

# Coaching Skills Drill

COACHING CONVERSATION STARTERS

## Learning Partner Exercise: Conversation Starters

Most new, and sometimes seasoned coaches, struggle with how to Create Really Thorough Coaching Agreements, you know the ones that really get to the core essence of what's going on with them and what they really need to address in order to be able to move forward toward what they want. They often stop after, "What do you want to focus on?" then just run with it, ticking off the "Agreement" box and head straight for actions that will solve the problem.

As long as you continue in the direction of what the client wants, this could be enough to get your ACC, but we're not training and mentoring for the bare minimum, we're developing a higher skill set that will ensure you get whatever credential you go for when you're ready for it, AND more importantly set you up to be an excellent coach, an MCC down the line who's primed for it, not one who has to unlearn bad coaching habits to relearn excellent ones. You already have to unlearn lots of regular communication habits, imagine what it would be like if you dug yourself into mediocre coaching ruts!

You may have heard it said, "What the client brings to coaching usually isn't what they want coaching on." Hopefully, you'll find with these suggested guidelines, you'll be Distilling and Creating Strong Coaching Agreements from the very start.

The primary objective of this Skill Drill is to walk you through how to Create a Coaching Agreement that goes beyond the basics and into really distilling what is most important for the client to explore and take away from the conversation.

\* **NOTICE** what *you're hearing* — Words/Vocabulary & Gist of what client is saying. Start to cull out when it's important to use their Vocabulary and when it's best to summarize the Gist. Notice your own reactions to the way people convey they actually listened to you.

\* **PRACTICE COACHING:** In coming to your Learning Partnership Call, each of you should bring a little something to get coached on ... the reason is that you won't be doing full-on coaching sessions yet, so the smaller the thing, the more likely you won't have to walk away half-baked or unsettled. If something big is all that's there or what actually comes up, you can bring it back next week to your practice call and build the coaching upon where it's at now.

\* **PUT ON your thick skin** for this exercise because it is set up to evoke feedback that can help you develop masterful coaching skills now, so you don't have to unlearn mediocre ones later.

This Skill Drill is focused on developing your ability to start your coaching conversations in a way that sets you up to explore and cause the most relevant and powerful agreement to reveal itself.

---

PREPARING COACHES TO MAKE IT, so THEY NEVER HAVE TO FAKE IT!

# Coaching Skills Drill

COACHING CONVERSATION STARTERS

## Coach Will:

1. **OPEN** “Session” with something like: “*What will make the next 30 minutes most worthwhile?*” or “*What’s most important for you to explore in the time we have today?*”

**(Client shares their opening story.)**

2. **LISTEN** for:

- \* Why are they telling me this? (What makes *this* story important to them?)
- \* What are the significant nuggets they just shared?
- \* What mood or emotion presents.
- \* What seems to stand out as the problem/concern/coachable thing? (What makes *this* story a problem for them?!)
- \* What in their speech or vocabulary stands out?
- \* What makes this a problem for them?

Your listening is designed to sift out the golden nuggets. Much like panning for gold, you let the story and details shake out, so you’re left with the good stuff.

This gives you what you need to begin understanding who they are, what makes them tick and what they really want for. Your first job in the coaching now is to distill what they said into five key things from which you will construct your two-part response: 1. which emotions present, 2. vocabulary that stands out, 3. the most significant points, 4. connect the dots, 5. ask a question that gets them to think about something they don’t already know, not something they do.

3. **REFLECT:** Keep it *brief*. This is about sharing what *you heard*, not repeating back to them what they said. Your reflection is the distillation of the first four keys above: mood or overriding emotion + the bottom line of what they said (significant dots that connect to encapsulate the meaning and gist of what they said) + any ‘*stand out*’ words, that is vocabulary that is specific to them. DO NOT repeat back everything they said because they already know the story; they just told it to you. You need you to make sense out of, bottom line it and let them know that you *get them and what’s going on for them*.

4. **ASK ONE** Question: It must begin with the word WHAT and does not ask for more details/info. Instead design a question that connect Who the person is with the situation and pokes at what might be making it a problem for them. At this point, you are in the exploration process that will lead to a discovery of what the agreement really is. Do not worry about trying to lock in the agreement yet, it’s too early. Designing questions this way will also get you in the habit of coaching the Who because that is exactly how it is designed.

**PREPARING COACHES TO MAKE IT, so THEY NEVER HAVE TO FAKE IT!**

# Coaching Skills Drill

COACHING CONVERSATION STARTERS

5. **STOP:** At this point, the “client” can answer the question if they want, but the most important thing to happen here is to have the client DEBRIEF and give feedback regarding how fully they felt “gotten” by the reflection. (What the reflection did for him/her.) AND how the question landed with them (timing right, on point, made think in a new way, took breath away, got irritated, etc).

**Client feedback: PLEASE BE HONEST** it is the only way the coach can reflect upon their intuition, boldness, timidity, cluelessness, etc. in order to learn and own the process in a way that is unique to her/him.

6. **SWITCH:** Repeat steps 1-5 for each in your group. This should take no more than 6-10 minutes per coach.

7. **DEBRIEF** the ENTIRE EXERCISE. Share your thoughts and respond to these questions.

- \* What surprised you about this?
- \* What did you learn about yourself? your coaching?
- \* What spotlight for development is there for you?
- \* What will you do with what you’ve learned going forward?
- \* What kind of support, if any, do you need in order to progress?

---

PREPARING COACHES TO MAKE IT, so THEY NEVER HAVE TO FAKE IT!

simonepeer.com  
1.773.384.5683