



PSDP—Resources and Tools: Using ‘rich pictures’ to further develop supervision skills

Introduction

This learning tool has been designed to help you explore how you would like to develop your supervision skills further. If you have accessed resources in other sections of this website you may well have already done quite a bit of thinking about how you engage with supervisees in supervision discussions. For this reason, we wanted to give you the opportunity to try something a little different for this final tool. We have therefore structured it around a creative way of recording your ideas and thoughts, known as a 'rich picture'.

The learning tool will give you some overview information about what rich pictures are, and why they are useful. You will then be given suggestions about how you can use this as a method of evaluating what you do in supervision, and why and how you would like to develop your skills further. We recommend that, in order to get the most out of this activity, you show your rich picture to a supportive colleague or line manager and engage in a discussion about what you have learnt.

It is important at the outset to highlight that the quality of the drawing is irrelevant. It is the thinking and drawing process (followed by conversation) which is helpful.

If time is tight, you might want to read through the tool and then identify time later when you can complete the activities.

What is a rich picture?

A rich picture is a systems tool devised by Checkland (2000) to help analyse information differently. It is a quick-thinking method using ideas and imagery specifically aimed at bringing out emotional content.

‘However, it is important that the picture should not structure the situation (as in a logic model or process chain). The whole point of a rich picture is to reflect on as much going on as possible without privileging, predetermining, or presuming a particular point of view.’

www.betterevaluation.org/en/evaluation-options/richpictures

Task one

Please read [this brief note on rich pictures](#), taken from the better evaluation website. This will help you get a sense of what rich pictures are and how they might be represented on the page. You will see that they provide you with a way of thinking more creatively and moving beyond linear thinking.

Some of the ideas introduced in the piece you have just read might be familiar to you, particularly if you have used mind maps or ecomaps before. There are some similarities between mind maps and rich pictures. The notable difference between a mind map and a rich picture is that, whilst a mind map may use words and attempt to bring order to our thinking, a rich picture is largely about images and feelings. Thus, though words may be used in a rich picture, it is the process of drawing that's encouraged.

Task two

Now that you have gained an overview of what rich pictures are, please click on this [link](#), which gives you more detailed guidance about how to draw one.

Task three

Please take a large, blank sheet of paper and any pens you might want to use and start to draw your own rich picture exploring some or all of the questions below (as they are relevant to you).

1. How do you want to develop further as a practice supervisor?

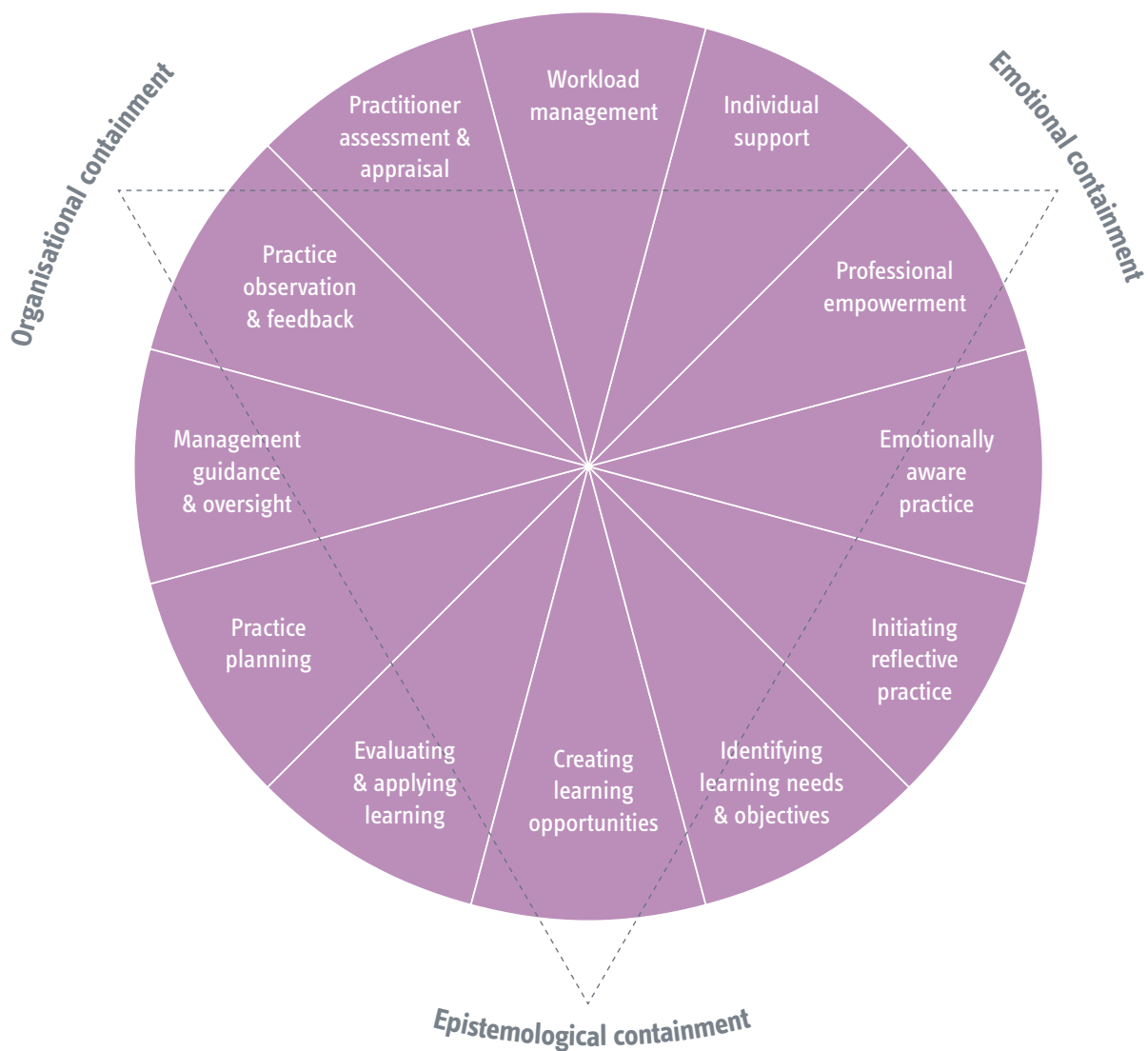
2. How might you engage team members going forward?

3. How will you review existing supervisory relationships

4. What will you do when you start a new supervisory relationship

5. Who (or what process / resources in the organisation) might support you to develop your skills further in each area you have identified? Why? What do you need to do for yourself?

As you think about the questions you might find it useful to use this visual prompt by Fairtlough which features in the 'Holistic containment wheel' learning tool in the 'Your journey to being a practice supervisor' section of the website. The wheel allows you to consider a range of different elements to your role as a practice supervisor, which you might want to develop further.



You might want to set an alarm for 20 minutes and ensure that you have no interruptions during this period to help you think.

As you draw, think about what you are drawing and the symbols or words you are using. Allow yourself to think freely and quickly about all aspects of your role as a practice supervisor, and your professional development. You are encouraged to think about people, processes and professional contexts as you construct this rich picture.

When you have finished your rich picture, put it up somewhere you can see it (if you can). You might want to spend a bit of time thinking about what you have drawn, or just mull it over as and when, as you go about your daily life over the next couple of days. Having time to process and reflect is as important as doing the picture itself. Pay attention to what you notice and what you think about your rich picture during this period.

Task four

Rich pictures are specifically designed to support a process of sense-making and reflection through conversation e.g. the significance of the symbols and why they might be placed where they are.

We recommend that you discuss what you have drawn with a supportive colleague and / or line manager to identify learning, share ideas and gain insights which may not be obvious to you from thinking about your rich picture on your own.

Discussing a rich picture with a supportive 'critical friend' helps us to be curious and

develop new insights and ideas. However, the key thing here is that this needs to be a supportive and safe conversation for you. It's important that you identify a person you trust, if you choose to do this.

The initial discussion should not be task-focused but encourage a free discussion about the images contained in the rich picture and what they represent. We have developed an example showing you how you might structure a conversation with a colleague / line manager based on the rich picture shown in figure 1.

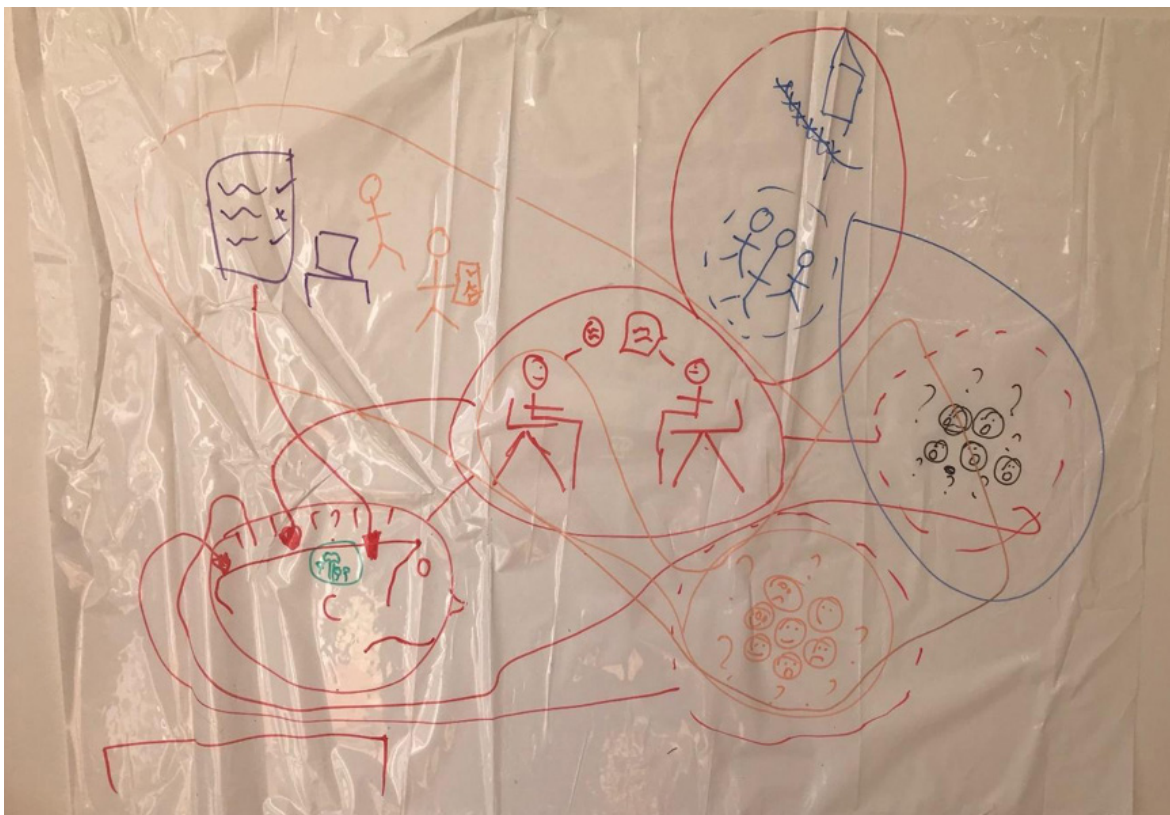


Figure 1: an example of a practice supervisor's rich picture

Q: Tell me about this drawing?

A: I started with the supervisory conversation, the need to stay focused on thinking about a family that the social worker is having difficulty getting into the home to see. This is a regular theme at the moment. The team seem particularly volatile (symbolised by the orange circles) and I am finding the demands of other agencies (the black circles with their mouths open) hard to meet.

Q: What is the significance of the purple rectangle? Looks a bit like a tick list.

A: Exactly, it is. Ofsted are due and every manager above me is racing around filling in lists. As I drew this I realised that the pressure is bearing down on me. My head (bottom left) looks more like an emptying tea cup. I started with a smile on my face but realised that inside I am not always smiling. The green oasis is professional development and the opportunity to grow.

Q: You mentioned that the social worker is having difficulty getting into the family home, what about the crosses with a line through them (in blue)?

A: Yes, it's supposed to represent barbed wire, it feels like there is a no-go area on that estate and especially with one family that we are worried about. I want to make supervision a safe space for the social worker to tell me how she feels about that and what she needs so she can work with the family.

Q: The most striking imagery is the circles in red.

A: Yes, that's deliberate and I am pleased that despite all the pressures around me I do make supervision a containing space where social workers talk to me about the children and families they are working with. I try to compartmentalise the pressures I feel and to keep a welcoming smile on my face while I deal with these pressures.

Q: What about the oasis?

A: I'm pleased it's there and holding its own with the competing pressures. I'd rather it was a landscape or a garden than an oasis which might disappear in a mirage. Think I might draw it differently now and find a space for it in the middle of my rich picture somewhere.

The second stage of the discussion is to spend time thinking about what conclusions, ideas or thoughts the process of discussion has generated for you. You may also want to follow this by moving to explore action planning and identifying what support or actions you need to take to develop further. This could take the form of using your rich picture (or the learning generated from it) as the basis for a discussion to explore your development and support needs with a line manager.

Other ways you can use this tool

You might want to team up with a supportive colleague or with a group of peers to undertake rich pictures as a joint activity.

It can also be helpful to introduce supervisees to the concept of rich pictures and ask them to develop some for any aspect of their practice or work with children and families, for discussion in one-to-one or group supervision.

You could also extend this to ask your team to draw a collective rich picture exploring particular issues like the emotional impact of practice, the challenges and opportunities of multi-professional working, how to enhance poverty-aware, culturally-competent practice, or what helps / hinders evidence-informed practice. As with the exercises in this learning tool, this needs careful facilitation and clear boundaries.




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.

References

Checkland P (2000) 'Soft Systems Methodology: A Thirty Year Retrospective'. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science Syst. Res.* 17 S11–S58. Available online: www.betterevaluation.org/en/evaluation-options/richpictures

Practice Supervisor Development Programme
The Granary Dartington Hall
Totnes Devon TQ9 6EE

tel 01803 867692
email ask@rip.org.uk
 [@researchIP](#) #PSDP

www.practice-supervisors.rip.org.uk

Author: Penny Sturt, Registered Social
Worker and Independent Trainer

Research in Practice is a programme of
The Dartington Hall Trust which is a company
limited by guarantee and a registered charity.
Company No. 1485560 Charity No. 279756
VAT No. 402196875

Registered Office:
The Elmhirst Centre, Dartington Hall,
Totnes TQ9 6EL