

WHY YOU NEED REFLECTIVE SUPERvision FOR YOUR BOARD COACHING WORK

In SUPERvision we reflect on ourselves in relation to our work, on our contracting, on systemic perspectives... the list goes on. Inquiries may include generative considering with your SUPERvisor:

- *What's happening in my relationship with this team?*
- *What happens as patterns across my board coaching work?*
- *What am I experiencing when thinking about my next session with this board?*
- *What worked?*
- *What could be improved in relation to contracting?*

Reflective SUPERvision can be understood as examining what comes up for us – our thoughts, feelings, choices, actions and reactions. It may also include reflecting on ways of working with colleagues, co-coaches, our SUPERvisor, our professional development needs, the business side of our practice, and habits that show up over time.

There are multiple lenses for reflection:

- *Preflection*: considering options on what might be a beneficial focus in upcoming work.
- *Reflection in action*: noticing what is happening in the moment cognitively, emotionally and somatically.
- *Reflection on action*: reviewing retrospectively.

“When coaching a board, a SUPERvisee I was working with found himself feeling flustered and somewhat triggered by one dominant board member. In reflective SUPERvision, slowing down allowed him to explore what was beneath that reaction. It emerged that the vocal board member unconsciously reminded him of his aunt, an authority figure with whom he had spent much time during his early teens. This recognition highlighted elements of transference at play, with the SUPERvisee projecting past relational dynamics into the present coaching situation. His sense of agitation could also be seen as countertransference, where his emotional response was intensified by these unconscious associations. Exploring this dynamic revealed how projection and even projective identification were influencing the relationship – the board member’s strong presence triggering an old narrative, which the SUPERvisee was unconsciously enacting.

By recognising these dynamics, the SUPERvisee was able to step back from judgement, re-engage with greater awareness, and avoid letting unresolved personal history cloud his perception of the board interactions. This enabled him to remain more present with the whole system, rather than becoming pulled into reactive patterns with one individual.” **Clare Beckett-McInroy**

Alignment with Professional Competencies

ICF Core Coaching Competencies

- *Embodies a Coaching Mindset:* pausing to reflect on internal triggers, acknowledging personal responsibility for self-awareness.
- *Maintains Presence:* recognising and regulating emotional reactions in order to stay fully engaged with the board.
- *Listens Actively:* discerning between what belongs to the board member and what is arising internally through projection or transference.
- *Evokes Awareness:* using insight from SUPERvision to expand conscious choice rather than defaulting to reactive behaviour.

ICF Team Coaching Competencies

- *Establishes and Maintains a Team Coaching Agreement:* avoiding distortion in power dynamics by noticing personal projections.
- *Cultivates Trust and Safety:* ensuring neutrality so that all board members feel equally respected.
- *Navigates the Systemic Context:* working with the team as a system rather than being disproportionately influenced by one member.
- *Fosters Learning and Growth:* modelling reflective practice that supports healthier team functioning.

EMCC SUPERvision Competencies

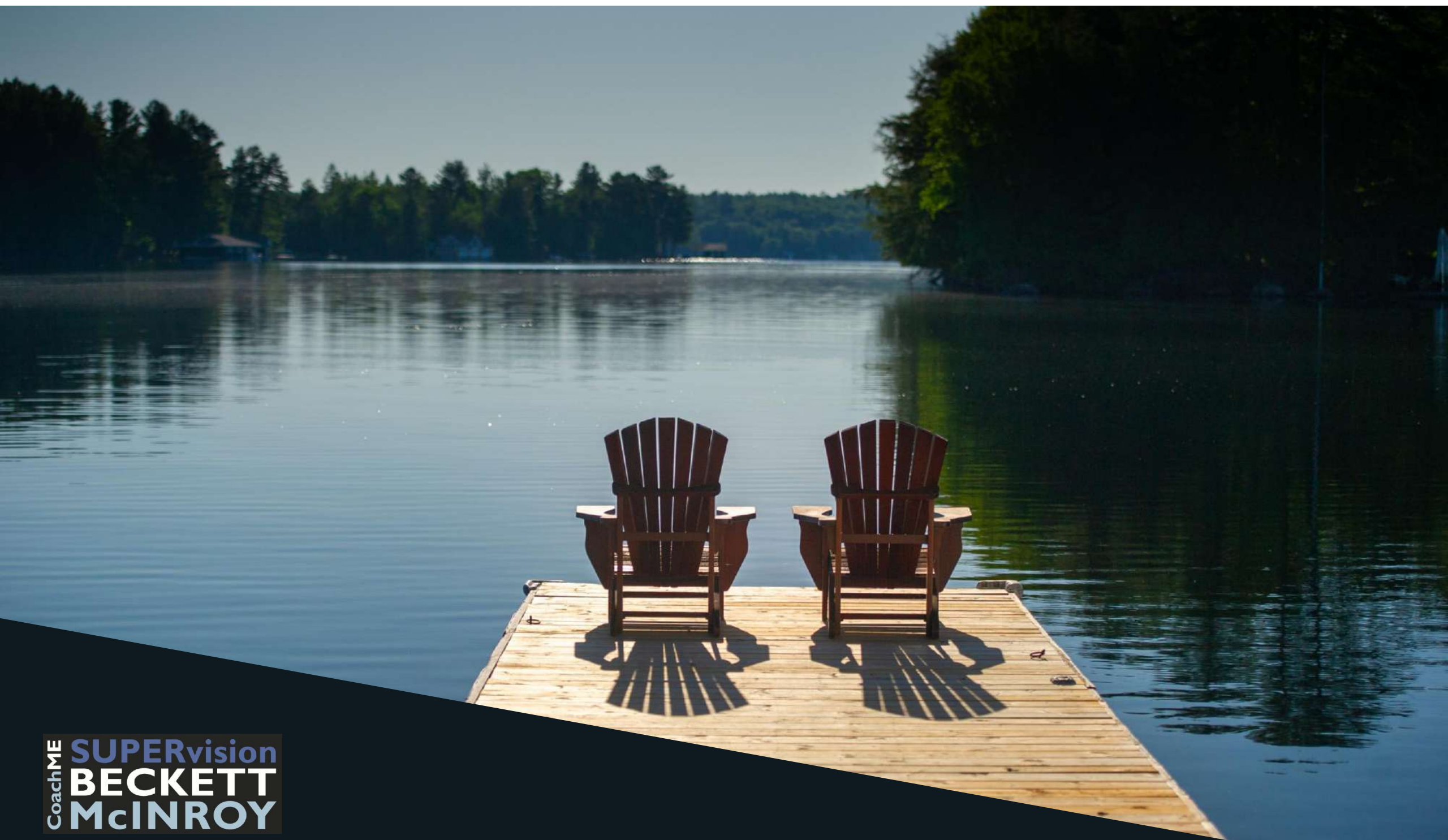
- *Managing Self:* being aware of transference and countertransference and managing emotional triggers.
- *Facilitating Development:* supporting the SUPERvisee to notice patterns and gain insight into relational dynamics.
- *Working with the Relational Triad (SUPERvisee, their team, and the organisational context):* exploring how projection/projective identification may influence behaviour and impact the coaching.
- *Ethics and Professional Standards:* maintaining boundaries and ensuring the work stays in service of the team and organisation.

Association for Coaching (AC) SUPERvision Competencies

- *Awareness of Self and Impact:* developing deeper insight into unconscious dynamics.
- *Use of Self in Relationship:* understanding how countertransference can inform or distort coaching presence.
- *Creating a Supportive Learning Environment:* enabling reflection on complex relational dynamics safely.

ICF SUPERvision Competencies

- *Contracting and Ethical Practice:* acknowledging when unconscious dynamics may risk distorting the coaching work.
- *Self-Reflective Practice:* engaging with transference and projection to deepen the SUPERvisee's capacity for presence.
- *Relational Competence:* noticing the impact of unconscious processes on relational quality and effectiveness.



Patterns Over Time

A SUPERvisor might ask: *“Share ways this experience of working with boards has shown up before for you, if at all?”* In doing so, the coach can identify personal triggers and patterns that might influence their practice. This reflection then transfers directly to their work with the board.

Reflective SUPERvision is not about finding fault or directive approaches, it's about stepping out of autopilot, noticing how our beliefs, values, and past experiences, our autobiography, shape our interpretations, and creating space for choice. This conscious awareness enables coaches to foster deeper reflection with the boards they work with.

Barry Oshry's (1999) idea of TOOTS – *“time out of time”* – offers a practical technique. Coaches can encourage boards to pause, practise turn-taking, and reflect on how decisions are being made. Just as the coach is supported to rehearse such interventions in SUPERvision, boards themselves can be guided to notice dynamics, allow multiple voices to be heard, and build more ethical and inclusive processes.



Ethical Issues in Board Coaching

Board coaching often surfaces complex ethical dilemmas that go beyond individual relationships.

Some examples include:

- *Whistleblowing dilemmas:* A board member discloses misconduct or unethical behaviour. Should the coach stay silent, prioritising confidentiality, or encourage wider disclosure to protect stakeholders?
- *Confidentiality breaches:* A chair asks the coach to reveal what individual members shared during one-to-one sessions. The ethical issue here is balancing trust with accountability.
- *Power imbalances:* Dominant voices can drown out quieter members, reinforcing inequity in decision-making (Huse, 2007).
- *Conflicts of interest:* Board members may push personal or political agendas at odds with organisational purpose (Carter & Lorsch, 2004).
- *Short-termism:* Boards can prioritise quarterly financial results over long-term sustainability or social responsibility (Solomon, 2020).

Working Through an Ethical Dilemma in SUPERvision

“In one reflective SUPERvision session, a coach brought a dilemma about confidentiality. A board chair had asked them for insights into what individual directors were saying in their one-to-one conversations. The coach felt torn between preserving trust with each member and the chair’s implied expectation of transparency.

In SUPERvision, we slowed this down:

- *We first surfaced the emotional impact: the coach felt anxious, pressured, and fearful of losing the chair's trust.*
- *We then explored ethical frameworks which stress the importance of confidentiality unless there is a clear risk of harm.*
- *Together, we rehearsed language the coach could use: affirming their commitment to confidentiality, while offering to support the chair in addressing systemic themes in the board without disclosing individuals' voices.*

The outcome was that the coach felt clearer, more confident, and equipped to handle the situation in alignment with their values and professional codes. By working through it in SUPERvision, they were able to model ethical integrity while still supporting the board as a whole.”

Clare Beckett-McInroy

What do you need to take to SUPERvision?

Reflections For You

- What ethical tensions most frequently arise in my board work, and how do I prepare for them in SUPERvision?
- What ways, as a coach, do I ensure that boards make decisions and reflect on how they are making them?

References

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Thank You!

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