



Coaching

A guide to developing your passion and skills

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Everyone can be a coach! We all have the ability to listen to people, we all know how to empathise with others, to impart knowledge and how to ask questions. It is within us simply by the fact that we are human. The key to becoming a really good coach is in the unlocking of our natural coaching style, becoming aware of who we are as a coach and ultimately broadening our abilities to best fit our coachee and the situation.

This short guide is intended to help you unlock your passion and potential as a coach. We invite you to take some time whenever you encounter a potential coaching situation to be curious about an aspect of yourself as coach. Devoting time to noticing how you are, what you think and what you feel about an aspect of coaching will enable you to improve as a coach.

Be encouraged to use this A-Z and reflect and act upon the ideas suggested. Use it for the next 26 days and see the difference that it makes for you as a coach!



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A

Autonomy

Personal Autonomy is vital for a coach. Coaches need to respect their coachees' autonomy and, rather than take responsibility for the coachee, co-create an atmosphere where it is possible to work with the coachee, so they are able to self-direct their thinking, being and action. For coaches to serve the coachee, they need to be able to make a clear assessment in any coaching situation about whether or not what they say and do is truly likely to serve the coachee rather than their own curiosity or self-confirmation.

A helpful hint is to notice who is 'doing the work' in a coaching conversation. If you, the coach, are doing most of the work, you may want to pay attention to that.

B

Boundaries

... help create an environment where real openness, clarity and learning can be achieved. The most crucial boundary is confidentiality of any content the coachee brings – it must be entirely up to the coachee how and what they want to share with others in the organisation.

Other boundaries can be negotiated and agreed such as the process of feedback from coachee to coach, and vice versa and how the coaching process is to be evaluated.

On a personal level a coach needs to know where their own boundaries are – ethical boundaries, boundaries of competence and demarcation from therapy as well as boundaries around themselves so as not to be enmeshed emotionally in the coachee's story.



Business benefits

It is one of the greatest challenges for all developers to demonstrate return on investment. However, there is mounting evidence that coaching can bring about behaviour change (Carol Braddick, 2003), often shown in improved leadership surveys.

Equally, most involved in coaching have a gut feel that it positively affects performance and the bottom line (CIPD, 2004) and there is plenty of qualitative data and examples of people increasing in confidence, gaining greater influencing skills, being able to cope with the vagaries of organisational life.

By its nature, coaching focuses on 1:1 relationships, however, there is now growing evidence that if generic themes arising during coaching conversations are brought into the mix for organisational development, coaching can really assist organisational change and alignment.



Challenge

Coaching aims to broaden people's perspectives and break unhelpful patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving to enable coachees to fulfil their potential.

In an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect a key skill of coaching is 'challenge'. Skilful questions around limiting beliefs, unhelpful perspectives and automatic responses can be mirrored back to the coachee allowing them to find useful alternatives and opportunities for change.

This is a highly skilful intervention and one coaches do well to develop.



Developing others

Coaching is all about developing others – be they individuals or teams – to improve performance.

In his article 'Leadership that gets Results' (Harvard Business Review, March/April 2000), Daniel Goleman argues that a Coaching Leadership Style is one of the most effective. Leading in this way, he suggests, has an overall positive impact on work climate and increases individual commitment, responsibility, flexibility, standards and clarity within organisations. The Coaching Style has now gained great credibility as a legitimate and productive leadership style.



Empathy

This is **the** key skill in establishing a coaching relationship. Empathy means the ability to step into someone else's shoes – really understanding how the other person is feeling or thinking in a particular situation.

Coaches who are able to 'park themselves' and so focus on their coachees help deepen the coaching relationship as the coachee feels truly heard, understood and not judged.

Being able to connect to the coachee's feelings also enables the coach to pick up emotions the coachee themselves maybe unaware of, allowing them to name them, allow them, explore their connection to a limiting belief or behaviour and through that create a shift.

Ethics

As a coach you need to develop your ethical reasoning skills. This is to enable you to manage the ethical dilemmas that can come up in a coaching relationship. Some issues will be covered by ethical codes of conduct that help you manage boundaries and have a clear sense of professional standards. But these won't cover every situation. That's when you need the capability of ethical reasoning.

To explore this concept further, we recommend reading 'Ethics for the Real World: Creating a Personal Code to Guide Decisions in Work and Life' by Ronald A. Howard and Clinton D. Korver



Feedback

Like it or not, we assess people all of the time. Feedback is offering your perception of others to them and, as such, has to do with us, them and our relationship. It is never the truth, but, given with positive intent, can offer an important insight to the coachee on how they come across, what they do well and where they may look for alternatives. Many coaching processes start with a 360° feedback process, allowing the coachee to reflect on how they are seen and form subsequent coaching goals.

It can be difficult to manage defensive reactions around feedback – your empathy skills will help with that!



Gestalt

'Gestalt' literally meaning 'Form' encourages coaches to look at and work with the 'whole' person – encouraging a big-picture view and taking into consideration the coachee's experience of feeling, thinking, behaving, their body sensations and also the wider (organisational) environment.

Gestalt has a base assumption that people want to be 'whole' and healthy and it is only a lack of awareness that prevents this. So a gestalt approach to coaching is about facilitating awareness of the sense-making processes by focusing on what is directly felt, experienced and perceived right now.

"Skills in Gestalt Counselling" by Phil Joyce and Charlotte Sills is a good read on the subject.





Holding the space

Together with a good relationship comes the coach's ability to 'hold the space'. What is meant by that is their ability to stay curious, present and fully engaged with the coachee whilst the coachee endeavours to inquire into their issue.

A coach will ask questions, give permission and encouragement, smile and support the coachee using their skills of empathy and suspending themselves to give a safe space for the coachee to discover their truth.

A good book on the subject is: 'Cultivating Self-generative Leaders Through Mind, Body and Heart' by Douglas K Silsbee.



Intuition

Intuition is a powerful place to come from in coaching. It is listening inside of ourselves to a deeper wisdom, a gut feel which we all have had at times, and which we may or may not have listened to. It can be a source of great value for coachees to tap into this wisdom and to share it in coaching.

However, there is a health warning. Our intuition and projections are indistinguishable. Some coaches value intuition so highly they do not stop, question themselves and take a moment to think about whether this is intuition or projection. So, it is important to offer our intuitions tentatively – being righteous about something which may, in the end, be our own 'stuff' will probably damage the relationship.



Journey

Often, when life events really rattle our core assumptions, beliefs and past learning – be that because we have taken on a new role, become redundant or taken on caring responsibilities, we need to change our core structures – the way we see the world - and, therefore, embark on a journey of learning.

A coach can add great value as we change the way we see ourselves and how we act and behave. They can facilitate transformational learning by helping us to reflect and consciously make new decisions. This then opens new opportunities and opens doors both in terms of career and lifestyle. Coaching assists in this discovery and ensures changes are sustainable and sustained.



Knowing yourself

Portia Nelson in her poem 'Autobiography in Five Short Chapters' really shows the benefit of getting to know yourself – useful as a coach, and ultimately the aim for the coachee:

I

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk
I fall in.
I am lost ... I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes me forever to find a way out.

II

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in the same place
But, it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

III

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in ... it's a habit.
My eyes are open
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

IV

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

V

I walk down another street.



Listening

Listening is a key skill in coaching. Listening well means that we attempt to concentrate our attention in such a way that we don't miss anything and that our interpretations are as close as possible to the other person's meaning.

As such there are 5 ways in which a coach can listen:

- They listen rather than just hear
- They use silence to give space to the coachee
- They reflect back what they have heard, both to make sure they have understood and to help raise awareness in the coachee
- They seek clarification of concepts and thoughts that we often think 'oh, I know what that means' and yet the meaning can be quite specific to the coachee
- They hear what is not being said and draw attention to that.

In the context of the above, coaches tend to listen to 5 particular areas:

- The truth about a situation/thought/emotion/action
- The ambitions and desires of the coachee
- Their limiting beliefs and blocks to achievement
- Their wins and shifts in the direction of success
- Their own agenda and how it may serve or get in the way of the coaching.



Making meaning

Human beings make meaning out of everything. You can call it opinions, judgements, assessments, interpretations or perceptions, but what it isn't, is objective or factual. As soon as we observe a situation or a person we have a perception. It's a natural human thing to do.

The challenge in coaching is that we are not always good at seeing the difference between what happened, and our perceptions about what happened. Ask someone to describe what happened in a particular situation, and you will have a series of interpretations. If it was a difficult situation involving a person whom they find challenging, they will often be resistant to exploring their perceptions as perceptions – “Well, other people think it as well, so it must be true!”

A coach can help the coachee to pick apart what happens, and their perceptions of what happens, and help them to understand what part of that perception relates to them. We all have patterns in how we perceive things (as a threat, an opportunity, a challenge, a weakness etc) and for the coachee to understand their perceptions, as perceptions, can open up new options for actions in the world.



Narcissistic leaders

Coaching narcissistic leaders has its own, particular challenges. They are often charismatic and charming people, but, being bored easily, they long for recognition and prestige in the limelight. This they strive to create first and foremost for themselves rather than for their organisations and, when power is offered, they often fall prey to excessive arrogance, greed and vindictiveness.

As narcissistic leaders find it exceptionally difficult to accept feedback or even just a free flow of ideas, they can effectively block organisational change. With this often comes an inability to relate to emotional issues with their subordinates and, rather than relating to them, they tend to simply use them for their own self-interests. The destructiveness in terms of organisations and their people is obvious.

The coach needs to ensure that they are not seduced by the charisma of the coachee to believe that whatever situation they are in is someone else's fault. Their task is to gradually and gently lead them to take responsibility for their organisations and people within them. One of the main tasks is to strengthen their fragile sense of self worth and allow them to see the potential harm of their defensive behaviours.



Organisational culture

Coaching is often associated with 1:1 work alone. However coaches need to pay attention to the systems and organisational cultures of which their coachees are part. Organisational culture is a powerful influencer of coachees' behaviours.

Not only that, though: coaching is a powerful tool for organisational change. By adopting a coaching approach and introducing a coaching culture, organisations can increase the level of engagement in their workforce.

As a coaching approach to leadership improves relationships, it also improves co-operation and the quality of communication in the organisation leading to a more flexible, creative and loyal workforce.

This coaching culture is not only reflected positively in organisational surveys but equally has an effect on the bottom line. The Roffey Park Management Agenda 2009 concluded that the 'quality of leadership in organisations was clearly related to strategic and financial success' and some reasons why this is so.





Power

There is always a power dynamic at play in any coaching relationship. The coach is the helper; the coachee is the person being helped, so there is a power dynamic from the start. As a coach it is vital to be aware of this and how your suggestions and advice, however well intentioned, may well be experienced by the coachee as instructions.

Most coaches do not abuse this power deliberately – if they do they're in the wrong game. For most coaches however, the power dynamic is experienced more subtly.

To explore this concept further, we recommend reading 'Power in the helping professions' by Adolf Guggenbuhl-Craig.

Presence

Anyone who has tried to do something simple, such as concentrate all their attention on their breath for a minute, will know that their thoughts will intervene and carry them off in different directions. It is the same when we are with a client. Being present in the present moment, as opposed to off in our thoughts about the previous coachee, and what we need to pick up from the shops on the way home, is key to a coach's presence.

That presence, and the true listening that comes from it, can be more valuable than any questions, feedback or other interventions we can offer. It is non-judgemental, as the judgements come when we get carried away with our thoughts. Letting them go provides a place for the coachee to really explore and work through the issues they bring to coaching.

To develop this further we recommend a basic meditation practice for coaches.

Projection

Projection is a psychological concept, which is important for coaches to be familiar with. It is based on the idea that I can only see something in others (or the world) when I have that concept within myself. I cannot see it in others if I do not have familiarity with it. Projection occurs when I take something that I am not willing to see about myself and put that onto another. It is something we all do, and is unconscious.

It is always important to take a moment to ask when giving feedback, 'How much of this is about me, and how much of it is really about them?'



Questions

Questions are **the** way of working as a coach, questions show curiosity, interest, establish a relationship and allow for change to emerge.

We all know when a powerful question really creates a shift in our coachees. There we are, exploring, inquiring and making sense and then, suddenly and often intuitively, we ask a question that makes a real difference. The coachee stops in their tracks, there is a silence and a deliberation and often a smile comes to the face!

These are the questions that elicit real in-depth insight in the coachee, the 'a-ha moments', the 'lightbulb moments'. These moments are as gratifying for the coachee as they are for the coach as they signify real change happening, insight leading to action.



Relationship

Establishing a good relationship between the coach and coachee is vital for the coaching outcome. Empirical studies conducted by the American Psychological Association, have shown that '... the relationship ... makes substantial and consistent contributions to outcome' (2002).

So then, what are the factors of a 'good relationship'? Three factors seem to be truly defining:

- The practitioner's level of empathy, the degree to which they can 'get' the world of their coachees
- The quality and strength of collaboration between practitioner and coachee - having positive regard, respect and a non-judgemental, curious approach
- The level of agreement between coach and coachee as to the aims of coaching.

In addition to the above, the quality of feedback and the level of self-disclosure by the coach are also considered important.

Dave Mearns and Mick Cooper pick up on the above in their book 'Working at Relational Depth'.



Somatic coaching

Somatics comes from the Greek word, soma, which means *the living body in its wholeness*. Somatic coaching therefore is a school of coaching, pioneered by Strozzi Institute (with whom we partner), in which the body is used as a means for development.

For example, gravitas is something that does not require someone to speak – when you meet someone with real presence and gravitas you know it. We would say that this is a bodily phenomenon and when coaching leaders for gravitas and presence, engaging through the body allows a direct and tangible way to develop and coach.

The body doesn't lie, and how coachees show up in some basic exercises can give you all you need to work with for your entire coaching programme. It is also possible to share with them practices that will allow them to develop the leadership presence they desire.

To explore this further we recommend our Embodied Leadership programme, which is also the first step in a Somatic Coaching certification.



Trap door

Transactional Analysis, has made a great contribution to coaching in terms of relationships and responsibility and given many models to help us understand ourselves and our coachees in a practical way.

One of the most useful models in this regard is Paul Ware's thinking about how different people communicate and how we, as coaches, can help our relationships and the coaching flow by paying attention to three different ways of communicating.

Ware states that we all have a 'contact door' and, if people communicate with us using this, it makes contact easier. Our contact doors are: thinking, feeling and acting.

The interesting piece here is that we all have trap doors as well. These are ways of being communicated with that bring out our defensive side. Again, these are thinking, feeling and acting. If the coach communicates straight into the trap door of the coachee, the likely disconnect in the relationship is obvious.

The aim here is to find out the target door of the coachee and flex our own communication style to match with this, at least for a time.

Ware's research shows that the distribution of preferred style is roughly equal in the population. Given that, and given that much of coaching, traditionally at least, was very action focused, makes it quite likely that we were working with the trap doors of around 70% of the population!

If you are curious to deepen your knowledge around this, Vann Joines' and Ian Stewart's book 'Personality Adaptations' is a good starting point.



Unknown

"We die to each other daily. What we know of other people is only our memory of the moments during which we knew them. And they have changed since then. To pretend that they and we are the same is a useful and convenient social convention which must sometimes be broken. We must also remember that at every meeting we are meeting a stranger."
T.S. Eliot (The Cocktail Party)



T.S. Eliot's eloquent words demonstrate an important aspect of coaching, and one which coaches need to remember: When we meet a client we prepare, we review our notes and look over the issues that they are addressing. We make sure that we remind ourselves of the actions they agreed to take after the previous coaching session. Then, we need to remind ourselves of this quote and empty our minds so that we can meet this person as *who they are today*, accepting that this may not be the same as the person we last met.



Values

What are our values? Often it is said that we notice our values when others cross them in some way. Values are a core part of our identity, they drive our behaviour.

It can be very useful, as a coach, to help the coachee find out what really matters to them, because we tend to judge others and situations by our values and this can become emotionally very draining and unproductive. And yet, in itself values do not tend to be either good or bad, but our judgement of them make it so.

Quite simply, if you can help the coachee to move from an automatic judgement, based on their values, you can decrease their frustration and anger with others, and enable them to be significantly more effective in their lives.



Working with typical leadership issues

Some issues come up time and again – and when leaders are suffering from particular 'syndromes' they can really infect the culture of organisations.

Take the imposter syndrome as an example. Here, often the very successful leader is somehow unable to internalise their success. Instead, they feel less competent, less intelligent, less accomplished than they really are and have a constant nag about 'being found out'. This can mean that they become hugely perfectionist both around their own work and drive others in the same direction. Goals and expectations can be set so high that failure is almost inevitable, or, if achieved, only serve to move the goalposts even wider.

This can lead to living with a view of the world where even the smallest error cannot be put in perspective, where workaholism becomes the norm and where the leader loses sight of relationships, being as hard and abrasive on others as they are on themselves.

This can really affect the bottom line as employees leave the boss, become sick or, because there can be no succession to this perfection, succession planning can be a real issue.

Having described just one syndrome, you may be curious to pick up 'The Leader on the Couch' by Kets de Vries who gives brilliant examples on how these syndromes can affect organisations and how to begin to work with them in the coaching conversation.



Xenophobia

A strange one for coaching perhaps, but an important one. We all have biases and prejudices – we live in societies which do, and it would be virtually impossible for us to grow up and live in these societies and pick up none of these. Understanding and working with these biases is vital for our effectiveness as coaches working across cultures.

Working cross-culturally, it is important to notice that coaching is a Western concept. We have heard too many coaches critique how coaching is conducted in other countries as somehow 'wrong' or not really coaching, without understanding the cultural constraints that make this appropriate.

If you are working with an international client group then developing your cultural awareness, sensitivity and education is vital to your success.

To explore this further we recommend *Coaching Across Cultures* by Philippe Rosinski.





Your personal style

You will be at your best as a coach when you can notice that you are in balance and able to draw on all your insights and knowledge, gained over the many months and years you have been working as a coach.

It is worth reflecting what kind of style your personal style is: is it more supportive? Is it action focused? Is it about deep inner transformation? Is it more a teaching style? Is it more about challenging people?

Whatever your personal style may be, your natural strength as a coach will shine through this and it is worth integrating other ways of being and make them your own. So, if you are naturally supportive, how can you make 'challenge' more of your repertoire? If you naturally go into 'teach', how can you stay open for longer and curious?

At first, you may be very conscious when adding to your style, but, with practice this will become more part of you and integrated into a natural coaching style that is broader and more versatile than before.



Zeitgeist

Zeitgeist: a German word, for which we have no good English equivalent, which roughly means the spirit of the times. It refers to the general cultural and intellectual climate of the times, and with the rising popularity of coaching, we could say that it is a part of the Zeitgeist.

A good question to ask is how it supports or challenges the world in which we live. If coaching does not want to fall prey to the critique of reinforcing many of the world's problems, rather than solving them, it is important for us to really question the impact of our field, and whether it makes an important difference in the world – or how it could do so and what our role is in this.

Always be open to critiquing the field and concept of coaching; this will allow it to remain as fresh, alive and relevant as it was when it emerged and was not part of the Zeitgeist.

Coaching at Roffey Park

Developing a coaching culture across organisations

We provide consultancy support for developing internal coaching programmes, building the internal capability to take on the shift in skills required. We will also support organisations who are implementing systemic changes in order to achieve whole scale culture change.

Individual coaching

Our well qualified coaches work with a wide spectrum of management levels from middle management to board level. Typically working at the non-directive end of the coaching spectrum, they draw on a variety of models and concepts to guide them to achieve the goals and objectives relevant to them in their organisations.

Postgraduate Certificate in Coaching

This is specifically designed for practitioners, practising managers and leaders to develop their coaching skills and knowledge to a high standard within the framework of a self managed learning programme.

Supervision at Roffey Park

We will work with coaches and supervisors to explore and find alternatives in their practice. This can be group or personal supervision depending on requirements and will incorporate supervision on approach, skill and personal development as a coach.

Manager as coach open programme

This programme focuses on essential skills and personal development for the manager as coach. It is a practical, hands-on programme which raises self-awareness, personal impact and broadens the coaching style of managers.

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About Roffey Park



Founded in 1946, Roffey Park is a management and leadership institute widely recognised for its expertise and experience in providing high impact personal development programmes that transform individuals and organisations – improving the well-being and performance of both.

We offer a variety of open and tailored development programmes, consultancy services and qualification programmes including the MSc in People and Organisational Development, validated by the University of Sussex.

Our expertise covers:

- Leadership Development (including talent management)
- Management Skills
- Personal effectiveness (including self awareness, interpersonal communication and influencing)
- Organisational Development (covering change and facilitation)
- Human Resources and HR Business Partnering
- Individual Coaching (including developing a coaching culture).

For more information, please visit www.roffeypark.com

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