

Mentor Coaching

Developing your muscle and refining your craft

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A common question asked by coaches is, “What can I do to become a better mentor coach?” Whether you are a certified coach mentoring someone through your own coach training school, or an ICF credentialed coach supporting a coach through the ICF credentialing process, here are some key things to keep in mind:

1. Immerse yourself in the core coaching competencies. The role of a mentor coach is to support the development of a coach’s coaching skills. It requires that we KNOW the core coaching competencies inside out. This comes from practice and from the experience of working with different types of clients, in different industries, within different modalities.

2. Keep expanding your repertoire. Coaching is a skill set that



atrophies without use. If we don’t use it we lose it. Gain experience working with different types of client groups, different styles of people and professionals. Coaching is highly adaptive according to those we work with. The greater our range as

a mentor coach, the more we can be of service to those we mentor.

3. Work across different modalities. Our profession continues to expand in terms of how coaching is experienced by clients, whether individuals, groups, teams or couples. Mentor coaches can provide extra value in their understanding of how the core coaching competencies are adapted across modalities. Gain an understanding of what the competencies look like across modalities, and techniques used for the different competencies. For example,

“A mentor coach needs to be able to communicate, model and provide feedback on the core coaching skills.”

designing the coaching agreement with an individual may include a letter of understanding, an intake or discovery session and/or a sample session. In designing the coaching agreement with a team or group, what do you put in place? Is there a questionnaire that is circulated? Do you hold one-to-one meetings with each participant? Do you spend time during the first session creating common expectations through the development of shared norms (ways of working, team ground rules)?

4. Know the business. Understanding the context of coaching – our history, current trends and

Questions to Consider for the Mentoring Process

Great mentoring is about developing a solid relationship. The following questions are worth considering for both the protégé and mentor coach.

Protégé:

1. What are your goals/focus areas?
2. What are your expectations of the mentor coaching process?
3. What role do you want me to play as your coach?
4. What is important for this process to be the best it can be?

Mentor Coach:

1. What can coaches expect from working with me?
2. What makes me unique as a coach – skills, insights, unique strengths and/or experience?
3. What I am committed to as a mentor coach?

future directions – is important for great mentor coaches. How do you stay abreast of the skills and evolutions in our field? Do you participate in online Special Interest Groups (SIGs)? Attend coaching conferences? Present at coaching conferences? Attend other conferences in related fields? How do you provide leadership to our profession and shape our future? Knowing the current state and sensing the evolution of our work is also a key area for mentor coaches to keep an eye on.

5. Teach it and train it. Being a great coach is not necessarily the same as being a great teacher. A mentor coach needs to be able to communicate, model and provide feedback on the core coaching skills. We ourselves will benefit from experiencing great teaching processes and asking ourselves how we can become a better teacher or facilitator in the process.

6. Recognize that it is all about co-creating the relationship. Just as the ICF set of core coaching competencies are named ‘co-create the relationship,’ a powerful mentor coaching process will place attention on the design of the mentor coaching process, and establishing the trust and intimacy at the start. Mentor coaches will want to consider what is included in this process, whether it is a structured questionnaire, a special mentor coaching discovery session, or a 15 minute pre-session program. Spend time designing your coaching agreement. Refer to text box for questions to consider in designing your mentoring agreement (see sidebar).

7. Consider the peer learn-

Core Mentoring Skills

What the research says

Research in the field of mentoring points to the following skill sets as being critical on the part of mentors:

1. Active Listening
2. Open Ended Questions (like our powerful questions)
3. Feedback

Notice how closely aligned these areas are to some of our core coaching competencies – active listening and powerful questions. Which of these areas are your strengths? Which might you need to brush up on?

Mentoring, in its most traditional form, tends to fail due to:

1. Lack of commitment to the relationship
2. Unclear Expectations
3. Lack of trust

What will you do to avoid these tricky areas?

ing impact of a group mentoring process. Through the process of leading multiple mentor coaching groups over the past few years, I continue to see the value of the mix of individual mentor coaching learning between coach and mentee coach, and the power of the peer coaching process through involvement in group mentor coaching calls. The addition of a peer’s coaching voice provides additional layers and perspectives on the coaching process.

As you move forward with your work, what can you do to build your muscle and refine your craft to be an even more effective mentor and coach?