

Mimi Choy-Brown ([00:07](#)):

My name is Mimi Choy-Brown, and this is the Heart of Supervision Podcast. This podcast is about what supervision is, what it could be and why it matters for child welfare, from both a research and a practice informed perspective. I'm an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work. And this podcast is in collaboration with the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare.

Katrina Cisneros ([00:32](#)):

We were working with plants. You know, if we were supervising a bunch of human beings working with plants, then we would probably be having a different conversation, but we're talking about human beings, supervising human beings that are responsible for critical decisions about the lives of other human beings.

Mimi Choy-Brown ([00:57](#)):

Welcome back to the Heart of Supervision podcast. In this episode, I talk with a seasoned child welfare practitioner and supervisor Katrina Cisneros. Who's now an instructor at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work and a leader in racial and social equity, culturally responsive services and clinical supervision. Katrina is not only super knowledgeable. She's also really fun to talk with, and engages her students in the really hard conversations necessary to do this work well. Katrina talks with me about her experiences as a brand new supervisee when she was working in child welfare, making that transition to being a supervisor and her thoughts on the role supervision plays in ethical care for kiddos and families. I also want to acknowledge the contributions of Sarita Kundrod who worked with me on this episode. Thank you, Sarita. It was so fun to learn from this dialogue with Katrina Cisneros, enjoy.

Katrina Cisneros ([01:59](#)):

So, I am Katrina Cisneros and I am a licensed independent clinical social worker. And I am currently on faculty at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities in the school of social work graduate program, where I teach across a couple of concentrations, including clinical and the family and children's concentration. And I have been working in the field as a social work practitioner for close to, I want to say 17 years, but I got my start as a social worker in the area of public child welfare. And from that point it was sort of a springboard for me to evolve my career into, primarily the nonprofit sector and working in communities, community organizing, and community mental health. And so that also then led me to doing supervision, clinical supervision, both group and individual, as we train these bright and brilliant up and coming social work practitioners who are bound to do great things. So that's me

Mimi Choy-Brown ([03:17](#)):

Awesome. Thank you so much, Katrina. Well, first of all, we're just really appreciate you joining us today to talk about clinical supervision in child welfare. We're thrilled to have you here and learn from your experiences. And I'm wondering just to start us off, you know, why child welfare, what brought you to it? Why did you start there?

Katrina Cisneros ([03:40](#)):

Well, full disclosure, I'm a Badger. I was in the MSW program at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. I was already in the kind of concentration if you will, of Children, Youth and Families in the program. So I already knew that I wanted to work with kiddos. I knew I wanted to work with families. I'm also stubborn and I'm just one of those people that thinks and believes like I'm just born to do hard things. And public child welfare seemed like in terms of like the realm of social work, it was one of those areas that you just had to be able to do hard things. And it was somewhat mysterious. And I had a lot of curiosity about what happened within the public child welfare system. And so I think in some ways like my personality also sort of lent itself well to wanting to work, and be involved in public child welfare.

Katrina Cisneros ([04:42](#)):

So, yeah, and, and I think when I think about why I chose social work, you know, I am somebody who came from a chronically stressed family system. I grew up in a lower resourced community. And so, you know, I also kind of had some sort of an understanding that there was a pretty high probability that the kids and families that I would be working with within that kind of realm of social work, what I would see a piece of myself in them, and they might see a piece of themselves in me. And so there was also I think, a personal connection to exploring what it was going to be like.

Mimi Choy-Brown ([05:19](#)):

What were your experiences as a supervisee in supervision, maybe what was important? What were you looking for, then perhaps what was missing?

Katrina Cisneros ([05:29](#)):

Yeah, well, I mean, I, if I'm being honest, I mean, when I started my career in public child welfare, I started as an intern in my MSW program in child protection investigations. Post-graduation I worked in ongoing permanency work in child protection and juvenile delinquency, which is what we kind of termed it in the counties that I was working in. And I had an opportunity to work in very, high dense kind of more, like city and urban settings. And then I also worked in very rural poor communities. So that was also kind of interesting, but no matter where I was when I think back I was so early on in my own career. Which is, I think oftentimes also what happens, some of the greenest and least developed social work practitioners are oftentimes placed in some of the higher stress, positions that have more exposure to trauma.

Katrina Cisneros ([06:33](#)):

And which is why I can get to it later, but why I decided to go into supervision, but I felt way out of my league and I was in child welfare units with very, very seasoned public child welfare workers who had been there 10, 15, 20 plus years. And so here I was, this very young graduate. And so, so I felt out of my league and I felt intimidated. And I also felt a lot of pressure because in public child welfare systems are the ones that I was working and I was responsible for really, really important decisions. Oftentimes life and death decisions that involved other people and those other people being some of the most vulnerable people, which are children. And so there's a lot of pressure and a lot of responsibility. And yet I felt very out of my league and in some ways intimidated, you know. When looking around at who my colleagues were at the same time, I had some pieces that I brought to the practice that set me apart.

Katrina Cisneros ([07:41](#)):

I was the only Spanish speaking social worker in both of the counties that I worked at. So I had a level of understanding in certain areas of the work that felt unique and that county has sort of wanted to

leverage which made me feel like I had some like sense of like agency or like expertise in something. And so, so I guess I like when I think back to that time, you know, I start to sweat a little bit, like I remember, you know, going into work every day and just really wanting to do a good job and not necessarily understanding what a good job meant and that the more I worked in child welfare, what was defined as a good job by the system I was working in, didn't always feel inherently what to me was a good job.

Katrina Cisneros ([08:31](#)):

Um, and so there started to kind of develop this conflict and tension between you know, some of those kinds of pieces. But in terms of supervision and being a supervisee, um, you know, I had excellent supervisors and, um, you know, excellent in what I knew at the time to be excellent. Now looking back and, you know, just reflecting on this question, it's like, you know, there were some things missing, but, you know, overall, I needed to feel like I was part of the team that was really important to me. Supervision was critical early on in my public child welfare career because I needed to have a place to land with all of my thoughts and concerns and decisions. I brought a lot of the reflective piece to my own supervision. Not necessarily something that my supervisor brought to me, but was something that I, you know, was I think more comfortable and transparent about, you know, like that home visit was really hard for me.

Katrina Cisneros ([09:42](#)):

And this is why it was really important to me early on in my career as a supervisee that my supervisor was available. And I remember my supervisor when I was doing ongoing child protection work. I knew if I walked by his office, he'd be there and his coffee cup would be there and I could, I could always find him. And so there was an availability piece for me as a supervisee that felt really critical decisions were being made in real time on the ground. And so I needed to have access to my supervisor in a trusting, available way that made me feel secure. Especially as a new kind of social worker in the field. And I would also say as a supervisee, having a supervisor with a great sense of humor was really important.

Katrina Cisneros ([10:38](#)):

The areas of public child welfare I was working in, I mean, it's, it's tough stuff. And you are really seeing in a lot of ways, the very, very ugly underbelly of society, of culture, of humanity, really. And so there's a darkness and a heaviness that comes when you work in systems that are operating with that kind of content. And so to also have a supervisor that knew how to you know, use humor and lighten things up and that we could have fun, I think was also a really like important protective factor,

Mimi Choy-Brown ([11:22](#)):

Right, that you could, you could be doing this really hard and important work, but it was still okay to laugh and be yourself.

Katrina Cisneros ([11:31](#)):

Yeah, exactly. Um, and, you know, I had a lot of issues working in the, in the area of public child welfare, which is why I don't think I ended up staying there. Um, and a lot of that was just, you know, um, you know, thinking about what I now believe to be really kind of trying to move family-centered, anti-racist kind of trauma informed decision-making, within a system that is just historically not set up in that way. And we know is not an equitable or fair system, and there's a lot of inequities that are, and systems of oppression that are maintained. And so, you know, I also needed my supervisor to be a place where I

could come with some of those challenges, whether in ideas and questions without kind of fear of, of kind of consequences, I think.

Mimi Choy-Brown ([12:37](#)):

Would that sort of fit in with, you talked a little bit about sort of the dissonance between sort of what the agency thought was a good job and what you sort of thought was a good job. Um, and trying to, you talked about that, and you talked about sort of the availability, but also just team membership. Is that something that your supervisor and also, oh, you mentioned the like kind of life and death decisions in real time that you maybe didn't have the tools yet to, in order to do, um, to manage in a way that you felt really good about, are those some of the things that you were bringing in to that time with your supervisor?

Katrina Cisneros ([13:17](#)):

Yes. I mean, I have always been a social worker that has valued supervision, and so I, you know, especially early on in my career, I would go over, you know, pretty much every decision I'd made with my supervisor. And especially because in public child welfare, there's a lot of technicality to the work and there's, you know, you're operating within statutes and court systems. And so there's a lot of like nuts and bolts that you have to get right. And so there were like multiple levels to decision-making that I felt like I needed the support of a supervisor to be able to, you know, in all honestly, in honesty, be able to go home and sleep well. And there was something about, you know, if, if I had talked it over with my supervisor, I felt like I could calm a little bit about it. Not always but you know, for the most part, that, that was definitely important.

Mimi Choy-Brown ([14:16](#)):

Do you feel like when you went to your supervisor, it sounds to me like maybe they were helping you sort of check the boxes in terms of all of the different things that you were supposed to be thinking about systemically, across all the different intersecting systems that these kids are involved, families are involved in, but did you also feel like you were getting help on the, how, like the quality and sort of making meaning of those gaps in what you saw?

Katrina Cisneros ([14:45](#)):

Sometimes not always. A lot of it for me was just a lot of support and questioning around why I made a decision and what informed my decision so that my supervisor could understand, and I could sort of walk them through how I got to, for instance, the decision to not place that sibling group that day in, out of home care. You know, I made a decision to not do that, and I needed for my supervisor to understand why I did that outside of just me documenting why I didn't do that. So, so there's a level of trust and understanding, and it would be really hard, I think, to work in the system when you also have a supervisory relationship that doesn't feel like there is that trust because you're already feeling isolated and under a lot of pressure and you're already working within a system that has a lot of challenges. And so supervision, in some ways, I think for me, at least it felt like a protective factor in my own mental health to have somebody to sort of walk me through what I had done and why, in a way that made me sort of just be able to process it.

Katrina Cisneros ([16:03](#)):

I never canceled supervision, you know, because I think there was something about me as a public child welfare worker that I knew I needed time with my supervisor because that relationship was going to be

really important. And I would watch a lot of other more seasoned workers as they moved up the ranks of the department, just stop having supervision. Right. And the only time I would see them in the supervisors office was, you know, I knew that there was like something big happening with a case, or, you know, like maybe there was like a big decision that the department was making in regards to like a kid or a family. But and as a new, as a new public child welfare social worker, you can feel a little bit of insecurity around that, right? Like, why do I need so much time with this person? Or should I be more self-sufficient or autonomous or independent? And, but there was just something kind of intuitive in me that it was like, I don't want to give up that hour, you know, especially in a lot of these settings, time is very valuable. And so if you prioritize supervision and you prioritize time with supervisees, it's also a demonstration of what's valued in the department. And that you know, that staff retention is valued, that outcomes to clients are valued. That knowledge and skills and ethics and values are valued.

Mimi Choy-Brown ([17:37](#)):

You mentioned that you were somebody who really brought a lot of reflection to your supervision and maybe sought help with your decision-making. And when you looked at what you were doing, versus those folks in your, in your near, you know, in your team that were, you know, 10, 15 years under their belts, were you seeing them using supervision in the same way? Was it typical what you were doing or do you feel like you sort of stood out?

Katrina Cisneros ([18:04](#)):

No. I mean, I think most of the other seasoned workers were much more independent and they just, you know, when I would go out and shadow them as I started my position, you know, they just called the shots and, you know, I was curious with them about their decision-making process. And that also felt challenging because, you know, I think a lot of times, especially in public child welfare, you know, the answer to the why is that it's just what we do or it's what we've always done or it's what we have to do. And that didn't that wasn't sufficient enough for me. That, that didn't feel like a conversation stopper. Like I wanted to like continue having more conversations or vet that question with other people that I worked with to try to get multiple perspectives. So you know, I know that when we had really challenging and heartbreaking child protection cases you know, that even some more of the seasoned workers would rely on supervision, I think a little bit more, or when a worker had to make what felt like a controversial kind of decision or a riskier decision, there seemed to be more consultation. Whereas for me, as somebody starting out and just kind of getting my child protection chops, you know, I relied a lot, I think more heavily on that supervision space.

Mimi Choy-Brown ([19:32](#)):

Did it change for you over time as you gained confidence and experience,

Katrina Cisneros ([19:39](#)):

I'm sure that it did, however, I'm just, I think in general, I'm just a very like relationship oriented person. And so, you know, even, I think back at my career, you know, doing outpatient clinical social work and therapy, you know, even a decade into my practice, I was still really trusting and utilizing my clinical supervisor probably in ways that felt different in the way that I needed to when I first started that kind of area of my career. But I really believe in the power of connection and consultation. And I think in some ways we have a greater risk of doing harm to clients when we think we've got this and, you know, we start sort of practicing more in isolation rather than in connection. So I think intuitively it also is just

more congruent with how maybe just how I am in the world. And so it makes sense that within my supervisory relationships that's also been the case.

Mimi Choy-Brown ([20:43](#)):

It's interesting because in the supervision literature, they talk a lot about this kind of optimism that clinicians can have about how things are going. And the, you know we often are fairly optimistic about how people are receiving us. How supervision, just to your point about kind of starting to operate in isolation and the kind of the benefits of inviting more perspectives into kind of how things are going, coming from a place of curiosity.

Katrina Cisneros ([21:15](#)):

For me, you know, supervision has always been about this larger framework, which is a parallel process, you know. In public child welfare, in the areas I was working with, you know, we wanted parents and caregivers to be able to love and care for their children. And in order to do that, in some ways we, as the social workers are providing a bridged relationship with caregivers, that models what we're wanting them to do with children. And then if we level that up, even further, that supervisory relationship is a parallel process to that social worker, parent relationship. So for me, there's an interconnectedness to this conversation that I feel is just important. And I think it's inevitable that, you know, if we have really good supervision, we have social workers who feel like they're able to do really good work with caregivers, which then enables caregivers to provide really good love and care for children.

Katrina Cisneros ([22:13](#)):

And so I see it sort of as this chain, and now as an instructor at the U I feel the same about my learning environment that, you know, I'm responsible to, in some ways, as an instructor, teaching these concepts, I'm modeling for students what it's like to hold that space in the hopes that they'll then be able to do that for clients. So I think that there's an interconnectedness to all of this that no matter where you are in your own professional or personal development, it's still, it still is there. It doesn't go away.

Mimi Choy-Brown ([22:42](#)):

So in that kind of model, is that how you learned to be a supervisor is sort of learning from kind of experiences along the way, or did, how did you learn to be a supervisor? What informed that?

Katrina Cisneros ([22:57](#)):

Well, I think I'm still learning to be a supervisor. I really see myself as a lifelong learner, especially you know in that area as well. I think I sort of learned how to be a supervisor by, you know, it's sort of like, you know, like you can like go to a club or you can like go somewhere and just like, get out on the dance floor and just give it, give it a go. And then, and then at some point you're like, I think I kind of liked this, so I might take a class. And then you learn the 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3. I think my journey in supervision has sort of been the same way. You know, I, I was a practitioner in the field experiencing supervision as a supervisee for many, many years. And I was cautious about when I made the shift to being a supervisor because I take it really seriously.

Katrina Cisneros ([23:51](#)):

And I had so kind of much respect and compassion for the supervision that I had received, that I saw it as a really big deal. And so when I did make the decision to start doing supervision in the clinical field, you know, I think I was sort of, kind of melding all of the kind of lived experience that I had within, the nuts and bolts kind of training that you go through to become a supervisor. And I think the combination of all of that, you know, the letting loose on the dance floor and then the 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3. I think that makes a really beautiful dancer, right? Because you have someone who's kind of comfortable in who they are, and there's an expression about it that feels really unique and particular to that person. Like no one else is going to dance like that person. And yet they're still they're doing the technical pieces that they need to do in order to like, you know, win the contest or something. So, you know, you have to have kind of both of those. And so I feel as like a supervisor, I think that's sort of like how I got there, you know, was by experiencing supervision and then learning about it on kind of a technical level and then practicing and it's a practice. So yeah,

Mimi Choy-Brown ([25:16](#)):

So as you sort of learn these technical pieces, like from a class like the supervision class or something like that.

Katrina Cisneros ([25:23](#)):

Yeah. Well, I mean, you have to take a lot of trainings. I mean in Minnesota for licensure to be attested at the supervisory level, you know, you have extra kind of hoops that you have to jump through in order to kind of attest that you are able to provide supervision outside of just being a clinical supervisor. So yeah, I think I saw a lot of trainings that felt congruent with maybe my supervision style. And then I did a lot of sort of reflective work about what felt good and what didn't feel so good in my own kind of experience as a supervisee. So yeah, I think that that's, that's kind of how I got there.

Mimi Choy-Brown ([26:03](#)):

What's an example of like something to keep and what was an example of, I mean, you talked about some, the availability and other things, but what would you add anything to the things to keep and the things to sort of let go of from your experience as a supervisee?

Katrina Cisneros ([26:19](#)):

So my most impactful and memorable supervisors have been human beings that know me, not only do they know and trust my practice as a social worker, but they know Katrina, the human being. And so there's a way in which I was able to be in supervision with those supervisors. And I could totally show up fully as who I was. I didn't have to leave any pieces of me at the door in some ways. And so I think that that was, that was just really critical. And so for me, when I moved into supervision, it was really important to me that I really got to know my supervisees. And that they felt that they could come into supervision with me their full self. And for different supervisees, you know, even for me as a white, you know, Cis you know, female, that, you know, that in of itself within some of these systems that I've worked in has afforded me a level of privilege that I think has even been important within supervisory relationships.

Katrina Cisneros ([27:37](#)):

And that is not necessarily the case for everybody in supervisory relationships or systems. And so I think that that was also a piece that I wanted to really nurture and understand better in terms of like the intersection of my own privilege as both a supervisee within systems, but then also what that means

within a supervisory relationship, especially when you're supervising across difference. So, yeah, I think that those were some of the things I felt were missing and then some of the things that I wanted to learn about and get better at. And I think my most critical moments in supervision have been when a supervisor, because they fully know who I am, that they have an ability to sort of challenge me in a way that is going to move me to the cusp of my own growth while also trusting and supporting me in a way that feels like someone's got my back, in a system that isn't oftentimes set up to have your back and where you're already kind of operating under the auspices of like pressure and a litigious sort of society and, you know, all of those things.

Katrina Cisneros ([28:48](#)):

So yeah, I would say that, that those are some of the things

Mimi Choy-Brown ([28:54](#)):

It's really interesting that you're bringing this up because one of the themes from my last study was exactly this, the supervisors in my study called it, knowing your audience and that, you know, knowing your audience really helped them to calibrate the learning. Like if they're translating a new evidence-based practice, they could sort of see when people could give and when they really just needed you to back off because of whatever else is going on. But also to know, again, to be able to identify sort of the emotional space that people were in in order to exactly like you were saying, kind of bring them as far as they can go in terms of their learning and feedback. So it's really interesting to hear, even in other systems and to hear supervisors talking about this, this was a theme that I've heard.

Katrina Cisneros ([29:36](#)):

Yeah. I think you want to, to be able to honor all of that in some ways in that supervisory space, for sure.

Mimi Choy-Brown ([29:49](#)):

It's interesting, especially, it seems especially pertinent in the context as you put it of this, like litigious high stakes, both in terms of the way that the agency sets up, you know, kind of the policies and practices and statute and all of those things and just the kids. I mean, you know, the stake is pretty high

Katrina Cisneros ([30:11](#)):

Yeah. Yup. And to know if you decide to make a counter, you know, I can think of some, you know, decisions that I made in the field as a, as a child protection worker that, you know, they didn't feel like the kind of standard protocol. And I knew when I made the decisions, multiple decisions over the years to, you know, call the shots in some way,. Whether it was about out of home placement, you know, my supervisor maybe didn't necessarily agree with my decision, but they trusted my judgment about it. And that was important for me. I didn't need somebody to always agree with me that doesn't help me as a professional in terms of my development. I wanted someone to challenge me and walk me through what I did and why I did it, and then support ultimately what my decision was which is hard to do within, you know, when there's protocol and there's a definite right or wrong that, you know, that can feel scary, especially when you're trying to infuse your work from you know, a level of competency and awareness and sensitivity that the system itself is not designed to do.

Katrina Cisneros ([31:28](#)):

And so, in some ways you, as the child welfare worker are the one trying to infuse you know, these levels of, cultural humility and anti-racism, and, you know, really kind of thinking about these things in real time, which are easy to kind of say, you know, like systematically or structurally, but these things get played out on the micro level every single time somebody makes a decision, systems and structures are built on the practice, the micropractice of human beings. And so I had a lot of that too, of like, how am I being complicit in this? How is my practice complicit in some of this and how do I feel about that? And where are the areas? And supervision was one of those areas where I felt like I need to be able to take that and bring that because that oftentimes informed my decisions. And I needed that support to feel like I could do that.

Mimi Choy-Brown ([32:27](#)):

I'm curious, when you were then a supervisor, how that discretion felt, knowing that the people that you were kind of influencing these families through supervisees.

Katrina Cisneros ([32:42](#)):

Well, I definitely had a deeper level of compassion for my supervisors. I can say that because, I mean, you know, when the buck stops with you, when, you know, you're the one signing off on every clinical document, when everything is getting billed under your licensure. Yeah. You are. You're thinking about this stuff in a way. And yet it was a moment I think, for me to continue to adhere to what I know to be true. Based on our professional values and ethics, and to stay brave, even in the face of systems and, protocol and rules that are not always equitable. And so I think in some ways there's also power and opportunity there when you can provide that discretion to supervisees to start to do some of that overhaul and change. And so I want my supervisees to also feel brave.

Katrina Cisneros ([33:48](#)):

And oftentimes that means that I have to be brave as a supervisor. And to be really transparent, you know. And that's part of reflective supervision, which I think is a model that, you know, that I really adhere to in terms of like my own supervision style, which is about let's slow things down, so we can both have an opportunity here to think about how we think and how we feel about this. And that there's a level of transparency for me to be able to say, you know, I'm worried about this, or I'm wondering if you could kind of talk me through, like these particular steps. And so I think that there's, when we're able to model that for supervisees, it provides a scaffolding that they are then able to use in the field with families and caregivers. So it's that back to that kind of parallel process, but yeah, you know, you, you lose more sleep, for sure.

Katrina Cisneros ([34:47](#)):

And you know, we're not like working with plants here, you know, we're not, we're,

Mimi Choy-Brown ([34:54](#)):

You're not moving boxes and factory,

Katrina Cisneros ([34:56](#)):

No, and you know, we need people who move boxes and we need people to water the plants, and it's all important and necessary, but this, you know, the, the energy and the level of, I think, trauma involved in this kind of work, I think really, you know, it's real. And I think that's another thing that we just have to

acknowledge, you know, working within the public child welfare system, is in and of itself about trauma. And, you know, when I think back to some of these really seasoned workers who were, I think having a harder time in their positions or, you know, just, they didn't seem very happy all the time and what I can look back now and have some compassion for was that I think they were really burnt out and they had experienced a level of secondary trauma that potentially hadn't ever really been tended to or protected, which is why I think a reflective supervision model is so powerful in some of these settings where we have supervisees working in really high trauma content areas, because the risk for some of that secondary trauma or compassion fatigue, or, you know, whatever you want to call it, or even now, you know, in the DSM-V actual post-traumatic stress disorder, it's real, it's a real risk.

Katrina Cisneros (36:22):

And so, you know, I think it's really critical that people working in these, in these marinated sort of have a supervision kind of a space because I do also see it as a protective factor around some of the trauma. And I think it helps kind of cultivate a self-awareness that's really important to being a good public child welfare worker. I think it slows a process down, that feels like it already goes really fast because it needs to, and if there's a collaborative energy to it that I think in some ways enhances things like communication, that scaffolding, which just makes us all better practitioners in the long run. So

Mimi Choy-Brown (37:08):

Yeah, I hear you talking about, you know, kind of holding space to slow things down, kind of to regulate some of the emotions that might be coming up based on the trauma, and give space for the thinking, the cognitive, you know, about like really what are we reacting to in this moment and, how are we gonna make ..? It just, it strikes me so much about sort of the high stakes yet gray and often obscured facts, about what's going on. And just the need for that kind of opportunity for that, how important that is in supervision space.

Katrina Cisneros (37:50):

And, you know, I did a reflective supervision training for NASW a couple of years back, and, you know, and I remember going to these trainings and sitting there thinking like, yeah, right, okay. Each of my supervisees has, I don't even know how many cases they all have deadlines and timelines, like, no, one's got time to be sitting in an office for an hour talking about, you know. And so I, you know, I don't see it as an either or. I think that there are times in supervision where we have to call the shots right, where we have to make quick decisions, where we don't necessarily always have, you know, the liberty of, you know, some of this kind of pillowed time. And so it's not about always doing this over kind of what I think for some people in the field feels like, you know, over-processing of everything.

Katrina Cisneros (38:43):

There are times where we have to do the nuts and bolts, and we have to do the administrative pieces of being a really good supervisor. And as a supervisee, there are times where that's what we need. We need a yes, no, we need the signature we need, you know, we need the, I'm going into court in 10 minutes. Can you sign off on this report? Like we need that. And we also need a supervision space where we're able to slow down a little bit. And I think it's really the tendency to move towards problem solving very, very quickly because it helps us control our own anxiety. It makes us feel like we have a sense of agency. And especially as a supervisor that makes you a good supervisor, right? Like, you know, the answer. So it can be, it's a very kind of tempting trap, as a supervisor to be the knower and to have

the answers, and to kind of stay in that methodical kind of nuts and bolts, area of supervision, which is important.

Katrina Cisneros ([39:45](#)):

And if we want longevity and we want reflective practitioners in the field who are going to do really good modeling for caregivers and kids, and we want them to get so good at it, that they want to do it for a really long time and get really skilled. Then people also need a place where they can think about their own thoughts and feelings and their own decisions, and that they have an opportunity to feel, you know, brave and trusting and honest in a way that I think is possible. Even if it's just having a supervisee fly into your office and saying, you know, I just went to this home visit and, you know, mom was doing this and then the baby was crying and then I'm thinking this, and she needs a housing resource. Do you have any housing resources, like as a supervisor I probably have some housing resources, but is that really what my supervisee needs right now? And, and how do I vet that? Well, the first way I do that is because I know my supervisee, you know, I can tell from the way that she's breathing and the way that she seems kind of frantic. And I know that this family has been really challenging and she's really worried about this baby. I know that this was a hard home visit for her. And so I'm going to slow it down a little bit and I might close my door for some containment. And I might just say, you know, tell me about it rather than just under my own pressures, handing her the housing resource. So I think, I think it's a both/and. I don't want to kind of, you know, like rose color this to the point where it doesn't seem realistic because I also understand the pressures of some of this. But I just refuse to, to kind of live in a world where we just say, this isn't possible.

Katrina Cisneros ([41:30](#)):

And if we were working with plants, you know, if we were supervising a bunch of human beings working with plants, then we would probably be having a different conversation. But we're talking about human beings, supervising human beings that are responsible for critical decisions about the lives of other human beings. So I don't know like that for me, like matters a lot. And I say it all the time in my classes, you have to really have a deep rooted understanding about yourself because you're a human being moving, you know, talk about blind spots. That's where we know ethical, you know, ethical issues arise. That's when we know that clients are most at risk of harm by social workers. You know, are when we have some of those blind spots and supervision is a place where we can really mitigate that stuff. And our primary role as a social worker is to do no harm, to do no harm.

Katrina Cisneros ([42:38](#)):

That's a big deal. And it's hard to think about it within the context of a system that's responsible, right, for decreasing harm to children. So deconstructing some of the complicit nature in some of that is really uncomfortable, but I think really necessary. And I think that supervision is one of the platforms that can be really powerful to elevate some of those important conversations, because or else, those are the blind spots that are going to create harm to communities, to families, to kids that are already hurting. And, you know, so I just, I, I think that it's serious stuff. It's the real deal Mimi, you whole life's work, is important.

Mimi Choy-Brown ([43:21](#)):

Thanks. Thanks Katrina. I really do appreciate you taking the time to talk with us about this. Thank you so much for joining me for this episode of The Heart of Supervision Podcast that was produced in collaboration with the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare. I really hope you enjoyed it and

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found something useful to bring back to your work. If so, please feel free to share it with your friends and colleagues. Again, I'm Mimi Choy-Brown and I love to talk about all things, supervision and research. So if you have any feedback, questions, comments, or suggestions for topics of the podcast, please feel free to reach out to me at my email address, mchoybro@umn.edu. I'd love to hear from you.

New Speaker ([44:11](#)):

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