

**Presencing Issue 13B- Pointing Towards Supervision:
Tao of Supervision
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In the I-Thou relationship, human beings are aware of each other as having a unity of being. In the I-Thou relationship, human beings do not perceive each other as consisting of specific, isolated qualities, but engage in a dialogue involving each other's whole being. In the I-It relationship, on the other hand, human beings perceive each other as consisting of specific, isolated qualities, and view themselves as part of a world which consists of things. I-Thou is a relationship of mutuality and reciprocity, while I-It is a relationship of separateness and detachment. Martin Buber explained ~angelfire.com



In my *Presencing* newsletters I have dealt with many issues that affect bodyworkers, clients, and community. I have dealt with issues that stem directly from clients' bodies in order to help them grow in conscious awareness. I own here that it would have been impossible for me to write those articles, or even teach the classes that I have taught without the many types of supervision I was receiving at the time.



Here is some background. Much more is available on [my website](#). When I was told in graduate school that I would be required to receive various types of supervision, I was appalled! Like the letter I quoted above, I had resolved never to go back to corporate America... never to have somebody tell me what to do.

What I found was completely different. The supervisors I worked with helped me with many of the dilemmas I faced in working with clients, challenged me to design my own goals and achieve them, helped me to start sharing experiences of my inner life for the first time, helped me work through many of my childhood issues, helped me define my practice of body-centered, client-centered spiritual direction and bodywork. In short they helped me to know myself.

Sixteen years later I am still drawing upon those sharings and in one case am still working with the same supervisor. I can unquestionably say that those sessions changed my whole life. I was supported by those individuals in every way possible, to reach further in my life than I ever thought possible.

As a profession bodyworkers are now facing the prospect of required supervision. Some on the massage board may be concerned that, without adequate oversight, bodyworkers could be susceptible to moving beyond their depth of training and "scope of practice." Some in the community may advocate that the real reason for supervision is so the supervisor can provide answers in the form of advice and guidance to the practitioner. This corporate view of supervision misses the point that **for supervision to work it must appeal to practitioners and empower their growth.**



In my ethics classes I have introduced concepts of peer supervision so that practitioners can create peer groups for discussing their own ethical dilemmas and other professional concerns. The core process of peer supervision is about listening without prejudicial responses, and not about offering advice. Peer supervisors are there for one another, as friends and as colleagues, to offer the support of listening and witnessing.

"Listening into Being," a phrase borrowed from spiritual direction, means that when we are truly listened to, we are enabled to hear our own inner truth. In my own teaching of supervision I lead groups and individuals through a process of silent listening, which means to listen to another without responding with affirmation or repudiation. This is a basic starting point for learning true supervision.

Even something as simple as asking a question can be a form of giving advice or offering approval or disapproval. So it is an important first step to practice silent listening. Silent listening allows supervisor trainees to hear the chatter of their own minds... called metathought.

Until we practice silence, we stay unaware of how much we are listening to ourselves rather than others. It can take a long time of practicing silent listening until we become comfortable with the silence of no-thought, one of the signs of presence.



As a profession we bodyworkers can provide that kind of support for one another. Our work is probably the most intimate of all forms of caregiving. As we accompany clients over the years we are witnessing for their changed relationships with their bodies. We are addressing the instrument of their livingness, the body, in a caring and affirmative manner. If we journey with them long enough we may witness their transition towards less physical and more spiritual existence. As we change, our bodies change, our work changes, it is very helpful to have our friends and colleagues witnessing for us. As we recognize those changes within ourselves, we start to recognize that our supervisory relationship is one of the deepest relationships we will ever have.

