

## Coaching

*When can a coaching dialogue generate ideas, resolve conflicts, and enhance teamwork? How is it different from supervision? What are the specific leadership skills involved in coaching?*

**Topics:** Coaching, conflict resolution, teamwork

**Summary:** Participants in this session will learn about circumstances in which coaching can bring about benefits and will have an opportunity to practice specific coaching skills. During the practice session, participants will learn their strengths and growth opportunities.

**Outcomes:**

Participants gain an understanding and self-confidence in the basics of coaching and motivating others to perform their best;

Participants take home a strategic process for guiding a coaching session

**Duration:** Two hours

**Materials:**

Coaching handouts

Chart paper

**Procedure:**

*Warm up:*

1. Introduce the principles of coaching through a personal anecdote. Be sure to cover the principles included in Handout 1. The definition of coaching included on this handout is ever-evolving and can be tailored to specific perspectives and environments.
  - a. Ask participants about their past experiences in giving and receiving coaching. Ask participants in their examples how the success was shared.
  - b. The most important question to open any coaching conversation is, “What do you want to get out of this conversation?”
2. Next, cover content from Handouts 2-3. These handouts focus on the Four Tools of Coaching: Framing, Paraphrasing, Reality Check and Open Questions. You may wish to lead the group through a brainstorm (captured on chart paper) including participants’ definitions of and thoughts on the terms.

*The activity:*

1. Ask the participants to select a professional challenge from their service that they'd like coaching on. Ideally, this would involve a challenge that is moderate in complexity and urgency, but not overwhelming and long-term.
2. Divide the group into pairs. Each participant will get a chance to play the roles of coach and coachee.
3. The coach should begin the conversation by asking, "What would you like to get out of this conversation?"
4. After 10 minutes of coaching, give 5 minutes for feedback. When giving feedback, the coachee goes first, then the coach. Here are some sample feedback questions that you may wish to write on chart paper so that participants can use them during the feedback part of the exercise:
  - What was it like to be the coachee/coach?
  - As a coach, what was it like to use the questioning tools? The suggestion tools? How did they help you as a coach?
  - As a coachee, what was it like to be listened to in this way? What did it do for your own thinking?
  - How was it as a coach to wait until the end to suggest and give feedback?
5. Switch roles.

*Wrap-Up*

1. Bring the large group back together and ask for volunteers to share what they learned from the activity.
2. Address some of the danger zones that coaches can experience. These can include, among others:
  - Jumping to solutions
  - Advocating too early
  - Assuming you know what the coachee wants to get out of the conversation or coaching relationship
  - Reloading rather than listening.
3. Let participants know that their coaching handouts include additional information on giving feedback and other topics. With self-study, participants can gain further knowledge and applications

**Other references:**

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Covey, Stephen. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Fireside, New York, 1989

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Hammond, Sue Annis. *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*. Kodiak Consulting, Plano, TX, 1996

Hargrove, Robert. *Masterful Coaching: Extraordinary Results by Impacting People and the Way They Think and Work Together*. Pfeiffer & Company, San Diego, 1995.

Huang, Chungliang, Al and Jerry Lynch. *Mentoring: The Tao of Giving and Receiving Wisdom*. Harper, San Francisco, 1995.

Landsberg, Max. *The Tao of Coaching: Boost Your Effectiveness by Inspiring Those Around You*. Knowledge Exchange, Santa Monica, 1997.

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## Handout 1: Principles of coaching

- 1 Coaching is a collaborative relationship in which the coach provides the support to empower the coachee to succeed.
2. The coaching relationship is centered on the coachee, their needs and goals, not the coach's. The coach's job is not to be an expert, but rather to be of service.
3. We are all capable of being coaches and coachees; ideally we are both.
4. Coaching is dependent on a partnership of mutual responsibility and respect.
5. Coaching is not therapy, a "quick fix," or supervision. It is the process of "Expanding the Box" or worldview of the coachee.
6. Fundamental to successful coaching are an attentive presence and deep listening.
7. An effective coach assists the coachee in thinking well for themselves (as opposed to cultivating dependency on others).

### Questions to Ask Self and Coachee:

- Am I motivated to change? (The greatest self-defeating behavior is FEAR—False Evidence Appearing Real.)
- Am I willing to have BHAG (Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals)? (Coopers & Lybrand).
- Am I willing to ask tough questions about myself and others?
- Will I honestly assess my problem areas?
- Am I committed to helping others in their development?

### Coaching Questions

Coaching questions are used to gain an understanding of the other person's structure of interpretation (e.g. what they are paying attention to, how they see their world). Below are some examples of good coaching questions:

- How do you know?
- How can you tell?
- Based upon what do you decide "x"?
- Based upon what have you decided "x" in the past?
- What did you intend to accomplish?
- How well did it work?
- What can happen next?
- What's missing?

## **Handout 2: Coaching**

What is it?

When to use it?

### **Four Tools of Coaching:**

Framing

Paraphrasing

Reality Check

Open Questions

## **Handout 3: More on the Four Tools of Coaching**

### **Framing**

The key with framing is to put aside your own reactions, opinions, or feelings long enough to get more information.

Q. What might you need to do in order not to react defensively?

Q. How might framing serve the coaching conversation?

### **Paraphrasing**

In paraphrasing, you take the words and main ideas of your coachee and repeat them back, often in more clear and less emotionally charged terms. Paraphrasing also helps make sure that you understand what the coachee is saying.

Q. What do you need to do to paraphrase effectively?

Q. How might paraphrasing serve the coaching conversation?

### **Reality Check**

It is important for the coach to maintain a view of the realistic outcomes from the conversation. A reality check can take the form of a question beginning with “How ...?”

Q. What do you need to do to do a reality check effectively?

Q. How might reality checking serve the coaching conversation?

### **Open questions**

An open question points to a matter that is undecided or a question on which differences of opinion are allowable.

Q. What do you need to use open questions effectively?

Q. How might open questions serve the coaching conversation?

**Tip:** Avoid questions that begin with WHY, instead using HOW and WHAT questions. WHY questions can trigger defenses, where HOW and WHAT questions seek for more information.

## Handout 4: Feedback

Sometimes as a coach you have information or a suggested course of action that you believe can help the coachee—you have a suggestion or an opinion. The motivation of suggestion and feedback is to reinforce or change a pattern of behavior, to assist the coachee in solving a problem, or to support a coachee's development.

We often offer our suggestions and feedback early in the conversation, before we have fully explored a situation with a coachee. The guidelines that follow assume that you have been in enough questioning to significantly understand the situation being presented to you.

Advocacy or suggestion is used only **after** sufficient questioning.

### Key Concepts:

- To truly achieve peak performance, people must see the relationship between their behaviors, thoughts, feelings, underlying beliefs, and the result of ALL of these (intended or unintended) in their lives.
- The spirit of coaching is to **offer and let go**.
- For optimal success, the coach maintains an open and curious state about the coachee's situation. If for some reason, this is not possible (ex: coach is highly invested in one alternative or action), another coach may be helpful.
- Coaching assumes that each of us knows our own needs, situation, and goals best.

## Handout 5: Issues and Aspects of Feedback

**Definition:** Feedback is the term used for giving people information about their performance.

### Issues with Feedback

Although supervisors may know about feedback, they do not always have skills to give effective feedback. It takes practice as well as knowledge. Staff and volunteers often are not receptive when feedback is offered. They may get defensive, trying to justify what they did rather than listening and considering the help they are receiving. Both supervisors and their staff or volunteers should prepare for feedback sessions, and know some ground rules. Feedback should be a regular occurrence, a part of the overall strategy to improve performance. As opportunities arise for the supervisor to observe, read, or discuss work, positive and corrective feedback should be a part of the interaction.

### Guidelines for Giving Feedback

- 1. Be specific and support general statements with specific examples.** The receiver of feedback for both positive and negative behavior will be better able to act on statements that are precise and concise. Example: “During this month you have improved a lot.” This may be satisfying for both parties but it’s not as effective as saying, “Your reports were on time and better proofread.”
- 2. Describe the facts and do not judge.** Describing the facts helps the receiver to understand the meaning and the importance of the feedback. It tends to focus the discussion on behavior and not on personal characteristics. Example: “Did you prepare for your meeting with the grantee? For me it looked like you did not. It was not organized.” This type of statement can bring anger, return accusations, or passive–aggressive behavior in the listener. A better sequence of statements would be: “I got confused in your presentation to the grantee. I was not clear what the presentation was meant to accomplish. A statement about that at the beginning would have helped us all focus on the information you presented.”
- 3. Be direct, clear, and to the point.** In many cultures, it is considered more polite and educated to not be direct. But in the case of feedback, since the objective is to communicate clearly and specifically, and not leave someone guessing, we encourage people to be direct but in polite way.
- 4. Direct feedback toward controllable behavior.** Inquire before critiquing. If an employee is continually late to work, perhaps s/he has a childcare situation that causes this. Discussing the cause and the alternatives to meet everyone’s expectations and needs would be a more constructive approach than simply criticizing the employee’s behavior. Avoid criticizing a participant’s physical characteristics. To say, “You are too short to be

seen in the back of the room,” without giving or exploring with him/her some suggestions (about room arrangement, for example), is not very helpful.

**5. Feedback should be solicited, rather than imposed.** If a collaborative work environment is present with employees or volunteers, feedback should be expected and welcomed. It should include positive feedback on good performance to reinforce what is being done correctly or better. Feedback that helps improve performance is critical to the learning environment and be desired by employees and volunteers.

**6. Consider the timing of feedback.** Do not wait too long to discuss observations with staff or volunteers. Given in useable amounts and in a timely manner, it is much more effective than allowing things to build up. A person may even feel you that you were holding things over him/her, if you withhold information about behavior that you feel needs to be changed.

**7. Make sure feedback takes into account the needs of both the receiver and the giver.** Feedback can be destructive when it serves only one’s own needs and fails to consider the needs of the person on the receiving end. If an employee or volunteer is struggling, and there are many points that could be discussed, select some positive points and one or two behaviors to work on first. Then, as performance improves, give feedback on other areas to improve.

**8. Plan your feedback. Plan what to say, and in what order.** Think before you talk. As you give feedback on a regular basis it will become easier to balance your comments, and provide feedback that can be acted upon.

**9. Own your feedback.** Use “I” statements, so that the receiver understands that it is your opinion. Example: “Your posture of standing with your hands on your hips was very authoritarian as you talked with the group” is different than saying, “I found your hands on your hips distracting. That posture is sometimes seen as aggressive and authoritarian. Were you aware you were standing like that? What were you thinking as you stood that way?”

## **Guidelines for Receiving Feedback**

**1. Solicit feedback in clear and specific areas.** It’s always easier to give feedback if one is asked. It’s even easier when a specific question is asked. Example: “I often find it difficult to conclude a presentation. Will you pay particular attention to the conclusion today?”

**2. Ask for clarification and make a point to understand the feedback.** Listen carefully and ask for clarification, if the feedback is not clear. Example: “Are you saying that if I had given an introduction stating what I was going to talk about, that the rest of the presentation was clear?”

**3. Help the giver use the criteria for giving useful feedback.** Example: If the feedback is too general, ask: “Could you give me specific examples of what you mean?”

**Avoid making it more difficult for the giver of the feedback than it already is.** Strive to avoid being defensive, angry or argumentative.

**5. Don't ask for explanations.** Clarification and examples are different than asking why someone did not like something. Requesting explanations beyond the facts can seem defensive and often end up in an argument. As a result the giver backs off and is discouraged from giving feedback in the future. However, the giver is not discouraged from seeing negative behavior or assessing your performance; the person simply becomes unwilling to provide the feedback. Focus on understanding the behavior and its impact.

**6. Assume the sender wants to help.** Related to the point above, assume that the person giving the feedback is helping you improve. It should not be seen as a way to be more powerful than you or to make you feel bad. Everyone can improve; it is a benefit to have someone reflect how your behavior appears to him/her.

**7. Be appreciative and thank the observer.** Express your gratitude in a sincere way, such as "Thanks. I am sure I will be clearer if I pay attention to your points."

**8. Share your improvement plan.** Tell the giver what you intend to do in the future. Example: "I think I will try your idea of putting talking points on the flip chart in pencil. That should help me get rid of the notes that are distracting to me."

**Remember that feedback is based on one person's perception of another person's behavior, not universal truth.** You are receiving one person's perceptions. Having this in mind should make you less defensive. If you do not agree with the feedback, you might check out the perceptions with others. For example, you might ask someone else to watch you for the specific behaviors you received feedback on.