[Coaching and Mentoring]

Lecture Title:

7. [Coaching and Mentoring: Communication Skills]

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Date: 13 October 2025 9.00hrs-13.00hrs

21 ACADEMY

Masters in Human Resources Management

Learning Objectives

Following this session students will be able:

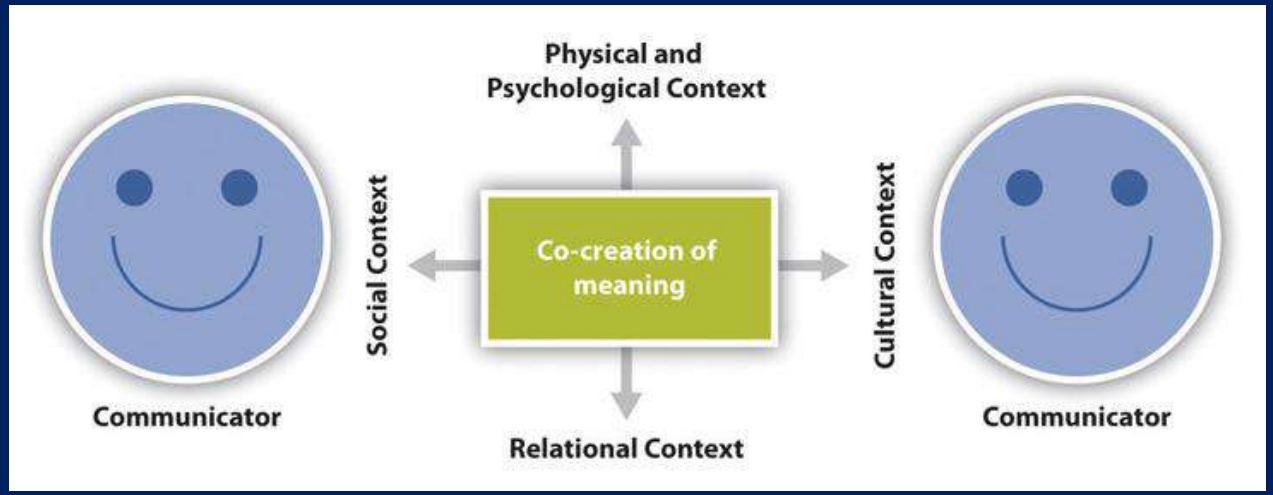
To use multi-disciplinary approaches of communication within a coaching or mentoring context.

To utilise assertive communication skills as a coaching tool – role playing

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.



- Using Multi-Disciplinary Approaches of Communication in Coaching & Mentoring

- *Integrating diverse communication models and fields for transformative development.*

The Modern Coaching Challenge

- **The Problem:** Coachees/Mentees present complex challenges that rarely fit into a single framework (e.g., a performance issue is often a *mix* of skill gap, confidence, and systemic context).

- **The Solution:** A **Multi-Disciplinary** approach. This means drawing from various fields—psychology, linguistics, behavioural science, and management models—to tailor communication to the individual's need.

- **Goal of the Presentation:** To explore how integrating diverse communication "disciplines" enhances the effectiveness, depth, and adaptability of coaching and mentoring conversations.

Defining Multi-Disciplinary Communication

- What is it?

- The intentional and flexible application of communication tools, techniques, and philosophies drawn from multiple academic or professional fields to address a client's holistic development needs.

Field of Origin	Communication Component	Focus
Linguistics	Questioning, Reframing	Clarity, Insight Generation
Behavioral Science	Non-Verbal Cues, Reinforcement	Rapport, Emotional Safety
Management	Structural Models (GROW)	Action Planning, Accountability
Psychology	Empathy, Cognitive Inquiry	Underlying Beliefs, Motivation

Foundational Discipline 1: The Linguistic/Verbal Toolkit

Active Listening: The bedrock of coaching. It's a multi-stage process:

- Focusing: Minimizing distractions and dedicating full attention.
- Understanding: Paraphrasing and summarizing to check comprehension.
- Responding: Validating feelings and creating space for deeper exploration.

Powerful Questioning: Moving beyond "yes/no" to provoke self-reflection and insight.

- Examples: *"What would your ideal outcome look like?" "What are you not seeing right now?" "If fear wasn't a factor, what would you do?"*

Reframing: Using language to shift perspective.

E.g., changing "Failure" to "Learning Data."

Foundational Discipline 2: The Behavioral/Non-Verbal Discipline

- Non-Verbal Communication is Dominant: Studies suggest non-verbal signals have a significantly greater impact than words, especially when incongruence exists.

Key Non-Verbal Cues:

- Posture: Open posture (uncrossed arms/legs) conveys approachability and psychological safety.
- Eye Contact: Maintaining appropriate eye contact shows engagement and respect.
- Proxemics (Use of Space): Adjusting distance to convey comfort and rapport.
- Congruence: Ensuring your body language aligns with your verbal message (e.g., saying "I'm listening" while checking a phone creates a breach of trust).

Using Silence:

A powerful non-verbal tool that encourages the coachee to process, reflect, and break their own silence with new insights.

Foundational Discipline 3: The Psychological Discipline

Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings of another. It's not sympathy (feeling for them), but the skill of connecting to their emotional state.

- Technique: Reflecting emotions ("I hear the frustration in your voice...")

Establishing Psychological Safety: Creating an environment where the coachee feels safe to be vulnerable, take risks, and discuss mistakes without fear of judgment. This is fundamental for growth.

HBR: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZgmoxOgfig&t=45s

Motivational Interviewing: A directive, client-centred counselling style for eliciting behaviour change by helping clients explore and resolve ambivalence (e.g., "I want to change, but...").

Structural Model Discipline 1: The GROW Model

Phase	Communication Focus	Example Question
G - Goal	Clarity & Specificity (SMART Goals)	"What exactly do you want to achieve today/long-term?"
R - Reality	Objective Assessment of Current State	"What is the current situation? What have you tried so far?"
O - Options	Creative Brainstorming & Possibilities	"What are three different ways you could approach this?"
W - Will/Way Forward	Commitment & Action Plan	"What specific first step will you commit to by when?"

Benefit: Provides a clear, logical, and accountable structure for goal-oriented conversations.

Structural Model Discipline 2: The CLEAR Model

Phase	Communication Focus
C - Contract	Agreeing on the *purpose* and desired *outcome* of the session.
L - Listen	Engaging in deep, active listening to understand the full context.
E - Explore	Using questioning to delve into feelings, beliefs, and underlying patterns.
A - Action	Collaboratively identifying practical steps and resources.
R - Review	Evaluating progress, feedback, and planning the next stage.

Origin: Relationship-Focused/Process Coaching

Benefit: Emphasizes relationship building and iterative review, ideal for newer coachees or complex, emotional issues.

Structural Model Discipline 3: The FUEL Model

Phase

F - Frame the Conversation

U - Understand the Current State

E - Explore the Desired State

L - Lay Out a Success Plan

Communication Focus

Setting the agenda, expectations, and desired end-state for the meeting.

Getting the mentee's perspective, focusing on facts and feelings.

Encouraging the mentee to articulate their vision and potential solutions.

Documenting the action plan, accountabilities, and follow-up.

Origin: Leadership Development/High-Impact Conversations

***Benefit:** Highly effective for brief, performance-driven conversations and integrating coaching into day-to-day management.*

Structural Model Discipline 4 – OSKAR MODEL

The **OSKAR coaching model** is a solution-focused framework designed to help individuals and teams move toward desired outcomes by emphasizing strengths and progress rather than problems. It was developed by **Mark McKergow and Paul Z. Jackson** and is widely used in coaching, mentoring, and organizational development contexts.

Why Use OSKAR?

- **Encourages positive, forward-focused dialogue**
- Builds on **existing capabilities** rather than diagnosing problems
- Supports **measurable progress** through scaling
- Ideal for **performance coaching**, **team development**, and **short-term goal setting**

Step	Description
O – Outcome	Define the coachee's desired future state or goal. What do they want to achieve?
S – Scaling	Use a 1–10 scale to assess current position relative to the goal. Helps quantify progress.
K – Know-How & Resources	Identify existing strengths, skills, and past successes that can support progress.
A – Affirm & Action	Reinforce what's working and co-create specific, actionable next steps.
R – Review	Reflect on progress in follow-up sessions and adjust actions as needed.

Example in Practice

Let's say a team leader wants to improve team communication:

- **Outcome**: "I want my team to have more open, respectful discussions during meetings."
- **Scaling**: "Currently, I'd rate us at a 4 out of 10."
- **Know-How**: "We've had productive retrospectives in the past when we used structured formats."
- **Affirm & Action**: "Let's reintroduce structured check-ins and rotate facilitators."
- **Review**: "In two weeks, we'll assess how the new format is working."

Would you like a printable OSKAR coaching template or a version adapted for group facilitation or mentoring contexts?

Model Synthesis: Choosing the Right Tool

Coachee Need	Suggested Discipline/Model	Rationale
Goal Clarity	**GROW** (Management)	Requires structured, measurable definition.
Emotional Block	**CLEAR/Psychology**	Need for deep listening, exploration of feelings, and safety.
Quick Check-In	**FUEL** (Leadership)	Efficient framing and action-planning focus.
Confidence	**OSKAR** (Solution-Focused)	Focuses on past successes and inherent resources ("Know-how").

A multi-disciplinary coach does not rigidly stick to one model. They use their communication fluency to select or blend approaches based on the coachee's needs.

Key Skill: Discipline Fluency—the ability to seamlessly shift techniques within a single conversation.

Advanced Discipline 1: Cognitive Inquiry

Focus: Identifying and challenging the coachee's limiting thoughts, beliefs, and assumptions.

Technique: Disputing Beliefs: Asking questions to test the reality and helpfulness of a belief.

Question: "What evidence do you have that this belief is 100% true, 100% of the time?“

Question: "If your best friend had this thought, what would you tell them?“

Goal: Use communication to facilitate a cognitive shift that unlocks new behaviors.

Origin: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Coaching Psychology.

Advanced Discipline 2: Systems Thinking

- Focus: Understanding the context and interconnected factors (the "system") that influence the coachee's issue.

- Communication Role: Expanding the coachee's perspective beyond themselves.
  Question: "Who else is affected by this? How does the team dynamic contribute to this problem?“
  Question: "If you were to view this situation from your CEO's perspective, what would they prioritize?“

- *Origin: Organisational Theory, Sociology.*
- *Benefit: Moves the coachee from personal blame to systemic insight, leading to more sustainable solutions.*

Advanced Discipline 3: Narrative Communication

- Focus: How people construct their reality through stories (narratives).
- Technique: Externalizing the Problem: Separating the person from the issue.

  Instead of: "I am an anxious person."

  We say: "When did 'The Anxiety' first show up, and what does it convince you to do?"
- Reframing the Hero's Journey: Helping the coachee see themselves as the protagonist who has the power to author a new, empowering future narrative.

Origin: Narrative Therapy, Literature.

Contextual Discipline: Cross-Cultural Communication

- **Focus**: Recognizing how cultural background influences communication norms and expectations.

- **Key Considerations**:

  Direct vs. Indirect Feedback: Some cultures prefer direct, explicit feedback; others rely on context and subtle cues.

  Power Distance: The comfort level with challenging or questioning an authority figure (mentor/coach).

  Non-Verbal Variance: Gestures, eye contact, and even silence carry different meanings across cultures.

- **Skill:**

High Cultural Intelligence (CQ)—the ability to adapt communication style based on the coachee's cultural context.

Origin: Anthropology, International Business.

Integrating the Approaches: A Scenario

- Scenario: *A coachee is consistently late on project deadlines (Management/Behavioural issue) and is visibly stressed and defensive (Psychological/Emotional issue).*

Discipline Used	Communication Technique	Impact
Linguistic	**Active Listening/Reflection**	"I can see this is causing you a lot of stress." (Builds rapport/safety)
Behavioral	**Non-Verbal Cues**	Open posture, gentle tone, intentional silence. (Creates trust)
Psychological	**Cognitive Inquiry**	"What thought stops you from starting the task until the last minute?" (Identifies limiting belief)
Management	**GROW Model**	"Let's use the 'Reality' section of our model to clearly map the process." (Introduces structure/accountability)

The Principle of Congruence

- **Definition:** Congruence (or authenticity) is the state where the coach's internal thoughts and feelings, external words, and non-verbal communication are all aligned.

- **Impact:** When communication is congruent, the coachee perceives the coach as highly trustworthy and authentic. This significantly deepens rapport and openness.

- **The Multi-Disciplinary Test:** Does the structural model (e.g., GROW) feel authentic given the psychological state (e.g., distress) of the coachee, and is your body language supporting the verbal message?

Developing Interdisciplinary Fluency

- Fluency is not about mastering every field, but about being agile with a core set of communication skills.

- **Self-Awareness:** Regularly reflect on your own communication defaults (e.g., Do you interrupt? Do you avoid silence? What is your typical posture?).

- **Context Mapping**: Before a session, mentally map the coachee's challenge to potential disciplines (e.g., Is this a motivation issue, a process issue, or a belief issue?).

- **Practice Blending**: Intentionally practice integrating a verbal technique (Powerful Question) with a non-verbal skill (Using Silence) and a structural model (GROW).

- **Seek Diverse Training**: Look for training outside traditional coaching (e.g., applied psychology, mediation, improv theatre) to expand your communication repertoire.

Ethical Considerations of Multi-Disciplinary Use

- Boundary Management: A coach/mentor is not a therapist or counselor. Using psychological concepts must be done with the explicit boundary that the relationship remains non-diagnostic and goal-focused.

- Scope of Practice: Know when to refer. If a challenge requires deep psychological healing or clinical intervention, the ethical obligation is to refer to a qualified professional.

- Transparency: Be clear about the models being used and the collaborative nature of the process. The communication is always for the coachee's benefit.

Key Learning Points

- **A Single Tool may be Insufficient**: Complex client issues require a toolkit of communication approaches.
- **Verbal, Behavioural, and Structural:** Effective communication is an integrated blend of what you say (linguistics), how you say it (behaviour/non-verbal), and how you structure the conversation (models).
- **Context is King:** The choice of discipline (e.g., GROW vs. CLEAR) must be flexible and responsive to the coachee's immediate emotional and developmental needs.
- **Fluency Requires Practice:** Mastery comes from consciously practicing the seamless transition between different communication disciplines.

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- To utilise assertive communication skills as a coaching tool

- *"Assertiveness is a philosophy of life and a way of conducting business founded on respect and consideration towards others. Relationships based on trust, respect, openness and sincerity are forged through assertiveness.*

- *These relationships are characterised by a genuine interest in understanding each other, recognising differences, confronting challenges and providing support while maintaining openness and honesty in communication.“*

(Suaraez & Cervantes 2025)

- Encouraging Mutuality:

- The goal of assertion is communication and mutuality, which involves both parties giving and getting respect, promoting fair play, and leaving room for compromise.

- This aligns with the non-directive, empowering nature of coaching.

"The purpose of role playing is to allow a person to practice a skill or ability they wish to develop. Applying what you learn in a simulated situation allows you to be more effective and comfortable in a real situation... Role play is valuable because it allows for practice in a safe and nonthreatening way.“

- SHRM (Society for Human Resource Management), "The Art of Role Playing in Developing Management Proficiency“

- This quote underscores the benefit of role-play in coaching by focusing on its role as a low-stakes, high-impact practice tool.

Context for Coaching

- In the context of coaching, role-plays:
- Develop Core Skills: They are crucial for practicing essential coaching competencies like active listening, powerful questioning, and giving non-judgmental feedback.
- Build Confidence: By rehearsing challenging conversations (like performance or attitude issues) in a simulated environment, coaches build the confidence necessary to handle real-world complexity.
- Provide Immediate Feedback: They enable learners to experience a genuine reaction to their communication style and receive immediate, actionable feedback from the partner or observer.
- Decrease the Gap Between Thinking and Doing: Role-play shifts learning from abstract theory to concrete, applied action, which is vital for mastery.

Role Playing as a Training Tool

- https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=rolE+PLAYING+AS+A+TRANIING+TOOL

Putting into Practice
ROLE PLAY 1

- Coaching Role-Play: Performance Issue

- This role-play demonstrates coaching skills in addressing a performance issue stemming from a lack of clarity and confidence.

- The scenario is set within an office environment.

Formative assessment

Scenario

Context: Alex, a high-potential employee, has recently been promoted to a team lead position managing a small, technically skilled team.

However, Alex is struggling to delegate tasks effectively, resulting in them working late and their team members feeling underutilised and frustrated. The overall team performance has dipped below target for the last month.

Goal for the Coach (Jamie): To help Alex gain clarity on his and their new role's expectations and identify a specific, immediate action to begin delegating effectively.

Role Player Brief 1: Jamie (The Coach/Manager)

- Your Role: You are Jamie, the Director of the department and Alex’s direct manager. You are generally supportive and believe in Alex's long-term potential. You recognize the performance dip is likely due to the transition into a new leadership role, not a lack of effort.

- Your Goal for the Session (using a GROW-like structure):

- G (Goal): Get Alex to clearly define the desired state for their team’s performance and their role in the next month.
- R (Reality): Get Alex to honestly describe their current workflow, delegation habits, and feelings about the new role.
- O (Options): Encourage Alex to identify at least three possible ways to delegate differently.
- W (Will): Secure a specific, measurable action Alex will take within the next week.

Key Communication Skills to Demonstrate:

- Active Listening: Use non-verbal cues (nodding, open posture) and reflect Alex’s feelings (e.g., "It sounds like you feel overwhelmed and responsible for everything").
- Powerful Questioning: Avoid "why" questions and ask "what" or "how" questions to promote insight (e.g., "What is the hardest part about handing off that task?", "What would success look like by the end of this week?").
- Non-Directive Approach: Resist the urge to offer solutions or advice.
- Your job is to help Alex find their own solution.
- Establish Safety: Start the conversation by acknowledging Alex’s effort and the difficulty of the transition.

- Opening Line (Suggestion):

- "*Hi Alex, thanks for meeting. I wanted to check in about how you're settling into the new team lead role. I've noticed you've been putting in some long hours lately, and I'm keen to talk about how we can make this transition smoother for you and the team."*

Role Player Brief 2:
Alex (The Coachee/Team Lead)

- Your Role: You are Alex, the recently promoted Team Lead. You were previously the top individual contributor on this team and are very proud of your technical expertise.

Your Feelings/Internal Reality:

- Overwhelmed: You are staying late every night and feel immense pressure.
- Fearful: You are worried that if you delegate the "high-stakes" technical tasks, your team members will make mistakes, and you will ultimately be held responsible.
- Guilty: You feel guilty that you are not spending enough time mentoring your team, but you feel compelled to step in and fix things yourself to ensure quality.
- Confused: You're not entirely sure what your manager (Jamie) expects of you now—is it high-quality output or effective leadership? You think it's both.

- Your Initial Response:

- When Jamie brings up the issue, you will initially be slightly defensive, explaining that the tasks are complex and only you have the full expertise to complete them correctly and on time.

- You will downplay the performance issue and focus on your effort (the late nights).

Coaching Challenge for You:

- You must be resistant to Jamie's suggestions, but open to your own insights if Jamie asks powerful, open-ended questions that focus on your feelings or the future state.

- When Jamie asks about the difference between your old role (individual contributor) and your new role (leader), you should have an "Aha!" moment and admit that you haven't fully let go of your old responsibilities.

- Desired Outcome (if the coaching is successful):

- You commit to identifying one or two smaller, repetitive technical tasks that you can delegate entirely to one team member in the next 48 hours, scheduling a brief one-on-one with them, and defining a clear check-in process.

Putting into Practice
ROLE PLAY 2

- Attitude Issue (Hotel Setting)

- This role-play focuses on a negative attitude issue impacting team morale and guest perception in a hotel setting.

- The coaching goal is to help the coachee recognize the impact of their behaviour and commit to a change in their communication style.

Scenario

- Context:

- Maya is a highly skilled and efficient senior concierge at a luxury hotel. She is excellent at handling complex guest requests and is technically proficient.

- However, she has recently become noticeably irritable, often sighing loudly when given tasks by junior staff or providing blunt, sarcastic answers to colleagues.

- Her negative attitude is causing junior staff to avoid her, and her terse communication has led to one formal guest complaint about a "cold and unhelpful" interaction. The overall Concierge team's morale is suffering.

- Goal for the Coach (Ben):

- To help Maya acknowledge the impact of her recent attitude and communication on the team and guests, and to get her to commit to a specific, behavioural change (e.g., changing her tone or internal self-talk) for the next two weeks.

Role Player Brief 1:
Ben (The Coach/Front Office Manager)

Your Role: You are Ben, the Front Office Manager and Maya’s direct supervisor.

You value Maya's competence and experience, but the atmosphere in the Concierge lounge is becoming toxic.

- Your Goal for the Session (using a GROW-like structure):

- G (Goal): Define the desired team atmosphere and guest perception—a return to a professional, helpful, and warm environment.

- R (Reality): Present the objective observations (e.g., loud sighing, a specific guest complaint, junior staff avoiding her) and get Maya to acknowledge the reality of the situation, without getting defensive.

- O (Options): Encourage Maya to explore the underlying reasons for her current frustration (e.g., stress, workload, perceived incompetence of others) and identify options for managing her reaction to these stressors.

- W (Will): Get a specific, simple, and immediate commitment from Maya (e.g., "I will pause for three seconds before responding to any colleague's question") and agree on a follow-up time.

Key Communication Skills to Demonstrate:

- Non-Judgmental Feedback: Focus on the behaviour and its impact, not on Maya's personality (e.g., "I've observed X behaviour, and the result is Y impact").
- Powerful Questioning (Attitude-Focused): Ask questions that focus on internal state and perception (e.g., "What feeling is driving that response?", "What message do you think your non-verbal cues are sending?").
- Empathy and Validation: Acknowledge the pressure of her senior role, even if you are addressing her attitude (e.g., "I know you carry a lot of the hotel's complexity, and that's stressful").
- Boundary Setting: Clearly state that the current behavior is impacting the business and cannot continue.

- Opening Line (Suggestion):

"Hi Maya, thank you for making the time. As one of our most experienced concierges, your professionalism is key to our reputation. I need to address a couple of specific observations I've made recently regarding the atmosphere in the lounge and one piece of guest feedback."

Role Player Brief 2:
Maya (The Coachee/Senior Concierge)

- **Your Role: You are Maya, the Senior Concierge. You take immense pride in your job and view yourself as a top performer.**

- Your Feelings/Internal Reality:

- Deep Frustration: You feel surrounded by incompetent junior staff who constantly ask "easy" questions and make simple mistakes that you have to fix. You feel your time is wasted.

- Overworked: You believe you handle 80% of the complex, high-value requests because you can't trust anyone else to do it right, which is why you're stressed.

- Unfairly Targeted: You think Ben is being overly sensitive and that "a little sarcasm" is just how people communicate under pressure in a fast-paced environment. The guest complaint was probably just an overly demanding customer.

- Fear of Losing Status: You worry that if you let others handle complex tasks, you'll lose your status as the "go-to expert."

- Your Initial Response:

- When Ben presents the observations, you will be initially defensive and rationalizing. You'll argue that your curtness is just "efficiency," and that you are "too busy" to be constantly gentle with others.

- You'll blame the junior staff for their lack of training or the demanding nature of the guests.

- Coaching Challenge for You:

- You must resist Ben's attempts to solve your workflow issues, but be open to reflecting on your own feelings of frustration and the non-verbal signals you are sending.

- If Ben asks you to imagine the perspective of a new employee or a guest, you should pause and reluctantly admit that you "probably look annoyed." You should also admit to a general high level of stress.

- Desired Outcome (if the coaching is successful):
- You commit to an easy, observable, behavioural change for the next two weeks.
- For example, you commit to sending a one-minute "positive response" in your mind before verbally responding to any irritating request.

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