

ICF Paris International Breakfast meeting 14th of October 2015 Guest Speaker Dr. Alison Hodge Subject: What goes on in Coaching Supervision?

For their second event, **ICF Paris International** was delighted to welcome **Dr. Alison Hodge** who is an EMCC accredited Coach at Master Practitioner level and an APECS accredited Executive Coaching Supervisor. She carried out her doctoral research during 6 years on the subject of Coaching Supervision at Middlesex University (UK).

Having been a Supervisor for the past 15 years, Alison found that although some coaches find supervision to be essential, others were coming to it with a lot of fear, resistance or ambivalence.

Her starting point for the research was the question “Why aren’t more coaches coming to Supervision?” After all, as a practitioner working in Executive coaching Alison knows first-hand what a coach can pick up from their client and from the complexity of the corporate environment.

In developing her research project, Alison felt called to model her practice and therefore chose Action Research as her methodology. During the 12 months of the Project Phase of her research, she invited the research participants (five coach supervisors and six executive coaches) to :

1. Participate in their own supervision sessions
2. Write up notes on what took place
3. Share the notes with Alison
4. Get together as a group to reflect on what important themes or issues had come up.
They explored all together, co-created with what emerged in the room and took the next step.

Then the cycle was repeated.

In the first cycle, the core questions were:

1. What were the issues raised in supervision?
2. What happened/emerged during the supervision session?
3. What changes were made to coaching practice

By the second cycle, the core questions were:

1. What changes to practice?
2. What influenced these changes?
3. What impact did the relationship have on your work?

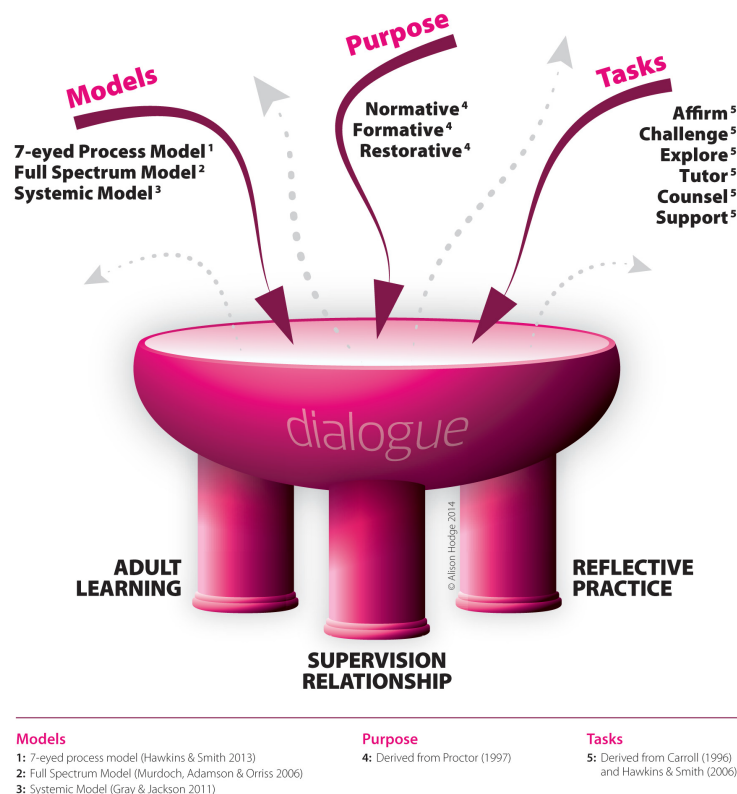
By the third cycle, the questions were:

1. How to support ourselves as coaches, keeping us fit for purpose?
2. How else beyond supervision do we support ourselves?
3. In an ideal world, what would supervision look like in order to keep us “fit for purpose”?

This methodology helped all participants to move from a place of “Am I doing right or wrong?” to a partnership relation and a place of inquiry and curiosity and led to the **The Three Pillars of Supervision model** created by Alison. It shows us what supports the cauldron of dialogue in supervision and helps coaches to keep fit for purpose :

- **adult learning** : creating the conditions for the coach to be at ease with not knowing leads to more openness, autonomy and responsibility for developing their practice
- **supervision relationship** : being aware of what’s happening in that relationship may be insightful for those conversations the coach is having with clients
- and **reflective practice** to keep fresh when engaging with clients.

It shows us also what goes into the cauldron; the models, the purpose and the tasks to enable learning and new knowledge to emerge.



Models

- 1: 7-eyed process model (Hawkins & Smith 2013)
2: Full Spectrum Model (Murdoch, Adamson & Orriss 2006)
3: Systemic Model (Gray & Jackson 2011)

Purpose

- 4: Derived from Proctor (1997)

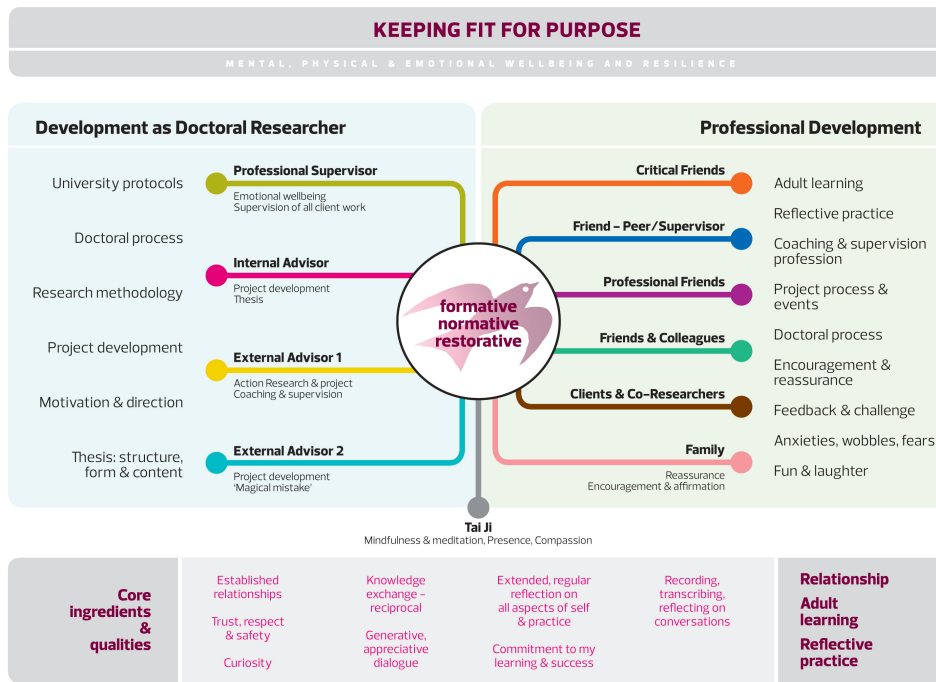
Tasks

- 5: Derived from Carroll (1996) and Hawkins & Smith (2006)

Among the findings of the research was the importance of acknowledging both the demands and the challenges of executive coaching. The supervision space was one where coaches could offload the issues that had arisen during coaching sessions, but also a space where they could seek to understand what had been taking place in the relationship with their client. They could learn and explore new techniques and use the supervisor’s point of view to step outside of their relationship with their client and gain perspective. It allowed them to ask the vital question “Is there anything here that may stop me from doing my best work?” The answer to that question could concern something in their coaching practice, but could also be something that was happening in their personal life.

All the research participants found that their appreciation of their supervision had deepened as a result of taking part in the study, as had their learning, which resulted in changes to their practice. Although most coaching organizations highly recommend Supervision, it is not compulsory and Alison found this to be a factor of motivation for the participants. It allowed them to retain autonomy as to their choice of Supervisor and the type of supervision that was effective for them. Indeed the value or effectiveness of the supervision was found to be something that both the Supervisor and the Supervisee were mutually responsible for.

However, in addition, Alison found that supervision on a 1:1 basis was not enough by itself. Drawing an interesting parallel between supervision in coaching and the supervision that she received during her academic journey towards her doctorate, Alison found that it was indeed a team that had helped to keep her on track. The extent of this team is shown in her slide “**Keeping Fit for Purpose**” which includes professional advisors and supervisors on the left hand side, but also critical friends, peers, clients, family members in the network on the right hand side.



The coach’s mental, physical and emotional wellbeing and resilience can all have an impact on the coaching that takes place and it is our responsibility as coaches to create the conditions to support us in being “Fit for Purpose”.

ICF Paris International is an initiative of the Paris-Ile de France chapter of ICF France. Its aim is to bring English speaking guests to the international coaching community in France.

Article written by Gaëlle Coqueblin and Jo Leymarie, team members ICF Paris International.