

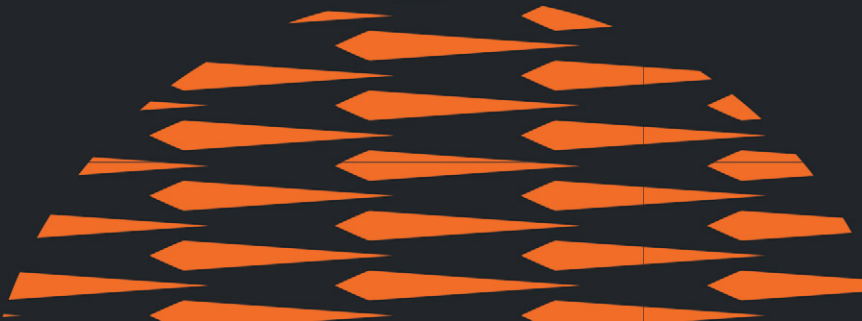


EMERALD POINTS

SUPERVISION FOR THE SOCIAL SERVICE PROFESSIONS

Perspectives From South Africa

**TEBOGO MOROKANE
RIKA SWANZEN**



SUPERVISION FOR THE SOCIAL SERVICE PROFESSIONS

The Republic of South Africa is a world leader in the professional recognition of three foundational professions that work across the social service sector of this great nation with its diverse regional histories still emerging from the apartheid era. In less than a decade, Child and Youth Care has been formally recognised as a Social Service profession (2014), followed by the recognition of Social Work practice specialties (2019) and then Community Development practitioners (pending). This ground-breaking volume focuses attention on the use and development of professional supervision as a foundational requirement for those seeking quality outcomes across the complex, social services sector of this diverse multicultural nation. This volume is 'a must read' for all South Africans in training and working professionally across the complex and changing population of a country challenged by rural-urban migration. This volume on professional supervision of those working across the social service sector helps to address challenges with work-related stress and burnout. It is also recommended for those who shape and implement government social policy across the social service sector. Get this volume as an e-book and review it frequently on your tablet or smartphone!

—*Leon C. Fulcher*, MSW, PhD,
International Child & Youth Care Consultant:
TransformAction, Tuai – Wairoa, New Zealand

This ambitious project, describing the supervision dynamics and processes of several analogous, but distinct professional endeavours, specifically attuned to a South African context, is quite impressive.

Employing a comprehensive bibliography, practical descriptions of supervisory situations and useful charts, diagrams and comparisons, the authors have created a major resource for the social service sector.

This book will be a heavy read for the practicing professional but is a powerful tool for developing organisational direction for supervision models, staff development efforts and for mentors of supervisors.

This book should influence agencies across several social service professions in South Africa and elsewhere as they focus on this critical component of practice.

—*Jack Phelan*, professor emeritus, MacEwan University,
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

‘Supervision for the Social Service Professions: Perspectives from South Africa’, by Dr Rika Swanzen and Mrs Tebogo Morokane is a wonderfully comprehensive look at the scope and impact of supervision in the helping professions. The book considers supervision from many different angles. It lays out several conceptual approaches and explores different models of supervision. I found the review of many different definitions of supervision presented by a range of other professionals to be particularly useful. The book does an excellent job of expanding on the definitions, concepts and models of supervision to show how they can be applied practically. The authors discuss the potential impact on supervisors, supervisees, agencies, clients and the overall quality of services. I believe that would make this book relevant for people in many different roles and at many different experience levels in our field.

I am one who has many years of experience in the field, has written extensively on supervision myself and I am currently actively facilitating training on supervision in the United States and internationally. From my perspective, an excellent book should, of course, provide a lot of knowledge. However, I believe the most important impact of a book is that it elicits a great deal of reflection and critical thinking for the reader. As I was reading the book, I found myself getting more and more engrossed in digesting the historical development of supervision and how this history helps expand my own current knowledge and understanding of supervision. I found the breakdown of how supervision can be impacted by the physical, interpersonal, cultural and psychological environment in which it is practiced placed an excellent perspective on the many nuances that are important for supervisors to assess and consider when practicing supervision. In a number of places, I found myself stepping back and looking at supervision from the perspective of the supervisee in a different way. Other times, my thinking moved towards viewing supervision in a different way from the perspective of a Senior Manager in an organisation.

I recommend this book highly. The authors have done an exceptional job of presenting a conceptual overview of supervision while bringing it smoothly and efficiently to very relevant practice levels.

—*Frank Delano*, LMSW, President, Professional
Package Consulting, Inc., Piermont, New York, USA

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SUPERVISION FOR THE SOCIAL SERVICE PROFESSIONS

Perspectives From South Africa

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The book is dedicated to Ms Morokane (nee' Moeketsi) families, in particular her husband and their children Neo and Olerato. With sincere gratitude and the overwhelming support during our grief and my difficult trials, you are dear to me and will remember the efforts placed for this amazing book. To Rebecca

Tshose and other sisters, you were my beacon of hope; your words of encouragement are never lost, and my mom and dad who rest in eternal peace.

Dr Swanzen equally expresses her immense appreciation for the unwavering support by her husband Bernie and her sons Jared and Noell for sharing their mother's attention, especially during the time in which they were adding our precious daughters-in-law to our family. To her marvellous mother Minnie for her constant prayers and comfort, and my stepdad Dawie for his patience with the time we take. As well as the extended Oosthuizen's for the laughs and voting!

We also wish to credit our friends and colleagues who offered encouragement during the process. And last but not least, we are thankful to our Heavenly Father for insight and strength during this journey, which enabled this seeming unlikely co-author combination to turn into a well-oiled writing process.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CD	Community Development
CDP	Community Development Practitioner
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CYC	Child and Youth Care
CYCW	Child and Youth Care Worker
IDM	Integrated Development Model
IDP	Individual Development Plan
NACCW	National Association of Child Care Workers
NASW	National Association of Social Workers
NDSD	National Department of Social Development
SA	South Africa
SACSSP	South African Council for Social Service Professions
SDA	Social Development Approach
SF	Supervision Framework
SNA	Social Network Analysis
SSP	Social Service Profession
SSPs	Social Service Professions
SW	Social Work
SWA	Supervisory Working Alliance

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FOREWORD

For more than a decade, the social service professions have laboured to determine the best strategy to manage supervision. Initially, the National Department of Social Development developed the Supervision Framework for the Social Work Profession (2012) and has since sought to develop a supervision policy for the social service professions. *Supervision for the Social Service Professions: Perspectives from South Africa* is an answer to the long impasse to developing a single supervision policy for the social service professions in South Africa.

This book is undoubtedly a very special contribution and well timed. Current developments in the practicing of child and youth care work, community development and social work are such that social service practitioners are yearning to implement structured supervision guided by competent, skilled and knowledgeable supervisors. The authors present a comprehensive book outlining the fundamentals of supervision, thus positioning supervision as a crucial function to social service organisations as well as managers and practitioners alike.

As an experienced social work professional and a public service manager, one gained knowledge that professional supervision is a critical component of social service practice. The quality and efficacy of supervision can be measured by the application of types and models, skills and techniques and demonstration of attributes and roles of both supervisor and supervisee. The authors give a research-based exposition of these fundamentals of supervision. Professional supervision is therefore about time management and maximising the best moment to provide the necessary development and support to supervisees. Similarly, it is about being involved with supervisees' performance, thus ensuring readiness to adapt and provide prompt responses on any aspect of practice or provision of services. A competent and skilled supervisor knows their role within the organisation and how to absorb pressures from management and supervisees. The book gives an analysis of current work to inform South African social service perspectives on professional supervision. This is a developmental tool for aspiring and current social service supervisors.

Supervision for the Social Service Professions: Perspectives from South Africa provides a coherent, harmonised and a different lens to professional supervision. It succeeds in its elucidation of a person-centred supervision, managed through the supervisor's character, knowledge and ability to perform the function and related processes beneficial to management and supervisees; taking accountability for supervisory actions while also giving attention to and raising awareness about the wider professional and ecologically diverse contexts of supervision.

By its nature, supervision requires being hands on with the supervisee to the extent that one becomes the advocate of their work, empowers and encourages others to make a difference. Every supervisor endeavours to see supervisees succeed and will therefore do everything to develop their potential and recognise their accomplishment. The authors demonstrate that mentorship and coaching are inherent to supervision. Whether structured or unstructured, mentorship and coaching are valuable for both the supervisor and supervisee roles.

The book envisions supervision within organisations characterised by workforce cultural and diversity dimensions as contemporary challenges for the social service supervision. Culturally sensitive supervision gives consideration to the individual supervisee, organisational and broader societal cultures affecting social service practice and the supervision function. Similarly, the authors conceive supervisors must have the knowledge and skills to deal with general dimensions of diversity.

The outcomes of research undertaken in writing the book empower the reader with the knowledge base of supervision, which is relevant across various social service professions. The book closes the gap on the current single profession approach to supervision by displaying content which any social service professional can identify with. It is an achievement for the authors to release a product which streamlines supervision across the social service professions; it is a meaningful contribution for effective management of social service professionals.

The best time to be a social service supervisor is now. The current reality is that social service supervision remains key towards the overall practicing of social work, child and youth care work and community development practice. *Supervision for the Social Service Professions: Perspectives from South Africa* is a critical influence for a pathway from generic supervision to specialist supervision for the social service professions. It assists in the development of a

competency framework for supervision. This is surely every social service manager, supervisor and professional's desk reference book.

Galeboe AG Rapoo

Director

Recruitment and Retention Programmes for Social Service Practitioners

National Department of Social Development

South Africa

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PREFACE

Over a couple of decades, the authors of this book gained experience in various social services settings, from government, community development, residential care and the non-profit civil society sector. In most of these settings, they served in senior and supervisory roles and were involved in various capacities with consultation on the supervision framework for social service professions. Appreciating this process and valuing the contributions of various authors we learnt from, we recognised the need for a contextualised compilation of relevant supervision practices. Following a multi-year scoping review of the most recognised and impactful literature sources on supervision for helping professions, this book brings together principles, types, roles and techniques that are contextualised in a South African context. The impactful resources incapsulated in this book reflect content for all three of the social service professions recognised in South Africa, while retaining relevance to an international audience through the use of best practices from various countries. From the authors' diverse contexts, they contributed to this book from their own knowledge generated, from both the practitioner/professional and academic/researcher side. They have not only seen the need for a certain combination of supervisor information for training but also experienced the inequity of a supervisory focus across the three recognised social service professions, for which they wanted to provide an initial bridge. The authors also noted progressive policies and national frameworks that influence supervision practices, guiding these practices in order to ensure quality services are delivered by competent and supported professionals. The authors wrote with the intention that each chapter will be relevant to the practicing supervisor, the social service professional, student and researcher. It is therefore their hope that this book will become a functional and popular reference to address supervision challenges in South Africa, especially for relevance to those exploring indigenous solutions to social service practice.

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ROOTS OF PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT OF SUPERVISION

Social services in South Africa (SA) is finding itself in an important period of development. Towards the end of 2014, the regulations for registration of child and youth care (CYC) workers were signed by the then Minister of Social Development, with 2019 seeing the approval of specialities in social work (SW) by the fourth SA Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). At the time of writing this book, a lot of groundwork has been done to inaugurate the first professional board for community development (CD) practitioners. At the core of all the changes lies the professional and quality delivery of services to vulnerable populations. This book will share the important changes that occurred in the social services sector and provide critically needed clarifications on the concepts, elements, stages, skills and functions of supervision in the sector.

Over decades, supervision has been defined by various disciplines, each emphasising different aspects thereof. The diverse organisational space of the offices delivering social services also shapes the context in which supervision needs to occur, which is different to the way general management is understood in a corporate environment. Patel (2019) confirms this by highlighting that public benefit organisations or government departments delivering social services find business management principles contrary to the mission of social development. As part of creating public value, the work of these organisations is driven by the vision of the society South Africans want to achieve. Their approaches are multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary, they include service users in decision-making, they recognise the value of professionals and volunteers, they emphasise self-direction of staff and they create a platform for managers and

supervisors that allows them to be open to participatory and enabling leadership styles that require greater flexibility and responsiveness (Patel, 2019).

Ncube (2019, p. 31) notes that ‘supervision has largely remained alienated from the developmental approach mandated in the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997); which have compounded problems for effective implementation of social welfare services’. Ncube did, however, find that not all practitioners appreciate the merits of the *social development approach* (SDA) in supervision and that supervision in SW does not incorporate elements of this approach (Ncube, 2019). Of value is that principles of the SDA, which includes ‘social justice, humanness (*ubuntu*), democracy and participation, equality, non-discrimination and reconciliation’, fit well within the supervision of social service delivery (Ncube, 2019, p. 35). Another drive in establishing an important context for supervision in social services is the inclusion of *Eco-metrics*, which is based on the equally strong theoretical foundation of *person-in-environment* (ecological model) in the social service professions (SSPs). Since all the SSPs need to have their practicing, teaching or studying members registered with the SACSSP, they are collectively referred to as social service practitioners and defined by the policy as ‘[a]ny person registered or who is studying toward practicing a social service profession or a social service occupation. The generic term covers both professionals and people practicing an occupation’ (Department of Social Development, 2017, p. 9).

Since a lack of coherent models and discrete procedures lead to weak practice, the use of evidence-based practice contributes to more structured and guided learning (Roestenburg, 2019). Practices that are critical for social service agencies to master are as follows: personal skills required by staff, challenging one’s own assumptions as practitioners, having a shared vision of desired results, learning through team dialogue and the importance of using a systems view of the change process (Patel, 2019). To bridge the micro-macro divide, ‘[a] broader understanding of the service user system (individuals, families, sub-groups and communities) as well as the stakeholders (institutions) would strategically position the supervisor and supervisee as change agents for bringing about structural changes’ (Ncube, 2019, p. 39). This viewpoint complements the focus of all three SSPs, as will be highlighted in Chapter 2, and reiterates the need for contextualising supervision, a focus receiving attention in Chapter 7.

Jacques (2019) states that a number of strategies aimed at improving performance management systems in several African states appeared to have been unsuccessful and that increased emphasis must be placed on professional supervision at every level in the social service organisation. ‘Social service organisations can support best practice (their ultimate goal) through flexible,

pragmatic and relevant policies and procedures but the most significant and direct influence is, arguably, the supervisory relationship. ... the issue of power disparity requires careful management' (Jacques, 2019, p. 195). Although the scope of this book is not to discuss the political realities of SA in depth nor any one theoretical approach, the combination of contextual factors will be highlighted throughout the book as they appear to influence supervision. This chapter clarifies the concepts that define professional supervision by highlighting why this function is so important in the social services, explores its origins to understand the foundations it is built on and provides an overview of the general approaches to and functions of supervision. More detail on the types of supervision, the scope within which it is practiced and the related skills and techniques for both the supervisor and the supervisee will follow in later chapters.

1.2 REFINING THE DEFINITION OF SUPERVISION

Supervision is derived from the Latin words 'super' meaning 'over' and 'videre' meaning 'see' (van Wyk & Smith, 1996), defining it in its most basic form as 'overseer' (Hunter, 2016). Supervision is defined as a method of using a continuous relationship to improve professional competence, the support of professional development, improve accountability to the public and improve outcomes for service users (Cheon et al., 2009; Grant et al., 2012). Brown and Bourne (2002) highlight the importance of supervision to ensure and enable – to ensure policy is implemented and to care and empower. They also indicate that supervision can be individual or collective, meaning that while the individual is the focus of the supervision process, the supervisor should also consider the team context in which functions are executed (Brown & Bourne, 2002). Supervision is an important tool in the profession, and it involves a reciprocal relationship between a supervisor and supervisee, built on the creative blend of functions to ensure the highest quality services are delivered to the client while the supervisor serves as 'in-between' to ensure workforce management functions and organisational policies are upheld (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014; van Wyk & Smith, 1996). Supervision is also described as indirect service because of the indirect contact the supervisor has with the client through the supervisee (Kadushin & Harkness, 2014) or as 'therapy, one step removed; and a process parallel to [SW] practice' (Brashears, 1995, p. 692).

The NACCW (1998 in Scott, 2009, p. 64) defines supervision in CYC as 'a goal directed contractual, interpersonal relationship which has jurisdiction over

all aspects of a supervisee's job responsibilities, performance and organisational interpersonal functioning'.

'Supervisors have been identified as teachers, enablers, consultants, and managers' (Brashears, 1995, p. 692), and as therapists and even directors, but later acknowledged as catalysts for 'facilitation, professional development, staff socialization and services delivery' (Caras & Sandu, 2014, p. 77). Historically, supervision was seen as *vertical* (hierarchical relationship with supervisor as expert) or *horizontal* (non-hierarchical relationship based on peer consultancy) and either offered individually or through group sessions (Basa, 2019). By 2001, this extended to *triadic supervision* where mentoring is done with one supervisor and two supervisees (Basa, 2019). According to Tsui (2005), the three approaches used to define supervision in professions like SWare *normative* (using a standard or ideals), *empirical* (using what supervisors actually do) and *pragmatic* (focusing on action guidelines instead of a formal definition).

Bernard and Goodyear (2014) consider supervision an intervention provided by a senior member of a profession to a junior colleague, who is typically of the same profession. This relationship (Bernard & Goodyear, 2014, pp. 9–13):

- Is evaluative and hierarchical, meaning the evaluative function provides a tool for interpersonal influence. This function that differentiates between supervision and counselling or therapy creates a more hierarchical relationship, which requires sensitivity to differences in terms of gender and ethnicity.
- Extends over time and therefore separates it from the functions of training and consultation. Where teaching is driven by curriculum outcomes, supervision is driven by the needs of the supervisee and their clients.
- Has the simultaneous purpose of:
 - enhancing the professional functioning of the more junior colleague;
 - monitoring the quality of professional services offered to the client;
 - serving as gatekeeper for the particular profession the supervisee seeks to enter.

An opinion by Botha (2002 in Engelbrecht, 2012), not shared by all, is that supervision should be terminated as soon as possible and replaced by a consulting relationship. With coaching supervision emerging as a relatively

new term, the differences between coaching, mentoring and supervision will receive attention in Chapter 8. Interestingly, van Wyk and Smith (1996, p. 92) note that the definitions they used for physiotherapy were based on those of the SW profession 'as they appear to be the only group of health professionals who have developed a scientific body of knowledge on supervision'. This begs the question why supervision is not a mandatory function in all social service organisations. Supervision is an essential element that differentiates a profession from an occupation (Caras & Sandu, 2014). As alluded to by Engelbrecht (2019a), international texts reference clinical contexts, differentiating it from managerial supervision, which has performance norms and compliance at its core. This differentiation points to the interactional process in a positive relationship, which is more attuned to the social development context social workers follow (Engelbrecht, 2019a). Although psychologists also use a relational context and reflection in supervision, they tend to refer more to clinical supervision. Gray (2010b) agrees that clinical supervision is different to supervision in social care but that they have common origins.

Another common use for the term supervisor is found in postgraduate studies where supervisors with the relevant qualifications and experience are allocated to a student to guide them through the research process. In education, this is also referred to as *instructional supervision*, which is the process of working with educators (professionals) in a collegial relationship, to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in schools (Brock et al., 2021). In such cases, the supervisor serves as a bridge that sustains efforts to achieve professional objectives (Brock et al., 2021). Tsui (2005) agrees that the difference between student and staff supervision centre on its purpose, activities, required skills, the analysis of current practice (students) versus maintenance and enhancement of services (staff), an abstract versus concrete approach to human service and consensus versus authority-based decision-making processes.

Beddoe and Davys (2016) looked at three different *lenses of supervision*, namely the personal survival, professional development and quality assurance lens. While risk and resilience in social service delivery are considered in the first lens, the professional development lens is seen as a career-long process where skills for critically reflective practice are enhanced (Beddoe & Davys, 2016). The use of 'professional' in describing supervision allows for the refinement of supervision for the SSPs. Chang (2013)'s definition of supervision confirms the ethical, ecological and relational context within which SSPs operate. Hawkins and McMahon (2020, p. 3) add to this by describing supervision as 'a joint endeavour in which a practitioner, with the help of the supervisor, attends to themselves as part of their client-practitioner

relationships and the wider systemic and ecological context, and by so doing improves the quality of their work, transforms their client relationships, continuously develops themselves, their practice and the wider profession’.

The complexity of the supervision process beyond this definition is acknowledged and forms part of the motivation behind this book, which focuses on the detail of the full supervision process. Considering the various types of supervision that will be unpacked in Chapter 2, and for the purpose of this book, the term ‘professional supervision’ is used in general to refer to supervision as a professional council or board requirement (by social service professionals), distinguishing it from research, managerial and clinical supervision.

1.3 THE CRITICAL NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION

Gray (2010b) proposes that supervision in social care be viewed as a crucial forum for dialogue, especially as meeting ground for the professional and the organisation, as opposed to the marginalisation of managerialism. Management conflicts with supervision if it is not developmental and focused on enabling learning (Gray, 2010b). Supervision is needed to (Gray, 2010b, p. 51):

- manage cases and make decisions;
- manage personal and professional development;
- integrate training and coaching;
- manage workload;
- manage career development;
- manage the emotional impact of the work;
- reflect on practice and improve performance;
- manage projects and delegate;
- inform about and discuss change;
- contribute to service development.

Supervision has also been found to improve worker satisfaction and retention (Wilkins et al., 2018). When competency-based supervision is practiced, a structure for evidence-based inquiry is established (Falender et al., 2014).

Staffing challenges, like high turnover, recruitment and retention problems, pay disputes, poor working conditions and chronic absences, undermine the quality of service-delivery. As such, a sharper focus has been placed on *safe staffing* in countries like the United Kingdom (McFadden et al., 2024). Kaslow et al. (2012) add that inconsistency exist in the supervision competence of faculty staff in a number of academic and practice settings in the United States because of the evolving standards of practice and the shortage in transformational leadership to enact a culture change. Hunter (2016) specifically highlights the challenges of social workers in the South African child protection system, which include high workload, dangerous working environments, lack of resources, the emotional impact of complex work, professional image, low and unstable salaries in the non-government sector and systemic issues like poverty, violence and substance abuse.

Prior to the turn of the millennium, significant resources were made available to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic in SA, which overwhelmed the social welfare system as demands for services increased (Hunter, 2016). A study published in 2012 by Moloi (Hunter, 2016) shows that of the 16,740 social workers registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) then, 45% were not practising social workers, meaning that the ratio of social workers to the population in Gauteng was 1:5,806. The supervision framework (SF) (discussed in Chapter 6) is expected to counter the brain drain and assist an overwhelmed and potentially failing profession through the renewed use of supervision services (Hunter, 2016). Evidence suggests that supervision helps to reduce staff turnover, and it is strongly linked to the supervisee's perception of the support received from the organisation (Carpenter et al., 2012), a critical need for the insufficient SW force countries like SA faces.

'Even with a wide variety of ways of renewing oneself, most people in the helping professions are stressed at some time during their careers. We become stressed when we absorb more disturbance, distress and dis-ease from our clients, patients or our work settings than we are able to process. . . . Stress that is not resolved or discharged stays within the body and can emerge as physical, mental or emotional symptoms. . . . It is chronic stress that is of concern, which saps our energy, creativity, and ability to be open to learning' (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020, p. 26). The supervisor should be aware of physical (i.e. insomnia, weight change, exhaustion, substance misuse, body tension and pain) and behavioural (i.e. isolation, indecisiveness, self-critical, inertia, resistance to innovation and change, irritability) signs of stress (Brown & Bourne, 2002).

Typical stressors that can be acting on the supervisee include those from their (Brown & Bourne, 2002, p. 108):

- personal life (like illness, bereavement, financial difficulties or abuse);
- practice (like assault by a client, racism, sexism or threats of violence);
- membership of a team (like harassment, scapegoating, isolation or lack of appreciation);
- contract with the employer (like reorganisation, competition for promotion or redundancies).

Each stressor needs to be reviewed in terms of how they are affecting the supervisee and how they are being managed (Brown & Bourne, 2002). Social workers, and by extension the other SSPs working in similar settings, are considered to be at an above-average risk of burnout (Söderfeldt et al., 1995). Common *signs of burnout* include negative emotions that is beyond the normal responses to everyday occurrences, including social withdrawal and feeling depleted and a loss of enthusiasm (Potter, 1998). *Emotional exhaustion* has been equated with alienation and is seen as a coping mechanism against stress (Söderfeldt et al., 1995). It is important to recognise that burnout is the result of the supervisee's professional's tenacity, dedication and noble qualities, like a strong sense of responsibility (Potter, 1998). Brown and Bourne (2002) and Potter (1998) identified various stages or progressive signs of *professional burnout*:

- *Initial enthusiasm* that may lead to indiscriminate volunteering that can result in unbalanced workloads and resentment from other staff for feeling exposed by the new worker's energy.
- *Premature routinisation* can occur when the new worker's hopes start to become unobtainable, the work may start to feel less exciting. At this point, service users may start to be talked about less as people and more as tasks. Just to get through expected tasks, a worker can accept a minimal return from their work.
- *Physical, mental and emotional exhaustion* can be the result of having too much responsibility, with little authority to execute, or an unmanageable schedule, leading to a comatose surrender at home in the evenings. An otherwise thorough professional can start to look for shortcuts, which starts to gnaw at their self-esteem.