

[Coaching and Mentoring]



Lecture Title:

3. [Coaching and Mentoring: Critical Understanding-A]



Lecturer: Paul Gauci

Date: 29 September 2025 9.00hrs - 13.00hrs

Masters in Human Resources Management

Learning Objectives

Following this session students will be able:

To demonstrate a critical understanding of the knowledge, skills, principles, behaviours, and good practices of effective coaching and mentoring within an organisational context on a one-to-one basis and group based. (Part A)



Learning Method

- **Lecture focused on learning objectives and core content** as a key instructional process.
- **Formative assessment through participative learning tools and activities** will be utilised evaluating students' comprehension and academic progress throughout - with respect to understanding and applying HRM concepts.



Theoretical Foundations to Enable Critical Understanding

The Concept of Learning in the context of coaching



LEARNING

...acquiring
knowledge,
understanding
and skill



Learning

*“Coaching activities are designed to
bring about changes in behaviour.”*

(Whitmore 2017)



“Learning is a relatively permanent change in behaviour that occurs as a result of practice or experience.”

(www.cipd.co.uk)



*There's no growth in
the comfort zone*



I hear and I forget
I see and I remember
I do and I understand

Confucius 500 BC



Theory of Andragogy

- *“Instruction for adults needs to focus more on the process and less on the content being taught”.*

Adults are:

- Autonomous
- Goal oriented
- Practical and problem solvers
- Have accumulated life experiences



Motivators & Barriers

Motivators

- Make/Maintain social relationships
- Professional advancement
- Stimulation
- Pure interest
- Learn to better serve

Barriers

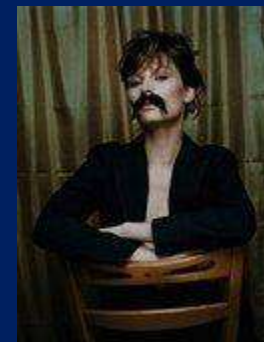
- Other responsibilities
- Lack of time
- Lack of money
- Scheduling problems
- Insufficient confidence



Why do People have different Learning Styles?

People differ from one another:

- Organized vs Disorganized
- Cautious vs Impulsive
- Quiet vs Noisy
- Tense vs Relaxed



Transfer

*Learning transfer occurs
when new learning is
applied in new settings.*



Transfer

Positive Learning Transfer

‘when learning that has already taken place on one task assists later learning on another.’

- vertical positive transfer : one subject acts as a basis for another (e.g. maths to statistics).
- lateral positive transfer: occurs when the same type of stimulus requires the same response (e.g. flight simulators).



Negative Transfer

- ‘when an old learning or past experience can hinder performance on a new task; when the same stimuli requires a different response’ (e.g. driving on right hand side)



Factors That Assist Transfer

Individual

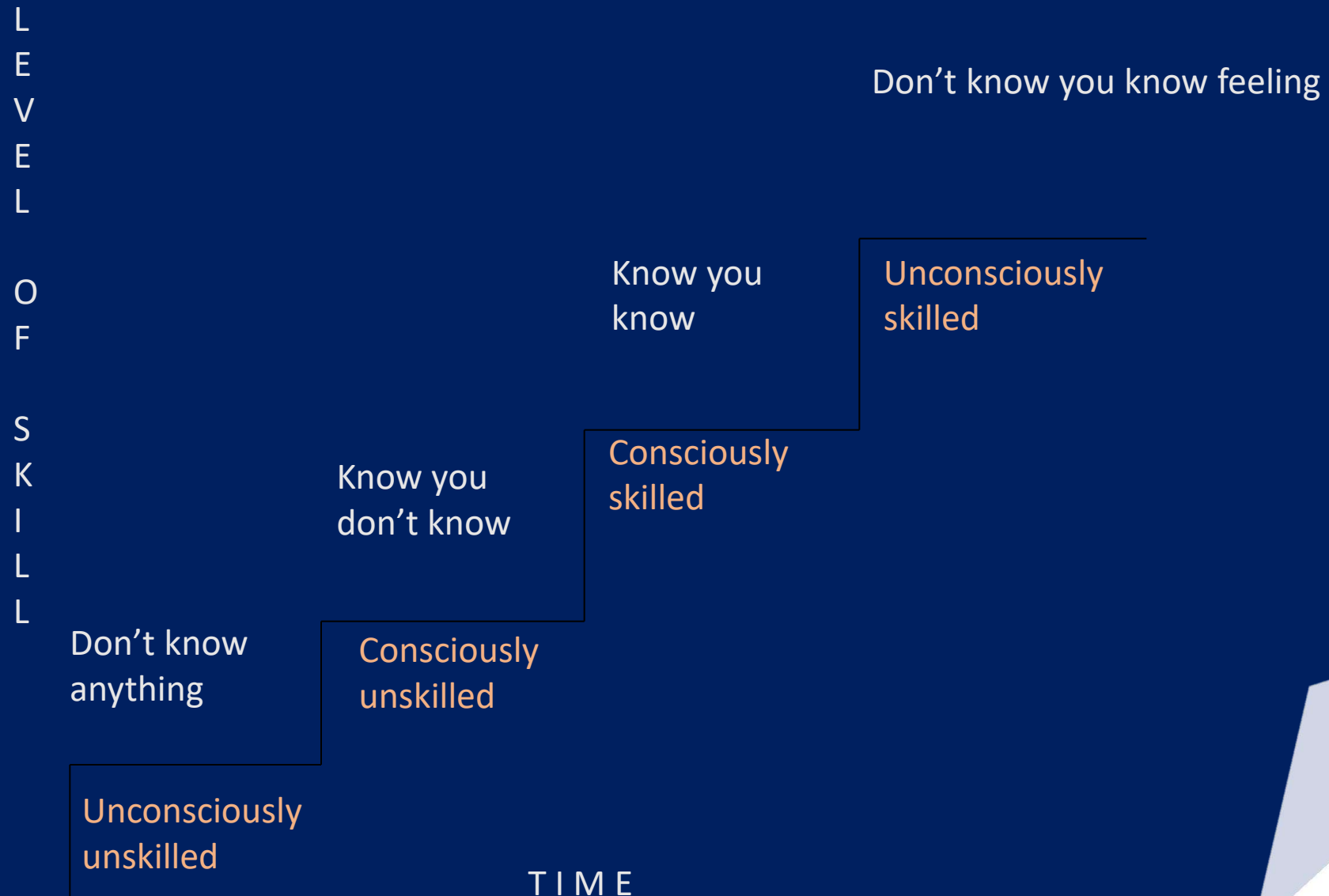
- Interest - keenness to learn
- Association - associating new learning with previous learning.
- Practice - ensuring a level of minimum competence

Organisational

- Supportive culture and attitudes



The Learning Stairway



*“A learning event is largely
determined by whether or not
you perceive the event.”*

(Whitmore 1980)



*"Try to learn something about
everything and everything
about something."*

Thomas H. Huxley



*“Learning is not compulsory...
neither is survival.”*



Learning is a complex process...

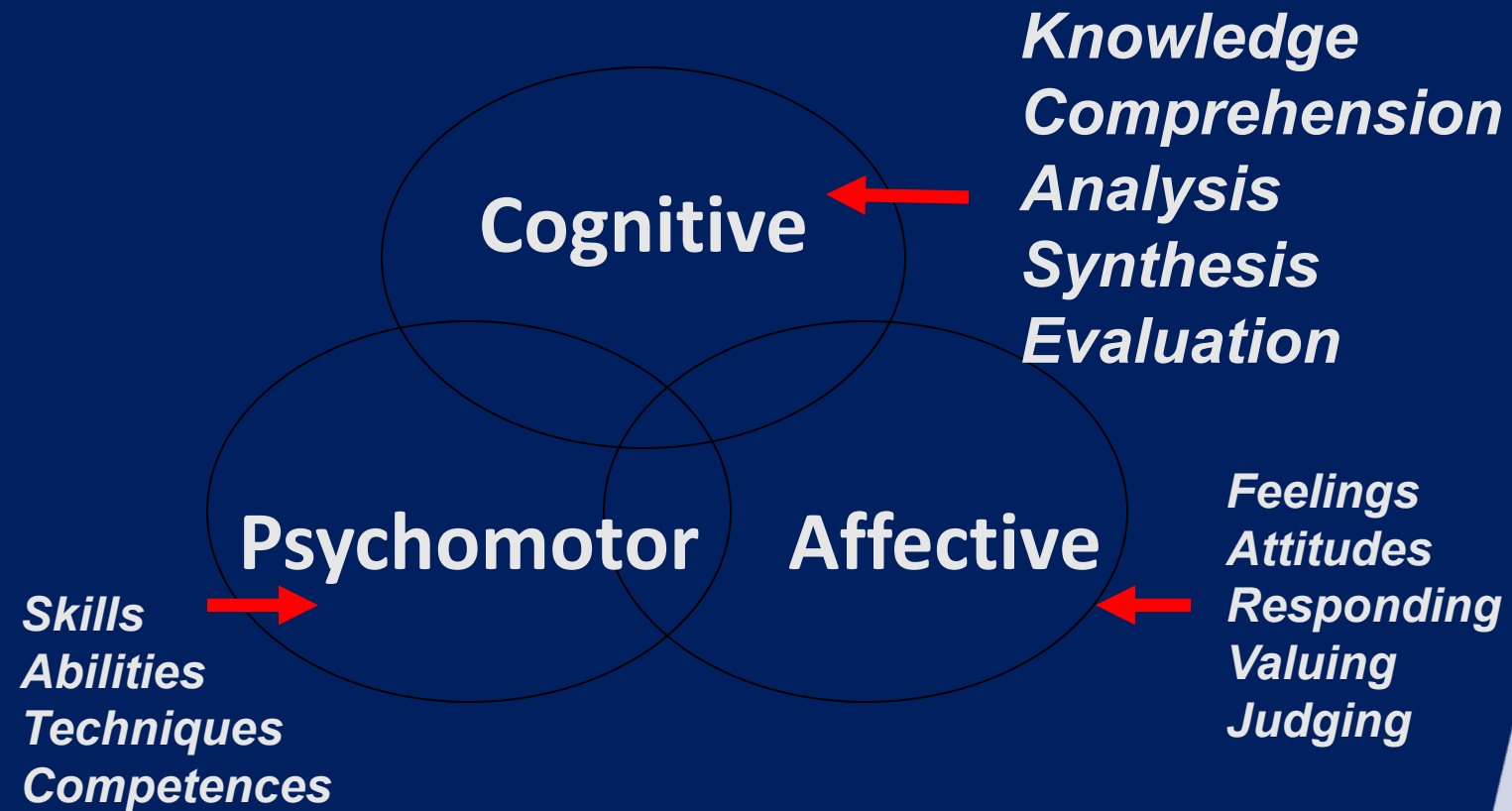
Consider:

- 1. What is to be learnt - knowledge, skills, attitudes*
- 2. Learning style preferences*
- 3. Learning needs for the task*
- 4. Training methods to match*
- 5. Training style*

...To obtain best “MIX”



Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning



**Learning includes
acquiring knowledge,
understanding and skill.**

Important Factors in the Learning Process

1. Coach attitude/ability/experience/credibility
2. Communication and rapport
3. Coachee attitude/ability
4. Learning experience
5. Age
6. Confidence
7. Motivation

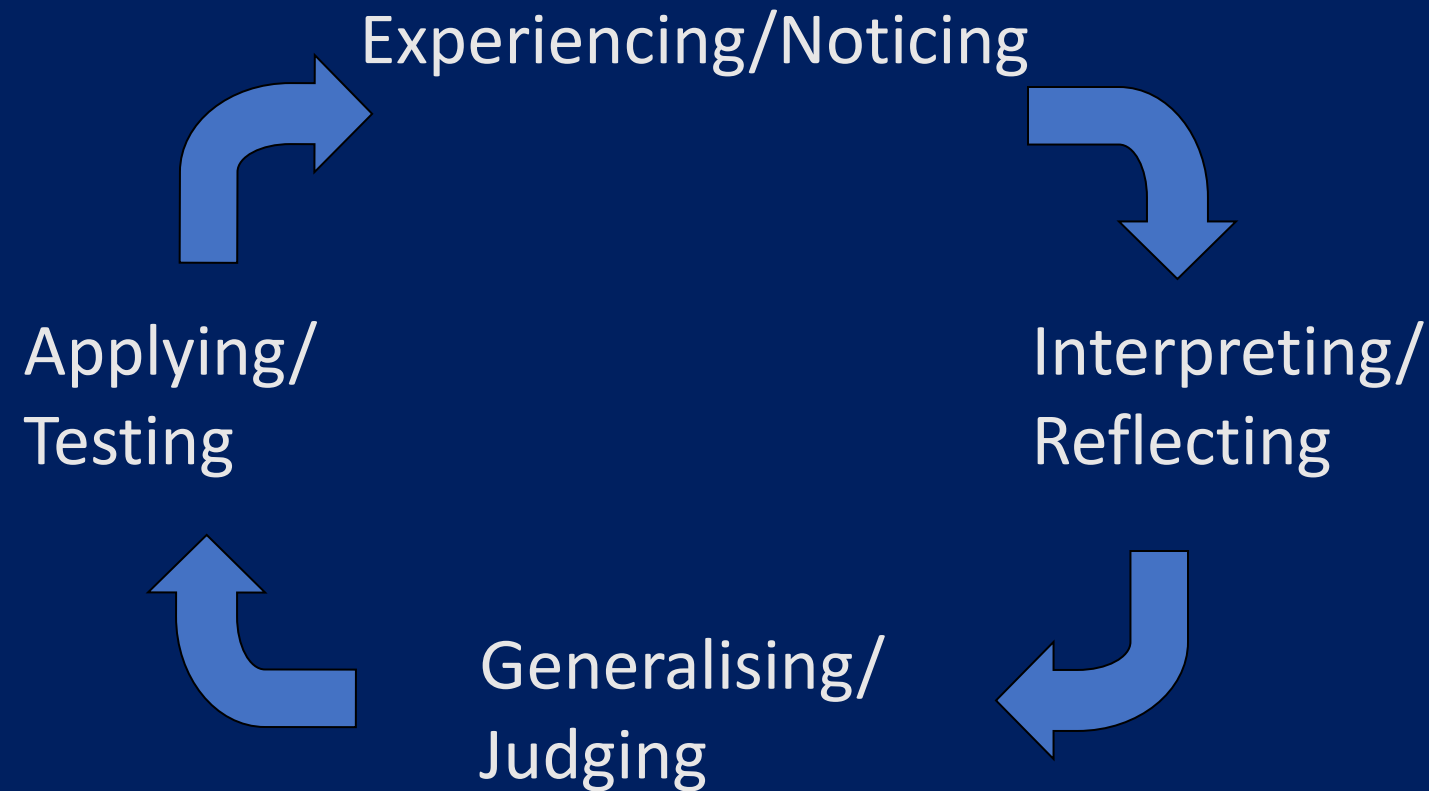


Important Factors in the Learning Process

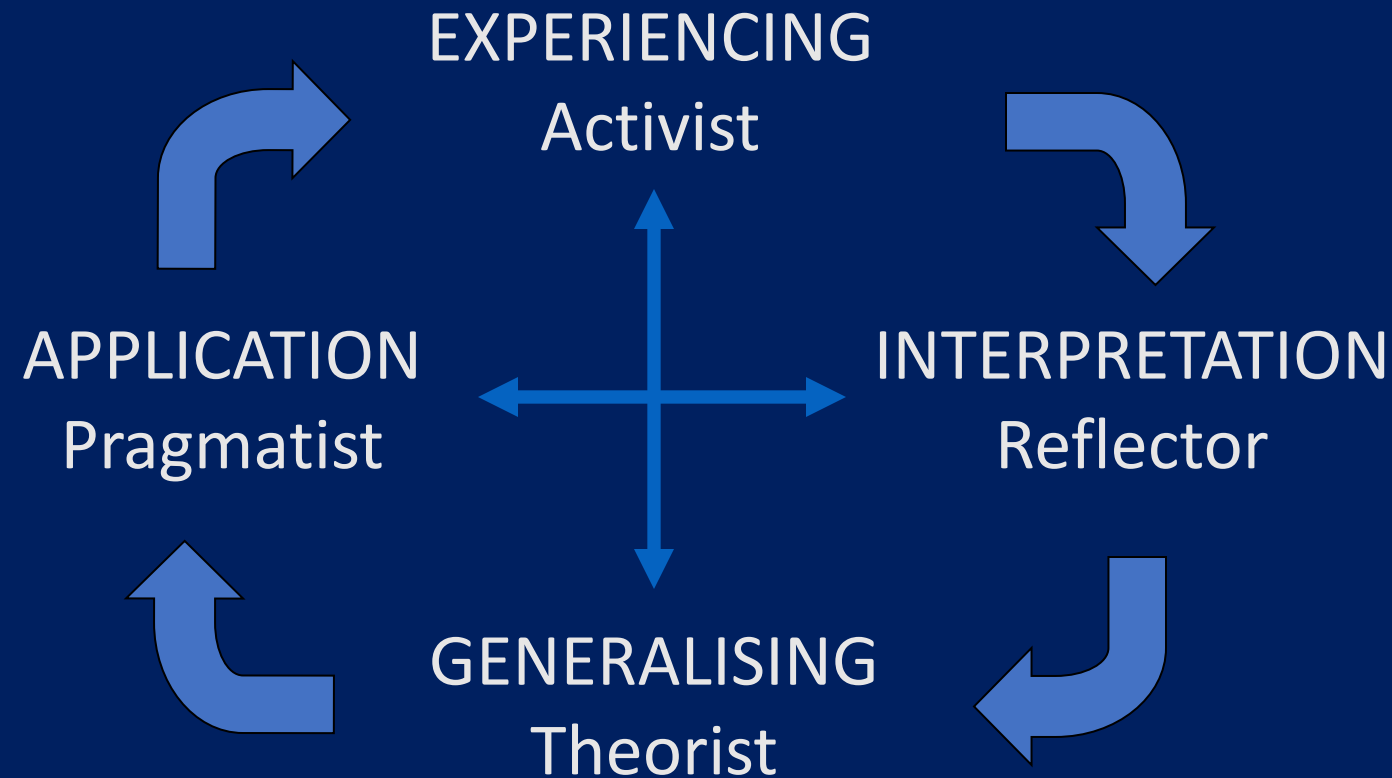
8. Feedback
9. Reinforcement
10. Meaningful objective and material
11. Time
12. Recall (remembering)
13. Internalising
14. Examples/questions/practical
15. Training aids/environment
16. Transfer of Learning



Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle



Honey and Mumford's groupings match up well with Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle



Activist – Creativity

Reflector – Cerebral activities

Theorist – Conceptual
Framework

Pragmatist – Obvious links
between theory
and practice



- <https://www.mint-hr.com/mumford.html>

- *Activists* - who prefer to learn through concrete experiences... open-minded, actively involved, bored with implementation
- *Pragmatists* - who learn through conscious experimentation, try out new ideas to see if they work in practice
- *Theorists* - who analyse facts and develop models, adapt & integrate observations, vertical, logical, hierarchical
- *Reflectors* - who stand back and observe from different angles, ponder experiences, cautious, 'bigger picture'



- Most people use a mixture of styles but tend to have a preference for one or two.
- Your preference will probably mean that you spend longer over this style of the learning cycle than others; the Reflector takes more time over interpreting while the Pragmatists spend longer applying their theories



Learning Styles

- Activists

- *Reflectors*

Strengths

Flexible; Open minded

Happy to have a go

Likes new situations

Optimistic

Doesn't resist change

Careful; thoughtful

Thorough; methodical

Good listener; assimilates

Doesn't jump to conclusions

Learning Styles

- Activists

- Reflectors

Weaknesses

Takes immediate action

Often risky

Poor preparation

Gets bored with implementation

Not a keen participator

Slow to make up mind;
make decisions

Cautious; doesn't take risks

Not assertive

Activists learn best from:

- New experiences/problems
- Activities - games/role plays
- Variety
- Change
- Excitement
- Chairing/leading discussions
- Generating ideas freely
- Being thrown in at deep end
- Involvement



Reflectors learn best from:

- Watching
- Thinking
- Observing
- Probing
- Investigating
- Reviewing what was happened
- Structured exchange of views
- Producing analyses/reports
- Lack of pressure/deadlines



Learning Styles

- Theorists

- Pragmatists

<i>Strengths</i>

Logical/vertical thinkers

Rational; objective

Asks problem questions

Disciplined approach

Keen to test in practice

Practical; realistic

Down to earth

Business-like; gets to the point

Technique orientated

Learning Styles

- Theorists

- Pragmatists

Weaknesses

Low tolerance for
uncertainty, disorder

Hates anything subjective,
intuitive

‘Should’, ‘ought’, ‘must’

Rejects if no obvious
application

Hates theories, basic principles

Accepts first practical solution

Impatient; no waffle

Task not people orientated



Theorists learn best from:

- Systems, models
- Concepts
- Theories
- Relationships between ideas and events
- Questioning or probing logic
- Being mentally stretched
- Structure/purpose
- Reason/logic
- Ideas/concepts for their own sake



Pragmatists learn best from:

- Obvious links with the job
- Techniques with a practical value
- Practice and feedback
- A model to copy
- A chance to practise/implement
- Practical issues





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Behavioural Psychology

– Feedback and reinforcement

- What Is Behavioral Psychology?
- Focuses on observable behaviours
- Emphasizes learning through interaction with the environment
- Key figures: B.F. Skinner, John Watson, Ivan Pavlov



The Role of Feedback

- Definition: Information given about performance or behavior
- Purpose: Guides future behaviour, reinforces learning
- Types:
 - Positive feedback (encouragement, praise)
 - Constructive feedback (correction, guidance)

Reinforcement Basics

- Reinforcement: A consequence that increases the likelihood of a behaviour
- Two main types:
 - Positive Reinforcement: Adding something pleasant (e.g., reward)
 - Negative Reinforcement: Removing something unpleasant (e.g., relief)



Schedules of Reinforcement

- Continuous: Reinforce every time behaviour occurs
- Partial: Reinforce intermittently
- Fixed interval
- Variable interval

Applications in Real Life

- Education: Praise, grades, feedback loops
- Workplace: Bonuses, performance reviews
- Parenting: Time-outs, rewards, praise
- Therapy: Behaviour modification techniques



Feedback That Works

- Be specific and timely
- Focus on behaviour, not personality
- Encourage self-reflection
- Use reinforcement to build habits

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gi5UfSI0BM>



Critical Aspect: Common Pitfalls

- Overuse of punishment
- Inconsistent reinforcement
- Ignoring individual differences
- Feedback that's vague or delayed



- Feedback and reinforcement are powerful tools
- Shape behaviour through consistent, thoughtful application
- Use psychology to build better habits, relationships, and outcomes



Why Group Feedback Matters

- Builds collective awareness and accountability
- Encourages peer learning and shared growth
- Strengthens team dynamics and trust



Best Practices for Giving Group Feedback

1. Set the Stage

- Create a safe, respectful environment
- Clarify the purpose: growth, not judgment
- Encourage openness and curiosity



2. Focus on Observables

- Use specific behaviours, not general traits
- Avoid assumptions or interpretations
- Example: *“I noticed several people interrupted during the discussion”*
vs. “You’re all too aggressive”

3. Balance Positives and Areas for Growth

- Highlight strengths: *“The group showed great energy and creativity.”*
- Address challenges constructively: *“Let’s work on listening more actively”*



4. Use Inclusive Language

- Say “*we*” and “*our*” to foster unity
- Avoid singling out unless necessary and agreed upon
- Example: “*We could all benefit from slowing down and reflecting before responding.*”



5. Invite Reflection

- Ask open-ended questions: *“What did you notice about our collaboration today?”*
- Encourage self and peer feedback
- Use silence and space to let insights emerge



6. Follow Up

- Summarize key takeaways
- Set intentions or goals for next session
- Reinforce progress over time



Giving feedback to a Team

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Vp7ozfPdac>



Case Study: Coaching in Action

- Scenario:
- Maria is a mid-level manager in a fast-growing fintech company. She's recently been promoted and is now leading a team of software developers.
- Her organization offers coaching support to help new leaders transition effectively. Maria begins working with Alex, a certified coach, to build her leadership confidence, improve team communication, and manage performance challenges.



- During their sessions, Maria expresses frustration with her team's lack of initiative and hesitancy to speak up in meetings.
- Alex uses a blend of active listening, powerful questioning, and feedback techniques to help Maria reflect on her leadership style.
- Over time, Maria begins to recognize that her directive approach may be stifling creativity.
- She experiments with more collaborative behaviors, such as inviting input and acknowledging contributions. After six sessions, Maria reports improved team morale and more open dialogue.



Questions for Discussion

1. What coaching principles are evident in Alex's approach?
2. Identify and evaluate the coaching skills Alex used.
3. How did Alex's behaviour as a coach support Maria's development?
4. What good practices in coaching can be identified in this case?
5. Critically assess the impact of coaching on Maria's leadership.



1. What coaching principles are evident in Alex's approach?

- Suggested Answer:
- Alex demonstrates key coaching principles such as:
- Client-centeredness: Focusing on Maria's goals and context.
- Confidentiality and trust: Creating a safe space for honest reflection.
- Non-directiveness: Encouraging Maria to generate her own insights rather than giving advice.
- Accountability: Supporting Maria to take ownership of her actions and outcomes.



2. Identify and evaluate the coaching skills Alex used.

- Suggested Answer:
- Alex used several core coaching skills:
- Active listening: Paying close attention to Maria's concerns and emotions.
- Powerful questioning: Asking open-ended questions that prompted deeper reflection.
- Feedback: Offering observations in a constructive, non-judgmental way.
- Goal setting: Helping Maria clarify her leadership development objectives.
- These skills were effective because they fostered self-awareness and empowered Maria to experiment with new behaviors.



3. How did Alex's behaviour as a coach support Maria's development?

- Suggested Answer:
- Alex modelled behaviours such as empathy, patience, and curiosity. By remaining non-judgmental and supportive, Alex helped Maria feel safe to explore her challenges. His consistent encouragement and belief in Maria's potential reinforced her confidence and willingness to change.



4. What good practices in coaching can be identified in this case?

- Suggested Answer:

Good practices include:

- Establishing clear goals and outcomes
 - Using evidence-based techniques
 - Maintaining ethical boundaries
 - Encouraging experimentation and reflection
 - Tracking progress across sessions
-
- These practices ensured the coaching was structured, impactful, and aligned with Maria's needs.



5. Critically assess the impact of coaching on Maria's leadership.

- Suggested Answer:
- Coaching had a transformative impact on Maria's leadership. She shifted from a directive to a collaborative style, which improved team engagement.
- However, the case also highlights the importance of sustained support—six sessions may not be enough to embed long-term change. A follow-up or peer coaching could reinforce progress.



- Coaching skills demonstration
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=to73DYQkApQ>



References

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