

Some reflections on what I attend to in preparation for a meeting with a potential supervisee

Having had this question in mind for some time now I did start to write something 2 months ago and it has become buried so deeply in my filing system that I just thought I would start again, especially as we are meeting again next week.

I realised that I had been thinking a lot about what it was like starting work with a new supervisee, an executive coach who works internally within a global corporate environment. The only large organisations I have worked in have been in the local authority, university and the NHS. None of them had coaches working in them.

I was anxious about stepping literally into a totally unknown environment; worried about what to wear and that I might not find the building! I couldn't have been more wrong about the building; it was about 20 stories high, standing out on the banks of the Thames in all its glass-fronted splendour. I was able to tell the coach that I would be glad if she could meet me at the nearest tube station and accompany me to the office. That helped enormously, so it was just what to wear!

The clothes question rarely bothers me and I realised that I was concerned about my image. Would I look ok for the part? I work such a lot on the phone that dressing up for the outside world isn't a major preoccupation. Then I came to see that what mattered more than anything was my preparation of myself as a person, the inner rather than the outer. So I then spent the journey time to the station thinking about the time we had met before and what she had said she was looking for in supervision. I stopped think about myself and remembered that one of the things she had told me that had intrigued me about her was that she worked with children as a volunteer counselor, and had done a group analytic course. These are unusual things for a coach to be doing in my experience.

The meeting went well and we set out our contract with a view that it was to be fluid and simply there to define the broad parameters. The key part of the contract is to agree that we will

use what goes on in our relationship when we sense we are holding the dynamics from their coaching relationship, parallel process. In fact I know that when coaches approach me for supervision I say something about how I work and include this aspect.

So, what I attend to depends upon how established the relationship is, how I am feeling, my sense of the nature of the relationship, and always checking:

Am I really able to be fully present today?

Can I leave my own concerns in the pending tray?

What do I need to support myself before and during the meeting/call so that I can stay present?

My supervisees vary a lot and each brings their own way of being, some like to talk in metaphors, others like to attend to what their body is telling them, others like to draw the systems they are a part of, others like to tell me about their personal lives and the impact this is having on their work.

I think what I see more and more is that there is no one way to supervise and adapting and connecting to the variety of people are what matters to me. I keep notes of their concerns and of my concerns about them, what they feel stuck with, any things about their own lives that have impacted them, what they are willing to explore, what models they work with, and I find I look forward to being with them all.

Some days I need to attend more to my aches and pains, my own worries, and other days these things are much less in my way. I notice that with some supervisees I say very little, make the reflective space really wide, and with others I prompt more, share what is evoked for me, or, if they wish, talk about ideas that help me understand the things they are talking about.

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