**EDUCATION & TRAINING FOUNDATION**

# USING COACHING AND MENTORING TO SUPPORT COLLEAGUES: CORE PRINCIPLES AND TECHNIQUES

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# Contents

# Preface

**The Advanced Practitioner (AP) role is diverse and operates in a wide range of contexts and organisations as is evidenced by the report 'Understanding the Role of Advanced Practitioners.[1]' This means that, as an effective AP, you will need a variety of skills and competencies to ensure you can fully support your colleagues in their quest for professional excellence and your organisation to drive quality improvements in teaching, learning and assessment across provision.**

This guide is part of a suite of four guides that will help you to rediscover things you already know and that will add to your toolkit of skills, competencies, models and approaches. Each of the four guides builds on evidence-based research that has been proven to make a positive difference to the professional learning and development of both individuals and teams. Theory is strongly linked to practice and through the use of 'reflective questions' and 'top tips' you will be supported to consider how you might apply the strategies and processes that are being explored to your own role as an AP.

The four guides are as follows:

| GUIDE | | AUTHOR |
|---|---|---|
| | Creating Spaces to Think in Further Education and Training | Lou Mycroft<br>Kay Sidebottom |
| | Using Coaching and Mentoring to Support Colleagues: Core Principles and Techniques | Jon Thedham |
| | Facilitating Professional Development and High-Performance Through Situated Learning | Ian Grayling |
| | Coaching and Mentoring in Action: Additional Approaches, Tools and Techniques | Jon Thedham |

Within each guide you will see links to a set of professional development cards. This is an additional, practical resource designed for APs to use in a variety of ways, for example to stimulate your own understanding and development, support your practice when working with others and to drive quality improvements in teaching, learning and assessment across the organisation.
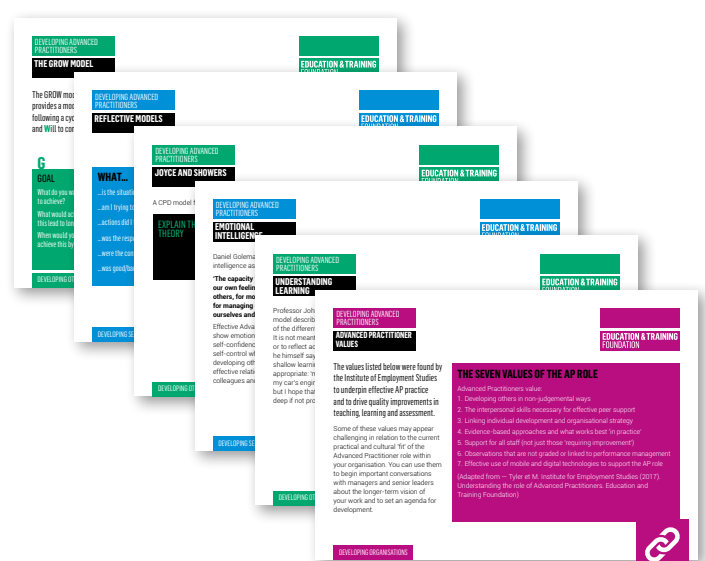
[1]    Tyler *et al*, (2017) Institute for Employment Studies. *Understanding the Role of Advanced Practitioners in English Further Education*. Education and Training Foundation

# Introduction



**USING COACHING AND MENTORING TO SUPPORT COLLEAGUES**

"I've said that education is a living process that can best be compared to agriculture. Gardeners know that they don't make plants grow."

KEN ROBINSON

## AN OVERVIEW OF THIS GUIDE

This guide looks at coaching and mentoring models that you can use in your role as an AP supporting colleagues to find solutions to challenges they are experiencing with their practice. It also provides you with a range of practical tools that will reinforce and develop wider aspects of your AP practice.

A key feature of reflective learning is the application of learning to practice. The first chapter in this guide introduces you to coaching and some key coaching models, the differences between coaching and mentoring and the skills required in both. The guide then moves on to explore practical ways to build effective and supportive coaching relationships through 'contracting', questioning and active listening. The third chapter provides you with a range of techniques and tools common to both coaching and mentoring which can help you improve the professional conversations you have with your colleagues.

# Chapter 1: <span style="color:magenta">Getting to grips with coaching</span>

**REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:** **?**

- Helping colleagues improve their teaching and learning is a key role of an AP; what challenges are you facing to make your conversations both supportive and developmental?

- In your current role as an AP when supporting colleagues, are you more directive or non-directive? Or is it a combination of both?

- How do you create the time and the space to support your colleagues?

- What learning have you been exposed to in the last three months that has had a real impact on your AP practice?
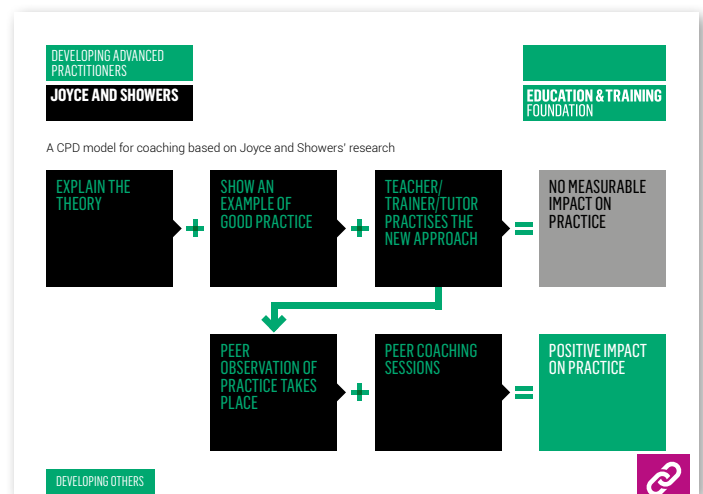
## 1.1 DEFINING COACHING

The Advanced Practitioner (AP) role requires you to have a wide range of skills and tools to use, when and where appropriate. As coaching is still relevant to many of the support interventions provided by APs, we shall start with an exploration of what coaching is and how that understanding can help you become a better coach.

Whilst there are many definitions of coaching, in its simplest form it is one person supporting the learning and development of another.

> 'Put simply, coaching is a conversation, or series of conversations, one person has with another.'[2]

The use of coaching to support teaching and learning improvement was initially proposed in the early 1980s. Joyce and Showers[3] identified that the majority of traditional professional development programmes for teachers had little to no sustainable impact on teaching and learning improvement because teachers were not supported in transferring the skills they had learnt into their own teaching contexts. Their research also highlighted the need to enable teachers and trainers to apply their learning effectively.

Their research identified that effective embedding of learning to improve teaching skills required:

- an understanding of the concepts behind a skill or strategy
- demonstrating or modelling the skill
- practising the skill
- peer coaching to fully embed the skill.

Their research helped establish a model of **'Peer Coaching'**.

> 'Peer coaching is a confidential process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices; expand, refine and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research or solve problems in the workplace.'[4]

## JOYCE & SHOWERS' PEER COACHING MODEL



> 'Teachers who used peer support for mutual problem solving, observations, collaborative teaching and planning were more successful in transferring new skills to their own practice.'[5]

2   Starr, J. (2003) *The Coaching Manual: The Definitive Guide to the Process, Principles and Skills of Personal Coaching.* Pearson Education p.3.

3   Joyce, B. and Showers B. (2003) *Student Achievement Through Staff Development.* https://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/cm-mc-ssl-resource-joyceshowers.pdf

4   Robbins, P. (1991). *How to Plan and Implement a Peer Coaching Program.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

5   https://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/cm-mc-ssl-resource-joyceshowers.pdf

## 1.2   COACHING VERSUS MENTORING

Coaching and mentoring have a number of similarities in that they are both professional relationships that are supportive and facilitate learning. The main difference is that coaching, in its purest form, is the process of helping a person solve their own problems through a process of structured questioning, whereas mentoring recognises the expertise of the mentor who not only asks questions but can also help development through the sharing of their expertise and experience.

The AP role will require you to be both a coach and a mentor and often a mix of both, depending on the situation and need of the colleague you are supporting. The important thing to remember is that people who find their own solutions are often more motivated to put those solutions into action, so try to avoid giving advice. However, if the colleague is really 'stuck' then your expertise can help them move forward, especially if the colleague is new to a role, situation or topic and 'doesn't know what they don't know'.

Another model used in the sector to support an understanding of coaching and mentoring support is the CUREE National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching (See diagram below).[6] This model sets out the similarities and differences between coaching and mentoring and separates coaching into **specialist** and **co-coaching** which are both roles that APs may undertake. The key skill for an AP is to know when it is best to use coaching or mentoring, it is not about sticking rigidly to one approach.

> **Development activity**
>
> - Keep a record of your AP conversations (both formal and informal). Identify whether you were more of a coach or a mentor, or an equal mix of both.  Reflect on why you used that approach and whether it was effective for the colleague that you were supporting.

## 1.3   COACHING MODELS (GROW AND OSKAR)

The AP professional development cards identify two coaching models that have been successfully used to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Both set out a structure for the coaching conversation and both use certain key stages.
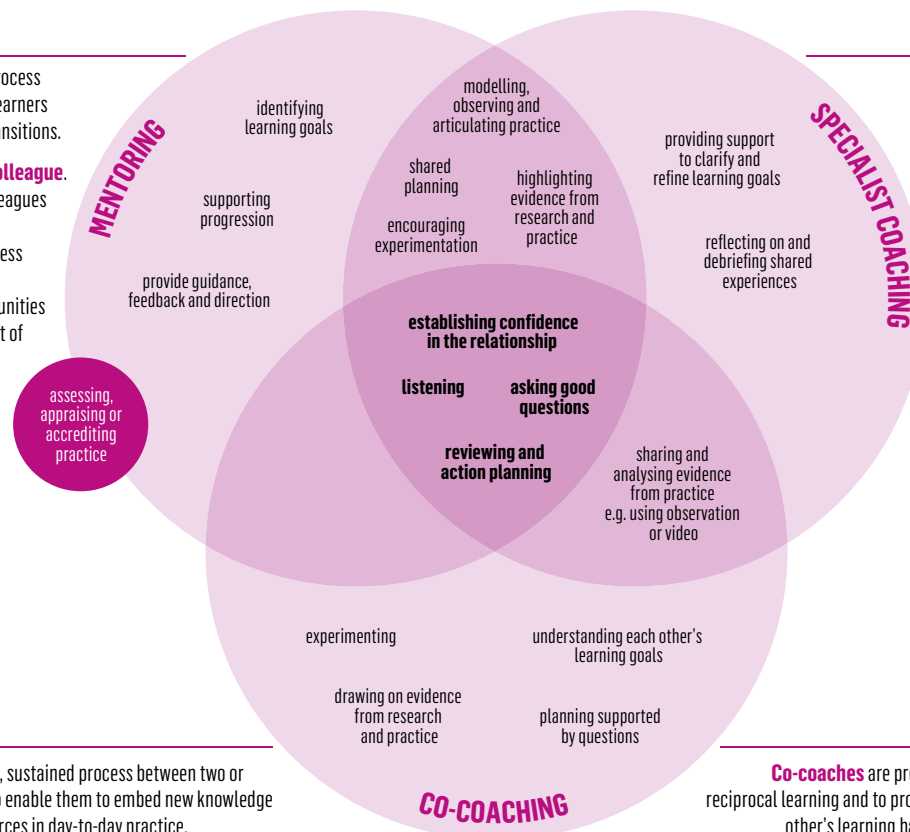
## MENTORING AND COACHING: A COMPARISON



**Mentoring** is a structured process for supporting professional learners through significant career transitions.

**A mentor** is a **respected colleague**. Mentors are experienced colleagues with knowledge of formal requirements who broker access to a range of increasingly self-directed learning opportunities in support of the development of the whole person over time.

**Specialist coaching** is a structured process for enabling the development of a specific aspect of a professional learner's practice.

**Specialist coaches are** fellow professionals with knowledge and expertise relevant to the goals of the professional learners. They enable professional learners to take control of their own learning through non-judgemental questioning and support.

**MENTORING**

identifying learning goals

modelling, observing and articulating practice

shared planning

highlighting evidence from research and practice

encouraging experimentation

supporting progression

providing support to clarify and refine learning goals

reflecting on and debriefing shared experiences

provide guidance, feedback and direction

assessing, appraising or accrediting practice

**SPECIALIST COACHING**

**establishing confidence in the relationship**

**listening**    **asking good questions**

**reviewing and action planning**

sharing and analysing evidence from practice e.g. using observation or video

experimenting

understanding each other's learning goals

drawing on evidence from research and practice

planning supported by questions

**CO-COACHING**

**Co-coaching** is a structured, sustained process between two or more professional learners to enable them to embed new knowledge and skills from specialist sources in day-to-day practice.
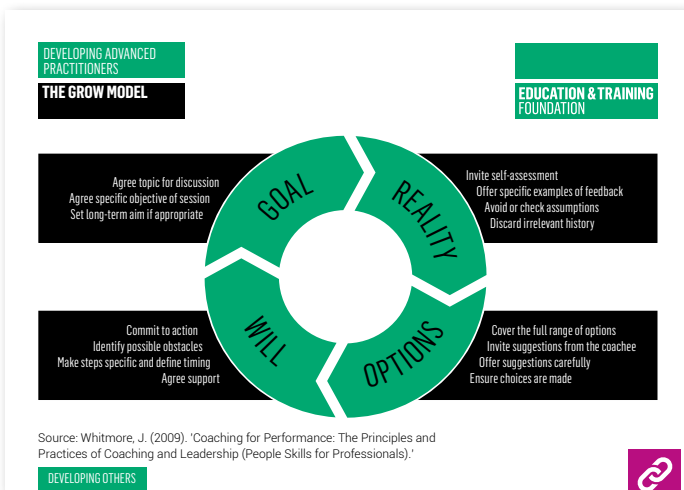
**Co-coaches are** professional learners who are committed to reciprocal learning and to providing non-judgemental support for each other's learning based on evidence from their own practice.

6    http://www.curee.co.uk/files/publication/%5bsite-timestamp%5d/2.%20Welsh%20CM%20framework.pdf

- **Goal and Outcomes** – what the individual, known as the 'coachee', wants to achieve from the session.
- **Reality, Scaling and Know-how** – the coachee's current situation, their perceptions of the situation and what experience and strengths they are bringing to the solution.
- **Options and Affirmations** – what choices they have to solve the problem and what strengths they can build on to find solutions.
- **Will and Action** – what they will commit to do and when are they going to do this.

Note: OSKAR has **Review** as its last stage which sets out the ongoing review of actions. It should be noted that with the GROW cycle the 'Will' section is often used to identify next steps, subsequent meetings and follow up.

## GROW COACHING MODEL

Source: Whitmore, J. (2009). 'Coaching for Performance: The Principles and Practices of Coaching and Leadership (People Skills for Professionals).'

GROW was introduced by John Whitmore[7] and takes people through a structured conversation which eventually leads to actions. The model has as its core the belief that the answer to any challenge that an individual coachee is experiencing lies within them and that the coach's job is to help that coachee find the solution.

## OSKAR COACHING MODEL

The OSKAR coaching model[8] comes from a Solutions Focused approach to coaching[9]. Again, this provides a structure to the coaching conversation which prioritises what the coachee can and will do. The keys to this model are:
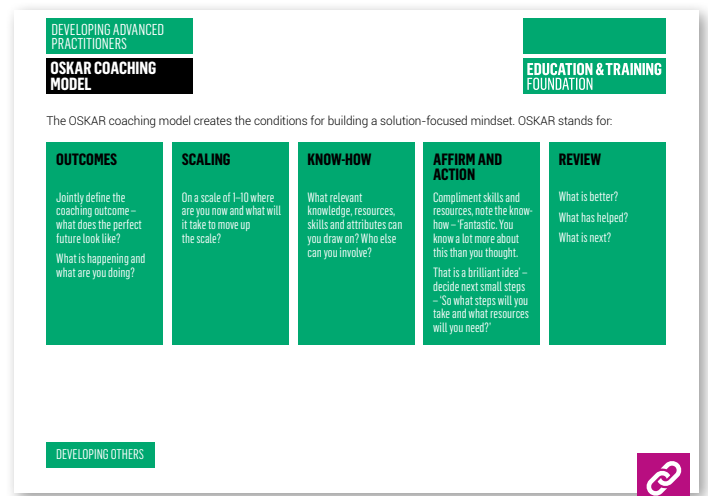
- **Outcomes:** focusing on what the coachee would like to achieve in the long-term (sometimes known as the **'future perfect'**) where you ask the coachee to identify an ideal solution or situation.
- **Scaling:** Identifying the coachee's perception of the current situation. 'If the future perfect is 10, on a scale of 0 to 10 where do you currently sit?'

Note: For more information about the use of scaling in professional conversations see section 3.1 of this guide.

- **Know-how:** Exploring what the coachee is bringing to the situation with regards to their strengths, what they have already tried and their previous experience of similar or related situations.
- **Affirmations:** building on the positives that you have heard the coachee talk about in the 'Know-how' and 'Scaling' stages. These are actively supported by affirmations from the coach to minimise the negatives in order to build a solution.
- **Action:** Agreement on the actions the coachee is going to take as a result of the conversations. What are they going to do? When are they going to do it and who may they need help from to achieve success?
- **Review:** Following up on actions and the session and building on whatever is working.

7    Whitmore, J. (2017) *Coaching for Performance 5th Edition*. Nicholas Brearley.

8    McKergow,M. and Jackson,P. (2002)*The Solutions Focus: Making Coaching and Change SIMPLE*. Nicholas Brealey

9    http://sfwork.com/pdf/Coaching%20with%20OSKAR.pdf

Both GROW and Solutions Focused Coaching are **future orientated** – in order to avoid dwelling on past failures and problems the focus remains firmly on future opportunities. Both models ensure that the purpose of the coaching session is defined by the coachee, that the conversation is challenging, awareness raising and developmental and that there are clear actions to be taken as a result of the process.

### Development activity

- Use GROW and OSKAR with one of the colleagues you are working with in two different sessions. Discuss with them which approach they found most helpful and why and reflect on which you felt most comfortable using.

## 1.4  COACHING AND DEVELOPING TEACHER ENQUIRY

As an AP you have a crucial role in supporting colleagues to improve teaching and learning. One way you can do this is through the use of questioning to help colleagues think more deeply about their practice and how it can be improved. Coaching provides a perfect vehicle for supportively challenging the way individuals and teams actively enquire about and reflect on their practice. It has been noted that individuals who adopt an **enquiring stance** as the core of their professional practice, will critically question and challenge their beliefs, assumptions, values and practices.
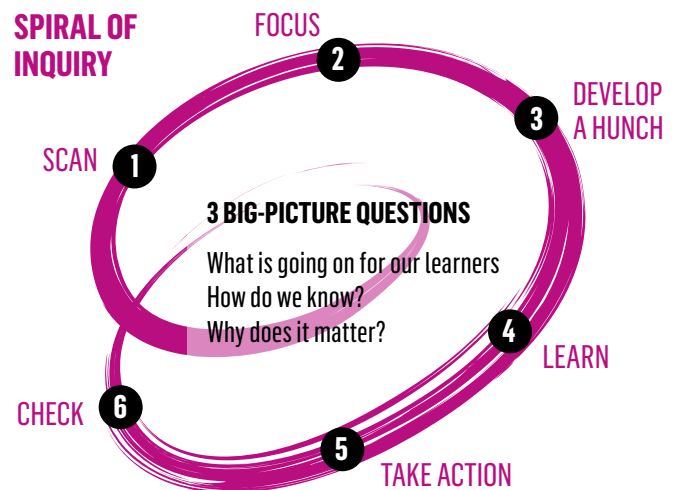
'Enquiry as Stance' is a term used by Cochran-Smith and Lytle[10], to refer to a 'way of being' as an educational professional. These are professionals who move beyond the well-rehearsed 'reflective practices' of good classroom teachers and trainers to adopt a more focused, critically informed questioning approach to their professional practice and learning.

This enquiring stance features in the [Professional Standards for FE Teachers](). Look specifically at Standard 2: 'Evaluate and challenge your practice, values and beliefs'.

An enquiring professional is: adaptive, flexible, open to change and constantly challenges their practice and context. They will continue to ask critical questions about what they are doing and why they are doing it.

The Education and Training Foundation provide a range of tools, including workbooks and a self-assessment tool, based on the Professional Standards for FE Teachers which can help APs to support such enquiry.[11]

## A TOOL TO HELP SUPPORT TEACHER ENQUIRY – 'SPIRAL OF INQUIRY'



**SPIRAL OF INQUIRY**

1 SCAN
2 FOCUS
3 DEVELOP A HUNCH
4 LEARN
5 TAKE ACTION
6 CHECK

**3 BIG-PICTURE QUESTIONS**

What is going on for our learners
How do we know?
Why does it matter?

The Spiral of Inquiry[12] enables practitioners to evaluate and adapt their practice and is driven by the learning needs of the young people they work with. It requires that practitioners ask questions of their practice, which initially may appear simple, but which can lead to profound changes.

The spiral is made up of the following six stages. APs could adapt the six stages and questions into a proforma when working with colleagues over a series of 1:1 or group sessions to help them inquire into their practice. This proforma could then be given to colleagues before a session to help facilitate better dialogue and discussions. It could also be a useful framework after a training session to help colleagues to carefully think about, plan, implement and assess changes to their practice over a period of time.

Imagine, that as a result of a drop-in surgery you have run, a curriculum manager asks you to work with her team to help them better embed functional skills into their learning programmes. How might you use each stage of the Spiral of Inquiry to plan and deliver the approach they will take?

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10  Cochran-Smith. M. and Lytle S.L (2009) *Inquiry as Stance: Practitioner Research for the Next Generation*. New York: Teachers College Press

11  https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/support-practitioners/professional-standards/

12  Halbert, J., Timperley, H. and Kaser, L. (2014) *A Framework for Transforming Learning in Schools: Innovation and the Spiral of Enquiry*. CSE Centre for Education Seminar Series 234.

**Stage 1. Scanning:** *What do I need to know before starting on this process?*

Collect a range of evidence and consider any other useful areas of learning. You will need to know what the team are already doing to embed Functional Skills, what resources and programmes they are accessing and how this relates to what other curriculum areas are doing. You would also want to have access to any relevant data such as feedback from lesson observations about the embedding of Functional English and maths, to identify areas of strength that you could build on along with feedback from learner surveys about their views on the current delivery of Functional skills.

**Stage 2. Focusing:** *Where do I need to have greater clarity before embarking on a course of action?*

Listen to all stakeholders, that is tutors, FS English and maths specialists, additional learning support tutors and learners, to understand the differing perspectives. Use the process to jointly identify and agree where energies are going to be concentrated.

**Stage 3. Developing a hunch:** *What is my 'gut feeling' about the situation?*

Stand back and take stock, question beliefs and behaviours. How may current approaches contribute positively or negatively to the situation? How can you encourage self-reflection and assessment of the team's attitudes and beliefs regarding the embedding of Functional Skills into their delivery? Are there any negative behaviours that need addressing?

**Stage 4. New professional learning:** *What research is there out there to inform my thinking?*

Look outside your organisation to identify what research and/or case studies have already been written that will help inform thinking and ideas for improvement?  For example, 'Effective Practices in Post-16 Vocational Maths'[13] and 'Making English and Maths Work for All.'[14] Work with your colleagues to identify what other research papers or case studies could help inform thinking.

**Stage 5. Taking action:** *What do I need to do to ensure learning is at the heart of this process?*

You need to ensure that whilst taking action, opportunities for learning are also facilitated. Who, in the team you are working with, are going to pilot new approaches and implement new ideas? You will support the team's learning by asking different members to try different things out with different groups and by facilitating their sharing of experiences and reflections. You can also enable improvement, by supporting those who have found some of the approaches challenging or who perhaps tried something that didn't work as well as they had hoped.

**Stage 6. Checking:** *Has the difference made, had a positive impact?*

You will have already ensured that you know what evidence you will be looking for to determine whether the actions colleagues take are beneficial. Identify those that have achieved the goals and objectives set out at the start of the process. Review success and benefits from your colleagues' perspective, the learners' perspective and the organisation's perspective.

As with the coaching models introduced previously, this model is designed to facilitate professional conversations, leading to changes in approach and thinking, which in turn lead to improvements of practice. Like the coaching models it also gives a structure to the conversation and resultant actions and can be used with both individuals and teams.



13   https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Effective-Practices-in-Post-16-Vocational-Maths-v4-0.pdf
14   https://feweek.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Report.pdf

**Development activity**

- Try adapting the six stages and questions into a proforma when working with colleagues over a series of 1:1 or group sessions to help them inquire into their practice.

- Experiment using the proforma with colleagues before a session to help facilitate better dialogue and discussions. Have a go also at using it as a framework after a session to help colleagues think about, plan, implement and assess changes to their practice over a period of time.

As an AP you can build on the Spiral of Inquiry by supporting colleagues to undertake 'Practitioner Led Research' to further develop their practice. A wide range of resources to support such research, including 'how to' guides and practical templates, can be found on the Research Portal[15] of the Excellence Gateway.

This chapter has looked at some of the models you can use to structure the professional developmental conversations you have with colleagues. The next chapter explores the skills that are needed to build effective coaching relationships.

## TOP TIPS

- Adapt your coaching so that it uses the approach best suited to the coachee, the situation and the context.

- Once you have become comfortable with using these coaching models with colleagues, get your coachees to start using them to coach themselves, their peers and their learners.

- Use your coaching relationships to develop collaborative improvement projects across your organisation.

# FURTHER RESOURCES

Cochran-Smith. M. and Lytle S.L (2009) *Inquiry as Stance: Practitioner Research for the Next Generation.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Halbert, J., Timperley, H. and Kaser, L. (2014) *A Framework for Transforming Learning in Schools: Innovation and the Spiral of Enquiry.* CSE Centre for Education Seminar Series 234.

Starr, J. (2003) T*he Coaching Manual: The Definitive Guide to the Process, Principles and Skills of Personal Coaching.* Pearson Education.

Tyler, E., Marvell, R., Green, M., Martin, A., Williams, J. and Huxley, C. (2017), *Understanding the Role of Advanced Practitioners in English Further Education.* Education and Training Foundation.

Whitmore, J. (2017) *Coaching for Performance 5th Edition.* Nicholas Brearley.

## WEBLINKS

GROW model outline and questions:
https://www.performanceconsultants.com/wp-content/uploads/GROW-Model-Guide.pdf

Joyce, B. and Showers B. (2003) *Student Achievement Through Staff Development:*
https://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/cm-mc-ssl-resource-joyceshowers.pdf

McKergow, M. and Jackson, P. (2002) *The Solutions Focus: Making Coaching and Change SIMPLE:*
http://sfwork.com/pdf/Coaching%20with%20OSKAR.pdf

The relationship between GROW and OSKAR:
http://sfwork.com/the-relationship-between-grow-and-sf

The Solutions Focus explored:
http://sfwork.com/the-solutions-focus-keeping-it-simple

# Chapter 2: Developing the coaching relationship – the power of questions and active listening

'Coaching is a conversation with a purpose, also a space where someone can think through what is going on for them/an opportunity to do 'great' thinking'.[16]

As an AP you will have many professional conversations with your colleagues. Some of these will be coaching and some will be mentoring but all of them will require you to ask a range of questions in order to facilitate thinking and reflection. Great questions also help the coachee see things differently and help them find solutions to problems and situations that they previously could not reconcile. They build an atmosphere of trust and respect that are essential in any supportive relationship.

## 2.1 ESTABLISHING THE RELATIONSHIP

'The main characteristics of a coaching style are partnership and collaboration as opposed to command and control. Coaching is a conversation between equals.'[17]

An essential element in setting the ground rules for any coaching or mentoring relationship is agreeing an initial 'contract'. This is simply agreeing the expectations for both the coach and coachee, the boundaries of the coaching relationship and joint responsibilities. It is also the time to discuss confidentiality, the timeframe and approach to meetings.

'That doesn't mean that the coach and coachee have to be great friends – simply that there has to be a high level of mutual respect at both the professional and personal levels.'[18]

This **contracting** stage is also an opportunity to explore whether the coachee is setting the agenda or whether it has been set by a third party such as a line manager. This 'three-way' contract where you have been instructed to work with someone on something specific is sometimes the hardest to manage. In these situations, you will need to clarify the purpose of the sessions, the expected outcomes and any additional support external to the coaching that both you and the coachee will be given.

A sample contracting template can be found on the Society for Education and Training (SET) website, 'Guidance for SET Mentors'[19], which you could adapt and use if you feel a more formalised approach is needed.

**Development activity**

- Work with other AP colleagues in your organisation (or a colleague from a similar organisation if you are the only AP) to develop a proforma for contracting that is suitable for the context you are working in.

Research shows that building rapport and a sense of shared values are significant factors in this relationship-building process. It is important to spend time at the start, to get to know each other and to build an effective working relationship. The following 13 questions, developed by David Clutterbuck, can provide a framework, on which to build this kind of exploratory conversation.

16    Starr, J. (2008) *Brilliant Coaching: How to be a Brilliant Coach in your Workplace.* Pearson Education.

17    Whitmore, J. (2017) *Coaching for Performance: The Principles and Practice of Coaching and Leadership.* Nicholas Brearley.

18    Lancer, N., Clutterbuck, D. and Megginson, D. (2016). *Techniques for Coaching and Mentoring,* Second Edition (Routledge) p.47

19    https://set.et-foundation.co.uk/professionalism/resources-and-webinars/mentoring-service/

**Questions to help build rapport with a coachee**

1.  How did you become you?

2.  Who do you admire? (What does this say about you?)

3.  What do you most care about? (How does this influence the choices you make?)

4.  What are your core values? (How do you put them into practice?)

5.  What do you fear most? (How do those fears affect your behaviour?)

6.  What does success mean for you? (What is your purpose in life?)

7.  What's the difference between your public and private selves?

8.  Where do you find your energy and how do you focus it?

9.  What do you still have to accomplish in your life? (What is your future story? Who do you want to become?)

10. How does what you want to achieve in the short term fit with your long-term aspirations?

11. What creates interference for you, preventing you from focusing on what's important to you? (How do you manage interference?)

12. What resources do you have/could you create to support your aspirations?

13. How do you think coaching/mentoring can help? (What are your expectations of me and of yourself?)

'Of course, other questions and topics will emerge from the dynamics of the dialogue. However, these 13 questions are enough to establish the insights and rapport essential for beginning a journey of deep learning and transformational change.'[20]

## TOP TIPS

- Make sure you establish a 'contract' with your coachee. Agree confidentiality, boundaries, hoped for outcomes and approach to the coaching sessions.
- Spend time at the start building rapport.
- If a good relationship is not established after the first few sessions be as open and honest as you can be as to what is getting in the way and if you can't move forward agree to part without blame.

## 2.2 BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIP

### ASKING POWERFUL QUESTIONS

Both GROW and OSKAR, together with other coaching models, provide guidance as to the types of questions that you can ask in order to take people successfully through the process. As an AP it is important to be aware of the types of powerful and effective questions that you can use to support colleagues to develop their own understanding and move their thinking towards defining the eventual actions they will take.

John Whitmore identified a number of questions that you could ask at each stage of the GROW process.[21] These questions could also be used to support the OSKAR coaching model as well. For example, the 'goal' questions in GROW would support the 'outcomes' focused phase of OSKAR.

**Goal**

- What would you like to achieve?
- What would be the most helpful thing you could take away at the end of this conversation?
- What outcome are you looking for (long term, short term)
- What milestones can you identify?

**Reality:**

- What is happening at the moment?
- What is your main concern?
- What is hindering/helping you achieve your goal?
- What have you done so far?

**Options:**

- What could you do?
- What ideas do you have?
- What has worked in the past?
- What would you do if you could start again with a clean sheet?

**Will:**

- What will you do?
- What will be your first step and when will this be?
- What support do you need? From whom?
- What will you do to make sure it happens?

20   Lancer, N., Clutterbuck, D. and Megginson, D. (2016). *Techniques for Coaching and Mentoring.* Second Edition, Routledge p.47.

21   Whitmore, J. (2017) *Coaching for Performance, The Principles and Practice of Coaching and Leadership.* Fifth Edition, Nicholas Brearly p.256.

Whitmore also identified 10 top 'powerful' questions from his own coaching practice which are particularly useful in supporting a coachee to remain solutions-focused and to move forward in their own thinking,

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### 10 powerful coaching questions

1. If I wasn't here what would you do?
2. If you knew the answer what would it be?
3. What if there were no limits?
4. What advice would you give a friend in your situation?
5. Imagine having a dialogue with the wisest person you know. What would they tell you to do?
6. What else could you do?
7. What would you like to explore next?
8. I don't know where to go with this. Where do you want to go?
9. What is the real issue?
10. What is the most important thing for you to do?

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Powerful questions are ones that have a significant, positive impact on the quality and direction of a person's thinking about issues important to them. Based on an analysis of hundreds of powerful questions and observing how coaches and mentors use them, the characteristics of a powerful question include being:

**Personal** – it is about them, or about how they connect to an issue.

**Resonant** – it has an emotional impact.

**Acute/Incisive** – it gets to the heart of the issue.

**Reverberating** – it stimulates reflection both in the moment and for some time afterwards.

**Innocent** – the intent of the questioner is not self-interested or derived from an agenda of their own.

**Explicit** – clearly and explicitly expressed.

These characteristics make a convenient acronym – 'PRAIRIE'.[22]

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### Development activity

- Notice the next time you engage in a coaching conversation with a colleague, how your questions 'measure up' against PRAIRIE
- Reflect on Whitmore's Top 10 powerful questions, in relation to the PRAIRIE acronym
- Identify the questions you frequently use in coaching sessions and review them against PRAIRIE

## CLEAN LANGUAGE QUESTIONS

Clean Language is a simple set of questions developed by psychologist David Grove.[23] These questions are used with a person's own words to direct their attention to some aspect of their own experience. Asking these questions in the right context often results in an interesting new insight or the recognition of some new possibility. And if that new possibility is then questioned using Clean Language, the result can be quite profound.

Clean questions invite people to consider their experience from different perspectives and they are often surprised by their own capacity to generate new, powerful and useful ideas about their own experience. They are used in many different fields, including coaching, therapy, business, health and education.

Clean Language is a powerful questioning tool because everything you say and do is intimately related to what the coachee/mentee says and does (see example on page 14). Each Clean Language question takes as its reference, the last thing the coachee/mentee has said, and their response then informs your next question. This helps give them structure in their thinking processes and explores their world, from their perspective, using their words.

Asking clean questions, using a colleague's own words and exploring metaphors are just a few of the things an AP can do to encourage the conditions for sustainable change.

---

22   Clutterbuck, D. (2012) *What Makes a Powerful Question?*, https://www.davidclutterbuckpartnership.com/what-makes-a-powerful-question/
23   Grove, D.J. and Panzer B. (1989) *Resolving Traumatic Memories: Metaphors and Symbols in Psychotherapy*. Irvington, New York.

## SOME CLEAN LANGUAGE QUESTIONS

**To find out what the coachee wants:** What would you like to have happen?

**To develop awareness:** What kind of *[coachee's words]* is that *[coachee's words]*?

**Locate in space:** Whereabouts is *[coachee's words]*?

**Expand awareness:** Is there anything else about *[coachee's words]*?

**Encourage metaphor:** That's *[coachee's words]* like what?

**To understand the bigger picture:** and then what happens (next)? What happens just before *[coachee's words]*? Where could *[coachee's words]* have come from?

**To explore relationships and connections:** And is there a relationship between *[coachee's words 'x']* and *[coachee's words 'y']*?; And when *[coachee's words]* what happens to *[coachee's words]*?

<div style="background:magenta">

**Development activity**

- Try having a 'clean language developmental conversation' with a colleague and see how the conversation progresses. Don't worry if it seems to have a repetitive syntax to you, just observe how it encourages the coachee to really explore their perceptions, awareness and understanding.[24]

</div>

## ACTIVE LISTENING

Another way to build rapport and show respect is through Active Listening. The guide 'Creating Spaces to Think in Further Education and Training' identifies that listening is a key tool for effective relationship building. One of the dangers when you are a coach is to start thinking of your next question before you have fully listened to the coachee's response. Don't be afraid of silences, these are essential tools to get the coachee to really think more deeply about a situation or possible solution.

The following ten pointers will help you to refine your active listening skills and have been adapted from the International Coaching Federation's guidance on active listening in coaching.[25]

**Guidance to support Active Listening**

1. **Let others tell their own stories and speak first.** "Seek first to understand, then to be understood"[26]

2. **It is impossible to listen and talk at the same time.** Try not to interrupt and be careful not to impose 'your' solutions.

3. **Listen for the main ideas.** Specific facts are only important as they pertain to the main theme.

4. **Fight off distractions.** Train yourself to listen carefully to the coachee's words, despite any external distractions.

5. **React to the message, not the person.** Don't allow your mental impression of the coachee to influence your interpretation of their message.

6. **Check your understanding.** Constantly try to check your understanding of what you hear. Do not only hear what you want to hear.

7. **Try not to be critical, either mentally or verbally, of the other person's point of view.** Allow the coachee plenty of time to fully finish their train of thought. Keep an open mind.

8. **Listen attentively.** Convey a positive attitude to the coachee and a willingness to talk through the situation. Use positive body language, but do not overdo it.

9. **Create a positive listening environment.** Aim for a quiet, private spot away from sources of distraction.

10. **Ask questions.** Ask open ended questions to allow the coachee to express their feelings and thoughts. Mirror, paraphrase, probe and summarise.

If you actively listen, you will build your ability to concentrate on what your coachee is really saying. The ability to shut out the internal noise that gets in the way of effective listening is known as 'Mindful Listening'.

The coach does not have to mentally rehearse what the coachee is saying, which blocks up short-term memory and prevents true listening. Listening with no mental rehearsal, leads to a deeper processing which is less phonic and more semantic .... In other words, the essential meaning 'sticks' more than the actual words that were said.

24    Lawley, J. and Tomkins, P. (2001), *Metaphors In Mind: A Case Study.* Anchor Point Vol. 15, No. 5

25    https://coachfederation.org/blog/10-tips-for-effective-listening

26    Covey, S. (2013) *The Seven habits of Highly Effective people.* 25th Anniversary Edition. Rosetta Books.

'Listening is the first step in making people feel valued.  Mindful Listening allows us to do more than take in people's words: it helps us better understand the how and the why of their views. From understanding, respect and trust for one another are possible; we are free to open our minds and widen the scope of potential solutions.'[27]

For listening to be effective, we require a non-judgemental mind: open, fresh, alert, attentive, calm, and receptive.  Listening is an active process; we often see listening as a passive, static activity. In fact, listening and the non-judgemental mind is open and active, and it can be cultivated through being aware of your own listening skills and practice.

This chapter has explored the core skills of questioning and listening which are central to coaching and to building the relationship between coach and coachee. The next chapter of this guide introduces you to a range of additional coaching and mentoring tools that you can use when supporting colleagues.

## TOP TIPS

- Try out some different questions when you are working with colleagues and reflect on those that have a strong impact.
- Keep a log of questions you have used when working with colleagues, record those that you (and your colleagues) find the most powerful.
- Ask fewer questions. This allows more time to focus on the quality of questions you do ask.
- Remember that your body language conveys strong messages as to whether you are listening. Be careful to avoid negative body postures.
- Always try to listen without judgement and be fully present in the moment by avoiding distractions and quietening your internal noise.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

Covey, S. (2013) T*he Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.* 25th Anniversary Edition. Rosetta Books.

Grove, D.J. and Panzer, B. (1989) *Resolving Traumatic Memories: Metaphors and Symbols in Psychotherapy*. Irvington, New York.

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Starr, J. (2008) *Brilliant Coaching: How to be a Brilliant Coach in your Workplace*. Pearson Education.

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## WEBLINKS

Clutterbuck, D. (2012) What Makes a Powerful Question? https://www.davidclutterbuckpartnership. com/what-makes-a-powerful-question/

Treasure, J. (2011) 5 Ways to Listen Better: https://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_5_ways_to_ listen_better

Treasure, J. (2013) How to Speak Powerfully: https://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_how_to_ speak_so_that_people_want_to_listen

Some more GROW questions: http://www.cmft.nhs.uk/ media/1841263/grow%20questions%20pdf.pdf

OSKAR questions: http://sfwork.com/oskar-coaching

OSKAR questions and when to use them: http://www. free-management-ebooks.com/faqch/models-11.htm

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27    Shafir, R. (2003) *The Zen of Listening: Mindful Communication in the Age of Distraction.* (Quest Books)

# Chapter 3:  Tools and techniques to support the coaching and mentoring process

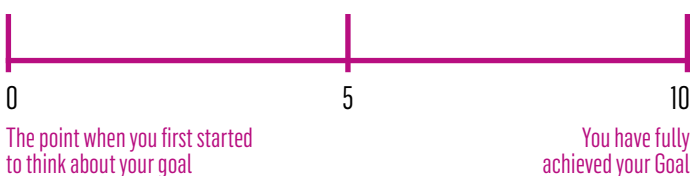> **REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS:**                                          **?**
>
> - What tools and techniques do you use in your sessions with colleagues to help facilitate understanding and learning?
>
> - How do you encourage people to think differently if they are stuck in one mind-set?
>
> - How do you continuously update and improve the approaches you use when supporting colleagues?

Both coaching (non-directive questioning and listening) and mentoring (guiding and directing) are structured conversations to help facilitate learning and generally they follow a process of awareness through possible solutions to taking responsibility for action. Sometimes you may find that you need to use different approaches to help ensure that the process is both valuable and successful. The following tools and techniques are just a small selection of what you can use to help your colleagues think, develop and learn.

## 3.1  SCALING

Scaling is a key tool that belongs in every coaching toolbox. Whether you need to gauge a subjective perception, define a person's current status/situation, assess progress, or discover resources and solutions, scaling questions can play a key role.

Scaling, in its simplest format, is asking people where they sit on scale from 0 to 10. Where 10 is the ideal solution/situation and 0 is the worse-case scenario/situation.

```
0                      5                          10
The point when you first started        You have fully
to think about your goal               achieved your Goal
```

**Where would you say things are between 0 and 10 right now?**

Scaling allows coachee to assess where they currently sit on that continuum and affords the coach the opportunity to ask questions to better understand the coachee's perceptions and situational awareness. It can be used visually, drawing out the scale on a piece of paper or up on a board, which helps the coachee to picture the journey they have to make moving from one point on the scale to the next (for example from a 4 to a 5). You can even encourage the coachee to move physically along a line that you have marked on the floor.

The OSKAR framework (see section 1.3) includes scaling as a key area for questioning once the coachee has set out their ideal or 'Future Perfect'. For example, if the ideal is 10 you could ask the coachee where they currently sit on a scale from 0 to 10.

The 'S' in OSKAR stands for Scaling and the Solutions Focused model identifies how scaling questions can serve four major purposes:

- **Recognising** what has already been accomplished ("What has got you to that point on the scale?")
- **Offering** shades of grey ("How is your point on the scale different this session from your last session?")
- **Focusing** on small next steps ("How will you notice that you have moved up one point on your scale?")
- **Considering** the consequences of having reached the goal ("How will things be different when you have reached your goal point on the scale?")[28]
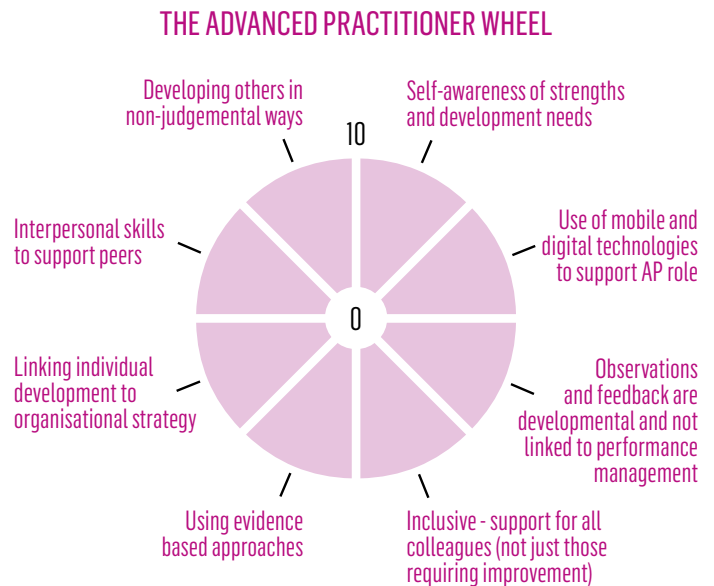
Scaling questions can be used in different situations as well as for different purposes. Here are some examples of scaling questions that as an AP you might find useful:

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[28]  Berg, K. and Szabó, P. (2005) *Brief Coaching for Lasting Solutions*. Norton.

### Useful questions to support scaling

- "How confident are you that you will follow through and make the change?"

- "How worried are you about this? Rate yourself on a scale from 0 to 10, 10 representing a maximum of anxiety, 0 the opposite."

- "What will you be doing at 8 that you are not doing now in your learning session?"

- "You have a lot of ideas to action. What do you hope to realistically achieve by our next session? Rate this on a scale of 0 to 10 (10 = all of it. 0 = none of it)."

- To check how things have developed. "Last time you rated yourself a 4. How would you rate yourself today?"

- "To what extent did you undertake your actions agreed at the last session?"

- "How satisfied are you with that learning session?" Rate yourself on a scale from 0 to 10.

- "How confident are you that you will reach this goal?" Rate yourself on a scale from 0 to 10.

### TOP TIPS

- If people are really stuck, use 0.5 in the scaling. "What would make it 4.5, 6.5 (from 4 and 6) etc.?"
- Use scaling to assess the effectiveness of the coaching session both immediately afterwards and at some point in time before the next session.
- Use scaling with teams to get a shared view of the current situation and their understanding.

## 3.2  COACHING WHEELS

A Coaching Wheel is a valuable tool for supporting self-evaluation, exploring current reality and helping you and your colleagues to critically reflect as professionals. It is an extension of the use of scaling and provides an informed foundation for planning a way forward.

The wheel identifies eight different aspects of a learning/developmental situation and then asks the coachee to score themselves on a scale of 0 to 10 against each of the segments.

The following is an example of a coaching wheel that looks at the values of an AP as set out in the professional development cards. You could use it as a tool to help with your own AP development.

### THE ADVANCED PRACTITIONER WHEEL



Developing others in non-judgemental ways

Self-awareness of strengths and development needs

Interpersonal skills to support peers

Use of mobile and digital technologies to support AP role

Linking individual development to organisational strategy

Observations and feedback are developmental and not linked to performance management

Using evidence based approaches

Inclusive - support for all colleagues (not just those requiring improvement)

When using the Coaching Wheel with colleagues, you will jointly agree a topic and then can either assign the 8 areas yourself for the coachee to fill in or ask the coachee/team to identify the areas for development themselves. Examples for the topic of a wheel could include:

- A learning session
- Helping learners progress
- Learner engagement
- Dealing with a challenging group of leaners
- Embedding English and/or maths
- Involving employers
- Assessment for learning.

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) has a wealth of information and resources about how to use a Coaching Wheel which includes a Coaching Wheel template.[29]

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[29]  http://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-standards/using-a-coaching-wheel.aspx

## 3.3  USING METAPHORS

'The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.'[30]

Metaphors and stories are used extensively in coaching and mentoring as they can help elicit different information around a particular situation, rather than just describing it. Metaphors generally operate at an unconscious level and by paying attention to them, you can gain access to a deeper and embodied level of experience: the structure of a coachee's thinking; the patterns that run their lives; their truth.[31]

In your role as an AP there are two ways to use metaphors:

1. Working with the coachee's metaphor which allows you as a coach to explore the coachee's perceptions.
2. Working with the metaphor provided by you as the coach.  You may share a metaphor that you think is relevant to the coachee's situation and experience.

The following approach when working with the coachee's metaphor can be found in Zeus and Skiffington's Coaching at Work Toolkit.[32]

When you are having professional conversations with colleagues, be aware of metaphors that are being used on a regular basis or one that really stands out. This can also include the use of language such as: 'a struggle', 'a battle', 'winning'. By asking questions about the coachee's use of the metaphor you can delve deeper into their understanding and awareness of a situation. This approach links to the 'Clean Language' questions we introduced earlier in this guide in section 2.2.

To make this approach powerful you need firstly to make the coachee aware of their use of language/ metaphor and then secondly ask them some questions to explore the metaphor in more detail.  At the same time, you need to be considering what the use of this metaphor is telling tell you as the coach.

When a coachee tells you that they can 'see light at the end of the tunnel', that is what they are experiencing. There is light for them, and they are in a tunnel. They will unconsciously 'know' much more about their situation from this metaphoric viewpoint. They are very likely to know in which direction the light is, how far away it is, and where the light comes from. They will know about the structure of the tunnel, how it feels and looks, how narrow the passage, and whereabouts they are in relation to the tunnel.

This is where the power of metaphor comes in. The coachee will know, on some level, what needs to happen for them to move towards the light and get out of the tunnel. Your job as a coach is to ask questions about the metaphor that will raise the coachee's awareness of their 'real' perception of the current situation which in turn will shift as their perception of the metaphor evolves and alters.

Here are some useful questions that will prompt the coachee to elaborate on the metaphor they have used.

### Questions to explore the use of metaphors

- What are the implications of your use of this metaphor?
- How is the metaphor influencing your emotions, assumptions and feelings?
- What does this tell you about your relationship with the situation?
- What insights can we gain from its use?
- Does this metaphor help shared understanding?
- Can the metaphor be developed further to aid deeper understanding?
- How might this metaphor be limiting your thinking?
- What strengths and weaknesses does this metaphor imply?
- What actions does this metaphor suggest?

30  Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1980) *Metaphors We Live By.* University of Chicago Press. p.5

31  Grove, D.J. and Panzer, B.I. (1989) *Resolving Traumatic Memories: Metaphors and Symbols in Psychotherapy.* Irvington.

32  Zeus, P. and Skiffington, S. (2002) *The Coaching at Work Toolkit: A Complete Guide to Techniques and Practices.* McGraw-Hill.

Once you have explored the metaphor ask the coachee if they would now like to change it to another metaphor. You could work with the coachee to build a new, positive metaphor. Ask them to take the new metaphor away and experiment with it. You can review the results in the next coaching session.

## USING METAPHORS IN COACHING

One useful approach to adopt as a coach is to use the metaphor of a play or a film when you are working with a colleague. Ask them what role or character they feel they are from any play or film they can think of. You can then explore why they have chosen that character and what it means for them.

You can then extend the metaphor by asking the coachee to take the perspective of the playwright, audience, actors etc. and explore the metaphor further. This process helps the coachee to step out of their situation and put themselves into someone else's shoes, which is particularly useful if they are blocked into one way of thinking. By extending the metaphor you will open up new and different options.

### TOP TIPS

- Listen to the metaphors people use. Alternatively, if a person is finding it hard to explain a situation or how they feel, ask them to describe the situation using a metaphor.
- Practise using metaphors often and have a list of ones to use whenever required to change a coachee's perspective of their situation.

## 3.4 VISUALISATION

Whilst metaphors are one way of extending your colleague's thinking, awareness and understanding of a situation, another is to use visual creative techniques to expand thinking outside of the usual parameters.

Visualisation has been used extensively in a sporting context as a way of creating a positive mindset. In his book the Inner game, Tim Gallwey[33] identified that failure is often caused by fear, self-doubt, lapses in focus, and limiting concepts or assumptions. By visualising success, you can create a positive mind-set that will make the chances of success more likely when you try out something new or innovative.

As a coach you can help this process through guided visualisation where you encourage the coachee to purposely rehearse a skill, approach or learning activity in their mind's eye. Get them to set out a positive picture of what will happen and help them programme themselves for success.

Visualisation can help focus on a specific issue and thinking about the ideal, or the 'future perfect', are ways to help visualise what the desired future looks like. Through the use of visualisation you can help your coachees change the way they think about things as well as changing any established behaviours and beliefs. You can help them use their imagination by getting them to explore new opportunities and solutions to tricky issues and then, by undertaking these new ways of thinking, they can make these new helpful behaviours become embedded positive habits. Applying the 'power of creative visualisation' opens up opportunities to create positive outcomes and picturing positive outcomes can help them create new possibilities and solutions.

Here are some useful visual techniques for you to try out with your coachees[34]:

- **Solution building:** take a large sheet of paper and draw a blank jigsaw on it (20-30 pieces). Ask your coachee the question, "what do we know about this problem?" For every item they know get them to write a note on the outer edge of the jigsaw gradually working inwards. Then ask them, "what do we not know?" and get them to write these in the centre. Finally ask them, "what do we know that we don't know?" and get them to place any items this generates in between (they can add colours to emphasise differences). Once they have completed the jigsaw you can discuss how they can change the picture to the colour of the "do knows" and work out potential solutions based on this conversation.

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[33] Gallwey W.T. (2015) *The Inner Game of Tennis: The Ultimate Guide to the Mental Side of Peak Performance*. Pan Books.

[34] Source of activities:
Lancer, N., Clutterbuck, D. and Megginson, D. (2016). *Techniques for Coaching and Mentoring*. Second Edition. Routledge.
Zeus, P. and Skiffington, S. (2002) *The Coaching at Work Toolkit: A Complete Guide to Techniques and Practices*. McGraw-Hill.

- **Drawing:** you can get people to draw out their metaphors as this sometimes helps to expand their thinking. Ask them to draw a picture that describes the situation, alternatively use stick people with speech bubbles to explore a tricky people situation. Ask your coachee to put themselves on the picture; are they in the centre or on the outside? Again, this will help to develop your understanding of your coachee.

- **Starting from somewhere else:** 'What if you were starting from the beginning again or from a differing point, what would it look and feel like?' Ask your coachee to imagine someone else was in their shoes (such as a well-known figure or a superhero), how would they be dealing with the situation? Ask them what they would be doing differently if this were a different story. Encourage them then as a result of this conversation to consider how they might think differently about the situation and how they could overcome some of the constraints they are facing.

- **The SWITCH technique:** this is a useful approach to replace a negative scenario with a positive one. Ask your coachee to visualise two pictures, one of the unwanted scenario (the cue picture) and one of the desired scenario (the outcome picture). First ask the coachee to imagine the unwanted scenario as a big and bright picture filling the screen, then ask them to place the desired scenario as a picture into the bottom corner of that screen. Now ask the coachee to zoom, very rapidly, the small desired picture so that it fills the whole screen.  Repeat the switch five times or until the coachee is confident they can do this without any help.  This can then be used to replace the limiting thoughts/pictures with positive ones.

## TOP TIPS

- Practise using and developing these techniques to create your own toolkit of approaches.
- Start using these tools in a safe environment with an AP/colleague you trust in your team and then when you are confident with the tools begin using them more widely with colleagues.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

Berg, K. and Szabó, P. (2005) *Brief Coaching for Lasting Solutions*. Norton.

Gallwey W.T. (2015) *The Inner Game of Tennis: The Ultimate Guide to the Mental Side of Peak Performance*. Pan Books.

Grove, D.J. and Panzer, B.I. (1989) *Resolving Traumatic Memories: Metaphors and Symbols in Psychotherapy*. Irvington.

Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago Press. p.5.

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Zeus, P. and Skiffington, S. (2002) *The Coaching at Work Toolkit: A Complete Guide to Techniques and Practices*. McGraw-Hill.

## WEBLINKS

Clutterbuck,D.  *blogs and articles*:
https://www.davidclutterbuckpartnership.com/blogs/

Excellence Gateway. U*se of Scaling in a Learner Context*:
https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2716

Excellence Gateway (use 'Search' for Coaching and mentoring resources):
https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/

Gallwey,T. *The Inner Game:*
http://theinnergame.com/about-tim-gallwey/intro-to-the-inner-game/

Online Library for Managers. *Solutions Focus Coaching* (free e-book):
http://www.free-management-ebooks.com/faqch/models-11.htm

Robbins, A. (2015) *The Power of Visualisation:*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAP3fOW8b8g

Whitmore,J. *GROW Model:*
https://www.performanceconsultants.com/grow-model

The Centre for Solutions Focused Work, *blogs and articles*
http://sfwork.com/articles-archive

The General Teaching Council for Scotland:
http://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-standards/using-a-coaching-wheel.aspx
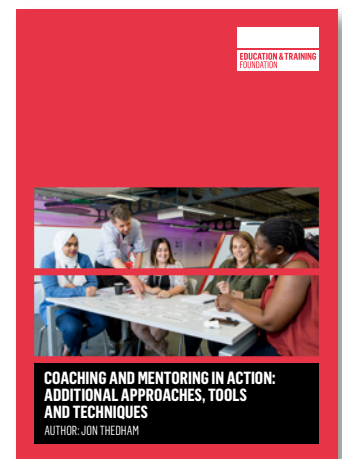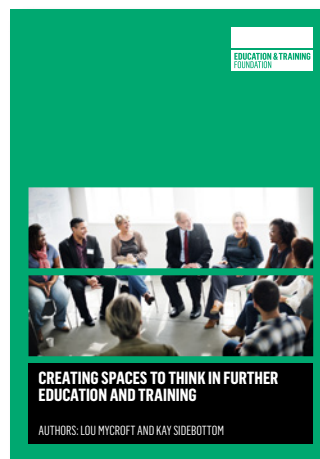
# Next steps

We hope that this guide has enthused you to try out and apply to your own practice some of the practical ideas and approaches that have been explored. We also hope that it has sparked your interest to find out more about the other guides in this suite.

Take a look in particular at, 'Coaching and Mentoring in Action' which will provide you with further tools to add to your toolkit and which will help you to reflect more deeply on your competence as an AP and your role in supporting colleagues. 'Coaching and Mentoring in Action' is packed with practical resources and tips that will help you coach people through change and to address some of the more challenging aspects of your role such as managing resistance.

Finally, each of the four guides relates strongly to the Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in the Further Education Sector and can be used to evidence, for example, how you as an AP and the colleagues that you are supporting:

- are reflective and enquiring practitioners who think critically about their own educational assumptions, values and practices
- draw on relevant research as part of evidence-based practice.

The professional standards are another valuable tool to add to your AP toolkit. You can use them as a benchmark to evidence high quality teaching, learning and assessment as well as effective professional practice. They also provide you with a 'common language' to use in your discussions with managers and colleagues.

FACILITATING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND HIGH-PERFORMANCE THROUGH SITUATED LEARNING
AUTHOR: IAN GRAYLING

USING COACHING AND MENTORING TO SUPPORT COLLEAGUES: CORE PRINCIPLES AND TECHNIQUES
AUTHOR: JON THEDHAM

CREATING SPACES TO THINK IN FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
AUTHORS: LOU MYCROFT AND KAY SIDEBOTTOM

COACHING AND MENTORING IN ACTION: ADDITIONAL APPROACHES, TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES
AUTHOR: JON THEDHAM

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