

Supervision Reflection Paper

Suzy Vaile

Department of Counselor Education and Supervision, Liberty University

Author Note

Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to Suzy Vaile, 1971

University Blvd, Lynchburg, VA 24515. Email: ssvaile@liberty.edu

Reflection on Training/Supervising

I worked with Dr. Cheyne in her COUC 512 class with master's level students. There is an interesting dynamic working with master's level students because it feels like those classes were so long ago, yet I practice the skills learned in those classes every day. I have also noticed a diverse age and stage population in both my master's and PhD programs. I feel like I am in a unique position because though I have a vast amount of life and job experience, I chose to complete my advanced degrees later in life, so I am a "new" student. Upon college graduation and marriage, my husband and I started our family, and I chose to postpone further education for myself and homeschool our children. I created, led, and taught at several co-ops, where our kids were able to receive their education from a wide variety of professionals who were also homeschooling their children. From physical education to public speaking, I taught subjects that were my strengths and that I enjoyed teaching. Once the kids graduated from high school, I re-entered the work force, teaching fitness classes for the YMCA, Hanes Brands, and Rock Tenn in Winston Salem, NC, which led me to creating and leading the wellness program at a local retirement community. It was then that I realized there was more that I wanted to do with my life to help people, and I remembered the dream of becoming a therapist from many years ago. After much prayer and trepidation, I began my journey at Wake Forest University and completed

my degree in clinical mental health. I was thrilled to be working in my field and helping patients in a hospital setting. After seeing my great enjoyment of this profession that I love, my husband encouraged me to pursue the terminal degree in my field; I immediately rejected the idea thought that I was done with school. But God had different plans for me; He used my husband to show me that by becoming a counselor educator, I could impact the next generations of counselors behind me, and from that moment on, I was convinced of the plan. I share all that to give perspective on my supervising history, but also my respect for this advanced education and desire to continue to learn and grow in this new counselor identity. I learned that training and supervising group leaders brings me immense joy; I am thrilled to participate in their counseling journey, and hopefully make an impact on them as they grow and learn. Dr. Cheyne was gracious and kind; she allowed me tremendous freedom to lead and give feedback, as well as answer questions and share my personal experiences with the class. The students were curious and teachable and I enjoyed my supervision interactions with them.

Reflection on Challenges

I have always loved public speaking and making connections with other people. I imagine this is due to seeing it modeled by my parents my whole life. My father was an officer in the military, and my mom was an amazing hostess and entertainer. I remember watching from upstairs at a young age as they invited people into our home and welcomed them to the new

military base, striving to help them feel relaxed and at home. My mom would come upstairs and bring my brother and I some of the amazing food and tell us goodnight, leaving a waft of Chanel No. 5 behind her. My parents not only made entertaining look easy, but they also made it look fun. I enjoyed watching them connect with people and as I got older, they always included me in these opportunities as well. I have led sports teams, sororities, and various other positions throughout my life, but one of my greatest challenges has been doubting my ability or “right” to be a supervisor. During my time with Dr. Cheyne, I had a moment before we were together that I wondered if I was going to lead the class the way she wanted me to, or supervise the students in a helpful manner. I don’t think I doubt my skills, but if I am unsure of a format or expectation, I can sometimes struggle with taking the lead and wonder if I am doing what is expected of me.

Reflection on Supervisory Skills

My top strength is communication; if anything, I am an over-communicator. I strive to hold space for whoever I am with to feel heard and seen. I excel at connecting with people in a variety of settings. I give clear feedback, I am focused on the tasks, and I reflect on the skills we are currently using in class. One skill I can improve on is ensuring that I differentiate supervision from other interventions like teaching, providing therapy, or other aspects of counseling. While the connection is important, I must remain focused on the supervision so that I can give appropriate feedback and work within the boundaries of a supervisor. I recognize that it will be

very important to be flexible and that our work is fluid in nature. However, I want to maintain a strong structure of supervision so that the boundaries and roles are clear and helpful for everyone that is involved. I am excited to continue practicing and honing these skills as I continue in my PhD program.