

Group Supervision: Notes for Beginners. By Michael Paterson and Liz Crumlish, London: Institute of Pastoral Supervision and Reflective Practice, 2022, 233 pps.

Michael Paterson writes the prose, and Liz Crumlish writes the poetry that comes together as an accessible and experiential volume on group supervision. In hopes of resourcing emerging supervisors, they focus on the formation of the supervisor and the development of their situational wisdom over constructing a theoretical system or simply focusing on skill-building. That said, the reader can benefit greatly from hard-won wisdom that the authors have shared from their own learning processes as supervisors.

The orientation and the structure of over 40 mini-chapters is reminiscent of Irvin Yalom's *The Gift of Therapy*, albeit with a focus on group supervision instead. After a brief introduction on supervision more broadly, Paterson touches on theory before turning to logistical issues. In the second half of the book, he has sections on beginning groups, "soulful supervision," and matters of support for the supervisor. Each section has between 3 and 11 mini-chapters.

Paterson is uniquely effective at making plain the wisdom of the broader group psychoanalytic tradition, with an emphasis on Bion, in a way that nourishes the initiated and is hospitable to the uninitiated. A unique contribution of this book is its emphasis on group supervision across disciplines, which is unique given the highly specialized and compartmentalization of professional supervision.

Describing supervision as the hosting of reflexive conversations, Paterson emphasizes the centrality of mutuality and co-creation. While the dynamics of the practitioner will be addressed in the consultation, Paterson insists that effective group supervision never loses sight of the goal of supporting the practitioner in providing the best quality of care to their patients. While they are physically absent, it is important to keep them emotionally present in the group, lest it default to a therapy group for the practitioners' healing or a compliance group to assuage the manager's anxiety. In this way, Paterson sees the experience of group supervision as the on-going dialogue between the soul, role, and context of each group member as they seek to connect, reflect, and respond with each other.

In inviting the supervisor to focus on facilitating reflexivity within the group, Paterson encourages the reader—as is appropriate—to avoid the temptation to take up the dual role as expert practitioner. Partially as a safeguard to this form of engagement, he recommends the creation of inter-disciplinary groups in which the supervisor might have a different disciplinary expertise than the supervisees, thus maintaining their focus on process rather than content. Another named concern is that groups will elect to become reporting groups that focus on the transmission of facts at the expense of reflexivity, especially when the supervisor is also a manager for the supervisees.

In countering the possibility that supervisors will overly focusing on their role as expert practitioners to the exclusion of facilitating reflection, the author seeks to create structural solutions to dynamic realities that could otherwise be attended to by self-supervision. Nonetheless, creative possibilities uniquely emerge when the supervisor is from a different discipline from the practitioners and/or when the practitioners are from different fields themselves.

It is notable that the authors have flexible supervisory skill sets and a variety of experiences with a variety of supervision groups. What is less clear is the context, authorization, and funding of how the reader might create such groups given that they are unlikely to serve the

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function of forming new practitioners, maintaining the certification of most existing practitioners, etc. Nonetheless, creating imaginative possibilities is frequently a precursor to structural possibilities. Additionally, one could imagine making use of their model for programs such as Reflection Rounds or Schwartz Rounds in the United States. The recent coming together of pastoral counselors and clinical pastoral educators in the ACPE offers another opportunity for making use of their inter-disciplinary supervision model, though their guidance would be more effective in an on-going supervision group rather than Level 1/Level 2 CPE.

Paterson is at his best and sharpest when addressing two ways in which culture enters the supervisory room, as well as dismantling non-sensical tropes within the spiritual care field. He offers a compelling rationale for why safety can be hoped for but not assured, while also never being the ultimate goal of the group. If the safety of the group members becomes paramount, then the well-being of the patient loses focus.

Additionally, he critiques diversity training as the total solution to engaging difference and shares that what matters most is not if he can cite black feminist theory but rather how his supervisees feel in his presence as a white man. While he is at it, he counters the well-worn arguments in the field that the supervisor (or practitioner) is to be neutral or agenda-less. Instead, he argues that if supervision does not have the agenda of helping the practitioner to contribute to the well-being of their patients, then it is not supervision.

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