

How coaching can help you come back stronger

Agnes Hendry, Alison Dakers and Lesley Henderson discuss coaching techniques for wellbeing and development

Agnes:

In his book *Authentic Success*, Robert Holden describes the Manic Society where we are so hurried that we have no time to be 'present' and where we are afraid to stop for fear of falling behind. We can often feel like that in schools today as we endeavour to provide the best possible learning experience for our pupils, especially in these challenging times. We are so busy 'doing' that we do not take the time to stop and reflect. Our ability to reflect and adapt (reflexivity) is crucial for our learning, success and wellbeing.

As the shoots of the spring flowers are appearing, we too need to get ready to flourish and embrace the next stage of the journey as we emerge from the current restrictions.



We need to create the space and time to take stock of our journey since March 2020 and appreciate how far we have come.

Often when we look back, there is a tendency to focus on what went wrong and we often do not allow ourselves to reflect on the positive. Although we can learn from areas which did not go as well as planned it is important that we also celebrate and learn from our successes.

There is considerable evidence that the ratio of positivity to negativity experienced by people in their interactions at work has a significant impact on their wellbeing and ability to achieve their goals. A 3:1 ratio of positivity to negativity is healthy. In order to achieve this when reflecting, we perhaps need to practise using a positive lens. It is also helpful if we can suspend judgement and be kind to ourselves, asking ourselves: what is fact and what is feeling?

The Success Week, designed by Ben Renshaw for Scottish Borders Council's Coaching for Success course, is an excellent coaching tool to help a coachee reflect through a positive lens. Individuals can practise reflexivity (task and social) by asking themselves reflective questions:

- What has happened today/this week that I am proud of?
- What has worked well for me, what do I need to change?
- When have I felt most energised, what were the reasons?
- What have I learned about myself?

Alison and Lesley:

It seems a cliché to say that education professionals work in a fast-paced, ever-changing landscape, but it's true. Never more so than in the past year. Often in coaching, we coach for performance, which is about addressing and fixing a specific problem or challenge. It's about putting out the fire, everyday stuff and it's important and necessary. However, coaching for development is about turning the focus from the issue to the person who's managing the fire. This conversation is rarer and *significantly* more powerful. Its focus is on calling you forward to learn, improve and grow, rather than just sorting something out.

The 3P model is a framework for choosing what to focus on in a coaching conversation - for deciding which aspect of a challenge might be at the heart of a difficulty that a person is working through.

The first P is Project. This is the content of the situation, the stuff that's being worked on. It's the easiest place to go and it will be familiar to most of us. We spend our days finding solutions to challenges, and our eyes



“Our ability to reflect and adapt (reflexivity) is crucial for our learning, success and wellbeing”

Success Week

Monday

What was my most important success?

Tuesday

What was my best contribution?

Wednesday

How did I add value?

Thursday

What did I enjoy?

**Friday /
Saturday /
Sunday**

How did I make a difference?

are almost always on the situation at hand. This realm is where coaching for performance and technical change tends to occur. Often the art is in knowing how to start but then seeing whether the conversation would benefit from including one or both of the other two Ps.

The next P is People. Have you ever thought: work would be easy if it weren't for all these annoying people? Certainly, situations are always made more complex when you - in all your imperfect, not always rational, messy, biased self - have to work with others who, surprisingly, are also imperfect, not always rational, messy and biased. When we're talking about people though, we're not really talking about them. We're talking about *relationships* and specifically about what your role is in this relationship that might currently be less than ideal.

Finally, there's Patterns. Here you're looking at patterns of behaviour and ways of working that you'd like to change. This area is most likely where coaching for development conversations will

emerge. They are personal and challenging, and they provide a place where people's self-knowledge and potential can grow and flourish. These are also the conversations that are usually the least common in schools.

The Scottish Government's *Education Governance* review advocates that we need to ensure that we are building the capacity of our educators, empowering our staff to make informed decisions about improvement, and providing opportunities for teacher agency.

Through building a culture of coaching in education and developing the skills and dispositions of being a coach, we are providing the foundations for individuals and teams to scaffold growth and expand possibilities for success. This cannot happen if time and effort is not spent in creating opportunities for structured reflection, considering the reasons for success and planning the next steps of development. As John Dewey quotes: "We do not learn

from experience, we learn from reflecting on experience."

ABOUT THE COACHES

- Agnes Hendry is a Director and Professional Coach at Positive People Development (Scotland) Ltd.
- Alison Dakers is an Induction Manager at Fife Council.
- Lesley Henderson is an Improvement Officer at Fife Council.

Coaching for teachers

As part of the Covid-19 support package, digital 1:1 coaching is being offered to: headteachers; deputies or teachers with pastoral or child protection responsibilities; teachers new to role; teachers who are in years 1-4 post-probation; and local authority CLD managers.

Find out more about these sessions at bit.ly/teacherdigitalcoaching