

BOOK REVIEW

Supervision in the Helping Professions (Fourth edition)

Peter Hawkins and Robin Shohet

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That this book is in its fourth edition suggests the growing importance supervision has in a number of different contexts. Given the reputation of former editions, this version is immediately welcomed by those in the field of supervision. 'Hawkins and Shohet' has proven to be a seminal text within professional supervision as the book distills over thirty years rich experience from the authors with valuable contributions from other writers such as Judy Ryde and Joan Wilmot. As identified in the foreword by another strong contributor to the supervision field, Michael Carroll, this new edition firmly places supervision within its contemporary challenge – the ever changing global context in which it takes place. Additionally, leading and up-to-date supervision publications have been reviewed by the authors and relevant research added in this edition.

The book's eye-catching cover suggests movement and change. This is certainly pivotal to supervision in the helping professions and the book's purpose. The title emphasises the broad spectrum where supervision takes place, how adaptable and essential it is in relating to everyone working in the helping professions. The format has been kept similar to the previous editions in that the breadth of supervision is tackled from individual, group and organisational perspectives. This provides balance in the coverage of supervision from all facets. It is well written and accessible to the reader.

This edition is introduced by a preface from one of the authors, Peter Hawkins. The preface introduces the structure and context in which supervision now takes place. Some chapters are new and respond to current issues in supervision whilst other chapters have been updated from previous editions. The book is comprised of sixteen chapters and four sections. The sections are the supervisee's perspective; becoming a supervisor; group, team and peer-group supervision; and the organisational approach.

The first section explores the context of helping professions and how supervision can be used to build resiliency. The first two chapters have been re-written and outline the current global pressures on helping professions to maintain a reflective 'space' for supervision and the essential ingredients required for this to occur. Chapter 3 explores the motivations and core beliefs in being an effective practitioner. There is a useful list of incomplete statements helpful in promoting an awareness of assumptions and unconscious patterns that may be driving our work. The section concludes with a chapter on being an effective supervisee and how we can take responsibility for getting what we want from our own supervision.

Section two introduces the issues relating to being a supervisor. Chapter 5 discusses the qualities, complexities and how enriching the role of supervisor can be towards learning. Chapter 6 provides a handy step-by-step framework and structure of supervision helpful to new supervisors in developing a broad understanding of what 'good' supervision entails. New in this edition is the acknowledgement of 'e-supervision' in this technological age. Chapter 7 describes in detail the authors' own contribution to models of practice in the field with their process model of supervision. The different modes may appear complex on first appearance but captures the different supervisory styles and the range of options available to the supervisor in exploring content that the supervisee has brought to the session. In this edition, the authors have expanded on the critiques given to the model, which is beneficial in clarifying any misunderstandings towards how it may be used. The chapter on transcultural supervision addresses and acknowledges this demanding area by suggesting an open hearted approach in working with difference. Establishing supervision training to meet different individual, professional and organisational needs is an interesting chapter for supervisor development valuable to trainers and educators. Chapter 9 is new to this edition and handles the complex situations that may arise in the session and how ethics is central to all supervision. Of particular note, the authors identify from their training of others over the years, the main difficulties that arise in supervision and provide guidance in how these can be overcome through open reflection.

Section three takes supervision into the arena of group and peer-group supervision and supervising in teams. Arguably, these are areas often left unexplored and undiscovered in the field of supervision. Chapter 11 explains the value of group and peer group arrangements, the complexities within the dynamics and its pitfalls. Chapter 12 discusses team supervision and ends with the authors' unique model of developing supervision of team facilitation, coaching and consultancy.

The organisational context in which supervision takes place is considered in more detail in section four of this edition. Useful case studies are added to explore how supervision may address complexities across agencies in Chapter 13. The culture of an organisation is an absorbing chapter where the authors share their experiences of different cultural dynamics and striving towards a 'learning culture'. In the final chapter 'working with an open mind and open heart' the authors stress the need for a good supervisory relationship and requiring 'fearless compassion'. This is undoubtedly a huge challenge in the current environment threatening quality services in the helping professions.

Hawkins and Shohet's latest edition demonstrates their continued contribution to supervision practice globally. The vast experience of the authors is notable and their passion for and commitment to supervision invigorates the reader. It remains the essential companion to anyone interested in and involved in supervision.

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