

Coaching Skills

What is coaching?

In supervising, managing and developing people there are a number of different techniques that we use – coaching, instructing, advising, teaching, counselling and mentoring. Each of these is distinct with a defined purpose and although one of the most useful techniques, coaching is frequently mis-understood.

The dictionary defines a coach as “a privately owned carriage used to transport from one place to another”- and whilst this may refer to a vehicle, this is exactly what coaching is about. A good coach will help an individual move forward from where they are to where they want or need to be.

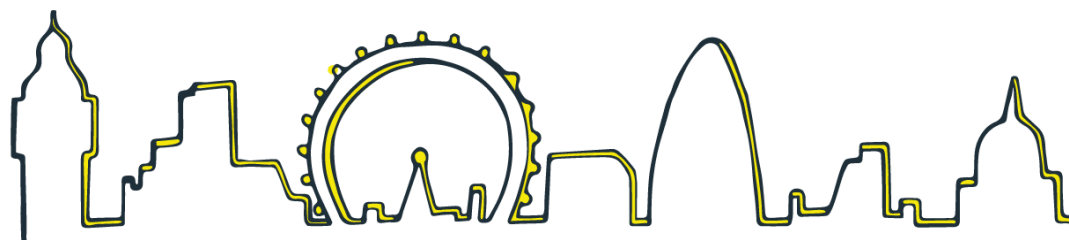
The premise of coaching is that the answers lie within the individual and it is through careful questioning and follow-through from a coach that the individual will reach decisions on how to move forward. This may be done within a short session or over several sessions. As it is the individual who comes up with the solutions (not the coach), they are more likely to be committed to following through and achieving. A coach is therefore a facilitator who encourages the thought process without giving advice or instruction.

Where an individual is coached over a period of time they begin to internalise the coaching idea and become able to think through the process themselves, becoming more independent.

One of the problems of coaching is that it takes time and patience. The coach needs to understand the power of silence and how this can be effective in encouraging the individual to reflect. It can frequently be frustrating not to give advice, solutions or answers. However this would be counter-productive and the learner becomes dependent on receiving answers without having to think through problems themselves.

Coaching in context

- **Coaching** is improving performance through a range of learning experiences to identify areas for improvement. This may involve helping someone to solve a problem, learn a new skill, address a difficult area or achieve a goal
- **Advising** is giving opinions or information which may or may not be taken. Guiding or giving advice based on your own experience

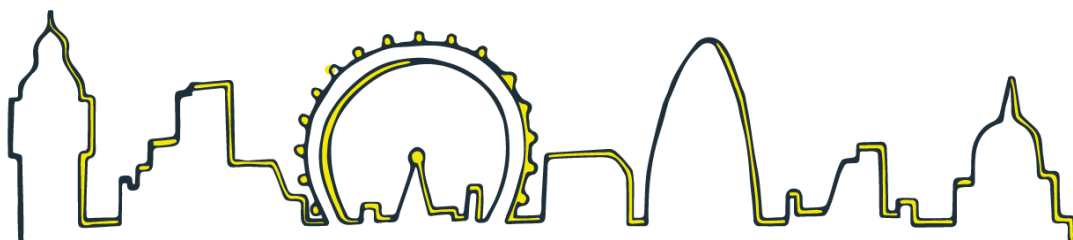


- **Instructing** is teaching others or giving instruction on how something should be done. This includes demonstrating practical skills
- **Teaching** is about passing on knowledge or skill to another person and facilitating their learning
- **Counselling** is encouraging others to take responsibility for a problem. It focuses on past experience
- **Mentoring** has different meanings in different contexts. It is typically less formal, combines elements of all the above and is aimed at helping people to realise their potential. Within healthcare, mentors are responsible for developing and assessing students and learners

The key to successful management or supervision is to understand when each of these core skills is required. When is coaching the better option and when is it more effective to provide answers, advice or instruction.

Rules of Coaching

- Ask a lot of open questions
- Listen more than you talk
- Be a good role model
- Never patronise or belittle
- Encourage growth and to go further than before
- Praise and don't be too judgmental
- Be led and do not lead
- Never share confidential information
- Never tell, simply guide
- Don't pry into personal problems
- Try not to solve their problems
- Provide back up and support
- Never under-estimate



Coaching Models

There are a number of different coaching models available. Each coach will have preferred ways of approaching coaching although a model will help to facilitate the process, particularly in the early stages of coaching.

GROW

Probably the most popular method is GROW – attributed to John Whitmore (1980s) which identifies a four stage process beginning with identifying the Goal for the individual, then considering the Reality or current situation, then clarifying the Objective before determining the Will or Way forward.



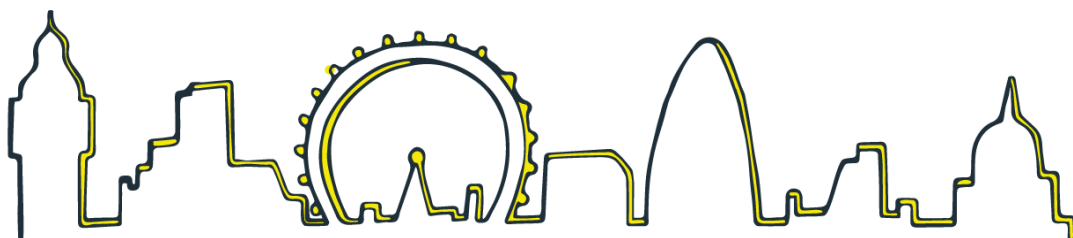
For each stage, the coach will ask a number of questions. Whilst each coach will have their own preferred questions, the following provide examples of the types of question that can be asked at each stage:

Goal

- What is the subject matter or issue you would like to discuss?
- What outcome are you seeking by the end of this session?
- How far and how detailed do you expect to get in this session?
- In the long term, what is your goal for this issue?
- What is your time frame for reaching that goal?

Reality

- 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?
- How much control do you personally have over the outcome?



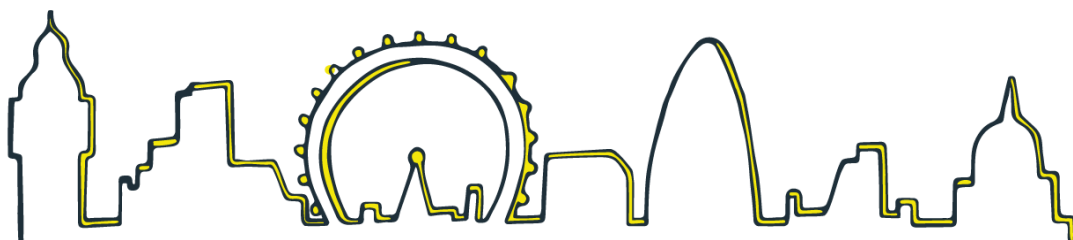
- Who else has some control and how much?
- What action steps have you taken so far?
- What stopped you from doing more?
- What obstacles need to be overcome?
- What, if any, internal obstacles do you have to taking action?
- What resources do you already have?
- What other resources will you need? Where will you get them from?
- What is really the issue here, the heart of the problem or the bottom line?

Options

- What are all the different ways you could approach this issue?
- Make a list of all the alternatives, complete and partial solutions?
- What else could you do?
- What would you do if you had more time, a larger budget or more control?
- What would you do if you had a clean sheet?
- Do you have any other suggestions?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
- Which would give the best result?
- Which solution appeals to you most?
- Which would give you most satisfaction?

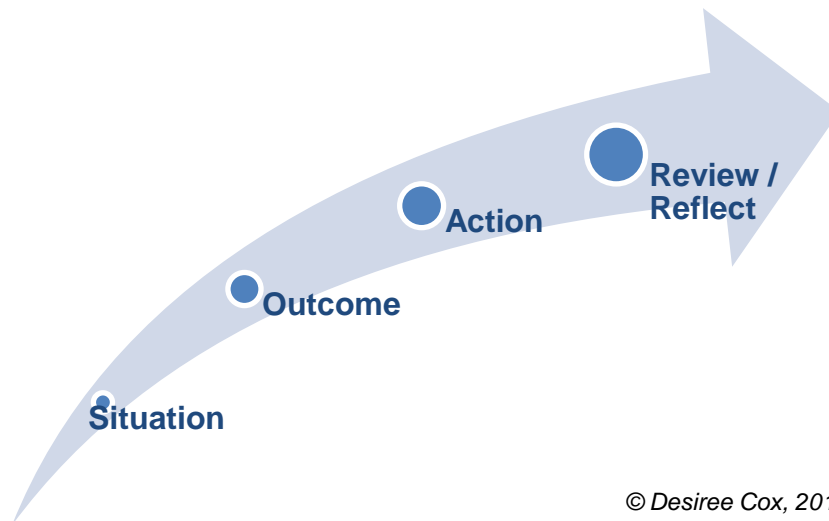
Will

- 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 step?
- What could arise to hinder you from reaching these goals?
- What personal resistance, if any, do you have 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 support and when?
- What could I do to support you?
- What commitment on a one to ten scale do you have to taking these actions?
- What prevents this from being a ten and what could you do to raise it?
- Is there anything else you want to discuss?



SOAR

An alternative model, also with four stages, focuses on considering the Situation initially before identifying the Outcome, looking at potential Actions and completing the cycle with Review and Reflect.



Situation

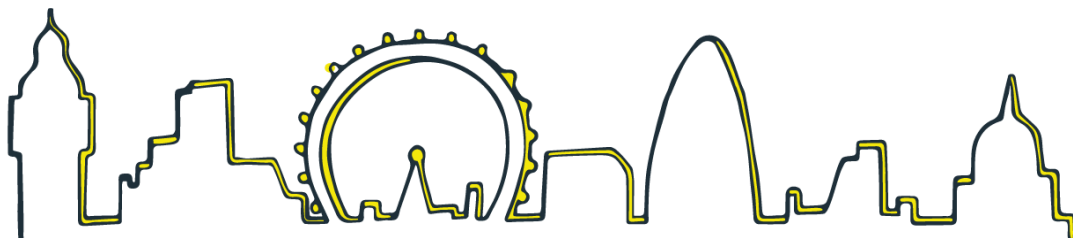
- Tell me about your current situation
- What skills / knowledge / competences do you have?
- What are your main responsibilities?
- What would you like to develop?
- Are there obstacles which are stopping you achieving what you would like to?

Outcome

- So what is you would like to achieve?
- How realistic is that in terms of your current commitments?
- What are your longer term objectives?
- What about short-term objectives?
- What is your timeframe for this?
- How would it feel for you when you achieve this?
- How may this impact on other areas?

Action

- What alternatives / options do you have?
- What would you do if you had a clean sheet?
- Which option appeals to you most? Why?
- What are the barriers you may encounter for this option?



- What is your commitment on a scale of 1 to 10?
- What stops you reaching 10?
- What is your timeframe?
- How are you going to measure your progress?
- How can I support you with this?

Review and Reflect

- How is it going?
- Are you where you planned to be in terms of achievement?
- Have you encountered any problems? And if so, how have you overcome these?
- What has gone / is going well?
- What you have learned from the process?
- How satisfied are you with the outcome?

Different models suit different people and different situations and it is important that each coach considers the questions that they feel comfortable asking for each stage. Each model also takes practice for familiarity.

References:

Landsberg, Max (2003) [1997]. *The tao of coaching: boost your effectiveness at work by inspiring and developing those around you*. London: Profile Books.

