

# Beyond Skills Training in Supervision: Teaching Professional Attitudes and Values

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areas of practice (e.g., pediatric psychology, geriatric psychology, or counseling) rather than on professional values. There is no shortage of material to focus on and given the multitude of skills necessary to be able to practice independently it is easy to fill supervision sessions with these vital content areas. Yet skills and knowledge alone are not sufficient for life-long competent practice, as the Board of Psychology disciplinary notifications often demonstrate. Competent practice includes a complex array of professional attitudes and values. Therefore, supervisors must focus on explicitly teaching positive professional values and attitudes to trainees, rather than simply hope that they possess them *innately* or develop them by seeing them modeled (i.e., through implicit learning). These are lessons Craig Gonsalvez, a psychologist from Australia (Gonsalvez & Calvert, 2014), has recently emphasized.

While there is a dearth of literature and research on teaching and supervising clinical attitudes and values (Gonsalvez & Calvert, 2014), it remains important to explicitly address the development of professional values. We join Gonsalvez and his research team in calling for clinical supervision practice to include thoughtful, systematic and intentional teaching of professional values and attitudes.

Das and Gonsalvez (2016) propose categories of attitudes and values, emphasizing that they interact and shape other professional competencies:

**Attitudes towards law, regulations and ethics** — motivation to learn and adhere to legal and ethical rules and regulations and to stay updated.

**Attitudes towards knowledge, learning and achievement** — valuing lifelong learning; positive attitudes toward supervision; taking responsibility and learning from mistakes, striving to engage in empirically supported practices.

**Attitudes towards clients and clinical practice** — unconditional positive regard and acceptance; respect for client boundaries; curiosity and a nonjudgmental stance.

**Attitudes towards oneself** — engaging in balanced self-assessment; reflective practice; self-care; protecting personal boundaries.

**Attitudes toward work, colleagues and the profession** — being open and transparent with colleagues; expressing differences in a respectful way; engaging in positive collaboration.

The focus on clinical and supervision competencies over the past twenty years has significantly increased the quality of training for psychologists. Falender and Shafranske (2004, 2017) among others, have identified the competencies in knowledge, skills and values which provide a framework for supervision and training programs. Yet Kaslow, et al. (2007) early on pointed out that we have become more effective at evaluating knowledge and skills than evaluating attitudes and values.

Indeed, clinical supervision often focuses on training knowledge and skills required to be competent in specialty

These are just a few examples under each category. As supervisor or training director, you may wish to design a list of attitudes and values critical for competent professional practice *in your setting*.

We also must consider **how** to teach these attitudes and values to our trainees. Rather than dictate attitudes we may adopt a learning cycle in which the supervisee is an active participant (Falender & Shafranske, 2004, p.24). For example, supervisors may use a variety of methods including didactic teaching, vignette-based case discussion, role play and self-reflection on experience. An important step might be to have trainees (and supervisors) reflect on the attitudes, values and inevitable biases they “bring to the table” in order to understand those that may be constructive vs. those that may require further examination in order to become competent practitioners.

Finally, we may consider the primacy of a positive supervisory alliance where expectations are explicit, and the learning goals are developmentally appropriate. Trainees require a “safe space” to explore their attitudes and values without fear of negative responses. As supervisors, we must be truly ready *to hear* a wide range of attitudes and values and engage in open-minded, culturally-sensitive, and respectful dialogue to facilitate growth of professionally congruent attitudes and values. ■

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Complete references for this article can be found at [www.cpapsych.org](http://www.cpapsych.org) – select *The California Psychologist* from the **Professional Resources** menu.