by the case presenter (5 minutes)**

The presenter summarises their learning and experience (I realised that...; I would like to try...; I noticed that...) and thanks the group.

### **9. Each participant sums up their learning**

This could be a learning slogan, a maxim or principle, or the most important thing to take away.


## References

Staempfli A and Fairtlough A (2019)  
'Intervision and professional development:  
an exploration of a peer-group reflection  
method in social work education'. *The British  
Journal of Social Work* 49 (5) 1254-1273.



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