Coaching: The Power of Purposeful Conversations

Coaching is a purposeful conversation, which helps another person to clarify, prioritise and focus their energy on taking the right steps towards their goals.

Coaching is about working with someone to deliver results. Your goal as a coach is to raise the awareness of your coachee so they can improve and develop on their own. You do this through asking powerful, open questions that encourage your coachee to become more aware of their choices, to trust their decisions and to take action. They will do the same for you in return.

A coaching approach can be applied to a range of challenges that you might face during your research career such as lack of confidence, writing blocks, managing PIs, raising your profile, presentations, career planning and work-life balance etc.

Increasingly Universities are using coaching to support academics at all levels, from Postgraduate Researchers through to Vice-Chancellors.

Spectrum of Coaching Skills

Challenge and Support

It’s important to provide a balance of challenge and support in coaching to make sure the person you are coaching is empowered to solve their own problems.
Ask, Don’t Tell

“The quality of your attention determines the quality of other people’s thinking.”
(Nancy Kline)

You don’t need to be the expert. As a researcher you are paid to be professionally curious, so apply this skill to your buddy and have purposeful conversations:

• Be present.
• First listen. And listen. Then listen.
• Your ideas are not their ideas.
• Appreciate that the person knows the answers already.
• Ask open-ended questions.
• Embrace silences.
• Help find limiting assumptions and replace it with a freeing one.
• Break down big steps into lots of little steps.
• Understand there's no right or wrong.

Powerful Questions

Coaching is about uncovering answers through inquiry, openness and exploration. No such thing as a bad question. Let the questions be guided by what your coachee says. And ask questions that build on their answers - that go under the surface replies. Powerful questions help to:

• Create awareness
• Choice and responsibility
• Promote discovery
• Encourage insight and lead to commitment and action

The GROW Model

The GROW model is a powerful framework to understand the key elements of a coaching conversation, but it's important to recognise that it often doesn't follow a neat sequential path.
Develop Your Coaching Skills

The following resources can be accessed via the Training Catalogue:

Coaching lessons - 10 bite size modules that each take 12 minutes to complete
Topics include:
• Introduction to coaching
• Coaching essentials
• Building trust and rapport
• Using coaching models
• Asking powerful questions
• The art of listening
• The power of silence
• The importance of goal setting
• Creating accountability
• Giving effective feedback
Register at: https://app.manchester.ac.uk/TSLD53E

An Introduction to Coaching Conversations (1 day course run by Staff Learning & Development)
Course Objectives
• Understand the difference between coaching and mentoring
• Understand the benefits of using a coaching approach with colleagues when appropriate
• Be able to build rapport, listen effectively and ask powerful questions
• Be confident to use coaching models to structure conversations
• Be adept to notice where non-verbal communication has an impact on a conversation
• Be able to offer constructive feedback
Register at: https://app.manchester.ac.uk/TSLD52