



Foundational Coaching Skills

A skill is an acquired ability or proficiency at something specific, while an approach is a way of proceeding or going about doing something. In coaching, we employ a variety of skills to engage our coachees in meaningful exploration to develop self-awareness and achieve their goals.

To be effective, a coach employs these skills in service to their coachee, so the coachee receives maximum benefit from the coaching conversation. Learn more about these foundational skills and approaches below.

Coaching Skills

Stay curious: Curiosity is having a genuine spirit of learning and a willingness to discover new things. Genuine curiosity is an authentic, nonjudgmental interest in whatever is going on for a coachee. When curiosity is present, new and increased awareness is possible.

Provoke deeper thinking: By provoking deeper thinking, you create and strengthen bonds and form meaningful connections to new learning. Some might call this developing insight. To provoke deeper thinking, we shift perspective, look outside of what is shared or demonstrated, and imagine a new way of being or doing.

Withhold judgment: It is imperative that, as a coach, we never let our judgments enter any part of the coaching relationship. The coachee is the expert. In coaching, it's always about what the coachee wants to explore, not what the coach thinks or feels should be explored. And, it's the coachee who ultimately determines what specific actions they will take to address their specific issues, not the coach. The coach can ask for permission to share an insight or experience that might help the coachee in that exploration process, but again, the coach's judgment should never enter any part of the conversation.



Believe in the client: A coachee who feels their coach has confidence in them is more likely to open up and connect with their coach. Ultimately, the coachee is the one in charge of the decisions and direction and having someone believe in their ability to make the right decisions can have a major impact on their level of engagement in the coaching relationship.

Ask great questions: Questions are the coach's most powerful tools. The information obtained is directly related to the strength and poignancy of the questions asked. A skillfully worded question can remove barriers and deepen or clarify the level of understanding within the coaching partnership. Asking great questions moves individuals and organizations toward their desired goals.

Dance in the moment: A coach is dancing in the moment when they are being completely present with the coachee, holding their coachees agenda, accessing their (the coach's) intuition, and letting the coachee lead the interaction.

Listen deeply: Effective coaching relies on listening intently and actively to what the coachee is willing to share in an environment that is conducive to the exploration of possibilities and solutions to what may be holding the coachee back from achieving their goals.