

## Book review

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**Turner, T., Lucas, M. & Whitaker, C. (2018). *Peer Supervision in Coaching and Mentoring. A Versatile Guide for Reflective Practice*. London: Routledge.**

**Cat Dunne**  
**Sydney, Australia**

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Earlier this year, a group of my fellow coaching peers invited me to participate in setting up a peer group supervision session. As we wanted the sessions to be valuable, we were fortunate that my individual coaching supervisor lent me a copy of this book, just to help us on our journey. It turned out to be extremely helpful and worthy of review.

Our engagement in a peer supervision process seems consistent with the greater acceptance of supervision that appears to exist within the coaching community, and coaches' increased participation in it. Interestingly, research has shown that peer supervision is the first experience of supervision for many coaches, principally because it is accessible and low cost (Lawrence & Whyte, 2014).

Despite these advantages, drawbacks exist (Gray, 2017). For example, many coaches report that peer supervision tends to be unstructured, and its value diminished by factors such as lack of self-awareness amongst participants (e.g. blind spots) and a lack of coaching experience (Bachkirova, Jackson & Clutterbuck, 2011). Anecdotally, the lack of structure in peer supervision appears to be a common experience amongst coaches, and I have direct experience of supervision sessions resembling informal chat groups.

Given this past experience, I found the book extremely helpful. In particular, I found Chapters 3 and 4 especially useful as they provided practical guidance on what ingredients and methods are needed to run an effective peer supervision session. For those looking to engage in one to one peer supervision practice, Chapter 3 provides insight into the mechanics of setting up an effective reflective practice. This chapter also discusses the critical factors in forming the relationship between a supervisor and a coach, the mechanics of the

coaching process (location, format, duration etc.) and the importance of contracting boundaries for the coaching relationship and process. Chapter 4 covers group supervision, offering additional guidance on meeting structures and group meeting techniques, along with sample group contracting processes and templates. In setting up our own peer group supervision session, the contracting discussion guide helped us to agree on our supervision scope, boundaries, meeting process and roles. The time we spent on the initial contracting has enabled our supervision time to be effective and focused.

In Chapters 5 and 7 the principles behind contracting and ethics are explained. Both are an important aspect of the supervision relationship, enabling the creation of a reflective environment that fosters, trust, openness and psychological safety. For those new to coaching supervision, it is not always clear what issues to bring along for discussion. To assist with this, Chapter 7 explores coaching and mentoring dilemmas and provides an extensive range of case studies and dilemma scenarios that a coach may experience within their practice. In our own peer group, we have used some of the examples to help us engage and share key learnings and reflections from our practices. The discussions enable a pragmatic way to explore common tensions and challenges us to examine our boundaries.

Drawing on extensive experience gained from coaching practice, coach supervision, and coaching scholarship, the authors have done a wonderful job of co-creating an informative, practical resource for the benefit of coaching practitioners, supervisors, and internal HR and OD managers. This book guides practitioners on how to build and develop a range of individual and group reflective learning practices in an evidence-based way. In this way, the book helps to take peer supervision practice to new levels, allowing coaches to experiment with their eyes wide open, to collaborate and to learn with peers in a purposeful and effective way.

## References

- Bachkirova, T., Jackson, P. & Clutterbuck, D. (2011). *Coaching and Mentoring Supervision: Theory and Practice*. McGraw-Hill: UK.
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- Lawrence, P. & Whyte, A. (2014). What is coaching supervision and is it important? *Coaching: An international journal of theory, research and practice*, 7(1), 39-55.