



**The  
supervision  
'lotus' a new  
tool for  
reflective  
supervision**

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For NISCC

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# Social Work (NI) Supervision Policy

## Core Functions of Social Work Supervision:

- 1 Professional Development
- 2 Organisational Role Performance
- 3 Personal Well Being

All are interdependent and aim to:

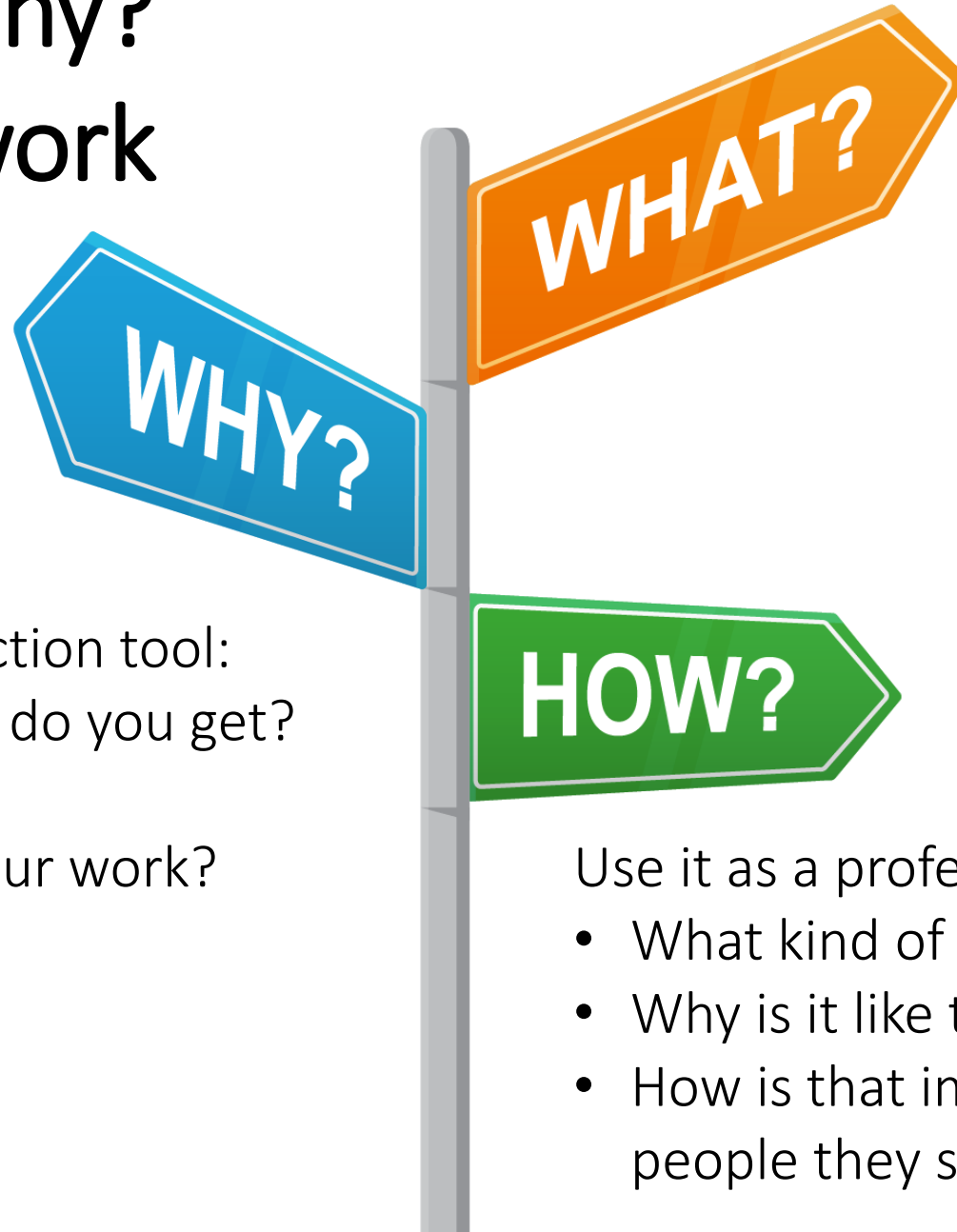
- 1 Improve
- 2 Develop
- 3 Support
- 4 Protect



the social work practitioner and their practice so they deliver positive outcomes for people they support



# The What? Why? How? framework



Use this as a personal reflection tool:

- What kind of supervision do you get?
- Why is it like that?
- How is it impacting on your work?

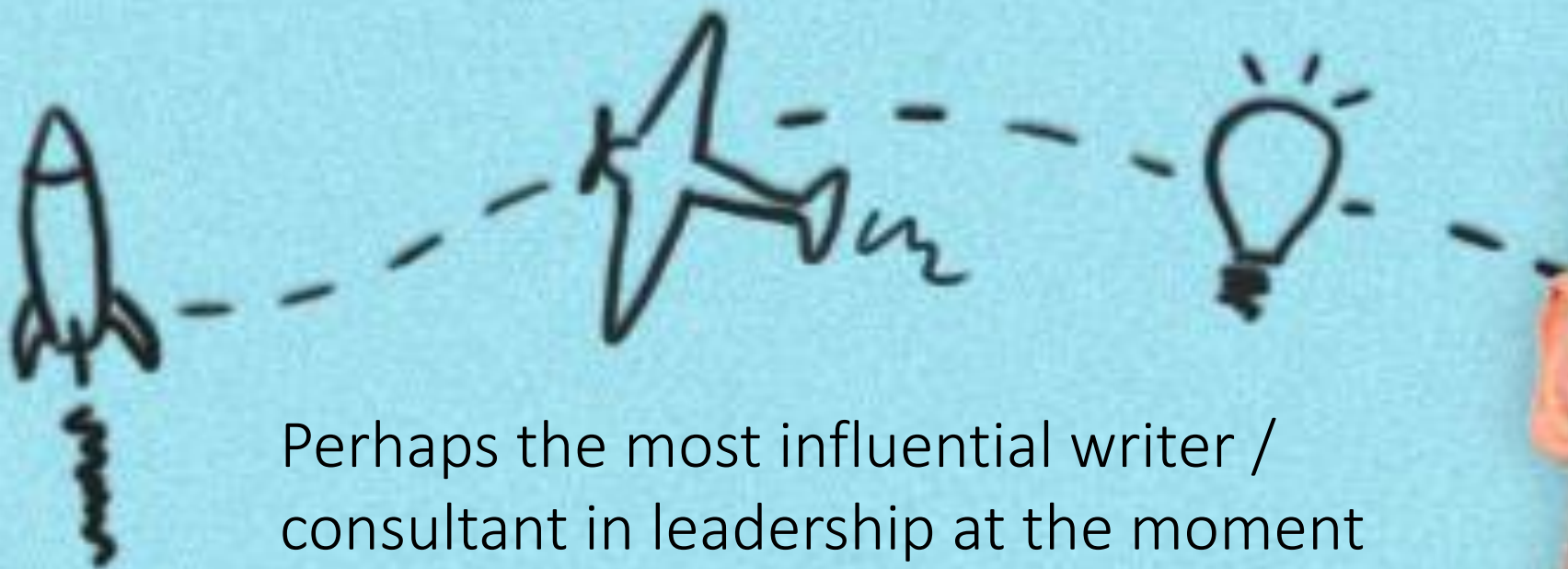
Use it as a professional reflection tool:

- What kind of supervision do you provide?
- Why is it like that?
- How is that impacting on staff and the people they support?

In their research Wilkins, Lynch and Antonopoulou (2018) listened to audio recordings of supervision. To decide whether they thought the supervision was practice-focused they considered the questions:

1. Do we know what the social worker is going to do in the next home visit or the next few home visits with the family?
2. Do we understand why the social worker is going to do these things and how?
3. Has this discussion helped the social worker think more carefully about what they are going to do, how and why?

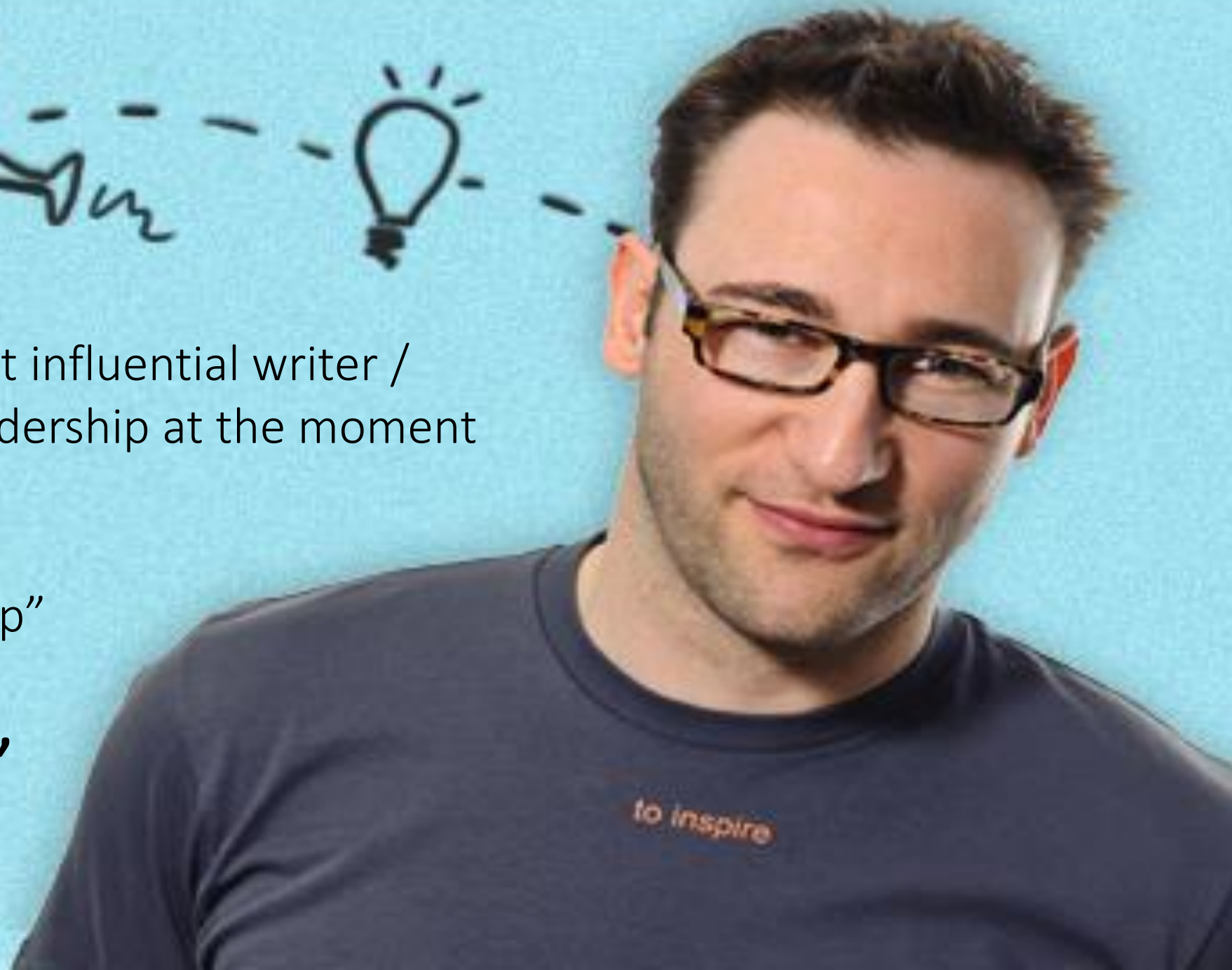




Perhaps the most influential writer / consultant in leadership at the moment is Simon Sinek

“Entire leadership”

**“START WITH WHY”**

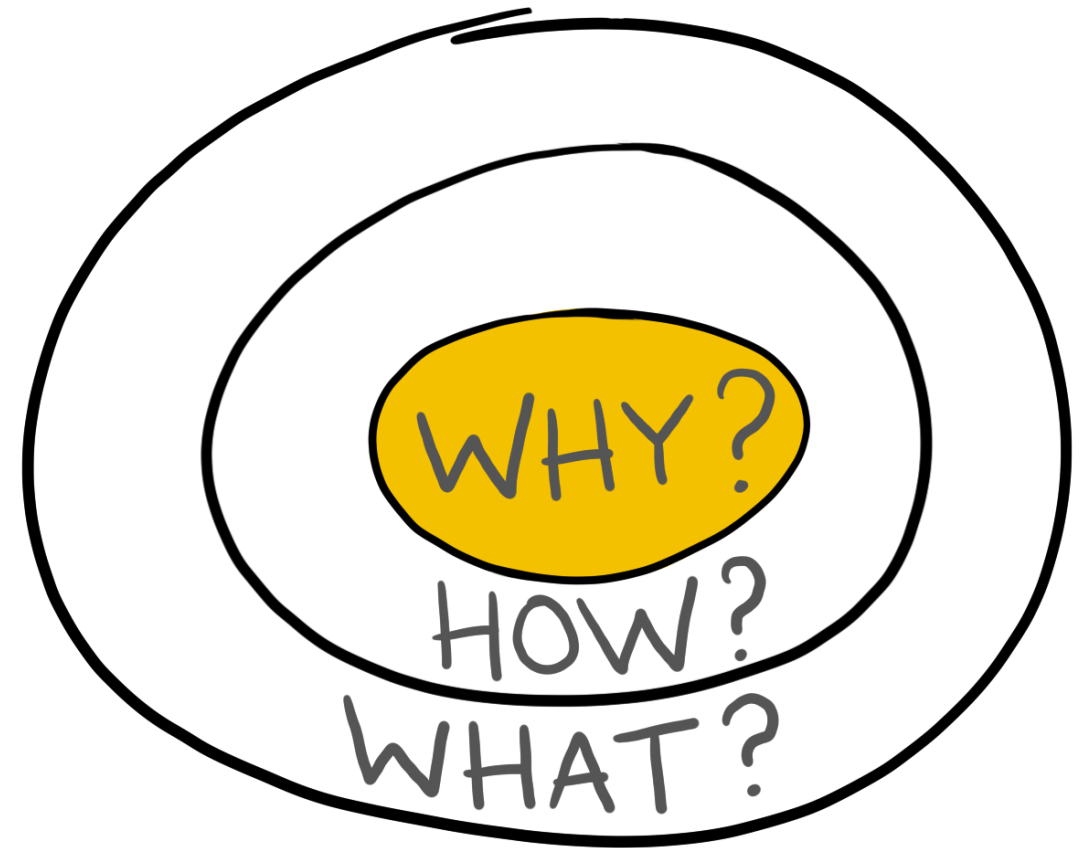


# Simon Sinek's 'golden circle'

**WHAT:** Sinek claims that every organisation on the planet knows *what* they do. The products they sell or the services they provide.

**HOW:** Sinek states that some organisations know *how* they do it. The things that set them apart from their competition – their 'USP.'

**WHY:** Sinek's main claim is that very few organisations know *why* they do what they do. Why is not about making money. That's a result. Why is a purpose, a cause or a belief. Why is the very reason that the organisation exists.





# Karen Treisman 'ingredients for trauma informed supervision'

- Recognise unique and individual experiences
- Be curious and open
- Model the model
- Secure base and safe haven
- Safety and trust
- Self care
- Strengths, skills and resiliency
- Multi-sensory and creatively embedded
- Meeting the person where they are at

# Neuroinclusive supervision

“Neurodiversity inclusion or 'neuroinclusion' involves consciously and actively including all types of information processing, learning and communication styles.”

(The CIPD neuroinclusion at work guide 2024)





# CIPD key principles for creating a neuroinclusive organisation

Principle 1: Understand where you are now and commit to a long-term plan of action

Principle 2: Focus on creating an open and supportive culture where people feel comfortable talking about neurodiversity

Principle 3: Proactively consider neurodiversity in all people management transactions

Principle 4: Allow individual employees to be masters of their own journey

Principle 5: Embrace flexible working to enable everybody to thrive

Principle 6: Practice ongoing attention to wellbeing

Principle 7: Empower neurodivergent voices



# Neuroaffirmative approaches

This is a concept much more referred to in terms of ‘treatment’ or care rather than in the workplace / organisation. Day et al (2024) of the British Psychological Society say that neuroaffirmative practice is about:

- Support which targets needs and challenges
- Recognition of value
- Respect for neurodivergent culture and identity
- Reframing from disorder to neurotype
- Rejection of compliance-based behaviour approaches
- Rejection of neurotypical social skills training
- Stop pathologizing approaches
- Advocating for systems and environmental changes
- Fostering positive neurodivergent identity as parity
- The process of ‘ever becoming’





# Who created the tool?

## Hannah's Creation (Created the Lotus Model)



## Emma's Development (Direct work tool)

"I created my lotus to support me through a presentation with professionals at the end of my first year of studies. The idea was that the model would act as a tool to connect me, as the student, with the audience. As a neurodivergent student, my brain sometimes cannot always "perform" how I need it to. This tool's interaction and connection allowed me to find alternative ways of engaging my brain and find a method more suitable for me.

Witnessing the Lotus Model being adopted and nurtured by creative and passionate students like Linzi and Emma is incredibly humbling. Thank you so much for trusting in the lotus and growing it into such a diverse and fun tool within Social Work – I am blown away!"

Hannah Barnes



"Creating my reflection box helped me to find my place while on placement and it helped me to create meaningful professional relationships with the young people. My box became a tool that the whole school valued and wanted to continue to use after I left. A highlight for me was one of the young people presenting it with me to the head of school, she was so proud of what we had created and she became the school's ambassador of the reflection box. A diverse, creative tool I will use again and again, I am grateful to Hannah for sharing the Lotus Model and have no doubt that it will become a vital tool used across every sector of Social Work". Emma Kirwin



# Handing over to Linzi...



I am now a final year RGR student at Queen's, a two-year route. I developed the supervision box on my first placement when Siobhan was my practice teacher in the Southern Trust. I used my development of the tool as the community development aspect of placement.

# WHY: Challenges for students



What does good supervision look like?

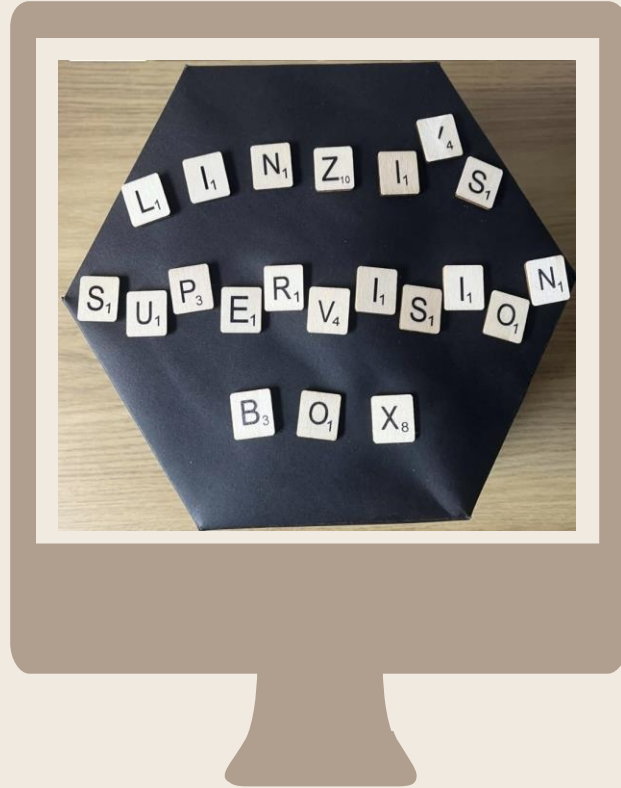
What topics should be covered within supervision?

How do I prepare for supervision?

What should I expect from supervision?

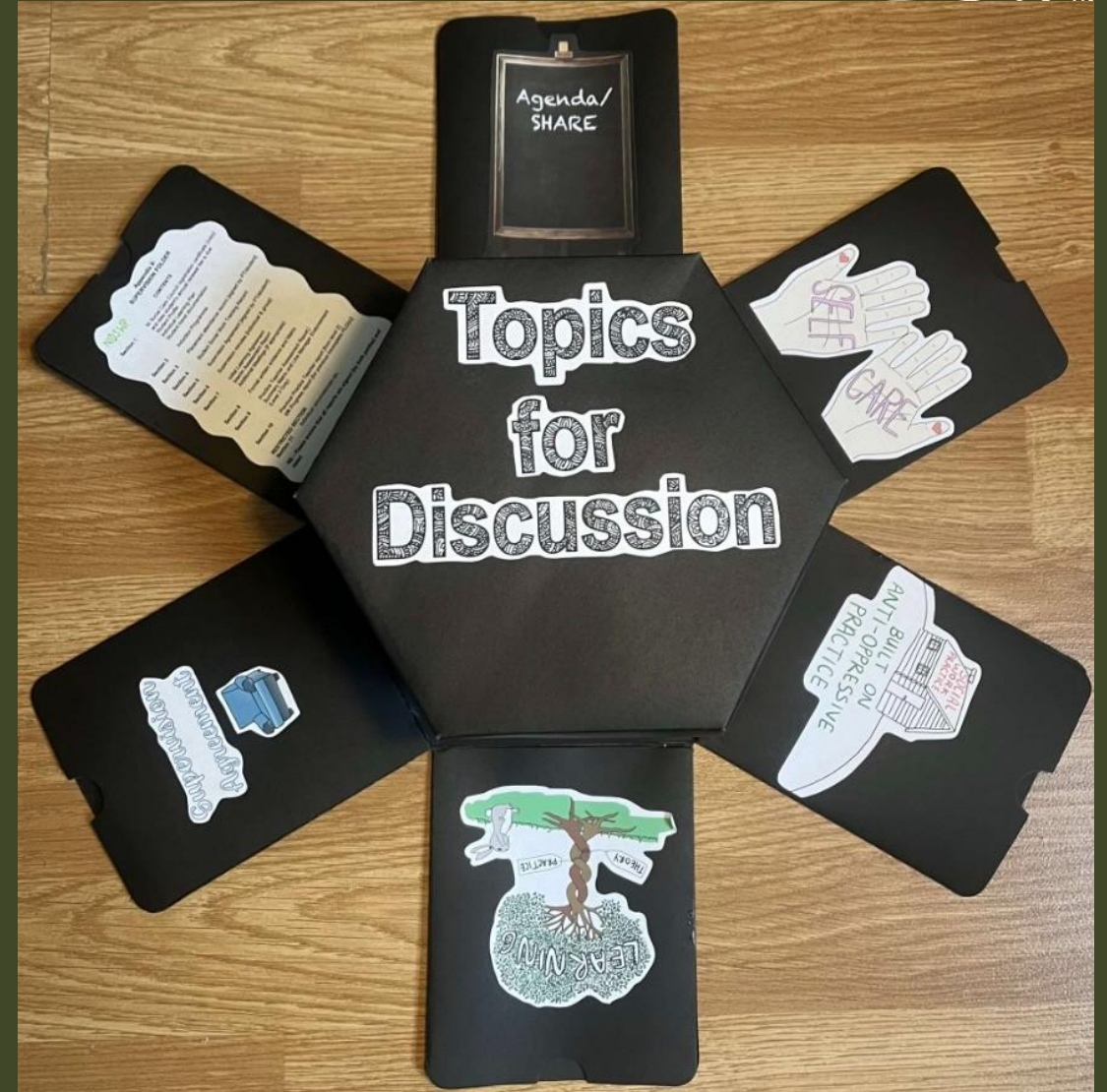
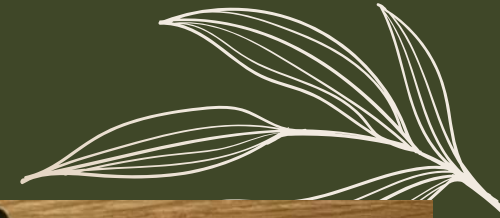
Adaptable in  
practice

# The supervision box



Visual/  
neurodiverse tool

# Layer 1



# Layer 2

## Six models of reflection

- Gibbs' (1998) reflective cycle
- The Big 6 (Maclean, 2021)
- The Reflective Onion (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005)
- 4 F's (Greenaway, 1992)
- Me, my, more, must and you, your, yet, yes (Maclean, 2024)
- Head, Heart, Hands (Cameron, 2005)







# Layer 3



## Reflective Practice -Stan Houston

“Combined, these domains explain human meaning and experience. They suggest a person is not just an individual psychological being. More than that, he or she is thrust into the world of ‘social’. In this context, identity is a social process deeply influenced by significant others. These tenets lead to the importance, or rather vital necessity, of ‘relationship-based’ social work”.

(Houston, 2015:43).



# Layer 4

## Social work key roles/ matrix





# Feedback on the supervision box

## Student feedback

“The supervision box is a practical tool that not only helps to structure supervision sessions but also provides materials to facilitate discussion surrounding different aspects of PLO. I strongly believe that using the supervision box can provide a unique, creative and enjoyable way to ensure both students and practice educators get the most out of supervision.” Kelsey Rankin.

## Personal tutor feedback

“I thought the supervision box was really innovative and I was impressed by the co-production element of it so far as it really puts the student at the heart of the supervision process helping to break down the potential perceived power imbalance between PT/supervisor and student/supervisee.” Danielle Mackle.



“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much”.

—Helen Keller.





## Conclusions / Recommendations

1. It would be good to have more training / learning around the purpose and practice of supervision for students
2. A supervision policy specifically for students would be useful
3. More resources around preparing for supervision could help people get more out of their supervision
4. We are hopeful that the new supervision policy will lead a wider variety of methods in supervision – supervision could be more contemporary but sometimes change can be challenging
5. We need to think about being trauma informed and neuroinclusive in supervision
6. The lotus is a tool that could be used in a variety of ways – essentially it provides a way of looking at layers / systems breaking down complexity





# Thanks!

Now time for comments,  
reflections or questions



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# THE REFLECTIVE SOCIAL WORKER

A little practical book



By Siobhan Maclean

The final chapter of this book is about the lotus model and creating new models for reflection and supervision