

Chapter 7: Groups Supervised by Colleagues

"Insight, I believe, refers to that depth of understanding that comes by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another".

(Bateson, 1994, p.14)

Utilizing the limited field texts of the colleague groups to compare and contrast with my groups

In this chapter I share reflections and summaries from the three groups supervised by my colleagues ("colleague groups"). I describe the groups briefly, and use "coach" or "supervisor" instead of giving the participants pseudonyms for the reader's ease. I write these from the researcher role at the forefront, and occasionally share how it influenced me as a supervisor. The field texts for these groups consist of the journal entries and the three to four focus groups I conducted with each throughout the 14-18 months they were engaged in the research. More typical of research on supervision, these are reflections on what happened in the room; they are not written from the recordings of the actual supervision sessions as these were not collected. I could not write vignettes of what happened in the room; I could write summaries and share participants' perspectives. In these ways I could compare and contrast all five groups, mine and my colleagues. This Chapter provides the reader with an organization that illustrates contrasts, comparisons, similarities and distinctions within topical groupings.

The journaling entries were provided by many of the coaches and supervisors in these three groups. There were four types of journal entries from the coaches—none as some coaches did not journal or if they did, did not share with me, coaches that occasionally submitted reflections of a handful of sentences, coaches that thoughtfully journaled and one coach that utilized the journaling to reflect, connect and reflect critically on the supervision experience with a reconsideration of events and stories across her life. The coaches in my two groups consistently submitted thoughtful journal entries; it appears the journaling may have been spurred as much from their relationship with me and desires to be in service to the research as it was about their own learning. A review of

who journaled in these groups is somewhat consistent with similar motivations; most of the coaches who regularly submitted thoughtful written reflections were the coaches I had personal relationships with and who had initiated asking their groups to participate in the research. There were exceptions to this as well.

As referenced in Chapter 3, I realized during the research process that my relationships with these groups was different than I imagined as I had designed the project. I have put the findings about my positionality, as less than the insider-researcher I imagined, and the implemented design of the debriefing sessions as focus groups in Appendix 2.

My inquiries were: What are the qualities and conditions that create enough safety in the supervision relationships within a group to enable self-disclosure, reflection and learning? How are these qualities designed and brought forth?

I introduce each group and write about their experiences based on the major themes that emerged in the Daring Group and the Creating Community Group. These themes are the supervisory relationships, the contracts for structure and process, the stewardship of the safe and trusted space for reflective practice, the facilitation of group dynamics, the inhibitors of that space, reflective practice and learning and development over time.

Introduction to the three groups

Most Tenured Group

Most Tenured Group Demographics					
Group	Years following certification	Prior Supervision Experience	Actively coaching	Other roles	Gender
Supervisor 2	Coach: 20+ Supervisor: 3	20+ years		Supervisor Faculty Organizational role	F
Coach 9	10+	5-7 ¹⁷ years	Yes		F
Coach 10	10+	5-7 years	Yes		F
Coach 11	10+	5-7 years	No	organizational, doctoral candidate	M
Coach 12	10+	5-7 years	Yes	organizational	F
Coach 13	10+	5-7 years	No	In transition	M
Coach 14	10+	5-7 years	No	In transition	F

Table 7: Most Tenured Group Demographics

This was a group of seven coaches, three actively coaching and four primarily engaged in other endeavors including retirement. The group, and their supervisor, had been together for 5-6 years. The supervisor was professorial in the sense of drawing on academic theories across knowledge areas of human development and psychology. The group elevated her status in recognition of her mastery, knowledge and long-term relationships. They revered her. The group had originally conducted their sessions via telephone, and embraced Zoom, with its video capabilities with a strong preference over voice only. They had met each other in person through attendance at conferences, and other activities through the years. Six of the seven agreed to participate in the research; these six and the supervisor were based in North America.

¹⁷ Memories varied

Newest Together Group

Newest Together Group Demographics					
Group	Years following certification	Prior Supervision Experience	Actively coaching	Other roles	Gender
Supervisor 3	Coach: 20+ Supervisor: 3			Supervisor External Mentor Coach	F
Coach 15	5-10 years	2 years	Yes	organizational	F
Coach 16	10+ years	none	Yes	In transition	F
Coach 17	10+ years	3 years	Yes		M
Coach 18	10+ years	3 years	Yes		F

Table 8: Newest Together Group Demographics

This was a group of four coaches, all actively coaching, three with vibrant practices and one with a full-time leadership position and coaching primarily outside of her organization. The group and their supervisor came together for the first time at the start of this research. The supervisor was earnest, wanting to get it right with an active inner critic. Three of the coaches had previously been in supervision, one had not. All had been coaching more than 5 years. They had not met each other in person. The coaches and the supervisor were based in North America.

Trio in Transition Group

Trio in Transition Group Demographics					
Group	Years following certification	Prior Supervision Experience	Actively coaching	Other roles	Gender
Supervisor 4	Coach: 20+ Supervisor: 3			Faculty Supervisor	F
Coach 19	5-10 years	2 years	Yes		F
Coach 20	5-10 years	3 years	Yes	In transition	F
Coach 21	5-10 years	3 years	No	In transition	F

Table 9: Trio in Transition Group Demographics

This was a group of three coaches, all of whom had been actively coaching in the past; they had been in supervision together with their supervisor in prior years. During the time of their participation in the research, one was actively coaching and two were in

transition to other endeavors (career, retirement). The supervisor was a lover, not in the romantic sense, but in the sense of an abundance of unconditional regard and enthusiasm for the coaches and their work together. Two coaches and the supervisor were based in North America. This group joined the research about midway through their supervision year.

Supervisory Relationships

The groups brought to my attention many times the special bond they had with their supervisor and with each other; the supervisors shared the same feelings about their bonds with the coaches and the group. These opportunities included our first meetings to discuss the research requirements and enlist them as participants, within their journaling, and in each of the subsequent focus groups.

In the Most Tenured Group the main discussion about participating focused on the risks of whether it could potentially disrupt or negatively shift their relationships with the supervisor. They placed paramount importance on that relationship. In the subsequent meetings with them, the supervisor and the coaches reiterated the appreciation they had for their working relationships, highlighting contributions, supportive ways of challenge, encouragement, compassion and the deep commitment they shared for learning and development. The fullness of life had been experienced by this group over the years which contributed to the deep connections they had with each other. One coach described a mandala that represented them:

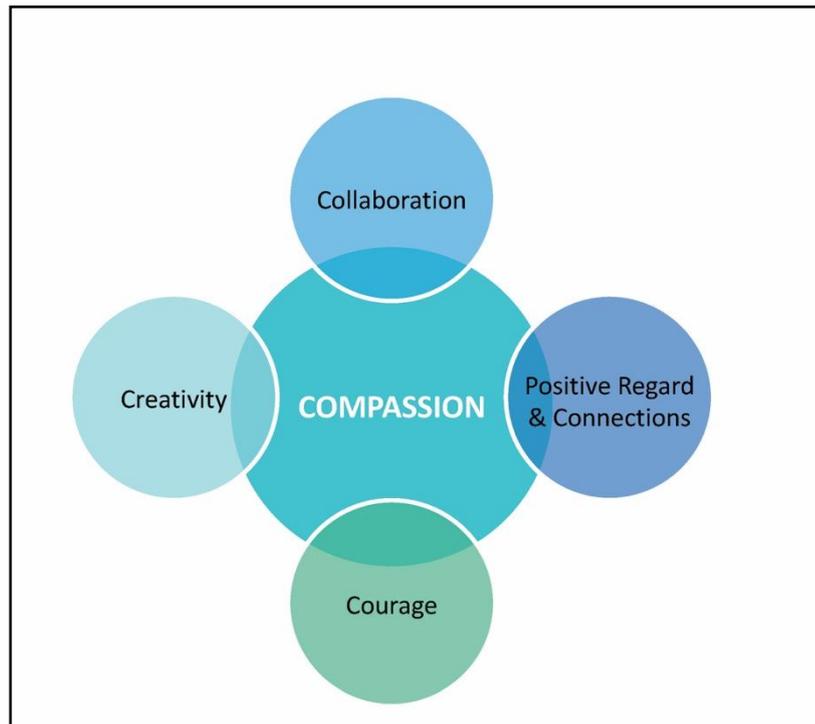


Figure 18: Mandala - compassion

In the Newest Together Group the supervisor asked the coaches what they wanted in their relationships with her and with each other. The group asked for her to show up as a peer with them by sharing her own struggles and challenges as a coach; to be vulnerable and self-disclosive just as they would; to share her expertise and wisdom; while retaining her facilitation responsibilities. The supervisor's realness, her vulnerability, was cited as being determinative in the relationships that enabled the reflection and learning space. Serendipitously everyone had a sense of humor, good nature and commitment to each other's development which contributed to the working alliance. The group identified the peer learning meetings as instrumental in their cultivation of relationships with each other.

The supervisor, in reflecting on the relationships within this group noticed a few themes. The first, that the group came eager, motivated and committed to their own growth and development, and that of their peers. They were engaged and prepared. Second, having supervised groups of six in the prior years, the smaller size of this group contributed to having the space for her to share more of her perspectives and experiences. She described her participation as she got things going, kept things going and added richness.

Third there was a special bond that emerged which she attributed to how the coaches were each unique in personality, style and presence.

The participants pointed to three important aspects in their relationships with the supervisor. First, her quality of naming and appreciating the specialness of the group. One member observed that the supervisor and the coaches savored and drew upon how “freaking different” each of them were from the others. Second, her all-in response to their invitation to show up both as a peer and a facilitator. Third, her consistent use of two quotes that resonated and inspired the group: “Don’t you see its all perfect?” (Dass and Das, 2013) and "We work on ourselves in order to help others, but also we help others in order to work on ourselves" (Chödrön, 2008, p.56). These three attributes were about acceptance and positive regard.

In the Trio in Transition Group, the relationships among the coaches and supervisor were nourished by humor, playfulness, self-disclosure, and shared accountability. The supervisor brought her own cases for the group to supervise her and brought a recording to the group to review before they committed to the research. The coaches planned the agendas for the supervision sessions in their peer learning calls; they were co-facilitators and co-inquirers with the supervisor. This group described the most collaborative approach, not quite a peer learning group, but closer to that (Heron, 1999) than the other groups.

The consistent themes within the groups were respect and gratitude for the contributions of the others, shared commitment to each other’s development, actively coaching coaches who brought rich coaching dilemmas, enthusiasm for the supervisor, and a culture of expansive acceptance. Shared vulnerability, through bringing one’s work for reflection, varied within the groups. In the Most Tenured Group, as in the Creating Community group, there were members who did not bring their work because they were not actively coaching. There was a distinction, which may have been meaningful in the potential contributions to the personal and professional development of the presenting coaches. In the Creating Community Group, the coaches were emerging, they were certified but not yet actively coaching. This limited their ability to contribute based on

coaching experiences. In the Most Tenured Group, they had been actively coaching and had moved onto other endeavors (retirement, further education, shifts in career). The non-coaching group members may have had prior experiences to draw on in inquiring and reflecting with the presenting coach with levels of discernment that the emerging coaches did not yet possess.

The supervisors had distinctly different styles. All three had deep and long experience as coaches, and in mentoring developing coaches. They shared personal qualities of warmth, care for others, finely developed emotional intelligence skills (Goleman, 2013), interpersonal relationship capacities, attention to individual and group relationships, extensive experience with group dynamics, courage, empathy, compassion and ethical maturity. Each of the supervisors knew about the coaches' personal lives, major challenges, victories and disappointments; they were interested in the group members as people, not merely as clients.

They were committed to their own ongoing development; they read widely, practiced and reflected, and were in regular supervision of their supervision.

[Contracting: Structure and Process](#)

The personalities of the groups with their supervisors showed up in the co-creation of the structure and process. The first level of contracting was the same for all five groups. As was set out in the earlier chapters, the structure consisted of the 10 supervision sessions, 10 peer learning calls, on Zoom, over approximately 12 months. All of the coaches paid for the supervision, each of the supervisors were paid by the Sponsor.

The second level of the contracting, the ways that the groups would work together, had both similarities and unique elements. In each group there was a beginning ritual of getting everyone's voice in the room. In the Newest Together Group the supervisor asked a reflection question at the start of each session; in the Most Tenured Group they shared how they were coming to the session; and in the Trio in Transition Group, they shared what was on their minds.

In the Most Tenured Group two coaches consistently brought the cases, with one additional coach bringing cases sometimes. Write-ups were expected in advance of the session. The other members of the group, who were not actively coaching, did not bring cases. The agenda for the session was set based on what was in the room. In the Trio in Transition Group, as noted above, the coaches set the agenda, and write-ups were optional. In the Newest Together Group, each coach was assigned a month in which to bring the lead case; the coaches could trade off months with each other; write-ups were encouraged yet optional. The presenting coach negotiated the agenda with the supervisor as it was their month. In all three groups, the supervisor contracted with the presenting coach about their inquiry, and the group members, to varying extents, were co-inquirers with the supervisor.

The groups responded differently to the research request to experiment with observational experiences. The Most Tenured Group actively utilized live-action coaching and experimented with a number of formats; they did not experiment with recordings. In the Trio in Transition Group, every coach brought a recording. In the Newest Together group, one coach experimented with bringing a recording; they did not do live-action coaching. These differences reflected the many variables across the groups including their levels of willingness to experiment with new and unfamiliar processes which required a willingness to step into different types of vulnerabilities and required larger time commitments.

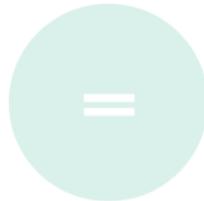
In all three groups, just as with my two groups, there were agreements to protect the confidentiality of clients, and the content of the sessions; the sessions were recorded and made available to those coaches who requested it, or to those who had missed the session, or to all the coaches; while video was preferred, coaches who needed to be audio-only were accepted; coaches participating from an environment with high distractions, e.g., a coffee house, were welcomed. In the two groups that had been in supervision together in prior years, the process had been attuned to their preferences and experiences in reflection and learning. In the Newest Together Group the process was more iterative as the group experimented and explored what would work for them.

The third level of contracting, what happened in each session, was tailored collaboratively among the group members and supervisor.

Experimentation was brought into each group; it provided learning and energy even when imperfectly executed. For example, in the Newest Together Group, a presenting coach had asked to explore four cases, the supervisor agreed, and the session was facilitated in that way. The supervisor reflected in her journaling that at the end of the session the other group members expressed dissatisfaction with the process and she had missed getting agreement for this process change. Interestingly in the coaches journaling entries the presenting coach was pleased, two of the other coaches appreciated the experimentation to try something differently and one coach had not found it an effective process. The supervisor concluded in her reflections that she would ensure going forward that shifts in the process were with explicit permission.

As an experiment in the Most Tenured Group, the supervisor invited the group to consider and inquire about the cases brought by two presenting coaches simultaneously. The group found unexpected themes and learning from this process and utilized it again. They also experimented with the concept of live-action coaching and developed a handful of formats for it: one coach coaching another and debriefing that experience; one coach bringing an inquiry and then role-playing the client while coached by another coach; one coach role-playing a stakeholder in the client's system while coached by another coach or the supervisor; and having the group members coach the presenting coach. These approaches are set out below.

INTERPRETATIONS OF "LIVE ACTION COACHING" IN A GROUP SUPERVISION SESSION



SUPERVISION EQUALS COACHING

Group members believed that coaching and supervision were one and the same, and that receiving and providing coaching were intrinsic to the sharing and reflecting process.



LEARNING LABS FORMAT

Group members coach each other and are observed by other group members, and then assessed against coaching competencies as outlined by the ICF.



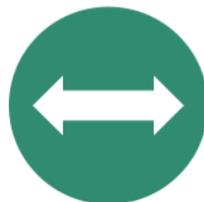
COACHING DEMO

Like Learning Labs Format, except group debrief is based on reflection as pertains to coach's case instead of assessed against external competencies.



TRIAD COACHING

Utilizing one group member as coach, one as client, and a third as observer. Following coaching demo, triad debriefs followed by group reflections and observations.



ROLE PLAY

Group member plays role of a client they are coaching, or stakeholder in client system, with another group member playing the role of coach. Group then debriefs on coaching session observations.

Figure 19: Ways to use Live-action Coaching

The two existing groups noted the experimentation as having brought new energy, had stimulated more learning and they found it inspiring. The Newest Together Group shared that the whole year was experimentation as they got to know each other and work together in the messiness of their coaching.

The coaches brought cases, issues, sticky situations and themes to the sessions. They did not note that they had brought successful moments to debrief and articulate what they were doing well. On a few occasions, a coach journaled that they had become aware of their development; they had caught up with their development. Examples from one coach are illustrative and include listening more intently, greater curiosity, willing to coach within the group, and increased comfort with not taking notes in her coaching sessions.

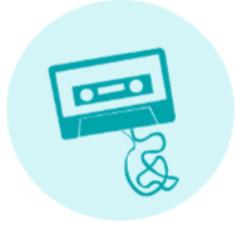
The appreciations they expressed were about opening of possibilities, of seeing more perspectives, of feeling held within the group without negative judgment. This was not perfectly enacted. There were a handful of times in each group when one or more coaches lost a sense of safe and trusted space. These are described later in this chapter. The following figure sets out examples of process flow within a session. Elements of the flow were established at each level of the contracting, and in-the-moment in the session with permission-based interventions. The intent was an ever-present commitment to contracting throughout each of the sessions.

CONSIDERATION OF CASES IN SUPERVISION SESSION

CASE PRESENTATION FORMAT:



Write-Up



Recording



Storytelling



Live Action Coaching

CONTRACTING

What does the coach want to explore with this case?

- ✓ Advice
- ✓ Examples
- ✓ Going on for coach
- ✓ Going on for client
- ✓ Client system
- ✓ Theories and models

GROUP DISCUSSION

What did group members and coach notice?

- ✓ Images
- ✓ Feelings
- ✓ Questions
- ✓ Observations
- ✓ Subtext
- ✓ Context

AWARENESS IN DIALOGUE

- ✓ System of group
- ✓ Roles of group members
- ✓ Balance of time and airtime



- ✓ Coach's learning
- ✓ Group's learning
- ✓ Adequate reflection

Figure 20: Examples of process within a session

Stewardship of the safe and trusted space

“We're dealing with an amazing group in how unselfish and willing everyone in this group was to give of themselves to each other”.

(Supervisor, Newest Together Group)

“When we come together...it's a safe landing...it creates a space that almost feels over time like a sacred space. Anybody can show up here in whatever form they're in and it's good enough”.

(Supervisor, Longest Tenured Group)

There was a focus and attention to attending to the qualities of the collective space. While the styles, practices and experiences of the supervisors and coaches varied widely, there were similarities. The first was that perfection was not required of the supervisor or the coaches. When there were small disruptions in each of the groups, from either the supervisor or coach advising, telling, judging, or distracted or any of a variety of human moments, they could be addressed, a small repair made, and the group moved forward.

There were themes about how the coaches and supervisors interacted in the group setting. There were comments in two of the groups about the importance of group membership in the context of relationships. In the Most Tenured Group, they recalled a group member who had been “toxic” which had inhibited the learning even with the good relationships with the supervisor. They noted it was only when that coach left the group, and another coach, with strong interpersonal skills, joined that the group was effective. The positive approach of empathy, compassion, regard, and kindness mattered. In the Newest Together Group, one coach shared that “I finally found a group that resonates well”.

Group members reported attributes in others of gratitude, appreciation, respect, positive regard, challenge, empathic responses, and acceptance. As a coach noted “it is a group of trusted, generous peers”. This theme, of the competence of the others in the group was referenced consistently, but not by every coach. As one wrote “...the group talks about

how great it is and I don't feel the same way. I like it but it seems less important to me". The three groups had seasoned and experienced coaches. They reflected on their learning from the diversity of perspectives and experiences, from differing approaches and from new ideas.

The supervisors embodied an expansive acceptance of the group and its interactions. The accountability was held by the coaches; the supervisors welcomed however the coaches showed up—depleted, overwhelmed, in a noisy space, with cases or with no cases, having prepared and sent write-ups, or not. This was the role-modeling of unconditional positive regard (Rogers, C.R., 1980) that is a foundational principle of coaching, and supervision. It did not preclude the holding of the ethical and normative guardrails of the professions; rather it co-created, with the coaches, an environment that was safe enough to bring one's struggles. The supervisor of the Most Tenured Group wrote "I also noticed (and commented on it) in our check in the enormous amount of challenges coaches can be handling on the personal front while doing good coaching work. Self-care and building resilience regularly [are] so darn important to keep front of mind in supervision". One coach wrote of the supervisor of the Newest Together group noting "the incredibly beautiful, caring way [she] shares her insights".

One hallmark of the Newest Together and the Trio in Transition Groups were their experiences of mutual vulnerability. The coaches brought cases and issues to share, focused on where they were stuck, or in doubt, or not feeling effective. In the Trio in Transition Group each coach brought a recording for the group to review and reflect. They were the only group to do so and attributed it to being inspired by their supervisor who had brought a recording of one of her sessions to the group before asking them to commit to the research. In the focus group discussions, they noted this mutual vulnerability, the intimacy it created and the richness of the inquiries and learning.

In the Most Tenured Group it was different. As mentioned above, three coaches primarily brought the cases to the group and exposed the messiness of their work. They found value in the inquiries and reflections of the others. They appreciated the long-term relationships and space. They did not comment on the lack of cases, issues or themes

from the coaches who were no longer actively coaching until our final focus group session. I was curious about the lack of mutual vulnerability and noticed it felt similar to my feelings about the Creating Community Group interactions. Was something missing in the potential learning when there was not the shared vulnerability of everyone bringing their work, their stuckness, their challenges? In that final focus group, the group disclosed that they had started an experiment to introduce shared vulnerability by asking those who were not bringing cases, to bring an issue or struggle within their current lives to reflect on with the group. They had done this with one member at that point. As one coach observed “we learned a lot more about xx and xx said it was really helpful to share”.

The groups were facilitated in different ways. As an example, the Most Tenured Group paused at the end of the consideration of the issues brought by the presenting coach for individual inquires of self. Each coach in the group, beginning with the presenting coach, shared what they were noticing, sitting with, “the big high-level learning or theme”. Then the next presenting coaching would proceed. In the Newest Together Group, at the end of the full session the supervisor asked for closing comments which included “what did each of us get as coach and self as a coach?” In the Trio in Transition Group the closing ritual was not described within the field texts.

The supervisors’ actions were seen as role-modeling interpersonal relationships and coaching competencies. The supervisor, in the Most Tenured Group, participated as the coach in a live-action coaching session, in contrast to many of the live-action sessions which had the coaches assume the roles. The group shared the significant learning from observing her coaching and in particular, two coaches mentioned one of her interventions in reflecting on their own level of courage to challenge a client. As mentioned earlier, the supervisor of the Trio in Transition Group brought a recording of her client coaching session to the group, role-modeling vulnerability and use of recordings for reflection.

Bumps in the container

One of the coaches in the Most Tenured Group brought a written from memory transcript of a segment of a coaching session. She acknowledged her vulnerability in doing this—it “took courage on my part to share”. She went on to write “The comments from the other coaches stung a tad...is this how I want to coach or is it how I am coaching?” Here were vulnerability and feeling judgment in the same moments. Did the sting cause her to feel less safe or diminish her trust in the moment? Or was it about her vulnerability in exposing her work to observation of her peers? Perhaps her relationship with feedback or the sense of judgment from the others? Or was this reflection about her feelings without any change in her sense of trust and safety?

This same coach had originally anticipated she would bring a recording to the group. A few months into the research, she and I had a conversation¹⁸ where she shared, she had come to realize she could not bring one. What she had noticed was that she was still “traumatized” from experiences two years before in which she had submitted two recordings for assessment by a certifying professional association. The two coaching sessions had been deemed not sufficient and the transcripts were returned to her filled with negative comments in red pen. She still felt the shame of that endeavor and could not bring herself to risk a repeat experience.

The supervisor of the Newest Together Group journaled that she was reflecting on whether she had held back some feedback in a session. She was noticing that the group responded to the coach with positive comments and that she thought “I held back some, not wanting to rain on the parade...”. This felt familiar to me; it was very similar to my not providing feedback to the coach in the Creating Community Group albeit for a different reason. I wonder to what extent we were exercising good judgment about the capacity of the group for additional feedback, or if we were not courageous enough, or what other factors might be at play?

¹⁸ This coach had been unable to participate in a focus group. The supervisor encouraged me to reach out to see if she would have a one-on-one conversation so I would have the benefit of her perspectives. The coach agreed.

Settling into the group at the start of the session was not a given, even with the time the groups had been together. In the Most Tenured Group, two of the coaches shared that it was not automatic. One noticed she needed time, 15 minutes, to arrive with intentionality; she would, moving forward, bring her practice of preparing for her coaching sessions, to her preparation for the supervision sessions. She would use the time to “get centered...review the cases...reflect on what I most want to learn from and contribute...”. Another coach wrote “It takes a while for me to become less self-conscious on the call”. In the Trio in Transition Group one coach reflected that she was observing herself in the sessions to notice if she was willing to be vulnerable and sometimes, she was not.

Repair

Interestingly there were few reports of the loss of feeling in a safe and trusted space. There was one explicit reflection and a breach and the subsequent repair. In the Most Tenured Group, one of the coaches, after a focus group session, shared with the supervisor that she felt underappreciated, and her contributions had not been recognized. The supervisor “artfully” raised the topic in the next supervision session, and the breach was repaired through a discussion. The coach journaled “That made me feel much better! It made me happy to get positive feedback and reinforces how good it feels for our coaching clients to get positive feedback...I was glad I made myself vulnerable”.

Reflective Practice and Learning

“I really enjoyed learning how other coaches thought about things and the questions they asked, the way they asked the questions... you're just sort of always learning from each other...you're just experimenting and trying different things in our supervision. Then, you know I think that made me kind of explore and try and do things differently with my clients as well”. (Coach)

“We bring cases to each other and coach each other and try to learn and develop our coaching skills while having a third-party point of view giving input to that as well, both from our peers and from our supervising coach”. (Coach)

Collective wisdom

One coach used the “collective wisdom” phrase to describe one of the key attributes of participating in a supervision group. This phrase resonated with me as an appropriate descriptor of a key advantage of small group reflective practice. She went on to write “it's a blessing and a gift to have access to other wise practitioners, who don't tell me what to do and what not to do, but just through questions or through bringing things forward for me to consider, had me do what we do as coaches, help people see what they do not see...”

Reflections and learning before, during, and after supervision were described in the focus group settings and in the journaling. Not every coach experienced each aspect that I describe below although there was a congruence that the coaches who reflected more deeply in their journaling expressed most of these reflective and learning elements. That does not mean the others did not, only that there is nothing in the field texts; the coaches were deriving sufficient value to devote dollars and time to supervision.

Reflective Practice

Reflecting and preparing for the supervision sessions was an opportunity for the coaches and supervisors. The use of case write-ups in the Most Tenured Group provided a process for pre-session reflection. The discussion in their peer learning session as to who would bring the cases for the upcoming supervision session had the potential for the coaches to reflect ahead of the session in the Trio in Transition Group.

Observing one's self, both in client settings and in the supervision sessions was often referenced. Coaches and supervisors would comment on what they noticed about themselves in the session. Examples include “more calm and centered than I used to be”, “got frustrated when someone in the group...”, “noticed I was completely focused...able to view each case from the balcony more readily”, “I am action-oriented and want clients to...” One coach caught herself in her own story “I caught myself looking for confirmation of what I believe, I refocused my attention to expanding my learning and deepening my

understanding”. One coach shared that although she took different approaches than her colleagues, she was trusting her instincts more than before, her confidence in her own style was strengthening.

Reflecting on what the presenting coach had brought and on their own similar cases or clients happened as a matter of course. It felt like a natural shift that the coach would consider their own work, as they co-inquired with a colleague. Coaches wrote often about this— “I realize one of the cases reminded me of one of my clients...”, “Noticed empathy and emotion...particularly connections to my own experiences...”, listening to the presenting case and imagining “how I would coach that client”. One coach noted that not being actively coaching enabled her to listen more deeply to the case being presented as she did not move to also consider her coaching.

Reflecting on future actions and designing experiments for future interactions with clients was described. There is no way to generalize to all the coaches, however for those who journaled they identified ways they were going to work with clients in the future. One coach specified a series of questions that were on her mind for a particular client, other coaches talked more generally, such as noticing they were in the client’s story and needed to step out, or that they had ways to approach challenging clients, or delivering feedback.

Learning

Many of the journal entries describe the learning; almost always these entries were written by actively coaching group members. Sometimes that learning came with noticing how practicing it with a client could be challenging. “I am taking my learning and working to apply it in my coaching sessions...leads to times when I am less present because I am reflecting on my coaching in the session”. One coach noticed her frustration with a group member for getting “off track” which led to her wondering if she had that response to clients who get off track and realizing she did, she identified a shift in her approach going forward. Consistently, the coaches were learning. A sample of reflections— “It is amazing to me how much I learn from presenting cases, my own and others’...”, “the most useful was the role-play as I learned by doing and the discussion afterwards...”. There were

reflections on the increase in one's self-awareness as a coach through watching colleagues and the collective dialogue which led to shifts in how one engaged in relationship with clients and the clients' systems.

The coaches talked and wrote about practicing the coaching competencies within the supervision sessions. Coaches wrote about practicing boundaries, staying in deep listening, staying out of other's stories, not moving to judgment, inquiring rather than advising, and a variety of other interpersonal relationships and coaching capacities. One coach noted that she was able to trust herself and be authentic; she wanted to remember that as she was coaching. Another coach noticed she could see her learning edges up close in the group both as she saw them in herself and in others. Learning how to reflect and learn about her coaching in the group was enabling another coach to reflect and learn on her own in between sessions.

The value of supervision was sufficient that coaches in the Most Tenured and the Newest Together Group renewed for the coming year, although one coach did not. The Trio in Transition Group had two of the three coaches moving onto different endeavors and therefore did not renew.

[Time together](#)

In the focus groups with the Most Tenured Group there was a strong and unanimous sense that the group had deepened their relationships and the depth of their work together over time. As the supervisor shared "This group has been together for 6 or 7 years and they have just asked to renew for another year. They reflected on how their work has changed, how their approaches have deepened and how the nature and quality of the group's connectedness has fostered development of one another".

In the final focus group with the Newest Together, which was about mid-way through their second year of supervision together, they shared they could feel the difference that the first year had made in how they approached the second year. They pointed to knowing each other better, which led to greater comfort, understanding of each other's styles, coaching practices, and developmental edges. As one coach noted "we're able to

go deeper and challenge each other in a way that I think we didn't at the beginning of last year”.

In summary

In this chapter I have shared observations about the three colleague groups, each of which had unique elements and elements that were consistent across the five groups. I focused the chapter on the themes that were pertinent to describing the qualities and conditions that created a safe and trusting place for self-disclosure, reflection and learning. The living nature of the groups, and the space within which they came together, the co-creation among the groups, the opportunities to develop personally and professionally, are incorporated into my findings and conclusions which are set forth in the next 3 chapters.

In the next Chapter, Chapter 8, I use the metaphor of the garden to share my findings about the interwoven nature of the tenets of cultivating and stewarding the safe and trusted space.

In Chapter 9, I focus on the findings about reflective practice and learning. I offer a model of how these were experienced in the groups.

In Chapter 10, I articulate the high-level conclusions about the art of supervising small groups of coaches, coming together virtually, and engaging in reflective practice.