# SUPERVISION IN WARTIME UKRAINE: CULTIVATING RESILIENCE THROUGH TRAUMA-INFORMED CREATIVE EMBODIED APPROACHES (TICES)

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***Abstract:*** *This paper analyses a series of supervision sessions supporting an individual and a group of Ukrainian therapists and psychologists via a voluntary online organisation known as PsyCrisis Ukraine. The supervision group met bi-monthly for just over a year. Our purpose, while highlighting supervision as a resourcing factor using creative embodied approaches to supervision, also emphasises the need to integrate a trauma resilience model (TRM) and a trauma-informed supervision model to help contain and work with aspects of vulnerability in the form of: stress, burnout and depression. As trauma continues to emerge as a result of the ongoing war, this article advocates increased self-care, emotional regulation support and a trauma-informed creative embodied supervision model (TICES).*

***Key words:*** *resilience, trauma, emotional regulation, embodiment, creativity*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper highlights the challenges confronted when holding supervision in wartime Ukraine. I used a method based on creative, embodied supervision, and maintained the fundamental pillars of supervision. However, the context of a country at war triggers moments of vulnerability in the process of developing resilience. Consequently, it is important to understand how we can best support the formative needs of supervision in this situation and this includes redefining our expectations. For example, what is resilience against the backdrop of war when dealing with adversity? I intend here to present an analysis of my work as a supervisor in three mediations, showing how cracks of vulnerability may appear while living through the actuality of war. In this context, I will offer paths of intervention when applying creative supervision methods.

For those who have fled and for those who remain living with air strikes, electricity cuts and years of hardship and relocation, the need to support health-care providers remains a priority when working with military polytrauma and a country at war. Trauma, secondary trauma, anxiety and burnout, and chronic stress need to be handled with care but how we manage these stress factors in supervision will depend on adapting to the concept of resilience and factors that offer personal resourcing and basic survival strategies. Resilience can be understood as a multi-dimensional construct [1, 2, 3, 4]. In the context of a war,

understanding the way communities and individuals function and cope in multiple ways can lead to more successful strategies in supervision. What are the coping strategies and is resilience a trait or a process? It is also important to consider how we should redefine normative functions of supervision while maintaining best and safe practice.

In Ukraine, supervision support is vital as the country is now in its fifth year at war. Addressing vulnerability needs a variety of support, coping strategies, to resource and develop resilience. The united support Ukrainians at large receive from international groups such as PsyCrises Ukraine and other international organisation might serve the 'collective' trauma in undergoing a process of 'self-transcendence' which Lucas describes as "the capacity to look beyond immediate personal needs to reach out to people we love and causes to serve" [5, p.161]. I believe concepts of 'self-transcendence' help define resilience. Despite great suffering and adversity people can find meaning and purpose. This paper makes no extensive reference to Logotherapy or existential psychotherapy, yet we may draw from some of its concepts to help offer meaning and purpose to people and individuals who are struggling to cope in the face of adversity [5].

Managing emotional regulation is part of a group of mind-body approaches and is one that has been adopted with the Ukrainian creative embodied supervision group. More personally, as a creative embodied supervisor and dance movement psychotherapist (DMP), I am reflecting from my embodied perspective and from the experiences of my supervisees. While individual training and experience is essential, learning collectively, creatively and with a mind-body focus are all valuable aspects in holding the role of supervisor as facilitator. I present three case studies to help underline what is needed to address the supervision enquiry, while aiming to create the best environment to offer safety and connection to help reduce stress and support supervision with embodied practices. I consider that additional layers of support help to maintain emotional regulation.

Creativity in supervision is derived from the work of J.L.Moreno (1889-1974) [6]. The first case is a sociometric perspective via the Small World technique. This supervision method was used in the context of the first years of the war (2022-2024). In the second case, I employed a creative method using the Six-Shape Structure (hereafter shortened to 6S) developed by Chesner [7]. For the third case I offer FERN (Framework for the Embodied Reflective Narrative) developed by Butté [8].

The theoretical framework with which I founded my practice is presented below with its five pillars:

1. Addressing resilience and vulnerability
2. Using creativity in supervision
3. Dance Movement Psychotherapy (DMT) as an Embodied Reflective Practice in Supervision
4. Emotional Regulation: drawing on Porges' polyvagal theory and other regulation theories to co-regulate and understand how trauma plays out in supervision
5. Supervision and Attachment Theory

## 2. ADDRESSING RESILIENCE AND VULNERABILITY

In accomplishing my work, the themes of vulnerability and resilience emerge. We need to support supervisees through a trauma-informed lens to understand the different ways in which Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) impacts our clients. I will discuss this further in my case studies. Supervision at its best is focused and informed -- offering clarity, integrity and safety -- but can sustain resilience. How do we cope? Is resilience a trait or a process? According to Lahad, resilience is an innate ability that needs developing and maintenance, so it is both [9]. Lahad categorises the different areas in which we measure coping mechanisms via six modes: B-Belief (faith), A-Affect (emotions), S-Social, I-Imagination (to visualise), C-Cognitive (reasoning), Ph-Physical [9]. Hawkins and McMahon have also linked resilience to the qualities of hope, optimism, a sense of balance and a future orientation [10]. Resilience is therefore personal, individual and in supervision we must meet vulnerability with compassion, gentleness and with humane enquiry.

We see vulnerability showing up with supervisees in the creative material that emerges via the creative action methods. Resilience in supervision also implies the ability to bounce back and it relates to the resources that sustain well-being [11]. Of course, individuals have differing levels of resistance. Resilience can also signify our capacity to identify challenges [8]. Creative embodied supervision today touches many forms of trauma [12]. Moments where vulnerability and resilience can be identified in action through vignettes from supervisees working in ‘war and crises’ are brought to attention. Stress is a physiological response to our emotions signalling alarm and danger. Stressors can be physical or physiological, both involving a bodily response.

Harris testifies that resilience is possible despite trauma, violence and the most adverse circumstances that arise from war-torn communities such as Sierra Leone in his work with ex-rebel teenage boy fighters. Creating safety, establishing trust, working with the body in movement and in letting the creative process unfold is key to transformation [13]. MacDonald “supports the hypothesis that dance movement interventions can help a traumatised individual to re-inhabit their body and to create new, healthy life meanings and pathways” [14].

There are co-regulation strategies and techniques to handle secondary trauma and methods to build and establish resilience from practitioners who are suffering from exhaustion and need to develop effective psycho-social resilience and self-care strategies [13]. My approach to supervision also draws on creative arts therapies, trauma-informed dance movement therapy and creative approaches [15, 16, 17].

### *2.1. USING CREATIVITY IN SUPERVISION*

I aim to highlight why creativity and embodied methods in supervision are supportive when working with war-time trauma. I also identify a need for a particular focus in holding the space with care when anxiety, burnout and deregulation are present. With loss of the executive functioning, emotions, thinking, planning and concentration can be disrupted. Anxieties, poor sleep, lack of concentration, depression, chronic stress, burnout and dissociation have been frequently identified. These are the realities of working in crises.

Creative approaches reduce the level of anxiety that sometimes arises in supervision. Providing safety with creative and embodied support is at the heart of my endeavor as a way to offer a space for personal resourcing.

This can include touching on uncomfortable moments that have later been forgotten. In her essay 'Forgotten Moments in Supervision', Panhofer emphasises the use of expressive movement, drawing, writing and acting to be extremely helpful in the supervision process. Whether or not these "forgotten" moments may be intentional or unconscious, we might easily push the more vulnerable aspects of our being to the back of our minds rather than face uncomfortable realities [18]. Art enables us to process the vulnerable.

Winnicott offers us the concept that we are born creative and that playing enables us to use the whole parts of ourselves and it is through being creative that the individual discovers the self [19].

Creativity is most often linked with joy and pleasure which induce dopamine release in the brain. Dopamine release lowers stress and takes us to a more relaxed parasympathetic state [20]. Thus, creativity engages the mind in alternative ways of processing information and emotions which differ from logic, and in consequence instills curiosity and opportunities to view and solve problems with new perspectives [6, 7, 8, 14].

In creative supervision, we use metaphors and engage in symbolism. Color, texture, form and shape are also dimensions that we embrace in the creative methods. Dance movement therapists encourage the use of these symbols and metaphors to reflect the wisdom of the body [8, 16, 17, 18].

Carl Jung asserts: *"*From the living fountain of instinct flows everything that is creative; hence the unconscious is not merely conditioned by history, but is the very source of the creative impulse. It is like Nature herself -- prodigiously conservative, yet transcending her own historical conditions in her acts of creation*"* [21].

In addition, the creative methods I use offer a particular approach that can be felt in the body, and this opens a dialogue between supervisor and supervisee [6, 7].

### *2.2. DANCE MOVEMENT PSYCHOTHERAPY (DMT) AS AN EMBODIED REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN SUPERVISION*

Dance movement therapy is defined by the European Association of Dance Movement Therapists (EADMT) as the therapeutic use of movement to further the emotional, cognitive, physical, spiritual and social integration of the individual. DMT respects the lived body as a source of knowledge production [22]. Whilst the body approach is potent, integrating embodied and somatic awareness with creative methods offers structure that can help guide, contain, and develop an evaluative perspective while holding action in supervision [6, 7, 8]. DMT seeks to support people towards more resilience through dance-based experiences. Building resilience is considered one of the core themes in dance movement therapy. In DMT we aim to explore, evaluate and treat the implications of fostering emotional regulation.

As a dance movement therapist, I rely on my embodied experience to inform and guide me in my supervision practice. DMT is a creative process integrating the body and mind approach offering neuroscience support in working with trauma and in promoting resilience [23]. Body-orientated techniques such as DMT rely on the body, the non-verbal and somatic responses to tune into the 'felt experience' as a place of process and reflection [11]. DMT is also used in supervision as a reflexive practice while tuning into the body's wisdom [16].

Because trauma is felt and experienced on a physical level, dance movement therapy has naturally led me to approach reflective processing on a somatic level. Empathic attuning has also been a valuable measure to understand the fear, anxiety and a freeze-or-flight fight mode that may creep into supervision opening up to vulnerability. Trauma is felt first and foremost on a body level [24, 25, 26, 27, 28]. Holding the space with trust, care, dignity and support has been an important element in my work.

Inviting supervisees to connect to their senses and emotions and in establishing feelings of safety, grounding based on breathing and body awareness is a starting point to open up the online supervision session. Once safety and self-regulation have been established, we might progress into a movement exploration to tune into what is being invited or stirred in supervision. We can then ask supervisees what it is that they want to explore.

### *2.3. EMOTIONAL REGULATION: POLYVAGAL THEORY AND OTHER REGULATION THEORIES TO CO-REGULATE IN SUPERVISION*

The shift from in-person to online supervision has grown since the Covid-19 pandemic. This means that somatic and creative approaches should take into consideration that in the virtual space we have to an overcome the limitations of the screen and adapt to altered working conditions. Creative methods enable supervisors to work with a wide range of theoretical orientations. Like many professionals working in the helping fields, I have drawn on Stephen Porge's polyvagal theory for safety and connection [26], [27], which enables us to connect via a central vagal space. Neuroception is a term used to describe the capacity to evaluate relative danger and safety in one's environment. The autonomic nervous system regulates three fundamental physiological states: social engagement, fight or flight, or freeze/collapse [24, 25, 26, 27, 28]. The hypothalamus receives messages from the pituitary adrenal glands to evoke fight, flight or freeze responses. This increases cortisol and adrenaline levels, leading to rapid heart rate. Sweating, changes in facial color and changes in voice are indicators of sympathetic states that vary in intensity. These visual physiological cues can be subtle and more difficult to spot on a screen.

Trauma is primarily a body experience. It can be present in many different ways: disassociation, anxiety attacks, nightmares, depression, isolation, insomnia and shame. It can lead to addictions. Trauma theory has become widely understood and supported by experts in the field [24, 25, 26, 27, 28]. Adopting a trauma-informed approach is essential while working with complex vulnerability.

Emotional regulation refers to the emotions that are felt, experienced and expressed. Supervision is more likely to have a positive outcome when there is a co-regulation between supervisor and supervisee [12]. We are told by Porges that growth and restoration are possible: "The body will reorganise when it feels safe" [27, p.7]. Supervision has to create safety and connection before we can embark on pragmatism, reflection and imagination [27].

### *2.4. CREATING A SAFE SPACE: SUPERVISION AND ATTACHMENT THEORY*

We can also view supervision through the wider lens of attachment theory. Bowlby defines attachment as a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings [29, p.194]. How is such connectedness achieved? The ability to understand the mind of another depends mainly on the development of the reflective function [7]. We optimise the latter

through active methods in creative supervision. Winnicott [cited in 10, p.2] reminds us that it is hard for any mother to be good enough unless she herself is held and supported "where the 'good enough' helping professional can survive the negative attacks of the client through the strength of being held within and by the supervisory relationship". My philosophy as a DMT supervisor incorporates attachment theory as a means of employing kinaesthetic, non-verbal connection, while aiming to adopt a positive interaction in support of supervision. It's also important to consider the therapist's own interoceptive awareness and somatic countertransference. Shared kinetic patterns during therapy lead to intersubjective relating and embodied attunement [23].

## 3. SUPERVISION THEORY

We begin with a supervisory question to bring clarity and focus. We keep this in mind as we begin our supervision exploration. The theory and techniques covered in this paper suggest that as creative supervisors we can discover 'form' while holding supervision within a secure frame. Form is what unfolds in the creative process together: inviting curiosity, shaping the techniques, choice of art materials or objects, developing the capacity to reflect via playful creative methods. The frame combining the Seven-Eyed model of supervision, [10] together with a clear focus on the supervisory question, takes us to what Hawkins and Shohet refer to as the Double Matrix [6]. The importance of holding the vulnerable and maintaining resilience while reflecting on action with online supervision is essential. Reflection in Action (RIA) signifies important questioning moments that take place while talking with a supervisee [7, 10]. The supervision contract is discussed at the start of forming the group. The contract is an important part of laying down the foundations of the group [7, 10].

A verbal check-in ensures everyone is present and we discuss our readiness to begin and agree the use of time within the 90-minute session. Inviting the group to start with a body-centering moment with breath, anchoring to the ground and by taking a moment to quieten the busy mind helps the supervisee establish self-regulation. The Zoom warm-up contains movement to encourage curiosity by tuning into emotional resonance enabling material to come to the surface. And then we share verbally and check in to see who will present aspects of their clinical work [6, 7, 8].

As the dialogue unfolds, we formulate a question; this influences the choice of method. There is a transition to prepare in gathering props and working out what is possible and what is needed. Once the agreed supervisee engages with the creative method, we are able to reflect in action as the dialogue unfolds. The final phase is to de-role, to identify key points and to create space for group reflection. Elements of the supervisory session are contained within the 5-Part Supervisory Arc [8], [6], marking a clear frame for the process. The 90-minute time frame enables each step to unfold while establishing moments to reflect in action and to transition in and out of action. Addressing self-care for the supervisee and supervisor is also an important part of supervision to prevent stress and burn-out [12, 27, 30].

### *3.1. CASE ONE: MARYNA AND THE SMALL WORLD TECHNIQUE*

Maryna is a Ukrainian psychotherapist and a body-orientated process therapist. She is a member of the supervision group. I bring to the supervision an embodied and trauma-informed perspective.

Maryna is undertaking online work with a support group of Ukrainian army volunteers. The volunteers have been clearing bombed cities in Ukraine, moving buried bodies out of rubble, thus facing traumatic experiences leading to burnout and excessive drinking. She would have normally been a co-facilitator but her colleague, usually taking the lead, was on leave, so on this occasion she was left on her own to hold the support group. Maryna brought the experience of anxiety to supervision to help her understand her overwhelming feelings. In this vignette, we observe how she struggles to feel that she has provided good enough support. It is her fear, the fear of the support workers, and collective fear in the horrors of war that we are working with.

In addition, Maryna is now living in Germany and, like many of her compatriots, struggling with feelings of guilt about leaving Ukraine during this war. In identifying the possibility of secondary trauma there is a parallel process and we can see how Maryna is emotionally deregulating. My intervention comes from listening and sensing my body responses, in my kinaesthetic reaction, where I offer co-regulation to establish safety and connection.

I use the Small World technique, one that has its origin in children's play developed from sand-play, sand-tray and drama therapy. Butté and Hoo suggest the Small World technique offers a helpful view of distancing when emotions may be overwhelming [31]. This technique will provide Maryna with aesthetic distance, as she had mentioned at the start how troubled she felt on her own in her last support group.

The action method of the Small World technique requires small objects being placed on a plain background, creating a scene with objects that reflect the supervisory enquiry. There is an element of sociometry that enables us to observe a quantitative method of measuring social relationships. The Small World offers Maryna much-needed time to reflect. Using the Seven-Eyed model of supervision and the Double Matrix, I invite Maryna to explore her area of concern. We formulate the question based on the information she provided, about her feelings of being inadequate in managing the support group. The supervision questions arise in the early engaging stages of check-in. Although Maryna's English is not fluent, we communicate adequately, and she can make herself understood to me.

The vignette describes the unfolding of the Small World technique with Maryna: a chance to unpack her thinking and feeling around her work. We can explore further why she struggled to hold the last session alone when normally she would have been in a co-supporting role. Maryna spoke about feeling 'helpless' and in a 'hopeless situation' where transference and counter-transference feelings were held in the frame, provoking somatic responses during supervision.

Their trauma touched her vulnerability – a process otherwise known as secondary trauma. The supervisory question was "Why was it so difficult to hold this group"? From the start, as Maryna began presenting her work, she addressed her difficulties in holding the group as she would normally have been co-facilitating this work but she was left holding the group while her colleague was on leave. We can see that Maryna felt the burden, fear and horror that were deeply embodied. There was a clear somatic reaction. In this case study, we see how Maryna's s focus on her group overrides her self-focus as she becomes overwhelmed with empathy for the Ukrainian support workers. I listened while I attuned to her kinaesthetically. I saw her breathing change and her voice became more fragmented and her face redden. The physiological changes were clear. I could see a wave of anxiety consuming her while she struggled to string words together. In this instant, her English went into abeyance.

My intervention at this moment came about through my discomfort in feeling into my own somatic counter transference in observing Maryna as she struggled to communicate via non-verbal cues. Watching her sympathetic nervous system deregulate was challenging. Exploring my own body countertransference while watching Maryna was uncomfortable. In this somatic resonance, I felt a need to pause, offering her a moment to step back, to self-regulate. Emotional distance from the enacted group experience enabled Maryna to let go for a moment. Holding Maryna as the safe and trusted other, as supervisor, I offered a moment to co-regulate her physiological state. She was soon able to self-regulate. My aim was to project a positive and supportive tone to help her regulate her autonomic state. Ideally, the "other" person projects positive cues through prosodic voice, warm welcoming facial expressions, and gestures of accessibility [27]. I offered support by holding via my words, tone of voice, and breathing.

I believe the intervention of naming what Maryna was holding emotionally enabled her to carry on as it gave her the chance to reflect in action (RIA) [7], [10]. From the start, it was clearly too much for Maryna to hold the group on her own. She was overloaded emotionally. This gave me a moment to stop too; to breathe and notice how my body felt and to create more safety for Maryna and co-regulate before proceeding further.

Maryna took time to gather material for the Small World technique where, step-by-step, she selected objects that represented people and feelings. With the Double Matrix, we not only identify a supervision question, but we also engage in identifying the Eyes [10]. Eye 7 captures the wider context of the war in Ukraine. The content of what and how the session seen in Eyes 1 and 2 were not explored in action. The focus of Maryna's emotions is stirred in action during Eye 3 and 4 explorations; here the relationship between her and the support group is the main focus.

## *UNFOLDING AND MAKING SENSE OF THE SMALL WORLD WITH MARYNA DURING THE CREATIVE ACTIVE METHOD*

The use of objects opens up a world of metaphor which offers powerful tools for us to consider and work with. Seven objects were used by Maryna: a towel, a purple soft toy, a cork, a stone, a pencil sharpener, bubbles and a candle.

*Figure 1.* Maryna's Small World.

**First**, a yellow towel was placed to create the background: an appropriate color since it is one of the two colors of the Ukrainian national flag. The spongy texture of the towel didn't provide a firm foundation for the objects as they kept falling. When the supervisee started setting up her Small World, the process looked unstable and messy. Things were being placed on the edges of the towel which were untidy and the first time an item was placed it fell, lacking a solid base. I noticed Maryna looked uncomfortable while we were exploring her supervisory question. It was a moment to offer reflection and to touch into her embodied experience, enabling her feelings to surface. This gave Maryna some reflection to look at the parallel process in what was being set up, and to see how the lack of a strong foundation was being played out.

**Second,** the purple soft toy represents the support group of volunteers. The supervisee described them as 'angels' "because of the work they are doing on the front line in helping get people out of the war-damaged zones, alive and dead". When Maryna spoke from the position of the angels, she identified what they experienced. "They drink a lot to cope and are unable to support themselves emotionally (we had already talked about the amount of alcohol the support group was consuming as a coping mechanism). In Maryna's Small World, the angel object kept falling as if it was drunk, exhausted and unstable. It simply collapsed in 'somatic dizziness' (as described later by a member of the group). Getting the angel to stand up straight required persistence and effort.

**Third**, the supervisee placed the cork as the next object to represent herself: a bottle stop to prevent liquid from spilling out. In metaphorical terms, this liquid could be emotion or blood. Placing her finger on the cork, Maryna explored how she is "trying to keep everything contained" in an effort of "having to hold everything in". Lack of sleep and this struggle to cope created an unhealthy environment amid the damage, violence and trauma of war. Volunteers struggle to sleep. The violence they are exposed to creates PTSD.

I made a significant slip in referring to the cork as a 'corkscrew', something that was 'screwed' without an opening counterpart (the colleague who was on leave). This remark was also later observed by another member of the supervision group. Even the cork struggled to find solid ground to stand on.

**Fourth**, the stone represented her feelings -- hard and difficult to penetrate (as if frozen in fear). It symbolized the hardness and coldness of what was present for the supervisee in her group, where it was difficult to feel anything other than cold sadness.

**Fifth,** the pencil sharpener (a red, angry bird figure) symbolised the war and the enemy soldiers responsible for attacks and killings destroying families.

**Sixth,** bubbles reveal two emotions. They bring lightness by trying to make troubles burst and disappear. In this view, they offer light relief and temporary distraction. They also represent the bubbling of emotion, or more specifically the "overwhelming problems" that are "bubbling over".

**Seventh, the candle** symbolizes restoration during the Small World process. Placed behind the cork, it offered light, presence and support. This seemed to be **i**mportant and something that has become a repeated symbol for Maryna, who reflects how light gives her the resource to carry on, signifying hope, love, warmth, clarity and support. The feeling seems deep, as I see her general demeanour soften. As supervision with Maryna unfolded, themes such as war, violence and destruction were repeatedly identified. The supervisee needed time to self-regulate when presenting such material.

## *EYE 6 SUPERVISOR'S COUNTERTRANSFERENCE*

The yellow towel was not easy to work with, in the same way that the group my supervisee presented wasn't easy to work with. I struggled in watching Maryna, while setting up, just as she struggled to hold her support group on her own. The sensations in my body helped me to locate and track the level of anxiety present. These felt sensations enabled me to respond, to pause and find time to co-regulate.

When I first noticed the angel, my attention wasn't focused on the angel; I saw an angry monster instead. Then, as I adjusted my vision, I saw the angel. Seeing a monster initially in the form of the support workers gave me a chance to experience something horrific that was being enacted and presented in supervision. In my countertransference, an Eye 6 focus took me to the other darker side of the angels/support group workers. The monster represented my own countertransference feelings and that of the fear that the support workers were experiencing. Their trauma and coping mechanisms, presented as drunken behavior and lack of sleep, enabled me to feel what Maryna touched and embodied at the start of the creative action method. I could also imagine how the sensation of blowing soap bubbles could make one feel that things disappear like magic. The bubbles provoked feelings of dissociation but also dream-like sensations in me: opposites reflected in the angel and monster.

## *FINAL REFLECTIONS ON MARYNA'S SMALL WORLD*

Once the creative method of the Small World was fully explored, Maryna cleared away the objects to make time for self- reflection. We discussed the importance of self-care, where insights are shared and reflected. The Double Matrix offers a framework to arrive with my supervisee at her destination. Working through the process step-by-step is like going through the liminal space and seeing the situation in a new and different light.

Why was it difficult to hold the group? On the one hand, there was a realization that it was too much to hold all these emotions - especially alone. Holding the emotions of the support workers must have touched deep fear in Maryna. There are limitations to what can be held at one time, especially in war. Processing in action with each small prop gave Maryna the time she needed to reflect. When Maryna placed her finger in the direction of the candle, she was reflecting in action. Her body realized that -- simply by showing up -- she offers this group hope and support, and this in itself is enough. This type of creative supervision offers an effective aspect of personal resourcing and support that has been acknowledged by the supervisee subsequently in moments of collaboration. Staying relevant to the question while using the methods purposefully can help create a mutual mental space of ease and transformation [6, 7, 10].

While offering Maryna a chance to reflect in action (RIA), she was able to tune into her embodied response. The dialogue between us enabled me to offer reflection and support her process step-by-step and enable creative resonance with the Small World technique. The action point for Maryna was symbolized by the candle, where simply showing up offers support and hope. In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl describes hope as a fundamental instrument of survival for concentration camp inmates during the Second World War [32]. The stone can be seen to hold somatic resonance for Maryna - of frozen fear and the difficulties of communicating her emotions. Maryna offers warmth, support and light and this knowledge gives her a renewed sense of optimism that restores her vitality.

## *GROUP COLLABORATION*

Bringing in the other members of the supervision group opened up the collective collaboration. These important voices are invited, not only to offer support and reflection to Maryna but as a reminder for the group about their own processes and reflections about what it means to work in support of the war in Ukraine. While acknowledging that ownership of supervision material remains with the supervisees, this collaboration enabled everyone in the supervision group to view the many edges, angles, and aspects of the process that may also touch upon their own experiences. They could, thus, carry this knowledge forward into their own work.

### *3.2. CASE TWO: THE 12-YEAR-OLD BOY AND THE SIX-SHAPE STRUCTURE*

"The images that emerge when we spontaneously draw are the language of the unconscious, offering insights into our emotional states. These drawings are capable of 'speaking' when our voice cannot, Jung found, and when it comes to anxiety and stress, working with imagery stored in our brain and connected to our somatic experience has profound results." [21, p.43]

A UK-based Ukrainian psychologist Olha, working with a 12-year-old Ukrainian boy, expresses the difficulties she is faced with during therapy sessions. These take place at school with the boy who is feeling displaced, while living in the home of an English family. The boy is bright; he seems depressed and is struggling to integrate into his life at school. We talk about her feelings of not knowing how best to proceed in therapy. In developing trust in the supervisee and supervisor relationship, we have to be curious about what is going on and tolerate the not-knowing [17]. I offer 6S as a method to explore her feelings and self-doubts.

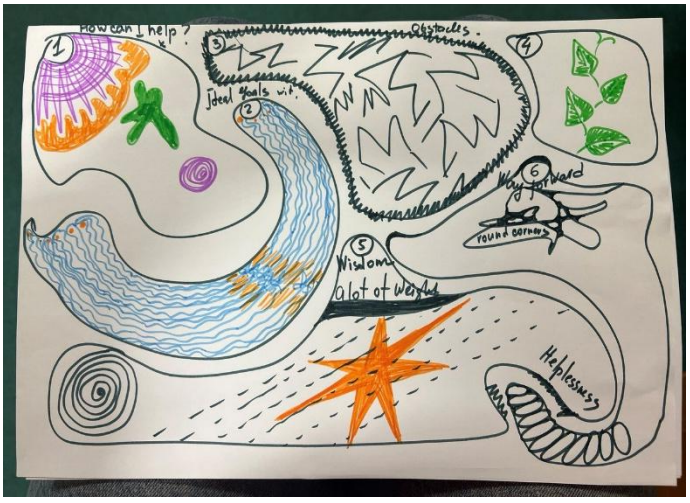


*Figure 2.* Olha's 6S.

The inner world of the supervisee is externalised with images; each shape enables her to focus on one aspect of the supervisory question. The question she brings to supervision is "How can I help my client when I feel so helpless?" – a parallel process that

came up regularly with my supervisees. This exploration offers the supervisee a moment to reflect on her feelings; the body countertransference brings up strong emotions, such as feeling frozen after each session with him. I invite the supervisee to draw six large random sized shapes. When the task is completed and I see that she has filled the paper.

***THE SIX-SHAPE STRUCTURE***

1. Client and relationship to therapist - an important relationship in developing the therapeutic alliance: it's a beautiful coral fish. The boy is bright green. The orange jacket brings more color to his life. That is the therapist.
2. Ideal goals: the flow of water is constricted, there are obstacles in the middle.
3. What are the obstacles? Barbed wire, sharp boundaries, it's helpless, the fear is huge.
4. Exploring my feelings: the leaves represent growth even though I touched elements of fear.
5. What is helping me to get unstuck: wisdom where there is weight -- but there is also a sense of helplessness. In the spiral, you enter but do not know where to move to.
6. The way forwards: keep moving round corners.

The 6S enables my supervisee to bring her emotions to supervision. Her sense of helplessness and her feelings and emotions are explored. As we move through each step of the creative method, colors and images appear to speak to her and open up the therapeutic relationship with her client. As the creative method unfolds, we see the therapist's countertransference feelings emerge. Fear takes the metaphorical form of barbed wire. The creative process enables Olha to unpack her emotions and continue working with her client. It also enables her to resource with the possibility to reflect in action while releasing her fears and self-doubts.

This process in fact raised moments of hope especially in the client-therapist relationship relating to Eye 3 and the bigger picture: an Eye 7 exploration of both therapist and boy having to leave Ukraine and finding themselves in a new culture at the same time. This reflection in action enables Olha to see more clearly how she symbolizes herself as a coral fish.

### *3.3. CASE THREE: ANNA AND THE SOLDIER*

Anna is a Ukrainian-based psychologist and sensorimotor therapist. She has been working with her client, a soldier, for a month. Like many therapists working with soldiers, their weekly sessions take place by telephone. The soldier has been suffering with grief, packed with guilt following an accident where comrades lost their lives. One of the tragic deaths was that of the soldier's best friend. They had been inseparable for 10 years.

The camera is switched off during Anna's therapy sessions with her client, which she feels signifies his not wanting to be seen. We discuss that this may be due to the fact that he feels some shame about, and responsibility for, the accident. Anna does not push him for information, being aware of the possibility for re-trauma; she listens but doesn't ask for details. Rothschild offers a recovery rule that trauma recovery without memory

work is legitimate [28]. We discuss how accounts of the past or descriptions of flashbacks are not in a client's best interest.

The question Anna raised is "how do I let out the air, while slowly reaching his core"? She then explained how psychologists and psychiatrists can medicate patients under hospital conditions (the soldier has a previous history of hospitalisation within mental health facilities). The context in which she is working does not allow for the possibility of dealing with his anger, his trauma and emotions in this way. I also have to remind myself that this is a wartime context where helping professionals are working at their maximum under extremely difficult situations.

While there is a lot of despair for the soldier, there is also hope -- as his wife is expecting their first child. We bring this news into the equation. Although the prospect of being a father is what keeps the soldier going, Anna feels he has a long way to go before he is able to accept his emotion.

## *FRAMEWORK FOR THE EMBODIED REFLECTIVE NARRATIVE (FERN) AS A CREATIVE EMBODIED METHOD*

FERN is a creative method developed by Butté, a dance movement psychotherapist and creative supervisor [8]. It offers a framework for the embodied reflective narrative. The method is laid out in space using ribbons, scarves or anything at hand such as felt-tip pens. FERN offers space to embody and reflect leaving somatic resonance for the supervisee to experience.

I suggest FERN as our creative method. Anna was familiar with FERN and agreed that the method might help her see the way forward. I am conscious that this method will raise an array of strong emotions, yet I know the supervisee has the capacity to explore and the experience to reflect.

Anna and I like to use this method because it enables her to step into the knowing body and reflect from a somatic perspective. A dialogue enables us to work together feeling and sensing into the supervision enquiry. The set-up is described below.

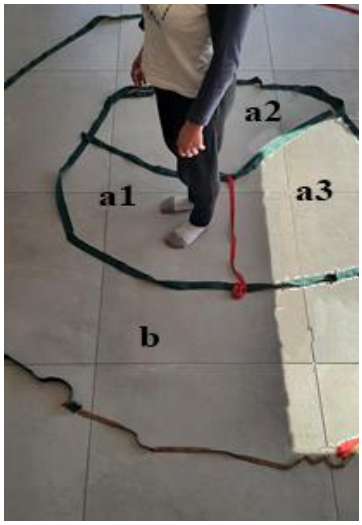


*Figure 3.* Example of FERN
The space is divided in two parts:
a - An inner circle with three spaces:
  a1 - Self (can be aspect of client, other or self).
  a2 - Relationship.
  a3 - Bigger Picture.
b - The outer circle is the Observer/Witness zone.

## *REFLECTING IN ACTION*

Once the background to the supervision enquiry had been established and the framework set up, Anna takes time to feel her way into the different zones while I simply observe. In a sense we both become 'witness' to the supervisory enquiry at the same moment.

Attuning to breath and anchoring into the space helps the supervisee ground; this might also support a degree of self-regulation if needed. In working with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) clients, it can be especially helpful to offer a moment to breathe for the supervisee to settle into the enquiring experience to meet the various strands of this story and to give space for her thinking and feeling.

As Anna begins to feel into this space, I can see that her body begins to move. She steps into the **Observer/Witness** zone (b, see figure 3) placing her hands on her chest. She then feels pain in the chest. "I want to get out," she quickly says. "I need air." Anna then transitions from the Observer zone into the **Self** space (a1); here, she says, "I am him: stubborn, lonely. I know the truth. Nobody understands." She then moves into the **Bigger Picture**. "I can breathe and it's actually a nice feeling." As she steps into the **Relationship** space (a2), she experiences intense sensations. "I want to cry; nobody understands his truth."

**Bigger Picture –** Suggestive of the socio-political context of the war: here it felt light because of emotional distancing between Anna and her client.

**Self –** Suggestive of the client's anger and desire to let things out, but it's a process than needs time.

**Relationship** – Suggestive of all aspects of the soldier's relationships: his wife, the unborn child, the dead friend, the dead soldier's family, the courage to face the family.

**Observer/Witness** – Suggestive of Anna's challenges in working with her client.

There is a level of empathic attunement that I feel as her supervisor. I am able to dialogue with Anna throughout this process, helping her to understand the complex dynamics around the soldier's trauma.

Once the supervisee has spent time in each of the zones, she is able to step out of FERN and clear the objects. This is an important part of the process, during which the supervisee can transition out of intense sensations to a more reflective space of dialogue.

The framework enables Anna to step into different thresholds, to embody and get a sense of how to process with her client. In transitioning from one space to another Anna has gathered some important facts and sees more clearly that her client is still in the early stages of trying to come to terms with the accident and the loss of his friend. His anger is part of his grief. Not pushing the soldier for full disclosure is the right decision for maintaining stability and not re-traumatizing. She believes that she must support him in managing his symptoms and helping him re-establish his life and create a future as a father. The last point seems significant for my supervisee.

She takes from this method the realization that the soldier needs more time. There is a gestation period for him to be able to release his trauma, just as there is a gestation period for his wife prior to the birth of their child. We consider the importance of focusing on trauma recovery, while not recounting the memories [28]. The trauma has happened but is not forgotten. This is part of the recovery stage during which we might attempt the management of symptoms as he re-establishes ordinary life.

In supervision with Anna, choosing FERN as a method of enquiry enables the use of non-verbal, embodied and creative approaches. The supervisee can separate her thoughts, to gain clarity and a sense of what is needed to continue working with her client and holding him in a safe space.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This paper demonstrates how supervisees respond to stressful events in different ways. Emotional regulation, support and coping techniques may be adapted to the larger context of the war. Trauma-informed and somatic sensing strategies adopted by DMTs may be incorporated into creative action methods to supervision. By maintaining emotional regulation, we aim to eliminate maladaptive patterns in supervision through the additional support and groundwork that is needed to hold the foundations of supervision. We must take the wider picture of the war into account and consider the personal impact on our supervisees and the communities in which they are working.

While using embodied creative action methods, the group touched different aspects of vulnerability. Being able to work with their feelings, doubts and uncertainties are valuable aspects of creative supervision that need to be handled with care and sensitivity. Yet verbalizing and bringing these to light and in sharing the more vulnerable parts of clinical experience has strengthened their skills as health-care workers, therapists and psychologists. With exposure to the vulnerable, we meet the authentic self, at times with sadness, in darkness and touching lonely places as well as sharing growth, improving training and acquiring areas of expertise. Being able to meet each other online, the supervision group was able to sustain resilience. Maintaining humane connections and witnessing each other's creative processes has brought about clinical wisdom and resilience. Self-care and resourcing are also important to address in supervision.

Supervision is a collaborative endeavor; furthermore when we collaborate, we are opening up to multiple perspectives. This joint exploration generates new understanding and new capacities [33]. While acknowledging that ownership of supervision material remains with the supervisees, this collaboration enables supervisees to view the many perspectives, edges, angles and aspects of the process. When moments of synthesis in supervision emerge, everyone can learn and benefit. We are reminded by Dimino that "[i]f handled well – with compassion and humility – it enables a transformative experience where emotional as well as intellectual understanding is gained" [33 p.33], [34].

This group has stated how resourceful it has been to be able to process their creativity while working with PTDS clients. Other positive outcomes reveal enhanced self-expression and improved self-confidence, stress reduction, and positive relationships found within the supervision group. Increased awareness, purpose, mindfulness, positive relationships and self-care help promote resilience.

Working with the body to self-regulate and to restore balance helps to create a sense of safety and develop a safe holding container. Establishing these foundations through attunement and establishing trust has been fundamental in developing resilience during supervision. These qualitative insights offer a rich understanding of the experiential dimensions of DMT's impact on emotional regulation.

Maintaining clarity, respecting the methods and hygiene around setting up of creative methods and clearing the spaces afterwards is an important part of the supervisory process [6, 7, 8]. Staying relevant to the question while using the method purposefully can help create a mutual mental space of ease and transformation [7].

The Ukrainian supervision group continues to gather online, via Zoom, in Ukraine and five different European countries: Grece, the UK, Germany. Portugal and myself in France. Towards the end of supervision, everyone is invited to participate in creative collaboration by offering their observations. Creative, embodied methods offer moments for resourcing, reflection and support as well as a means of checking self-regulation in supervision.

In times of war, maintaining a balance between vulnerability and resilience, we need to implement more layers of self-care to prevent burnout and to offer trauma-informed supervision in deployed military settings [35]. There is still more research needed to sharpen our focus and establish how to best manage the Trauma Resilience Model and Trauma-Informed Supervision Model within creative embodied supervision.

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