

Why a peer chat isn't Supervision

Coaching can be a lonely profession. We've all been there; can't see the wood for the trees, overwhelmed by too many options – or stuck in a rut. Perhaps some uncomfortable emotions are surfacing – yours or your clients. It's natural to 'phone a friend' and reach out to a trusted peer. After all, a problem shared is a problem halved.

But what might you be missing if you only rely on peers to help you grow as a coach?

It often comes down to the difference between *reflection* and *reflexivity*.

Reflection	Reflexivity
• Looking back at what happened. • Recalling your thoughts and feelings. • Critical step for learning, if we are honest. • Risks being limited by blind spots.	• Turns attention inward to examine our own beliefs, assumptions, behaviours, and identity. • Explores the source of thoughts and feelings. • Recognises and manages the impact of these factors on the quality of our interventions. • Invites a deeper, systemic understanding of other factors in play.

Reflexivity is what grows you as a coach.

Within my work accrediting coaches with APECS, reflexivity is the key differentiator between a competent and master coach. It signals that a coach has a level of maturity, humility and self-awareness that enables them to keep learning and growing, no matter how many years of experience they bring. It's a capacity that develops over time, that shapes your 'being' not just your 'doing' as a coach.

Phone a friend?

Here's a typical 'phone a friend' moment. Consider what sort of questions you are typically asked by your peers and whether they help you develop your reflexivity:

A client seems to be stuck and keeps bringing the same problem to each session. You've asked different questions and applied a range of interventions, but nothing seems to be working.

Reflective questions

- What have you tried so far?
- What else could you do?
- What did your client say or do?
- Have you tried...(usually something based on their experience)?

Reflexive questions

- What assumptions are you making about this client and how they 'should' progress?
- Where does 'stuckness' show up with your other clients?
- What have you not said, but thought about saying, to your client?

These are the sort of questions you may be asked in supervision.

- Have you shared how you feel with your client? What might feel at risk for you if you did?
- How might your interventions be keeping your client 'stuck'?
- What else is happening in your client's working context that might be contributing to their behaviour?

What's supervision?

Supervision is a terrible name for a really valuable process. It implies that you can't be trusted to do your job, and that a supervisor is some sort of compliance manager. Wrong meaning here.

Professional supervision provides a safe relationship that nurtures your reflexivity and grows you as a practitioner and a person. When done well, it allows you to be vulnerable and to go deep – to see more than you can normally see about yourself and your work. A good supervisor will challenge you too, helping you to hold yourself to account to professional standards and ethics.

Supervision doesn't need to replace peer conversations – there are many benefits to mutual learning and sharing experience. And you may be fortunate to have a peer who brings the skills and perspectives of a supervisor.

Are you really getting what you really need from 'phoning a friend'?

- ☐ Does the conversation typically take a range of perspectives into account: yours, your clients, your relationship with the client, and the system within which they work?
- ☐ Does your colleague carefully share their own responses (both logical and emotional) to inform your situation?
- ☐ Do you feel that you can be completely honest and vulnerable in the conversation, without fear of consequences?
- ☐ Do both self-reflection and reflexivity get attention?
- ☐ Is the relationship established enough to notice long term patterns?
- ☐ Does your colleague understand the code of professional standards and ethics under which you work?

If any of these answers raise more questions for you, let's talk. I supervise new and experienced coaches to help them develop their reflexivity and grow their practice.

👉 [Book a Short Call](#)

And if you can think of a better name for this than supervision, let me know ;)

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