

Leadership Bites: Introduction to Coaching

LEADERSHIP LEARNING IN 20 MINUTES



Leadership Academy

South East

Introduction

What is coaching?

Coaching is a simple yet powerful conversation; a form of development in which a person called a coach supports a learner or client in achieving a specific personal or professional goal by helping the learner (sometimes called a coachee) identify barriers by asking questions. The main point to note here, is that the coach shouldn't have an agenda before going into a coaching conversation and should aim to not provide solutions to the questions/goals; these should all come from the coachee.

Understanding what is required of you, and some common misconceptions...

There are many misconceptions around coaching, and whilst it is a great leadership style, a good state of mind and the most powerful way to react in many situations, sometimes there are other roles which are more suitable to the situation or the individual. A good way to understand what support is required of you is to understand the difference between the following 4 key roles;

- *Training or Feedback*
- *Mentoring*
- *Coaching*
- *Counselling*



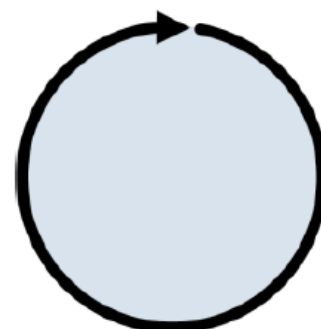
Using the scale on the left, you can see that each of these roles are helpful and needed, but the key is to understand the level of direct or non-direct communication which the individual or situation needs from you. If the individual is asking you a question, which requires more of a 'tell' response, i.e. – it doesn't matter how many questions you ask them, they simply don't know the answer and won't be able to get to this themselves, then a Training need has been identified.

If you need to relay information back to the individual, i.e. if you have completed a compliance activity and are required to play this back, or if they have performed a task incorrectly and the consequences impact the member, are reputational or there is potential monetary loss, then you may need to provide Feedback. Instead of having a one-way conversation, where you lead it and relay information back and 'tell' them how to do something correctly, you can still give feedback in coaching method. This is called 'Feedforward'.

Feedforward;

- looks to the future
- consciously work on what we want to change
- provides positive direction
- reinforces benefits

Using this method, the individual can change what they do in the future and do it in way that benefits them and those around them - if they are given some helpful cues. If the individual would benefit from a mixture of sharing



experiences, a few suggestions and giving advice as well as asking questions for them to come to their own solutions/conclusions, then a *Mentoring* role is the best fit here.

When the individual requires more development than training, i.e. they are a well-established team member and are performing well in their role, or you want to give them room to grow, then a *Coaching* role is the best fit here.

Important: Sometimes, when having a conversation in a professional setting, emotions and feelings are shared, which may be unexpected and have an emotional impact on the individual, or you, or both of you. It's important to be aware that this might happen, and to be comfortable with this.

Part of the role of a coach is to help 'hold up the mirror', and sometimes this means listening to personal experiences and information which may be a barrier or impacting the individual's confidence and performance at work.

It is also important to agree and understand the boundaries here; you are not a qualified counsellor and shouldn't try to step into this space, regardless of how much you want to help the individual. If you feel that you cannot help the individual and *Counselling* is the solution, stop the conversation and explain why.

Key skills of an effective coach

Skilful questioning - As a coach, you can draw out solutions by asking powerful opening questions which allow you to explore a situation in more detail and enable a broader response. Give your team member the opportunity to talk more about the subject. Start your question with one of the 5W's – "Why, How, What, When, Where or Who".

Reflection - Reflect back on what you hear, this is also known as 'holding up the mirror'. For example, you could say something like "I sense you're excited/angry/frustrated/happy/concerned about this?"

Summarise – Summarise to help them understand what they've told you, and to help you understand and gain their verbal confirmation that you've understood correctly. It's always best summarise by using the individual's own words.

Be curious - Explore what lies beneath the initial response. This will show you're trying to help them on their own level. Curious questions are usually open questions and encourage individuals to talk, i.e. – Ask "what makes you feel like this?" - Replace 'why?' with 'what?' questions to help you drill down to the true source of the issue.

Skilful listening - When someone feels as though they're being listened to, they're more likely to open up and talk honestly. There are 3 types of listening listed below. Once you've read them, think about which level you tend to listen at? What could you do to increase the level?

1. **Level 1 Internal listening** - At this level our attention is on ourselves. We may be hearing the words but are we truly listening to them? You may be listening but in terms of what it means to you. You may hear the words of the other person but you're thinking of your own stories, judgements and opinions.
2. **Level 2 Focused listening** - At this level you're focused on the other person listening to what they say and how they say it. Your mind talk has all but disappeared and you're not trying to work out your next question. Instead, your attention is entirely upon trying to understand. You will be using this level of listening to gather information solely for the benefit of your team member rather than you.
3. **Level 3 Global listening** - At level 3 there is a softer focus that takes in everything including all that happens at level 2. This is where you listen to what's not being said. You consciously notice other stimuli such as gestures and body movements and look for congruence. The individual not only feels understood but they understand more about why things are/not happening and not just what's happening.

Coaching models

GROW - This coaching model is one which is widely used, and it was created by Sir John Whitmore in the 1980s, and it was designed as a way of achieving goals and solving problems. The model highlights 4 key areas to explore; the Goal, the Reality/current state, the Options to solve the problem or achieve the goal and agreeing the Way Forward.

Below are some examples of questions you can use to explore each area, and sometimes you might need to revisit one of the areas if the goal changes or the reality tells you what is really important.



The Coaching Habit – a model designed for you to ‘Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way You Lead Forever’ (by Michael Bungay Stanier) is a model based on research which tells us that to be an effective coach, without doing all the work, we need to develop coaching as a habit and make it a routine; a daily event. If you adopt a solid coaching habit, it will sustain you as a coach and help you avoid common workplace problems that often burden managers.

The 7 questions below are designed to help you change your coaching ‘task’ into a coaching ‘habit’. You don’t need to follow them religiously, but have them written down and close by to help you if you need them;

1. *A kick start question – “What’s on your mind?”*
2. *An ‘AWE’ question – “And what else?”*
3. *Time to focus – “What’s the real challenge?”*
4. *Start to lay the foundation – “What do you want?”*
5. *The ‘lazy’ question – “What do you need from me?”*
6. *The ‘strategic’ question’ – “What are you saying yes to? What are you saying no to?”*
7. *Close – “What was most useful?/Where are you now?”*

Further learning ...

Get a coaching buddy? Peer to peer coaching can help enhance your coaching skills in a safe way with someone you work alongside and have an established relationship with. Make regular time to meet where you can share learning and challenge each other’s perspective. For further information and learning, as well as suggested activities, feel free to visit the People.NHS.uk website or our [South East Leadership Academy site](#).



Time to reflect...



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Take some time to note down your thoughts on what you've learned;

What resonated?

What has made you curious?

What small changes could you make to start having an impact differently and quickly?

What might you need to share with your team, and commit to 'testing and learning' together?

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a blue border, intended for the user to write their reflections on the questions provided above.