

SUPERVISION TIPS: SUPERVISION FUNDAMENTALS SHOW NOTES



SUMMARY

In this episode of Rural Health Conversations, hosts Kathryn Fitzgerald and Abigail Lewis discuss the fundamentals of supervision in rural health education. They explore the importance of building strong relationships between supervisors and students, the significance of regular supervision sessions, and the application of Proctor's Interactive Framework in supervision. The conversation emphasizes the need for a balance between formative, normative, and restorative aspects of supervision, highlighting the emotional challenges faced by students in rural placements. Key takeaways include the importance of reflection, collaboration, and support in fostering effective learning environments for healthcare students.

TAKEAWAYS

- Different disciplines have different definitions of supervision.
- Establishing a strong collaborative relationship is essential.
- Regular supervision sessions save time and enhance learning.
- A warm, supportive relationship fosters student reflection.
- Students often feel anxious about new relationships in placements.
- Proctor's model includes formative, normative, and restorative aspects.
- Supervisors should balance emotional support with performance evaluation.
- Vulnerability in supervisors can enhance student trust.
- Involving the team in supervision can alleviate pressure.
- Reflection, relationship, and regularity are key components of effective supervision.

CHAPTERS

- 00:00 Introduction to Rural Health Conversations
- 00:30 Understanding Supervision in Rural Health Education
- 04:25 Building Strong Supervisor-Supervisee Relationships
- 08:51 Models of Supervision: Proctor's Interactive Framework
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FURTHER RESOURCES

See Supervision Fundamentals tip sheet.

- Links to the four UDRHs of WA who co-produce this podcast:
 - Website of [Goldfields UDRH](#)
 - Website of [Majarlin](#)
 - Website of [UDRH SW](#)
 - Website of [WACRH](#)

TRANSCRIPT

Kathryn Fitzgerald

Welcome to Rural Health Conversations, a podcast exploring the people, places and perspectives that shape health professions education in rural and remote Australia. We'd like to pay our respects to the traditional custodians of the lands of which we live, learn and work and to the elders past and present. We recognise that First Nations

people have been caring for country, community and culture for tens of thousands of years. In each episode, we'll explore the experiences, insights and innovations that make Rural Health education so vital to supporting and developing our rural health workforce. From practical strategies to inspiring stories from the field, this is your space to connect, learn and celebrate the essential work that you do in preparing healthcare professionals for rural and remote practice. My name is Kathryn Fitzgerald and I'm on Southern Yamaji Country and in this episode we're really excited to be talking about supervision tips, the fundamentals. And I'd like to hand over to Abigail.

Abigail Lewis

I'm Abigail Lewis and I'm on Wardandi Country.

Kathryn Fitzgerald

Thanks Abigail. So I'm going to put you in the hot seat first a little bit. So we've spoken a little bit about how to plan a placement but I think we brought this one in about fundamentals of supervision is to give it a bit of a stronger base as to thinking about what on is supervision. So I'm going to ask you just that question. So what is supervision?

Abigail Lewis

Yeah, good question. I think there's not one great definition of supervision. So different disciplines have different definitions of supervision. But certainly, I think you would agree with me. We think that you need to focus on establishing a strong collaborative relationship, a focus on reflection, and also to be having some regularity in terms of supervision sessions actually booked in.

So certainly the supervisor supervisee relationship is really key and setting that up when you've only got a short placement can be quite tricky, but focusing on that at the very beginning, even before the student arrives in how you talk in emails, I think can also save you time if you've managed to set that up as well as you possibly can. So we particularly think it's important to have a warm supportive relationship with students where you've got mutual trust and respect, where it's a safe learning place so the student can bring to you successes and mistakes and so that they can be completely open and honest with you. And so I think thinking about how you set that up is really important. And then when you have that relationship set up, you're more easily able to foster students reflection. We do have a whole episode on reflection and it's linked to feedback. But certainly if you've got that good relationship, then the student is more likely to talk more and reflect more with you. And know and then that gives input into the whole feedback process and into developing their competencies. And you can also ask them what helps them in terms of their reflection and also what experiences they've had in supervision. Sometimes if a student has come from a placement where supervision was very difficult, they might be quite anxious about connecting with you and you might need to work a little bit harder to kind of get that good relationship so that they feel that it is a safe space.

And then the other area of regularity, I think if you actually have booked supervision times in your timetable, it saves time for you because the student will know when they can bring their questions and their issues rather than trying to catch you all the time. Often people will find it takes less time if you've got it booked in the timetable than if the student is constantly trying to find you because they've got things that they want to know they're kind of, you know, asking you at a time where it's not appropriate, where you're trying to prepare them for the next session or whatever. So having those booked in sessions, I think is really important. So yeah, those are the three things that I think are fundamental. Do you want to add anything else to those three or do you?

Kathryn Fitzgerald

just to reinforce them and I'm thinking that I totally agree, the relationship is crucial. If you don't have a good positive relationship it's really hard to have a supervisor relationship that's good for their teaching and learning. One thing we find is we always have to remember that all of the relationships for these students are new so we might have students all the time or in your practice you might have students or you work with colleagues but for students it can be quite daunting. So they've got relationships they need to maintain at the university, they've got relationships with maybe multiple supervisors and then all these new relationships with patients and clients it's probably a lot of cognitive and emotional sort of capacity taken up. So one thing we're always really clear about and especially if the students are coming through a University Department of Rural Health where we both work is we want the student to know who their primary supervisor is. So at the end of the day, who is the main person? So

they might be coming, say, to our university department of rural health. We just welcomed a podiatry student this morning. I'm actually their contact for the UDRH, not a podiatrist, but I'm not their primary supervisor. So I am a contact person for this person, but this student knows exactly who their primary supervisor is for all those areas.

And I think the other thing that struck me when you were talking, if I'm the primary supervisor for a student, I always ask what's worked well for you in the past in supervision and what hasn't worked. And I actually find students are amazingly honest and able to give really good examples of what's worked for them in a very professional way. They're not sort of throwing anybody under the bus. And then that challenges me to maybe step away from my preferences all the time of supervision, to maybe listen to their preferences and see if I can help that. And maybe if there's multiple students, you have to kind of have a little bit of a different slant for each one. Because we just, at the end of the day, we want them to have a great learning experience. And the other thing that I totally agree with is we have weekly meetings as a primary supervisor with students where we do not discuss anything to do with clients or patients. We talk about them.

We talk about their learning journey. We talk about what goals they want to set for the week. We tell them what our expectations are for the week. Feedback on supervision, which again, remarkably honest, well actually I really liked this but I didn't like when we did a reflection straight away, I need more time. yeah, we didn't talk about this beforehand Abigail, but I think we're pretty much on the same page. So yeah.

Abigail Lewis

Yeah, and I think what you said, like how you set up that relationship of where it's safe place is where you will get more student feedback. Whereas if they don't feel it's safe, they won't. And I think another thing that struck me when you were talking as well is thinking about all those new relationships that they are forming. They're often performing, they're putting on a good front because they want to come across well. And in the supervision session, you want to know what's really going on. And are they, know, how are things really so that they don't feel that they have to put on a performance in those sessions, they can be real and really explore, you know, how they're going on the placement and how they're going living in a rural area. So think that is really important.

Kathryn Fitzgerald

We often talk a lot about being vulnerable and you have to be really vulnerable as a learner and if we model that as well. I know you and I, you finished your recent study, I'm still doing mine, and we've, you had and I have supervisors and that's been a really good learning experience for me to be sitting on the other side of the table and having to be really vulnerable and exposing my weaknesses in my learning as well as hopefully getting some decent feedback as well. So it is actually interesting to remember if you're a clinical supervisor, remember what it was like for you when you were a student, what worked for you and remember how you felt as well. So I think that relationship is really important and it's a different relationship to you have with your colleagues or your friends or your colleagues that you might also be friends with outside of work. A student relationship is a little bit different which I think we'll explore a bit under models of supervision. So I might move on to that. So I'd love to hear a little bit more about some of the model or a model of supervision that you think works particularly well in our rural placement settings.

Abigail Lewis

Yeah, and again, there are different models and in your discipline, this might not be a model that you're familiar with. And certainly, I've got lists of models that have come from different disciplines. But one that's quite common is called Proctor's interactive framework, a model of supervision. And that is usually depicted as three interacting circles with kind of supervision being in the middle and these three different aspects. So the three different aspects are formative, normative, restorative. So the formative aspect of supervision is where you are developing, forming the person that's being supervised. So developing their skills, their knowledge, working on, you know, competencies, whether that's knowledge or even emotions or reactions to people. that's really about the learning part. And then the restorative is around the wellbeing and giving people that space to process emotions, the things that come up in clinical practice which make it difficult, managing caseload and how stressful that can be. If a client passes away or has really difficult background, where do you go with those emotions? so having that restorative aspect of supervision is where people can talk about how they really are things are going. And then the normative aspect is looking at benchmarking, like how are you going with the policies, with the procedures, where are we up to in the competency development. So with staff you would be looking at things like is your paperwork in

on time, have you done your stats. With students it might be how are we going when we're heading towards our mid placement evaluation, know, sort of like looking at, you know, how are they going, the norms that you're looking for and whether they are reaching those norms. So how about in your experience, do you find that model useful? Proctor's model?

Kathryn Fitzgerald

I didn't know about it for quite a long time and then when I learnt about it, was kind of that light bulb moment a little bit thinking, of course, it's a very simple model and I like the visual that's got the diagram of supervision in the middle because it said to me you've got to get the balance right. So I think from my experience, I was probably focusing a little bit too much on maybe that sort of formative stuff, the learning and teaching and I think the students were too. So they have a lot of boxes to tick off, I need to be able to do this type of assessment or this type of procedure or this particular case history or I need to see so many of this particular health group and that group and a lot of focus goes on that. And then the next one that I find that students are more aware of and I think as rural placement coordinators or supervisors we're also very aware of is very much that restorative because our students are often away, it's not just like you're saying the stresses or the emotional components or the wellbeing of being on prac. They're also quite often away from home for extreme periods of time. They're not got their usual supports. And so I think we're aware of that as well. And the students are too. And also the enrolling university seem to be a little bit more, well, we're very aware of that now actually too. So students are often tasked by their enrolling university to make sure when they write their goals to have a self-care goal in there, which sometimes they're pretty useful. Sometimes I think students just have one that they may be used for all their placements of what they're going to do. But I think what it does is allows us as supervisors the ability to open up that conversation with them as well and maybe link them in to make sure they've got supports in other areas. But I think the one that we miss out on Abigail in terms of we have high expectations, but the students are not maybe quite aware of this. And I think it's because a lot of students that I have anyway coming to us in their final year is the normative stuff. I think what they're not ready for is the volume of work that's required in understanding what are the policies and procedures, what are the paperwork requirements and how does ethics that they've learnt about in a theoretical way apply in this sort of rural context? And I think that's one that students often struggle with. without naming it as a normative goal, I always try and make sure that when students are setting some placement goals, and we are going to have a podcast on goal setting, which will be great, that they actually include some stuff in that normative as well. I guess it's come through to me a lot with a lot of particularly in allied health placements in NDIS. Boy, there's a lot of policy and procedures involved in NDIS and in talking to students, I don't supervise in NDIS placements, but in talking to students, they've become very aware throughout their placement of how that works. So I think that the three are really important. So the formative, the normative and the restorative. But I think as a clinical supervisor, you just have to keep your eye across the three and make sure that they're in balance for you and your students.

Abigail Lewis

Yeah, yeah, definitely. think having those in your mind does really help. And it also shows you that you're wearing multiple hats as a supervisor. And how do you juggle that? I'm evaluating your performance, but also I'm to know about your wellbeing. And yeah.

Kathryn Fitzgerald

Be vulnerable, but I'm going to evaluate your performance, yeah.

Abigail Lewis

Right, and making it to students when you're making that separation, like, well, when I'm asking you now how you are, this is not about me marking you off on your mid placement. I really do want to know because I might be able to support you to feel that you're managing things in a different way. And it's very common to have strong emotions when we work in health care. And it is really important that we have somewhere we can go where we can talk about that. So I think making it explicit that there are different parts of the supervision in session can also help students not to just be performing all the time as well because students might worry if I tell you that I feel really stressed about this client and I feel really uncomfortable with them. Is that going to reflect on my mid placement assessment? So being clear that you have got aspects where you're looking at their well being because everyone in healthcare does need somewhere where they can talk about difficult emotions is separate to when you are looking

at how you doing in terms of your competencies in the mid placement assessment. So again, I think being explicit can actually help with those and help students to be more honest about how they're really going. And get them to be in charge of the agenda when you have those meetings, get them to set what they want to talk about and what's important to them so that they are taking charge of those sessions and getting across what's important to them to talk about as well as you having input into that.

Kathryn Fitzgerald

I'm just wondering too what you think about the balance for the supervisor to not necessarily show all their stresses of the world and their job but the importance of the supervisor showing a bit of vulnerability as well to show what it's really like because I feel that students sometimes think that their supervisors have just got it all organised and I've got it all under control and you and I know and probably most people listening know that is really not true.

Abigail Lewis

Yeah. Yeah, and I think often supervisors will also perform for the students and might take that was a really tricky session I just did with the student, but they might talk about that with someone else and not with the student. So I think it's also important to think about, you putting on a good face and actually an unrealistic idea of what it means to be a health professional? We all have clients that are difficult. We all have emotional responses to things that are, you know, unpleasant or traumatic that the clients may tell us and that it is important to show to the student that you also respond to that. And even if you just talk about what you do to manage that elsewhere, because you don't necessarily want to get into an emotional debrief with a student, but really showing them that that is a reality that you do need to debrief sometimes and that things are difficult and that is part of managing as a professional. You're not a robot who does ever have any emotional responses but you actually do manage those professionally.

Kathryn Fitzgerald

I think that's another reason that it's even more important to have a model. Like we've talked about proctors today, but like you said, Abigail, there's many different models of supervision that might gel better with some people than others. To have that vulnerability as a supervisor, I think it's even more important to have something in your mind that's a model so you can see where your foundation of your relationship with a student and yourself fits. And so it doesn't become too swayed onto like you know, all the emotional stuff or too swayed on, you know, ticking the boxes of the policy and the procedures. I think that's probably important. I don't think you need to, as a supervisor who's got a busy clinical caseload or workload to be, you know, going home and reading books and books on clinical supervision. You can if you want to. But I think it's, I know some strange people do, but I think it's important to have a little bit of a structure. Yeah, yeah.

So are there any other things like this podcast is Fundamentals of Supervision and we've spoken a little bit about some of the fundamentals. I would recommend people perhaps if they're interested in listening to some of the other podcasts on reflection and preparing for placements but is there anything else you wanted to mention today on Fundamentals of Supervision?

Abigail Lewis

I think another fundamental is involving your team and your supervisor. So knowing that you've got support from the workplace to have students, that your workload might need to be adjusted, particularly in the first couple of weeks when they're finding their feet and might need more support and also that your team are there as well supporting you and maybe be able to do some of the supervision or certainly take the students sometimes for interprofessional or other activities. So definitely looking around, don't feel that you have to carry the whole load by yourself. And also consulting with your team then means that you don't all have students at the same time, which then can put pressure on space and things like that. I think having that discussion with your line manager and with your team is certainly very important. Anything else you think is important?

Kathryn Fitzgerald

look I think probably moving on to our takeaway messages because I think we've covered quite a lot today but I'm just thinking having a model is important. If you like something like the Proctor's model which is very simple sometimes having a drawing of it and just taking jotting some notes down in each of the three areas as to what that

might mean for you as a supervisor and on your placement can be super handy and just keeping that handy to maybe just reflect on yourself at points in the placement. And I think just going back to the very first point is relationship is key as a fundamental supervision. It doesn't mean you have to be your students best friend. It doesn't mean you have to bring them into your family, but it's important you have that professional supervision relationship and sometimes in a rural settings we do have a little bit more of a personal relationship as well, so it's important to have that in the fundamentals as well. What about you Abigail, any sort of takeaway messages for people listening today?

Abigail Lewis

I think the three building blocks, as well as Proctor's Model that you've said, know, fact that you want to have a strong collaborative supervisory alliance even, a relationship, the reflection and regularity. Thinking about those three things I think is really important. Actually that is three Rs, isn't it? Relationship, reflection and regularity. So that might be a good way of remembering.

Kathryn Fitzgerald

Very good. That is great. All right, well I think that brings us to the end of this episode of Rural Health Conversations. Thank you very much Abigail for sharing your insights and experiences about fundamentals of supervision. If you're interested in learning more, please check out, we put a copy of the proctor's model in there, in the show notes, you can have a look at.

And if you enjoyed this episode, please subscribe and leave a review. But until the next episode, keep the conversation going and thank you very much, Abigail, for your time today.

Abigail Lewis

Thanks. Bye.