

A framework for looking at how you relate with your students: Getting the balance right

To create a productive relationship requires having some idea of what one might look like, what aspects are most important and why. An articulated framework can be reflected on critically and shared with others.

The challenge for supervisors is to get the balance right between 'benign neglect' and 'taking over'. This demands a flexible approach to sustaining an effective relationship, and involves judging when to be more or less directive, consultative and/or task-focused as described below on the dimensions of empowerment, effective listening and task/relationship focus.

Balancing		
Empowerment		
I disempower myself: withdraw, become more passive; rely too much on the other to take the initiative; or provide the impetus - 'laissez faire'.	Empowered communication: appropriately assertive; not disempowering the other person; actively empowering the other person.	I disempower the other person: being overly directive; controlling; or even coercive.
Effective Listening		
Focus too much on the other person. Listen too much.	Balance attention on myself and other person.	Too preoccupied with my own agenda. Listen too little.
Task vs Relationship		
Focus so much on feelings, needs and the relationship that I lose sight of the task.	Balance between focus on task and the focus on the relationship/process.	Focus so much on the task that I lose sight of feelings, needs and the relationship.
NOTE: Positioning yourself 'in the centre' will involve: 1. Not focusing on ego-issues (taking it personally)	2. An openness to alternative perspectives and new information	3. A collaborative, problem solving mind-set.

(Adapted from materials provided by Geoff Mortimore, CEDAM, ANU.)