

Presenter:

Facilitator:

Group Members:

STAGE 1 – set the scene

The Contract - The Facilitator agrees with the Presenter

- what she would like to bring to the group
- what outcome she wants
- how she will know when she has reached the outcome.

1. Contracting Questions: starting with an end in mind and agreeing how you are going to get there. (This identifies and limits what the Presenter wants from the discussion.)

- How do you want to use your time?
- What do you most need to achieve in this session?
- What do you want most to focus on?
- How could I (or other Group Members) be most valuable to you?
- What challenges are you facing?

Notes

STAGE 2

Present the issue - The Presenter talks for an agreed amount of time (5-10 minutes is suggested).

Notes

STAGE 3

Active Listening 1 Group Members **ask questions** and **reflect back** to the Presenter to facilitate learning. They can **make observations** in order to help the Presenter to focus.

Importance of silence - *It is important to allow the Presenter time to reflect on anything that has been said and consider her own ideas.*

2. Clarifying Questions: help the Presenter to clarify his/her topic or issue and gain insight.

- Let's see if I can summarise what you've said...
- Can you say more about that?
- Are there any people involved that you have not mentioned?
- How do you think other people see the situation?
- What do you mean by...?
- What do **you** think is the main issue here?
- Could you give me an example?
- Could you expand on that?

3. Challenging Questions: encourage deeper thinking, challenging the Presenter to create new possibilities for future action in resolving the situation

- How are you feeling right now?
- Are there any feelings that you have not expressed?
- Is there anything you would like to have done differently?
- You seem to have three themes here ... what do you think?
- If you asked someone you trust what they would do in your situation, what do you think they would say?
- Why are you saying that?
- What do you think causes... ?
- How does this relate to what we have been talking about?
- Can you rephrase that, please?
- What evidence is there to support what you are saying?

Notes

STAGE 4

Results - Facilitator sums up what has been presented so far.

Notes

STAGE 5

Active Listening 2 Group Members **ask questions** and **reflect back** to the Presenter to facilitate learning. They can **make observations** in order to help the Presenter to focus.

Importance of silence - *It is important to allow the Presenter time to reflect on anything that has been said and consider her own ideas.*

4. **Catalytic questions:** trigger new ideas

- What outcomes do you (and others) want?
- What behaviours need to be different in you or your team members to achieve the outcome?
- Who might be of help to you?
- Can you think of different ways of tackling the situation
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of...?
- How could you look another way at this?
- What are the implications of...?
- Why is ... important?
- What is the best...? Why?

5. **Questions about action:** support the Presenter to commit to a way ahead and create the next step

- What are the pros and cons of each possible strategy?
- What is your long-term objective?
- What is the first step you need to take?
- When are you going to do that?
- Is your plan realistic? What is the percentage change of your succeeding?
- How might you approach the situation?

Notes

STAGE 6

Action - The Facilitator prompts the Presenter to decide on a solution and asks

- what she has learned and
- what action she will take in consequence.

6. Reviewing questions

- What have you decided to do next?
- What do you need to know you have succeeded / reached your goal?
- What have you learned from the session?
- What did you find helpful about this session?
- What could be better next time in the Action Learning process?

Notes

STAGE 7

Review - The Presenter reports back to Group Members on what happened as a result of her action/s.

7. Questions at next session

- How did what you planned work out?
- What feedback did you receive?
- What did you do well, and what could have been even better?
- What can you learn from what happened?

Date of review:

Notes

ADSHE's Action Learning approach

ADSHE's adaptation of Action Learning is **one** form of Professional Peer Supervision – **it is not the only one!**

Ask the question; what is the issue?

Discuss; open out the issue

Supportive solving of issues

Help to implement solutions by agreeing actions

Experiential learning to encourage reflection

Action learning is: "an opportunity to have regular and purposeful conversations about current uncertainties with the ... intention of discovering new options" Revans (2011).

It offers:

- A 'safe' environment to explore new ways of thinking and practising
- Space for individual, reflective learning which can lead to *action*
- A fresh perspective on your working practices and time to think about creative ideas which you can incorporate in your regular work
- Insight into how others achieve different solutions
- Support and challenge from peers.

Rules of engagement

1. Confidentiality about students and tutors' work should stay within the group. This keeps it safe to bring up any issues without fear of external discussions.
2. Listen actively -- respect others when they are talking.
3. Participate to the fullest of your ability.
4. Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing ('I' instead of 'you', 'we' or 'they').
5. Stay on topic.
6. Instead of invalidating somebody else's story with your own spin on her or his experience, share your own story and experience.
7. Refrain from personal attacks, but do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions -- focus on ideas.
8. We are all responsible for the meeting.
9. The goal is not to agree -- it is to gain a deeper understanding.
10. No negative comments about people.
11. Emotions are OK – aggression is not.
12. Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses -- they can be as disrespectful as words.
13. Facilitator manages the process – group manages the substance

A Summary of the Action Learning Process

- Small groups (sets) of professionals work together on real life issues/situations to examine and challenge current ways of working.
- One person acts as the **Presenter**. The Presenter describes a situation, problem or challenge that she is currently working with. At the end of the session, she decides on which actions to take and report back to the group at the next session.
- **The Facilitator**
 - holds the agreed timing of the session,
 - establishes the 'contract' between the participants,
 - keeps the focus on the Presenter's issue, and
 - at the end of the session, summarises the range of possible actions that have emerged from the process.

The **Group Members** help the Presenter reflect and explore her options by **asking open questions**. This helps the Presenter

- reflect and come to a deeper or different understanding of the issue presented and
- decide on any future actions intended to help her manage/solve the issues at hand.

Structuring an action Learning Approach

Set the scene The Facilitator agrees with the Presenter what she wishes to bring to the group, what outcome she wants, how she knows when she has reached the outcome. This is the **Contract**.

Present the issue The Presenter talks for an agreed amount of time (5-10 minutes is suggested).

Active Listening Group Members ask questions, reflect back to the Presenter in order to facilitate the Presenter's learning – these questions are *not* for the Group Members' benefit.

Importance of silence *It is important to allow the Presenter has time to reflect on anything that has been said and to consider her own ideas. As dyslexia tutors we are often uncomfortable with silences, but this is often important in an Action Learning/PPS session.*

Making observations **Group Members can make observations** in order to help the Presenter focus.
I notice that
You seem to be saying

Results Facilitator sums up what has been discussed.

Action Facilitator prompts the Presenter to decide on a solution. Facilitator asks the Presenter

- what she has learned and
- what action she will take in consequence.
- The Presenter identifies what she has learnt/will do and
- takes what she has learnt back to the workplace, initiating changes in practice or trying out new ideas.

Review The Presenter reports back to Group Members **at the next session** on what happened as a result of her action/s.

The Role of the Facilitator:

- The Facilitator is responsible for creating a safe place for the Presenter to discuss the issue.
- The Facilitator is there to support and encourage. She needs to be aware of creating the right balance between being supportive and challenging assumptions.
- The Facilitator is responsible for 'monitoring' the Group Members' reactions as well as the Presenter's.
- The Facilitator initiates the meeting by asking the Presenter what s/he wants to talk about and what s/he hopes to gain from the meeting (This is the *Contract*).
- The Facilitator leads the questioning by example. She ensures that the questioning is **focussed, specific and relevant** to the Presenter and *not* the Group Members.
- The Facilitator ensures that the group follows the agreed ground rules.
- The Facilitator needs to be observant about the Presenter's non-verbal behaviour and practise
- The Facilitator needs to have empathy and understanding of the Presenter's point of view, to be accepting and affirmative. This does not necessarily mean agreeing with the Presenter.

A good Facilitator should:

- Have good listening skills
- Be reflective
- Be questioning
- Have an awareness of group dynamics
- Be aware of the impact of emotions on learning
- Have empathy

The Role of the Presenter:

- The Presenter needs to think about what she wants from the session. The Presenter should describe what she wants to explore or think about. In ADSHE's Action Learning Professional Peer Supervision, the issue needs to be work-related, but the issue does not necessarily need to be a 'problem'. Some examples of issues might be: *How to tackle tricky situations at work; how to learn more effectively by using action and reflection on daily work practice; exploring about the role and boundaries of dyslexia tutor.*
- The Presenter should be prepared to have her ideas and assumptions challenged and extended and be aware that sometimes this can feel uncomfortable.
- The Presenter will receive support from the Group Members to come up with a different way of looking at the issue. Support from the Group Members can help the Presenter gain confidence to try out any actions suggested by the Group.
- It is often difficult to accept other ways of doing things. The Presenter needs to keep an open mind and reflect and respond thoughtfully to questions posed by Group Members.
- The Presenter needs to take responsibility for their own issues, learning and intended actions as a key to professional development.
- By the end of the session the Presenter will be able to begin to think of an action plan for what s/he intends to do next.
- The Presenter should be prepared to feedback the results of any *action* to the group at the next session.

The Role of the Group Members

- Group Members ask questions; make observations allowing the Presenter enough time for reflection.
- Questions are asked in order to help the Presenter explore the issue and decide what to do next. The purpose of questions is to help the Presenter check her own perceptions of the issue to clarify or make it more manageable.
- Group Members should focus solely on listening to the Presenter and what she is saying, helping her to gain clarity, not on how they themselves would react in a similar situation. They should be listening for what is *not* said as well as what is said and for any ambiguities.
- Before posing questions, it is helpful to think how useful the question is to the Presenter.
- Group Members do not offer advice, or pass judgement. They do not tell anecdotes and talk about their own situation. Their task is to stay focussed on the Presenter and their issue at hand.
- Group Members should be comfortable with silences – this can allow the Presenter time to reflect and think through ideas.

A good Group Member should:

- develop good listening skills
- have empathy
- practise confidentiality

ADSHE's Principles for Action Learning:

- Active Listening
- Reflective Practice
- Facilitative Questioning
- Professionalism:
- Confidentiality
- Mutual Respect
- Valuing Difference
- Taking responsibility for own learning
- Belief in the individual's capacity to find their own solutions
- Belief that the listener's role is not to advise or problem solve (counter- dyslexia-tutor position)
- Non-judgemental
- Non-supervisory (in traditional sense)
- Don't offer advice!

Tips:

- Listen for meaning behind what is said
- Acknowledge the feelings presented to help the Presenter uncover what is at the heart of the issue
- Ask questions in order to facilitate the Presenter to take action
- Remember: there are no right or wrong solutions

The Importance of Active Listening Skills

McGill and Brockbank consider that **really listening** is a key skill central to Action Learning. Effective listening skills are also crucial in any form of Professional Peer Supervision. They point out, however, that we often do not listen properly to other people. They refer to Abraham Maslow (1969) and agree that his remarks are still very relevant today.

“To be able to listen ... really wholly, passively, self-effacingly listen – without presupposing, classifying, improving, controverting, evaluating, approving or disapproving, without duelling with what is being said, without rehearsing the rebuttal in advance, without free-associating to portions of what is being said so that succeeding portions are not heard at all – such listening is rare.”

McGill & Brockbank, 2004:164

McGill and Brockbank (2004) stress the importance of paying attention to the Presenter in a non-judgemental way. They cite Egan who emphasised the importance of body stance to enhance attention and listening. He described this with the mnemonic SOLER.

S – face the Presenter **SQUARELY**, in a positive manner which shows you are giving your full attention.

O – Adopt an **OPEN** posture to show that you are ready to listen and engage with what the Presenter is saying.

L – If appropriate, **LEAN** towards the Presenter to show that you are engaging fully.

E – Maintain **EYE** contact.

R – Keep a **RELAXED** attitude i.e. not fidgeting or distracting the Presenter in anyway and showing that you are comfortable with the Presenter.

The individual or the rest of the group should demonstrate understanding of what the Presenter has said as well as empathy. Reflecting back to the Presenter a summary of what s/he has just said is useful, followed by careful open questioning.

The point of questioning is to *enable a Presenter to learn and develop, to reflect upon her actions, generate her own plans, and implement her own solutions* (McGill & Brockbank, 2004, p. 180). What the listener should not do is jump in with solutions or an account of their own interpretation of what has been said or even with an account of their own similar experiences.

Careful Questioning

Open questions (i.e. those which cannot be answered by a simple yes or no) are the most useful for PPS, as they encourage the respondent to think and reflect.

Useful words to begin open questions are:

What?

How?

Who?

Where ...?

When?

'Why....?' questions can also be useful, but treat them with care as they may feel intrusive or inappropriately challenging.

Here are some examples of different questions appropriate to a PPS setting:

1. Contracting Questions: starting with an end in mind and agreeing how you are going to get there. (This identifies and limits what the **Presenter** wants from the discussion.)

- How do you want to use your time?
- What do you most need to achieve in this session?
- What do you want most to focus on?
- How could I (or other Group Members) be most valuable to you?
- What challenges are you facing?

2. Clarifying Questions: help the **Presenter** to clarify his/her topic or issue and gain insight.

- Can you say more about that?
- Are there any people involved that you have not mentioned?
- How do you think other people see the situation?
- Let's see if I can summarise the issue.
- What do you mean by ...?
- What do **you** think is the main issue here?
- Could you give me an example?
- Could you expand on that?

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- Why are you saying that?
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