Microcounselling Supervision:
An Innovative Integrated Supervision Model

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ABSTRACT

This article introduces a new integrated model of counselling supervision entitled the Microcounselling Supervision Model. This type of supervision is designed for supervisors and supervisees who favor eclecticism and work from multiple theoretical orientations. MSM successfully combines skills from various theories and supervision models by reviewing basic counselling skills, classifying those same skills, and processing needed supervisory information gleaned from the interviewing session. The Counselling Interview Rating Form, an integral instrument used in this model, is illustrated using examples from a case study.

RÉSUMÉ

Le présent article présente un nouveau modèle de supervision intégrée du counseling nommé le *Modèle de supervision en micro-counseling*. Ce type de supervision est conçu pour les superviseurs et les supervisés qui préfèrent travailler de façon éclectique à partir d'orientations théoriques multiples. La MSM réussit à combiner des compétences de diverses théories et modèles de supervision en passant en revue les compétences de base en counseling, en les classant et en traitant l'information nécessaire à la supervision à partir de la séance d'entrevue. Le formulaire d'évaluation de l'entrevue de counseling [*Counselling Interview Rating Form*], un instrument qui fait partie intégrante de ce modèle, est illustré à l'aide d'exemples tirés d'une étude de cas.

All helping professions use some type of clinical supervision to assist students in developing new counselling skills, maintaining current skills, and building professional competencies (Haynes, Corey, & Moulton, 2003). The use of clinical supervision seems universal, but the manner in which professionals conduct supervision varies widely.

In this article, a new, innovative model of integrated supervision, the Microcounselling Supervision Model (MSM), will be outlined and discussed (Russell-Chapin & Ivey, 2004). The Counselling Interview Rating Form (CIRF) was developed and used as an evaluation tool for the MSM. The MSM is demonstrated using the CIRF and a case study involving a client and counsellor during a supervision session.

MICROCOUNSELLING SUPERVISION MODEL

This model builds on the foundational writing of Thomas Daniels and his colleagues (Daniels, Rigazio-DiGilio, & Ivey, 1997), who outlined the basics of

using microskills in supervision. MSM extends that earlier work by creating a model designed for supervisors who favour eclecticism and work from multiple theoretical orientations. MSM successfully combines and uses many of the skills from a variety of theories and supervision models by reviewing basic interviewing skills that are used in some fashion in every theoretical orientation and counselling interview (Lambert & Ogles, 1997). These are the same skills used in developmental, theory specific, and other integrated supervision models. Therefore, the value of microcounselling supervision is that it teaches the supervisee and supervisor a structured method for reviewing counselling tapes and offering feedback, regardless of theoretical orientation. The MSM serves a unique function for the already existing supervision materials. No other supervision model has built in the structure to teach and classify the needed basic counselling skills. This model fills that void by enabling the supervisor and the supervisee to assess the supervisee's skill level and provide the opportunity to establish a baseline of skills.

The MSM is a standardized approach that provides assistance with reviewing, offering feedback, teaching, and evaluating microcounselling skills. Lambert and Ogles (1997) described microcounselling skills as an approach that facilitates the general purposes of psychotherapy no matter what the theoretical orientation. The effectiveness of microcounselling skills training has been researched for decades (Miller, Morrill, & Uhlemann, 1970; Scisson, 1993). In 1989 Baker and Daniels analyzed 81 studies on microcounselling skills training. They concluded that microcounselling skills training surpassed both the no-training and attention-placebo-control comparison. Daniels (2003) followed microcounselling research for many years and now has identified over 450 data-based studies on microcounselling skills training.

Russell-Chapin and Sherman (2000) found that, even with the effectiveness of the microcounselling approach, there is little consistency in the strategies used to actually measure and evaluate counselling students' skills and videotapes. They stated, "The need for quantifying counsellor skills becomes increasingly important as the counselling profession continues to develop and refine standards for counsellor competence" (p. 116). The efficacy and strong research base of microcounselling skills training led the authors to develop a supervision model that would concretize a method for utilizing the microcounselling skills approach.

The MSM and the CIRF were designed in response to that very need to accurately and effectively supervise supervisees' counselling videotapes and live supervision sessions (Russell-Chapin & Sherman, 2000). A major focus of the MSM provides a vocabulary guide, a framework for constant examination of individual counselling style, and a method for offering feedback. In beginning skills classes, students are encouraged to give others feedback. Usually the comments are very positive, for example, "You were great," or "I liked the way you paraphrased." During supervision, though, more positive concrete and specific feedback must be given. If constructive feedback is not provided to students during supervision, progress will be stagnant and perhaps nonexistent.

The MSM offers a way for the supervisor and supervisee to learn to give constructive feedback incorporating strengths and areas for improvements by following the format of the CIRF, an integral part of the MSM. The CIRF has a variety of functions, but it is mostly used as a method of providing positive, corrective, qualitative and quantitative feedback for supervisees when reviewing counselling tapes.

The Counselling Interview Rating Form

A major component of microcounselling supervision is the CIRF. The CIRF was originally developed for a counsellor education program, but it has been used in both educational and clinical settings. The CIRF is the structured underpinning of microcounselling supervision, as it provides a format for evaluating the five stages of the counselling interview as described by Ivey and Ivey (2003) and the microcounselling skills used in the counselling interview.

The CIRF was created by including the essential listening and influencing skills taught in many helping professional programs. Two categories are included: listening and influencing skills, and counselling interview stages (Ivey & Ivey, 2003). The CIRF is divided into six sections that correspond to the five stages of a counselling interview, plus one additional section on professionalism. The vocabulary used for the five stages of the interview are (a) opening, (b) exploration, (c) action, (d) problem-solving, and (e) closing. Listed within each section are skills or tasks related to that stage of the interview. The opening section, for example, includes the specific criteria of greeting, role definition, administrative tasks, and beginning.

The construction of the CIRF was reported in an article by Russell-Chapin and Sherman (2000). Aiken's (1985) content validity index coefficients were used to calculate the CIRF's content validity, and six out of seven sections were statistically valid. The sections of the CIRF that were statistically significant were the opening, exploration, action, problem-solving, closing, and overall. The professionalism section was not significant, and raters suggested that the items in this section needed to be more clearly defined to assess professionalism.

Aiken's (1985) agreement coefficient was used to determine the reliability. The results showed that the CIRF can assist in distinguishing between A graded tapes and C graded interview tapes. See Russell-Chapin and Sherman (2000) for additional information on the construction of the CIRF.

Scoring the CIRF

While the reviewer watches a current videotape or participates in a live counselling supervision session, the CIRF is used to tally the number of times a certain skill is used each time the skill is demonstrated. Values are assigned after the counselling session to indicate the level of mastery achieved for each skill, and ratings of 1, 2, or 3 for each of the 43 listed skills are given for those skills observed.

Ivey and Ivey (2003) describe mastery as using the skills with intention which have an observable, desired effect on the client. A score of 1 means that the

counsellor/supervisee was using a skill with little or no effect on the client. A score of 2 means that the counsellor used the skill with mastery and intention and that the client responded in the intended manner. Scores of 2 are the desired score for the majority of the CIRF responses. A score of 3 means that the counsellor was demonstrating and teaching a new skill or concept to the client, for example, when the supervisee teaches the client new assertiveness skills and the client actively practices that skill during the session. A score of 3 is used sparingly, as the supervisee does not regularly teach skills or concepts in the counselling session.

The CIRF includes space for comments next to each skill, so any reviewer can make notes or write the counsellor's actual statements while viewing the tape. These comments are extremely important to the supervisory session, as they can offer the counsellor actual examples of skills and processes used during the interview. The last page of the CIRF consists of space for providing written feedback on strengths and areas for improvement. During microcounselling supervision, all peer supervisors and the instructor utilize the narrative space to provide constructive feedback.

If the CIRF is being used to quantify counselling sessions into grades, the total values are tallied, with an A corresponding to 52 points and higher (i.e., at least 90% of the total points). This cut-off score requires scoring in the mastery range on all the essential skills denoted by an "X" on the CIRF. Essential skills are those deemed necessary for an effective interview as determined by the CIRF authors and the microcounselling approach to training (Russell-Chapin & Sherman, 2000).

Uses of the CIRF

From informal and formal evaluative feedback regarding the use of the CIRF, the CIRF is seen as a useful evaluative tool for supervisors, peers, and self-evaluation (Russell-Chapin & Sherman, 2000). By using this form as a central foundation of microcounselling supervision, one can approach supervision time with less vulnerability as this promotes a supervision environment that is not threatening but validating. In addition to being an evaluation tool, the CIRF is reportedly an excellent teaching tool, as it identifies areas and skills frequently used and skills that are not being demonstrated effectively.

THE THREE STAGES OF MICROCOUNSELLING SUPERVISION

The Microcounselling Supervision Model has three major stages: (a) reviewing skills with intention, (b) classifying skills with mastery, and (c) processing supervisory needs. The tenets of MSM are based on the microcounselling skills first reported by Ivey, Normington, Miller, Morril, and Haase (1968) and fully developed by Ivey and Ivey (2003). All the skills correspond to the five stages of the counselling interview.

Reviewing Microcounselling Skills with Intention

The implementation of the first component of the MSM is essential to the efficacy and efficiency of the remaining sections. It is critical that initially the supervisor takes the needed time to ensure that each individual skill definition along with the underlying intention of that skill is understood by the trainee. Intention is defined as choosing the best potential response from among the many possible options. Following the stages and skills in the CIRF, supervisees can easily review the information that needs to be clarified.

In the first MSM stage, the supervisee is not looking for the "right" solution and skill, but is selecting responses to adapt an individual counselling style to meet the differing needs and culture of clients (Ivey & Ivey, 2003). With intentionality, supervisees can anticipate specific interviewing results if certain skills are used. For example, if a supervisee wants a client to continue expressing emotions, a basic reflection of feeling would be a wise skill to choose. A client laments, "Today was my little boy's first day of kindergarten!" The counsellor's reflection of feeling is, "There must be many differing emotions going on inside. You could be sad, lonely, scared yet excited!" Supervisors and supervisees can go through the CIRF and review skills that the supervisee/student can define following the format of the CIRF. This initial step allows the student to begin to identify areas of strength and areas needing attention in skill identification.

Classifying Skills with Mastery

The second stage of the MSM is titled "classifying counselling skills with mastery." One of the easiest methods to begin the second stage during supervision is to have examples of someone else demonstrating the microcounselling skills and their uses. Russell-Chapin and Sherman (2001) created an interactive CD-ROM and videotape to assist students in observing actual skill demonstration. Observing videotapes of other students allows students to begin the classification process as well. The CIRF is used in all MSM stages, but in the classifying stage this form assists in identifying actual skills demonstrated during a counselling interview.

Summarizing and Processing Supervisory Needs

The final stage of the MSM begins by summarizing and processing the demonstrated skills on the CIRF, as well as other important dimensions of the session. Using the CIRF and the counselling supervision tape with the supervisee, summarization of skill usage can begin by marking frequency tallies each time a skill is demonstrated. At the end of the session or during each response, numbers from 1 through 3 are assigned, determining which counselling response represents basic mastery and/or active mastery. Basic mastery is defined as being able to demonstrate the skill during the interview, but the desired response from the client did not happen. Basic mastery may suggest that the supervisee knows to try a particular skill but the effectiveness, timing, and skill level are not evident.

Active mastery shows an advanced development of the skill, in that the supervisee and client are able to produce specific and intentional results from the chosen counselling intervention.

The last step involves comparison of the supervisor or supervisory team's ratings with the supervisee's ratings, within a classroom or supervision setting. Once the CIRF has been tallied, the narrative process for microcounselling supervision can begin. The supervisory team can be any configuration that the supervisor and supervisee deem necessary. It could consist of a supervisor and supervisee or a group of supervisees and supervisor. The supervisee may present the interview video and case presentation ahead of time and can be asked to formulate needed supervisory questions and concerns. These issues are addressed as a team in a round-robin fashion, going over trainee/supervisee responses, supervisory concerns, strengths, and areas of improvement. The very last question asked will be, "What did you learn in supervision today that will assist you in more effectively working with this client?" Many of these comments may come from the strengths and area for improvement section of the CIRF.

A Case Example

To assist the reader in more easily understanding the three stages of the MSM, the case of Minnie and a student counsellor, Natashia, is presented, showcasing the CIRF and the counsellor's responses (Appendix). Notice the frequency tallies for classification of counselling responses, numbers assigned for intentionality and mastery of skills, and process comments for supervisory growth.

Minnie is a 71-year-old African female whose husband has recently died. Minnie's children are trying to care for their mother. The comments on the form in the Appendix are from a first session with a young counsellor named Natashia. Read the examples given from the session and classify the microskills that Natashia, the counsellor, is demonstrating.

First, two responses will be classified for the reader. Natashia is just listening and nodding. That skill would be classified as a "minimal encourager." Was Natashia's skill done with intention? In other words, was Natashia successful with her choice of skills? In this case, we think Natashia's choice did work, as Minnie does continue talking, and her resistance begins to lessen. Soon after the minimal encourager, Natashia stated, "I noticed when you began talking about your children your voice became higher and louder." In reviewing the skills listed in the CIRF, Natashia's statement would be classified as a "behavioural description."

After reading and classifying several skills in this session, the reader begins to understand that Natashia's life experience was indeed different from Minnie's. The two people have varying cultural experiences. Acknowledging those differences early in the interview is important. A White European counsellor and an African client, for example, would need to have frank discussions of their differences to be helpful. Similarly, if a gay adolescent client and a heterosexual are working together or a younger counsellor is working with an older client,

upfront discussion of the differences can be important in developing trust. This, of course, is conducted with sensitivity and careful client observation. There are not hard and fast rules on this important issue, but generally it is considered best to explore differences.

The CIRF in the Appendix illustrates the first, second, and third components of MSM. Each observed counselling skill was given a frequency tally, counting the number of times that particular skill was demonstrated. The skills observed were given an evaluative number showing the level of mastery. Actual remarks were written down to assist the supervisor in the supervisory process later. A cumulative grade was calculated by adding all the mastery scores. The comments in these sections assist immensely in helping the supervisee to progress forward. In this example, Natashia's comments were from her supervisor, Dr. Smith. Natashia earned a grade of 56, which is an "A."

DISCUSSION

Observing interview tapes and analyzing case presentations are essential to the growth of novice-helping professionals. As the reader can tell from reviewing the CIRF and the case of Minnie, the MSM offered an easy and efficient method of first assessing a supervisee's skill level and then classifying and processing supervision needs. In addition, MSM can be a supervisory method for assisting the supervisor and supervisee in naturally strengthening skills through careful identification of mastered skills (Russell-Chapin & Ivey, 2004; Russell-Chapin & Sherman, 2000).

MSM has been used to create a foundation necessary for effective counselling and developmental growth. It provides the building blocks for better understanding of basic attending behaviours and influencing skills through the three stages of the MSM: identification, classification, and processing of counselling skills.

Using the MSM and the CIRF assisted in developing a system for reciprocal supervision. This supervision system provided a tangible and structured method for teaching the supervision team, supervisee, peers, instructors, and supervisors to become skilled enough to offer constructive feedback, thus creating reciprocity and mutual growth for everyone involved. This begins a "magic dance" of supervision, where an easy and dynamic flow can encourage supervisees to be receptive to new ideas and interventions. In our experience, the MSM and the CIRF not only provide a method to review and teach how to classify specific skills and behaviours, but also to evaluate the intention. Finally, the CIRF assists in examining whether the goals of each interview stage are achieved.

Using the MSM as a foundational method of supervision allows the supervisee and the supervisor to assess the baseline skills of the supervisee. Developing a baseline of counselling skills seems to be one of the major advantages of the MSM. Very few supervision models offer a practical and quantitative method for assessing skill level. Developing a baseline of counselling skills is the first stage of the MSM. If supervisors already know the mastered skill level of the

supervisees, proceeding directly to the classifying and processing levels of the model is desired. Informal feedback from supervisors who are using the MSM indicates that different counselling populations may require different skills and that the MSM has allowed the supervisor to use the three components of MSM with flexibility when needed. Additional research on the MSM and the CIRF is needed, particularly to further the development of the model and the instrument. Further research on the CIRF's content validity of the professionalism section and the effectiveness of MSM is indicated.

The MSM can stand alone as an integrated supervision model. However, another advantage of the MSM is that it can be the fundamental building block for the supervision team. Then, if additional supervision needs are required and requested, other supervision models and techniques can be supplemented as needed. If supervisors and supervisees practice using the MSM and the CIRF, the natural flow of the MSM will be experienced.

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<div align="center">APPENDIX</div>

Counselling Interview Rating Form

Counsellor:	Natashia Neiman	Date:	1/15/04
Observer:		Tape Number:	1
Observer:		Audio or Video; please circle	
Supervisor:	Dr. Ralph Smith	Session Number:	Initial

For each of the following specific criteria demonstrated, make a frequency marking every time the skill is demonstrated. Then assign points for consistent skill mastery using the ratings scales below. Active mastery of each skill marked by an X receives a score of 2 and should be seen consistently on every tape. List any observations, comments, strengths, and weaknesses in the space provided. Providing actual counsellor phrases is helpful when offering feedback.

Ivey Mastery Ratings
3   Teach the skill to clients (teaching mastery only)
2   Use the skill with specific impact on client (active mastery)
1   Use and/or identify the counselling skill (basic mastery)

To receive an A on a tape at least 52–58 points must be earned.
To receive a B on a tape at least 46–51 points must be earned.
To receive a C on a tape at least 41–45 points must be earned.

SPECIFIC CRITERIA	FRE-QUENCY	COMMENTS	SKILL MASTERY RATING
A. OPENING/DEVELOPING RAPPORT			
1. Greeting X			
2. Role Definition/ Expectation			
3. Administrative Tasks			
4. Beginning X			
B. EXPLORATION PHASE/ DEFINING THE PROBLEM MICRO SKILLS			
1. Empathy/Rapport	I	I am very sorry.	2
2. Respect			
3. Nonverbal Matching X			
4. Minimal Encourager X	I	Nods	2
5. Paraphrasing X	I	Having John hits you at so many levels.	2
6. Pacing/Leading X	II	Minnie, you are probably correct.	2

7. Verbal Tracking	X	III	What do you miss about your old life?	2
8. Reflect Feeling	X	III	You are lonely.	2
9. Reflect Meaning	X	III	Having your husband be an independent part of your life for so long and die unexpectedly must be devastating.	2
10. Clarifications	X			
11. Open-ended Questions	X	IIII	How does that sound to you?	2
12. Summarization	X	II	Let me see if I truly understand the situation.	2
13. Behavioural Description	X	I	I noticed when you began talking about your children your voice became higher and louder.	2
14. Appropriate Closed Question	X	III	Am I close?	2
15. Perception Check	X	III	Is that right?	2
16. Silence	X	I	Listening	2
17. Focusing	X	I	Coddling	
18. Feedback	X	I	Minnie, you came here today very hesitant…	2

C. PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS/ DEFINING SKILLS

1. Definition of Goals	X	II	The first goal is to openly share your grief with others.	2
2. Exploration/ Understanding of Concerns	X	II	How many of those friends have you contacted lately?	2
3. Development/ Evaluation of Alternatives	X	I	There are many alternative ways to start.	2
4. Implement Alternative				
5. Special Techniques				
6. Process Counselling		II	Today you stated that you are willing to re-gain control of at least….	

D. ACTION PHASE/ CONFRONTING INCONGRUITIES

1. Immediacy	II	How are you feeling about us now?	2
2. Self-Disclosure	I	My father died when I was 25.	2
3. Confrontation			
4. Directives	I	You will contact one of your duplicate bridge friends.	2
5. Logical Consequences	I	The consequences of John's death seem to have shattered your old life.	2
6. Interpretation	I	Your loneliness goes deeper than John.	2

E. CLOSING/ GENERALIZATION

1. Summarization of Content/Feeling	X	I	We have covered a lot of territory…	2
2. Review of Plan	X	I	Today you stated that you are willing…	2
3. Rescheduling		I	What would you like to do about setting up another appointment?	2
4. Termination of Session				
5. Evaluation of Session	X	II	What did we work on today that makes sense to you?	2
6. Follow-up	X			

F. PROFESSIONALISM

1. Developmental Level Match	I	(assessing Minnie's developmental level) as a 1 or 2	2
2. Ethics			
3. Professional (punctual, attire, etc.)			

G. Strengths:
1) I liked the way you were able to build rapport with Minnie using the microcounselling skills and going with her resistance.
2) The intentional use of reflections of feeling and meaning seemed to assist Minnie in better understanding her sadness.

Area for Improvement:
1) Be cautious about asking too many opened and closed questions.
2) Let her brainstorm more ideas for grieving, such as creating a memorial for John, etc.
3) Even though Minnie read the Service Agreement describing confidentiality, be sure to discuss it next time.

TOTAL   58

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