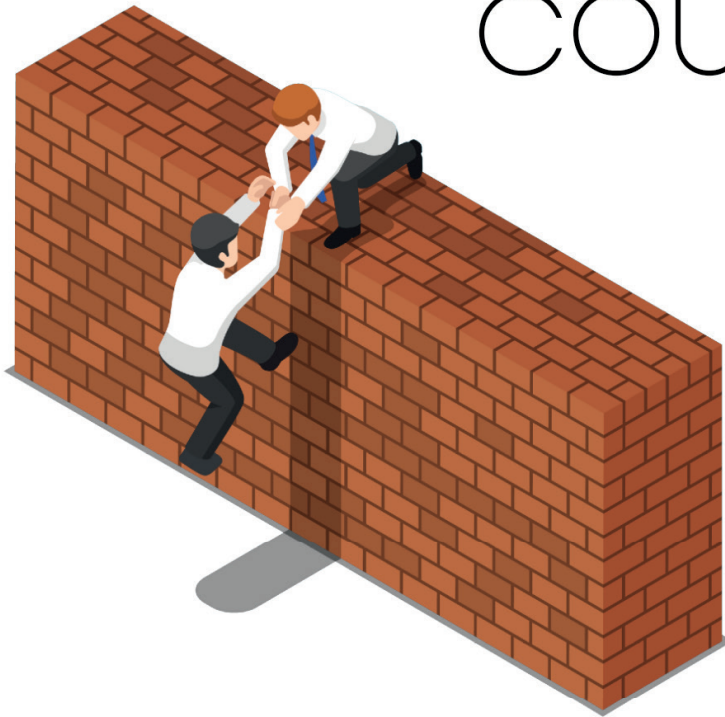




MENTORING & COACHING COURSE



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1. Introduction and objectives

This workbook has been designed to be used both during and after participation on the one-day ISC mentoring and coaching course to aid delegates learning and provide more in-depth theory.

The aim of this mentoring and coaching course is to equip candidates with tools they can use to support others in their personal development, including dealing with problems and difficulties. When coaching or mentoring others, the temptation is to skew the process by providing solutions to problems instead of placing the onus back onto the person who is being mentored or coached.

The course will help candidates understand the dynamic of working on a one-to-one basis with others and the various ways in which they can be successfully mentored and coached.

By the end of the training you will be able to:

- Gain effective mentoring and coaching skills based on widely recognised evidence-based methods
- Learn the difference between doing, telling and coaching
- Develop stronger questioning, listening and answering skills
- Learn how to motivate and guide others, and assist them in their personal and professional development
- Develop methods to deal with under- and over-confidence issues
- Learn how to empower others to drive their own development
- Learn how to give effective feedback
- Discover the virtues and values of patience

Your objectives

List below the objectives you would like to achieve from this course:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

2. What is coaching?



- How would you define coaching?
- What opportunities do you have to coach?

Some definitions of coaching

Coaching is a style of management in which the manager encourages people to reach their full potential by encouraging self-belief and self-development. Scott Bradbury (The Power of Questions)

Coaching facilitates the process of generating awareness and responsibility within another, with the goal of improved performance through personal growth and change. Sir John Whitmore

As a coach you will help employees improve their ability to seek solutions to problems and help themselves change the way they perform at work. This is the opposite of the directive style of managing people where the coach has the answers, solves work problems and gives advice or instructions to follow precisely.

People learn better when they discover things for themselves, rather than being told by others.

*Tell me, and I will forget
Teach me, and I will remember
Involve me, and I will learn.*

Benjamin Franklin (1706 – 1790)

The coach believes in the potential of the coachee to reach that superior performance. The coach need not be an expert in the subject area but must have credibility in the eyes of the coachee in order to build the relationship. The coach is skilled in the process of coaching using a non-directive approach within a structured conversation.

Coaching is used in many aspects of life. There are sports coaches, executive coaches, life coaches, development coaches and performance coaches. One of the most important aspects of coaching is choosing the right approach to use. Many organisations use a non-directive coaching approach as it increases self-awareness and commitment to behaviour change. In order to achieve this, the coach uses a variety of skills such as listening, open questioning, reflecting and summarising to name but a few.

Coaching is a personal and professional relationship between two people, the coach and the coachee. It is a completely practical skill, underpinned by a good knowledge and understanding of the theories and applications of personal development.

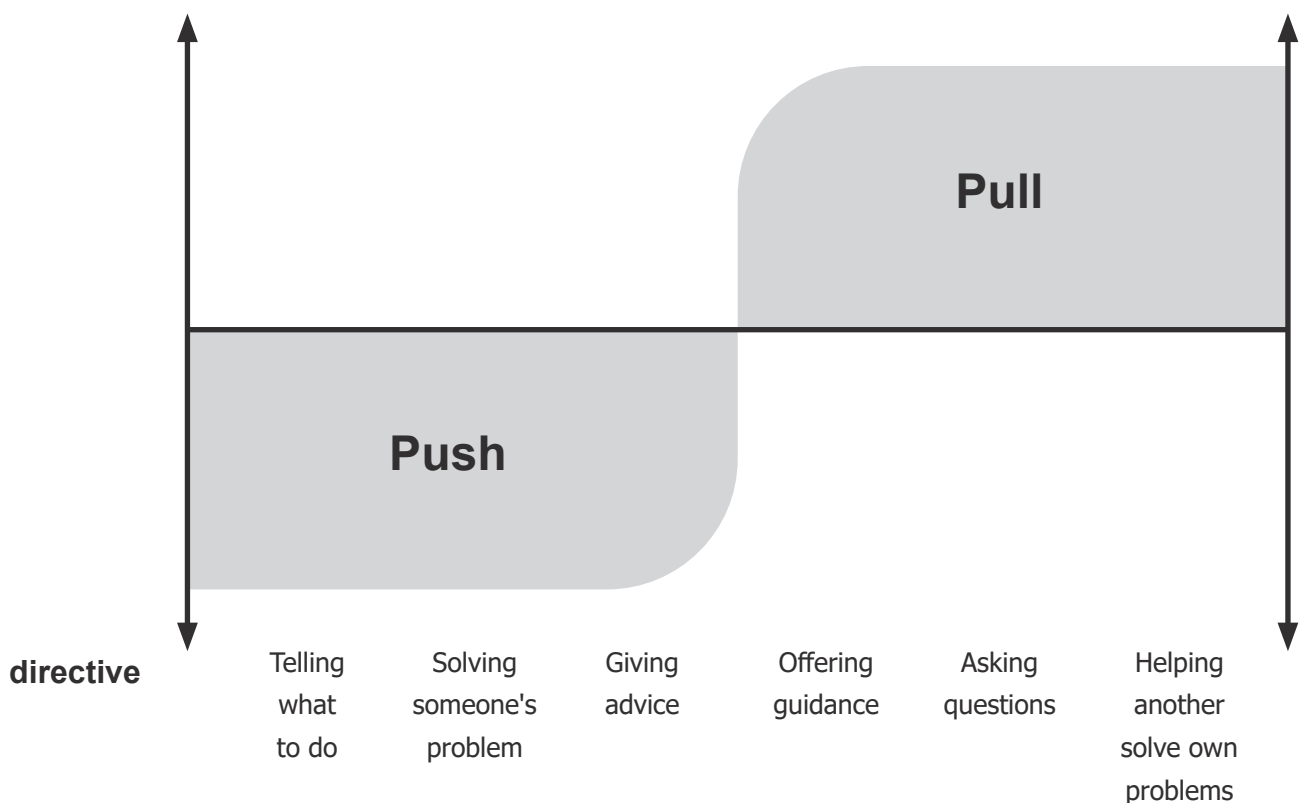
Directive coaching

A coach with a purely directive style of language assumes authority and superior knowledge in any given situation. Instructions are relayed that the individual is expected to follow. The coach isn't so much working with the coachee as he/she working on the coachee.

Collaborative coaching

Collaborative coaching means that the coach and the person being coached are working together to create changes. The coach's task is to use advanced skills of listening, questioning and reflection to create highly effective conversations and experiences for the individual. A collaborative coach's language is likely to be non-directive as opposed to directive. A non-directive approach adopts the principle that the person being coached probably knows more about their situation than the coach does and believes in the ability of the individual to create insights and ideas needed to move their situation forward.

Non-directive



- What are the pros and cons of taking a non-directive approach over a directive approach within your role as coach/mentor?

Where has coaching come from?

During the 1960s the business world began to look at sports coaching and started to adapt its ideas for use in learning and development. Instead of running faster, jumping higher, scoring more goals or winning more matches, coaches began to work with clients on issues such as:

- Stress related matters
- Work/life balance
- Conflict resolution
- Increasing performance and productivity
- Teamwork
- Relationship and communication issues

The US writer Timothy Gallwey played a key role in developing the methodology of coaching. In his 1974 book, 'The inner game of tennis' (1974) he argued that a coach's job is primarily to release the self-knowledge and potential that everyone possesses.

While most people do not aspire to be Olympic champions at work, there is a growing recognition that organisations and individuals need to manage their own learning. The argument outlined in Eric Parsloe and Monika Wray's book entitled 'Coaching and Mentoring for the Learning Organisation' (2005) is as follows:

- We are moving into an era of global, information technology-driven organisations. Success will depend on the speed with which new information is applied to current operations, problems and opportunities.
- Storage, transfer and retrieval of information is essentially technology driven, but application of that information is driven by people.
- Applying information effectively means that people and organisations will need to learn to do things differently as a result of new information.
- Since new information is becoming continuously available, learning will need to be continuous for all organisations.
- Only organisations and individuals who actively manage their learning processes will be successful – or indeed will survive.

- **How do you think this applies to you?**

3. The difference between coaching, counselling and consulting

- What is the difference between coaching, counselling and consulting?

Coaching is often confused with other therapies and practices because it applies similar skills and techniques. Coaching is not psychotherapy, but it does use techniques derived from clinical psychology. The main differences between coaching and therapy are as follows:

- Coaching deals with clients who are functional. They may be dissatisfied with some aspect of their lives but it is usually because they want to improve their performance in a particular area, not always because they have a problem
- Coaching focuses the individual on the future, it is not about unravelling problems or difficulties
- Coaching does not deal with clinical issues such as depression

Consulting	Coaching	Counselling
Provide answers	Present to future	Past to present
Acts as a catalyst	Future and action based	Resolves past issues
Gives you the answers. Offers suggestions and solutions	Allows you to find the answers	Usually deals with personal issues
Working a problem from outside-in	Working a work related problem from inside-out	Digs up old problems
	Asks "why not?"	Asks "why?"
	Creating the present and future	Healing the past

Consultants tend to be business experts whereas coaches have expertise in interpersonal skills and emotions. Coaching is also concerned with relationships whereas traditional consultancy is based on information. Coaches facilitate solutions with teams and individuals whereas consultants give the answers. Coaching can be more personalised and consulting can be prescriptive, giving commercial solutions.

4. Coaching compared to training

- How does coaching compare to training?

Research suggests that only 8 to 12 percent of those who attended training courses translate new skills and knowledge into measurable performance improvement or business results.

This is because most training programs don't allow for the skills to be put into practice, and there is no feedback or ongoing support. When an employee's skill level deteriorates during the initial application of new skills, there is no support mechanism in place, and therefore the individual reverts to his/her previous behaviour.

Perry Zeus and Suzanne Skiffington's book 'The Complete Guide to Coaching at Work' outlines some differences between training and coaching as follows:

- The training agenda is fixed and set by the trainer, whereas in coaching, the individual sets the agenda, which can be fluid and flexible.
- In training, change comes from the outside, whereas coaching works with the client to clarify values and enhance intrinsic motivation.
- Some trainees benefit from a training program while others don't. By contrast, the coaching intervention is personalised and geared towards the individual's needs and aspirations.
- Trainees are frequently assigned to a training course, whereas, ideally, coaching is voluntary.
- Training tends to reinforce a traditional, hierarchical style of management, whereas coaching is more democratic and collaborative in its process.

5. Coaching compared to mentoring

- **How does coaching compare to mentoring?**

Mentoring is often compared and confused with coaching. Mentoring is a natural way of passing on knowledge, skills and experiences to others by someone who is usually older and wiser with broad life experiences and specific expertise.

Other definitions of mentoring are as follows:

- "One who offers knowledge, insight, perspective or wisdom that is especially useful to the other person". Shea, 1996
- A protected relationship in which experimentation, exchange and learning can occur and skills, knowledge and insight be developed. (Mumford)
- A partnership between two people built upon trust. It is a process in which the mentor offers ongoing support and development opportunities to the mentee. Addressing issues and blockages identified by the mentee, the mentor offers guidance, counselling, support in the form of pragmatic and objective assistance. (Jenny Sweeney)
- "A role model.... A guide, a tutor, a coach and a confidant." (Clutterbuck)
- "A career friend, knowledgeable about your field who advises and encourages". Rolfe-Frett, 1996
- Traditionally, within a hierarchical institution, a mentor was one who gave advice to junior people who were often powerless. In today's world, a mentor has more of an equal relationship with the mentee based on a more mutual, equal and collaborative learning alliance.

- Perhaps the simplest way to describe the relationship between coaching and mentoring is to view coaching as a style of relationship that can be employed in mentoring.

Similarities	Differences
Both require well developed interpersonal skills.	Mentoring invents a future based on the expertise and wisdom of another, whereas coaching is about inventing a future from the individual's own possibilities.
Both require the ability to generate trust, to support commitment and to generate new actions through the use of listening and speaking skills.	Mentors are recognised as experts in their field.
Both shorten the learning curve.	Mentoring is usually specifically career focussed in terms of career advancement.
Both aim for the individual to improve his or her performance and be more productive.	Mentors usually have experience at senior management level, and have a broad knowledge or organisational structure, policies, power and culture.
Both encourage the individual to stretch, but can provide support if the person falters or gets out of his or her depth.	Mentors freely give advice and opinions regarding strategies and policies, whereas coaching is about evoking answers in the individual.
Both provide support without removing responsibility.	Mentors have considerable power and influence to advance the individual's career and advocate promotion.
Both require a degree of organisational know-how.	Mentors convey and instil the standards, norms and values of the profession/ organisation. Coaching is more about exploring and developing the individual's own values, vision and standards.
Both focus on learning and development to enhance skills and competencies.	
Both stimulate personal growth to develop new expertise.	
Both can function as a career guide to review career goals and identify values, vision and career strengths.	
Both are role models	

6. Four styles of mentoring

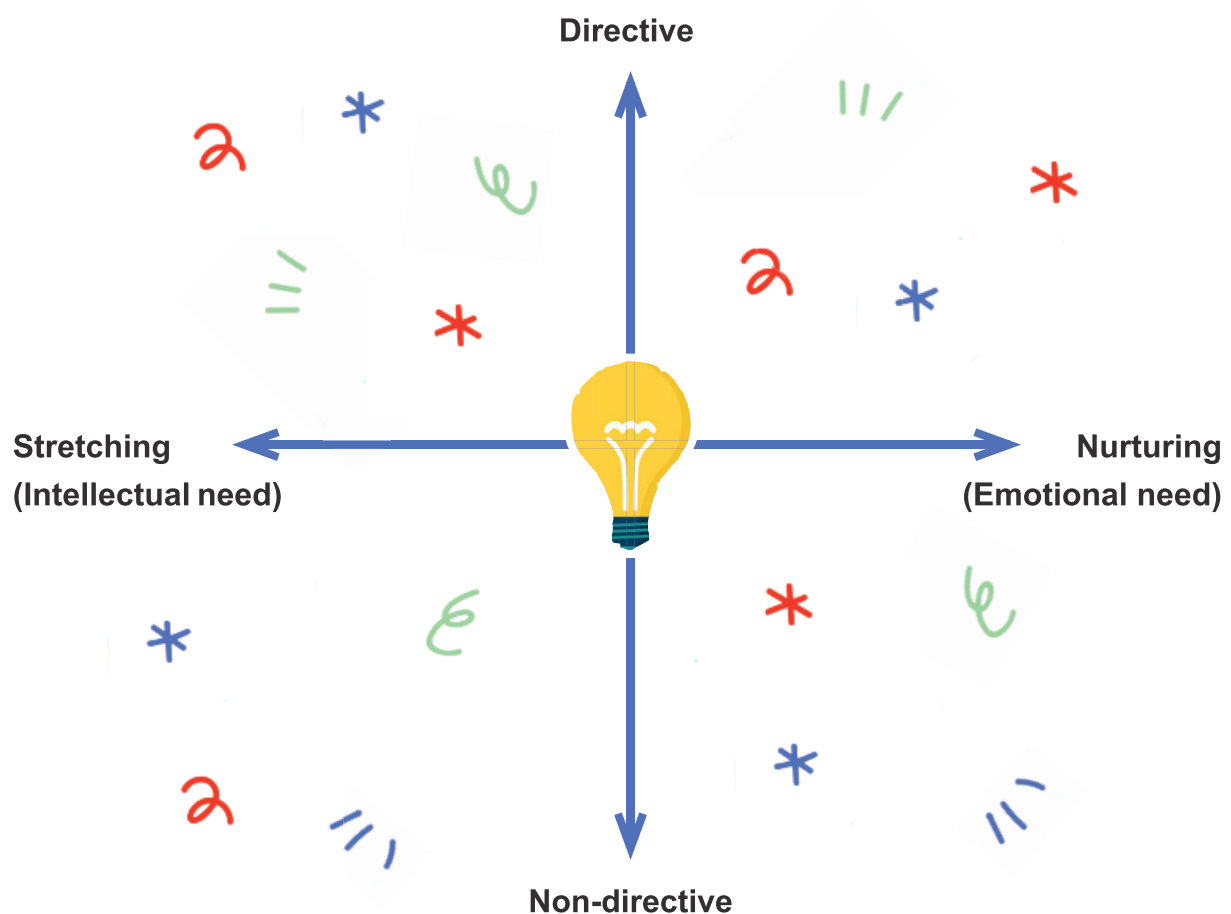
Clutterbuck (2001) highlights four basic styles of helping (dimensions) in mentoring which relate to a set of behaviours which run along two continuums of approach:

1. The directive, non-directive continuum
2. The stretching, nurturing continuum.

The stretching, nurturing continuum refers to learning in the sense of the extent to which mentees are stretched and challenged or nurtured, supported and encouraged.

Four basic styles of helping

Clutterbuck, D. (2001) Everyone needs a mentor



Clutterbuck identified the importance of non-directive approach by suggesting that the most effective mentoring relationship is one in which the mentee is relatively proactive, whilst the mentor is relatively passive or reactive (Clutterbuck;2004). Nonetheless, he does advocate a more flexible approach which is responsive to individual needs:

“The essence of effective mentoring is that mentors have the facility to move along the dimensions, in any direction, in response to their observations of the learner’s need at the time.” (Clutterbuck ;2004;17)

From the above they isolated four helping-to-learn styles

1. **Directive/stretching:** This might include - Challenging learner’s assumptions, giving feedback, playing Devil’s advocate, being a storyteller, being a critical friend, demonstrating how you do something, delegating a challenging task (Teaching)
2. **Directive/nurturing:** This is the one many mentors find easiest to do (sometimes they come away from a coaching course thinking that they should never use this) The reality is that sometimes straight answers are very appropriate. This might include - Giving advice, giving information, role modelling, dealing with personal issues, providing insight into opportunities and being an advocate. (In the extreme you should be careful – e.g. putting mentees forward for high profile tasks, tipping them off about opportunities, moulding learner’s career) (Guardian)
3. **Non-directive/nurturing:** This might include - Acting as a sounding board and being there to listen (Counselling)
4. **Non-directive/stretching:** This might include - Clarifying goals, helping someone structure their decisions, helping mentees network by making them aware of resources available to them (Information and people), networking/facilitating, (Non-directive coaching / networking)

- **When could you use or have you used each of the above styles?**

7. Benefits of coaching

- What do you see as the benefits of coaching to the individual, the coach and the organisation?

For the individual:

- Enhanced skills and awareness
- A sense of ownership own learning process; better able to solve own problems
- Confidence and independence to identify and act on development needs
- Sense of achievement
- A learning process to match their own needs and learning style
- Appreciation for their manager because of their personnel involvement and support

For the coach:

- Develops the skills of an existing employee, rather than having to take on extra or replacement staff
- Provides the coach with a sense of achievement and value
- Helps the coachee reinforce and apply theoretical and knowledge-based learning acquired through courses and any other form of training
- Staff who are more competent, motivated, flexible and open to change
- More ideas and initiatives from the team
- More cooperation
- Better value from development programmes
- In the longer term, more time as staff become more competent

For the organisation:

- Faster implementation of organisational changes
- Provides a cost-effective approach to development, targeted specifically at one individual and their identified needs
- Motivates employees and therefore avoids unnecessary staff turnover and the associated replacement costs of recruitment and initial training
- More effective performance through teams by encouraging people to value learning, and being more open to change
- Implementing “competences” and “values” in daily behaviours
- Sends a positive message to other employees
- Meeting people’s expectations
- Meeting staff expectations of personal growth and development
- Talent management and preparation of successors

What does this mean for you as a coach?

Coaching works at a number of levels. Coaching works because it directs itself and tunes into the heart of motivation and commitment. It identifies goals, priorities and challenges people to take responsibility for their own learning and actions required to make this happen. It explores the knowledge and skills that people need to do their work competently and it communicates how important they are.

It is also a great way of motivating people and building confidence. It builds relationships and improves teamwork, developing and maximising skills and resources. Enhancing your coaching skills can increase the effectiveness of your leadership style. It demonstrates an interest in the person which can have huge benefits in terms of increasing motivation, gives clarity and focus to an individual's work and potentially provides personal challenges for the individual

8. Skills needed for effective coaching

- What are the skills needed for effective coaching?

The essential skills a coach must have are:

- Self-Awareness
- The Coaching Relationship
- Confidentiality
- Questioning
- Listening
- Use of silence
- Flexibility
- Checking understanding
- Providing feedback
- Setting goals and supporting action
- Motivating and inspiring
- Confidence

9. Questioning skills

A coach must develop a clear understanding of the person being coached and the issues involved.

Often the person is unable or unwilling to express their view of the situation clearly. It is then up to you to devise a way to gain helpful responses. This definitely comes with practice and good listening skills.

The aim of coaching is for the coach to take the coachee's lead and structure the question according to what the coachee is sharing.

The aim is for the coach to enable the client to shift their existing thinking and to discover new options for themselves and to commit to taking appropriate action towards their goal.

A good question can literally 'switch the light on' for a person and can trigger many realisations and ideas. As you develop the art of questioning you also must learn to use silence to create space for the other person to search for the answer. A good coach will ask questions that the coachee may never have dared to ask themselves.

Do:

- ☒ Be prepared to explain clearly why you need to ask questions.
- ☒ Put the person at ease by asking your questions in a friendly, supportive manner.
- ☒ Acknowledge answers in a polite and encouraging tone.
- ☒ Probe for more information e.g. "Have we covered everything?"
- ☒ Develop people's self-awareness e.g. "What do you feel went well on that project?" and "What have you found difficult?"
- ☒ Get individuals to consider future scenarios by using forward looking questions e.g. "Who else could you involve and how might they help?"

Don't:

- ☒ Ask long winded questions; you may not be understood.
- ☒ Ask multiple questions; the coachee won't know which one to answer.
- ☒ Ask leading questions; they can undermine self-esteem.
- ☒ Ask lots of closed questions; they can lead to a barrage of 'no' answers.
- ☒ Ask trick questions; they can be demotivating.
- ☒ Assume that what you hear is a complete answer.
- ☒ Answer your own questions; it's their agenda not yours.
- ☒ Be side-tracked. Interesting to you does not mean relevant.

Types of questions to use in coaching

Single word questions

The coach's role is primarily to raise the client's awareness. Listening closely for the language being spoken the coach is able to repeat single words to encourage honesty and clarity.

For example: The coachee says: 'I always say the wrong thing.....' and the coach replies: 'Always?'

Or, the coachee says: 'I'm never any good at anything creative.....' and the coach replies: 'Never?'

Open and closed questions

The most common categorisation of questions is open and closed. Closed questions are seeking specific information which can often be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer. Open questions provide space for the person to decide how much information they disclose and the exact nature of their response. This often leads to a fuller answer because open questions tend to invite the other person to think a little before responding and they open up the thinking process.

Open questions

- What was important about this for you?
- How did you feel about that?
- What did you say in the meeting?
- How is your work going at the moment?

TED questions

Asking questions, the TED way is another way of eliciting lots of information

- Tell me e.g. tell me what happened, tell me what's gone well, tell me your ideal outcome
- Explain e.g. explain what you mean, explain your ideas
- Describe e.g. describe what you see as a solution, describe how you would solve the problem

Closed questions

- Did you say anything in the meeting?
- Is finishing this important?
- Did you finish that report on time?
- Have you been in your job more than six months?

- **Notes on questioning**

10. Questioning skills exercise

Prepare one **OPEN** and one **PROBING** question for each of the following scenarios.

1.	What the coachee feels are their weak points.
2.	Why the coachee appears to be demotivated.
3.	Why the coachee feels they have a development need in an area in which you believe they are competent.
4.	Why the coachee has recently made a serious error.
5.	How the coachee views your management/mentoring style.
6.	Why the coachee has a problem meeting deadlines.
7.	What training need the coachee has.
8.	Whether the coachee has anything else they wish to raise.

- **Notes on questioning**

11. The GROW model

The **GROW** model presents the key stages in the coaching cycle and a checklist of possible questions to ask at each stage of the process to enable the coachee to:

- Increase awareness of own development needs
- Set goals and make realistic action plans
- Take ownership of own development
- Build commitment and enthusiasm to reach own goals

The GROW model is a well-established and useful format for structuring a coaching conversation. It keeps the conversation on track and ensures that the result of each coaching interaction is a goal(s) and set of actions that will move the coachee forward.

Goal:	The focus and aims of the coaching session
Reality:	The current situation
Options:	What has been tried, what could be explored, how realistic options are
Way forward:	Commitment to the action plan

Goal

It is important to discuss the goal, or the desired outcome before discussing the reality because it focuses the person on the future and from the outset, gets the person thinking positively about what they would like to achieve.

Goals – both target (overall goals) and sub-goals should be framed in terms of smart. The fact that coaching deals with the goal prior to the reality is one aspect that differentiates coaching from counselling or therapy. Setting a goal for each coaching session is the key to realising the ultimate goal of the client. It gives the coaching session focus and provides a tangible outcome enabling the client to see what has been achieved during the session. As the client becomes familiar with goal setting for each coaching session so they will see how they can apply the principles to their own goal achievement outside of the coaching relationship.

Reality

Once the goal has been established, the next step is to discuss the current reality. The aim at this stage is to clarify and gain a thorough understanding of the situation and context. This includes understanding the factors that are both supporting and hindering progress towards the goal. The relevance of the goal can be assessed and the goal reworded or restated as a result of talking through the current situation.

The important aspect when examining reality is to be objective. As coaches, we come to the coaching relationship with an open mind, completely free of prejudices, opinions, judgments, concerns and fears. The client can explore reality from a new perspective so that they can see things more as they are, more as they want them to be rather than how they appear to be.

Awareness is perceiving things as they really are. Self-awareness is recognising those internal factors that distort one's own perception of reality. Looking at the reality of a situation provides a practical and common-sense approach to the 'here and now'. It asks the client to consider the thoughts and actions that directly affect the realising of the goal and allows them to explore those areas around them that directly impact on and influence the outcomes.

Options

Once a thorough understanding of the situation has been gained, the next step is to discuss the options that are available to the person. All options should be explored and discussed and at this stage it is often useful for the coach and coachee to brainstorm various options. Each option should be assessed for its merits as well as the challenges it may present. The purpose of looking at options is not to find the 'right' answer but to create as many different courses of action as possible that could open up to the client.

The quality of ideas is not as important at this stage as the quantity of ideas. This is one area where the coach can think creatively with the client, especially if the client is a bit stuck. However as soon as all the cards are on the table, then the focus is back on the coachee to select which option appeals the most so that the session can move forward non-directively.

Way forward

This is where the coach and coachee work together to come up with a detailed action plan for taking forward the chosen option. The action plan should include the elements presented in the previous section. The coachee's commitment to the action plan should be discussed and if anything is in doubt, the goal and the option chosen should be reassessed. The coachee can be encouraged to summarise the session, making sure that they have clarity, and are fully committed to the chosen option, by stating exactly what their intended actions are, the timescale for completion and the means of evaluating success. A date for the next meeting should be agreed between the coach and coachee, during which progress can be reviewed and next steps planned.

The Myles Downey TGROW model shows a star connecting all the stages. this indicates that there may be times when the client takes you in a different direction or revisits parts of the model. It may be that as they begin to explore the options open to them, new realities are brought to light that impact on the way forward. When this happens simply return to the relevant part of the model and work through the sequence again.

- **Notes on GROW**

Goal –What do you want?	G
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the topic for discussion • Agree specific objectives for the session • Set a long-term aim if this is appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the subject matter or the issue on which you would like to work? • What form of outcome are you seeking by the end of the session? • How far and how detailed do you expect to get in this session? • In the long term what is your goal related to this issue? What is the time frame? • What intermediate steps can you identify, with their time frames?
Reality- What is happening now?	R
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite self-assessment • Offer specific examples of feedback • Avoid or check assumptions • Discard irrelevant history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the present situation in more detail? • What and how great is your concern about it? • Who is affected by this issue other than you? • Who knows about your desire to do something about it? • How much control do you personally have over the outcome? • Who else has some control over it and how much? • What action steps have you taken on it so far? • What stopped you from doing more? • What obstacles will need to be overcome on the way? • What, if any, internal obstacles or personal resistances do you have to taking action? • What resources do you already have? Skill, time, enthusiasm, budget, support, etc? • What other resources will you need? Where will you get them from? • What is really the issue here, the nub of the issue or the bottom line?

Options- What could you do?**O**

- **Cover the full range of options**
- **Invite suggestions from one being coached**
- **Offer suggestions carefully**
- **Ensure choices are made**

- What are all the different ways in which you could approach this issue?
- Make a list of all the alternatives, large or small, complete or partial solutions.
- What else could you do?
- What would you do if you had more time or a larger budget?
- What would you do if you could start again with a clean sheet or with a new team?
- Would you like any suggestions from me?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each of these in turn? Which would give them the best result?
- Which of these solutions appeals to you most?
- Which would give you the most satisfaction?

Wrap Up/Will – What will you do?**W**

- **Invite self-assessment**
- **Offer specific examples of feedback**
- **Avoid or check assumptions**
- **Discard irrelevant history**

- Which options do you choose?
- To what extent does this meet your objectives?
- What are your criteria and measurements for success?
- When precisely are you going to start and finish each action step?
- What could arise to hinder you in these steps or meeting the goal?
- What personal resistance do you have, if any to taking these steps?
- What will you do to eliminate these internal and external factors?
- Who needs to know what your plans are?
- What support do you need and from whom?
- What will you do to obtain that support and when?
- What could I do to support you?
- What commitment on a scale of one-to-ten do you have to taking these agreed actions?
- What prevents you from being a ten – do you need to break it up into smaller chunks?
- What could you do to alter or raise your commitment closer to ten?
- Is there anything else you want to talk about now or are we finished?

12. Observers' feedback

Use of coaching model

Did well:

Areas for improvement:

Active listening

Did well:

Areas for improvement:

Questioning

Did well:

Areas for improvement:

Goal-setting and action-planning

Did well:

Areas for improvement:

13. Listening skills

Effective questioning is pointless without the skill of listening, no matter how good the question is. When coaching, you need to listen not only for accuracy but also for the note of confidence in the person's voice. It can be tempting to dive in to offer advice if they are struggling. Instead pause and reflect as you consider the next question to help them find their own solution. The 80/20 rule applies to you – 80% listening, 20% talking.

Good tips for developing listening skills to use in coaching are:

- Show you are interested by maintaining eye contact and a friendly expression.
- Be alert to the tone of voice being used.
- Encourage the individual to describe their ideas and opinions freely (by using such prompts as "yes", "I see", "What happened then?").
- Show the person that you empathise.
- Summarise your understanding to help them make sense of complicated situations (by using phrases such as "So what I think you are saying is" or "Let me play that back to you just to check").
- Don't argue or interrupt.
- Use active listening techniques.

Creating space

Listening is the foundation of coaching and, in order to utilise this skill effectively, the coach needs to learn to create space for the coachee. There are two main aspects to creating space, first within oneself as the listener and secondly within the speaker.

If you sit quietly and become aware of your thoughts, you will notice how many you have and at what speed. In fact, thinking speed is thought to be in the region of 500 words per minute.

Creating space in ourselves is about taking control of our own thoughts and clearing our own inner space ready to listen. If your mind is on other things you will not be able to give someone your full attention. The coachee may also have many thoughts in their mind but a good coach will use silence and be present for the coachee giving them an opportunity to express themselves. A coach never puts words into the mouth of another or interrupts the coachee. In order for new thinking to happen the coachee needs to declutter their mind and be internally free.

Levels of listening

Level 1 – Internal listening

At level one the focus is on oneself. the conversation is listened to and interpreted in terms of what it means to you. Level 1 listening is commonly used in everyday life, to make arrangements, to find out what is going on, to gather information. While listening at this level your self-talk is very active.

Level 2 – Focused listening

At level 2, the focus is on the speaker. Occasionally, you will see people engrossed in a conversation, leaning forward, fully attentive. However, focused listening is not practiced very much in everyday life as it takes time and effort to listen in this way.

All the focus is on the other person and your mind is on their words, tone and body language. All the information being conveyed to you is noticed, the expression, the emotion, the energy, the positivity or negativity, and what is both said and unsaid. this kind of listening takes place in coaching, counselling and client-centred consulting.

Level 3 – Intuitive listening

At level 3, the focus is on the speaker as part of their wider environment, using intuition, outside stimuli, feeling emotion, and sensing signals. It is a kind of listening that a performer engages in when responding to the feel of an audience.

When people are listened to, they feel valued; they feel that what they say matters and what they think is important. To level with a person, to influence a person or to coach someone a manager needs to deepen his/her listening skills in order to build trust.

Poor Listening Behaviours

The faker

All the outward signs are there: nodding, making eye contact and giving the occasional “uh huh”. However, the faker isn’t concentrating on the speaker. Their mind is elsewhere.

The advice giver

Giving advice is sometimes helpful; however, at other times, this behaviour interferes with good listening, because it doesn’t allow the speaker to fully articulate his feelings or thoughts; it doesn't help the speaker solve their problems; it prohibits venting; it could also belittle the speaker by minimising his concern with a quick solution. Well-placed advice is an important function of leadership. However, advice given too quickly and at the wrong time is a turnoff to the speaker.

The interrupter

The interrupter doesn't allow the speaker to finish and doesn’t ask clarifying questions or seek more information

from the speaker. They are too anxious to finish the speaker's words and shows little concern for the speaker.

The rebuttal maker

This listener only listens long enough to form a rebuttal. Their point is to use the speaker's words against them. At their worst, they are argumentative and want to prove you wrong. At the least, they always want to make the speaker see the other point of view.

The intellectual or logical listener

This person is always trying to interrupt what the speaker is saying and why. They are judging the speaker's words and trying to fit them into their logic. They rarely ask about the underlying feeling or emotion attached to a message.

The happy hooker

The happy hooker uses the speaker's words as a way to get to their message. When the speaker says to get to his message. When the speaker says something, and frankly, it could be anything, the happy hooker steals the focus and then changes it to their own point of view, opinion, story or facts. Favourite hooker lines are, "Oh that's nothing, here's what happened to me..." I remember when I was..."

Listening techniques

Types	Purpose	Possible Responses
Clarifying	<p>To get additional facts</p> <p>To help the person explore all sides of a problem.</p>	<p>Can you clarify that?</p> <p>Do you mean?</p> <p>Is this the problem as you see it now?</p>
Restatement	<p>To check our meaning and interpretation with another</p> <p>To show you are listening and that you understand what the other has said.</p>	<p>As I understand it, your plan is...</p> <p>Is this what you have decided to do...and the reasons are.....</p>
Neutral	<p>To convey that you are interested and listening</p> <p>To encourage the person to continue talking</p>	<p>I see</p> <p>I understand</p> <p>That is a good point</p>
Reflective	<p>To show that you understand how the other feels about what he/she is saying.</p> <p>To help the person to evaluate and temper his or her own feelings as expressed by someone else.</p>	<p>You feel that...</p> <p>It was shocking as you saw it</p> <p>You felt that you didn't get a fair hearing.</p>
Summarising	<p>To bring all the discussion into focus in terms of a summary</p> <p>To serve as a springboard to discussion of new aspects of the problem.</p>	<p>These are the key ideas you have expressed...</p> <p>If I understand how you feel about the situation....</p>
Verbal encouragers	To show you are listening and encourage the coachee to continue.	"Right", "Yes", "Ah-hah"
Non-verbal encouragers	To show you are listening and encourage the coachee to continue.	Matching postures or gestures, eye contact, head nods, attentive body language.

Use of Silence

Use silence when appropriate because people will often feel the need to talk if you keep quiet.

Flexibility

Coaching is client led, which means that emotions have to be tapped into from the very beginning of the coaching process. So, having the flexibility to react to people's differences, along with the curiosity and interest to understand fundamental issues in people's lives, are also crucial in coaching.

Checking Understanding

Coaching is a two-way process. Whilst listening is crucial, so is being able to interpret and reflect back, in ways that remove barriers, pre-conceptions, bias and negativity. Communicating well enables trust and meaningful understanding on both sides.

Coaches are able to communicate feeling and meaning, as well as content – there is a huge difference. Communicating with no personal agenda, and without judging or influencing, are essential aspects of the communicating process, especially when dealing with people's anxieties, hopes and dreams.

Good coaching uses communication not to give the coachee the answers, but to help him / her find the answers for themselves.

- **Notes on listening**

14. Listening skills

Self understanding

Complete the following sentences with whatever comes to mind first and don't worry if you can't finish a sentence.

1. I'm quite happy to listen to somebody when... _____

2. I tend to feel friendly to speakers when... _____

3. I don't like speakers who... _____

4. Irritating habits in speakers include... _____

5. I can get quite anti when someone is talking about... _____

6. As a listener, I get a bit nervous when... _____

7. I get a lot of pleasure listening to someone talk about... _____

8. I tend to concentrate on what someone is saying if... _____

9. If I can't put my two-penneth into a conversation I feel.... _____

10. When I'm listening to someone speaking, I tend to spend most of the time... _____

**Now review what you have written,
then write down what you need to do to be a better listener**

15. Action learning sets

The action learning set (ALS) process

- An ALS consists of 5-6 members who meet on a regular basis (monthly).
- A good length of time that should be allocated is half a day, though this can be negotiated.
- Each member of the set is allocated time to speak on a specific problem, issue or project.
- The member speaking describes the situation.
- Group members use questions to get to the route of the situation. Using this process, the speaker gains a deeper understanding of the situation, what options they have for dealing with it and, where appropriate, develops an action plan to deal with the situation.
- Once all members have had a chance to discuss their situation, the ALS should then evaluate their effectiveness as a set.

An example of an ALS

Welcome – A brief catch up on how everyone is doing, refresh on ground rules

Setting the agenda for the meeting – Allocate a timekeeper. Agree time for each speaker and time for final review of process. Identify if there are any other issues to be discussed.

Individual Presentation

Individual presents their issue,

Member of set summarises issue

Presenter writes down the issue in a sentence or nutshell

Presenter chooses questioning technique

Technique executed

Member of set summarises responses

Actions – Flip chart actions agreed as result of discussion of issue

Process Review – Individual comments on:

What part of the process worked well?

What was difficult?

How the set can improve at the next meeting?

What have we learnt about our ALS?

Issues to bring

Members should ask:

- Is the challenge important, significant, complex and real?
- Who, if anybody, needs to approve of my choice of issue?
- Am I certain I will be able to take action on the dilemma?
- What is the time frame for making progress on the issue?
- How would I feel if I were not able to resolve the problem?
- Can I explain what is in my head and heart to other people?
- Am I willing to be challenged on this area of my work, life or personality?
- Would it be most useful to work on a familiar or unfamiliar issue?
- What is troubling me or exciting me about work?
- Who cares (who genuinely wants something done) about the problem?

3 steps to action learning

Step 1 – Understanding

We open out the issue, asking questions about context, who is involved, what has happened before, etc. Once the issue has been expressed, it is often helpful to ask: What are the main concerns about the issue? This helps the coaches to be clear on what aspect of the issue need to be focused on.

Step 2 – Consolidation

This is all about clarifying and testing possible hypotheses, and may involve reordering, reconceptualising, reframing, or reconsidering the issue. Do the coaches understand what the issue is? Here we may ask them to say what they think the issue is and allow the issue-bringer to add further clarity as necessary.

Step 3 – Action planning / review

We narrow down to (say) the two alternative outcomes X or Y. Popular outcomes for the time together could be new insights, additional options, actions to be taken, increased confidence, seeing where the real problem lies, etc. There should always be a sense of 'what next?' about this time. What will the issue-bringer take away and do after the set meeting?

At the end of this member's time, the group conducts a review of how the session went.

This may of course be done by the 'external' dedicated facilitator. The aim here is to explore set learning opportunities that will make the next time the set meets, even more effective. We expect, We expect, overtime, individual, set and organisational learning to occur. Helpful questions for this part of the process include:

To the issue-bringer:

- What was the most useful part of this time?
- What was the least useful part of this time?
- What would you like the coaches, to change next time we work with you?

To the coaches:

- What were we most pleased about in the way that we worked together?
- What were we least pleased about in the way we worked together?
- What should we change, if anything, about the way we work together?
- Do we have any less helpful tendencies which came out in this time? (common answers to this question include – asking lots of closed questions, offering advice too early, ineffective time management, etc).

Next time the 'set' meets, the issue-bringer will 'check in' with the group at the beginning, saying what has happened and exploring what help, if any, they now want from the group.

- **Notes on listening**

Questioning techniques

1. Questions on a flipchart

- Each set member writes questions or observations/reflections on paper. There can be as many or as few as people like.
- Set members take it in turn to write questions on the flip chart so that the presenter and the entire set can see questions.
- Presenter chooses the questions they wish to focus on and responds.
- If the presenter has not reached any actions or resolutions, questions can continue being asked either with random questioning /commenting from the group, or each person takes it in turns to ask a question moving round the set.

2. Questions on post-its

- Write a single question on a post-it (up to 3 post-its).
- Post-it's are passed to presenter.
- Presenter responds to the questions they wish to focus on.
- If the presenter has not reached any actions or resolutions, questions can continue being asked either with random questioning /commenting from the group, or each person takes it in turns to ask a question moving round the set.

3. Ping-pong questions around the room

- Each set member takes it in turn to ask the presenter a question.
- The presenter responds to each question until he/she reaches a resolution or an action.
- Set members may pass if they have no question.

4. Questions around the room

- Each set member takes it in turn to ask the presenter a question.
- The presenter responds after ALL the questions have been asked and responds to the questions, they feel most helpful.

5. Goldfish bowl

- Presenter sits out while everyone else sit round in a circle.
- Set members make reflections and ask questions with regard to the issue – again avoiding advice giving and giving points of view while Presenter listens to questions/reflection and takes notes

After several minutes, the facilitator checks with presenter whether he/she would like the set to continue or does he/she want to come back to the group and respond to the points raised.

Questions to ask

- What assumptions did you make about the individual(s) in the situation?
- How did you know this?
- What result did you want?

- What assumptions did you make about the situation?
- What is the most radical thing you could have done?
- What do you know about this situation?
- What don't you know about this situation?
- On reflection how might you have dealt with this better?
- How can you improve the situation now?
- What might you have invented or imagined about this situation?
- How do you feel / think about the situation now?
- How would you like to resolve this situation?
- What is the worst outcome that could happen?
- What have you learnt from this situation?
- How will you move forward?
- What will success look like?
- What is important about that?
- What is right for you?
- How will you know?
- What are you learning?
- What if there were no limits?
- How will you start?
- What's next? What else?
- What advice would you give someone else?
- Tell me more
- Talk me through your options
- What's holding you back?
- What am I not asking you that you wish I could ask?
- What story are you telling yourself?

- **Notes on action learning sets**

16. Giving feedback



You may need to give feedback during a coaching or mentoring session because

- It's a behaviour you have observed during the session.
- It's an issue raised during the session and you have observed the mentee outside of the session.
- It's come up as part of the reality section of a GROW session.
- The mentee asks you for it.

- **What are your thoughts on giving effective feedback?**

Giving Feedback

Effective feedback relies on the right balance of support and challenge. All support and no challenge will be encouraging but without direction (Cosy Club). All challenge without support can demotivate. Feedback is not necessarily about telling the person what they've got right and wrong. One of the most useful approaches is to facilitate **self-appraisal** using your process skills.

Questioning the person about what they have achieved and what they are having difficulty with may reveal all that is required. We are usually our own best critics, and this can be usefully drawn upon in the learning process.

People generally digest constructive criticism more readily if it is **balanced with positive feedback**, so it is useful to start with an appraisal of what has been achieved and what has gone well

Difficulties may then be discussed – again preferably with them being identified by the person giving feedback. Similarly, it is more useful to then **ask the person for a range of possible solutions** to the problems identified, rather than 'putting them right' yourself.

Ending on a positive is also a good move in terms of motivating the person to achieve any further objectives that have been agreed but be careful not to fall into the trap of a praise sandwich (going back into all the positives) because this can mean that the middle section of the sandwich is forgotten.

- Be specific and accurate and give examples
- Depersonalise it. Talk about performance behaviour, rather than the person themselves.
- Give positives as well as areas for improvement.
- Be honest and constructive.
- Describe what the right way looks like and what you want to see next time, don't dwell on the past.
- Give feedback as close to the event as possible.
- The presence of a patient or other learner can make giving timely constructive feedback difficult.
- Allow discussion time.
- Most corrective feedback is best delivered privately.

BOOST – Follow the Boost Model for best practice

- **Balanced** – it looks at positive and negative aspects, not just one or the other.
- **Objective** – it looks at the actions and behaviours of someone rather than their personality.
- **Observed** – it relates to first-hand observations, not just reports from others.
- **Specific** – there are details to the feedback, rather than vague statements.
- **Timely** – the person receiving the feedback is told at the first opportunity.

Before giving feedback consider

- Is the receiver ready, interested and receptive to feedback?
- Will my feedback be understood or create a defensive reaction?
- How can I be clear without appearing rude or abrupt?
- Will feedback build bridges?

Feedback models

Pendleton rules

A model for giving feedback in clinical education was developed by Pendleton (1984). This model contains 7 steps

1. Check the learner wants and is ready for feedback.
2. Let the learner give comments/background to the material that is being assessed.
3. The learner states what was done well.
4. The observer(s) state what was done well.
5. The learner states what could be improved.
6. The observer(s) state how it could be improved.
7. An action plan for improvement is made.

This model provides a useful framework for giving feedback in a structured and positive way. An alternative way of giving feedback is to include reflecting observations in a chronological fashion, replaying events that occurred during the session back to the learner. This can be helpful for short feedback sessions, but you can become bogged down in detail during long sessions.

When giving feedback to individuals or groups, an interactive approach has been shown to be the most helpful. This helps develop a dialogue between the learner and the person giving feedback and builds on the learners' own self-assessment helping learners take responsibility for their own learning.

Even elephants need cuddles (EENC)

EENC is a simple feedback model that can be used for both positive moments and those that need corrective action

- Event – The specific behaviour you heard or observed that you want to feedback on.
- Effect – The impact of that behaviour on them, their colleagues, patients, results
- Need – What needs to be different/happen next
- Consequences – The consequences (or benefits) if that behaviour does or doesn't change

You may find initially that you tend to tell rather than ask. The more you ask, the more your learners will be able to self-assess and improve their own performance.

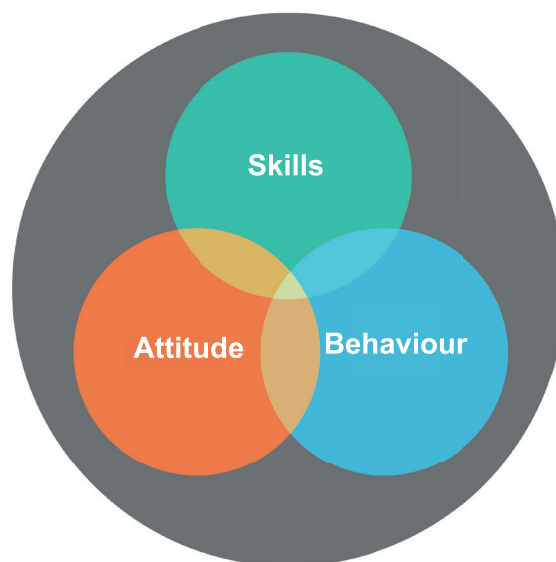
- **Think of the last two times you gave or received feedback? How closely did it follow BOOST and EENC?**
- **Think of someone you need to give feedback to. It could be positive or constructive. Have a go at using EENC to give that feedback**

17. Self-awareness

An effective coach constantly works on increasing his or her own self-awareness. Self-awareness means recognising one's own skills, attitudes and behaviours and being able to recognise and modify one's feelings and reactions in order to make an appropriate impact on a person or situation.

As a coach it is important to recognise your strengths and limitations. This begins with being more aware of your own skills, attitudes and behaviours.

Individuals who are interested in increasing their own self-awareness regularly ask for feedback. In a coaching relationship, it is important to ask for feedback from those you are coaching – and to act on it in order to improve your effectiveness as a coach. Each individual you coach will require a different style and approach and a different mix of skills, attitudes and behaviours. Assuming you know what, they want can be misleading and even dangerous – it is only through open communication that you and the person you are coaching will develop a relationship that works.



Receiving Feedback

- Listen carefully.
- Ask questions for clarification.
- Be open to other perspectives.
- Try not to react defensively.
- Don't take it personally.
- Treat feedback as useful information.
- Remember feedback is just someone's opinion and says as much about them and their learning style as it does about you.
- Give all feedback equal weighting (Not just the negative feedback) Listen for what's right.
- If you receive really critical feedback, don't take it personally – take the useful learning from it and then put it to rest.
- Be clear if you want an honest mirror or a supportive one.

18. Structuring a mentoring session



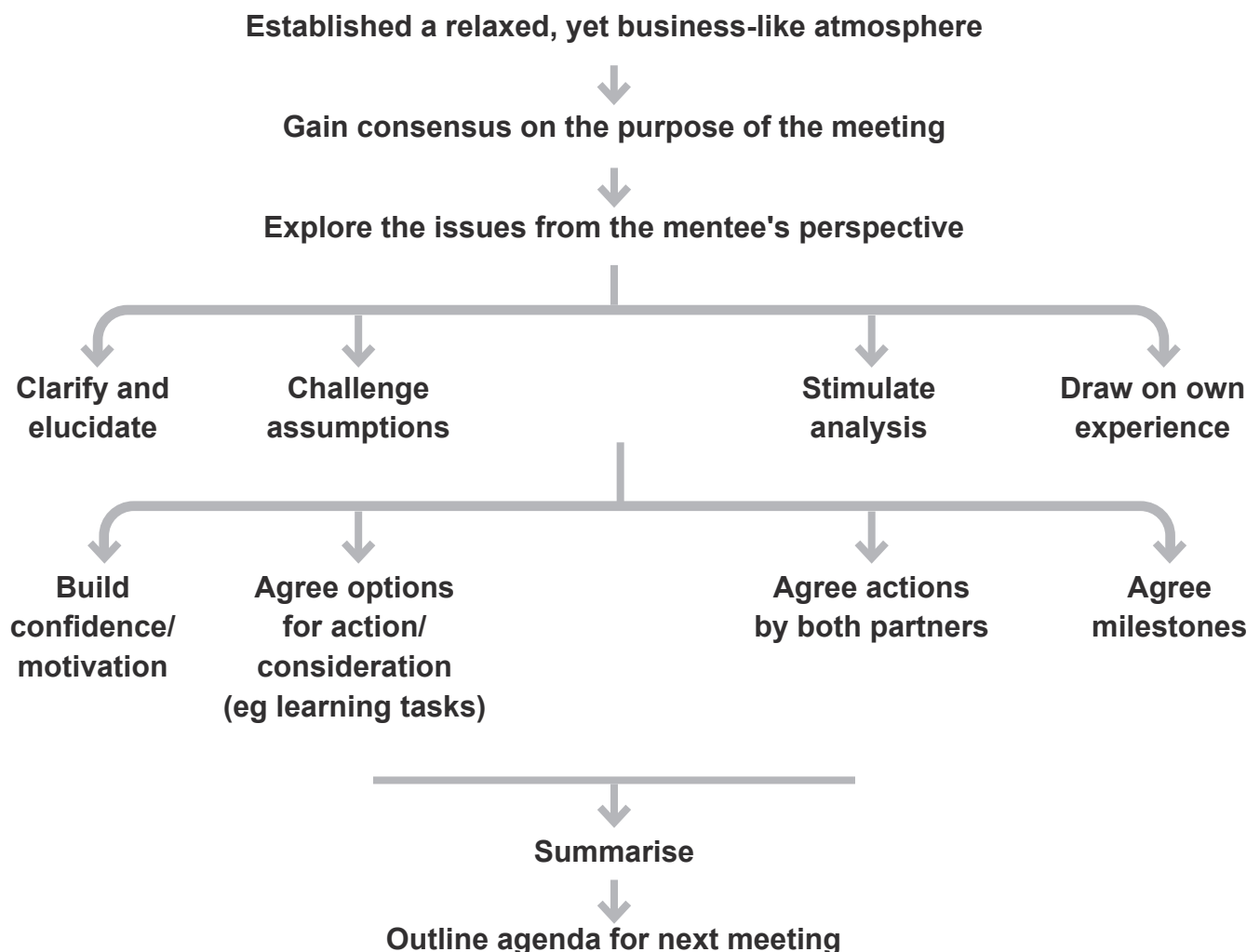
- How would you structure a mentoring session (consider the first and subsequent meetings)?

Structuring the first meeting

- Get to know - social, career aspirations, goals
- Review of strengths, development areas
- Agree best way of working (duration, method, ground rules)
- Overall objectives of programme
- Areas of required support (Who can help, what ideas do you have?)
- Any issues we want to work on now
- Agenda for next meeting?

Structuring subsequent meetings

- Reconnect
- Objective/focus for today's session
- Review of actions/insights gained/lessons learnt/workshops attended
- Discussion on topic of focus for today
- Wrap up (actions, learnings from session, value of process, logistics of next session)



19. Setting up a mentoring session

- What would you need to consider when setting up a mentoring scheme?

Administering a mentor scheme

Each scheme should have a senior lead, taking overall responsibility for the scheme. This role includes promotion of the scheme the value of mentoring, overseeing the recruitment procedure and ensuring standards are maintained. They should also provide support for all mentors, identifying and providing suitable training opportunities. The lead will also require administrative support to register mentors and mentees, help with the application process, the matching process and gathering of feedback.

Recruitment and selection

There should be a strategic plan that drives the targeting and selection of mentees based on matching their needs with realistic expectations of how the scheme can benefit them. The recruitment and selection process may require eligibility screening for both mentors and mentees through a formal application and interview process,

Developing the scheme

The initial development of the scheme will require the identification of interested individuals and the provision of training. Thorough evaluation is an imperative for schemes still in their embryonic phase, Training for mentors is always advisable, though in cases where this is not available or feasible, it should never act as a barrier to getting schemes off the ground.

Matching

In order to meet the wide-ranging needs of mentees, it's useful to hold a database of mentors with a diverse range of skills and expertise. In most cases, mentors will initially be allocated to newly registering mentees. An introduction to the scheme would be sent to the mentee, alongside an appointment invitation or contract, and a meeting with their matched mentor arranged. At this first meeting the mentor would take the lead in explaining aspects of the scheme to the mentee and arranging some future meetings. After this first meeting the coordinator of the scheme should contact the mentee for discussion. It may be that based on this initial meeting, the mentee decides that they would prefer to opt out or to find a different mentor for any reason, in which case they would make this known to the coordinator.

The long-term relationship

There is no prerequisite for the duration or frequency of the relationship between mentor and mentee. In most cases, it would be expected to last at least one year, and often may extend for a number of years or even the length of one's career. The average frequency of meetings would be at least once a month, depending on circumstances. For example, meetings may initially occur every 2-4 weeks for a mentee in the initial stages of a new professional role, whilst becoming less frequent over time as they become more experienced and independent. Relatively infrequent scheduled meetings can also be supplemented by brief communication as the mentee seeks a mentor's advice in between meetings.

20. Confidentiality

Trust is the hallmark of a successful coaching relationship. It is the responsibility of the coach to ensure that everything said between the coach and coachee is confidential and if anything, they hear within the context of the coaching relationship needs to be actioned, it must be done in a way that maintains the confidentiality of the relationship. It is the responsibility of the coachee to be open and honest with their coach in order for the coach to be able to fully support them. Issues to be considered include:

- Role conflict. A manager who coaches a team member will not be able to wipe his mind clean if that member of staff is being considered for promotion, disciplinary action or redundancy
- Nature of the goal. For example, if a member of a team is looking to move on from the company, is it appropriate to establish a coaching relationship with them – will either party be able to be fully open and honest?
- Quality of relationship. A coach needs to be non-judgmental and if a manager cannot listen without bringing in personal prejudice or judgements about a particular individual, then the success of the coaching relationship will be compromised

Referring on

There will be occasions when coaching is no longer appropriate for a particular individual or in a particular situation and as the coach, you need to be aware of and recognise the types of situations that are best dealt with by other people, departments or professionals. You need to be able to deal with such situations effectively and first and foremost, do what is necessary to ensure that the coachee does not feel that you do not care or are trying to get rid of her. Using the appropriate language and timing are crucial.

There are many reasons why a coaching relationship should come to an end (or should not begin in the first place). Both coach and coachee need to feel comfortable in the relationship, and if at any time, the coach does not feel comfortable or feels that something is getting in the way of them being a successful coach, this needs to be dealt with.

While it is also important for the coachee to take responsibility for the coaching relationship, by being open and honest with their coach, if the coach picks up on clues or signs that all is not right, he should bring this up with the coachee.

Before making a referral, ask yourself:

1. Why am I referring this person? Is it because:
 - This is not a 'coaching' issue, for example it requires counselling, HR or legal advice?

- I do not have the time to devote to the coaching relationship.
- There is a role conflict which means I cannot be impartial?
- There is a personality clash which means I cannot be non-judgmental?

2. Why am I referring the person now and not last week, yesterday or tomorrow?
3. Has the person been referred fully agreed with the decision?
4. Have we chosen the most appropriate referral point?
5. Have we enough information about who is going to help the person?
6. Have I made all these points clear to the individual?

When referring on, it is often necessary to get HR involved in finding the appropriate source of help or guidance for an employee. the manager must ensure that this is done in a way that maintains the confidentiality of the coaching relationship, and in this respect should discuss the referral with the coachee.

The manager should offer to help find an alternative source of help or should leave the coachee to find alternative help by allowing them to take their own approach. An open, honest conversation is the best way to iron out these issues

Manage expectations

Agreeing a set of ground rules can be helpful in managing the expectations of both the coach and coachee. they should cover the following

- The lifespan of the coaching relationship, which will depend on the nature of the goal, the context and the personality of the individuals.
- The duration of the coaching sessions: as coaching is action oriented, a coaching meeting should generally last no longer than an hour.
- The timing of the meeting: formal coaching sessions should be scheduled in advance and should not be cancelled unless absolutely necessary.
- The location of the coaching: privacy is vitally important in order to create trust between coach and coachee. It is best to book an office or a quiet private space to conduct a formal coaching session. In situations where the coachee requests an informal, ad-hoc session, the coach should try to find a suitable space for the conversation to take place.

21. The coaching relationship

Numerous studies, over the last thirty years, have confirmed the importance of the coach and client having a positive relationship. Assay and Lambert (1999) identified the relative importance of key factors affecting the client outcome:

- Client factors (40 percent): such as openness, optimism, motivation, a strong friendship and family network or membership in a religious community
- Expectancy/placebo factors (15 percent): the instillation of hope brought about the engagement
- Model and technique factors (15 percent): gains arising from the use of particular theories, models or techniques
- Relationship factors (30 percent): the client perceives the practitioner to be offering empathy, respect and genuineness and there is a shared understanding of the nature of the work

Building rapport

A coach's ability to build rapport with people is vital. Normally such an ability stems from a desire to help people, which all coaches tend to possess. Rapport building is made far easier on a one-to-one coaching scenario because the coach's only focus is the coachee. When a coach supports a person in this way it quite naturally accelerates the rapport building process.

The impact of non-verbal communication

Professor Mehrabian, one of America's foremost experts in communication, conducted research on the relationship between the only three elements that are communicated each time we speak. He measured the difference between the **credibility** of the verbal, vocal and visual elements of our messages. the ways in which we do this are:

Verbal - the vocabulary and intellectual content

Vocal how we sound, tone and delivery

Visual facial expression and body language these have a direct impact on how and whether we:

- Like someone
- Believe them
- Understand what they are truly saying

Professor Mehrabian's research found that the degree of Inconsistency between these three elements was the factor that determines **credibility** in face-to-face communication.

Inconsistent/incongruent messages

If an **inconsistent (incongruent)** message was given when speaking to another person, the professor's research found that the three elements influenced the listener in the following ratios: - the research was based on what individuals Believed when there was an Inconsistent message.

Consistent/congruent messages

If, however, the message is **consistent (or congruent)** the figures will change. All three elements will work together and reinforce the message. The firmness or excitement and enthusiasm of the voice work with the appropriate expression, energy and animation of the face and body, to reflect the conviction and confidence of what is said.

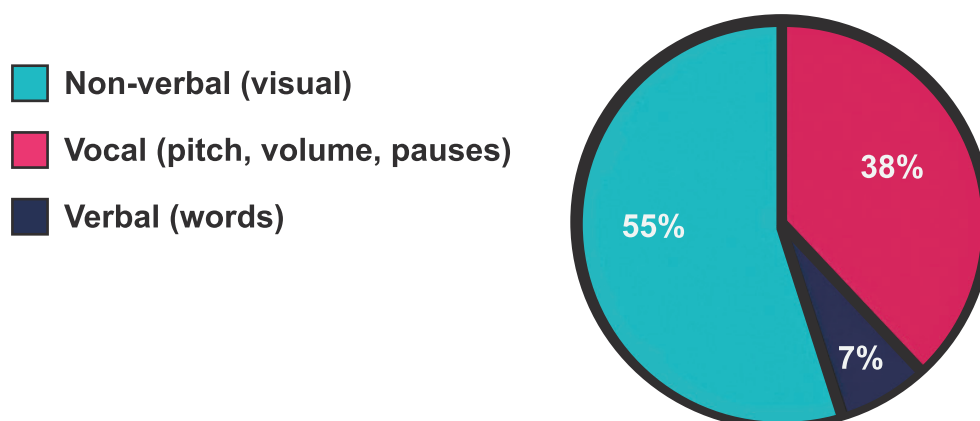
Hence the **words, voice** and **delivery** are all congruent and the message gets through unambiguously.

The maximum congruency that can be achieved, when all the three elements are reinforcing each other equally, is 33.33% each.

In other words, we process information much more through the visual than any other way when we're face-to-face with others. If we can't see them, then we become dependent upon the vocal, the way they sound and their tone when they are speaking.

Hence the saying: "It's not what you say, it's the way that you say it, it's not what you do but the way that you do it."

To create good judgements, we need to take responsibility for our own behaviour (what we choose to show and tell) and be aware of what others see and hear of us.



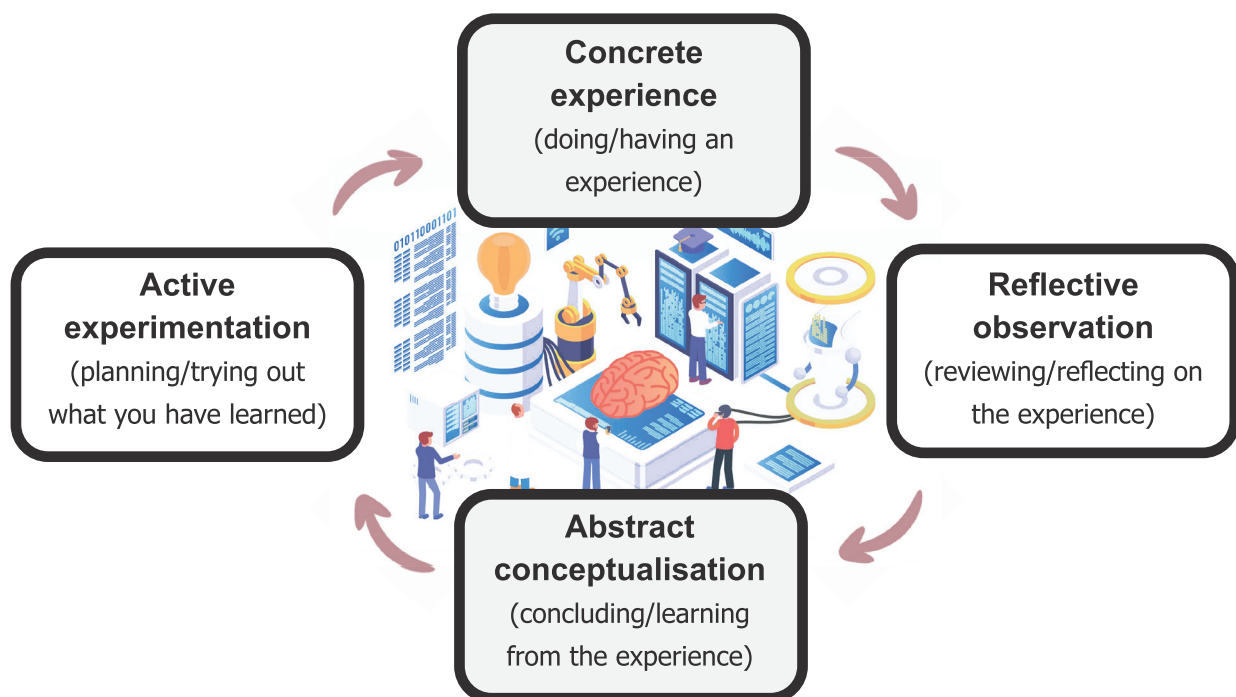
- How can you apply the above when you are coaching?

22. Kolb's learning cycle

Kolb developed a theory of experiential learning which gives us a useful model by which to develop coaching practice. This is called The Kolb Learning Cycle. The cycle comprises four different stages of learning from experience. This can be entered at any point, but all stages must be followed in sequence for successful learning to take place.

Effective coaching strategies which incorporate experiential learning approaches provide opportunities for a person to engage in an activity, review this activity critically, draw some useful insight from the analysis, and apply the result in a practical situation. Remember the poem – I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand.

Kolb's experiential model is as follows:



Once the experience stage is completed, the coach guides the coachee into the process (Reflection) part of the cycle. During this phase, coachees reflect on the activity undertaken during the experience phase and share their reactions in a structured way. In addition, with the coach's assistance, they try to link these thoughts and feelings together in order to derive some meaning from the experience.

The coach's role as facilitator is very important during each phase of the cycle. During the process phase, he/she should be prepared to help the coachee think critically about the experience and to help them verbalise their feelings and perceptions, as well as draw attention to any recurrent themes or patterns which appear in their reactions to the experience. The coach's role involves helping the coachee to conceptualise their reflections on the experience so that they can move towards drawing conclusions.

The generalisation (abstract conceptualisation) stage is the part of the experiential learning cycle in which the coachee forms conclusions and generalisations which might be derived from, or stimulated by the first two phases of the cycle. During this phase, coachees are helped to "take a step back" from the immediate experience and discussion, and to think critically in order to draw conclusions that might generally or theoretically apply to "real life."

This stage is perhaps best symbolised by the following questions:

- What did you learn from all this?
- What more general meaning does this have for you?

The coach helps to facilitate this step by:

- Asking and helping individual to summarise what they have learned into concise statements or generalisations
- Pushing back at people to help make their thinking more rigorous
- Relating the conclusions reached and integrating them into a theoretical model
- Helping the coachees compare and contrast different conclusions, identifying patterns where they exist.

After coachees have formed some generalisations, they are guided into the application (active experimentation) stage of the cycle. Drawing upon insights and conclusions reached during the previous phase (and other phases), they can begin to incorporate what they have learned into their lives by developing plans for more effective behaviour in the future.

One of the ways the coach assists during this process is by helping coachees be as specific as possible in developing their action plans.

- **How can you apply Kolb's learning cycle when you are coaching?**

23. Honey and Mumford's Learning styles

Honey and Mumford connected each stage in Kolb's learning cycle with a preferred learning style. In their model the learner can move around the cycle, jump in any part of it and exit when they have learned the task.

Kolb's learning styles

- Stage 1** Having the experience
- Stage 2** Reviewing the experience
- Stage 3** Concluding from the experience
- Stage 4** Planning/trying out what you have learned

Honey & Mumford's learning styles

- Activist**
- Reflector**
- Theorist**
- Pragmatist**

Individuals have different learning styles, in that some will learn better from experiences that emphasis one part of the cycle, which others will learn better from experiences that emphasise another part.

At a minor level there is a need for adjustment between learner and coach: sometimes their preferences are complementary, sometimes antagonistic, and of course sometimes collusive if they both tend to go for the same stages in the cycle.

At a major level, neglect of some stages can prove to be a major obstacle to learning. Learning is more effective when the learner is able to complete the whole cycle. The Coach can help the learner move through the cycle.

Activists

- Enjoy new experiences
- Are enthusiastic about new ideas
- Thrive on challenge
- Hog the limelight
- Are open minded
- Seek to centre all activities around themselves

Reflectors

Like to stand back and ponder on
New experiences
Collect data and consider carefully before
Making a decision
Are cautious
Prefer to take a back seat in discussions
Keep a low profile
Can be distant

Theorists

Tend to be analytical and objective
Are consistently logical
Feel uncomfortable with subjective judgements
Think problems through in logical manner
Tend to be perfectionists

Pragmatists

Are keen on trying out new ideas and
Theories to see if they work in practice
Search out new ideas
Are practical and down to earth
Enjoy making practical decisions
See problems as a challenge

- **How can you apply Kolb's learning cycle when you are coaching?**

Theorists

Theorists adapt and integrate observations into complex but logically sound theories. They think problems through in a vertical, step by step logical way. They assimilate miscellaneous facts into coherent theories. They tend to be perfectionists who won't rest easy until things are tidy and fit into their rational scheme. They like to analyse and synthesise. They are keen on basic assumptions, principles, theories, models and system thinking. Their philosophy appreciates rationality and logic. "If it's logical, it's good". Questions they frequently ask are: 'Does it make sense?' 'How does this fit in with that?' 'What are the basic assumptions?' They tend to be detached, analytical and dedicated to rational objectivity rather than anything subjective or ambiguous. They prefer to maximise certainty and feel uncomfortable with subjective judgements, lateral thinking and anything flippant.

Pragmatists

Pragmatists are keen on trying out ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. They positively search out new ideas and take the first opportunity to experiment with applications. They are the sort of people who return from management courses brimming with new ideas that they want to try out in practice. They like to get on with things and act quickly and confidently on ideas that attract them. They do not like 'beating around the bush' and tend to be impatient with open-ended discussions. They are essentially practical, down to earth people who like making practical decisions and solving problems. They respond to problems and opportunities as a challenge. Their philosophy is: "There is always a better way" and "If it works it is good".

Activists

Activists involve themselves fully and without bias in the new experiences. They enjoy the here and now and are happy to be dominated by immediate experiences. They are open-minded and not sceptical, and this tends to make them enthusiastic about anything new. Their philosophy is "I'll try anything once". They dash in where angels fear to tread. They tend to throw caution to the wind. Their days are filled with activity. They revel in the short-term crisis firefighting. They tackle problems by brainstorming. As soon as the excitement from one activity has died down, they are busy looking for the next. They tend to thrive in the challenge of the new experiences but are bored with implementation and longer-term consideration. They are sociable people constantly involving themselves with others but in doing so they hog the limelight. They are the life and soul of the party and seek to centre all activities around themselves.

Reflectors

Reflectors like to stand back to ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives. They collect data, both first-hand and from others and prefer to chew it over thoroughly before coming to any conclusion. The thorough collection and analysis of data, about experiences and events is what counts so they tend to postpone reaching definitive conclusions for as long as possible. Their philosophy is to be cautious and leave no stone unturned. "Look before you leap" and "Sleep on it". They are thoughtful people who like to consider all possible angles and implications before making a move. They prefer to take a back seat in meetings and discussions. They enjoy observing other people in action. They listen to others and get the drift of the discussion before making points of their own. They tend to adopt a low profile and have a slightly distant, tolerant, unruffled air about them. When they act it is as part of a wide picture which includes the past as well as the present and other observations as well as their own

24. Further reading

There are many books that have influenced this workbook and course. Some of our favourite books are listed below:

1. Sir John Whitmore – Coaching for Performance (2009, Nicholas Brealey)
2. Kimsey House – Co-Active coaching (2018, Aladdin)
3. Michael Bungay Stanier - The Coach Habit (2016, Box of Crayons Press)
4. David Clutterbuck – Everyone needs a mentor (2014, Kogan Page)
5. Julie Starr – The Mentoring Manual (2014, Pearson)
6. Coaching and Mentoring for Dummies (2000, For Dummies)
7. Timothy Galway - The Inner Game of Tennis (2015, Pan)
8. Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen – Thanks for the feedback (2015 Penguin)
9. Ben Hunt Davis – Will it make the boat go faster? (2011, Matador)
10. Anne Brockbank and Ian McGill - Action Learning Handbook (2003, Routledge)
11. Mike Pedler - Action Learning for Managers 2008, Routledge)
12. Nancy Kline – Time to think (2002, Caswell)

- **Notes**

- **Notes**

