

# **Develop Coaching Excellence: Adopt the 8 Essential Habits of Successful Coaching**

Coaching is vital for Agile leaders, focusing on self-awareness and self-realization to develop creative solutions and set goals for growth. Coaching involves unlocking potential, not teaching and aims to maximize performance by assisting in learning.

It involves a thought-provoking process to motivate individuals, teams, and organizations to reach their full potential. Coaches should guide individuals to find their own solutions and perspectives.

## COACHING IN AN AGILE ENVIRONMENT



## PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF EFFECTIVE AGILE COACHING



### WHAT IS AGILE COACHING?

A series of artful conversations in which the coach helps the coachee see new perspectives and possibilities.

From here, the coachee can imagine the next step in their personal and professional growth and move into action to take that step.



## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF OUR COACHING?

- Help the organization achieve extraordinary results
- Help the team develop and become healthier
- Help each person take the next step on their journey so that they can be more successful and contribute in a way that feeds team improvement and their own growth.
- Increasing people's feelings of joy and accomplishment in their work

### COACHING AND SUBJECT-MATTER EXPERTISE

Individuals may have far more subject-matter expertise in the fields they work in than you do. That's fine.

You don't have to be an expert in any of their fields to coach them effectively, as long as you stick to coaching and avoid solving their problems for them.



### TWO LEVELS OF COACHING

When you coach an agile team, you are coaching them on two levels at the same time: the individual level and the whole team level.



## COACHING FROM A DISTANCE

Face-to-face interactions are essential in coaching

Direct engagement allows both the coach and the coachee to establish trust, comprehend nuances, and lay a solid foundation for their coaching relationship.



## MAKING THE SWITCH TO REMOTE COACHING

Consider the following:

**1. Loss of Direct Observation:**

You are no longer a firsthand observer of team dynamics

**2. Navigating Narratives:**

When doing distance coaching, it's easy to get tangled up in different versions of events

**3. Coaching from a Distance:**

Remote sessions are often more individualistic than team-oriented.



# 8 ESSENTIAL HABITS OF SUCCESSFUL COACHING



**8 Habits** that enable conversations that provoke thinking in individuals as well as in teams.

1. Observing
2. Asking powerful questions
3. Engaged listening and mindful speaking
4. Giving Effective Feedback
5. Helping people explore options
6. Helping set goals
7. Challenging assumptions
8. Maintaining the flow / frame of the conversation



## HABIT 1: OBSERVING

**Quote:** "Share what you see, hear and feel, not your judgement of it."

The primary role of a coach is to highlight areas that may require attention rather than to provide solutions.

Coaches can provide teams with an external perspective by embedding themselves as reflective observers, often revealing patterns and behaviors that the team itself was unaware of.



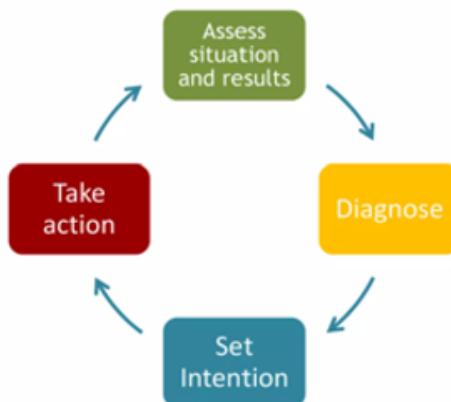
The ultimate goal is for the team to generate rich perspectives, encourage diverse viewpoints, and continue on their journey, iterating and improving along the way.

A helpful framework is the Reflective Action Cycle



## THE REFLECTIVE ACTION CYCLE

A four step cycle that enhances the natural process of learning from experience. We move through it many times per day, but unconsciously...



## THE REFLECTIVE ACTION CYCLE



### 1) Assess the situation and results:

This involves looking at how the team functions, identifying any obvious impediments, and identifying areas that could benefit from coaching interventions.

## THE REFLECTIVE ACTION CYCLE



### 2) Diagnose:

Ask probing questions to get to the root cause of the observed patterns.

- Is there a dominant voice in the discussion? Why?
- Is there a lack of creative ideas? What could be the reason for this?

## THE REFLECTIVE ACTION CYCLE



### 3) Set intentions:

It is critical to decide on the right course of action following a diagnosis.

- Is the team in need of advice on how to make sure that all voices are heard?
- Should there be training on how to better facilitate brainstorming sessions?

Specific goals for the following coaching sessions, such as improving the quality of team conversations and collaboration.

## THE REFLECTIVE ACTION CYCLE



### 4) Take action:

Use tools: powerful observations, questions, and challenges.

This action step should always aim to empower the team to better navigate their conversations and achieve productive results.

## THE REFLECTIVE ACTION CYCLE

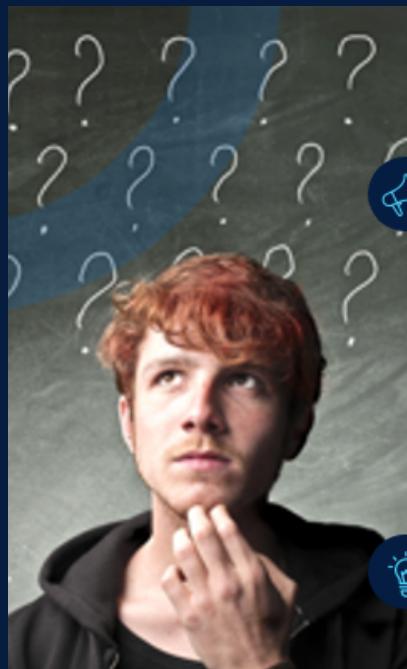


### 5) Assess situation and results (Again):

It is critical to go back and observe the team dynamics again.

- Is there an obvious change in the quality of conversations?
- Is everyone's voice being heard?

If the desired change is not observed, it means the cycle must be restarted.



### OBSERVING TEAM CONVERSATIONS

- Is everyone being heard? Are some dominating while others remain silent?
- Are the ideas being presented of good quality?
- Is the team aiming for simplicity?
- Do they seem fatigued or stressed? Could they use a light-hearted moment?
- Are their ideas bold and barrier-breaking?
- Are they focusing on customer value?
- Do they seem stuck and need a fresh viewpoint?

Wait before you comment.

If you decide to provide feedback, phrase it carefully to ensure that it is useful.

### EXERCISE:

### THE REFLECTIVE OBSERVATION CHALLENGE



## INSTRUCTIONS:

**Q1.**

### **Observation Journaling:**

For the next week, set aside 10–15 minutes after every team meeting or interaction to journal your observations. Use the guiding questions provided under "Observing Team Conversations" as a basis.

*Remember, it's about recording what you see, hear, and feel, not your judgment of it.*

## INSTRUCTIONS:

**Q2.**

### **The Reflective Action Cycle in Practice:**

At the end of the week, review your observation journal and select one specific instance or meeting that stood out to you. Now, apply the Reflective Action Cycle to it:

- a. **Assess the situation and results:** Reflect on the dynamics of that specific interaction.
- b. **Diagnose:** Probe deeper into the patterns you observed. What might be the root cause?
- c. **Set intentions:** Based on your diagnosis, what specific goals do you have for the next similar interaction?
- d. **Take action:** Plan how you might intervene or approach the situation differently next time, utilizing observations, questions, or challenges.

## INSTRUCTIONS:

- e. **Assess the situation and results (Again):** After your next intervention or interaction, revisit your journal and evaluate the outcome. Did you notice changes based on your actions?

## HABIT 2: ASKING POWERFUL QUESTIONS

**Quote:** *I'm not here to answer your questions. I'm here to question your answers.*

As a coach, having the right questions is more valuable than having the right answers.

When people come up with their own solutions they're more likely to follow through.

A good question at the appropriate time can set change in motion for your coachees by creating insight or inspiration.



Ask questions – in a curious way – that help people see that what they are doing may not be moving them toward their desired outcome.

### The Importance of Asking Questions:

- Empowerment over Directing
- Creating Insight
- Navigation through Curiosity



## FOCUS ON THE COACHEE:

Directing your questions toward understanding the coachee's perspective ensures effectiveness.

Asking powerful questions reveals essential information beneficial to both the coaching relationship and the coachee.

A good question:

- **Reflects active listening** and comprehension of the coachee's viewpoint.
- **Challenges assumptions** and evokes discovery, insight, or action.
- **Invites clarity**, new learning, or opportunities through open-endedness.



## THE NATURE OF POWERFUL QUESTIONS:

- **Open-endedness:** Good questions are open-ended and not directed towards specific yes/no answers.
- **Invoking Reflection:** The best questions often lead to a moment of silence, indicating reflection and introspection by the coachee.
- **Non-judgmental:** Powerful questions are unbiased, emphasizing the coach's belief in the coachee's ability to find the answers.



## EXAMPLES OF POWERFUL QUESTIONS:

- What is your main goal or change you're aiming for?
- What currently holds significance for you?
- How does your ideal Standup appear?
- What aspects are working well for you now?
- What progress have you made towards your goal?
- What changes are necessary to reach that goal?
- How could you approach this differently?
- What actions or habits should you stop?
- What's the next step for you?
- What are the primary obstacles you're facing?



- How would you handle this if success was crucial?
- What opportunities or challenges do you see in this situation? If you had total freedom, what action would you take?
- Reflecting on past similar situations, how did you succeed then?



## EXERCISE:

### THE ART OF ASKING POWERFUL QUESTIONS CHALLENGE



#### INSTRUCTIONS:

Q1.

##### Questioning Journaling:

Over the next week, during any conversation or interaction, jot down the questions you ask. At the end of each day, reflect on them.

- Were they open-ended?
- Did they spark reflection?
- Were they judgment-free?



Q2.

##### Powerful Question Challenge:

Choose one of your coaching sessions or interactions. Before the session, set a goal to ask only open-ended questions, focusing on invoking reflection without judgment.

During the session, try to navigate the conversation using powerful questions from the provided list or your own.

After the session, reflect:

- How different was this session compared to your usual ones?
- How did the coachee react to the questions?
- Were there moments of silence or introspection?
- Did the coachee come up with any insights or realizations?

## HABIT 3: ENGAGED LISTENING AND MINDFUL SPEAKING

**Quote:** "Listening is the way we connect with people."

Engaged listening is essential for a coach. We make connections, understand dynamics, and discover the unsaid by listening. It becomes the starting point for meaningful interactions and change when combined with mindful speaking.



### Levels of Listening:

- 1) Level I – Internal Listening: Focus remains on the coach's perspective.
- 2) Level II – Focused Listening: The coach is deeply attuned to the speaker, deciphering not just the words but the emotions, pacing, and underlying meanings.
- 3) Level III – Global Listening: Listening extends beyond words. The coach picks up cues from the environment, tone, body language, and even room ambiance, leading to intuitive insights.



### Engaged Listening in Practice:

- **Are You Truly Listening?** True listening is a gift. As coaches, we must develop and hone this skill to support teams in realizing their full potential.
- **Power of Silence:** After asking a question or hearing a statement, give it room.
- **Reflect on your listening habits:** After interactions, rate your listening level.



### Mindful Communication:

- Intent Before Speaking: Always consider your intent before speaking.
- Practices for Mindful Speaking:
  - Don't Speak First:
  - Embrace Silence:



## EXERCISE:

### ENGAGED LISTENING AND MINDFUL SPEAKING



### INSTRUCTIONS:

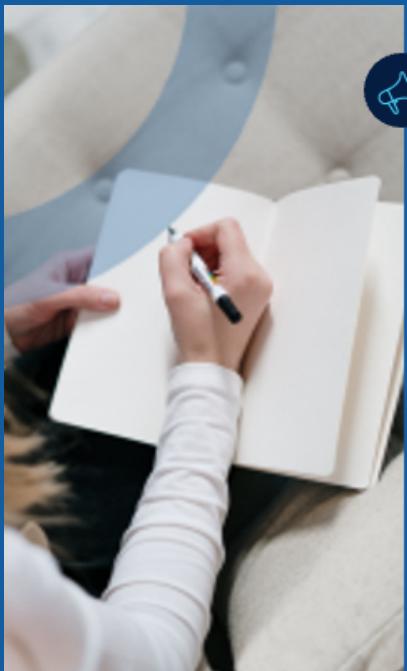
Q1

#### Active Listening Exercise:

During your next interaction or coaching session, practice the Levels of Listening.

Take note of the level at which you are operating most frequently.

After the interaction, jot down moments when you shifted between levels and what triggered these shifts.



## INSTRUCTIONS:

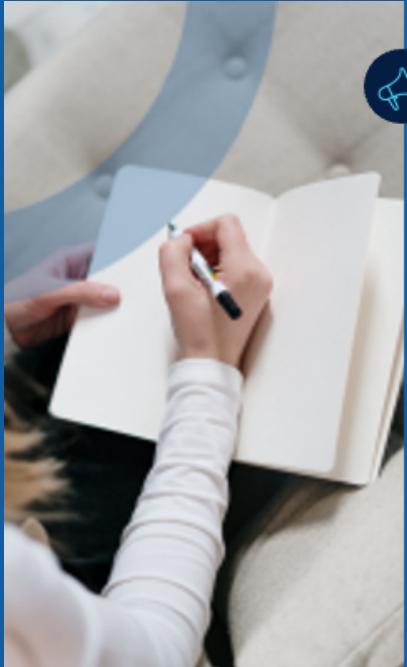
**Q2**

### Reflection Moments:

After the interaction, jot down:

- A moment where you felt you were at Level I, and why.
- A moment where you felt you were deeply connected at Level II.
- Any cues or insights you picked up from the environment that gave you an intuitive insight (Level III).

*Reflect on how these moments influenced the flow of the conversation.*



## INSTRUCTIONS:

**Q3**

### Mindful Speaking Challenge:

In a group setting, engage in a discussion about a specific topic. Before speaking:

- a. Reflect on your intent.
- b. Give room for silence and let someone else speak first.
- c. When you do speak, ensure it's concise and focused on the topic.

## HABIT 4: GIVING EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

**Quote:** "Effective feedback is the bridge between intention and results."

Feedback is critical for personal and professional development.

It acts as a mirror, reflecting our actions and behaviors and highlighting areas where we can improve.

Feedback can act as a catalyst for positive change and improved performance.



The primary goal of providing feedback is to promote personal growth in the recipient.

It should be useful, relevant, and ideally reveal blind spots that the individual may not have noticed before.

### Steps to Provide Critical Feedback Effectively:

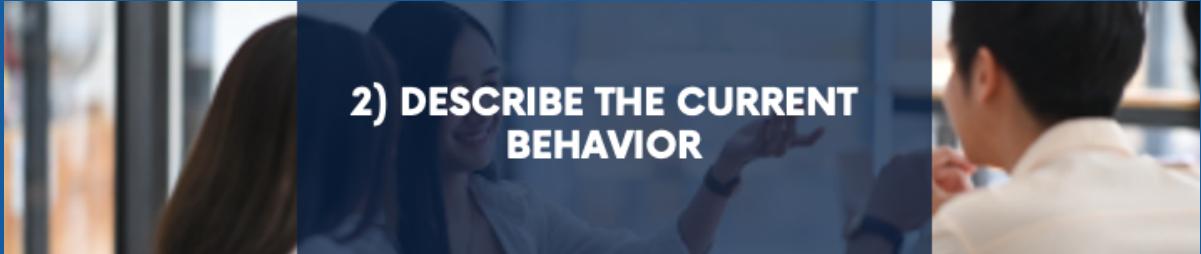
- Ask for Permission
- Describe the current behavior
- Explain the Behavior's Impact
- Describe the Desired Behavior



#### 1) ASK FOR PERMISSION

Begin the feedback process by asking for permission. This ensures that the recipient is open and ready.

e.g., "Can I share some feedback with you that I believe will be beneficial?"



## 2) DESCRIBE THE CURRENT BEHAVIOR

Be specific and clear. To provide context, use recent examples.

Avoid vague statements and instead concentrate on specific observations.

e.g., *"I've noticed that during our last few meetings, you often interrupted others while they were speaking."*

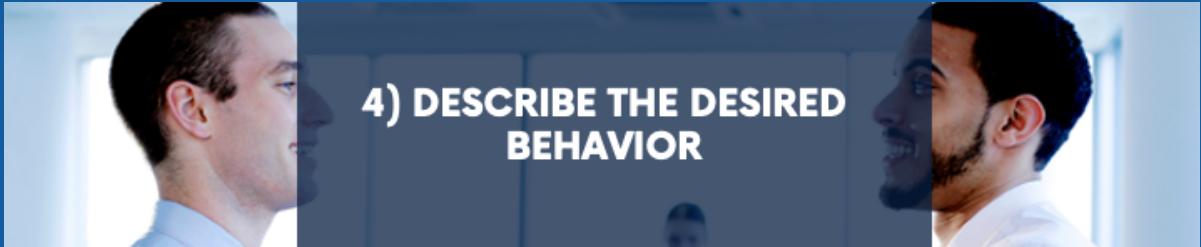


## 3) EXPLAIN THE BEHAVIOR'S IMPACT

Describe how the behavior affects you, the team, or the project.

Be gentle but honest about the consequences or feelings that the behavior causes.

e.g., *"When interruptions happen frequently, it makes the flow of discussion disjointed and might make team members feel undervalued."*



## 4) DESCRIBE THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR

State clearly what behavior or action you want to see in the future.

Provide constructive alternatives, and make sure your feedback is solution-oriented.

e.g., *"It would be beneficial to the team if everyone had the opportunity to finish their thoughts. Waiting for a natural pause before sharing your insights may be beneficial."*

## Conclusion:

Effective feedback is a combination of art and science.

We are able to bridge the gap between current performance and desired outcomes by making sure it is timely, relevant, and delivered with genuine intent.

It's critical to approach feedback with empathy, knowing that its ultimate goal is to uplift rather than tear down.



## Example

### Step 1.:

*"Hey, can I share some feedback on how you've been engaging with this online course?"*

### Step 2.:

*"I've noticed that you've been watching the course videos on a regular basis and taking thorough notes." It's truly admirable!"*

### Step 3.:

*"Your dedication not only benefits your own understanding but also positively influences the overall online learning environment for everyone."*

### Step 4.:

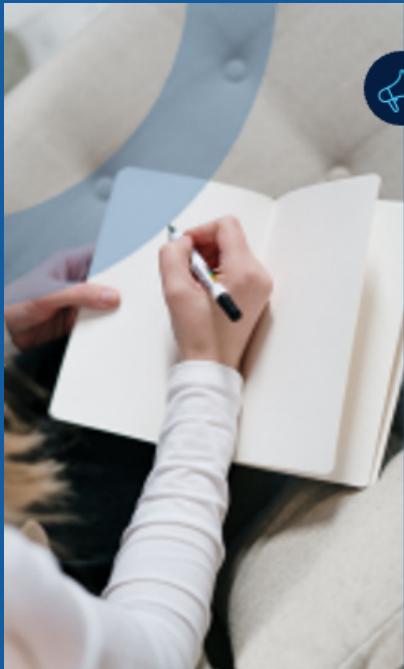
*"Use this approach for the remainder of the course." It appears to be working well for you!"*



## EXERCISE:

### THE FEEDBACK CHALLENGE





## INSTRUCTIONS:

**Q1**

### **Feedback in Real Situations:**

Think back over the last few weeks, were there some opportunities to provide positive or critical feedback?

Choose one of these opportunities in mind when doing the next exercise



## INSTRUCTIONS:

**Q2**

### **Practicing the steps:**

So think back to the chosen situation you experienced.

Now use the 4 steps to write down how you could have given feedback in that situation

*Remember the steps to Provide Feedback:*

- Ask for Permission
- Describe the current behavior
- Explain the Behavior's Impact
- Describe the Desired Behavior

## HABIT 5: HELPING PEOPLE EXPLORE OPTIONS

**Quote:** "Dwell in Possibility"

As a Coach, you are helping in the development of your coachees' and teams' minds.

You help them in gaining a fresh perspective on what they might achieve. Here are some examples of effective coaching behaviors

- Provides genuine encouragement.
- Expresses or demonstrates belief in the potential of the coachee/team.
- Demonstrates dedication to the success of the coachee/team.
- Provides specific, positive feedback on the coachee's or team's behavior and performance.
- Reminds the coachee/team of his/her/their abilities, talents, knowledge, and experience.
- Inspires and elicits the coachee's/team's full potential.
- Where appropriate, taps into the coachee's/team's desire to leave a lasting legacy.
- Links the coachee's potential to potential opportunities and resources within the organization.



## HABIT 6: HELPING SET GOALS

**Quote** "Setting goals is the first step in turning the invisible into the visible."

- Coaches assist people in setting and achieving better goals.
- Challenge their coachees to go above and beyond what they would have done on their own.
- Assist their coachee in focusing better in order to produce results more quickly.
- Give coachees the tools, support, and structure they need to succeed.



Here are some examples of effective coaching behaviors:

- Continually clarifies what the coachee intends
- Perceives what matters to the coachee
- Ask questions that reveal the coachee's intentions
- Bring the coachee back to what is important
- Rephrases coachee intentions in a way that adds value
- Questions intentions or assumptions, while respecting the coachee's goals and preferences.

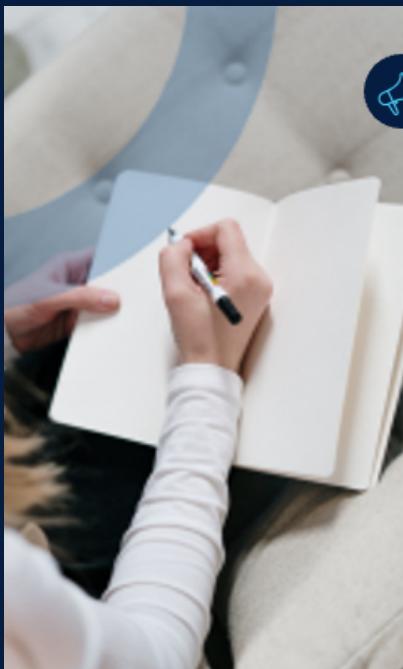
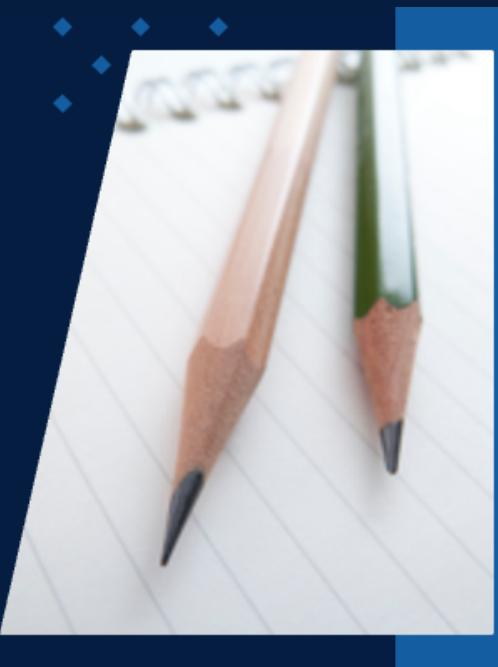


- Provides resources to improve the coachee's ability to clarify intentions;
- Perceives or inquires about, and responds to, changing coachee needs and desires;
- Aligns coaching points or intentions with the coachee's values; and
- Understands how the coachee's values and/or beliefs support the intentions.



## EXERCISE:

### QUICK GOAL CLARITY



#### INSTRUCTIONS:

##### 1) Immediate Goals:

- Write down one goal you wish to achieve in the next month.

##### 2) Why It Matters:

- In one sentence, state why this goal is important to you.

##### 3) Alignment Check:

- List one personal value this goal resonates with.

##### 4) Actionable Step:

- Write one specific action you'll take this week to move closer to this goal.

## HABIT 7: CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS

**Quote:** *Questioning the Known, Paving the Way to the Unknown*

A good Coach will put your assumptions, organizational processes, and structure to the test.

Create a picture in their mind of what their desired future state looks like.

It is easier to challenge assumptions and break down limiting beliefs when you are in this expansive state.



They want more for themselves than they do for themselves.

During a conversation, you'll notice a lot of assumptions and limiting beliefs hindering the coachee's progress. Always question the Coachee/Team's assumptions and beliefs.

Question intentions and assumptions while respecting the coachee's goals and preferences

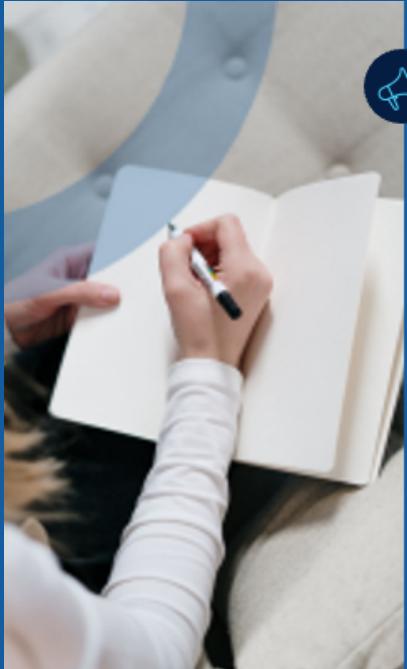
It's common for groups to make incorrect assumptions about what "they" ( "the organization") will allow them to do.



## EXERCISE:

### ASSUMPTION CHALLENGE





## INSTRUCTIONS:

- **Spot & List:**
  - Reflect on a recent decision or advice. List underlying assumptions.
- **Question:**
  - Ask: "Is this assumption based on evidence or just belief?"
- **Flip:**
  - Write the opposite of one assumption and consider its impact.
- **Challenge:**
  - This week, test one assumption's validity.  
Adjust based on findings.

## HABIT 8: MAINTAINING THE FLOW AND FRAME OF THE CONVERSATION

**Quote:** Conversations are an art; they start, flow, and conclude, painting a picture of understanding.

### Starting the Coaching Conversation

#### The Introduction:

- Understand the potential unease
- Embrace authenticity



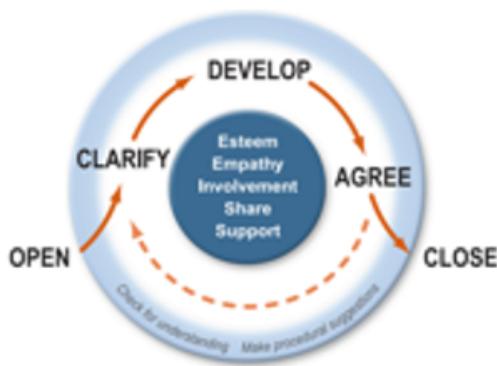
#### Starting the Conversation:

- Relax and go with the flow when the Coachee begins.  
Allow their concerns and topics to guide the conversation's initial course.
- When the Coach Starts the Conversation:  
Use informal settings to naturally ease into the topic. Starting the conversation with an observation or invitation can help it feel more natural.



## THE EFFECTIVE INTERACTION MODEL

Five steps, each guideline represents an important, logical step in the communication or coaching process

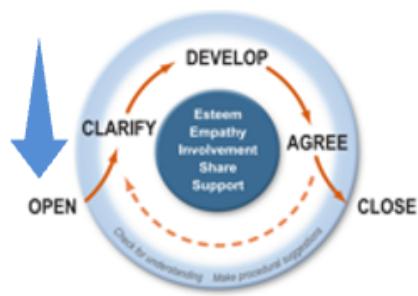


Together they provide a road map to guide you through any type of discussion.

# OPEN

Ensure a clear Purpose (What) and the importance of accomplishing it (Why)

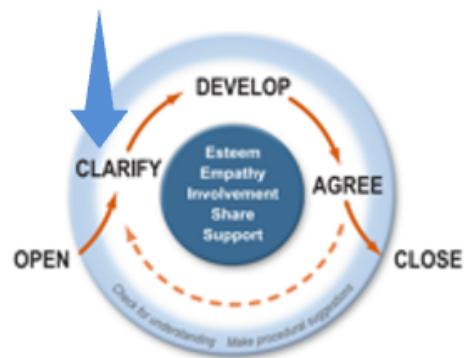
- 1** Tell how it would benefit the employee to accomplish the purpose
- 2** Ask if the coachee has related topics to discuss



# CLARIFY

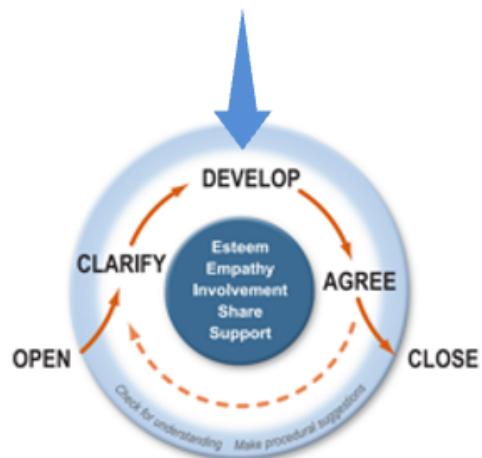
Before discussing ideas or solutions, make sure **the coachee understands** the details

**Clarify facts, figures, or information** that the coachee needs to know to move forward

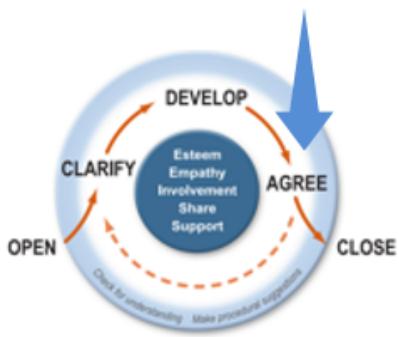


# DEVELOP

- 1** Actively seek **involvement** from the coachee
- 2** **Share** your own ideas-after **listening**
- 3** Use idea generation and **evaluation techniques**
- 4** **Discuss any resources** or support the coachee might need



# AGREE



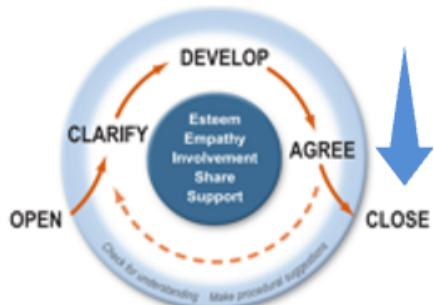
- 1 Specify **What** will be done, **Who** will do it, and by **When**
- 2 Agree on any follow-up actions needed to track progress in carrying out the plan
- 3 Be sure to agree to needed resources or support

## A CRITICAL SKILL:

Provide support without removing responsibility (to build ownership)



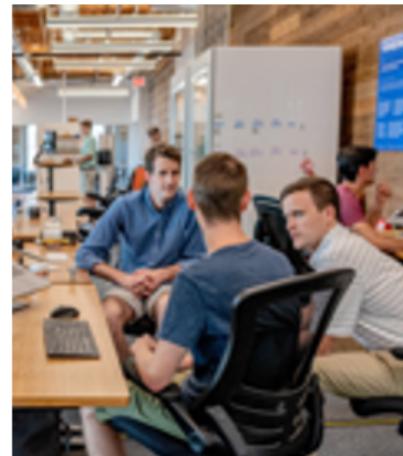
# CLOSE



- 1 Go over the main points of the discussion and what people agreed to
- 2 Make a final check on the coachee's confidence in their ability to follow up on the actions they agreed to

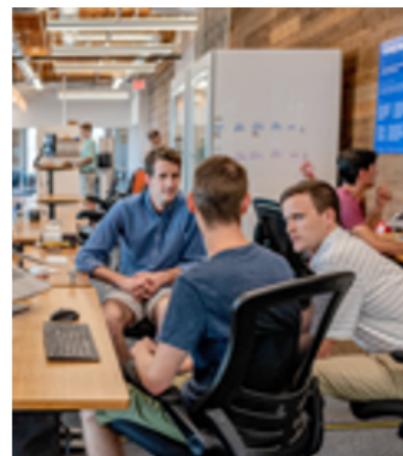
## FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH A SINGLE TOPIC:

Cover each guideline from **OPEN** through **CLOSE** once



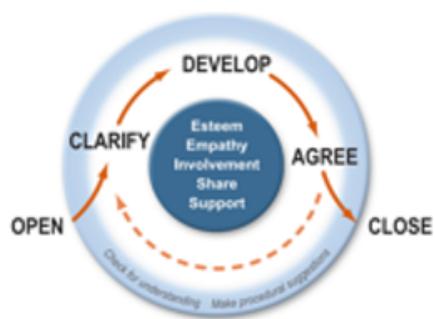
## FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH MANY TOPICS:

**CLARIFY, DEVELOP, and AGREE** for one topic, then repeat them for the additional topics, then **CLOSE**



## CLOSING ISSUES:

- 1 Return to **CLARIFY** and ask questions to understand concerns
- 2 Then **DEVELOP** ideas for resolving the concerns and reach revised **AGREEMENTS**
- 3 Then **CLOSE**
- 4 Check for Understanding
- 5 Confirm that the coachee has the same understanding of what has been discussed
- 6 Summarize the information in the form of a question then request confirmation or correction and close



## Setting Accountability

- **Explicit Accountability:**  
Agree on actions, set deadlines, and explain how the coachee will keep the coach up to date.
- **Soft Accountability:**  
By suggesting check-ins or follow-ups, you can provide a more relaxed approach.



## EXERCISE:

### CONVERSATION FLOW



#### INSTRUCTIONS:

##### 1) Identify a Topic:

- Think of a topic or challenge that you would like to discuss with someone

##### 2) Introduction:

- Start the conversation. Embrace authenticity, either initiate the dialogue yourself or let your imaginary coachee guide the initial direction.

##### 3) Middle:

- Practice the Effective Interaction Model
- Ensure clarity, develop, ask probing questions, and navigate any distractions.





- Decide on accountability – explicit or soft.
- End on a note of acknowledgement, thanking the imaginary coachee for their insights or contributions.

#### 4. Reflection:

- How did it feel to guide the conversation?
- What would you do differently in a real conversation?