**How to Coach**

**Coaching is great for developing people’s skills and abilities.**

At some point in time, each of us has either received coaching in some type of setting or you might have coached another peer; perhaps to improve that peer’s performance.

**CONSIDER:** What actually is coaching and how do you use it?

And what skills do you need to be an effective coach?

* Coaching is a useful way of developing people’s skills and abilities and of boosting performance.
* Coaching can also help deal with issues and challenges before they become major problems.
* Coaching in the workplace and in sports requires a different approach. **WHY?** Workplace coaching consists of questioning and reflection vs. sports coaching consists of mentorship, the use of technical skills, experience, and a “telling style of direction”

**HOW WILL YOU USE THIS INFORMATION?**

**\*\*** You will utilize each coaching session with an advocate as a conversation between coach and coachee to focus on helping the coachee discover answers for themselves. After all, people are much more likely to engage with solutions that they have come up with themselves, rather than those that are forced upon them!**\*\***

**Golden Rules of Coaching**

These are the fundamental “rules” of coaching:

* **Coaching is Found on Confidentiality and Trust**

Coaching can be successful only if coaches are able to discuss every aspect of an issue or challenge with their coach. The coach may need to listen to personal problems or private information that must be kept confidential. (Unless, of course, it involves criminal activity or activities harmful to the team, its clients or the organization; or affects the safety and welfare of other people).

* **The Solution to the Coachee’s Issue Lies Within the Coachee**

This may sound unusual, but it means that the background of an issue and the options available are generally known to the coachee. The coach’s job is to ask the right questions to help coachees arrive at their own conclusions. As said before, this is a very powerful way of helping people to change.

Of course, the coach can provide helpful input or suggestions, but the best answers usually come from the coachee. **TIP:** You probably have useful knowledge and experience, and you’re responsible for helping people find the right answers to questions they’re asking. However, be sensitive and humble in the way you help people—situations may be more complex than you initially think.

* **There’s No Judgment or Fixed Agenda, but Have an Agreed Goal for Each Session**

For a coaching session to work well there should be a lot of relaxed conversation and the session should be free from the fear of judgment and should not follow any set pattern. At the same time, coaching conversations must be focused in order to be effective (i.e., consisting of potentially pre-planned or follow-up questions in response to information being given by coachee).

The coachee should have a general idea or outline of the objectives of the coaching, both within the specific session and in the longer term. The coach then helps the coachee arrive at the destination by whatever route seems appropriate. The coach should check with the coachee during the session to determine if they’re both moving in the right direction.

* **Coaching is About the Whole Person**

Although a coaching session will probably focus on one issue, coaches must remember that they’re having a conversation with a whole person who has specific experiences, emotions, and patterns of behavior. **TIP:** It is important to remember to remind the advocate of screening for biases, maintaining objectivity, and educating about their CASA family’s culture, etc.

* **The Coach and Coachee are Equal Partners**

The best coaching conversations are set up so that the coach and the coachee are equal partners. The coachee will define the actual issue, while the coach will use his or her skills to help deal with the issue.

* **Coaching Looks to the Future and Next Actions**

Coachees are typically looking for some change to their performance. Determining the right path may require the coachee to look at past experiences and decisions. However, the most positive coaching experiences are sessions that conclude with an agreed set of next steps or actions to take.

**TIP:** A good coaching session typically lasts between one and two hours. If they’re less than an hour long, it’s likely that the topic(s) won’t be reviewed in sufficient detail. If a session lasts more than two hours, both the coach and the coachee may lose focus and concentration.

**Key Approaches Used Coaching**

These are useful approaches you can use in coaching sessions:

* **Structured Questioning**

Most coaching is achieved by asking the right questions—the types of questions that coaches would ask of themselves. With practice and experience, you can develop a sense of what the right questions are. But as a simple rule, start with open questions and then ask more specific and probing questions once the coachee has raised an issue or concern.

* **Active Listening**

Pay attention the fine detail of what coaches are saying and how they are saying it. This is key to understanding a coachee’s position at a deep enough level. Is there a lot of emotion attached to the words that the coachee is using? If so, what emotion? Passion, fear, excitement, dread, anger, joy?

How does the coachee’s body language compare with the words being spoken? We often use words lightly, but the underlying meaning may say a lot about what we feel or believe. For example, phrases starting with “I should do…” or “I must do…” are very different from phrases starting with “I will…”

**TIP:** Inquiring about how an advocate feels about a certain issue and referring to concerns such as minimum sufficient level of care and cultural diversity, for example, could help them maintain objectivity.

* **Summarizing and Repeating**

During a coaching session, summarize where the coaching conversation has led. This helps the coachee relax and continue, as they know that you have taken an interest and see the whole picture.

You should also occasionally repeat what coachees say—particularly when it could help you understand how their behaviors or expressions might be seen by others. This is helpful in deciding what the next steps are and a timeline for steps to be taken.

* **Checking In With the Coachee**

During a coaching session, it really helps to confirm with coachees that the session is going well for them and that it’s covering what they want it to cover.

It’s normal for coaches to give “homework assignments” to coachees. This does not mean the coaches are taking on the role of teacher. It simply means that both coach and coachee agree that some structured thinking time between sessions is of value.

**KEY POINTS**

Coaching is great for helping people develop their skills and abilities and for resolving issues before they become serious.

Always remember to keep the coachee’s interests at the forefront of the coaching sessions. Also, try to let coachees come up with their own conclusions through open questions, rather than giving them the answers directly.