

What is effective coaching and mentoring at work?

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Trwyddedwyd i'w ddefnyddio ar gyfer y cwrs 5KDCM - CIPD Diploma in Applied Human Resources in Practice

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1 What is effective coaching and mentoring at work?

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- Coaching and mentoring in context
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Introduction

Our aim in writing this book is to capture the essence of coaching and mentoring, and to energize and equip the reader, whether as coach, mentor or client, and whether coaching or mentoring formally or informally.

There are increasing numbers of full-time professional coaches and mentors for people at work. In addition, many managers and professionals offer coaching and mentoring within their organization or profession. Even more of them use the skills in leading and managing individuals and teams. This book is addressed to all these groups, and to those who are not yet actively involved in coaching and mentoring. It is for those who want to find out more about effective coaching and mentoring, and who:

- are already a coach or mentor;
- want to become a coach or mentor;
- are looking for a coach or mentor;
- use coaching or mentoring skills at work;
- are participants on coaching or mentoring programmes;
- train or supervise coaches and mentors;
- want to establish or review the provision of coaching and mentoring in their organization or profession;
- see coaching or mentoring as part of leadership, management or professional development.

Terminology can be problematic and so in this book we generally use the term 'client' to refer to the person with whom the coach or mentor is working. We acknowledge that in real life they may be called, for example, 'mentee' or 'colleague'.

There has been considerable debate in the literature about the differences and similarities between coaching and mentoring. It is evident that what is described in one organization as mentoring might be known in another as coaching. Recently, with acknowledgement that use of the terms varies widely, attention has turned to the common ground, and it is to this common ground that our book is addressed.

What is this kind of helping, this kind of learning, which is not teaching or telling or advising or instructing? Whatever it is, it is certainly in demand, and the number of coaching and mentoring articles, journals, special interest groups and training courses has increased rapidly in recent years.

We define coaching and mentoring as *learning relationships* which help people to take charge of their own development, to release their potential and to achieve results which they value (see Figure 1.1). We believe that the learning relationship is central to both coaching and mentoring, which are more than just a set of activities or skills. Through the relationship, the client develops and changes, as, indeed, does the coach or mentor.

Clients are helped to take charge of their own development. The coaching or mentoring relationship facilitates insight, learning and change. Through this relationship, potential is identified, possibilities become reality and tangible results are delivered. Coaching and mentoring help a person to see the present as a springboard to the future, and to be strategic about their development.

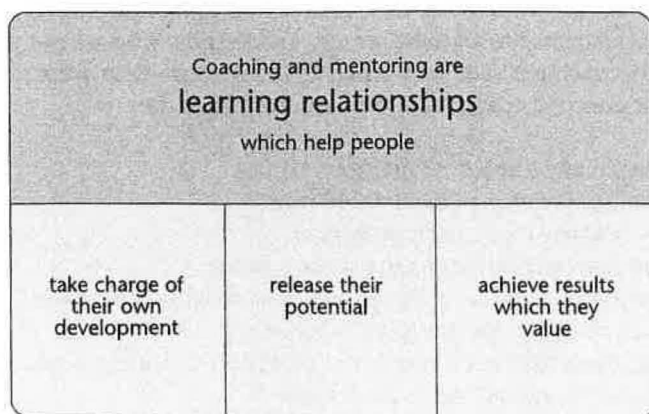
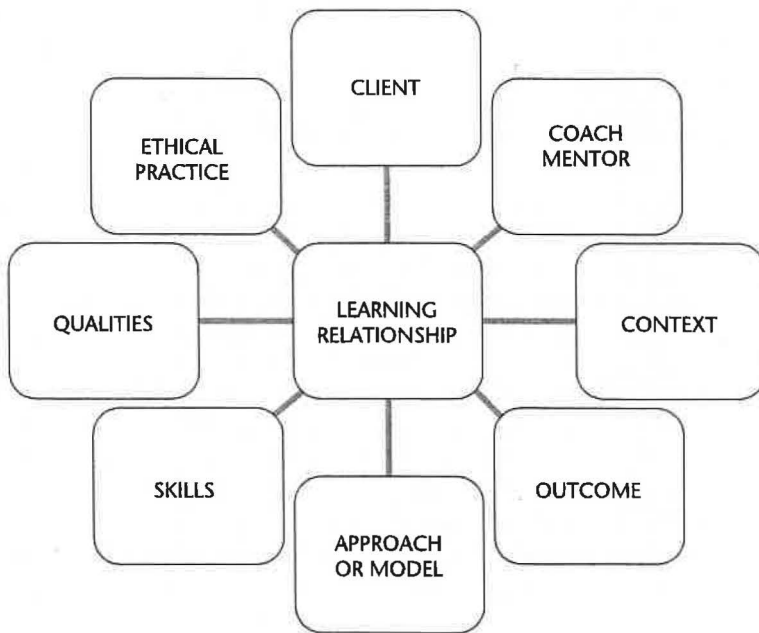


Figure 1.1 Definition of coaching and mentoring

Whether the person seeks help with a specific current work issue, or a longer-term career question, the coach or mentor will facilitate exploration, help in the formulation of goals and provide support while action is implemented.

Nine key principles for effective practice

Effective coaching and mentoring are underpinned by nine key principles (summarized in Figure 1.2). These principles, derived from our experience, have informed and guided our coaching and mentoring. We introduce them here. In subsequent chapters, they are explored in greater depth and linked to case examples and interactive exercises.



- 1 The **LEARNING** relationship is at the heart of change
- 2 The **CLIENT** sets the agenda and is resourceful
- 3 The **COACH OR MENTOR** facilitates learning and development
- 4 The **CONTEXT** is work
- 5 The **OUTCOME** is change and action
- 6 The **APPROACH OR MODEL** provides movement and direction
- 7 The **SKILLS** develop insight, release potential and deliver results
- 8 The **QUALITIES** of the coach or mentor affirm, enable and sustain the client
- 9 **ETHICAL** practice safeguards and enhances coaching and mentoring

Figure 1.2 Nine key principles for effective practice

1 The learning relationship is at the heart of change

The central principle is that learning, change and transformation occur through the relationship with a coach or mentor. Coaching and mentoring are not just an interaction, an event, an opportunity. Two people meet. They share knowledge, values, attitudes, skills and experience. They engage with one another, they relate to one another and if the coaching and mentoring is effective, they *connect* with one another. Dialogue is important in establishing and maintaining the connection. In a learning dialogue there is, on both sides, a willingness to share perspectives, to listen, to understand, to be open to new ideas and to take joint responsibility for the conversation and the outcomes. Dialogue sustains the connection and it follows, therefore, that the learning relationship is a partnership, and not an activity imposed by one person on another.

2 The client sets the agenda and is resourceful

Centre stage in the learning relationship is the client and their agenda. Being centre stage and being the focus of attention can be both challenging and empowering for the client. Some clients are reluctant, some are eager. Where a client is referred, they may have little interest or belief in creating their own agenda. Some clients have clear goals, some only vague ideas. In all cases, the start point of the effective coach or mentor is to work with the client to help them figure out what they want. This process, the first step in facilitating the client's learning and development, can be relatively straightforward, or may be one of the most demanding parts of the coaching and mentoring relationship. However, unless the client chooses to be a partner in the learning relationship, and has a sense of purpose, the relationship cannot be successful.

Once the agenda is clear, the task of the coach or mentor is to help the client to identify and use the resources, both internal and external, that will enable them to change and develop. Affirming the client's resourcefulness, and communicating this affirmation to the client, is an important role. When the client seems to lack energy or focus, or ideas, or direction, or creative alternatives, the coach or mentor can communicate hope and possibility, and work with the client to make these real. A coach or mentor can enable a client by believing in them at times when the client's self-belief falters.

3 The coach or mentor facilitates learning and development

The coach or mentor is a facilitator, not an instructor. They support and challenge the client to learn and to develop. The client learns by acquiring new

awareness, insight, skills, ideas and knowledge. Development involves integrating this learning into their everyday working and way of being. It is important that the facilitator asks questions which provoke new perspectives and change in the client.

The effective facilitator reviews the learning relationship and the learning process, and does not take these for granted. The client is asked what might help their learning and development. The effective facilitator finds learning methods that suit the client. They help the client to clarify how they learn best, and how to make coaching or mentoring work for them.

Finally, the effective facilitator understands the importance of what happens between sessions. They know that coaching and mentoring sessions should be a catalyst for learning and action, not a substitute.

4 The context is work

This book is about coaching and mentoring at work. The focus is on the relationship with an individual client, although the principles apply also to team coaching. The client may want or need to improve their work performance in the short term, or they may be concerned with broader issues of personal, professional and career development. Short- and long-term issues are often interrelated. The effective coach or mentor values the client as a whole person within their work context. The focus of coaching and mentoring is the client's present and future experiences, problems, opportunities and development. The best results are produced when there is a balance between developing strengths and resources and addressing areas for development.

The effective coach or mentor knows enough about the work context to be able to facilitate exploration of issues and is aware that opportunities and resources in the workplace differ from person to person.

Coaching and mentoring are not career patronage, neither are they counselling or therapy. The effective coach or mentor agrees with the client the boundaries of their coaching or mentoring work, and is aware of other resources and networks beyond these boundaries.

5 The outcome is change and action

Coaching and mentoring enable reflection leading to change which produces valued outcomes. The client achieves something that they care about, that makes a positive difference in their working life or career. The real significance of change should be judged in relation to the client agenda and their goal. A minor change in attitude for one client may be just as transforming as a major

job promotion for another. Insight and understanding are important in coaching and mentoring in so far as they lead to change. Of course, change is hard work. Change provokes resistance, a normal reaction to facing up to difficult issues. Resistance can be viewed as a sign that the coaching or mentoring dialogue is on track and that it is touching on important issues for the client. Effective coaches and mentors work with client resistance, rather than try to overcome it. They use resistance to help the client to clarify their values and their goals, and to explore what will help or hinder them in making changes.

6 The approach or model provides movement and direction

If coaching and mentoring are about change, then the approach or model used provides a map for the journey, for both client and coach or mentor. It does not fully describe the landscape of the journey, but rather it provides reference points and a sense of direction. It can help if either party gets stuck or loses direction. Any approach, model or framework should be used with a light touch, or even set aside, if that is what would be most helpful for the client. It should not be used to constrain or limit exploration of the landscape.

7 The skills develop insight, release potential and deliver results

The effective coach or mentor uses skills appropriately to enable the client to develop insight and release potential. The effective coach or mentor is competent, using the skills in an integrated way within the learning relationship, not merely applying a set of competences. The skills communicate the coach or mentor's belief in, and valuing of, the client. Wise and judicious use of the skills ensures a balance of support and challenge, of reflection and action. The effective coach or mentor has a repertoire of tools and techniques which they offer appropriately to the client to support their learning and development.

8 The qualities of the coach or mentor affirm, enable and sustain the client

The distinctive style, personality, values and experiences of the coach or mentor are shared as 'self'. Moreover, when the chemistry between coach or mentor and client really works, there is a sense of deep connection. The

paradox of this connection is that it is not tangible and yet it is powerfully present and effective in bringing about client self-belief, hope, courage and action.

Effective coaches and mentors are not only smart, but also wise. They have the wisdom to make sound judgements about what they see, hear and experience in the learning relationship. They communicate caring, valuing, respect and empathy. They model a way of being which is both human and professional. This is not deliberately taught but is often 'caught'. Learning is not just 'from' the coach or mentor, but also 'with' and 'through' them. Learning 'through' the coach or mentor is often overlooked, yet it may be the most powerful learning of all.

9 Ethical practice safeguards and enhances coaching and mentoring

The client is safeguarded if ethical principles inform and guide practice. Such principles might include: respect for client autonomy; faithfulness to promises made; acting in ways which are beneficial to the client; not doing harm; and acting fairly. When these principles are in operation there is an openness and transparency in the coaching and mentoring relationship. This not only safeguards the interests of both parties, but also enhances the quality of their work together. Effective coaching and mentoring start with clear expectations and a working agreement, continue with ongoing review, and finish with well-prepared endings. Ethical coaching and mentoring are informed by legal requirements and professional codes of practice. Working within agreed limits and boundaries helps the client to feel secure, for example in relation to issues of confidentiality or conflicts of interest.

Coaching and mentoring in context

Since writing the first edition of this book, plenty of evidence has emerged that both coaching and mentoring are becoming embedded in organizations. Cultures are changing. Senior leaders are relying less on external coaches to help transform teams and departments. There is now increasingly the expectation that all managers and leaders should use coaching skills to encourage learning and development throughout the organization, as well as to increase productivity. Coaching is used alongside appraisal, work planning and performance review. Experience is showing that the positive approach of helping people to 'astound themselves' is far more beneficial than the type of coaching which focused on remedying performance deficits. Rogers (2008: 7) puts it this way: 'The coach works with clients to achieve speedy, increased

and sustainable effectiveness in their lives and careers through focused learning. The coach's sole aim is to work with the client to achieve all of the client's potential – as defined by the client'. The rise in executive coaching has given a strong message that the most successful leaders are also clients who benefit from working regularly with a coach. Meanwhile, mentoring has also been developing, away from the concept of patronage and sponsorship in which the use of power and influence worked for some but not for all, to a more inclusive concept of exchange of experience, resources, knowledge and information. Megginson *et al.* (2006) highlight two contrasting models of mentoring: sponsorship versus developmental. The trend now is away from sponsorship in which the mentor actively champions the client with the primary motive of career or professional success. It is towards more developmental mentoring where the mentor may be experienced but not necessarily more senior and their aim is to facilitate learning rather than being the 'expert' who provides the answers.

Mentoring may be used to support the development of newly recruited staff, or as a means of identifying and sustaining talent at different levels of an organization. The mentor may, or may not, be someone more experienced or senior in the organization or profession. Often their services are offered and taken up voluntarily, through mentoring networks and schemes. Mentoring can be either short term or long term and may involve aspects of personal, professional and career development. It is frequently used at times of induction or transition in organizations, particularly when the client is promoted or demoted. In some mentoring schemes, clients are offered a limited number of sessions over a set period of time. In other organizations the mentor is available in a more developmental role over a longer period of time. This mentoring may be less structured and more informal, but nevertheless greatly valued. Parsloe and Wray (2000: 82) summarize mentoring as 'a process which supports learning and development, and thus performance improvements, either for an individual, team or business. Mentoring is usually understood as a special kind of relationship where objectivity, credibility, honesty, trustworthiness and confidentiality are critical'.

We have found overlap in what is described as coaching, and what is presented as mentoring. Some of these similarities have been identified by Zeus and Skiffington and are summarized in Figure 1.3. Both coaching and mentoring base their assumptions on basic values and beliefs: that humans have the ability to change; that they make the best choices available to them; that helping is not a quick fix – 'it is a journey where the process of learning is as important as the knowledge and skills gained' (Zeus and Skiffington 2000: xv). Zeus and Skiffington talk about coaching and mentoring as essentially a conversation where learning takes place through asking the right questions rather than providing answers. This leads to personal and professional transformation and reinventing of oneself.

- Both require well-developed interpersonal skills
- Both require the ability to generate trust, support commitment, generate new actions through listening and speaking skills
- Both shorten the learning curve
- Both aim for the individual to improve his or her performance and be more productive
- Both encourage the individual to stretch, but can provide support if the person falters or gets out of his or her depth
- Both provide support without removing responsibility
- Both require a degree of organizational know-how
- Both focus on learning and development to enhance skills and competencies
- Both stimulate personal growth to develop new expertise
- Both can function as a career guide to review career goals and identify values, vision, and career strengths
- Both are role models

Figure 1.3 Similarities between coaching and mentoring (Zeus and Skiffington 2000: 18)

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD 2010) attempts to differentiate coaching and mentoring but acknowledges that the same skills and models are used in both. The CIPD notes that coaching is often shorter term, focused on skills and knowledge leading to improved performance, and ultimately linked to achievement of organizational objectives. On the other hand, mentoring relationships can be longer term and more broadly developmental, and traditionally mentoring has referred to a more experienced person helping a more junior or inexperienced colleague. Table 1.1 provides a summary of some of the differences highlighted by the CIPD (Jarvis 2004: 19).

We understand the distinction made between coaching as shorter term and performance focused, versus mentoring as longer term and focused on career and professional development. However, we are aware that, in real life, specific performance development issues and broader professional development are often inextricably linked. In this discussion of the context of coaching and mentoring at work, we have included differing perspectives. Our own view, having worked in this field for some considerable time, is that:

- in practice, coaching and mentoring often overlap;
- nomenclature is often context driven rather than activity driven – for example, the activity which is called ‘coaching’ in the business sector may be referred to as ‘mentoring’ in the health, education and public sectors;
- both coaching and mentoring may encompass the transmission of knowledge or skills and this should be accomplished in a facilitative, rather than a directive, way;
- our definition of coaching and mentoring, and our nine principles for effective practice, apply equally to both activities.

Coaching	Mentoring
Relationship generally has a set duration	Ongoing relationship that can last for a long period of time
Generally more structured in nature; meetings are scheduled on a regular basis	More informal; meetings can take place as and when the client needs some advice, guidance and support
Short term (sometimes time-bounded) and focused on specific development areas/issues	More long term and takes a broader view of the person
Coaching is generally not performed on the basis that the coach needs to have direct experience of their client's formal occupational role, unless the coaching is specific and skills-focused	Mentor is usually more experienced and qualified than the client, often a senior person in the organization who can pass on knowledge, experience and open doors to otherwise out-of-reach opportunities
Focus is generally on development/ issues at work	Focus is on career and personal development
The agenda is focused on achieving specific, immediate goals	Agenda is set by the client, with the mentor providing support and guidance to prepare them for future roles
Coaching revolves more around specific development areas/issues	Mentoring revolves more around developing the client professionally

Table 1.1 Differences between coaching and mentoring

Influences on our practice

We have found that the most important thing we bring to our work with clients is ourselves. In this section, we discuss approaches which have particularly influenced us and which we have incorporated into the way we work. These approaches have been experienced by us as clients and as helpers in both formal and informal coaching and mentoring contexts.

A significant influence on our work is that of humanistic approaches and particularly the work of Carl Rogers (1961, 1983). Rogers emphasized the importance of psychological 'contact' between helper and client, and particularly the presence and communication of the core conditions of respect, empathy and genuineness. Humanistic or person-centred approaches describe

the innate positive tendency of people, given the right conditions, to grow and to develop, to fulfil their potential and to self-actualize. Maslow's research (1970) highlighted the importance of the core conditions. He found that unless basic needs for acceptance, respect and trust were met, then higher-order needs for achievement and self-actualization were unlikely to be realized. Many later research studies (e.g. Lambert 1992) have confirmed the importance of the core conditions and found that a positive relationship between helper and client is one of the predictors of positive outcomes.

Interestingly, very few coaching and mentoring approaches nowadays agree with Rogers that the core conditions are both necessary and *sufficient* for change to occur, although a great many of them cite the core conditions as important cornerstones upon which to build their particular approach. This has resulted in the downplaying of the importance of relationship, and we are pleased that in recent times there have been signs that this downplaying is being questioned.

What we value from the person-centred approach is the emphasis on relationship and connection between two people, and on the intrinsic human capacity for growth. We experience again and again in our work the transforming power of being fully present with, and listening to, a client, and in so doing enabling them to access their own resourcefulness.

The non-directive element of the humanistic approach can be thought to imply, erroneously in our view, 'not really going anywhere', and in the work context, with an emphasis on performance and results, more upbeat-sounding 'going somewhere' approaches may have greater face validity and acceptability. In this context, we wonder whether the term 'coaching' has become more acceptable in the business world because it is viewed as more performance-oriented than the term 'mentoring'.

The humanistic view of the individual as growth-oriented and resourceful is also found in the field of positive psychology, with the emphasis on using client strengths and resources to enhance well-being (Seligman 2002). As coaches and mentors we value this reminder that our work is developmental not remedial. We find this particularly useful with clients who are in difficulty at work. These could include clients who are 'sent', having been identified as underperforming, or clients who self-refer, perhaps seeing themselves as undervalued in their organization. Positive psychology encourages clients to identify and apply their strengths to achieve their goals. It should not be misunderstood as offering bland reassurance to clients that all will be well or as glossing over difficult or important issues. Rather, it uses intentional interventions to help clients build their resourcefulness and lead more fulfilled lives. We find such interventions are particularly useful in helping clients to access resources and creativity at times when, if they are stuck with a problem, they may not feel very creative or resourceful. A simple prompt – for example, 'How can you use your strengths in this situation?' – may be enough to catalyse client thinking and action.

Similarly, appreciative enquiry (Cooperrider *et al.* 2003) emphasizes helping the client to appreciate what *is*, and to build on successes and strengths. It employs specific questions about existing strengths and current positives, and we find that this can work well. Brief or solution-focused therapy (Berg and Szabo 2005) employs some similar approaches, with an emphasis on exploring the client's 'preferred future' and identifying any pieces of that future that are already happening. Associated with these approaches is the so-called 'miracle question', which might be asked thus: 'If you were to wake up tomorrow morning and a miracle had occurred and the problem was sorted, what would things look like, what would be different?' For us, a strength of these approaches is that they help the client to focus on the future and on positive goals, rather than negative ones. So, for example, a client who states that their goal is 'I will stop feeling anxious in meetings' can be asked to restate it in a positive way: 'I will feel confident and assertive in meetings'. Positively stated goals are more likely to be achieved. Similarly, some clients get stuck going round and round analysing and dwelling on their problems. They are unwilling or unable to contemplate the future because the difficulties in the present absorb their energy and attention. Techniques such as brainstorming a preferred future, or even a gentle prompt ('So what would this look like if it were just a bit better?') can enable clients to move forward.

Motivation theory asserts that appropriately stretching goals are most powerful in changing behaviour. A 'stretch' goal is neither too hard nor too easy to achieve, and is a powerful motivator when it is self-determined and not imposed. As coaches and mentors we have experienced the powerful impact for clients of identifying personally meaningful, realistic goals. Research by Gail Matthews (undated) indicates that when goals are written down, and shared with a trusted person, they are more likely to be achieved, and we notice that this simple intervention can increase the probability of client success.

While we value motivational and goal-setting approaches, we realize that goal-setting is neither simple nor straightforward for many clients. There is an interesting debate among coaches and mentors: some think that helping should start with asking the client what their goal is, as in the GROW model (Whitmore 2002), while others think that the client benefits from telling their story and imagining their preferred future in order to arrive at a meaningful goal, as in The Skilled Helper model (Egan 2010). Our experience has been that some clients are not ready or able to set substantial goals, even after more than one session. However, after each session we expect that a client will act in some way, whether that is a significant change, simply reflecting on the session, or taking a small step.

We have been influenced by cognitive behavioural coaching (CBC) which asserts that the way a person thinks about events influences the way they feel, and how they behave (Neenan and Dryden 2002). We find these

ideas particularly useful in enabling clients to self-challenge. A client can ask themselves whether their thoughts and beliefs are justified and whether they are helping or hindering in the situation. Self-limiting beliefs can be questioned and replaced with ones which help rather than impede performance. The client who asserts 'I'm hopeless at job interviews' restates this as 'Some interviews have gone well for me and others not', and similarly 'I always fall to pieces under pressure' becomes 'When I am well prepared I can withstand interview pressure'.

Taking the time to help clients explore their stories and underlying themes and patterns in their lives is a powerful intervention. An awareness of psychodynamic approaches has helped us here (Johnson 1985). When unconscious beliefs and assumptions (perhaps formed very early on in life) are limiting the client's capacity to manage problems and make the most of opportunities, it can be a welcome relief to examine and challenge these beliefs in a safe and supportive context. However, we would caution against too much interpretation, or seeking underlying patterns or meanings which may not exist. We once heard a sound piece of advice for the coach or mentor: 'Always work at the least interventionist level necessary to help the client to achieve change.'

Helping clients to become aware of their personal stories and how these shape their identity and behaviour is emphasized in narrative-based approaches to coaching and mentoring. Launer (2002) describes six concepts taken from family therapy, and from these we draw some useful reminders for our work: being fully attentive in the conversation and listening to what the client actually says rather than what we think they mean; staying both curious and neutral as the story unfolds; asking reflective questions which encourage the client to examine and expand their perspective; talking with the client about how we work together, not just focusing on the content of the client story; and working *with* the client rather than applying a particular approach *to* them, irrespective of whether it is right for them.

It may be tempting to see our coaching and mentoring conversation as talking 'about' change, while the real change happens 'out there' back in the client's world. Hawkins and Smith's model of transformational coaching (2006) challenges this view, and describes the 'shift in the room' when a fundamental shift in client thinking, feeling and behaving occurs in the coaching or mentoring session. The emphasis is on the here and now, and the relationship in the room, in order to change things 'out there'. These ideas have helped us to be brave in challenging ourselves and our clients when things get stuck. Hawkins acknowledges that to work in this way may seem risky, but the impact is potentially very powerful. Similarly, Gestalt approaches describe the importance of heightened awareness of the here and now. The Gestalt paradoxical theory of change asserts that change occurs when one is fully in contact with what is, rather than trying to be different or disown parts of ourselves (Bluckert 2010: 83). We have found techniques which originated

in Gestalt, such as 'role reversal' and 'empty chair', to be particularly helpful for clients in bringing immediacy to the session, so that rather than 'talking about' an issue, they *experience* it.

Another important influence on us has been the work of Isabel Briggs Myers, and her mother, Katharine Briggs, in developing the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® questionnaire.¹ Their aim was to make Jungian Type theory accessible and useful to individuals and groups (Myers with Myers 1980). We find the MBTI questionnaire a useful way of working with differences and similarities between ourselves and our clients. Clients find it helpful in thinking about their relationships and how they lead, manage and influence others (Bayne 2004). For example, the client who likes to keep their options open and gather more information may be irritated by their colleague who prefers to reach conclusions and make decisions. An awareness of 'type' can help the client to work with difference rather than seeing it as an obstacle, and appreciate that both approaches have value. However, we are aware that questionnaires don't suit all clients and this one does not, nor does it claim to, explain all differences between people or capture each person's unique individuality.

Many successful leaders and managers are also coaches and mentors. We are intrigued by research (Boyatzis *et al.* 2006) that highlights the benefits for a leader of being a coach. Coaching others and experiencing compassion serves to balance at a physiological level the effects of the stresses of the leadership role. We find that leadership research often resonates powerfully with clients. For example, Goleman (1998) describes the link between successful leadership and emotional intelligence (EI). He defines EI as 'the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships'. He describes five EI competencies: the personal competencies of self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation, and the social competencies of empathy and social skills. These competencies can be developed and we find many clients are able to use these ideas in their personal and professional development.

This section would not be complete without further reference to The Skilled Helper model (Egan 2010). While some coaches and mentors may experience the framework as constraining or too simple, we find it both liberating and embracing complexity. Used wisely, it has enabled us to apply the ideas and approaches we have described above. Our experience of using the model is rather like two people going for a walk in the countryside with a good map. Both can look at the map. It doesn't dictate their journey. It doesn't prevent

1 MBTI and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator are registered trade marks of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Trust.

them from slowing down or speeding up or taking shortcuts or meandering away from the path. Rather, it helps them to know where they are, albeit that they may choose sometimes to get pleasantly lost. It helps them to judge wisely the best route for them for that day, given the weather, their stamina and how much time is available. And they can return another day, map in hand, with a clearer sense of the terrain, to choose which direction they will then take.

Some useful approaches

Coaching and mentoring are learning relationships which help people to take charge of their own development, release their potential and achieve results which they value. In this section we explore several approaches which contribute to coach or mentor effectiveness in relation to:

- releasing potential for change;
- working with the relationship;
- focusing on performance;
- team coaching.

Releasing potential for change

In the previous section, we referred to humanistic and positivist approaches. These describe the core conditions for effective helping as belief in the client and communication of genuine interest, respect and empathy. The co-active coaching model is based on these conditions. There are four 'cornerstones' that are the foundation of co-active coaching (Whitworth *et al.* 1998: 3):

- 1 The client is naturally creative, resourceful and whole.
- 2 Co-active coaching addresses the client's whole life.
- 3 The agenda comes from the client.
- 4 The relationship is a 'designed alliance'.

The aim of the 'designed alliance' is that both client and coach have joint responsibility that the coaching will meet the client's needs. Clients learn to be in charge of the changes they will make in their lives. Coaches and clients use listening, intuition, curiosity, action learning and self-management. Two forces are used to create change: action and learning.

Because the notion of *action* that moves the client forward is so central to the purpose of coaching, we make 'forward' a verb and say that one of the purposes of coaching is to 'forward the action' of the client. The

other force at work in the human change process is *learning*. Learning is not simply a by-product of action, it is an equal and complementary force. The learning generates new resourcefulness, expanded possibilities, stronger muscles for change.

(Whitworth *et al.* 1998: 5)

When using this model the coach or mentor can focus all their attention on listening to the client and moving in whatever direction the client wants. Experience and skill are needed to 'freewheel' in this way.

Releasing potential for change is an important aspect of positivist approaches, which include appreciative enquiry and solution-focused coaching. In appreciative enquiry, the aim of the mentor or coach is to help the client through a four-stage cycle (Pask and Joy 2007: 212):

- 1 *Discovery*: through dialogue involving systematic enquiry the client is helped to identify within a particular focus the elements that they find challenging, interesting and energizing and to which they can commit.
- 2 *Dream*: the client is encouraged to project positive elements of the existing situation into a positive vision or dream of how the future ideally might look.
- 3 *Design*: the client thinks through and designs a strategy to achieve the articulated vision or dream.
- 4 *Destiny*: the client focuses on implementing the vision, and, importantly, sustaining and developing the energy, hope and enthusiasm and positive relationships underpinning the design.

In this approach the mentor or coach focuses on change from the outset. Below is an example of some appreciative enquiry questions for a client who is having problems with their team. Rather than asking what is wrong with the team, the mentor or coach invites the client to think about the strengths of individual members and a time when they worked to achieve something that the client valued. This might include questions such as:

- 'Describe a high point experience in your senior leadership team – a time when you were most engaged or excited!'
- 'Without being modest, what is it that you most value about yourself and your contribution to the team?'
- 'What do you most value about the team and its contribution to the organization?'
- 'What do you think are the core factors that give life to the team?'
- 'If you had three wishes to heighten the vitality and health of the team, what would they be?' (Pask and Joy 2007: 215 from Cooperrider *et al.* 1999: 11–12).

Such questions (Cooperrider *et al.* 1999: 11–12; Pask and Joy 2007: 215) are valuable in trying to develop new perspectives and uncover blind spots which prevent the client from moving forward. They energize and give hope. There are some similarities between the discovery, dream, design and destiny cycle and the stages of The Skilled Helper model. The latter model is described as 'A problem-management and opportunity development approach to helping'. In the model there are three stages:

- 1 Current picture: *What's going on?*
- 2 Preferred picture: *What do I need or want?*
- 3 The way forward: *How do I get what I need or want?*

The client is invited to tell their story, identify an aspect they would value working on, brainstorm their preferred scenario, choose and commit to a goal and then develop strategies and a manageable plan that will lead to valued outcomes. These stages help to release client potential by creating the opportunity for them to identify what they really value and then encouraging them to 'dream' about their preferred future.

Another approach which releases the potential for change is solution-focused. This has some similarities with appreciative enquiry and focuses on practicality and simplicity. It is positive and pragmatic (Jackson 2002). The methodology is based on:

- finding what works and doing more of it;
- finding what doesn't work and doing something different;
- finding and using resources;
- finding and building on successes.

Some of the techniques which are used to help people include focusing on what clients say they will do, not on what they won't do, and using questions of scale, such as 'On a scale of 1 to 10 where are you now? What would it take to move you from where you are now to where you would like to be on this scale? How much is good enough?' Questions about how well a person is coping with a difficult issue at work would not concentrate on the problem but would focus on client resources to solve it: 'I can see that . . . is very difficult at the moment . . . and I am noticing that you have still managed to . . . I am wondering how you have managed to do that?' In this example, helping the client to be aware of their strengths may make them feel more positive about moving forward. There are the classic questions: 'Tell me, what is already going well for you?' and 'When . . . worked well, what was it that was different?'.

An exercise in positive psychology, to help clients move towards a goal that seems unattainable, is explained this way: 'Visualise yourself on one side

of a gap, with the goal on the other side. Now let's construct bridges over that gap. Let's consider your top five strengths, and see how each one can be used to connect you to what you truly want to be' (Kauffman *et al.* 2010: 161). The coach begins with the client's top strength, for example persistence. They then invite the client to develop an action plan, *a road map for crossing the bridge*, using that strength of perseverance. Then the client is asked to create another bridge with their next highest strength and the process is repeated with the other four strengths. Two other techniques are useful: the first is to help the client to get into the habit of affirming what is going well, the second is to encourage the client to remember that tiny steps make a big difference.

Working with the relationship

Relationship is the way in which two or more people are *connected*. There is currently an interest in relational coaching, partly, we suggest, growing out of the experience of those who have found that models of performance coaching leave certain questions unanswered. 'Relational' tells us about the way in which the two people, coach or mentor and client, *relate to* one another. Whereas some approaches focus on what is happening in the client, relational coaching is equally interested in what is happening in the coach, and indeed in the way coach and client are both *relating to* one another. Coaches and mentors who have had a background in psychological (Berne 1976), psychotherapeutic (Perls 1951; Jacobs 1989), sociological (Mead 1967) or constructivist (Gergen 2003) perspectives have realized the importance of understanding how meaning is communicated between coach and client. In this section we share some perspectives on the dynamics and transactions which may occur in the here-and-now of a coaching or mentoring session.

In relational coaching there is an ever-present awareness that past experiences of attachments and relationships with significant others are likely to influence the current ways of relating, between coach or mentor and client:

When a coaching client meets his or her coach, he/she brings into the encounter, both consciously and unconsciously their experience of primary relationships, their expectations of someone who is supposed to be there for them . . . This relational approach requires the coach to be capable of self-awareness and reflexivity, to allow him or herself to be subject to the process of relating, rather than to be in control of it, and hence to being changed by the interaction. It is also risky in the sense that precise outcomes cannot be forecast. Working fully in the relationship increases the possibility of emergent novelty at the necessary expense of predictability.

(Critchley 2009: 26, 29)

Relational coaches notice and respond to the dynamics between coach and client as they are actually happening in the session.

Berne (1987) helps us to understand, and work with, the way that the past impinges on the present. He examined communications or 'transactions' between people and his analysis suggested that most communication arises from three ego states: parent, adult and child. These ideas form the basis of transactional analysis (TA). TA ideas and techniques are widely used in coaching and mentoring, and coaches and mentors who use TA may notice certain 'scripts' which come from these ego states, such as 'I must always be perfect', 'I cannot succeed' and 'One day I will be found out'. People learn scripts early on in life, and these can become unhelpful 'games' in later life; however, the effective coach or mentor can enable the client to identify and challenge these.

The Karpman Drama Triangle (1968) illustrates this by showing how the roles of persecutor, victim and rescuer get shifted around in such a game. So, it can happen that the well-meaning coach or mentor is perceived by the client as the persecutor, while the client sees themselves as the victim. For examples of scripts and games in coaching and supervision see Hay (2007). Coaches and mentors find TA valuable as a way of noticing the transactions taking place within the session. It is also useful when exploring difficulties which the client is having in relationships at work or elsewhere. The wise coach or mentor reflects to the client what is heard and experienced, but in a spirit of enquiry and invitation to explore, rather than offering expert interpretation. *The aim is for interpretation to come from the client, not from the coach or mentor.* Working with scripts, games and transactions can lead, in the session, to rehearsal of different ways of communicating with others back at the workplace (for further detail on TA and the Drama Triangle, see Chapter 9).

When the coach or mentor is fully aware of what is going on in the here and now, they work in an appropriately immediate way. This can make a real difference to the client. They can learn that it is safe to be authentic with the coach or mentor, and so they are more likely to be authentic in their other relationships. The importance of this authenticity is evident in the Gestalt relational approach. Bluckert (2010) suggests that this approach would not be appreciated by all clients, but that it is useful with those who are flexible, reflective and interested in both their internal and external worlds. He outlines some core assumptions: that clients are always doing the best they can; that change occurs when the client is fully in contact with 'what is'; that heightened awareness helps people into new ways of seeing, choosing and acting; that each context and situation has its own dynamic which needs to be understood; that so-called 'unfinished business' holds clients back from realizing their potential; and that exploring the 'here and now' provides 'the best opportunities for learning and growth by such questions as *What are you aware of now?*' (Bluckert 2010: 83). So clients are helped to develop an honest

awareness of what is happening in themselves in the moment-to-moment encounter with the coach or mentor. They are encouraged to 'make contact' or 'meet' all parts of themselves, their work and workplace, their colleagues and friends.

Gestalt theory asserts that change occurs, paradoxically, not by moving to the future, but by remaining fully in contact with the present. However, making contact with 'what is' means getting in touch with parts of the self which have been disowned or denied, maybe because important basic needs have not been met or satisfied in earlier experiences. The difficulty of doing this cannot be overestimated and in Gestalt theory there are four major obstacles to making contact with the self. Two of these are introjection and retroflexion. Introjects are the 'shoulds' and 'oughts' which may have been acquired from parental and other adult expectations. These interrupt contact with what the client 'wants'. Retroflexion occurs when clients turn inwards with their real thoughts and feelings, perhaps in the workplace, where they do not feel safe to express themselves and where, for example, they may have allowed themselves to become invisible or overlooked. A client may have lost contact with what they really think and feel. If the coach or mentor can stay fully present with them so that they feel safe enough to 'make contact' with what they really want and need, this can be powerfully liberating for the client. Contact leads to the sort of 'connectedness' that develops from this shared vision of honesty and transparency and from the willingness to empathically challenge when 'contact' is being interrupted. It is this quality of connectedness which enables the relationship to be transforming for the client.

Focusing on performance

Approaches which focus on achieving specific performance outcomes are often informed by cognitive behavioural psychology. They use knowledge of the ways in which thinking, feeling and acting are interrelated and affect client outcome. They focus upon present experience and future possibilities. They use techniques of behavioural reinforcement to accentuate positives and reduce negatives. They have a common aim to help clients formulate and achieve specific, measurable, realistic goals within clear timeframes. Neenan and Palmer (2001: 17) describe the coaching relationship as 'a collaborative relationship that helps individuals to focus on problem-solving in a structured and systematic way'.

GROW is a popular coaching model developed by Whitmore (2002) for performance coaching. It has been used extensively in executive coaching and coaching at work. With the emphasis on performance and outcome, the GROW sequence starts by asking the client to identify a *Goal* or outcome

which they want to achieve. Once this is identified, the coach helps the client to track back to their current *Reality*. Once the client has explored where they are now and where they want to be, they are then helped to explore all the *Options* for getting there. Finally, having decided upon options the client explores the *Will* to act.

Several writers on performance coaching and executive coaching base their ideas on the 'inner game'. Much of the thinking in performance coaching originated from sports coaching, including the difference between the 'outer game' of performance and the 'inner game' of attitude and psychology. Gallwey (2000) states that the outer game of improved performance will only be possible if there are changes in the inner game of thinking and feeling. The power of positive thinking is at the heart of the inner game approach. The important concept is that *potential minus interference equals performance*. Downey (2003: 11) is an advocate of this approach and explains that time and time again he has noticed that what prevents successful performance is the emotional interference that comes between potential and achievement. He cites the following examples of interference that get in the way and stop us focusing on the goal: fear, doubt, lack of confidence, the 'be perfect' driver, anger, boredom and frustration.

The coach helps the client to identify interference and then to work with it to minimize its impact. This leads to 'relaxed concentration', which in turn leads to performance that flows. The relationship between this approach and sports coaching is obvious. We all recognize 'flow' in excellent performance, whether it be playing tennis, playing the piano or public speaking. Downey gives useful examples of listening for emotions when the client tells their story. Like Whitmore and Gallwey, he starts by asking about aspiration. When the client starts talking about their dream, the coach or mentor listens not only to the external reasons why the client thinks this cannot be achieved, but also the internal reasons, 'the interference', which perhaps have never been articulated before. Although Whitmore, Gallwey and Downey keep their focus very much upon outcome in coaching, they also use skilled listening and questioning to be facilitative with the client, rather than directive. In fact, Downey calls his approach 'non-directive coaching': 'Coaching is the art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another' (2003: 21).

Coaches who use the neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) approach draw attention to similarities between the 'main pillars' of NLP and the stages of the GROW model. Grimley (2010: 190) states that the NLP coach focuses on three main questions:

- Does the client know specifically what they want?
- Can they keep their senses open so they know what they are presently getting?

- Do they have the flexibility to keep changing until they get what they want?

Grimley suggests that the goal of NLP coaching is maximizing client resourcefulness and increasing choice. This is to be done with an awareness of context. The coach helps the client to see that if they get stuck it is because of the way they are construing the world. Self-awareness is key, with goal achievement as an important outcome.

There are several features in common between Whitmore's GROW model and The Skilled Helper model (Egan 2010). Both approaches highlight the important relationship between wanting and acting. Both focus on articulating specific goals for change. Both test commitment to the goal. However, the differences are in the sequencing of events. In Egan's approach, commitment is tested before options and action plans are drawn up. In both models it is important for the coach or mentor to be flexible and not to follow the model rigidly. The Skilled Helper model is explored in Chapters 7 and 8. It provides a framework for the coaching and mentoring process which can be used with some of the ideas and approaches which have been presented in this section.

Team coaching

While this book is primarily about the learning relationship between the individual client and the coach or mentor, in team coaching the client is the team. Team coaching is growing in popularity as a way of developing high-performing teams, which are often found to: have a high level of agreement about their common purpose; work closely together; be 'mutually accountable'; and value and respect individual differences (Katzenbach and Smith 1993). Team coaching helps to align individual, team and business goals.

Definitions of team coaching vary; however, many authors agree that task performance and team development are both important components of successful coaching. Therefore, a team coach might be expected to have an understanding of group dynamics (Bion 1961), group development (Tuckman 1965) and team roles (Belbin 2003), as well as an awareness of organizational culture and its impact on team learning (Pokora and Briner 1999).

Team coaching may be used to: encourage more effective teamworking in an existing group; accelerate the development of a newly-formed group into a working team; enhance the coaching skills of team leaders; and develop cross-boundary teams which address organization-wide issues. Barden (2006: 6) outlines how team coaching may be useful with a team which already works together:

a team may be coached when it is no longer aligned with its purpose. That can occur when the organisation has changed its focus and a key team is having difficulty in following suit. The team leader has – perhaps through individual coaching – become aware of the need for a new purpose and the team needs to revisit its key elements.

In practice, the team coach will often work with one or more management sponsors, as well as with the team, and may coach individual team members to enhance their participation in the team. Executive coaches may start work with an individual executive client and then be asked to coach the client's team. In this scenario, boundary issues and conflicts of interest need to be clarified.

The skill of the team coach includes firstly, aligning team outcomes and achievements with business expectations and targets, and secondly, maximizing the distinctive contributions of individuals to ensure high performance of the team as a whole. Although team coaching can be cost-effective and rewarding, it is not an easy option. It requires sensitivity, skill and adaptability on the part of the team coach who manages a variety of individual and organizational expectations.

The wise coach or mentor

So far we have defined coaching and mentoring at work, explained the nine principles underpinning effectiveness and shared some approaches and models which have influenced us and which are commonly used. Now we turn to consider what it is that makes a coach or mentor not just competent, but also effective, and wise.

Clutterbuck and Megginson have observed numerous coaches and mentors at work and conclude that mature practitioners are those who, although informed by particular models and approaches, do not stick to them rigidly. Instead, they constantly ask themselves three key questions when working with a client: 'Are we both relaxed enough to allow the issue and the solution to emerge in whatever way they will? Do I need to apply any processes or techniques at all? If I do, what does the client context tell me about how to select from the wide choice available to me?' (Clutterbuck and Megginson 2010: 7). They call this way of working 'systemic eclectic'. These mature coaches or mentors are demonstrating the confidence to be able to 'let go' and 'freewheel' with the client. This requires the wisdom to make difficult choices from moment to moment in the session. When we have experienced as clients the help of a 'wise' coach or mentor, what has made the difference? For one of us, it was like this:

My mentor was just a natural. So natural that I didn't even notice his skills, but they were certainly there. He wore his experience lightly, keeping himself in the background. But he was himself, he showed me that he cared, he gave me enough time to talk and think. He could be very challenging too, but he seemed to consider carefully when to be like this, watching me closely for my reactions. I was continually surprised at how well he seemed to know me. He would know just when to push and just when to hold back. I felt like I was moving along with my issues and targets and he seemed to intuitively understand when to say something and when to just stay quiet.

I wanted to learn from him. I chose him because he knew how my organization worked and he knew the politics there. He shared his own experiences with me so that I felt I was with a real person and not just some 'professional front'. He gave me time. That was a big thing. I needed to make some changes at work, but wasn't ready at first. He never tried to move me too quickly into making those changes. There were moments when something would click. I may have suddenly opened my eyes to something and we would share that eureka moment together, he would be as pleased as I was! There were other difficult moments when we seemed temporarily to be not connecting and he would take his time, give me time, and then ask if I would like to look at what was happening, together. This we would do and each time, although difficult, it brought our relationship to a new level of trust. The times when I sensed he had really understood, he didn't need to say anything, there was just a certain twinkle in his eye, a smile, a quizzical expression and in that moment I knew he was 'with' me.

So, what is this wisdom? Competencies are tangible, wisdom less so. Wisdom seems to be about discerning what is needed at any one time and using sound judgement. To make such wise choices, the coach or mentor needs to be able to tune into the client on several levels at once. Such sensitivity, combined with caring, gives a special quality to the relationship. People talk about 'connecting', being 'in tune with one another', moving together 'in harmony'. These expressions attempt to capture the essence of being with a coach or mentor who is wise as well as competent, who trusts their instincts and intuition as much as their knowledge and skills, who knows when to hold back and do nothing, and when to move forward and actively engage, who uses all their senses to communicate a real belief in the worth and capacity of the client to achieve what they want and value.

Summary

In this chapter we have:

- Proposed a definition of coaching and mentoring as learning relationships which help people to take charge of their own development, to release their potential and to achieve results which they value.
- Outlined nine key principles which underpin effective coaching and mentoring.
- Explored the context of coaching and of mentoring.
- Shared some influences on our practice.
- Discussed some useful approaches to coaching and mentoring.
- Concluded with thoughts about effective and wise practice.