

# **Praise for *Coaching Supervision at its BEST***

ILM is pleased to validate *Coaching Supervision at its BEST* as an ideal resource to support the ILM Level 7 Certificate and Diploma in Coaching Supervision qualifications.

*Coaching Supervision at its BEST* is a deeply practical text book which will be great introductory or core reading for a Coaching Supervision qualification at Level 7. It provides an overview of the principles and practice and covers many of the areas within ILM L7 assessment criteria and indicative content. It provides an extremely useful and accessible guide to coaching supervision best practice, looking at coaching supervision before, during and after the undertaking.

For the ILM one of the real strengths in the text is the exploration of coaching supervision within the organisational context and the types of challenges this raises from the perspective of various stakeholders. The author covers contracting in depth and explores the ingredients for ethical and effective supervision throughout. Different approaches to preparing for and undertaking supervision are described and discussed, focusing on the use of clean language in supervision and weaving in a range of other models, tools and techniques. The author offers a range of case studies to illustrate points of practice and the reader is challenged throughout to reflect on his or her own practice as a supervisor with deep questions and practical activities.

**The Institute of Leadership and Management**

This book is an excellent guide to the field of twenty-first century supervision practice. A quick look at the contents illustrates the thoroughness and range of Jackie's discourse on supervision. She is superbly informed – largely because of her long experience and the depth of her training.

Jackie covers key supervision models and gives an excellent overview of working with Clean Language in supervision – the first available text on how to use this model in supervision.

The writer's enthusiasm is contagious, the writing is clear and the chapters are full of examples, new insights and new tools for the reader. This is a rich and rewarding read.

**Edna Murdoch, Director, Coaching Supervision Academy**

*Coaching supervision at its BEST* is a lovely, straightforward introduction to simple, powerful processes to engage coaches and supervisors in reflecting on their own practice.

This book is a fantastic resource for supervisors wanting to expand their practice to include Clean Language questions and introduce metaphor landscapes to encourage deep reflection. It is also a fantastic resource for coaches wanting to think deeply about the kind of supervision they need for their own professional and personal development. It ensures that coaches are being held in the same exquisite, non-judgmental, rigorous attention that they wish offer to their clients.

Clean questions, Clean Feedback and metaphor landscapes support you, as the supervisor, to be completely present to your supervisee's experience and perception. Alongside these clean processes, Arnold outlines excellent

contracting processes to ensure you are paying due diligence to all of the stakeholders involved in the coaching process.

**Caitlin Walker, Training Attention Ltd,  
author of *From Contempt to Curiosity***

*Coaching Supervision at its BEST* will be a very useful handbook for new, as well as experienced, coaching supervisors. It is a timely addition to the growing field of coaching supervision – a vitally important component of any professional coach’s development. And what is really interesting and innovative about this book is how it applies Clean Language and other ‘clean’ approaches to coaching supervision. Coaches from all schools will benefit from their supervisors using the methods clearly explained in this informative book.

**Penny Tompkins, co-author of  
*Metaphors in Mind: Transformation through Symbolic Modelling***

I found the book very accessible – the language is easy to understand and the concepts are communicated clearly and efficiently. This makes it an enjoyable read. I was surprised to find that it extended not only to supervising coaches who are learning their skills, but also to the supervision of employees within the workplace. It is great that the book is able to give attention to both.

Some excellent, very practical exercises are given. There are also many offerings of encouragement that are valuable. Excellent questions are shared, as well as models and tools that I think our team would find useful.

I will get a copy of this for our library and will consider getting a copy for each of our coaches involved in supervision.

**Karolyne Williams, Head of Coaching,  
The South African College of Applied Psychology (SACAP)**

This book is aimed at coaching supervision but also encompasses supervision in a wider sense to include managerial supervision. It provides a simple and useful model of 'BEST' as both a structure and a checklist for supervision. The case studies and personal anecdotes are excellent and really draw you in to what actually happens in supervision. Finally, it is wonderful to see a coaching supervision book that takes a 'clean' approach and includes lots of valuable references to Clean Language.

**Angela Dunbar, Clean coach, coach trainer and supervisor**

As a fellow founder with Jackie of the Association of Coaching Supervisors, our vision was to raise the profile of the supervision of coaches so they could understand the importance of supervision and do a better job for their clients the next time they coached. Until I read this book I thought the only way to get the message across was by actually having a supervision session. What I like about the book is that not only does it get the message across to coaches, but there is a clear understanding for companies and organisations too. The case studies bring supervision to life and the exercises are excellent for supervisors, as they remind us of the importance of reflection and mindfulness. We all get wrapped in the pace of life and, by taking our time, reading *Coaching Supervision at its BEST* will make us better supervisors too.

**Neil Williams, Coach and Coach Supervisor,  
Founder Member of Association of Coaching Supervisors**

# Coaching Supervision

at its

**BEST**  
Build Engage Support Trust

Jackie Arnold



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# Introduction

Supervision is a safe reflective place for all individuals acting as managers, support workers, coaches or mentors to explore their own work in partnership with a skilled and respectful professional. It promotes the safety of all stakeholders, enhances ethical awareness and encourages growth and learning for all parties.

If you have picked up this book you most likely support or are a leader of others. You may be someone who has chosen to actively support staff members in your organisation, company, school, university or other workplace. You may work in either the private or public sector and at middle to senior level of the company or organisation. You have chosen a role where you are encouraging others to: *Build* relationships, *Engage* their teams, *Support* their growth and *Trust* their judgement. In other words you want them to work at their BEST.

It is a great relief to know that we have moved on from the kind of supervision that used to be described as 'like walking on broken glass' where no one likes being involved and it can be very painful. This was at a time when comments such as 'I don't think someone constantly looking over your shoulder is very helpful or supportive' were common.

It is therefore encouraging to know that supervision at its BEST has changed. It no longer instils fear, and as leaders in a supporting role you are likely to be actively seeking to enhance your own growth and self-awareness. It is now recognised that sensitive and/or challenging situations require a more trusting and collaborative form of supervision; a place where the head of department, manager or team leader as supervisor, is holding a professional space for the supervisee to better understand what is going

on in the system. This is the kind of environment that allows the coach/mentor/supervisee to reflect on their patterns of behaviour; it's a space to nurture those interventions which best serve their own growth and that of their staff/team.

*Coaching Supervision at its BEST* will appeal if you are in a supportive or leadership role and are required to regularly supervise others. It will enhance your practice if you are receiving supervision and want to get as much out of it as possible. The useful tips, practical information and strategies in this book will greatly enhance your current understanding of the process. You will also discover simple models and guidelines to enhance your existing skills.

So what is it that makes quality supervision so vital? Why is it necessary and who can benefit from the process? Let me explain from my own personal experience.



In the eighties and nineties I ran my own language schools in Switzerland, Poland and in the UK. I also trained teachers to teach English overseas and I was often in a supervisory role, supporting them to cope with challenges, complete assignments and reach deadlines. Luckily I had received excellent supervision during my own studies and was able to listen and empathise with my supervisees. Nonetheless, I now know that my ego often got in the way; I remember feeling slightly superior and I sometimes supervised in

the way that suited my own style rather than that of the supervisee. I was also not sufficiently equipped to deal with the strong emotions and issues that quite often arose. This is not supervision at its BEST or most helpful! It was not 'broken glass' but neither was it the highly professional, reflective and supportive 'clean' process I now practice.

In the late nineties I studied for three years to become a qualified ICF-recognised business coach. I sold my language school in the UK and began practising full-time as a coach and coach trainer, running my own company, Coach 4 Executives.<sup>1</sup> I was extremely fortunate in 2007 to join the Coaching Supervision Academy's (CSA) first Diploma Course. I chose this course as it was run by three experienced coaches/supervisors (Edna Murdoch, Miriam Orriss and Fiona Adamson) who were also counsellors and psychotherapists and this was an area where I wanted to extend my skills; I can highly recommend this course for all those wishing to become coach supervisors.<sup>2</sup> I am also an assessor for these Supervision Diploma courses held in the UK and overseas. I was on the founding board of the Association of Coaching Supervisors (AOCS) for three years and currently act as an ambassador for them worldwide.<sup>3</sup> Other examples of creditable organisations offering coach supervision training are Coaching Development, in London, the Academy of Executive Coaching and Oxford Brookes University, who introduced the first Coaching Supervision Postgraduate Certificate in 2007.

A great deal of my work now focuses on executive coaching, leadership mentoring and coaching supervision. My international coaching practice supports executives at every level, internal coaches/mentors and those coaching professionals working externally.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.coach4executives.com](http://www.coach4executives.com)

<sup>2</sup> [www.coachingsupervisionacademy.com](http://www.coachingsupervisionacademy.com)

<sup>3</sup> [www.associationofcoachingsupervisors.com](http://www.associationofcoachingsupervisors.com)

The kind of supervision that is the most effective is without doubt the reflective and highly sought after coaching style of supervision. As both internal and external coaches and supervisors, we have learnt a great deal from the counselling profession in this regard. All counsellors have supervision as a matter of course.

Supervision is now also required by most organisations employing internal coaches and by the major coaching and mentoring institutions such as ICF, AC, ILM and EMCC. As many managers and leaders are required to ‘coach’ or ‘mentor’ their staff, the need for effective and skilled supervision has never been greater. Supervision differs from coaching in that it has a broader, deeper and less defined remit. It is usually longer term and supports the development of the coach in the service of their client. The focus is more on the coach/client dynamics and the complex relationships across the organisation. Not only is this a protection for the leader, it also ensures safety for members of staff in supervision, and indeed for the whole organisation.

Coaching supervision is an essential part of their continuous professional development. It’s the pivotal link between theory and coaching practice. For those who organise coaching services, it’s the key to effective quality assurance, to managing the risks that can be inherent in coaching, and to drawing learning from the coaching conversations that take place in the organisation. It can help to increase the return on an investment in coaching and can even help to provide evidence of that return.

**Dr Peter Hawkins and Gil Schwenk, Bath Consultancy Group,  
CIPD report 2007 ‘Coaching Supervision – Maximising  
the Potential of Coaching’**

How? What does coaching supervision offer that other support lacks? How can we ensure that supervision is effective and really Builds, Engages, Supports and Trusts in the growth and learning of supervisors and supervisees? These are the questions you will find answers to in this book.

# 1 The Purpose and Principles of Coaching Supervision

- What is coaching supervision at its BEST?
- Using Clean Language in supervision
- Who is it for?
- Why is it important?
- Key principles and role of coaching supervision

## **What is coaching supervision at its BEST?**

In brief, coaching supervision is:

*Clean* – Using deep listening, clean questions and reflecting back specific words used by the supervisee. Exploring the metaphorical landscape of the supervisee in order to remove assumptions and bring deeper self-awareness and understanding. Maintaining total presence in mind and body and focusing on the language and unique style of the supervisee

*Coaching* – Being non-judgemental, convinced of the skills and inner knowledge of your supervisee and allowing them to take ownership and responsibility for their development. Supporting them to learn in their own way and encouraging their potential. Listening at an extremely deep level and reflecting back sensitively and appropriately in the moment.

*Super* – Being professional, ethical, mindful and transparent. Supporting others to develop a deeper awareness of self and others. Sharing expertise

and coping strategies for those critical and/or emotional moments that often arise unexpectedly.

*Vision* – Having a bird’s-eye view of what is happening, spotting and reflecting on unhelpful patterns, celebrating success and helping your supervisee to see the bigger picture.

BEST =

- *Build* the coach/client and supervision relationship
- *Engage* the supervisee on a variety of levels
- *Support* and sustain the supervisee
- *Trust* the supervisee to take responsibility for their learning and development

Coaching supervision at its BEST is having a professional one-to-one conversation in order to enhance and *Build* the skills and self-awareness of your supervisee. Using specific deep listening and sensitive reflection techniques, you attend even more acutely to their language and worldview. They *Engage* better, and reach deeper understanding and clarity around the issues that may arise. Knowing they have the full non-judgemental *Support* of their supervisor, they are able to *Trust* their judgement and gain confidence in their own ways of working with others.

## **Using Clean Language in supervision**

‘Clean Language’ was devised by psychotherapist David Grove as a way to keep his assumptions out of his interventions, as far as possible, so he could work directly with his clients’ perceptions. He respected the client’s choice of words rather than paraphrasing them. In this way his clients could work in a safe and familiar ‘mind scape’ that enabled them to gain a deeper self-awareness.

In practice, Clean Language consists of thirty or so Clean Questions, asked in a slow and neutral tone of voice. The questions have been developed so that there is minimal pollution or influence from the facilitator. The focus of attention is on the language of the person being supervised and enables them to stay in their own thoughts and feelings without interruption. The supervisor using clean methodology creates a unique space for the supervisee to think and reflect; this in turn allows new insights to emerge.

Starting clean questions with 'and' enables continuous thought processes and allows the supervisor and coachee/supervisee to stay in their own mind space. The questions help individuals stay with the words they find familiar and that have meaning for them. Clients do not notice the repetition of their own language. In fact, they like to hear what they have said and really feel heard. It takes a while to use the questions in the right voice tone and intonation (neutral and curious).

Examples for you as a supervisor when used with supervisees are:

What kind of (their word/s) is that?

And is there anything else about ...?

And when (their words) then what happens?

And what happens next?

And what could happen just before (their words)?

When you use them for yourself they can also bring greater awareness.

For coaches who wish to use Clean Language in their practice, Marian Way's excellent book *Clean Approaches for Coaches* is highly recommended, as is *Clean Language* by Wendy Sullivan and Judy Rees.

## **Definition of supervision**

Coaching supervision is a formal process of professional support, which ensures continuing development of the coach and effectiveness of his/her coaching practice through interactive reflection, interpretative evaluation and the sharing of expertise.

**Bachkirova, Stevens and Willis, 2005**

## **Who is it for?**

Supervision is for individuals and teams wishing to extend their existing skills and knowledge. It sustains all those who mentor, coach or support others in the workplace. It is also essential for enhancing leadership skills, qualities and behaviours. It helps to eradicate unhelpful patterns and beliefs and builds on strategies for success. It enables the supervisee to explore and reflect on real case studies in a safe and supportive environment. It encourages coaching and mentoring ethical practice and ensures high standards for all stakeholders.

## **Why is it important?**

In our very fast-paced world there is little or no time for reflection on how or why we act as we do in certain situations. As a leader of others, how do you know you are working at your BEST? What happens when you are confronted with a member of staff who seems resistant or unable to move forward? How do you ensure you are operating at an ethical level and how do you react to others who are not? Our world has become quite reactive; most coaches and mentors feel they cope and manage pretty well but is that really enough? Most of us would like to think we are doing our best in whatever role we hold. How are you perceived in your place of work? What do you do to update your skills as a leader/manager, as coach/mentor?

Perhaps this is best illustrated by a case study:

This is a coaching supervision case study by Neil Williams, NLP Master Coach and Dip. Coach Supervisor, who uses some Clean Language in his practice. This session was requested after an internal coach received the following comments in his feedback form after a coachee had received six sessions of coaching.

***How would you describe me as a coach?***

*Honestly, as discussed to begin with, it felt a little Headmasterly but this was due to the fact that I didn't really know what to expect from the exercise or what was expected of me.*

***As your coach, what did I do specifically that helped you?***

*When I had settled into it, it was a useful sounding board. You provided reassurance around the decisions and actions being taken and challenged me to think differently on many levels.*

***In your opinion, what would have made me a better coach for you?***

*To be a little less stern (the Headmaster thing again). To perhaps provide some dialogue around how others used you and what for; obviously my line managers could have helped in the positioning of this also.*

***What three words would sum me up as a coach?***

*Headmasterly, knowledgeable and direct.*

In the coach's wrap-up session he had been shocked by the comment that the coachee had initially felt that he had been in detention for the first couple of coaching sessions. This had been a real slap in the face for the

coach as in his seven years of coaching he had never received such feedback. He decided to bring this situation to supervision.

So where did the external supervisor start with this? He started with a 'clean' introduction question:

**What would you like to have happen in this session?**

I'd like some clarity around why I was considered headmasterly by my client in the feedback and ensure this does not come up again in my feedback.

**What was your reaction when you saw the word 'headmasterly'?**

I nearly fell off the chair, particularly when in the meeting with his line manager he said he had felt like he had been in detention!

**What feelings emerged as a result?**

Externally OK, internally 'What is going on here?' and a little bit of panic.

**What were you expecting the three words to be?**

I was OK with knowledgeable and direct but being a headmaster was the opposite to what I wanted to be.

**What was it about the coachee that led you to be headmasterly?**

My instinct was that he was not on board for coaching. My belief is that if the coachee does not want coaching then it is a waste of time. The type of questioning and my challenging him so early in the process may have made him feel like this.

# Coaching Supervision at its BEST

contains clear strategies and real life case studies and can be used in all settings where there is a need for effective and efficient coaching supervision. Jackie Arnold details a specific clean questioning technique which allows the supervisor to avoid assumptions and to obtain an eagle-eyed insight into the whole supervision spectrum. The book is recommended by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) for their Level 7 Masters qualification in Coaching Supervision.

The key topics covered are:

- The principles and practice of coaching supervision in organisations
- Using Clean Language and Clean Space
- The supervision contract
- Supervision methods
- Internal versus external supervision
- Supervision quality assurance and review
- Supervision scenarios

This practical guide can be used by leaders, coaches and supervisors in business, education, health and public services.



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**Edna Murdoch, Director, Coaching Supervision Academy**



**Jackie Arnold** is a former board member of the UK ICF. She is also an associate coach/consultant for Notion and for the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, delivering executive coaching programmes and consulting on building a coaching culture. She uses Clean Language methodology as a coach supervisor and is an Ambassador for CSA and The Association Of Coaching Supervisors.



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