



Promoting Excellence in Coaching

A Promoting Excellence Leadership Book.

This is part of a series of self-development books available from Promoting Excellence Leadership Consultants.

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SELF DEVELOPMENT

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PREFACE

“Leadership is not an innate quality. Rather, it is a combination of skills, aptitudes and perspectives that can be learned and developed. To hone your leadership skills, you need to practise and also have frequent opportunities to reflect on your own actions and feelings. An effective coach can help you do this”

Hay Group



AN OVERVIEW

Coaching exists in many forms ranging from career coaching and skills coaching to leadership and performance coaching. Underpinning all of these is powerful future focused process that enables individuals to work on specific issues and find solutions for these. This process works by reflecting and gaining insights, identifying what works and acting on this learning.

Coaching builds upon and impacts on how managers work and learn and has the double value of enabling change at individual, team and organisational level plus building an ability to sustain this after coaching.

Coaching has become an increasingly successful way of providing focused development for individuals and teams. It also has a vital role in delivering a culture change and performance improvement programme throughout the organisation. Coaching focuses on enabling managers by providing the essential space to reflect to improve performance.

Managers should use other performance management strategies, exercise leadership, manage wellbeing and demonstrate a range of other skills. Coaching is the common denominator in making these work effectively and in linking them to employee development, engagement and organisational performance.



The purpose of coaching:

- 1 General personal development
- 2 Part of a wider management and leadership development programme
- 3 Remedial in cases of poor performance
- 4 Where a specific change of behaviour is required – new skills for a new role
- 5 Transition support after change in role or joining organisation
- 6 Building capacity to manage others
- 7 To support the development of senior leaders
- 8 As a tool for organisational or culture change – develop a more strategic perspective
- 9 To reach solutions to problems
- 10 Non-specific performance development – wellbeing, motivation, confidence

Some Definitions:

'A process that enables learning and development to occur and thus performance to improve'	Parsloe [1999]
'Unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance'	Whitmore [1996]
'The overall purpose of coach-mentoring is to provide help and support for people in an increasingly competitive and pressurised world in order to help them: • Develop their skills • Improve their performance • Maximise their potential • Become the person they want to be'	CIPD coaching courses definition
'Primarily a short-term intervention aimed at performance improvement or developing a particular competence'	Clutterbuck [2003]
'A conversation, or series of conversations, one person has with another'	Starr [2003]
'The art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another'	Downey [1999]
Defines the verb 'coach' as to... 'tutor, train, give hints to, prime with facts'	Concise Oxford Dictionary
'A coach is a collaborative partner who works with the learner to help them achieve goals, solve problems, learn and develop'	Caplan [2003]
'A collaborative, solution-focused, results-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance, life experience, self-directed learning and personal growth of the coach'	Grant [2001]

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CHAPTER ONE: The Benefits

Organisational and individual benefits of coaching

Coaching can be a critical element in promoting and managing successful change for individuals and teams.

It is a particularly effective leadership style and skill for the long-term development of staff. It can:

- Help staff assess their unique strengths and weaknesses
- Encourage staff to develop clear goals
- Provide on-going support and feedback to promote personal development

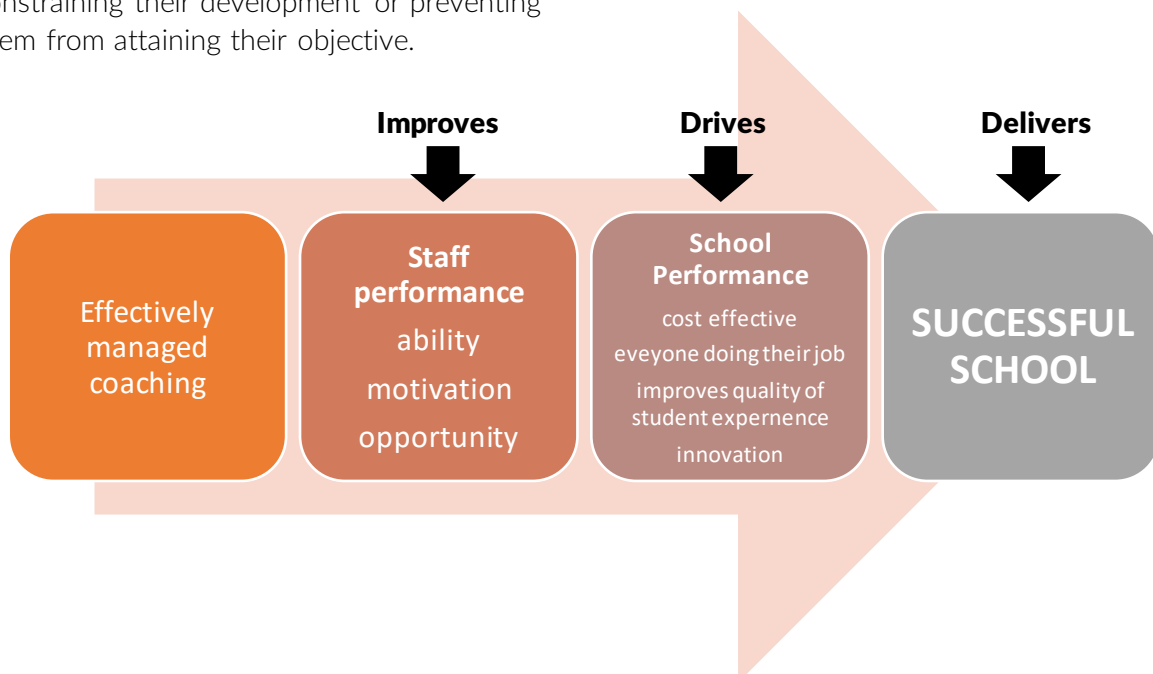
Coaching helps people improve their performance by:

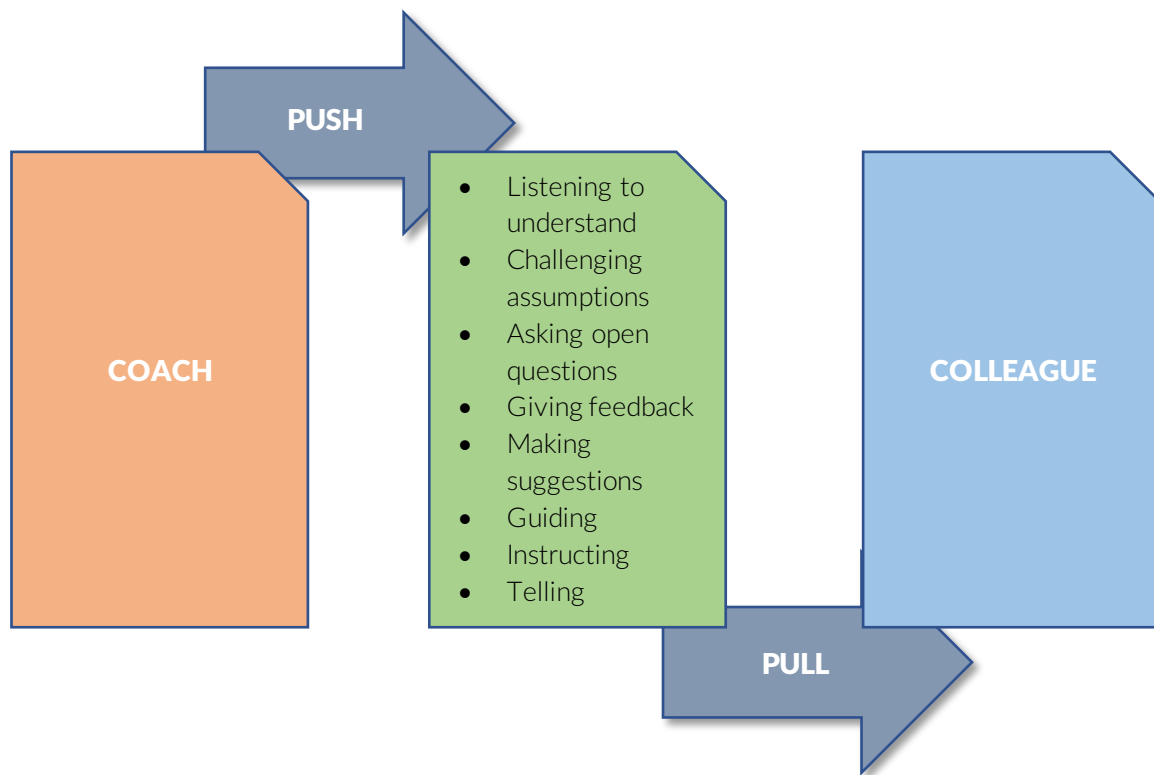
- Helping teams and individuals to develop and reach their potential
- Encouraging teams and individuals to own the responsibility for their own personal and professional development
- Helping teams and individuals to find a way to move on from a situation that may be constraining their development or preventing them from attaining their objective.

An effective coaching style requires sensitive balance between 'push' and 'pull'. The coach must control their impulses to manipulate the conversation so as to ensure that their views and opinions are not over emphasised.

This can be shown in the diagram opposite.

- A balance of styles and techniques is important
- It is NOT coaching if you operate at the push end
- The pull end requires a higher level of skill





How can it be used?

- Performance management and career development
- Leadership and management skill development
- Talent management – valuing others and nurturing their talent
- Personal and team effectiveness
- Self-evaluation
- Managing workloads and work-life balance

Coaching and Change

Coaching can be a key element of self-directed change. It is a process of helping people to help themselves by:

- Exploring new experiences
- Getting people to want to change
- Challenging ideas and assumptions
- Effective questioning

Making the case for coaching

Coaching should be combined with other individual based interventions and development strategies.

When or where is coaching most appropriate or of benefit in your school?

- Talent shortages - developing current colleagues to fill skill gaps
- Small schools – where flexibility and multi-tasking is required
- Where there is shared coaching can bring long-term and sustainable improvements through the development of key colleagues
- Where the school expects that behaviour can be changed in a short period of time
- During times of change when significant shifts in the behaviour and attitudes of some colleagues is required to adapt to new structures or ways of working
- Changes in job role – coaching can be a valuable and short-term intervention to help people adapt and cope with their change of role
- Support for future leaders, aligned with succession planning
- Performance management



Key drivers for coaching



CHAPTER TWO: Coaching Defined

Some generally agreed characteristics of coaching in organisations

Although there is a lack of agreement about precise definitions, there are some core characteristics of coaching activities that are generally agreed on by most coaching professionals:

- It consists of 1:1 developmental discussions
- It provides people with feedback on both their strengths and weaknesses
- It is aimed at specific issues/areas
- It is a relatively short-term activity, except in executive coaching, which tends to have a longer timeframe
- It is essentially a non-directive form of development
- It focuses on improving performance and developing/enhancing individuals skills
- It is used to address a wide range of issues
- Coaching activities have both organisational and individual goals
- It assumes that the individual is psychologically healthy and does not require a clinical intervention
- It works on the premise that colleagues are self-aware, or can achieve self-awareness
- It is time-bounded
- It is a skilled activity
- Personal issues may be discussed but the emphasis is on performance at work



Differences between mentoring and coaching

Mentoring	Coaching
Ongoing relationship that can last for a long period of time	Relationship generally has a set duration
Can be more informal and meetings can take place as and when the mentee needs some advice, guidance, or support	Generally more structured in nature and meetings are scheduled on a regular basis
More long term and takes a broader view of the person	Sort term [sometimes time-bounded] and focused on specific development areas/issues
Mentor is usually more experienced and qualified than the 'mentee'. Often a senior person in the organisation who can pass on knowledge, experience and open doors to otherwise out-of-reach opportunities	Coaching is generally not performed on the basis that the coach needs to have direct experience of their colleague's formal occupational role, unless the coaching is specific and skills-focused
Focus is on career and personal development	Focus is generally on development/issues at work
Agenda is set by the mentee, with the mentor providing support and guidance to prepare them for future roles	The agenda is focused on achieving specific, immediate goals
Mentoring revolves more around developing the mentee professionally	Coaching revolves more around specific development areas/issues



Coaching vs. Instructing

Coaching can be summarised in the handy mnemonic 'COACH':

C = Clarification of the underlying issue/s

O = Objective setting for desired change

A = Action to achieve desired change

C = Critique of action taken and its impact

H = Habitualising what works into everyday activity

Instructing is basically 'Telling'. In 'Instructing', an instructor tells, or shows, a colleague how to do something to an expected standard.



The difference between Mentoring and Coaching

Counselling	Coaching
Broader focus and greater depth	Narrower focus
Goal is to help people understand the root causes of longstanding performance problems/issues at work	The goal is to improve an individual's performance at work
A short-term intervention, but can last for longer time periods due to the breadth of issues to be addressed	Tends to be a short-term intervention
Counselling can be used to address psycho-social as well as performance issues	Coaching does not seek to resolve any underlying psychological problems. It assumes a person does not require a psycho-social intervention
The agenda is generally agreed by the individuals and the counsellor	The agenda is typically set by the individual, but in agreement/consultation with the organisation



CHAPTER THREE: Skills for Coaches

Skills and Attributes for coaches

In preparing its national report 'Developing Aspiring Leaders' for the DfES, Promoting Excellence, with the help of experienced coaches, produced a set of skills and attributes for coaches.

A. Setting The Foundation	
A1	Meets professional standards
A2	Agrees and maintains appropriate ethical guidelines, including confidentiality
A3	Formalises the coaching agreement
B. Co-Creating A Positive Coaching Relationship	
B1	Engenders trust and respect
B2	Establishes a learning environment
B3	Manages oneself in the interests of the colleague
C. Communicating Effectively	
C1	Uses active listening and silences to add value
C2	Uses powerful and probing questions
C3	Uses language that has the greatest possible impact on the colleague
D. Facilitating And Learning	
D1	Develops colleague's awareness of themselves in work and life situations
D1	Creates positive movement towards action
D3	Assists with planning and goal setting
D4	Manages progress and accountability

On the next few pages we'll consider those skills you could develop, as evidence for your Leadership Coaching style.



Descriptor	Evidence
A. Setting The Foundation	
A1 Meets professional standards	• Participates in specific training for the role • Is receptive to feedback to develop further his/her coaching skills and performance • Is clear and aware of own skill limitations and acts within these • Prepares for each coaching session both in terms of colleague's details and own mental space
A2 Agrees and maintains appropriate ethical guidelines, including confidentiality	• Agrees and reviews the ethical dimensions of the work • Establishes guidelines for managing confidentiality of all information for both parties
A3 Formalises the coaching agreement	• Negotiates quality time and space for the sessions • Agrees the decision-making process, methodology and outcomes for the sessions • Agrees with the colleague when and how to review the process on a regular basis
B. Co-Creating A Positive Coaching Relationship	
B1 Engenders trust and respect	• Is patient, impartial supportive and sensitive to colleague needs • Demonstrates personal integrity, honesty and respect • Respects the colleague's perceptions, learning styles and well being • Promotes healthy work-life balance whilst recognising the needs of the organisation
B2 Establishes a learning environment	• Ensures that the physical environment is conducive to coaching • Establishes a psychologically safe environment where the colleague feels safe to explore challenging situations • Confidently establishes and maintains rapport
B3 Manages oneself in the interests of the colleague	• Is aware of own qualities as a coach and uses these to support • Manages own emotions and needs in the interests of the colleague • Is flexible and uses a range of approaches • Remains in the 'here and now' for the colleague



C. Communicating Effectively	
C1 Uses active listening and silences to add value	• Listens effectively and attentively and suspends judgement • Uses silences to allow colleague time to contemplate and think • Focuses on colleague's agenda not own agenda • Is able to hear what is said, what is not said and what cannot be said
C2 Uses powerful and probing questions	• Selects and uses purposeful questions to address deeper issues • Uses questions effectively to open up new areas of thinking • Uses questions effectively to challenge assumptions • Uses neutral questions to avoid influencing the colleagues direction of thought
C3 Uses language that has the greatest possible impact on the colleague	• Uses language that is appropriate to and clearly understood by the colleague • Re-frames questions to help understanding of issues and situations from a different perspective • Uses language that is respectful – (e.g. non racist, non-sexist non-patronising etc...) • Uses a range of communication techniques e.g. metaphor or analogy, to develop creative thinking
D. Facilitating And Learning	
D1 Develops colleague's awareness of themselves in work and life situations	• Actively promotes enquiry • Enables colleague to identify for themselves underlying concerns, ways of perceiving themselves to the world • Helps colleagues to explore beliefs and perceptions which might limit their effectiveness and enable them to take steps to change them • Help colleagues to identify useful resources which will help them build their own capacity
D2 Creates positive movement towards action	• Senses accurately the appropriate time to move to action • Empowers colleague to take responsibility for own learning and actions • Supports the development of self-belief and self confidence • Enables colleague to set a clear picture of the outcomes they want to achieve • Focuses on identifying and minimising barriers to excellence • Encourages the colleague to gather and use feedback from colleagues to provide a platform to progress
D3 Assists with planning and goal setting	• Empowers colleague to choose actions most appropriate for their situation from a range of alternatives • Motivates them to act in accordance with their values • Encourages them to examine cost and benefits of any actions being considered • Supports planning and goal setting that is realistic and will bring results • Provides ongoing support for and encourages colleague to try new behaviours and actions, and to reflect on their effectiveness

D. Facilitating And Learning (Continued)

D4 Manages progress and accountability

- Review progress between coaching sessions and builds on achievements
- Encourages colleague to share goals and plans with others
- Encourages colleague to identify their own support networks and to celebrate their achievements
- Prepares colleague to work independently of the coach
- Encourages to take responsibility for reviewing own progress against goals and outcomes.

These skills and attributes form a framework that can be used to develop individuals as coaches. It is essential that coaches are equipped with the appropriate skills and personal qualities and receive appropriate training and support to develop these.

“Coaching fits brilliantly with what we want to do and where we want to go. I want something that support people and gives them a chance to improve themselves. Something to build us up. If I get it right, I can use coaching to give these things focus.”

Primary Head Teacher

Underpinning these skills and attributes and key personal attitudes, described by Carl Rogers as ‘attitudes to coaching’.



Excellence in Coaching

What does excellent coaching behaviour look like?

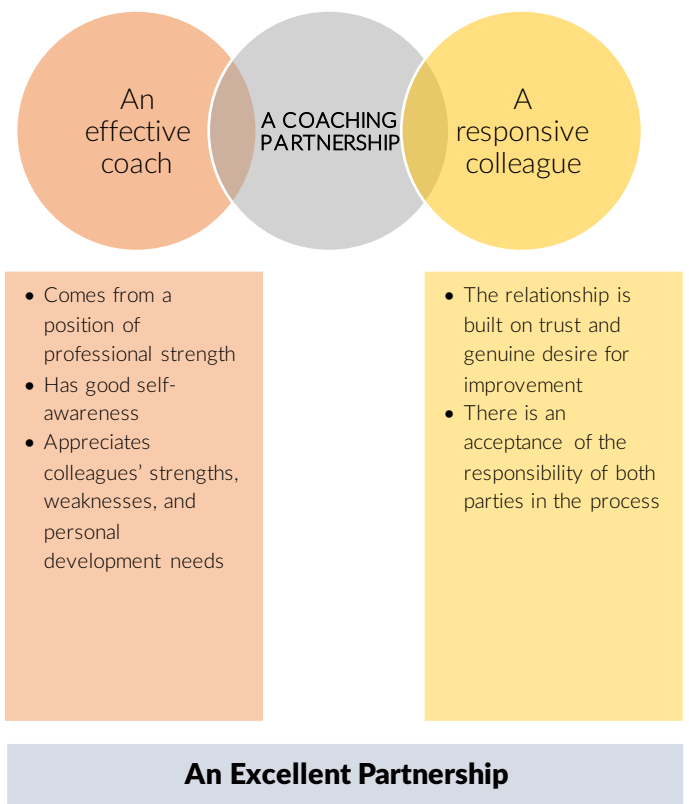
- Non-threatening
- Respectful
- Doing the right thing (ethical/moral)
- Firm, confident assertive
- Challenging
- Based upon a peer-to peer relationship (non-hierarchical)

What constitutes an excellent coaching experience?

- The coach does not dominate the airspace or force the process
- Focus is on the colleague's agenda
- Colleague will find the solution
- Proceedings are confidential
- Coach does not tell colleague what to do
- Coaches experience and opinions do not intrude on the process
- Coach listens, questions, reflects, summarises, and synthesises

What constitutes an excellent climate for coaching?

- A proactive and optimistic approach to change and personal development
- A common understanding of vision and direction and desired outcomes
- An openness to discussion about performance
- A clear leadership view of the benefits of coaching
- Development of a common language around personal, team and organisational improvement



CHAPTER FOUR: AN EXCELLENT COACH

Coaching - The Basic Format

- ✓ Ensure clarity of expectation - How long is the session? How many sessions? Venue? Focus?
- ✓ Begin by building rapport – feeling/empathy question – How are you?
- ✓ Listen with your eyes as well as your ears
- ✓ Act with curiosity and intuition
- ✓ Employ good self-management – don't talk too much, stay on the colleague's agenda, no anecdotes, no advice, no sharing experiences

Excellent Coaching

- Is based on the premise that an excellent coach will have strong coaching skills
- Excellent coaches believe that people only change through self-discovery, they don't believe that people change by being told by others what is lacking in them and how they need to address it

Essential Skills for Excellent Coaching

Coaching & Mentoring are both well-known ways of working effectively with colleagues and enhancing professional development. They are 2 separate processes.

Putting it simply, coaching is about “drawing out” with an emphasis on the colleagues coming up with their own solutions. Mentoring is more about “putting in” whereby an experienced and respected colleague provides more advice and guidance.

They share the same skill set for both, excellent coaching skills are vital.

“The individual conversations I have with my staff are the most valuable part of my work. I learn a great deal from them, and they have the opportunity to talk and be listened to”

Primary School Headteacher

These are the four essential skills in coaching and mentoring:

They are best learned from experience and practice:

1. Active listening
2. Questioning skills
3. Summarising and giving feedback
4. Influencing skills, to ensure a positive impact



1. Active Listening – What is it?

Active Listening is a way of listening that focuses entirely on what the other person is saying and confirms understanding of both content of the message and the emotions and feelings underlying the message to ensure that understanding is accurate.

Here are some guidelines with suggested useful questions.

Guidelines for Active Listening	Example Question/Behaviour
1. Use open questions to encourage the other person to talk	"So, what would you like to discuss?"
2. Paraphrase what they say	"As I understand it, what you are saying is..."
3. Reflect on the implications	"So that may mean ..."
4. Acknowledge underlying feelings	"How did that make you feel?"
5. Encourage further contribution	"Tell me a bit more about that?"
6. Use encouraging non-verbal responses	Eye contact, nodding and encouraging sounds "mm" and "uh huh"

An excellent coach will:

1. Listen to understand people's perspective [whether you agree or disagree] – suspend judgement
2. Listen for people's aspirations and inner needs
3. Listen for people's passion
4. Listen for thinking or behaviours that are inconsistent with intentions
5. Listen for people's real story
6. Listen for unexamined assumptions
7. Listen for gaps in people's reasoning
8. Listen for emotion themes
9. Listen for readiness to act

Good practice:

In interpreting message accurately and sensitively key elements are:

- Use of appropriate language, tone and carefully chosen words
- Body language and facial expressions

Skilled practitioners use non-verbal behaviour to reinforce what they are saying

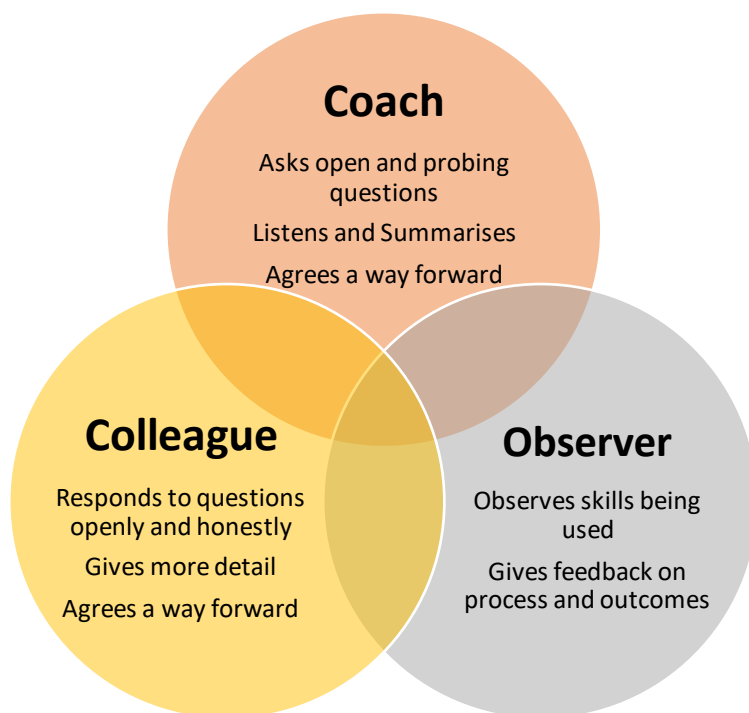
- Use supporting and encouraging questions, smiles, affirmative nods
- Make eye contact without staring
- Look interested and staying relaxed
- Asking intuitive questions and avoid interrupting
- Use silences to allow your colleague to contemplate and think



2. Questioning Skills

A hallmark of a good coach is the ability to ask the right question at the right time. Appropriate questions often initiate useful responses. To develop this skill, you need time and practice. Peer coaching with colleagues in triads is a productive way of achieving this.

Types of questions - Consider the following types and examples of questions and the advantages and disadvantages of each.



Type of question	Example	Benefits	Drawbacks
Open question	Open questions normally start with who, where, what, why, when, how. Why did you leave? To what extent would you say? How do you feel?	These encourage the other person to talk freely, as little or no restriction is placed on their answer. They enable people to 'open up' on any topic, opinions or feelings.	The person may talk too much, drift away from the subject and start to control the interview. To avoid this, try using a qualifier. For example, 'very briefly, tell me how you...' or 'in a few words....'
Closed questions	What time did it happen? How long did it take? Did you speak first?	These questions can be effective in verifying specific information, re-focusing on the subject in hand or emphasising a vital point.	They can be very unhelpful when dealing with feelings. For example, 'did that make you feel bad?' may not illicit the depth of response you hoped for.

Type of question	Example	Benefits	Drawbacks
Probing/ reflective questions	Why did you say that? What, in particular, made you feel like that? Are you telling me that...	Useful in seeking depth and detail.	The employee may feel threatened. Attention must be given to anticipating and monitoring the effect on the person.
Leading questions	You're not suggesting that...? You must admit that...? Why don't you try doing...?	These questions should be avoided.	You may run the risk of putting words in someone's mouth and leading them towards your own conclusions.
Multiple questions	Can you tell me what happened, how you felt and what you did about it?	These questions should be avoided.	The person is unsure what part of the question to answer first, and so confusion can arise.

Deciding which questioning technique to use and when:

- At the start of the discussion, it is usually best to ask open questions
- You might then follow up with probing questions, with information verified using closed questions where necessary
- Open and probing questions are more likely to get to the real and deeper issues. These types of questions can open up new areas of thinking, can challenge assumptions.....

Tips:

Start your question in one of the following ways:

- As concisely as possible, tell me how you...
- Very briefly, outline...
- In a few words, explain...

However, be conscious of interrupting a train of thought by asking too many questions.

When asking searching and probing questions, ensure your body language is calm and neutral, be aware of your colleague feeling threatened. Anticipate and observe the effect of your questions on the other person.

3. Summarising and Giving Feedback

These skills are the best way of demonstrating that you have actively listened. They will help build upon a relationship based on trust, confidence, and respect. When summarising some **'BC's'** to bear in mind:

- Be clear
- Be concise
- Be constructive
- Be considerate
- Be careful
- Be calm

By using appropriate and respectful language, insightful summaries can help colleagues to understand issues or situations from a different perspective. Using a variety of communication techniques, such as metaphors or analogies can develop creative thinking.

Back- channelling is a name given to behaviour in a conversation where the listener gives vocal feedback to indicate that he/she is paying attention. It is a minimal response, almost always involving a short phrase or single word, - such as "yes" "sure" "right" or a gesture such as head nodding etc... It shows you are listening, but not necessarily signifying agreement.

4. Influencing skills

"The ability to persuade, convince or impact others in order to constructively control conversations."

Things you need to consider:

- The need to think on the spot
- Whether you might need a break
- Whether you need to change your approach
- On a frequent basis, are you in control?

TIPS: When reflecting on current or past coaching conversations keep a simple log, noting positive examples of evidence you achieved in the 4 areas.

When having conversations with colleagues, always try to

- Develop their self-awareness
- Provide opportunities for joint action planning
- Help them to set realistic goals
- Encourage them to regularly review and evaluate



The importance of good feedback

An effective coach is essentially a critical friend. Good friends are supportive, trustworthy, and honest. Constructive and challenging feedback is a key aspect of successful coaching, as it helps people to develop and learn.

- Its purpose is to encourage team members to repeat their positive behaviours and to improve their less helpful ones, and it should be seen as positive and helpful in team building
- Giving and receiving feedback does not come naturally to many – it requires courage, practice and learning from experience.

The ability to both give and receive high quality feedback is a characteristic of strong leadership. It is essential to create a safe and private environment with no interruptions to give feedback in a constructive and positive way.

The asking for and receiving feedback should become a natural way of operating in a good team.

How it is done is critical- it should:

- Show there is strength or an issue by using examples which have been observed/ recorded
- Be connected to the way people think and interact – not personalities
- Be focused on honesty and good intent
- Be done as soon as possible after the event
- Ensure there is consensus between what is said and what is done – if not, question this
- Focus on a positive outcome
- Identify what is missing that will reduce any negative impacts and improve performance
- Not simply label what is right and what is wrong
- Open up opportunities to build on strengths, and not been seen as a threat
- Be motivated by an honest desire to help

- Be based on dialogue not monologue – talk with them not at them!
- Be given at a time and place suitable for the individual

If done professionally it should...

- Result in a consensus about strengths and issues
- Focus on behaviour and performance not personality
- Offer specific actions for greater use of strengths and suggest improvements
- Conclude with agreed specific action plans

The essence of coaching: some summary quotes

“Coaching is unlocking a person’s potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.”

Whitmore

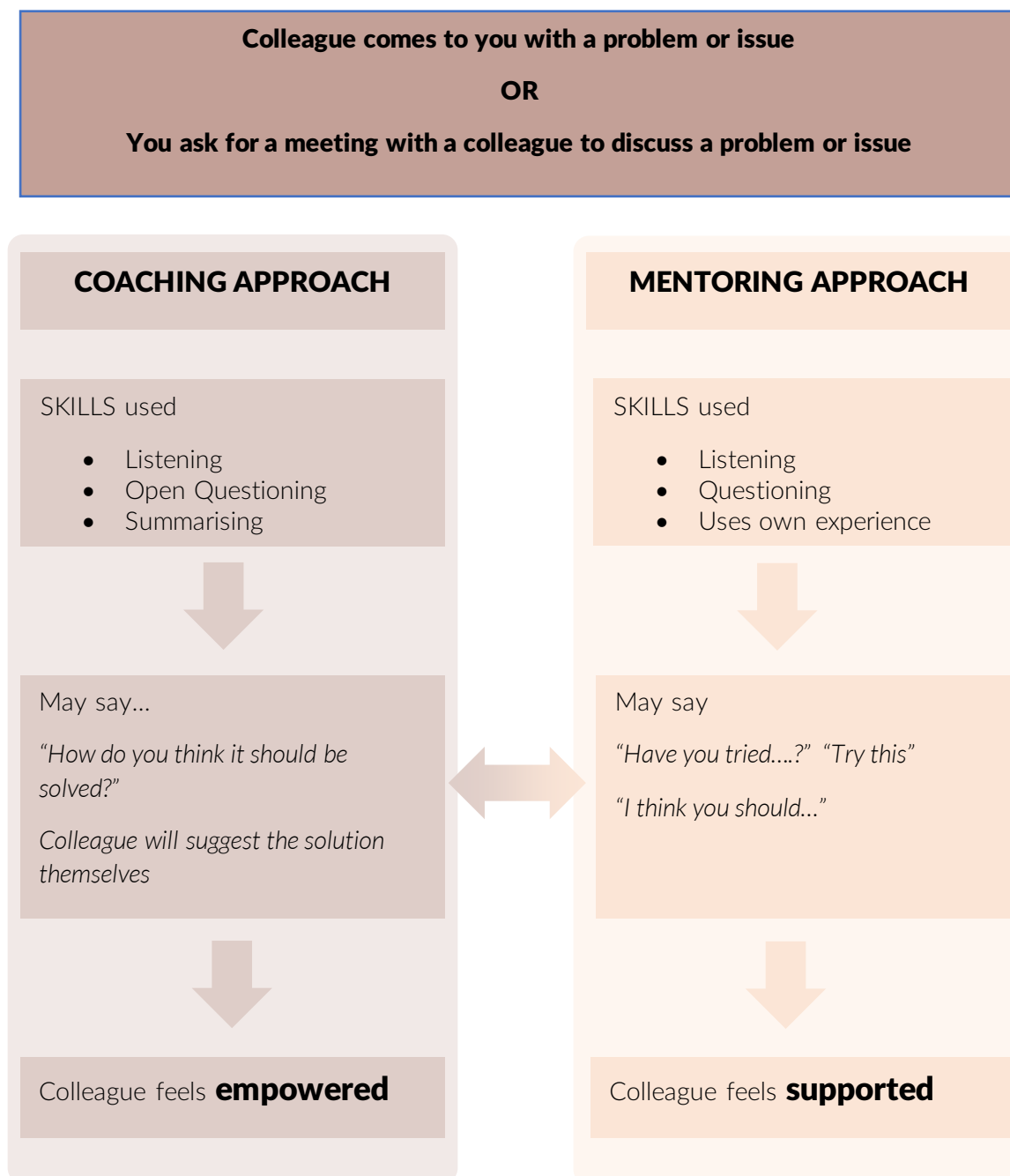
‘Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I will remember. Involve me and I will learn’

Abbott

“The coaching process should focus on helping individuals gain greater understanding of the issues they are focusing on and enable them to make better decisions than they would have done otherwise”

Promoting Excellence

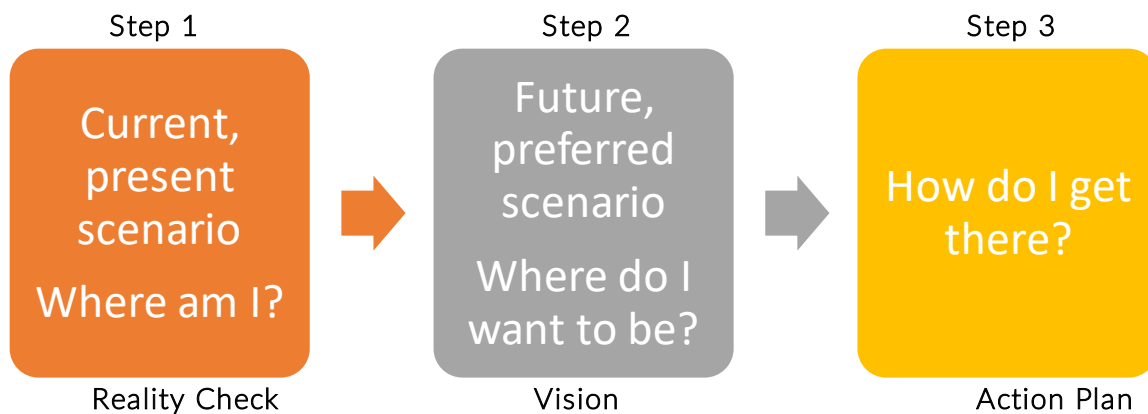
Summary – Coaching and Mentoring Approaches



APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Model - The Process of Change



It is worth spending quality time clarifying the present situation. Failure to do this can lead to a septic focus, and the drawing of inaccurate conclusions and assumptions.

The benefits of a model:

- It provides clear structure and route map for the coaching process
- It provides guidance on the kinds of interventions that would be most helpful, whilst remaining flexible

Mutual Contracting

At the outset of the coaching relationship, a contract should be agreed by both parties. Common features of successful codes of practice are:

- Having a transparent process but one with ultimate respect for confidentiality
- All information shared is treated with strictest confidence
- There should be agreed timescales with opportunities for review and feedback
- A clear set of outcomes should be agreed, ensuring that both parties are clear of their respective responsibilities



Appendix 2: An exemplar coaching agreement

The purpose of this agreement is to clearly define and set out expectations of the coach and colleague prior to any coaching taking place, so that both participants are aware of their responsibilities and commitment required for effective coaching sessions.

As a coach I will:

- Behave with integrity and ethically. In doing so I will be non-judgemental, will avoid an abuse of power, and will avoid causing you undue stress or uncomfortableness.
- Be focused on you and your best interests, which will determine your goals and your successes in meeting these goals
- Support and encourage you to develop to your full potential
- Allow you to work towards your chosen goals without presenting my views unless asked to do so
- Ask you questions that will challenge your ideas and thoughts as the coaching progresses in a sensitive manner
- Provide timely and appropriate feedback
- Seek your feedback on the sessions so as to develop my own abilities as a coach

As a colleague you will:

- Engage with the sessions in an open manner, being receptive to change and responsive to feedback
- Be open to new ways of working and trying to approach situations in new ways previously not considered
- Be honest with yourself and your coach
- Commit to your development through honest two-way feedback

The content and outcomes of the sessions will remain confidential between you and your coach unless agreement has been reached to share information. However, if there is a concern regarding a safeguarding matter, and actual or potential illegal act, or the school's integrity, the coach will share these concerns with the relevant authority

In the event that a session needs to be cancelled, please give 24 hours' notice

Both the coach and coaches will need to prepare for the sessions in advance, and the colleague accepts that some homework/preparation may be set and should be undertaken.

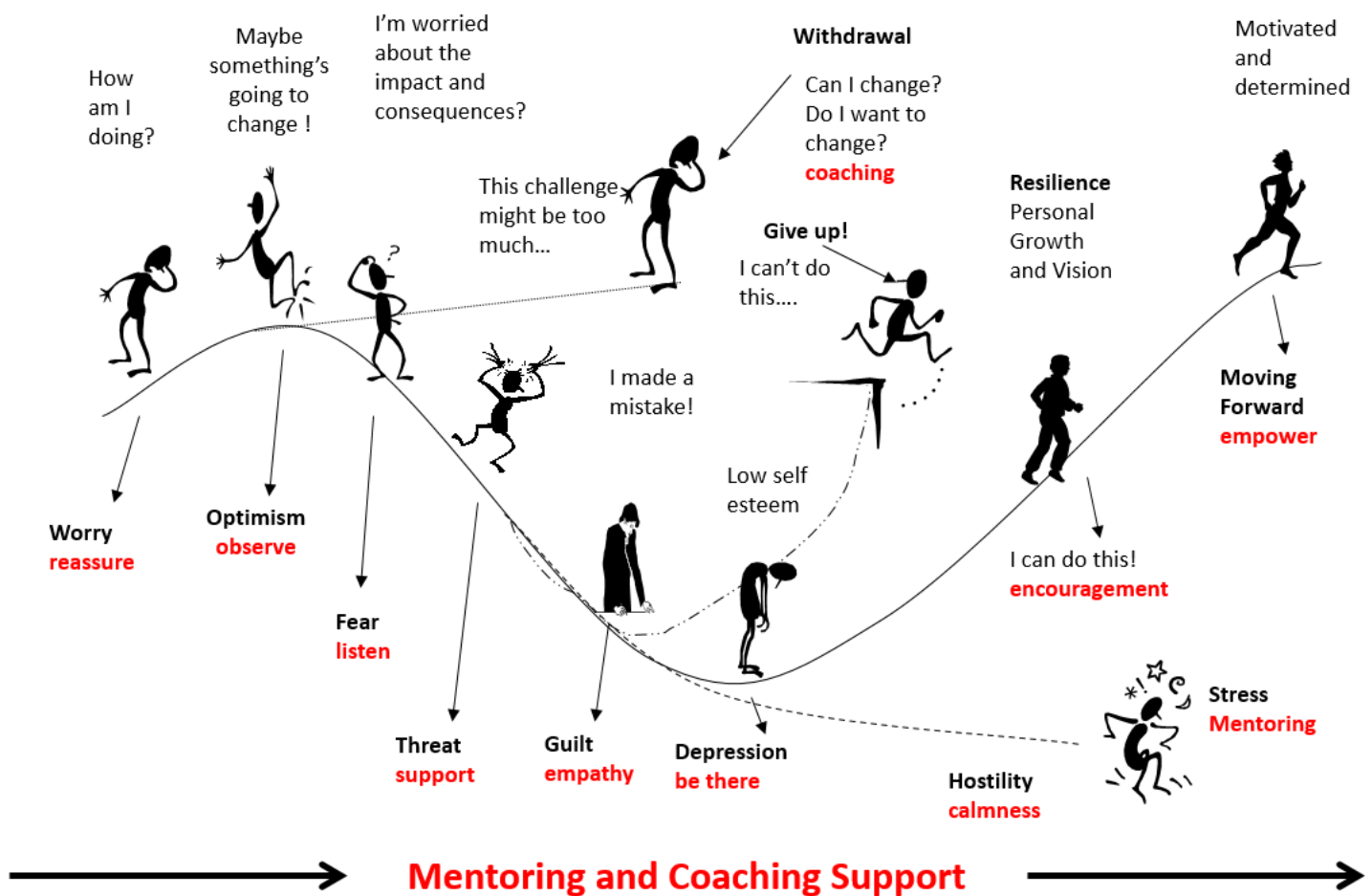
In signing below, both the coach and colleague accept the terms of this agreement.

Signed Coach....

Signed Colleague....

Date...

My Personal Development



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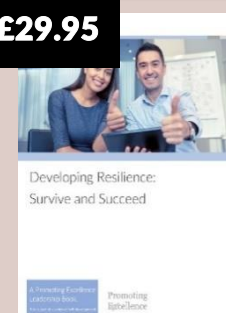
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