

The Nature of Supervision in Spiritual Direction

Unlike supervision in other fields, Supervision in Spiritual Direction isn't about evaluating achievement. Instead it's the gathering of insight. Evaluation is performance-oriented. By contrast, SD supervision explores the numinous and the unfolding, mysterious work of the spirit. With the assistance of a supervisor or supervisory group, the director receives multiple perspectives ("Super-Vision"). That Super-Vision offers the spiritual director discernment about hidden dynamics, including those that shape the director's own reactions. Areas where the director's own history and struggles interfere are named and released. Compassion and wisdom operate together. For both giver and receiver, supervision is an ongoing source of support, self-awareness, and formation.

SUPERVISION IS:

Less About	More About
Evaluation	Illumination
Examination	Exploration
Method	Meaning
Criticism	Reflection
Procedure	Process
Technique	Purpose
Cognitive analysis	Contemplation
Specific events	General patterns
One clear path	Multiple perspectives
Facts	Possibilities
The already known	The undiscovered
Surface level	Paradox and mystery
Specific details of the case	Inner world of the Director

SUPERVISION AND THE COMPONENTS OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Supervision is the essential partner to wise and ethical spiritual direction. Ethically, each spiritual director ought to be:

- 1) In spiritual direction,
- 2) Receiving supervision
- 3) Working in consultation with colleagues.

Together the 3 things serve the client's welfare and growth. At the same time, they nurture the spiritual director's professional development.

The Three Components

Spiritual Direction is the intentional exploration of a client's spirituality. The director helps the client reflect on the experience of the sacred, and on the beliefs and practices surrounding that experience. The focus is on what the *client* is encountering.

Examples of content that might be covered (with the client):

Where do you sense the presence of ____ (God, the Divine, Numinous etc.)

What spiritual practices are supporting or might support your journey?

Where are you being challenged? (unhealthy patterns, compulsions, false self, toxic beliefs, etc.)

How are your beliefs and practices evolving?

Supervision is the intentional exploration of what's happening within the spiritual director as that director works with various clients. The focus is on what the *director* is encountering.

Examples of content that might be covered (with the director):

Where did you feel free and authentic with the client? Where DIDN'T you?

Where might your own issues be operating?

How does the client's spiritual journey remind you of your own?

Where might there be projection, transference, or counter-transference?

Where to you see _____ (brokenness, redemption, transcendence, etc.)?

What ethical concerns are arising in this situation?

Consultation is problem-solving and issue exploration between colleagues within Spiritual Direction. Content can range from the pragmatic to the hypothetical, from business operations to professional strategies. The focus is on what the *profession* is encountering.

Examples of content that might be covered (between colleagues):

How important is it to have a website?

What do you do if you think a client may be in addiction and denial?

What's your approach working with very different faith traditions than your own?