

NOTABLE INCIDENTS

Purpose To provide a format for preparing for supervision (B5). Sometimes preparation for supervision is left to chance or takes place in a vague, general manner. This format provides a useful first person account of an experience that's helpful for reflective supervision. An example of the use of Pat's notable incident (next page) is given in Chapter A5 of Hewson, D. & Carroll, M. (2016) *Reflective Practice in Supervision*.

Background This format is derived from Jan Fook and Fiona Gardner. We've changed the term "critical incident" to "notable incident" because practitioners interpret the word "critical" in various ways including "a grave condition", "crucial", "urgent", "criticism" and "critical incident debriefing".

Reference Fook, J. and Gardner, F. (2007) *Practising critical reflection: a resource handbook*. Open University Press.

NOTABLE INCIDENT INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose a notable incident to discuss in supervision. A notable incident is any experience that you regard as noteworthy.
 - It can be something that went well, or something that didn't go so well, or something that you aren't sure about.
 - It is not necessarily a major event or crisis. Experiences that could be described as typical, normal, mundane, or trivial can provide rich material for reflection because many taken-for-granted theories and values are embedded in our routine practices.
 - It is not necessarily big or lengthy. Assumptions are embedded in even the smallest and briefest of notable incidents, and the smaller and less horrific the incident, the safer it is likely to be to reflect on it.
 - Ensure that you feel safe to present it in supervision.
 - Ensure you can present it in an ethical way (e.g. protecting the confidentiality and safety of all others involved).
2. Write a maximum of one page in three sections:
 - **Background** to the incident (very brief)
 - **Incident** A raw and concrete description of the incident
 - Focus on one or more moments, not everything that happened
 - Use your own words, in first person, present tense
 - Don't interpret – just raw description
 - **Significance** Why the incident is notable or significant (the reason could be that it's so routine you think it's time to check it out)
3. Please try NOT to analyse the incident before bringing it to supervision because prior analysis can bias our exploration

NOTABLE INCIDENT EXAMPLE

Pat's Notable Incident

Background

I had to take an emergency phone call from an important client. Bruce is the head of one of the big businesses I consult to. He had to make an urgent decision that needed my input. Unfortunately, the call went on longer than I expected, so it made me 35 minutes late for my next appointment with a new counselling client, Dawn.

Incident

When I walk into the waiting room to greet Dawn she is sitting with her arms across her chest and looking at the floor. I notice that I feel uneasy. When I introduce myself Dawn jumps up and shakes hands rather stiffly. She smiles, but it's forced. I notice her eyes are puffy. Perhaps she's been crying?

I realise she's probably angry because she's been kept waiting. I assume the receptionist didn't pass on my apologies and my reason for keeping her waiting. I feel annoyed. I make a mental note to talk to the receptionist later. I also feel guilty that I kept Dawn waiting. I decide I'll make up for this bad start by being very professional and organised.

As we take our seats I apologise and then quickly get down to business. Dawn answers my questions very flatly. I realise she'll be hard to engage. I ask a question and she doesn't say anything. She is closed. Why? Should I apologise again for being late? But I've already apologised. There's no point in repeating it. It's frustrating. How can I get her to talk?

Suddenly there's a loud, sharp noise very close by. We are both startled. I look around and realise that a gust of wind has slammed the window shut. I settle quickly from the shock, but Dawn starts sobbing and holding herself tightly. I acknowledge her distress and sit quietly with her. She becomes easy to engage. She starts to tell me what's happening for her. She witnessed a car accident on the way here and only just managed to avoid being involved. I provide a safe space for her to debrief. Once she has settled we agree to make another appointment for next week.

Significance

I'm shocked that I couldn't engage with Dawn because I misinterpreted her distress as anger.

NOTABLE INCIDENT

BACKGROUND

INCIDENT

SIGNIFICANCE