“The worst and most stressful aspect of work is the immediate supervisor.”
- unknown

Supervision is work – hard work
- No one does it right “naturally.”
- No one does it right all of the time.

The Value of Good Supervision
- Productivity
- The right work gets done.
- Loyalty
- Longevity
- Respect
- Willingness to go above and beyond
- Trust
- Positive morale
- Team work
- Synergy
- Ability to survive adversity.

Attributes of a good supervisor

Respect
- Be polite and caring.
- Listen, really listen.
- Be honest – always
- Give credit where credit is due - always
- Never correct or reprimand in front of anyone else.
- Never wait until the performance review to discuss something – the sooner you say something, the easier it is.
- Take the time to communicate appropriately - don’t throw work assignments on the desk, giving instructions as you walk away.
- Don’t “shoot the messenger”. Acknowledge that staff have a responsibility to apply policy.
Honesty
- Be honest, tell the truth all the time.
- If you can’t reveal something for confidentiality reasons, say so – don’t lie.
- If you make a mistake, admit it and apologize.

Empowerment
- We all want to feel capable and encouraged to think and act beyond a narrowly constrained job description.
- Empowerment is not just giving someone more work.
- We all want to be taught and informed so we don’t have to ask all the time.
- We all want to be respected, independent contributors; we need to know that we are valued, that our contributions are important.
- Empowerment is possible at every level and for every person.

Fairness
- Do not play favorites – do you spend more time with one employee than another?
- Beware of using an “inner circle” of advisors or confidants; others will feel marginalized.
- Although you might like or respect one individual more than another; everyone deserves the same quality of supervision.
- Performance assessment must be fact based.
  - Never wait until the performance review to discuss something! If you didn’t discuss it at the time it happened, it should not be raised during the performance review.
  - Do not generalize; speak only about specific examples.
  - Salary administration should be unbiased.

Spend Time One-on-One
The easiest way to...
- be respectful
- to care
- to give feedback
- to discover needs
- to empower
- to appreciate
- to ask what you can do for them
...is to spend time one-on-one...at least monthly.

During the one-on-one:
- Are there any issues that you need to address? Anything that you want to say, “Next time let’s do it this way instead?”
- Reflect on last year’s performance review and the objectives that you set out. Do you need to talk about these?
- Brainstorm about ideas for continuous improvement
Each and Every Interaction Counts
- There are no casual comments or e-mail messages.
- Non-verbal communication speaks volumes. (door slamming, avoiding interactions, silent treatment, etc.)
- A casual, disrespectful, critical, or insensitive remark can be devastating and the effects can be very long-lasting.
- A casual, praising, supportive, or understanding remark can be transforming. These should happen often and certainly not just at the performance review.
- Respectful, constructive, fact-based feedback can be very helpful. It should happen throughout the year.

Who Needs to Know What?
- Err on the side of over-communicating.
- Information is empowering. Everyone needs to know the goal(s), the background, the context, what’s coming, etc. Consider having staff meetings to be sure everyone knows everything.
- Pitfalls:
  - Do not share confidential information
  - Do not share information with just an inner circle of individuals.

Tricks of the Trade
- Listening is not waiting for the other person to stop talking.
- Ask questions about issues that you want to drive.
- “Drip method” of orchestrating change.
- Be flexible. Mesh your style to that of each employee.
- No one can change their personality. The supervisor can’t and the employee can’t. Focus on the work.
- Walk the talk; lead by example.
- Do not reward bad behavior.
- Performance reviews should be constructive and motivating.

Pet Phrases
- When in doubt, take refuge in the truth.
- We each have an opportunity to be part of the solution OR part of the problem.**
- Do not presume malice where ignorance can explain the situation.
- I trust people until they give me a reason not to.
- Bad news doesn’t get better with age.
- I wish I knew... I wonder if... Help me understand...

** There is a fine line between asking someone to help define a solution and telling them to fix the problem as a punishment for bringing it up in the first place.
Especially Difficult Situations

- One-on-one reporting relationships
- No formal reporting relationship but there is a perception of power over an employee.

Introspection & Reflection

- Supervision is hard work.

So...Think about it. How is it going? What could you do better? Have you given appropriate, timely feedback? Have you been respectful...honest...empowering...fair?