

Chapter 4

Obtaining Feedback from Supervisees



The previous chapter covered providing feedback to supervisees, and this chapter will cover the inverse, which is seeking out and obtaining feedback from supervisees. Specifically, we will review why inviting and encouraging feedback from supervisees is important, how to guide supervisees to provide relevant feedback, and strategies for regularly requesting feedback.

When you became a supervisor, regularly requesting feedback may not have been something you planned to do. However, we hope to convince you that it should be a high priority, and we outline three reasons why this activity should be conducted. The first reason is because it is included in the Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts. Specifically, code 4.10 states that “Behavior analysts actively engage in continual evaluation of their own supervisory practices using feedback from others and client and supervisee or trainee outcomes” (BACB, 2020). Therefore, we are called as supervisors to regularly review outcomes and recruit feedback. In addition to providing ethical supervision, recruiting feedback can aid you in providing high-quality supervision. If you have built a supervisory relationship on trust and mutual respect, the feedback provided by your supervisees will likely be geared toward improving your supervisory practices, which we assume are already better than most because you are reading this book. Third, recruiting supervisee feedback allows you to minimize or eliminate your engagement in ineffective supervisory practices. Sellers, Alai-Rosales, and colleagues (2016a) provide three potential risks of failing to recruit feedback regarding the quality of supervision being provided. These risks include failing to replicate effective supervisory practices, providing ineffective supervision which results in harm to future clients, and modeling ineffective supervision which is likely to perpetuate ineffective supervision because the supervisees will imitate these supervisory practices. We highlight the importance of each risk separately. The first risk refers to situations in which your supervisees did not have the opportunity to praise supervisory practices that they found most beneficial. Therefore, your behavior will fail to contact the appropriate contingencies, and shaping of effective strategies will not occur. The second risk is important because

it breaks the oath made to our clients to provide effective services with the goal of improving their lives. We hope that use of this book will reduce the likelihood of this occurring as you will consistently evaluate your supervisee's implementation of assessments and interventions with their clients; however, frequent supervisee feedback will provide an additional safeguard against ineffective services. Finally, the third risk is important because modeling ineffective supervision strategies will likely result in your supervisee engaging in these ineffective practices once they become a supervisor. Thus, in order to break the cycle of modeling and imitating ineffective strategies, supervisee feedback should be regularly recruited.

The next topic we introduce is the importance of intentionally guiding the substance of the recruited feedback. In order to receive feedback that is related to your supervisory practices, you must purposely guide your supervisees to provide useful information. For example, we have experienced situations in which college students fill out teaching evaluations, and their comments are related to the time of the class or the room in which the class was held. Neither of these comments have anything to do with the instructor's pedagogy. This issue is applicable within the supervisory evaluation if the supervisees provide feedback related to their client's schedule or displeasure with the other clinicians working with their clients. This type of feedback is completely unrelated to the supervisory practices and is likely out of the supervisor's control. Therefore, you must proactively ensure that this does not happen. We recommend that at the onset of the supervisory relationship, you have a conversation about the type of information that will enhance your ability to provide effective supervision. In addition, we suggest developing specific questions that will directly target the information of interest. For example, instead of posing the question "What do you most like/dislike about your field experience?" you might pose the question "Does your supervisor provide explanations along with their critical feedback?" Behavior analysts are typically very thoughtful about presenting discriminative stimuli in a manner that is most likely to evoke the desired response; however, they may be less thorough when posing questions to evaluate their own supervision. Therefore, we suggest experimenting with several questions to determine which will be most effective. It is also possible to adopt an established questionnaire for use such as the one provided in Turner et al. (2016).

Finally, we present some strategies for recruiting feedback. During your initial supervision meeting, ask your supervisee to inform you of how they prefer to provide feedback (Sellers et al., 2016b). Multiple sources of feedback are ideal, so encourage your supervisee to endorse as many formats as possible with which they feel comfortable. Examples of formats include face-to-face, questionnaires, electronic polls, and rating scales. Reassess for preference of formats to provide feedback throughout the supervisory relationship as your supervisee's comfort may change as they become more acquainted with you. Ask your supervisee about their comfort level of submitting their anonymous feedback to you or if they would prefer for a third party to review their responses. For anonymity to be suggested, it is imperative to request this information from multiple supervisees at the same intervals. If your supervisee agrees to provide face-to-face feedback, discuss the type of information you are interested in and examples of questions you will regularly ask

during individual supervision meetings. In the event that questionnaires, rating scales, or polls will be used, review the questions that will be posed and discuss the purpose of each question. This discussion is not meant to influence the supervisee's evaluative responses but rather to ensure the responses they provide are an accurate description of their perceptions. It is also important to discuss a specific plan about the frequency with which you will request your supervisee's feedback. The intervals of recruitment should be often enough to allow for your supervisory behavior to be impacted but not so frequent that it becomes a burden to your supervisee.

References

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