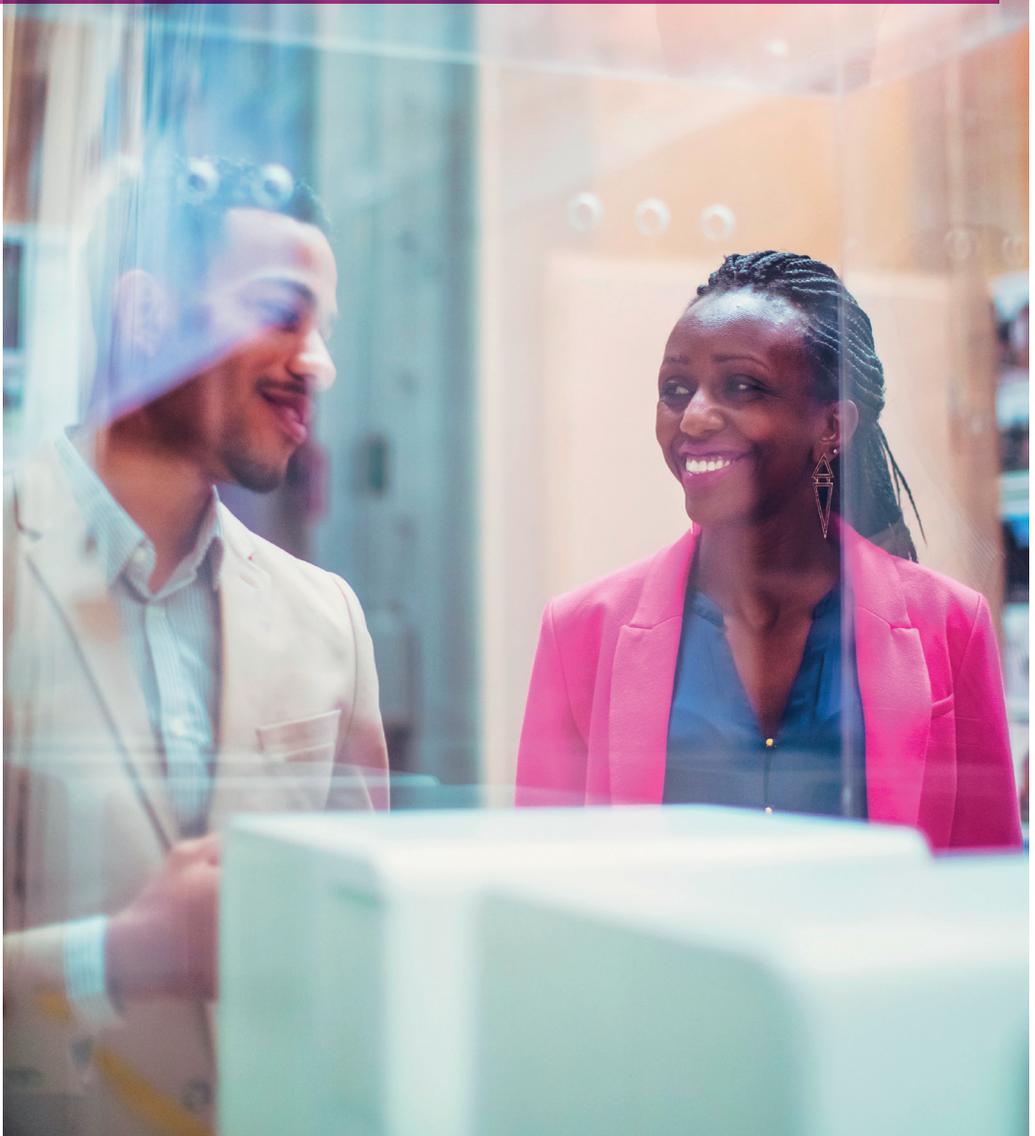


Coaching for safety



An introductory guide



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Coaching for safety – an introductory guide

IOSH publishes a range of free technical guidance. Our guidance literature is designed to support and inform members, and to motivate and influence safety and health stakeholders.

Coaching for safety – An introductory guide

There is an increasing acceptance within the occupational safety and health profession that a knowledge of the law and compliance standards is not enough. To succeed, an occupational safety and health practitioner needs to engage and influence at a leadership level. The role is increasingly collaborative, supportive, challenging and helpful – the characteristics of a coach.

Coaching for safety – An introductory guide aims to provide occupational safety and health practitioners with a basic understanding of the soft skill of coaching to enable them to engage others so that they can improve occupational safety and health outcomes. The guide includes a self-reflection tool for practitioners to consider their existing style and a framework for coaching to enable practitioners to get started on their coaching journey.

If you have any comments or questions about this guide, please contact Information and Intelligence at IOSH:

- t +44 (0)116 257 3100
- researchandinformation@iosh.co.uk

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Introduction

The aim of this guide is to provide occupational safety and health practitioners with a basic understanding of the coaching approach to engaging others to improve occupational safety and health outcomes.

Coaching is becoming a standard feature of corporate life, and the ability to coach is increasingly seen as an essential management skill. In the field of occupational safety and health, there is a growing awareness that technical capability alone is not enough and that outstanding occupational safety and health practitioners are those who complement their technical knowledge and understanding with effective one-to-one communication skills.

An occupational safety and health practitioner's success is based upon more than their knowledge of compliance standards. To be effective in their interactions, honed personal communication skills and the ability to form productive alliances with others are needed. Increasingly, the role of an occupational safety and health practitioner is collaborative, supportive, challenging and helpful – all of which are part of the defining characteristics of a coach.

Many occupational safety and health practitioners already characterise themselves as coaches, and a growing number have the title 'Safety Coach'. But what is coaching and why are coaching skills necessary for the modern occupational safety and health

practitioner? This guide introduces the basic principles and techniques of coaching to help support practitioners in their continuing professional development.

Where did coaching come from?

Coaching as a way of managing and learning began appearing spontaneously in first world countries in the 1980s. Its roots are mixed. Some of the pioneers such as Sir John Whitmore in the UK were influenced by their experiences in 1970s California as part of the 'human potential movement'; others came from management consulting, management development, occupational psychology, sports or therapy backgrounds. By the early 1990s, Sir John had published the first edition of his influential book *Coaching for Performance*,¹ closely followed by the Coaches' Training Institute's equally influential *Co-Active Coaching*.² Since then, the coaching profession has grown exponentially.

Coaching has flourished because it has been shown to work. Meta-analysis indicates that coaching has significant positive effects on performance and skills, well-being, coping, work attitudes and goal-directed self-regulation. Findings show that coaching is an effective tool for improving the functioning of individuals in organisations.³ The most recent Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) report (2015)⁴ suggests that 75 per cent of large organisations are using coaching one way or another, many of them training and supporting cohorts of internally-based coaches for middle-level staff.

Why coaching – and why now?

Interest in coaching is growing. It has become the approach of choice in many organisations and professions. Young doctors now learn how to coach patients as a standard part of their undergraduate and postgraduate training. It is popular as a teaching method in schools. Relationship counsellors may re-badge themselves as 'relationship coaches'. 'Manager as coach' is recognised as the ideal style of leading in many organisations and it would now be unusual for a senior manager not to have used the services of an executive coach at some point in their career.

One reason for this shift in emphasis to coaching is that we have a better educated, more self-assured population. For example, nearly 40 per cent of young adults in the UK now receive higher education. An automatic respect for hierarchy has steadily diminished over the last hundred years: rather than expecting people to obey orders because they appear to know more, are paid more, are older or more senior, the authority that matters now is moral authority.

Safety and health has a higher priority in organisations than was previously the case. This is probably attributable less to the introduction of new legislation and tougher penalties by the courts, and more to employees, clients and wider society being better educated about risks and less willing to be exposed to them.

The stereotypical image of the occupational safety and health practitioner is of a 'compliance police officer', technically proficient and quick to point out what is wrong, but less often able to provide the value-adding practical advice and support that managers need. Modern organisations wanting to excel at managing risk need more sophisticated professionals, capable of collaborating with managers and supporting them to find their own best solutions.

What is coaching?

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development defines coaching and mentoring as 'development techniques based on the use of one-to-one discussions to enhance an individual's skills, knowledge or work performance.'⁵

Commonly agreed principles of coaching are:

- people are resourceful and can make their own decisions even when it appears that they are nervous and uncertain
- the role of the coach is to increase the coachee's resourcefulness rather than to give advice
- the coachee brings the agenda/topic for discussion
- practitioner and coachee are equals in the conversation: it's a collaborative relationship
- coaching is about change and action: if nothing needs to change, then there is no need for coaching.

This means that the coach forms a productive partnership that serves the coachee's agenda. The success of any coaching ultimately depends on the quality of this partnership which, in turn, depends on the coach's capacity for building rapport, for listening intently and for asking powerful questions. Finding and implementing a solution to an issue is a collaborative effort, but in coaching, as in safety and health, the responsibility for doing so remains firmly with the coachee.

Safety coaching

With regard to coaching for safety, executive coach Janice Caplan's definition of a coach also works as a definition of a modern occupational safety and health practitioner: 'A coach is a collaborative partner who works with the learner to help them achieve goals, solve problems, learn and develop'.⁶

Occupational safety and health practitioners can provide significant added value to their organisations by engaging as collaborative partners who work with their colleagues and/or clients to help them learn and develop. This links directly to the priority in IOSH's 2017–2022 strategy to enhance the profession.

The words *coaching* and *mentoring* are often used interchangeably, but they have subtly different meanings. Mentoring deploys the same skills, but is generally used to describe a situation in which a more experienced or senior colleague uses their greater knowledge and experience to support the development of a colleague. In practice most occupational safety and health practitioners will use both coaching and mentoring in their daily work.

Behaviour change: what works?

Coaching for safety and health is effectively about supporting people to make better decisions. How do you help managers to find the best solutions to safety and health problems that they can buy into and manage? How do you:

- persuade those at the top to lead actively on safety and health?
- encourage all workers to report risks?
- ensure the completion of risk assessments?
- promote the safe handling of hazardous substances?

We should therefore be asking, 'What approach really changes behaviour?'

Advances in neuro-psychology, along with 60 years of research into human motivation, demonstrate that just *telling* people what to do and giving them straight advice do not work and probably never have. Research shows that when doctors give much-needed lifestyle advice, fewer than 10 per cent of patients act on it.⁷

Why being told what to do does not work

At best, 'being told' creates apparent compliance. It does not create the commitment and ownership that lead to permanent, positive behaviour change. There is a spectrum of possible responses, from enthusiastic acceptance to compliance, disagreement, resistance and rebellion.

When we tell ourselves what to do, it is very different: we believe what we hear ourselves say, we feel energised, confident and take ownership. The research which has uncovered these intrinsic human responses is the foundation of why coaching works as a long-term solution to behaviour change.

The coaching occupational safety and health practitioner

Providing the appropriate advice to ensure that an organisation complies with legislation is at the foundation of the role of an occupational safety and health professional. However, the manner by which this is achieved (the directive disabler) may have contributed to the negative perceptions of safety and health in business, governments and some sections of the media.

Coaching is powerful but, of course, it is far from the only style of intervention with which the occupational safety and health professional needs to be effective. Its practice will contribute to positioning occupational safety and health as a central management function and contribute to the organisation's success and reputation. Coaching is one of many skills a good occupational safety and health professional should have. Which one you choose in any given situation will depend on your assessment of what is needed.

The skills of an effective coach

We will consider the skills of an effective coach:

- building rapport
- effective listening
- asking powerful questions
- silence
- summarising
- blending support with challenge
- giving feedback
- giving advice and information.

Rapport

Building and maintaining rapport within a coaching relationship is essential – it is not simply showing empathy (the ability to understand and share feelings). It is ensuring that there is a close relationship, within which people can understand each other and communicate well together. Behaviours that can help build rapport include:

- being completely honest
- being respectful of the coachee's thoughts and feelings
- withholding personal judgement
- displaying genuine interest.

Listening

Listening is the foundation skill of coaching. Active or genuine listening is a skill that can be acquired and developed with practice. It is hard work. Mostly what we experience is pretend-listening, characterised by meaningless phrases such as 'I hear what you say' or the other person nodding while they get their own statement ready, interrupting you

or finishing your sentences for you. It is about the listener rather than the speaker. Instead, active listening is inquiring into the message and the speaker's feelings around it.

You cannot coach until you are able to give your full attention to the other person: hearing, really hearing, what they are saying. The reason this is challenging to do is that so many of our non-listening habits get in the way, among them:

- believing you already know the answer – you have heard the same story many times so you assume that this situation is just like the ones you have dealt with previously
- wanting to reform the other person: seeing it as your duty to educate and to put them right, wanting to rescue
- having pet theories that you enjoy explaining
- wanting to talk about your own experience
- shouldering too much of the responsibility for the outcome
- being preoccupied by your own worries; being in a hurry; being distracted
- being unaware of any of the above.

In coaching, listening is critical – 'the gateway through which all coaching passes', according to the authors of *Co-active Coaching*. The authors describe three levels of listening.

Level 1 listening is the sort of commonplace, everyday listening we all experience when we're distracted by our own agenda. We're concerned about whether what's being said is to our advantage or might ultimately disadvantage us. Often we're focused more on our reply than on what's being said and sometimes our eagerness to speak becomes too much and we interrupt or simply speak over others. A coach listening at level 1 is preoccupied with their own thoughts and judgments, and prone to direct the conversation according to their own needs.

Level 2 listening is the sort of focused, attentive listening which occurs when the inner voice is silenced. When we are involved in a deep conversation, every word counts and we are aware of the effect that words have. A coach listening at level 2 is actively listening and following the coachee's lead. Coaches describe the close nature of this deep conversation in which they become immersed as 'dancing in the moment'.

Level 3 listening is being intently focused on what is being communicated, both verbally and non-verbally through body language, gestures, expressions, metaphors and emotions. A coach listening at level 3 is paying attention with all of their senses and is responsive to their intuition and feelings.

Coaches believe that gestures, expressions and metaphors are a window into a coachee's thoughts that can provide a glimpse of ideas that haven't yet been fully formulated or communicated verbally. By intervening to make the coachee aware of the gesture, expression or metaphor, the coach hopes to reveal these ideas and thoughts to the coachee with a view to a deeper level of reflection. Such interventions can be illuminating moments.

Illustration

A coachee was explaining how their team was being let down continually by a colleague. The colleague, who worked for a different department, was required periodically to join the team and provide a service which, time and time again, they failed to provide to the required standard.

The coach noticed that every time the coachee mentioned the team, they drew tiny circles with a finger in the palm of their cupped hand. The coach mentioned to the coachee that they

had done so three times in a little over a minute. The coachee was surprised: they been completely unaware. After a period of reflection the coachee revealed that the team was extremely close and tightly-knit and perhaps the team really hadn't done all it could do to accommodate the colleague and make their task as easy as possible. The conversation had turned on the coach's intervention and the coachee went away from the coaching session committed to doing more to help the colleague.

At such deep levels of conversation, it is not unusual to just sense something without being able to pinpoint the exact source of that feeling. Great coaches learn to trust this intuition and regard it as something that should be shared with the coachee. The effective coach's role is to articulate these feelings accurately, without judgment and in a way that doesn't direct the conversation.

Coachees are often unable to see for themselves what it is that is going on and one of the principle roles of the coach is to help them join the dots. Listening appropriately and being fully engaged in the conversation provides a coach with considerable information about the coachee at a particular moment.

The importance of asking powerful questions

The essence of coaching is to provoke fresh thinking. This is why asking an open, non-judgmental question is at the heart of what makes the difference between a mediocre and an outstanding coach. If you phrase your question in the wrong way you will merely get a defensive answer or one where the other person drones their way through a familiar response. These differences can be subtle. Just one or two words can be transformative.

- "Are you aware of the hazards associated with storing this chemical?"

On the face of it this is a reasonable question. The questioner wants to know how much the other person already knows. However, the question encourages the answer 'yes' and may quickly close down discussion (a closed question). This is because the question comes from the questioner's agenda.

A coaching version of the same question might be:

- "What do you think are the hazards associated with storing this chemical?" or
- "How would you store this chemical safely?"

These questions cannot be answered 'yes' or 'no'. They are more likely to encourage the honest response which could lead to a productive discussion.

The biggest single trap for coaches is asking advice-in-disguise questions. These all begin with a verb: *has*, *hasn't*, *would*, *was*, *wouldn't*, *is* and *isn't*. They all come from the questioner's agenda and contain a hidden instruction:

- "Would it be an idea to assess the risks here?"
- "Have you thought of replacing that floor with something less slippery?"
- "Wasn't it the case that the report advised consulting staff about this?"

These questions are best avoided.

'Why?' is also a question to use sparingly because it tends to provoke a defensive response: 'Why does your team seem to be ignoring the safety procedures on earthed metalwork inside this silo?'

This may be a well-intentioned question but it will most probably drive the respondent into a long-winded justification. They feel attacked, so they have stopped listening. Another frequent answer to questions that begin *Why...?* is *I don't know*. When someone says *I don't know*, take it as read that you have asked the wrong question. It would be much better to say:

- "How do you think you could best protect your team from electrical hazards inside this silo?" or
- "Tell me about the safety of entering this silo."

Watch out for double questions or questions that are too long. The best coaching questions are short – from four to 12 words – and they will typically begin *What...?* or *How...?*

Silence

Silence can be louder than any words, and in a coaching relationship we should not rush to fill the gaps. Many people find silence awkward, but when used consciously and efficiently it will build rapport. Sometimes you may ask such a good question that you meet with silence. This is a sign that the other person is thinking hard, so don't rush to fill the gap. Similarly, pausing before responding as a coach shows you are reflecting on how best to reply to what you have truly heard.

Summarising

How else can you show that you are listening? The most powerful technique here is to use frequent summarising: a brief précis of what the other person has said, using their language, avoiding the

addition of any interpretation of your own. Useful phrases here are:

- "So may I just summarise what your views are here?"
- "In essence what I'm hearing you say is that..."
- "I'm losing the thread here, so can I try a summary of what you've just said?"

It is always possible that your summary has not been accurate, but in any case it is good practice to check back:

- "That's what I think you said, but have I got that right?"

Often just by asking this question, you will trigger more vital information about the other person's views.

Blending support with challenge

It is a misunderstanding to assume that coaching is just about being 'supportive'. In practice, coaching blends high support with high challenge (see Figure 1). If all you do is support, you may be encouraging complacency. If all you do is challenge, you will meet resistance. If the conversation has neither challenge nor support then it becomes a meaningless chat.

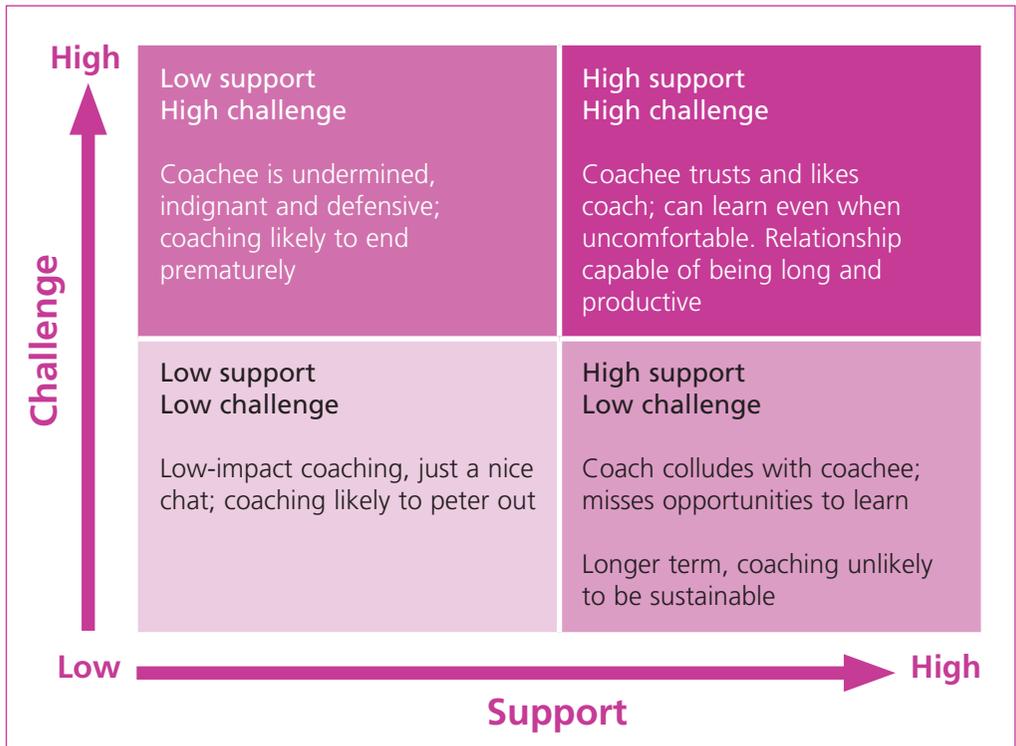


Figure 1. The support and challenge matrix

Feedback as a coaching technique

Giving feedback is one of the most powerful ways in which a coach can offer this blend of support and challenge. Feedback is not the same as criticism, although the two words are often used as if they have the same meaning.

Criticism is generalised, harsh, attacks the person and is a one-way process, often given as a way for the criticiser to unload anger. As a way of changing behaviour, research shows that it merely creates resistance, along with determination to find better ways to avoid getting criticised again.

Feedback is different: it is given for the benefit of the receiver. It is about specific behaviour and invites comment from the receiver before making a mutual decision about what should happen next.

When might you need to offer coaching feedback?

There are many occasions when an occupational safety and health practitioner might offer coaching-style feedback. For example:

- Asbestos needs to be removed from a building site. You realise that the report about its condition lacks essential detail
- You work in a hospital and observe that in one team, standards are becoming lax over the use of personal protective equipment such as eye protection and gloves, putting team members at risk of blood-borne viruses
- A music event's organiser is failing to provide clear notices

which demarcate worker hearing-protection zones

- A charity providing hot meals for people in an improvised kitchen in a church hall has volunteers serving food on wet floors with trailing cables and no steriliser for washing plates and cutlery.

In these situations feedback will be powerful. It gives you the chance to talk straightforwardly about what you see, while leaving the other person with their dignity intact and thus reduce resistance to change. Here is a failsafe way of offering it in seven easy steps:

- 1 Overcome your reluctance to do it: you most probably have a duty of care, so you must speak up.
- 2 Ask permission: 'May I offer you some feedback?' This may seem like a trivial question but it is like a polite knock on the door. Note that it is a closed question, so it is most unlikely that the other person will say no.
- 3 Describe what you have observed, using phrases like *I noticed, I saw, when I watched... when I read...*, then give a factual description, leaving out any implied judgment or criticism – or assumptions about the other person's motivation.
- 4 Describe the impact on you or on others in the scenario using phrases such as *The impact on me was to be very worried about...* or *As I watched, I felt uncomfortable...*
- 5 Ask for the other person's response. For instance, say, *This is what I saw and this is why I'm concerned, but what's your own view here?*
- 6 Summarise their views.
- 7 Agree jointly what action to take next.

Giving advice and information: in coaching style

Coaching is associated with an approach that is essentially non-directive, but there are times when it is important to give information. These will include situations where there are clear right or wrong solutions to a problem and you have a

duty of care; the other person is not in a position to make their own decisions; you are offering facts and not opinions; the matter is complex and genuinely needs an expert view and giving advice is unlikely to create dependency or to humiliate. When these conditions are satisfied you can use a coaching approach to giving information.

Here is how to do it

Ask permission:

"May I offer you some useful information here?"

Ask what the other person already knows. This is vital to avoid seeming to patronise or to waste your time telling someone something they already know:

"Can I just check what you already know about this?"

Ask how the other person would like to get the information. Some people like to have the detail step by step, some like an overview:

"What's the best way of explaining this – detail first, big picture?"

Check how far the other person is following you, not in a perfunctory way, for instance by saying *OK?* before plunging on with your mini-lecture. Pause for several seconds, checking for understanding:

"How am I doing so far in explaining it?"

Invite disagreement: this may feel counter-intuitive, but it is a way of stressing the other person's autonomy and will reduce the chances that your message will be rejected.

"This is how it seems to me, but how does it strike you?"

Give examples of how other people have successfully solved the same problem. If there is genuinely only one right way to do something, then omit this step – but in practice one right way is rare. By describing how others have solved the same problem in different ways you leave the gate open for the coachee to make their own choice.

If you need to disagree, say so clearly but courteously:

"I've been listening carefully to what you've said and I find I can't agree. Can I offer you a different view?"

Agree how to take it forward, repeating the above process if necessary.

Useful frameworks for coaching conversations

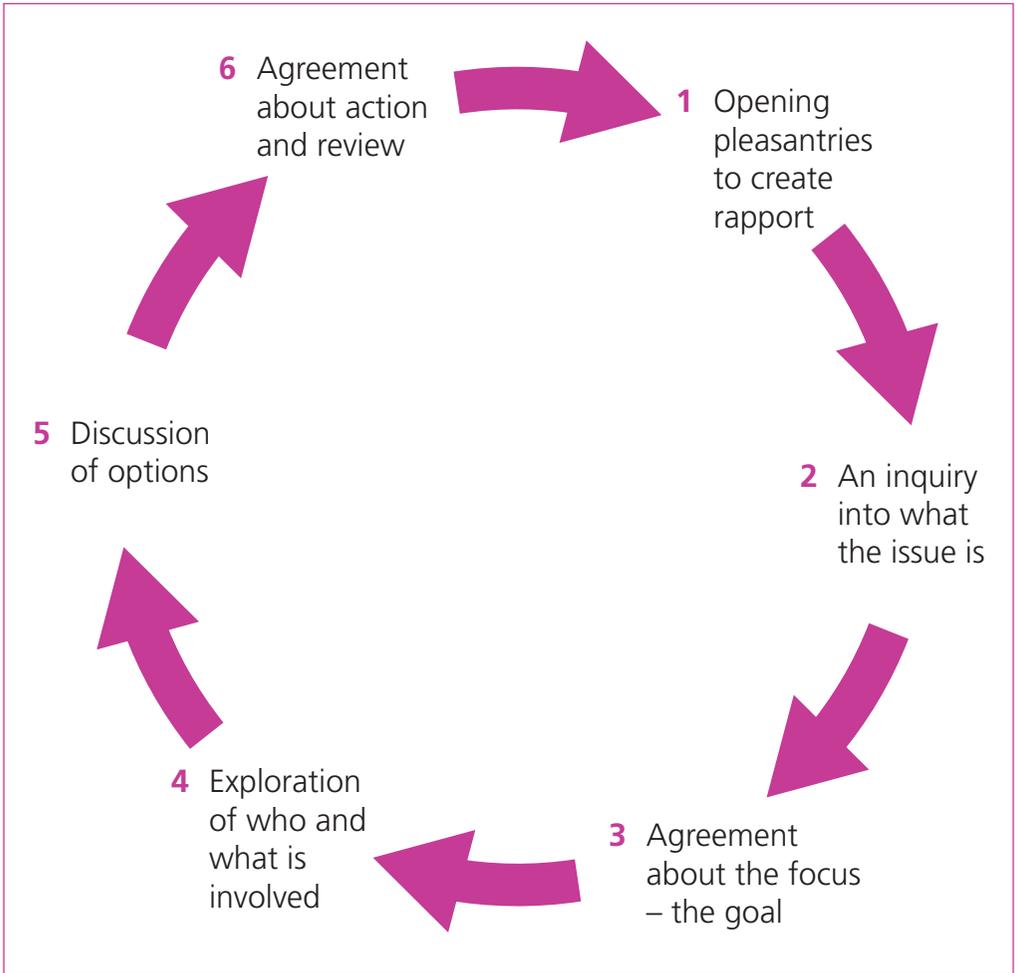


Figure 2: Typical cycle of a coaching conversation

As the coaching world has expanded, so has the number of useful models and frameworks for having a coaching conversation. An experienced coach does not need a model or can make any model work, but when you are at the beginning of using a coaching approach, a framework is helpful. It reminds you that a coaching conversation typically goes through a number of recognisable stages.

There are dozens of such frameworks, for instance **CLEAR**, developed by Peter Hawkins (2012),⁸ which stands for Contracting, Listening, Exploring, Actions and Review. There is the **OSKAR** model developed by Paul Jackson and Mark

McKergow (2007),⁹ who endorse what they call the solutions-focused approach, making extensive use of scaling questions such as 'On a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 is achieving your desired outcome and 0 is the complete opposite, where do you see yourself now?' There is an acronym for Outcome, Scale, Know-How and Resources, Affirm and Action and Review.

A similar-sounding model, popular with managers, has been developed by Karen Whittleworth and Andrew Gilbert,¹⁰ where **OSCAR** stands for Outcome, Situation, Choices and Consequences, Action and Review (2012).



Figure 3: The GROW model

For the purposes of this guide we concentrate on the earliest and simplest such model, **GROW**, often attributed to Sir John Whitmore.

GROW is an acronym which describes the stages of a coaching conversation (see Figure 3). Each part of GROW has its own set of useful questions.

Goal

Identifying the goal enables coach and coachee to agree on what they are aiming for in the conversation. Good goal-setting questions are:

- "What's our aim for today's conversation?"
- "What help do you need from me on this problem?"
- "If this conversation went well, what would have changed for you?"

There will also be occasions when the coach defines the goal. For example: the practitioner approaches a machine operator who is not wearing hearing protection in a noise hazard area and names the goal by saying:

- "I'm concerned that your hearing is being damaged by this noise and want to discuss how best to protect you."

The practitioner is concerned about work being carried out at height and says to the work supervisor:

- "I'm concerned by the risk here and want to explore what we can do to protect people better. Can we talk about that?"

Reality

This is the part of the conversation in which the coach and coachee establish what is going on. The coach wants the coachee to reflect and explore, and it is the coach's curiosity and questioning that propels this exploration.

Remember that the objective for the coach is not to solve the problem – it is to work with the coachee to solve the problem. Beware of spending too much time on this phase or of asking more and more factually-based questions on subjects already well known to the coachee. The aim is not for you to understand it, as it would be if you were the owner of the problem, but for the coachee to understand it – a very different emphasis.

Good questions at this phase of the coaching conversation can be:

- "Who are the key stakeholders?"
- "What will your contribution be?"
- "What have you already tried?"
- "What will happen if you do nothing?"
- "What would an ideal solution look like sound like and feel like?"
- "What's standing in the way of that happening?"
- "On a scale of 1 to 10, where do you think you are now in terms of reaching your goal?"
- "What makes you a 4, rather than a 1, say? What do you have already?"

Options

The *Reality* part of the coaching conversation will normally have brought out the underlying problems, often nothing to do with the ‘facts’ and everything to do with human emotion: fear of failure or of being blamed, inability to understand other people’s perspectives, unwillingness to read up on legal responsibilities – and so on. So now you can move to *Options*. Good questions here are:

- “So what do you think might be possible?”
- “What other ideas do you have?”
- “If we were to dream up some wild ideas, for instance if money or time were no object, what would you suggest?”
- “When you’ve met this kind of situation before, what did you do?”
- “What have you seen other people do?”
- “What are the pluses and minuses of each of these ideas?”
- “How practical are they?”
- “What might they cost in time, skill, effort and money?”
- “Which one do you think is worth taking forward?”

Since this part of the conversation has the flavour of a brainstorming session, it is fine to offer your own ideas, as long as you accept that the ultimate choices about which ideas to act on or reject are the coachee’s.

Wrap-up (What? Will?)

Wrapping-up is about achieving a commitment from the coachee and agreeing which of the options they are going to choose. Coaches often use the technique of scaling to measure how committed a coachee is to an option, and to try to gain additional commitment. For example, a coach might say:

- “On a scale of one to ten, how happy do you feel about going to the Board to have this discussion?”

If the coachee replied that they felt they were at five out of ten, the coach might ask what would need to happen for it to become a nine. Another possible double-checking question here is:

- “What might stop this from happening?”

The simplicity of GROW lies in its power to energise conversations. For many, it is the only coaching model they ever learn and they are transformed by it.

Illustration

The topic on the coachee's mind was linked to 'mental health first aid' ie, the support provided to a person who is developing a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate treatment is received from a mental health professional or until the crisis resolves. The coachee had recently become qualified in this area and wanted to introduce mental health first aiders into their organisation. They had developed some ideas but didn't really know how to take the initiative forward.

After several minutes of exploration by the coach, the coachee said that they wanted "to have some clear ideas for how to approach management with their initiative."

For the remainder of the conversation the coach kept to the coachee's agenda by asking questions such as:

- "In the context of what we're discussing, who is 'management'?"
- "Who are the key decision-makers and stakeholders?"
- "What are you going to approach them with – how do you see this working?"
- "What are they likely to want to know?"
- "What might make or break the deal for them?"
- "How would they like to be approached?"
- "What approach might be most effective?"
- "In what order do things need to be done?"

Each question led to other questions in turn – so there was an ever-present risk of being sidetracked – but the coach kept the goal in mind and thereby supported the coachee in their exploration of the problem. At the end of the conversation, the coachee knew what they didn't know and needed to find out, what they needed to do and in what order. They now indeed had "some clear ideas for how to approach management with their initiative."

Becoming a safety and health coach – making the choice

What type of practitioner are you, and what's your safety style?			
Would your colleagues say that you...	Yes	Maybe	No
encourage and support them?			
listen carefully and in depth?			
use frequent summarising to check on their understanding?			
demonstrate that you understand their situation and appreciate the constraints that influence their choices?			
question them and help them explore options and find solutions?			
help their personal understanding and development?			
acknowledge and praise their successes?			
are a valuable member of the team?			
Totals			

Figure 4: Your safety style

For many occupational safety and health practitioners, choosing to adopt a coaching style is a relatively easy step to take. You may attend a course or, by self-study, learn the basic principles and techniques. Through practice you can become increasingly competent, and by using trial and error plus reflection you may develop your own coaching model – an approach that suits your personal style.

For some practitioners, however compelling the reasons to change may seem and however great their desire, adopting a coaching approach is more complicated. The habits a practitioner develops through experience can be ingrained and difficult to change, and more extensive support is required than simply learning the theory, putting it into practice and then steadily achieving the required coaching competences.

If most of your responses on this questionnaire were 'Yes', then you are already a coach, even though perhaps not consciously, and probably without that role description. If most of the responses were 'No', is that because your organisation has an outdated internal culture, or because you've not personally kept pace as it has evolved to a more supportive style?

The most difficult aspect of the transition to a coaching style is about willingness to let go of the responsibility for solving all the organisation's safety and health problems. The wish to do this comes from conscientiousness and is laudable – but

impossible. One of the biggest single challenges for any coach, whether an executive coach, a life coach or a safety coach, is to set aside ego and to let go of the need to be right.

Be assured that becoming a coach brings new depth and satisfaction to the occupational safety and health practitioner role. Once you have tried it, it is unlikely that you will ever look back.

You can take your first steps by introducing the GROW model of coaching into your everyday interactions with colleagues.

More information

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Further reading

Other IOSH guides that might prove helpful:

- *Getting the message? Guidance on communication*
www.iosh.co.uk/communication
- *Promoting a positive culture: A guide to health and safety culture*
www.iosh.co.uk/positiveculture
- *Looking for higher standards: Behavioural safety – improving performance*
www.iosh.co.uk/behavioural

IOSH research

- *The relationship between safety culture, advice and performance*
www.iosh.co.uk/safetyculture

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We set standards, and support, develop and connect our members with resources, guidance, events and training. We're the voice of the profession, and campaign on issues that affect millions of working people.

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IOSH

The Grange
Highfield Drive
Wigston
Leicestershire
LE18 1NN
UK

t +44 (0)116 257 3100

www.iosh.co.uk

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