

## Topic 1

# Concepts of mentoring and coaching

## Introduction

In this topic we will start to explore the purposes of coaching and mentoring so that you understand the differences between the two roles and the responsibilities and skills associated with them.

Throughout the course we will refer to a person being coached as a **coachee** and a person being mentored as a **mentee**.

Completing the activities in this topic will give you a clearer understanding of what it means to be a coach or a mentor and whether these are roles that you would like to pursue.

You will probably need 3 hours to complete this topic.



## What you will learn

In this topic you will:

- explore the purpose of coaching
- explore the purpose of mentoring
- identify some key differences in approach between the coach and the mentor
- identify some key differences in the responsibilities of the coach and the mentor
- explore the concepts of reflection and self-awareness
- explore some models of coaching and mentoring.

## What is a coach?

Let's look first at the purpose of the coaching role. Most of us have received coaching at some point in our life, sometimes without even realising that we were in a coaching situation.

### Activity 1

(Allow 10 minutes)

Identify someone you would think of as a coach. This could be someone you know personally or a public figure that you know about, for example a sports coach. What do you think the primary purpose of that person's role as a coach is? Write down your own thoughts.

Read the feedback at the end of this topic before moving on.

It's important to keep in mind that coaches concern themselves with the 'what' and the 'how'. The coach's role is to:

- identify *what* the coachee should work on to reach their goals
- give practical advice on *how* to get there.

The focus is on what the situation is at present and what action the coachee needs to take in order to develop and move on.

Coaching is therefore about improving someone's performance in a specific context and finding the best way for each coachee to realise their potential.

Gareth Southgate, the England football team manager, is a good example of a coach who is able to get the best out of his coachees. According to the *Guardian's* John Crace:

'Southgate is blessed with the rare gift – in football, especially – of emotional intelligence. That is what makes him emblematic of a modern, outward-looking man. He trusts his players. He encourages them to take responsibility for their own actions.'

*Guardian*, 10 July 2018

## What is a mentor?

Now let's have a look at how we might define the purpose of a mentor and how that differs from the purpose of the coach. A mentor's role is more about helping the mentee to develop and grow as an individual rather than teaching specific skills. It's about working with the individual to identify and set their own goals rather than specifying them.

The most important thing to remember about mentoring is that the relationship you develop with your mentee has to be one of absolute trust.

### Activity 2

(Allow 10 minutes)

Think about someone in your life (at any point of your life) who has been a positive influence for you. It could be a friend or family member, a teacher or a colleague. Reflect on what they were like and why they had an impact on your life. What did they do that made a difference? List your thoughts.

Read the feedback at the end of this topic before moving on.

We will explore some of the skills and attributes of an effective mentor in more detail in the next topic but for now keep in mind that successful mentors are those that build a lasting and trusted relationship with their mentees.

Mentoring therefore is more concerned with the individual's personal development and well-being. In many situations the mentor may not have any expertise in the mentee's performance context (e.g. their job role) but they will have life experiences and good reflective skills that enable them to support and facilitate development in others.

#### Steven Spielberg on mentoring

'The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves.'

## Key differences between coaching and mentoring

The differences between the two roles can appear quite subtle at first glance. Although there will be some overlap between the skills needed in the two roles, and we will explore these in Topic 2, it is important to identify the key differences, particularly as you might undertake both roles. In other words, you need to be clear about when you are coaching someone and when you are mentoring.

### Activity 3

(Allow 15 minutes)

Read the statements below. Which statements would you associate with a mentor and which with a coach?

Statement	M or C
An ongoing relationship, potentially over a long period	
A relationship of a set duration focused on a specific goal	
Focus is on development of the whole person	
Focus is generally on specific performance issues	
Goals are set primarily by the individual	
Aim is to achieve specific short-term performance goals	
Meetings tend to be structured and held regularly	
Meetings tend to be more informal and held as and when needed	

Read the feedback at the end of this topic before moving on.

You should now be clear that the mentoring relationship can be more holistic than a coaching relationship; this means that it is concerned with the mentee as a whole individual rather than focusing on a specific performance goal.

## What makes a good coach/mentor?

The first step in becoming an effective coach or mentor is to take some time to analyse your own attitudes and behaviours. If you have some understanding of yourself and how your previous experiences have moulded how you think and behave, you will be better placed to understand the needs of the person you are going to support through coaching and/or mentoring. You can do this through a process of reflection and becoming more self-aware.

### Reflection

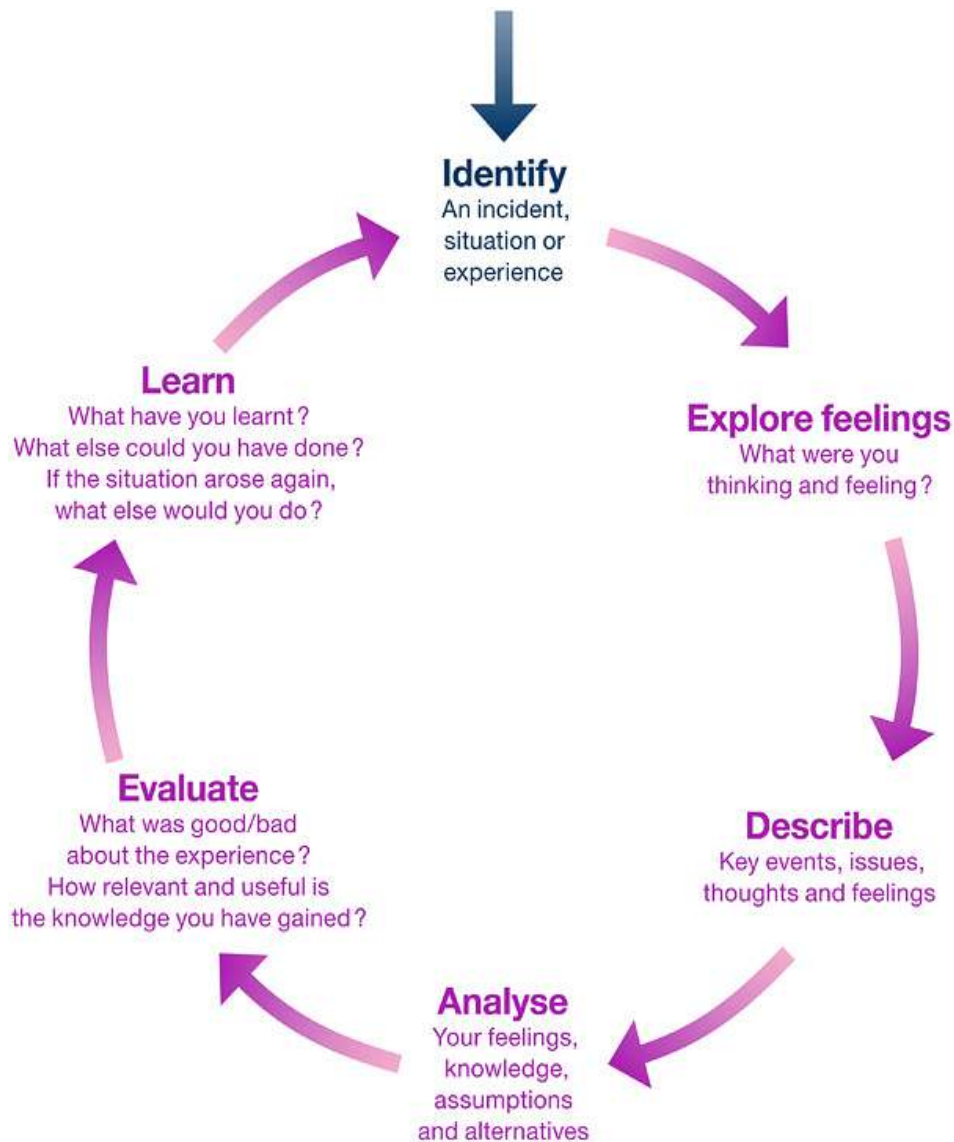
Reflection is thinking deeply about your thoughts and actions, looking at their impact and what you've learnt from an experience. In any coaching or mentoring context, you need to understand the concept of reflection so that you can facilitate reflection in the individual you are working with.

Self-reflection is a skill that you need to practise. It's not always easy to look objectively at things you've said and done and to think honestly about the impact your actions have had or might have had.

Gibb's Reflective Cycle is a model that can help you understand and practise the skills of reflection. It encourages you to think about an event in terms of what you could do differently or improve upon in a similar situation.

The model explains the process as a continuous cycle.

Figure 1.1 Gibb's Reflective Cycle



(Adapted from Gibbs (1988) and Atkins & Murphy (1994))

## Activity 4

(Allow 15 minutes)

Think of a situation that you've been involved in recently. It could be a personal interaction with a family member or friend, a task you've completed at work or as a volunteer, or a meeting with a group of people where a decision has had to be made.

Think critically about your role in this event and what the outcome was. Use the template below to note down your thoughts.

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**What was the event? Give a brief description.**

**What were you thinking or feeling at the time?**

**What did you think was good about the experience? What was positive about it?**

**What did you think was bad about the experience? What were the negatives?**

**What might you do differently another time?**

Read the feedback at the end of this topic before moving on.

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The Gibbs model is a useful one to use with the people you coach or mentor – it applies to both. We will review it again, together with some other tools and techniques, later in this course.

## Self-awareness

Through becoming more reflective you can get to know yourself better, understand more about who you are, and work out what makes you tick. Becoming more self-aware can be an interesting journey and give you experience of the process others will need to go through. Even if you think you know yourself well, there are always things to discover, particularly from the observations of others who may not always see you as you see yourself.

Your self-perception (how you see yourself) will be influenced by many things such as how confident you feel in given situations. For instance, you might feel that you struggle in social situations while others think of you as the 'life and soul of the party'.

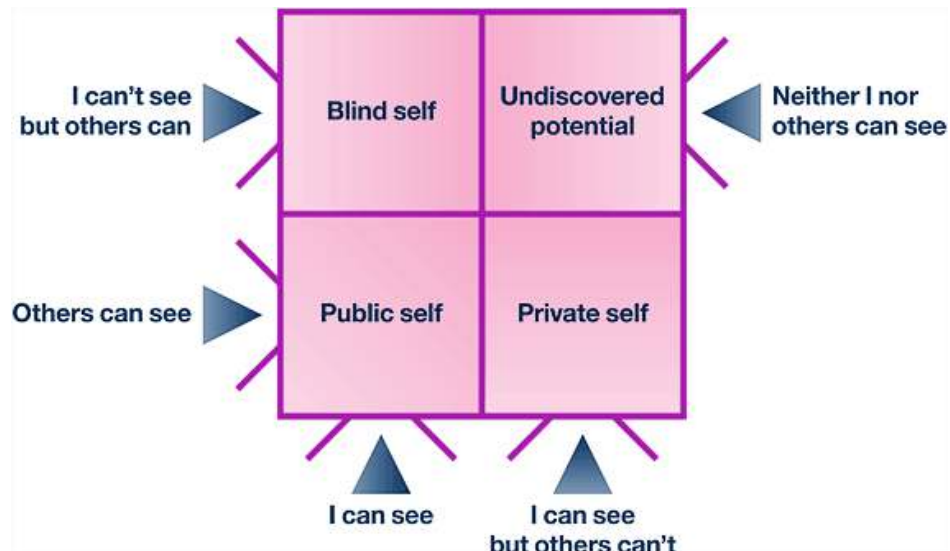
## Johari Window

The Johari Window model is helpful in giving you a structure to think about how you perceive yourself. The idea behind it is to think about and identify your behaviours and attitudes, and what you and others know about you, under four headings:

- **Public self:** this is the very public part of you – that bit that everyone can see and know about; what you know about yourself and what others also know about you.
- **Blind self:** this is the area where other people see things that you might not. To use a very simple example, you might have a nervous habit like biting your lip that you are unaware of but others see all the time. This is an area where others may see in you outstanding qualities that you don't recognise (or refuse to accept) or unhelpful personal qualities that are holding you back.
- **Private self:** this is the area you don't want to disclose to anyone else. For example, it may be that you don't want to share certain information or behaviour because you lack confidence or self-esteem. However, it's worth considering whether revealing more about yourself to others would have a positive impact on relationships.
- **Undiscovered potential:** this is the area of hidden potential and growth – things that you have yet to find out about yourself and others are yet to know.



Figure 1.2 Johari Window



To build a picture effectively using the Johari window you need to invite feedback about yourself from trusted people who know you well, for example a close friend, colleague or family member – what we call a ‘critical friend’. This will help you learn more about your unknown self so that you can develop your potential.

## Activity 5

(Allow 30 minutes)

Using the headings from the Johari Window, spend some time thinking honestly about yourself and note down the things that come to mind. Limit yourself to just three or four features that you feel are important. Remember to include some of the characteristics that you often hide from others.

If you feel comfortable in sharing your thoughts, ask someone you trust and who knows you well to give their input. Ask them to give you honest feedback to see if their perception is different from yours.

Read the feedback at the end of this topic before moving on.

## Roles and responsibilities

Before you start any role in coaching or mentoring you need to think carefully about the responsibilities that come with those roles. Any coachee or mentee that you work with has to be clear from the start what your role is and how the relationship will work. You will need clear ground rules that are agreed between both parties so that each of you knows what to expect from the relationship from the outset. You should have some guidelines and boundaries in place for the protection of both parties. The list below identifies the key areas to consider.

There are guiding principles to follow whichever role you're in. We will look at the issues one at a time in the context of mentoring and then consider which of these are different for the coach. Later in the course we will explore tools and techniques that will help you in the role so don't worry if at the moment you feel you need help with some of the points highlighted in this section.

### Mentoring

At the start of any mentoring relationship, agree with your mentee the ways in which you will work together.

### Building the relationship

It's important to establish a positive relationship that is built on trust. The mentee needs to be confident that you have their best interests at heart and have no hidden agenda. This can be difficult at the start if you're in a situation where someone has been referred to you for support, for example by a manager at work who feels the person is under-performing. Nobody likes to feel they're being monitored so it's important to have a clear conversation at the outset to reassure the mentee that your interest is in supporting them to develop, not in reporting back to whoever suggested they needed a mentor.

### Confidentiality

A successful mentor/mentee relationship is built on trust. Confidentiality is paramount. The mentee needs to know that anything you discuss during your mentoring meetings will remain between the two of you, unless the mentee expressly gives you permission to share information with another person.

You do, however, need to be clear that if your mentee discloses something to you that you have a legal duty to report, then you would need to break that confidentiality. Make sure you explain this at the outset.

## Facilitation

The role of the mentor is not one where you're telling your mentee what to do. Your responsibility is to guide and support the mentee to reflect on issues and any problems they have. Your role is not to offer solutions but to help your mentee come up with their own solutions. Never force your own ideas and suggestions on the mentee, however tempting that might be.

## Feedback

As a mentor you will need to be skilled in giving constructive, informative feedback, helping the mentee to work through problems rather than offering solutions. We will look at some models of feedback in Topic 3 so don't worry if you feel this is an area you know little about.

Equally, as a mentor you will want to get feedback from your mentee. Mentoring has to be a two-way process and the giving and sharing of feedback will help you build a trusting relationship.

## Sharing knowledge

Be prepared to share appropriate knowledge and to draw on your own experiences if it's helpful, but remember you're not giving instructions and suggesting solutions. You're drawing on your experience to guide the mentee, facilitating problem-solving through reflection.

You might also want to keep an eye out for resources and other points of contact that you can signpost your mentee to where that's helpful.

## Setting ground rules

In Topic 4, we'll look at creating a mentoring contract and why it's important, but for now let's think about why some ground rules might be important.