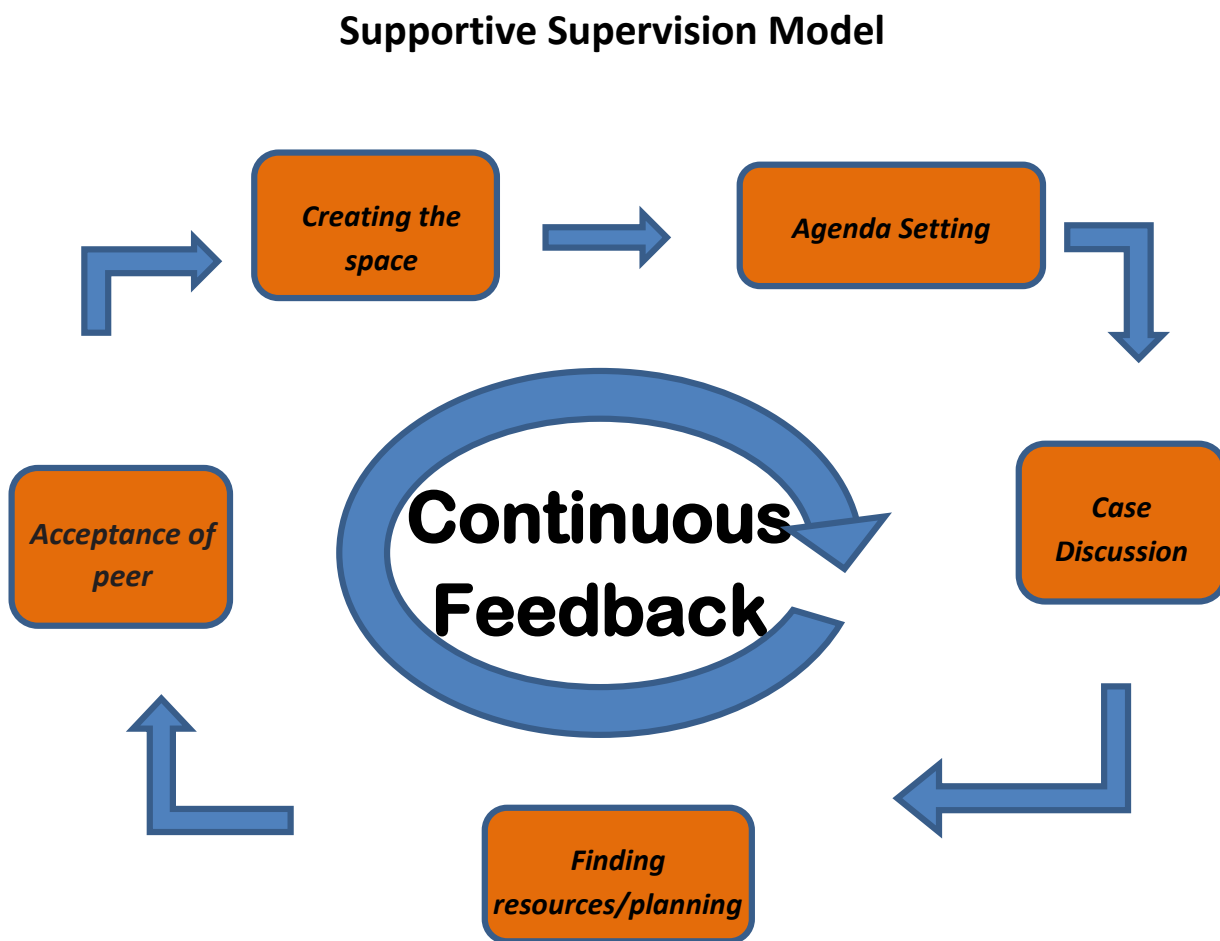


6.2 SUPERVISING PEERS: SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISION

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Coaching Model for Supportive Supervision

The coaching model below illustrates some key approaches to individual supportive supervision meetings with peers.



SUPERVISING PEERS: SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISION

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A **supportive supervisor** is defined as someone who supervises peers using a supportive approach that borrows from some of the tenets of clinical supervision. Supportive supervisors are often unlicensed (for example an intern, nurse practitioner, or unlicensed social worker), but have worked in the same field in which they are providing supportive supervision.

Creating the Space

As a supportive supervisor, it is important to invite peers into a space that is designated as “protected,” allowing the peer to be vulnerable and share how work is affecting his or her personal life. In this way, the supervisor can learn what struggles the peer faces and reduce the possibility that the peer will act them out negatively toward the client (countertransference). In this space, the peer is able to talk openly about anxieties and concerns, knowing that the supportive supervisor will be empathic. Creating this space, however, does not rule out the necessity of “breaking” that space, meaning that in the event of a misuse of the peer-provider relationship, the supportive supervisor will need to break confidentiality (e.g., the same situation applies to breaking a boundary with a client - see [Read More: Tasks and Tools for Developing a Supportive Approach](#) for an example dialog which addresses a potential boundary issue.)

Agenda Setting

It is important to set an agenda with the peer even if it is loosely articulated so that both the peer and supervisor know what will be discussed.

The peer should be involved in the agenda setting since the primary role of a supportive supervisor is to give guidance to the peer in areas where the peer feels vulnerable or is requesting support. The supervisor can and should raise issues that may be challenging or difficult for the peer and where the peer may be reticent. However, these issues should be raised in a safe, nonjudgmental way so that the peer is able to explore his or her reactions and responses as they relate to clients and work. Some agenda items may be standardized and become part of each supervisory session such as:

- Client successes
- Client case discussion
- Resources

Case Discussion

The key difference between supportive and clinical supervision is the framework of case discussion. Case discussion in supportive supervision is the section where the peer can talk about the client and create a supportive plan. In clinical supervision, case consultation is the section where the peer and supervisor talk about the client in the context of a therapeutic intervention, and the supervisor and peer delve into deeper issues of transference and countertransference.

In supportive supervision, case discussion is the section dedicated to client work and focuses generally on how a peer is working with a particular client. Peers may want to talk about all their clients if time allows, but in general, peers should be encouraged to discuss their most challenging clients. Case discussion is an opportunity to share the client story with the

SUPERVISING PEERS: SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISION

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supervisor in order to gain perspective on the client, the work, and the peer's concerns as they relate to both the client and the scope of work. (see: Supportive Supervision Case Discussion)

Finding Resources and Planning

An important aspect of supportive supervision is to provide an environment beyond the physical environment that helps the peer think about how best to support the client as well as acquire support for him or herself. The supportive supervisor does this through actively listening to the peer and helping to identify what resources and supports the peer can offer the client, as well as what resources might be useful for the peer. It is important to plan ways in which the peer can best communicate this support to the client. If a peer initiates this type of planning, it is a good indicator that the client is willing to consider utilizing the support.

Planning encourages client goal setting and a process by which the peer and client can set goals together. Supportive supervision in the context

of finding resources and planning gives the peer an opportunity to sort these options out in the supportive nature of a supervisory session.

Acceptance of Peer

In this context, the supportive supervisor's role becomes that of accepting the peer in their efforts to support their clients. This requires the supervisor to be an active listener, to remind the peer of the importance of boundaries when working with clients who seem similar to the peer, and to act as a sounding board to explore ways to work with clients and the issues that clients raise. It is also imperative for the supportive supervisor to recognize when the discussions or client issues become overwhelming and to be able to secure clinical supervision for the peer in order to best serve the peer and ultimately the client.

See the [Read More: Recognizing and Addressing Countertransference](#) for more information.

This "Read More" section accompanies [Section 6.2, Supervising Peers: Supportive Supervision](#), part of the online toolkit, *Building Blocks to Peer Program Success*. For more information, visit http://peer.hdwg.org/program_dev