



COACHING

Coaching Skills

Abstract

This program is designed to assist leaders who are struggling with coaching skills to achieve greater success in becoming an effective coach.

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Lesson 1: Introduction

(3 hours)

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the role of coaching.
- Understand some basic theories behind coaching
- Understand the GROW model as a coaching tool
- Understand contemporary thinking about coaching.

One of the most important skills a frontline leader can develop is the ability to coach. Coaching is not just a tool for fixing problems; it is a way of leading. When leaders coach well, they create stronger team members, clearer thinking, and better results.

Coaching shows up in two directions. The first is reactive. It helps team members correct behaviour or learn from things that have already happened. The second is proactive. It looks forward and helps people imagine who they want to become and what they are working towards. Both are essential. Correction without forward vision becomes punishment. Vision without honest reflection becomes fantasy. Good coaching moves between the two.

There is one common mistake many leaders make when trying to coach. They talk too much. Real coaching is not advice with a polite tone. It is not teaching in disguise. It is about creating the kind of space where the other person begins to think deeply for themselves. The best coaching happens when the coach speaks less than half the time. Their job is not to supply answers but to draw them out.

The most powerful thing a leader can offer a team member in a coaching conversation is attention. Not answers. Not solutions. Attention. This includes listening, asking thoughtful questions, and holding space for the team member to struggle, reflect, and make meaning. It also includes accountability. Coaching is not soft. It requires clarity and follow-through.

Lesson 2: Theoretical Constructs Behind Coaching at Work

Adult Learning Principles

Adults learn best when they are actively involved in making sense of their own experience. Coaching allows team members to learn from their work rather than be told how to do it better.

Let's explore how adults learn best, not by being told what to do, but by making sense of their own experiences. Coaching is a powerful way to support this kind of learning."



"Think of a time when you learned something that stuck with you, what made that learning stick?"

Core Concept: Adult Learning Principles

Let's use a simple visual or acronym (e.g., SELF) to anchor key principles:

Principle	Description
Self-directed	Adults want autonomy in learning. They value choice and relevance.
Experience-based	Prior experience is a rich resource. Learning builds on what they already know.
Life-centered	Learning must connect to real-life challenges and goals.
Feedback-rich	Adults thrive on timely, respectful feedback that helps them reflect and improve.

“Coaching aligns beautifully with these principles, it’s not about giving answers, but creating space for reflection, insight, and ownership.”

Coaching as a Learning Tool

Coaching is a method that activates adult learning:

- Coaching encourages reflection: “What worked? What didn’t?”
- It builds ownership: “What would you do differently?”
- It respects autonomy: “What support do you need?”

“Think of coaching as holding up a mirror, not a megaphone. It helps people see themselves more clearly, not hear louder instructions.”

Takeaway

*“Adults learn best when they’re invited to reflect, explore, and own their growth.
Coaching is a bridge between experience and insight.”*

“What’s one shift you’ll make in how you support learning in your team?”

Self Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan)

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan) proposes that human motivation thrives when three psychological needs are met:

Core Need	Description
Competence	Feeling effective and capable in one's actions
Autonomy	Having choice, control, and ownership over decisions
Relatedness	Feeling connected, respected, and part of a community

“When these needs are met, people don’t just comply, they commit.”

Coaching supports these needs by:

- Encouraging self-reflection and skill development (Competence)
- Inviting ownership of goals and decisions (Autonomy)
- Building trust and relational safety (Relatedness)



Reflective Exercise

1. Personal Experience

Think of a time when you felt deeply motivated.

What made you feel competent, autonomous, and connected?

2. Coaching Lens

Recall a recent coaching conversation (as coach or coachee).
Which of the three needs were most supported?

Which could have been strengthened?

Takeaway

"Motivation isn't something we give others; it's something we help them uncover."

Growth Mindset (Carol Dweck)

Growth Mindset (Carol Dweck) is the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed through effort, feedback, and learning, rather than being fixed traits.

Mindset Type	Belief System
Fixed Mindset	"I'm either good at this or I'm not."
Growth Mindset	"I can improve with practice and feedback."

In coaching, this mindset is nurtured by:

- Normalizing setbacks as part of the learning journey
- Focusing on effort, strategy, and reflection rather than just results
- Celebrating progress, not perfection

"Coaching shifts the spotlight from performance to potential."



Reflective Exercise

1. Personal Lens

Think of a time when you faced a setback or challenge. How did you respond, with a fixed or growth mindset?

2. Coaching Lens

Recall a recent coaching moment (as coach or coachee). How was the challenge framed, as failure or feedback?

Takeaway

"Growth mindset isn't just a belief, it's a practice. It's how we respond to difficulty, how we coach others through it, and how we model resilience."

What's one area in your leadership where you'd like to shift from performance pressure to learning focus?

Psychological Safety

Psychological Safety (coined by Amy Edmondson) is the belief that one can speak up, make mistakes, and take interpersonal risks without fear of humiliation or retaliation.

In coaching, psychological safety is the soil in which growth takes root. Without it:

- Feedback feels threatening
- Mistakes are hidden
- Learning is blocked

With it:

- Team members feel safe to reflect honestly
- They're open to feedback and experimentation
- Coaching becomes a space for transformation



"A team member will not be coachable unless they feel safe."

Reflective Exercise

1. Personal Lens

Think of a time when you didn't feel safe to speak up or admit a mistake. What impact did that have on your learning or motivation?

2. Leadership Lens

Reflect on a recent coaching moment. Did the person feel safe enough to be vulnerable?

What signals told you that they felt this way or that they didn't?

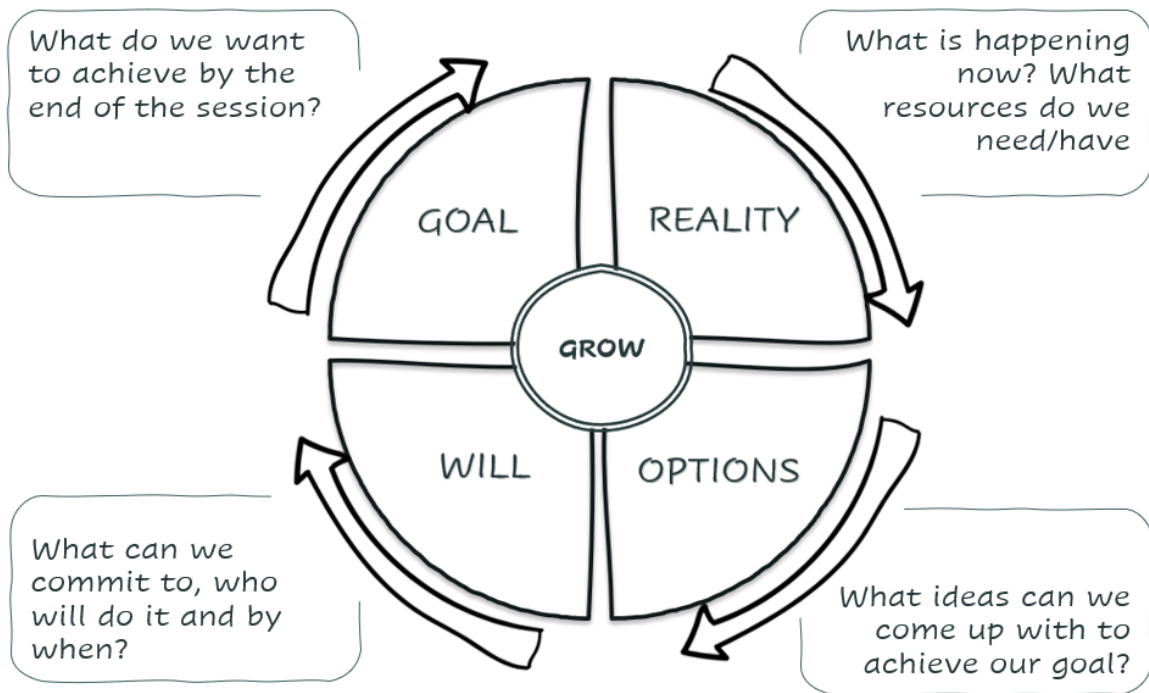
Takeaway

"Psychological safety isn't soft, it's strong. It's the foundation of accountability, learning, and trust."

What's one thing you'll do this week to signal safety in your coaching conversations?

Lesson 3: The GROW Model: A Simple Structure for Coaching Conversations

The GROW model is a widely used, practical framework that helps leaders have structured coaching conversations. It consists of four stages:



GROW stands for **Goal**, **Reality**, **Options**, and **Way Forward**, guiding individuals from where they are to where they want to be. By starting with a clear goal, exploring the current reality, identifying possible strategies, and committing to actionable steps, the GROW model fosters ownership, clarity, and momentum. It's especially powerful in leadership contexts because it encourages reflective thinking, empowers autonomy, and supports accountability, all while maintaining a psychologically safe and trust-based environment.

G- Goal	R - Reality
- What do you want to achieve? - This could be a short-term outcome (I want to finish the project on time) or a longer-term aspiration (I want to become a more confident presenter). - Help the team member articulate a clear, meaningful goal in their own words.	- What is happening now? - This is about understanding the current situation. What's working? What's not? What have they already tried? - This phase is about facing facts, without blame. The goal is to help the team member see their situation more clearly.
O - Options	W - Way Forward
- What could you do? - Ask open-ended questions to help the person think creatively. What are the different ways they could move forward? What else might be possible? - The goal here is to generate multiple ideas, even ones they might not immediately choose.	- What will you do? - This is the commitment phase. What action will they take? When will they take it? What support do they need? - The more concrete the plan, the more effective the coaching conversation becomes.

Reflection

1. Goal

Think of a recent coaching conversation or leadership moment.

What was the stated or unstated goal?

How clearly was it defined was it, and by whom?

- What made the goal meaningful or motivating?

- Did the goal reflect the coachee's values and aspirations?

2. Reality

How did you explore the current situation with the coachee?

What questions helped uncover the truth beneath the surface?

Were they able to reflect honestly on barriers or blind spots?

How did you hold space for complexity without judgment?

3. Options

What possibilities were explored?

Did the coachee feel empowered to generate their own ideas?

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How did you balance offering insight with encouraging autonomy?

Were creative or unconventional options welcomed?

4. Way Forward

What commitment was made?

How did the coachee define their next step?

Was the action specific, realistic, and self-directed?

How will accountability and support be maintained?

"The GROW model is not a script, it's a scaffold. It holds space for clarity, curiosity, and courage."

Final Thoughts:

The GROW model offers more than a coaching structure, it's a relational pathway that honours autonomy, insight, and accountability.

When used with emotional intelligence and trust, it transforms conversations from transactional to transformational. Each stage invites deeper reflection: clarifying purpose, confronting reality, expanding possibility, and committing to action.

As leaders, our role is not to direct the journey but to illuminate it, helping others discover their own wisdom, courage, and next step. In this way, GROW becomes not just a model, but a mindset for growth-centered leadership.

Which stage of the GROW model do you naturally lean into?

Which stage could you strengthen to deepen your coaching impact?

Lesson 4: Contemporary Thinking in Coaching

Presence over Performance (Julie Starr, The Coaching Manual)

Julie Starr reminds us that **coaching is not a performance** — it's a relational practice rooted in presence. True coaching doesn't require dazzling questions or impressive techniques. It asks us to:

1. Slow down
2. Tune in
3. Stay curious

Presence means:

- Listening beyond words
- Noticing tone, energy, and emotion
- Holding space without rushing to fix or advise



"The most powerful coaching often happens in the quiet, when we stop performing and start witnessing."

Reflective Exercise

1. Personal Lens

Recall a moment when someone was truly present with you. What did they do / or not do, that made you feel seen?

2. Coaching Lens

Reflect on a recent coaching conversation. Were you fully present, or performing?

What helped or hindered your presence?

Takeaway

"Presence is not passive; it's a courageous act of attention."

What's one intention you'll carry into your next coaching conversation to stay present, not perform?

Immunity to Change (Kegan and Lahey)

Immunity to Change (Kegan & Lahey) explains why people often fail to follow through on their best intentions, not because they lack willpower, but because they're unconsciously protecting themselves from perceived threats.

This "immunity" is like an emotional immune system:

- It defends against discomfort, vulnerability, or identity shifts.
- It creates **competing commitments** that conflict with stated goals.
- It keeps people safe - but stuck.

"Coaching helps surface these hidden commitments and gently challenge the assumptions beneath them."

Reflective Exercise

1. Personal Lens

Think of a change you've wanted to make but struggled to follow through on.
What good intention did you set?

What might be competing with it beneath the surface?

2. Explore the Immunity Map

Use this simplified version of Kegan & Lahey's process:

Step	Reflection
1. Commitment	What do I genuinely want to change or improve?
2. Behaviours	What am I doing (or not doing) that works against this goal?
3. Hidden Commitment	What fear or need might be driving these behaviours?
4. Big Assumption	What belief am I holding that keeps this fear alive?

Takeaway

"True change requires more than intention — it requires uncovering what we're protecting ourselves from."

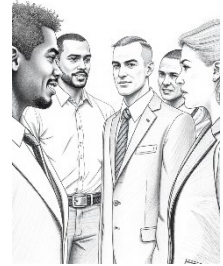
What's one assumption you're ready to challenge in order to grow?

Narrative Coaching (David Drake)

Narrative Coaching is grounded in the idea that people live through stories, not just events. These stories shape identity, behaviour, and possibility. David Drake emphasizes that coaching is not about fixing people but about helping them reflect on the stories they tell themselves and how those stories influence their choices.

Key principles:

- **Stories are meaning-making tools:** They help us interpret our past and imagine our future.
- **Coaching invites reflection:** Noticing the story beneath the surface.
- **Transformation happens in the present:** When we shift the narrative, we shift the path forward.



"Narrative coaching is less about solving problems and more about evolving the story."

Reflective Exercise

1. Personal Lens

Think of a story you often tell yourself about who you are as a leader.
Is it empowering or limiting?

Where did it come from, and is it still serving you?

2. Coaching Lens

Recall a recent coaching moment.

What story was the other person telling themselves?

How did that story shape their choices or mindset?

Takeaway

"When we change the story, we change the future."

What's one story you're ready to rewrite, in yourself or in someone you coach?

Lesson 5: Coaching Self-Assessment Tool

The tool is divided into 7 key dimensions, each aligned with a concept from your module. For each dimension, rate yourself on a **scale of 1–5**, then reflect on strengths and growth areas.

1=Rarely or never / 2=Occasionally / 3=Sometimes / 4=Often / 5=Consistently

Assessment Dimensions	1	2	3	4	5
Adult Learning Principles					
<i>I coach in ways that allow others to reflect on their own experience, rather than telling them what to do.</i>					
Self-Determination Theory					
<i>I support others in feeling competent, autonomous, and connected during coaching conversations.</i>					
Growth Mindset					
<i>I frame setbacks as learning opportunities and encourage experimentation and resilience.</i>					
Psychological Safety					
<i>I create a climate of trust where mistakes can be discussed without fear or shame.</i>					
Presence Over Performance					
<i>I focus on being present and curious, rather than performing or impressing.</i>					
Immunity to Change					
<i>I help others uncover hidden fears or competing commitments that may block progress.</i>					
Narrative Coaching					
<i>I listen for the stories people tell themselves and help them explore new, empowering narratives.</i>					

Reflection Prompts

After rating each dimension, invite delegates to reflect:

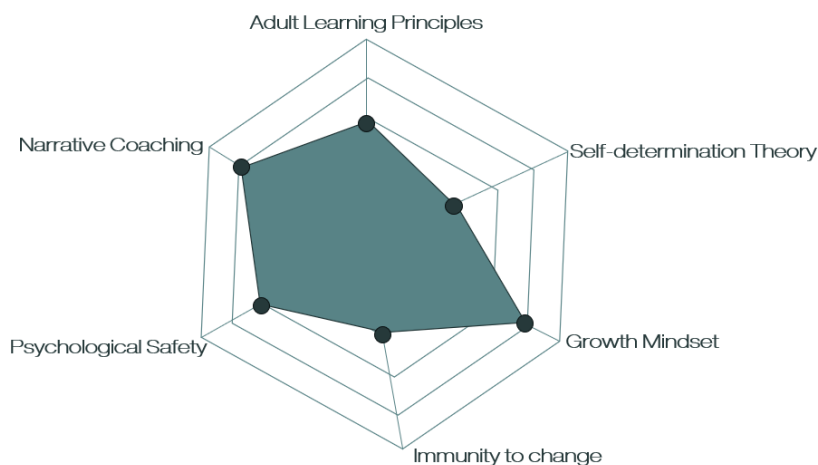
a) Which dimension feels strongest in your current coaching practice?

b) Which area would benefit from more intentional focus?

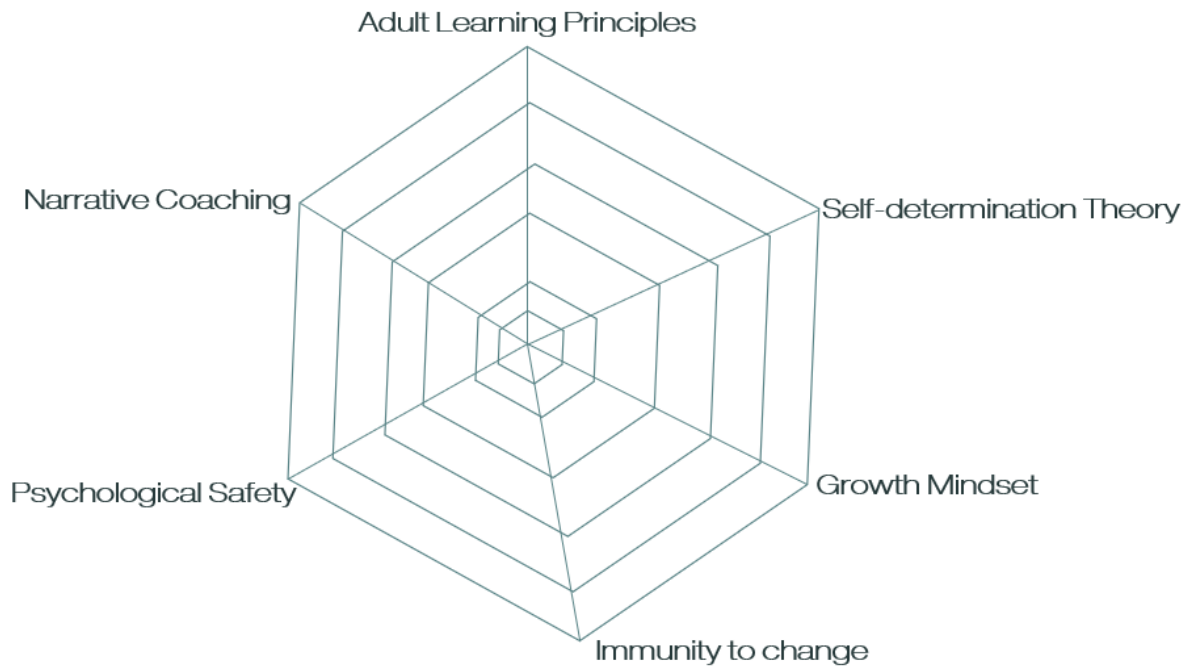
c) What's one small shift you can make this week to deepen your coaching impact?

Below is a printable coaching **radar chart** template where you can plot your scores across the seven dimensions, creating a visual snapshot of your coaching profile.

Here is an example:



This can be repeated in a few months to track your growth as a coach.



Lesson 6: Conclusion

Coaching is not a technique; it's a way of being. At its heart, it honours the adult learner's need for autonomy, relevance, and reflection. It activates intrinsic motivation through **Self-Determination Theory**, nurtures resilience through a **Growth Mindset**, and builds trust through **Psychological Safety**. It invites presence over performance, reminding us that the most powerful shifts happen not through clever questions, but through deep listening and attuned connection.

Through frameworks like the **GROW model**, coaching offers structure without rigidity, guiding individuals from intention to action while honouring their lived experience. It helps surface the hidden fears and **Immunity to Change** that silently block progress and gently challenges the assumptions that keep people stuck. And through **Narrative Coaching**, it opens space for new stories to emerge, stories of agency, courage, and possibility. In this model, coaching becomes a relational practice rooted in trust, curiosity, and emotional intelligence. It's how leaders cultivate growth not just in others, but in themselves. It's how we shift from directing to partnering, from fixing to witnessing, and from performance to presence.

This is the essence of trust-based leadership: creating spaces where people feel safe enough to grow, brave enough to change, and supported enough to lead.

Reflections for action:

Our Reflections are often the most powerful part of the learning process

It would be a pity to forget them. Use this Work page to record things which you have learnt during the workshop and which you want to put into Action.

	Action	Who what when
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