

# Critical Events in Supervision

John Michael Dandurand, PhD

Prepared for the National Psychology Training Consortium (NPTC)

## Objectives

- 1. Define the term “critical event” as it pertains to supervision and identify 7 types of critical events which can occur in supervision.
- 2. Articulate the three components of the “task analytic model”.
- 3. Conceptualize supervision interactions between the supervisor and supervisee through the “task analytic model”.

APA CEU DISCLAIMER: There are no known personal, professional, legal, financial, or other interests could reasonably be expected to impair this presenter’s objectivity, competence, or effectiveness as it pertains to this presentation. However, this presenter elects to disclose that he provides pre-licensure supervision for interns in the NPTC in Missouri in the capacity of a Missouri licensed psychologist.

## Small Group Activity in Breakout Rooms (~10 Minutes)

**Task: Identify a difficult therapy or clinical situation that you were hesitant to bring to supervision.**

*(This does not need to be shared with the larger group but will help with understanding the model we will be learning today.)*

## What Is A “Critical Event”?

- “Perceiving the therapeutic process as a sequence of events occurs naturally with time, experience, and supervision. Perhaps unknowingly, supervisors help novice therapists start to think about each session, or portion of a session, as an episode in a story; each episode having a specific “task” to be accomplished. It is simply unrealistic to work any other way. [...] From this perspective, the portion of a session devoted to a given objective is an *event* or *episode*. Like an event in a film, the supervisory event has a definable beginning, middle, and end, during which a *task* or *series of tasks* is addressed. The identification of, working through, and accomplishment of a specific task is essentially what defines the event”
- “*Critical events* in supervision; events that are particularly challenging for both supervisee and supervisor”

(Ladany et al., 2005, pp. 4-5)

## 7 Critical Events Identified By Ladany and Colleagues (2005)

- 1. Remediating Skill Difficulties and Deficits
- 2. Heightening Multicultural Awareness
- 3. Negotiating Role Conflicts
- 4. Working Through Countertransference
- 5. Managing Sexual Attraction
- 6. Repairing Gender-Related Misunderstandings
- 7. Addressing Problematic Attitudes And Behavior

(Ladany et al., 2005, pp. 18)

## Task Analytic Model Prototypical Critical Event Example

(Ladany et al., 2005, pp. 17)

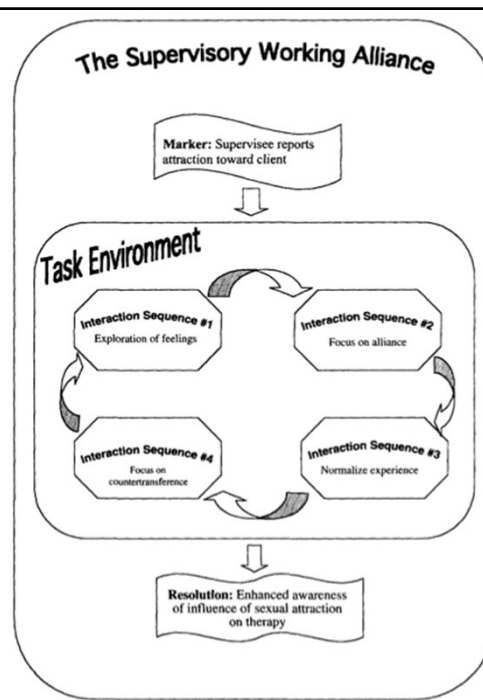


Figure 1.2. Example of a sexual attraction event.

## Marker

- “In a task-analytic model, the Marker is the supervisee's statement, series of statements, or behavior signaling the need for a specific kind of help.”

(Ladany et al., 2005, pp. 14)

## Interaction Sequences

- “Essentially, when broken down into its elemental parts, the Task Environment [...] is a series of stages, which we call interaction *sequences*, comprised of various supervisor operations (interventions or strategies) and supervisee performances or reactions.”

(Ladany et al., 2005, pp. 14)

# Common Interactional Sequences

- Focus on the supervisory alliance
- Focus on the therapeutic process
- Exploration of feelings
- Focus on countertransference
- Attend to parallel processes

- Focus on self-efficacy
- Normalizing experience
- Focus on skill
- Assessing knowledge
- Focus on multicultural awareness
- Focus on evaluation

(Ladany et al., 2005, pp. 15-16)

TABLE 1.1 Common Interactional Sequences in the Task Environments of Critical Events		TABLE 1.1 (Continued)	
Sequence	Explanation	Sequence	Explanation
Focus on the supervisory alliance	Discussion of aspects of the relationship related to agreement on the tasks and goals of supervision (including evaluation), as well as to the emotional bond between supervisor and supervisee. May either be a "checking in" about the alliance or an explicit discussion about what is taking place or should take place in supervision, including a focus on the supervisee's or the supervisor's feelings about their relationship.	Normalizing experience	A discussion of how the supervisee's experience, (either as a therapist, colleague, or supervisee), is typical and developmentally expected or appropriate. Discussion of the how, when, where, and why of conceptual, technical, and interpersonal skills. May include role-playing or a discussion of how to apply theory to specific therapy interventions.
Focus on the therapeutic process	A discussion about what is taking place between the supervisee and client (i.e., the kinds of interactions that occur, the strength of the therapeutic alliance, and how the client sees the supervisee's behavior in relation to self and vice versa). Typically, but not exclusively, a here-and-now focus. Feelings can be expressed about the client, the therapeutic relationship or process, about the supervisee's progress in training, or about personal issues.	Focus on skill	Discussion of the how, when, where, and why of conceptual, technical, and interpersonal skills. May include role-playing or a discussion of how to apply theory to specific therapy interventions.
Exploration of feelings	Discussion of how and why the supervisee's feelings and/or personal issues are "triggered" by a client's behavior or attitude.	Assessing knowledge	Evaluating the degree to which the supervisee is knowledgeable in areas relevant to the case(s) under discussion. Knowledge bases include ethics, research, and theory as applied to practice.
Focus on countertransference	A discussion that draws attention to similarities between a specific therapeutic interaction and the supervisory interaction. Parallel processes may originate in either interaction and be mirrored in the other.	Focus on multicultural awareness	Discussion of the supervisee's self-awareness in relation to individuals who are similar and different from them in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability, family structure, or socioeconomic status.
Attend to parallel processes	A discussion of the supervisee's sense of confidence in his or her therapeutic skills (either specifically or globally), sense of self as a professional, or ability to function in various roles (e.g., as therapist, student, supervisee, colleague).	Focus on evaluation	Discussion of the supervisee's performance in therapy, in supervision, and as a professional. May involve a discussion of feedback, critical and positive, either summative or formative.

(Ladany et al., 2005, pp. 15-16)

## Resolution

- “The final component of the event is the Resolution, which is—in effect—the outcome or accomplishment of a particular supervisory task. Generally speaking, Resolutions can be thought of in four broad categories: an enhancement of or decline in (a) self-awareness, (b) knowledge, (c) skills, or (d) the supervisory alliance.”

(Ladany et al., 2005, pp. 18)

## Resolution

- “**Self-awareness** refers to the supervisee's ability to understand how personal biases, feelings, behaviors, and beliefs influence the ability to work with clients.”
- “**Knowledge** includes theoretical, empirical, and practical understanding gained through training and experience.”
- “**Skills** [...] can be interpersonal, technical, or conceptual and range from microskills (response modes like asking open-ended questions, making reflections, or confrontations) to complex therapeutic strategies (e.g., two-chair dialogues).”
- “**The alliance** refers to enhancing the emotional bond, negotiating an agreement on goals and tasks, or repairing a rupture in the supervisory working relationship.”

(Ladany et al., 2005, pp. 18)

## Example 1: Supervisee Shame

- Critical Event:  
“Some of the more typical types of shameful events included the therapist falling asleep in session, chronic difficulties with time management, referring to a client by another client’s name, forgetting significant client information such as a death in the family, bodily function difficulties, internal recognition that an intervention was failing miserably, and sexual behaviors by the client.”

(Ladany et al., 2011, p. 309)

## Example 1: Supervisee/Therapist Shame

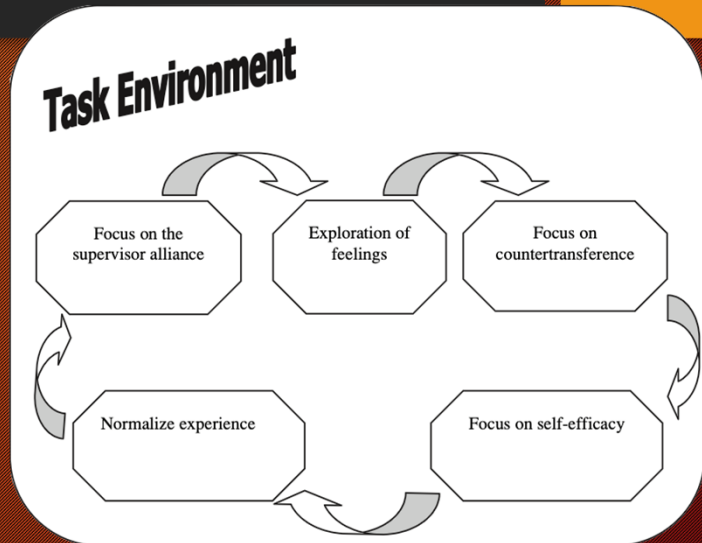
- Marker:  
“These statements may be simple, such as “I had this shameful experience with my client that I need to talk about.” Alternatively, markers can take on a more subtle character, such as when a supervisee avoids talking about a particular client, forgets the client’s name, or becomes uncharacteristically defensive when the supervisor brings up a client.”

(Ladany et al., 2011, pp. 311)

## Example 1: Supervisee/Therapist Shame

- Task Environment and Interaction Sequences

(Ladany et al., 2011, pp. 313)

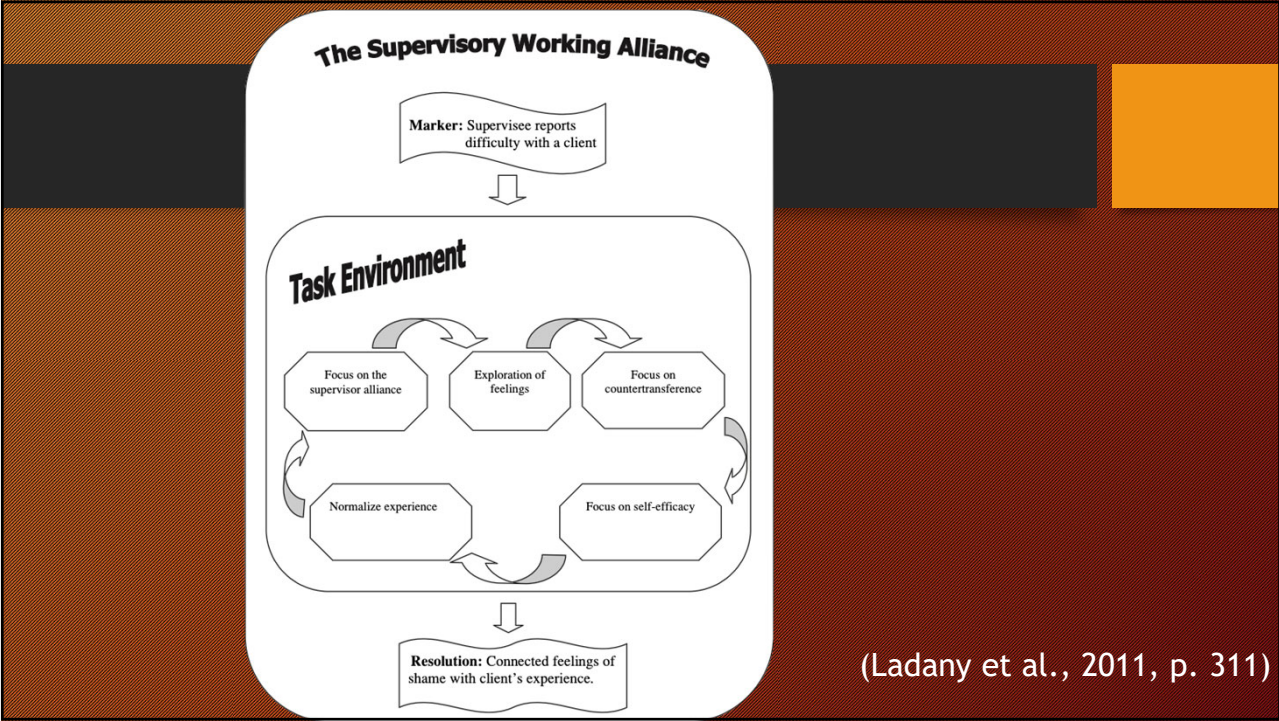


## Example 1: Supervisee/Therapist Shame

- Resolution  
“Connected feelings of shame with client’s experience.”

(Ladany et al., 2011, p. 313)





## 7 Critical Events Identified By Ladany and Colleagues (2005)

- 1. Remediating Skill Difficulties and Deficits
- 2. Heightening Multicultural Awareness
- 3. Negotiating Role Conflicts
- 4. Working Through Countertransference
- 5. Managing Sexual Attraction
- 6. Repairing Gender-Related Misunderstandings
- 7. Addressing Problematic Attitudes And Behavior

(Ladany et al., 2005, pp. 18)

## Marker

- “In a task-analytic model, the Marker is the supervisee's statement, series of statements, or behavior signaling the need for a specific kind of help.”

(Ladany et al., 2005, pp. 14)

## Common Interactional Sequences

- Focus on the supervisory alliance
- Focus on the therapeutic process
- Exploration of feelings
- Focus on countertransference
- Attend to parallel processes
- Focus on self-efficacy
- Normalizing experience
- Focus on skill
- Assessing knowledge
- Focus on multicultural awareness
- Focus on evaluation

(Ladany et al., 2005, pp. 15-16)

## Resolution

Resolution	Description
<b>Self-Awareness</b>	“refers to the supervisee's ability to understand how personal biases, feelings, behaviors, and beliefs influence the ability to work with clients.”
<b>Knowledge</b>	“includes theoretical, empirical, and practical understanding gained through training and experience.”
<b>Skills</b>	“can be interpersonal, technical, or conceptual and range from microskills (response modes like asking open-ended questions, making reflections, or confrontations) to complex therapeutic strategies (e.g., two-chair dialogues).”
<b>The Alliance</b>	“refers to enhancing the emotional bond, negotiating an agreement on goals and tasks, or repairing a rupture in the supervisory working relationship.”

(Ladany et al., 2005, pp. 18)

## Mock Supervision Activity

- Instructions:
- *Supervisee: pick a category (to right).*
- *Create a scenario involving some problematic behavior and include a “marker statement”.*
- *Supervisor and supervisee - attend to the interaction sequences and practice working towards a resolution in allotted time.*

### Categories of Critical Events

- 1. Remediating Skill Difficulties and Deficits
- 2. Heightening Multicultural Awareness
- 3. Negotiating Role Conflicts
- 4. Working Through Countertransference
- 5. Managing Sexual Attraction
- 6. Repairing Gender-Related Misunderstandings
- 7. Addressing Problematic Attitudes & Behavior

## References

- Bertsch, K. N., Bremer-Landau, J. D., Inman, A. G., DeBoer Kreider, E. R., Price, T. A., & DeCarlo, A. L. (2014). Evaluation of the Critical Events in Supervision Model using gender related events. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology, 8*(3), 174.
- Ladany, N., Friedlander, M. L., & Nelson, M. L. (2005). *Critical events in psychotherapy supervision: An interpersonal approach*. American Psychological Association.
- Ladany, N., Klinger, R., & Kulp, L. (2011). Therapist shame: Implications for therapy and supervision. *Shame in the therapy hour, 307-322*.
- Inman, A. G., & DeBoer Kreider, E. (2013). Multicultural competence: Psychotherapy practice and supervision. *Psychotherapy, 50*(3), 346.
- Safran, J. D., Crocker, P., McMain, S., & Murray, P. (1990). Therapeutic alliance rupture as a therapy event for empirical investigation. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 27*(2), 154.
- Shaffer, K. S., & Friedlander, M. L. (2017). What do “interpersonally sensitive” supervisors do and how do supervisees experience a relational approach to supervision?. *Psychotherapy Research, 27*(2), 167-178.
- *Skill Deficit Event* [Video file]. (n.d.).

I would like to extend a special thanks for Dr. Parkhurst and Dr. Fringer for providing permission to use their role play video (“Skill Deficit Event”).