



ASCCANZ

Association for Supervision, Coaching, Consultancy in Australia & New Zealand

3 Church Street  
Waverley, NSW 2024, Australia

[www.asccanz.org](http://www.asccanz.org)

ph: +61 2 9386 1488

fax: +61 2 9369 4227

e: [info@asccanz.org](mailto:info@asccanz.org)

Book Review

## **On Being a Supervisee: Creating Learning Partnerships**

***Carroll, M. and Gilbert, M. Psychoz Publications, 2006.***

by Alex Nelson \*

In 2005, at the Conference on Supervision held in Auckland, I heard a number of supervisors, from a variety of helping disciplines, say with regret that one of their difficulties in offering satisfying and satisfactory professional supervision was that those they supervised had received little or no training to be a supervisee. I came away wondering what would prepare those practitioners to gain optimum learning and benefit from professional supervision. What would enable supervisors to induct newcomers to supervision and establish a learning partnership that holds satisfaction for both?

Similar questions must have also surfaced about this time for well-known psychologists Michael Carroll and Maria Gilbert, whose book *On Being A Supervisee: Creating Learning Partnerships* came to my notice recently. My first questions on picking up this book were about how useful it might be for practitioners venturing for the first time into supervision with me. A glance at the Contents confirmed my hope that this text would provide for both beginning and continuing supervisees a good look at how supervision works. As I read the chapters I realised that the book was also providing me with a looking glass to inspect closely my own supervisory practice.

In the beginning chapters, the authors deal with several steps in setting up a partnership in supervision from the perspective of supervisees– prompting them to recognise their assumptions and expectations, and to establish a clear agreement with their supervisor. Carroll and Gilbert know that a practitioner / supervisee may need to learn skills to participate fruitfully within a supervisory partnership. As supervisees actively engage in supervision through personal preparation and review, and find effective ways to present their issues in sessions, their autonomy and quality of practice can be expected to develop. The middle chapters of the book encourage readers to recognise their preferred styles of learning, and to realise that they may pass through some developmental stages on their way to autonomy in the learning relationship.

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Chapters on giving / receiving feedback in supervision, on skills for reflection, developing emotional awareness, and realistic self-evaluation contribute to the reader's preparation for and ongoing engagement in learning with the supervisor.

Carroll and Gilbert have included Declarations of Rights and Responsibilities for Supervisees, and provided thirty pages of useful Appendices. Among the Appendices are examples of a two-way contract with supervisors, a one-page evaluation form for the process of supervision sessions, and a form to provide feedback to the supervisor.

I particularly liked the unequivocal emphasis that supervision is for learning that will generate confidence and autonomy in the supervised practitioner. The authors treat the supervisee respectfully as someone capable of taking responsibility for learning in partnership with their supervisor.

The book delivers its wisdom in short chapters, raising questions that quickly get to the point and usually presenting case examples to provoke thoughtful consideration.

The book's modest size (157 pages) means that its treatment of each area is brief, but it is not superficial.

. I'm sure that the supervisors in Aotearoa will welcome this book as I do. Feedback from supervisees at Mercy Foundation indicates their appreciation for this book, and colleagues have seen it as a means to energise the relationship with supervisees. Congratulations to Psychoz Publications for publishing this text in Australia.

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\* dr. Alex Nelson is supervisor (ASCCANZ) and lives in Sydney

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