**Coaching conversations**

A coaching conversation is multifunctional and often includes the opportunity for an individual (the coachee) to move forwards with a challenge or an opportunity they face, to support them with their personal development, or when they are feeling stuck.

Active listening and using open questions are valuable tools for a coach, as a question will get the brain processing a response and thus considering options, which can help the coachee to find their own solution. The questions below might sound ‘clunky’ because they are so broad a spectrum, but you will tailor them to meet your needs during the conversation, as they are just ideas to stimulate thinking. Questions need to flow, and we try and ask open questions allowing time for them to filter through the coachee’s brain and giving time for reflection and creativity, developing their resourcefulness. Then, the use of summarising questions can be used to confirm an understanding by both the coach and the coachee. So, active listening is essential.

You may find it helpful to have a few standard questions to guide the flow of the conversation, for example “say more” or “and what else?” to open discussions, and phrases like “is there anything else?” as ways to move onto the next part of the model.

Sometimes models such as GROW can be used to help structure a coaching conversation. The GROW model is versatile, and you can use it 1:1 to support team members involved in a QI project, or in appraisal and continuous professional development discussions. It also works in a team setting, for example to structure the team meeting for your QI project.

One of the most well-known coaching models is the acronym GROW model by Sir John Whitmore[[1]](#footnote-1).

* **Goal** – The coach helps the coachee to clarify the outcomes for which they are aiming. Often referred to as their goal, but could also be their expectation of the conversation, what they want to consider or reflect on for a clearer understanding. A well-formed articulated goal should be super sticky in our thoughts, so that it is in the forefront of our minds. Often using the acronym of SMART can be useful.
* **Reality** – here we seek to encourage the coachee to consider facts of their current situation and challenge subjective assumptions. This is a time to generate deeper awareness within the current context of their situation. Remember they know more about their unique situation than you do.
* **Options** – now is a time to get creative and access their own experience, wisdom, creativity, and innovation. Consider their style of learning and use post-its or paper to generate lists, pictures or even a mind map.
* **Will** – at this end stage before the conversation ends, we are encouraging the coachee to confirm their commitment to their goal, to identify what will support them, what barriers they may face and hence overcome them and for the coachee to consider/design their own accountability.

Remember that it is your coaching skills that are most important not the questions, if you really listen the right question will come, if you get stuck, ask them where they are now and what do they need to consider next. Trust them and trust yourself. It is just a chat with their needs at the centre.

You can use the handout over the page as a prompt with some potential questions to ask, but please do adapt and add in your own questions in the space for notes.

**Permission to use the GROW model granted by The Estate of Sir John Whitmore and Performance Consultants International.**

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| **G** | What would you like to {discuss, think, explore} together?  What’s the real challenge here for you?  What outcome would you like to have at the end?  What makes this important to you?  How will you know when you have achieved this?  What would be the best outcome for you today? |  |
| **R** | What have you tried so far?  What is happening now?  Who is involved?  Where are you now in relation to attaining your goal?  What resources do you need?  Who may be able to help you?  What are the benefits of reaching your goal?  What information or research have you done?  What have you considered?  What have you learnt so far that may be useful?  What or who may be getting in the way of your progress? |  |
| **O** | What is the first thing you need to do towards your goal?  Where is a useful place to start?  What options are available to you?  Who else may be able to help you?  What obstacles may be on the journey, and  How, may you overcome them?  What do you need to know more about?  What would be helpful to have?  Looking at each option what are the pros and cons of each?  Is there anything holding you back?  If you had a magic wand, what would you do with it?  What are your time frames?  What does your instinct tell you?  What learning from previous experiences would be useful to consider?  If you are saying yes to this, what are you saying no to? |  |
| **W** | When are you going to start?  How will you manage the unexpected?  What will help to keep you focused?  Is there anything else we need to consider?  What will happen if you do nothing?  How motivated do you feel on a scale of 1-10?  How will you celebrate your success?  *You may want to add a question to ask for feedback at the end, for example “what was most useful to you?,” “what worked well?” or “how could this conversation have been even better if…?”* |  |

1. Whitmore, John and Performance Consultants International. Coaching for Performance. The principles and practice of coaching and leadership. Nicholas Brealey Publishing 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)