

TECHNOLOGY IN SUPERVISION

By way of introducing [Günay](#) and [Liz](#), the newest members of the Coaching Perspectives supervision contributor team, they join [Benita](#) and [Michelle](#) in reflecting on their experiences of using technology – as always, taking both supervisor and supervisee perspectives.

BENITA AS SUPERVISOR

I enjoy working virtually because it offers new avenues and endless opportunities to connect and work with coaches and supervisors from diverse backgrounds, cultures and continents.

I feel privileged and energised in the way I have been able to develop my 'virtual' supervision practice, transcending barriers and embracing the wider world we all inhabit. This approach is fundamental in opening up to the infinite ways and challenges of seeing things differently.

Initially I recall a reticence about working online. As the process became more familiar, I was able to be more courageous and open, leading to a more trusting approach. It was as if technological glitches necessitated opportunities to work out new ways of working together.

I am further strengthened and confident in what's possible through learning in a virtual world. In my experience, we find ways of being together, of shaping our human connection for the greater good of the whole.

BENITA AS SUPERVISEE

Having met with my supervisor in person for many years, the introduction of technology engendered a very different approach and experience. Gone were the established physical and caring rituals of arriving and leaving, alongside noticing the body cues we had become accustomed to.

While the essence and focus of our work remained the same, we spent time navigating our way with the technology. In the early days we revealed a 'messiness' in our ways of problem-solving technical issues. Overall, it required me to become more curious and mindful of our relationship now being on the other side of a screen. Our circumstances had changed and it was important to recognise what significance this had in order to recover our flow.

Alongside, there were the practical freedoms and benefits to be gained: using less of the planet's resource, a convenience of working from my home office, avoiding the hassle and expense of traveling, managing time differently.

Two years on we have embraced the use of technology. Our learning partnership continues to sustain, deepen and flourish in service of my client work. We are now finding ways of bringing in new rituals while working online.

GUNAY AS SUPERVISOR

In 2017, a change of countries pushed me to seek technology that would allow me to work with my supervisees online. Zoom was a way to almost teleport myself to sessions. Unfortunately this teleportation consisted of only half of me: head and shoulders! At first, I felt as if I was only providing half a service as a supervisor because my eyes could not see the whole body and its language. After a while, I discovered new questions that brought me the details that my eyes were looking for.

During the Covid-19 era, the technology that I learned in my spare time suddenly became a necessity. My own supervisor's mind-blowing questions about how I expected my future job to be was a prompt to increase the speed of my technical learning. I was glad that I didn't have to start from scratch, and learnt lots about different virtual platforms and collaborative whiteboards by participating in online events facilitated by others. My supervisees were so patient and understanding about the difficulties I experienced while resolving technological problems! I am eternally grateful to all of them.

GUNAY AS SUPERVISEE

I was able to have more regular sessions with my supervisor via technology during the pandemic. Luckily, she was good at tech and helped me to discover how to provide the best angle of the half-body view from my camera. She also helped me discover which online tools were best for me, the working details of the virtual platform I chose and the unlimited features of the internet.

We have also worked on my emotional reactions to working online. Technology evoked fear, anger and sadness, especially when it wasn't working properly. These feelings affected my 'being in the moment' with my clients. I also had difficulty trusting the reliability of technology to perform as expected, and this could trigger anxiety. My approach is to discover my work and then give myself to it wholeheartedly, and this was difficult amongst such strong emotions.

My supervisor helped me to understand these feelings and to identify what I could do to manage them. She believed in my ability to overcome challenges, and my self-efficacy improved day by day.

LIZ AS SUPERVISOR

When the pandemic moved all of my work online, I was already familiar with the technology but realised a few months in that my creative spark had been dampened. Through reflection and discussion with my own supervisor, I was reminded of the impact of place and space on my work. Pre-pandemic I had a dedicated coaching/supervision space within my home with large windows and a beautiful view into the garden. When this needed to be transformed into a dance studio for my daughter's continued online musical theatre studies, my considered, prepared and inspiring workspace became a small, cluttered office in a house full of other people also working online.

To renew my creativity, I knew I needed to take ownership of my office, considering what I wanted and didn't want around me to

help me do my best work. This prompted me to encourage my supervisees to do the same: to notice their online workspace and make small changes that would positively impact themselves and their work. Some chose to light candles, others added flowers or plants to their coaching space and chose virtual backgrounds that added something different. This in turn encouraged their clients to consider where they accessed coaching from, to reignite choice.

LIZ AS SUPERVISEE

I have had online supervision for many years because I live in Yorkshire and my supervisor is in London. Despite the distance between us, we have a great connection and I like being able to join from whichever space feels right for me on the day. This might be my admin space, my supervision space or even the garden. I think this ability to choose my space increases my sense of comfort and psychological safety and sets my intention for the work.

As I reflect on how else technology has worked for us, I see it as an open window. It allows us to see each other and frames the work we do but doesn't get in the way or inhibit us in our ways of working creatively; indeed it fades into the background. It's a silent facilitator, enabling but not prescribing, and that's what my supervisor is too. She gives me space to explore, think, try things out and create my way of working. Of course she isn't void of challenge, questions or support, and like a 'healthy' Zoom connection she weaves her subtle magic skillfully and delicately.

MICHELLE AS SUPERVISOR

On the whole I've enjoyed the virtual ways of working that became the norm in the pandemic. Perhaps my introversion preference contributed to me missing less the informal and social elements that accompany in-person working. I always seek to bring freshness and creativity into my work – and increasingly found ways of using technology to replace what I did in person. So digital whiteboards, digital imagery, playlists, and YouTube videos have all been ways of engaging creatively while online. In the main I feel this has added an extra dimension to the work. I've loved the challenge of creating a sense of connection and shared experience even when we are not physically in the same room. I've noticed that when emotions are evoked in the work and we are online it has the impact of slowing things down. With the client in their own space there seems to be a greater sense of safety – and for me, as with different cues to work with I become more tentative. This feels helpful and more spacious, and seems to help the client sit more gently with their exploration.

MICHELLE AS SUPERVISEE

Interestingly, despite my own comfort with technology, I notice that I use technology less as a supervisee than I do as a supervisor. When someone else is facilitating, I seem to follow their lead, grateful for once not to be responsible for holding the space! There is only one of my regular supervision sessions where the facilitator offers a digital whiteboard. He uses it for group contracting and we add our individual thoughts on virtual notes on the board. This is useful as a reference point that we can return to each session and is similar to re-using the original flip chart each session! I also like the chat

function; as sometimes more of a reflector, I can be slow to speak up... so I pop a quick comment in the chat when it occurs to me. Sometimes others in the group respond, other times not. I notice that giving my thoughts a voice is more important than whether it provokes further debate. But with a good facilitator, it can work a bit like putting a coin on the pool table: it marks my request to go next. Neat!

GROUP SUPERVISION EXPERIENCE CALLS

The Association for Coaching provides a group supervision experience on the third Thursday of every month. This service is free to members. Calls are held via video link or low-cost teleconference line and are facilitated by experienced AC coaches, who donate their time to support AC members. The calls last for up to an hour and have a maximum of five participants. AC group supervision calls are designed to offer members a taste of what supervision is like and what can be gained from participating in it. The calls are available to AC members regardless of location across the world. For more information, visit associationforcoaching.com/page/EventsGroupSupervi.

WHY NOT GET INVOLVED?

We are looking to welcome new volunteers who would like to join the team guiding this column forwards. We are particularly interested in expanding the diversity of the team and invite interest from all over the world – whether you're an AC member or not. New members would work in collaboration with the existing team and Clare Manning, lead on excellence for the magazine. If you are interested please contact Benita at benitatreanor@btinternet.com and or Michelle at michelle@greenfieldsconsultancy.co.uk for an informal exploratory chat.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Benita Treanor is an executive coach, coach supervisor, author, lead contributor on supervision and a founding member of the Association for Coaching. Benita is an AC-, CSA- and BACP-accredited supervisor, coach and psychotherapist. Benita founded her own coaching and organisational development business in 1998 and works with not-for-profit organisations, private and public, both locally and globally.



Günay Ozarin is founder of Göz Danışmanlık ve Koçluk in Turkey. She is AC-accredited as both a professional coach and a coaching supervisor. She is one of the founders of AC Turkey and is the lead for group supervision experience calls there as a head of talent and engagement.



Liz Ford is an accredited master executive coach and an accredited coaching supervisor. Prior to setting up Ford Consulting in 2001, she worked in both the NHS and private healthcare industry in nursing, management and learning and development. She loves working creatively and often uses the outdoors with her clients.



Michelle Lucas's first interest was psychology, leading to a career in HR. Having supported many executives who were dealing with transition, coaching was an obvious next career. She set up Greenfields in 2003, where she works as an accredited master executive coach as well as an accredited coach supervisor.