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Developing Coaching and Counseling Skills for Health Care Professionals



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Basic Communication skills for Coaching & Counselling

Introduction

Developing oneself as a coach or counsellor means acquiring tools and skills to do a proper job. Although coaching and counselling require different skills and different application of tools the basic communication skills in both are the same. In the course we distinguish analytical skills and interpersonal skills, and communication skills are a major group within the interpersonal skills. Basic communication skills are:

- Observing
- Listening
- Questioning

This handout introduces in particular the last two elements, but we start with some general concepts of communication.

Communication

When people communicate with each other, they exchange messages. Three things are needed for communication to take place:

- The sender of the information (the speaker)
- The information or message itself
- The receiver of the message (the listener)

Sender → **Message** → **Receiver**

Receiver ← **Message** ← **Sender**

Communication is the process of sending messages and accepting a response from the receiver about how he/she has received that message. There is more involved in the transmission of these messages than only the meaning (the content) of the words themselves.

Other things are conveyed to the receiver as well, such as feelings, opinions, prejudices, expectations, and so on. For instance, the interaction with which words are spoken also plays an important role in determining the meaning of the message.

The content of a message and the way in which it is presented are only two parts of the total message: much of the information is consciously or unconsciously transmitted through facial expression, gesture and posture: body language.

Verbal language and body language

People have different ways of sending messages to and receiving messages from each other: with and without words. The message which is transmitted

solely via the meaning of words we call verbal communication. All other vehicles of communication, such as the intonation of words or the body language we refer to as non-verbal communication.

Non-verbal communication is important because it is the principal vehicle for making clear one's feelings and emotions and expresses what is happening "inside" people.

Four rules for communication

There are four rules which determine the course of communication between people. If your profession causes you to carry out a lot of discussions with other people, then it is important for you to be familiar with these four rules. Each rule is described below in brief:

1) It is impossible not to communicate

As soon as you are near someone else you begin influencing each other. Even if you remain silent or ignore each other, this has a meaning, for instance it says that you are not interested in the other person.

2) People communicate with words, but mainly without words

Emotions are mostly expressed through body language. For instance, anger, sorrow, happiness, enthusiasm, and so on: Sometimes words and body language can contradict each other. If you are the receiver of these conflicting messages, you become confused.

Our response tends to focus on the words alone, and a misunderstanding (mis-communication) can develop which is difficult to resolve. Communication only works well when words and body language are in accordance with each other.

3) My interpretation is not necessarily somebody else's interpretation

We often hear what we want to hear or what we imagine we are hearing. Because people differ in their expectations and needs, they experience a conversation in very different ways. That's why they come to different conclusions and interpretations.

4) When people say something, they also say something about the way in which they want to be approached

The meaning of messages is also influenced by the relationship between the parties involved in the conversation and by the environment in which the conversation takes place.

The relationship between people often determines the way in which they communicate. A superior usually talks to his/her subordinates in a different way from the manner in which subordinates talk among themselves. The same is true for the environment in which the conversation takes place: different environments lead to different ways of conversing. For example: compare the meeting of the Director General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a staff meeting at a children's clinic, or a road worker's meeting on their site.

Communication begins to fail when one of the parties refuses to approach the other in the way in which he/she wishes to be approached. When someone behaves in a high-handed fashion, he/she is really saying: "I'm the one in charge here". If you refuse to accept this, then the conversation grinds to a halt or you get into an argument. On the other hand, the conversation will come to a satisfactory conclusion if you behave submissively and accept his tone.

The only way to find a solution to these kinds of discussions is to talk about the way in which the communication process itself is taking place. Problems are then found to lie in poor relationships and must be tackled at this level.

We refer to this aspect of communication as the relational level (as distinct from the level of "content", i.e. what is said). It determines the way in which the message is conveyed, and indirectly says something about the nature of the relationship between the parties.

Listening

Listening is more difficult than you think. It is an essential skill for people who have to conduct discussions regularly. In active listening, a continual check is made to see whether the message has come

across. This technique ensures optimal mutual understanding with maximum transfer of information.

What is listening?

‘Listening is actively receiving all sorts of signals, a skill which we mostly consider as ‘I heard what you said’. Listening however is more than hearing, listening is also concentrating on what is now actually being said. Listening is not passive hearing: it is an active activity.

Listening is an important skill for the advisor. Compared with speaking, it appears that listening occupies far more time than speaking. Listening is important both to understand the client, and make the client feel understood and accepted. Listening is the basis of the process of raising awareness, willingness and commitment among the clients for changes.

Listening is difficult

Listening is difficult for several reasons:

- a. The spoken word disappears quickly. We can't rewind the tape, the information has to be taken down and processed straight away.
- b. There are problems in interpretation. There is no certainty that what the speaker intended is the same as that which the listener thinks that he/she meant.
- c. Our minds are quicker to process what we have heard than we can express it in words. There is therefore time to spare. Thus attention tends to stray.
- d. Physically: we cannot/do not want to listen. We are tired, are distracted by other matters, want to go home, etc.

It is not easy to repeat what the other person has actually said. Physical and psychological processes affect this. The technique of active listening is an instrument for effective listening despite all this.

Active listening

Active listening comprises four steps, which go on continually during a discussion:

1. Listen to what the other person is saying

Concentrate on what the other person is saying and try to subordinate your own thoughts during this process in order to listen to the other person. Look at the other person and see if what is being said is supported by facial expression, gestures, and expression, etc.

2. Recapitulate what the other person has been saying

Put the words of the other person together to make a summary of what has been said. Do not wait too long to do this, even if the other person is not intending to stop speaking, try to find a moment to interrupt them to make the summary (sorry to interrupt you, but as I understand you mean).

3. Check whether the summary correctly states what has been said

‘If I understand you correctly, you mean that’ is the question, is that indeed what the speaker has said? The answer ‘yes’ is then a joint agreement to go on with the discussion. If the speaker denies this, then the listener must try again, perhaps with more information from the speaker, to make a summary of what has been said. When it appears that both parties have understood one another, with checks from summaries, the discussion can proceed.

4. Organize the information and continue the discussion

One of the parties starts up the discussion again. This may be the next question in an interview, the following point in a discussion, or to pick up the structure of the discussion.

Asking questions

Conducting an interview is more than listening to what the other person has to say. It would be very much of a coincidence if the other person provides the exact information you want. In that case we could ask ourselves whether that is actually a coincidence.

- Present a situation: 'Suppose that you... (more directly related to the person than an example)
- Prolong questions: repeat questions, without building up resistance

In many cases, it is necessary to continue questioning and to ask concrete questions in order to find out about the real situation. If the person is not inclined to answer a question or the subject is rather sensitive, they are likely to give vague, indirect answers.

Note: the handout was made with materials from MDF training and consultancy <http://www.mdf.nl/>

Behaviour Promoting and Hindering Communication

Promoting	Hindering
1. Eye contact: adequate and comfortable	1. Eye contact: staring or avoiding
2. Posture: slightly leaning forward	2. Posture: slouching, crossed arms
3. Facial expression: smiling, friendly	3. Facial expression: fixed and rigid
4. Gestures: head nodding occasionally	4. Gestures: distracting e.g. looking at watch, fiddling with pen
5. Questioning: open ended	5. Questioning: closed, too many questions
6. Repeating key words	6. Talking too much
7. Checking out what you think you have heard	7. Drawing conclusions prematurely
8. Reflecting: helps sender to clarify his point also to check whether your understanding is accurate	8. Filling silences too quickly
9. Summarising what you have heard	9. Devaluing other by minimising, disbelieving or laughing inappropriately
10. Attending to both verbal and non-verbal cues	10. Insisting that your perceptions and beliefs are the correct and only views

Effective communication

Introduction

Communication is effective when the receiver has received and understood the message of the sender according to the purpose of the sender. So effective or good communication means clear, unambiguous two way constructive exchanges, without distortion of the message between when it is given and when it is received.

how people feel about themselves. People with a low sense of self-esteem tend to be over-critical of themselves and underestimate their abilities. This will reflect in their communication. This lack of assertiveness may result in failure to speak up for themselves or they may react with inappropriate anger and even violence. We need to learn to communicate and relate to others in a morally responsible way with respect for oneself and others and with sensitivity towards the needs and views of others. We often assume these skills (part of life skills) present but it may need education to acquire them.

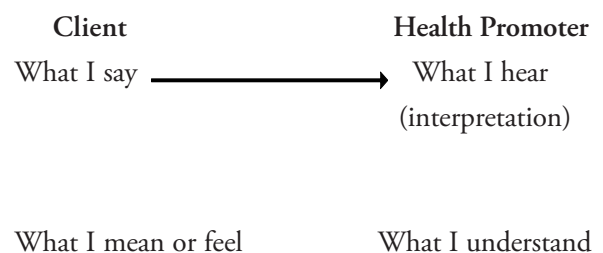
Exploring relationships

Communication is closely related to the basic attitude towards the persons you are communicating with (Ewles & Simnett chapter 10).

Some basic questions to ask:

- Are you accepting people or judging their behaviour?
- Do you stimulate autonomy or dependency?
- Do you see communication as a partnership or a one-way process?
- Does your communication stimulate positive or negative feelings of the receiver?

The listening process



Self-esteem, self-confidence and communication

The ability to communicate is closely linked to

Helping people to talk

1. Give an invitation to talk
2. Give attention

3. Encourage
4. Paraphrase
5. Reflect feelings
6. Reflect meanings
7. Give a summary

General communication session

Interviewing is one communication technique to gather information, to assess a situation or to assess the health education needs of an individual.

Phases:

1. Introductory phase
2. Working phase
3. Termination phase

Before you start you need a good relationship with the person you are going to interview. They need to **trust** you. They need the feeling that you **care** about them and that you are **concerned**.

They need to be explained on the **purpose** of the interview and what you are going to do with the results.

An interview needs to be systematic, that means an organised approach and a logical sequence of the questions. First you need to know your aims and based on your aims you are preparing the questions.

1. The introductory phase:

The introductory phase sets the tone and directions of the interview and establishes a mutual understanding of the purpose of the exchange. The purpose of the introductory phase is as follows:

- To establish rapport
- To ensure a comfortable setting
- To state the purpose of the interview

* Establishing rapport:

Rapport is an essential component in a helping relationship. It begins with showing respect for the person. How to show respect: greeting, addressing the patient by name, introducing yourself, equal seats, and eye contact.

* Ensure a comfortable setting:

If possible conduct the interview in a private setting, free from interruptions and distracters. Assure confidentiality.

* State the purpose of the interview:

State the purpose at the beginning of the interview. Tell the person you want to discuss in order to

2. The working Phase:

During the working phase, which is the most time-consuming part of the interview you should collect all the data that you need. Ask questions from general to specific and discuss first common topics and later the more personal and intimate topics. Questions are a guide, don not use them too rigid.

3. The termination phase:

The termination phase serves to end the interview. Saying how long the interview will last at the beginning helps the patient to have an idea about the length. Pre-summary, summary and follow-up techniques may be part of the termination phase.

Pre-summary involves providing cues to indicate that the interview is coming to an end, e.g. I see that we have 10 minutes left, is there anything else you would like to discuss before our time is finished?

Communication techniques:

1. Personalise the interview (focus on the person)

It will help the person to feel at ease and to have the feeling the interviewer is concerned and really interested in the views of the person interviewed

2. Use open ended questions

This will allow the person to tell the story in his/ her own words. Excellent way to find out ideas/ feelings/opinions

3. Make broad opening statements

This is like an introduction to your topic, to help the person to get focused

4. Use reflection

By telling the person what you heard or what you see, you give the person time to respond and to say whether the reflection is true or not for the person.

5. Verbalise implied ideas

Tell the person how you interpret his communication to check whether that is correct. “I have the feeling that you are still very angry”

6. Provide general leads

This will help to go smoothly from one topic to the other and connecting them. There will be a flow. It can be combined with a summary in between. “We talked about your family, I now would like to go a different topic namely”

7. Seek clarification

Gives the person an opportunity to explain more about an issue that is not completely clear

8. Use silence

It is not always necessary to fill all the gaps with talking. Give a person time to think, be patient.

9. Use open-body language

Show a person you are listening

10. Listen actively

Active listening is a two-way communication, through asking questions and all the other above techniques

11. Share perceptions

“It seems”, again invites the person to tell more about a certain subject

12. Confront contradictions

Some people say opposite things, by confronting them you give them time to think deeper and to explore better what they really mean. Do it gently and in a respectful manner.

13. Review the discussion

Give summaries in between and at the end of the interview. Be in control but show respect for the feelings and the ideas of the person you interview.

Verbal responses to avoid:

- Empty reassurance
- Clichés like “the doctor knows best”
- Imposing your values on people and advice them according to your values (help them to explore alternatives and to choose one)

Non-verbal communication:

1. Personal space

Each person has a space around them called “personal space”. If you come too close you invade in the person’s space. If you are too far away you may give the person a feeling of isolation. When you speaking with a person you can sense the boundaries of their personal space

2. Eye contact

If a person does not look at you it may mean that the person is nervous, shy or lying. It may also be a sign of respect

3. Facial expression

An apparently happy expression, such as smiling, may be misleading (also culture bounded). A person may also laugh inappropriately because s/he cannot deal with the situation

4. Body movements and posture

A twitching or bouncing foot may indicate anger, impatience or boredom. A slouched appearance may indicate depression

5. Personal appearance

How people are groomed, what kind of cloths they are wearing and their posture gives information. It may convey true feelings or it might be misleading

6. Touch

A touch can be a message to show somebody that you empathise with the person (cultural aspect). Is it an appropriate gesture within the culture?

Communication Skills Advanced

Why you need to get your message across

Effective communication is all about conveying your messages to other people clearly and unambiguously. It's also about receiving information that others are sending to you, with as little distortion as possible.

Doing this involves effort from both the sender of the message and the receiver. And it's a process that can be fraught with error, with messages muddled by the sender, or misinterpreted by the recipient. When this isn't detected, it can cause tremendous confusion, wasted effort and missed opportunity.

In fact, communication is only successful when both the sender and the receiver understand the same information as a result of the communication.

By successfully getting your message across, you convey your thoughts and ideas effectively. When not successful, the thoughts and ideas that you actually send do not necessarily reflect what you think, causing a communications breakdown and creating roadblocks that stand in the way of your goals – both personally and professionally.

In a recent survey of recruiters from companies with more than 50,000 employees, communication skills were cited as the single more important decisive factor in choosing managers. The survey, conducted by the

University of Pittsburgh's Katz Business School, points out that communication skills, including written and oral presentations, as well as an ability to work with others, are the main factor contributing to job success.

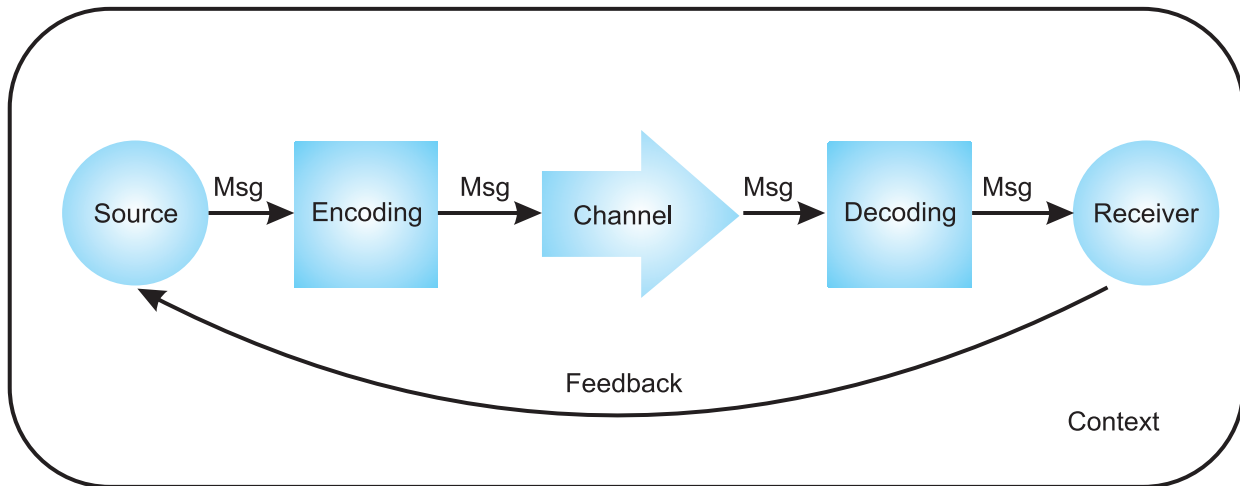
In spite of the increasing importance placed on communication skills, many individuals continue to struggle, unable to communicate their thoughts and ideas effectively – whether in verbal or written format. This inability makes it nearly impossible for them to compete effectively in the workplace, and stands in the way of career progression.

Being able to communicate effectively is therefore essential if you want to build a successful career. To do this, you must understand what your message is, what audience you are sending it to, and how it will be perceived. You must also weigh-in the circumstances surrounding your communications, such as situational and cultural context.

Communications Skills – The Importance of Removing Barriers

Problems with communication can pop-up at every stage of the communication process (which consists of the **sender**, **encoding**, the **channel**, **decoding**, the **receiver**, **feedback** and the **context** – see the diagram below). At each stage, there is the potential for misunderstanding and confusion.

The Communications Process



To be an effective communicator and to get your point across without misunderstanding and confusion, your goal should be to lessen the frequency of problems at each stage of this process, with clear, concise, accurate, well-planned communications. We follow the process through below:

Source...

As the source of the message, you need to be clear about why you're communicating, and what you want to communicate. You also need to be confident that the information you're communicating is useful and accurate.

Message...

The message is the information that you want to communicate.

Encoding...

This is the process of transferring the information you want to communicate into a form that can be sent and correctly decoded at the other end. Your success in encoding depends partly on your ability to convey information clearly and simply, but also on your ability to anticipate and eliminate sources of confusion (for example, cultural issues, mistaken assumptions, and missing information.)

A key part of this is knowing your audience: Failure

to understand who you are communicating with will result in delivering messages that are misunderstood.

Channel...

Messages are conveyed through channels, with verbal channels including face-to-face meetings, telephone and videoconferencing; and written channels including letters, emails, memos and reports.

Different channels have different strengths and weaknesses. For example, it's not particularly effective to give a long list of directions verbally, while you'll quickly cause problems if you give someone negative feedback using email.

Decoding...

Just as successful encoding is a skill, so is successful decoding (involving, for example, taking the time to read a message carefully, or listen actively to it.) Just as confusion can arise from errors in encoding, it can also arise from decoding errors. This is particularly the case if the decoder doesn't have enough knowledge to understand the message.

Receiver...

Your message is delivered to individual members of your audience. No doubt, you have in mind the actions or reactions you hope your message will get from this audience. Keep in mind, though, that each

of these individuals enters into the communication process with ideas and feelings that will undoubtedly influence their understanding of your message, and their response. To be a successful communicator, you should consider these before delivering your message, and act appropriately.

Feedback...

Your audience will provide you with feedback, as verbal and nonverbal reactions to your communicated message. Pay close attention to this feedback, as it is the only thing that can give you confidence that your audience has understood your message. If you find that there has been a misunderstanding, at least you have the opportunity to send the message a second time.

Context...

The situation in which your message is delivered is the context. This may include the surrounding environment or broader culture (corporate culture, international cultures, and so on).

Removing Barriers at All These Stages

To deliver your messages effectively, you must commit to breaking down the barriers that exist within each of these stages of the communication process.

Let's begin with the message itself. If your message is too lengthy, disorganized, or contains errors, you can expect the message to be misunderstood and misinterpreted. Use of poor verbal and body language can also confuse the message.

Barriers in context tend to stem from senders offering too much information too fast. When in doubt here, less is oftentimes more. It is best to be mindful of the demands on other people's time, especially in today's ultra-busy society.

Once you understand this, you need to work to understand your audience's culture, making sure you can converse and deliver your message to people of different backgrounds and cultures within your own organization, in your country and even abroad.

The first skill that you'll learn in this communications skills section of MindTools.com is 'How to Make a Great First Impression': This is essential if you're going to have the chance to communicate your message. To read this, click 'Next article' below. Other relevant destinations are shown in the "Extension Resources" list underneath.

How Good Are Your Communication Skills?

Speaking, Listening, Writing, and Reading Effectively

Communication skills are some of the most important skills that you need to succeed in the workplace.

We talk to people face to face, and we listen when people talk to us. We write emails and reports, and we read the documents that are sent to us. Communication, therefore, is a process that involves at least two people - a sender and a receiver. For it to be successful, the receiver must understand the message in the way that the sender intended.

This sounds quite simple. But have you ever been in a situation where this hasn't happened? Misunderstanding and confusion often occur, and they can cause enormous problems.

If you want to be an expert communicator, you need to be effective at all points in the communication process - and you must be comfortable with the different channels of communication. When you communicate well, you can be very successful. On the other hand, poor communicators struggle to develop their careers beyond a certain point.

So are you communicating effectively? Take this short quiz to find out.

The Communication Quiz

Instructions: For each statement, click the button in the column that most applies. Click the 'Calculate My Total' button to add up your score and check your result using the scoring table underneath.

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Statement		Not at all	Rarely	Some times	Often	Very Often
1	I try to anticipate and predict possible causes of confusion, and I deal with them up front.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	When I write a memo, email, or other document, I give all of the background information and detail I can to make sure that my message is understood.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	If I don't understand something, I tend to keep this to myself and figure it out later.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	I'm sometimes surprised to find that people haven't understood what I've said.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	I can tend to say what I think, without worrying about how the other person perceives it. I assume that we'll be able to work it out later.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	When people talk to me, I try to see their perspectives.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7	I use email to communicate complex issues with people. It's quick and efficient.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8	When I finish writing a report, memo, or email, I scan it quickly for typos and so forth, and then send it off right away.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9	When talking to people, I pay attention to their body language.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10	I use diagrams and charts to help express my ideas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11	Before I communicate, I think about what the person needs to know, and how best to convey it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12	When someone's talking to me, I think about what I'm going to say next to make sure I get my point across correctly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13	Before I send a message, I think about the best way to communicate it (in person, over the phone, in a newsletter, via memo, and so on).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14	I try to help people understand the underlying concepts behind the point I'm discussing. This reduces misconceptions and increases understanding.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15	I consider cultural barriers when planning my communications.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Total = 0						

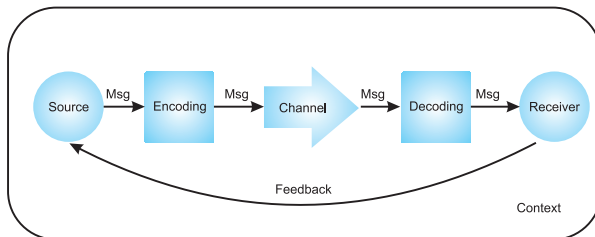
Score Interpretation

Score	Comment
56-75	Excellent! You understand your role as a communicator, both when you send messages, and when you receive them. You anticipate problems, and you choose the right ways of communicating. People respect you for your ability to communicate clearly, and they appreciate your listening skills.
36-55	You're a capable communicator, but you sometimes experience communication problems. Take the time to think about your approach to communication, and focus on receiving messages effectively, as much as sending them. This will help you improve.
15-35	You need to keep working on your communication skills. You are not expressing yourself clearly, and you may not be receiving messages correctly either. The good news is that, by paying attention to communication, you can be much more effective at work, and enjoy much better working relationships! The rest of this article will direct you to some great tools for improving your communication skills.

Detailed Interpretation

Whenever you communicate effectively with someone else, you and the other person follow the steps of the communication process shown below.

The Communications Process



Here, the person who is the source of the communication encodes it into a message, and transmits it through a channel. The receiver decodes the message, and, in one way or another, feeds back understanding or a lack of understanding to the source.

By understanding the steps in the process, you can become more aware of your role in it, recognize what you need to do to communicate effectively, anticipate problems before they happen, and improve your overall ability to communicate effectively.

The sections below help you do this, and help you improve the way you communicate at each stage of the process.

The Source - Planning Your Message (Questions 1, 2, 11)

Before you start communicating, take a moment to figure out what you want to say, and why. Don't waste your time conveying information that isn't necessary - and don't waste the listener or reader's time either. Too often, people just keep talking or keep writing - because they think that by saying more, they'll surely cover all the points. Often, however, all they do is confuse the people they're talking to.

To plan your communication:

- Understand your objective. Why are you communicating?
- Understand your audience. With whom are you communicating? What do they need to know?
- Plan what you want to say, and how you'll send the message.
- Seek feedback on how well your message was received.

When you do this, you'll be able to craft a message that will be received positively by your audience.

Good communicators use the KISS ("Keep It Simple and Straightforward") principle. They know that less is often more, and that good communication should be efficient as well as effective.

Encoding - Creating a Clear, Well-Crafted Message (Questions 1, 5, 8, 10, 15)

When you know what you want to say, decide exactly how you'll say it. You're responsible for sending a message that's clear and concise. To achieve this, you need to consider not only what you'll say, but also how you think the recipient will perceive it.

We often focus on the message that we want to send and the way in which we'll send it. But if our message is delivered without considering the other person's perspective, it's likely that part of that message will be lost. To communicate more effectively:

- Understand what you truly need and want to say.
- Anticipate the other person's reaction to your message.
- Choose words and, if appropriate, use body language that helps the other person really hear what you're saying.

With written communication, make sure that what you write will be perceived the way you intend. Words on a page generally have no emotion - they don't "smile" or "frown" at you while you're reading them (unless you're a very talented writer, of course!)

When writing, take time to do the following:

- Review your style.
- Avoid jargon or slang.
- Check your grammar and punctuation.
- Check also for tone, attitude, nuance, and other subtleties. If you think the message may be misunderstood, it probably will. Take the time to clarify it!
- Familiarize yourself with your company's writing policies.

Another important consideration is to use pictures, charts, and diagrams wherever possible. As the saying goes, "a picture speaks a thousand words." Our article on charts and graphs has some great tips that help you to use these to communicate clearly.

Also, whether you speak or write your message, consider the cultural context. If there's potential for miscommunication or misunderstanding due to cultural or language barriers, address these issues in advance. Consult with people who are familiar with

these, and do your research so that you're aware of problems you may face. See our articles on Communicating Internationally and Effective Cross-Culture Communication for more help.

Choosing the Right Channel (Questions 7, 11, 13)

Along with encoding the message, you need to choose the best communication channel to use to send it. You want to be efficient, and yet make the most of your communication opportunity.

Using email to send simple directions is practical. However, if you want to delegate a complex task, an email will probably just lead to more questions, so it may be best to arrange a time to speak in person. And if your communication has any negative emotional content, stay well away from email! Make sure that you communicate face to face or by phone, so that you can judge the impact of your words and adjust these appropriately.

When you determine the best way to send a message, consider the following:

- The sensitivity and emotional content of the subject.
- How easy it is to communicate detail.
- The receiver's preferences.
- Time constraints.
- The need to ask and answer questions.

Decoding - Receiving and Interpreting a Message (Questions 3, 6, 12, 14)

It can be easy to focus on speaking; we want to get our points out there, because we usually have lots to say. However, to be a great communicator, you also need to step back, let the other person talk, and just listen.

This doesn't mean that you should be passive. Listening is hard work, which is why effective listening is called active listening. To listen actively, give your undivided attention to the speaker:

- Look at the person.

- Pay attention to his or her body language.
- Avoid distractions.
- Nod and smile to acknowledge points.
- Occasionally think back about what the person has said.
- Allow the person to speak, without thinking about what you'll say next.
- Don't interrupt.

Empathic listening also helps you decode a message accurately. To understand a message fully, you have to understand the emotions and underlying feelings the speaker is expressing. This is where an understanding of body language can be useful.

Feedback

(Questions 3, 4, 9)

You need feedback, because without it, you can't be sure that people have understood your message. Sometimes feedback is verbal, and sometimes it's not. We've looked at the importance of asking questions and listening carefully. However, feedback through body language is perhaps the most important source of clues to the effectiveness of your communication. By watching the facial expressions, gestures, and posture of the person you're communicating with, you can spot:

- Confidence levels.
- Defensiveness.
- Agreement.
- Comprehension (or lack of understanding).
- Level of interest.
- Level of engagement with the message.
- Truthfulness (or lying/dishonesty).

As a speaker, understanding your listener's body language can give you an opportunity to adjust your message and make it more understandable, appealing, or interesting. As a listener, body language can show you more about what the other person is saying. You can then ask questions to ensure that you have, indeed, understood each other. In both situations, you can better avoid miscommunication if it happens.

Feedback can also be formal. If you're communicating something really important, it can often be worth asking questions of the person you're

talking to to make sure that they've understood fully. And if you're receiving this sort of communication, repeat it in your own words to check your understanding.

Key points:

It can take a lot of effort to communicate effectively. However, you need to be able to communicate well if you're going to make the most of the opportunities that life has to offer.

By learning the skills you need to communicate effectively, you can learn how to communicate your ideas clearly and effectively, and understand much more of the information that's conveyed to you.

As either a speaker or a listener, or as a writer or a reader, you're responsible for making sure that the message is communicated accurately. Pay attention to words and actions, ask questions, and watch body language. These will all help you ensure that you say what you mean, and hear what is intended.

The Johari Window Creating Better Understanding Between Individuals and Groups

The Johari Window is a communication model that can be used to improve understanding between individuals within a team or in a group setting. Based on disclosure, self-disclosure and feedback, the Johari Window can also be used to improve a group's relationship with other groups

Developed by **Joseph Luft** and **Harry Ingham** (the word "Johari" comes from Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham), there are two key ideas behind the tool:

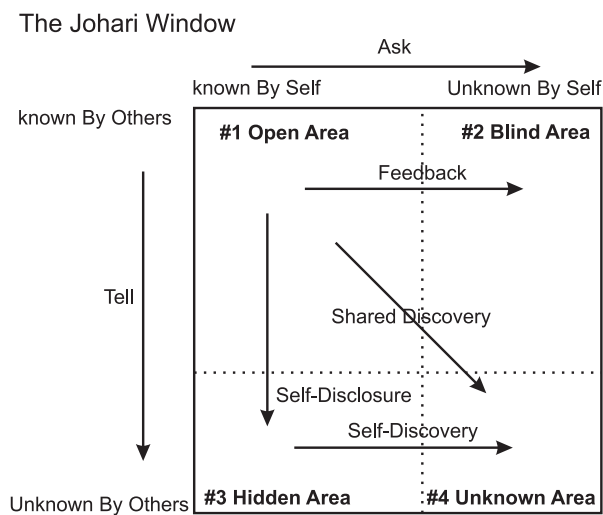
1. That individuals can build trust between themselves by disclosing information about themselves; and
2. That they can learn about themselves and come to terms with personal issues with the help of feedback from others.

By explaining the idea of the Johari Window to your team, you can help team members understand the value of self-disclosure, and gently encourage people to give and accept feedback. Done sensitively,

this can help people build more-trusting relationships with one another, solve issues and work more effectively as a team.

Explaining the Johari Window:

The Johari Window model consists of a foursquare grid (think of taking a piece of paper and dividing it into four parts by drawing one line down the middle of the paper from top to bottom, and another line through the middle of the paper from side-to-side). This is shown in the diagram below:



Using the Johari model, each person is represented by their own four-quadrant, or four-pane, window. Each of these contains and represents personal information – feelings, motivation – about the person, and shows whether the information is known or not known by themselves or other people.

The four quadrants are:

Quadrant 1: Open Area

What is known by the person about him/herself and is also known by others.

Quadrant 2: Blind Area, or “Blind Spot”

What is unknown by the person about him/herself but which others know. This can be simple information, or can involve deep issues (for example, feelings of inadequacy, incompetence, unworthiness,

rejection) which are difficult for individuals to face directly, and yet can be seen by others.

Quadrant 3: Hidden or Avoided Area

What the person knows about him/herself that others do not.

Quadrant 4: Unknown Area

What is unknown by the person about him/herself and is also unknown by others.

The process of enlarging the open quadrant vertically is called self-disclosure, a give and take process between the person and the people he/she interacts with.

As information is shared, the boundary with the hidden quadrant moves downwards. And as other people reciprocate, trust tends to build between them.

Tip 1:

Don't be rash in your self-disclosure. Disclosing harmless items builds trust. However, disclosing information which could damage people's respect for you can put you in a position of weakness.

Using the Tool:

The process of enlarging the open quadrant horizontally is one of feedback. Here the individual learns things about him- or her-self that others can see, but he or she can't.

Tip 2:

Be careful in the way you give feedback. Some cultures have a very open and accepting approach to feedback. Others don't. You can cause incredible offence if you offer personal feedback to someone who's not used to it. Be sensitive, and start gradually.

If anyone is interested in learning more about this individual, they reciprocate by disclosing information in their hidden quadrant.

For example, the first participant may disclose that

he/she is a runner. The other participant may respond by adding that he/she works out regularly at the local gym, and may then disclose that the gym has recently added an indoor jogging track for winter runners.

As your levels of confidence and self-esteem rises, it is easier to invite others to comment on your blind spots. Obviously, active and empathic listening skills are useful in this exercise.

The Johari Window in a Team Context

Keep in mind that established team members will have larger open areas than new team members. New team members start with smaller open areas because little knowledge about the new team member has yet been shared. The size of the Open Area can be expanded horizontally into the blind space, by seeking and actively listening to feedback from other group members.

Group members should strive to assist a team member in expanding their Open Area by offering constructive feedback. The size of the Open Area can also be expanded vertically downwards into the hidden or avoided space by the sender's disclosure of information, feelings, etc about himself/herself to the group and group members.

Also, group members can help a person expand their Open Area into the hidden area by asking the sender about himself/herself. Managers and team leaders play a key role here, facilitating feedback and disclosure among group members, and by providing constructive feedback to individuals about their own blind areas.

Key Points:

In most cases, the aim in groups should be to develop the Open Area for every person.

Working in this area with others usually allows for enhanced individual and team effectiveness and productivity. The Open Area is the 'space' where good communications and cooperation occur, free from confusion, conflict and misunderstanding.

Self-disclosure is the process by which people

expand the Open Area vertically. Feedback is the process by which people expand this area horizontally.

By encouraging healthy self-disclosure and sensitive feedback, you can build a stronger and more effective team.

Active Listening

Hear What People Are Really Saying

Listening is one of the most important skills you can have. How well you listen has a major impact on your job effectiveness, and on the quality of your relationships with others.

We listen to obtain information.

We listen to understand.

We listen for enjoyment.

We listen to learn.

Given all this listening we do, you would think we'd be good at it! In fact we're not. Depending on the study being quoted, we remember a dismal 25-50% of what we hear. That means that when you talk to your boss, colleagues, customers or spouse for 10 minutes, they only really hear 2½-5 minutes of the conversation.

Turn it around and it reveals that when you are receiving directions or being presented with information, you aren't hearing the whole message either. You hope the important parts are captured in your 25- 50%, but what if they're not?

Clearly, listening is a skill that we can all benefit from improving. By becoming a better listener, you will improve your productivity, as well as your ability to influence, persuade negotiate. What's more, you'll avoid conflict and misunderstandings – all necessary for workplace success.)

Good communication skills require a high level of self-awareness. By understanding your personal style of communicating, you will go a long way towards creating good and lasting impressions with others.

The way to become a better listener is to practice

“active listening”. This is where you make a conscious effort to hear not only the words that another person is saying but, more importantly, to try and understand the total message being sent.

In order to do this you must pay attention to the other person very carefully.

You cannot allow yourself to become distracted by what else may be going on around you, or by forming counter arguments that you’ll make when the other person stops speaking. Nor can you allow yourself to lose focus on what the other person is saying. All of these barriers contribute to a lack of listening and understanding.

Tip:

If you’re finding it particularly difficult to concentrate on what someone is saying, try repeating their words mentally as they say it – this will reinforce their message and help you control mind drift.

To enhance your listening skills, you need to let the other person know that you are listening to what he or she is saying. To understand the importance of this, ask yourself if you’ve ever been engaged in a conversation when you wondered if the other person was listening to what you were saying. You wonder if your message is getting across, or if it’s even worthwhile to continue speaking. It feels like talking to a brick wall and it’s something you want to avoid.

Acknowledgement can be something as simple as a nod of the head or a simple “uh huh.” You aren’t necessarily agreeing with the person, you are simply indicating that you are listening. Using body language and other signs to acknowledge you are listening also reminds you to pay attention and not let your mind wander.

You should also try to respond to the speaker in a way that will both encourage him or her to continue speaking, so that you can get the information if you need. While nodding and “uh huhing” says you’re interested, an occasional question or comment to recap what has been said communicates that you understand the message as well.

Becoming an Active Listener

There are five key elements of active listening. They all help you ensure that you hear the other person, and that the other person knows you are hearing what they are saying.

1. Pay attention.

Give the speaker your undivided attention and acknowledge the message. Recognize that what is not said also speaks loudly.

- Look at the speaker directly.
- Put aside distracting thoughts. Don’t mentally prepare a rebuttal!
- Avoid being distracted by environmental factors.
- “Listen” to the speaker’s body language.
- Refrain from side conversations when listening in a group setting.

2. Show that you are listening.

Use your own body language and gestures to convey your attention.

- Nod occasionally.
- Smile and use other facial expressions.
- Note your posture and make sure it is open and inviting.
- Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like yes, and uh huh.

3. Provide feedback.

Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments, and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect what is being said and ask questions.

- Reflect what has been said by paraphrasing. “What I’m hearing is...” and “Sounds like you are saying...” are great ways to reflect back.
- Ask questions to clarify certain points. “What do you mean when you say...” “Is this what you mean?”

Summarize the speaker’s comments periodically.

Tip:

If you find yourself responding emotionally to what someone said, say so, and ask for more information: “I may not be understanding you correctly, and I find myself taking what you said personally. What I thought you just said is XXX; is that what you meant?”

4. Defer judgment.

Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.

- Allow the speaker to finish.
- Don't interrupt with counter-arguments.

5. Respond Appropriately.

Active listening is a model for respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective. You add nothing by attacking the speaker or otherwise putting him or her down.

- Be candid, open, and honest in your response.
- Assert your opinions respectfully.
- Treat the other person as he or she would want to be treated.

Key Points:

It takes a lot of concentration and determination to be an active listener. Old habits are hard to break, and if your listening habits are as bad as many people's are, then there's a lot of habit-breaking to do!

Be deliberate with your listening and remind yourself constantly that your goal is to truly hear what the other person is saying. Set aside all other thoughts and behaviors and concentrate on the message. Ask question, reflect, and paraphrase to ensure you understand the message. If you don't, then you'll find that what someone says to you and what you hear can be amazingly different!

Start using active listening today to become a better communicator and improve your workplace productivity and relationships.

Feedback

Introduction

Feedback is a term that originates from natural science. In psychology it refers to the process in which people inform each other about their behaviour. It is impossible to learn about behaviour without the feedback of other people. When others inform a person about his behaviour, s/he learns what the effects are. These are especially the effects on others and this effect can differ from one person to the other and depends on many factors e.g. the relationship you have with that particular person. Feedback gives a person the opportunity to change certain aspects of his/her behaviour.

Receiving feedback is essential for the learning process of an individual. In training courses the feedback of peers and the trainer aims at adequate practice of skills that are being trained. Attention is paid to the **accuracy** with which a skill is practised, **adequacy** as well as **timing**. To give feedback in adequacy is not always easy.

This handout will give you some guideline for feedback.

The contents of the feedback

Feedback is more effective, if it is focussed, explicit and functional and immediately related to observed behaviour.

Feedback is most effective when:

1. It refers to the **actual** behaviour and not to the person
2. It is **descriptive** and not an interpretation of or judgement about the behaviour
3. It is **specific** and not general, and it is aimed at concrete, specific and clearly described behaviours
4. It is given **immediately** following the behaviour
5. It gives the receiver the opportunity to **act upon it**
6. It is **well timed**
7. It **invites** the receiver to **respond**

Facilitating conditions:

- Take some time to think about what you are going to say. In this way it is easier to take some distance. Write down the incident you want to give feedback upon
- Give feedback starting sentences with “I....” When you start the sentence with “you” your feedback might be perceived as a judgement or threat. Your message will not come across
- Restrict the feedback to the behaviours you have seen on this very occasion. Do not compare with other situations, as the context may well have been different

- Describe your own feelings/thoughts. These are the only feelings/thoughts you can describe. “I liked it thatbecause”
- Describe the effect the other person’s behaviour had or has on you

In general it is more helpful if you start with positive feedback. It is more stimulating for the person receiving the feedback to hear what s/he is doing well. S/he will be more prepared to hear negative feedback and look for alternatives, so it facilitates the learning process.

Helpful order to give feedback:

1. What did you do well? *Positive feedback*
2. What could you have done better? *Positive criticism*
3. How could you have done better? *Try to give an alternative*
4. Do you understand? *Check whether the receiver understands what you mean*

To give feedback is a complex skill, which is needed to maximise the learning effects of a training course. The amount and detail in which feedback is given and the efficacy is strongly dependent upon the level of trust between group members.

To give *feedback* in an *effective* way means: feedback which is *understood and accepted* and which *can be used to initiate behaviour change*.

Defence mechanisms

One of the responses to feedback about one’s own behaviour is being defensive. Both rational and irrational arguments are used. In this we often see a typical communication pattern: the person receiving feedback is responding defensively, the observer adds even more to convince the other. This results in more defensive behaviour. Defence or resistance invokes aggression. It is important to realise that people communicate on different levels: what is expressed at relationship level is fought out on the contents level. This type of communication has a destructive effect: the parties will focus on their own positions and do not listen anymore.

The following behaviours invoke defensive behaviour (Gibb, 1986):

- Judgement about the person/personality of the receiving party
- Trying to convince the other with a stream of arguments
- Trying to indirectly make something clear
- Neglecting or denying the emotions of the other

When you give feedback you compare the behaviour with an expected standard or criterion. In this sense you can say that giving feedback is giving a judgement. It is important however that this happens in a fair way. The standards or criteria must be clear to all the observers. The observers must stick to the comparison between the observed behaviour and the standard/criterion.

How to prevent defensive reactions on feedback?

1. Give descriptive feedback, do not judge, interpret or look for motives. By describing your own reaction, you give the other the liberty to choose whether or not to use the information given. It is then less needed to react in a defensive way, and reject the information given. It is then less needed to react in defensive way, and reject the information. E.g. “ I saw that you were facing the chalkboard when you were addressing the participants. I would not have found it easy to follow you when I was a participant”.
2. Give specific not general feedback. E.g. it makes more sense to tell somebody that s/he asks a lot of closed questions and does not look at others a lot than to say that s/he is dominant
3. Give functional feedback. Feedback can be destructive if it is not aiming at the goal of the exercise (e.g. a role-play). An example of this is a role-player who is given a lot of negative feedback and in a subsequent exercise is too judgemental and negative about somebody else
4. Give useful feedback. Aim your feedback at behaviour that can be changed. If someone is directed at an aspect of his/her behaviour that s/

he has no influence on s/he will probably feel even more frustrated

5. Ask the person who wants feedback whether s/he wants to hear something specific. Feedback that is asked for is more effective, especially when the receiver has formulated specific questions
6. Give feedback that is correct. In case of doubt, other group members or videotape can be consulted. In this way, misunderstandings can be prevented

Feedback is only effective when the learner gets the opportunity to practise the newly acquired knowledge about his/her behaviour, i.e. practise the skills. Feedback and practise should alternate, preferable guided by personal learning goals phrased in a concrete and specific way. Acquisition of skills is a twofold process: a newly acquired skill should ideally be practised in different situations in order to generalise.

Receiving feedback in a constructive way is also a skill. The following are guidelines for receiving feedback:

1. Adopt an open attitude
2. Try not to be defensive
3. Listen carefully
4. Ask for elaboration or examples if necessary
5. Try to understand the person who gives you feedback e.g. by asking questions and reflection
6. If you perceive the feedback as negative try to filter the message, what are the parts you can work upon? Re-define it in a constructive way
7. Have a positive attitude, every feedback is a possibility to learn, to improve yourself even if it said in a terrible way
8. If the feedback is unjust in your eyes, compare it yourself with the expected standards/criteria. Think whether it is worth to do something with it, otherwise “let it go”

References:

Gibb, J.R. (1986) Defensive communication. In: Leavitt, M.J. & J.R. Poncey (1986). *Readings in managerial psychology*. Oxford University Press, Oxford

Geke Blok Department of Educational Research and Development, University of Maastricht, The Netherlands, training in feedback (2003)

Checklist for giving Feedback

(adapted from Westberg and Jason 1991)

DO I

Yes/No	Establish and maintain a climate of trust and support?
Yes/No	Make sure learners understand when and how I will give feedback?
Yes/No	Ensure I discuss the standards and criteria for evaluation?
Yes/No	Directly observe performance and give objective evidence?
Yes/No	Invite the learner's self-critique?
Yes/No	Link my feedback to standards and observation of performance?
Yes/No	Ensure feedback is timely and sensitive to learner's needs?
Yes/No	Present feedback in a non-judgmental way?
Yes/No	Focus feedback on behaviours which can be changed?
Yes/No	Label subjective feedback?
Yes/No	Limit my feedback to 2-3 points?
Yes/No	Use a balance of positive and negative feedback? (PNP sandwich method)
Yes/No	Phrase my negative feedback in a constructive way?
Yes/No	Obtain methods for improvement from the learner?
Yes/No	Arrange follow-up and ensure performance has improved?
Yes/No	Include opportunities for feedback at regular times?
Yes/No	Invite feedback from learners?

Counseling

What is counselling?

Counselling is a process that enables a person to sort out issues and reach decisions affecting their life. Often counselling is sought out at times of change or crisis, it need not be so, however, as counselling can also help us at any time of our life.

Counselling involves talking with a person in a way that helps that person solve a problem or helps to create conditions that will cause the person to understand and/or improve his behaviour, character, values or life circumstances.

Counselling is often performed face-to-face in confidential sessions between the counsellor and client(s). However, counselling can also be undertaken by telephone, in writing and, in these days of the Internet, by email or video conferencing.

Counselling is one person helping another as they talk person-to-person. When you help a client make a decision or solve a problem, you are counselling.

Counselling can and may take many different formats to bring a person to a better understanding of them self and others. It can therefore be seen that counselling can be of benefit to a person experiencing problems in finding, forming, and maintaining relationships.

Relationship counselling is not about giving advice. It is about helping and supporting a person to find an

understanding and answers that work for that person. Counselling is a friendly, supportive and positive approach to personal development.

Many people seeking counselling have problems or past experiences in their life, which they find difficult to overcome. These experiences and problems prevent the person moving forward in their life. Counselling helps the person face the effects of past experiences and seek ways to overcome them.

Clients usually find counselling a very liberating and empowering experience. That is not to say that they do not feel nervous or daunted when first approaching a counsellor, they do! However, the process and the feeling afterwards, are usually very positive and beneficial.

Counselling may take time to work, depending upon the nature and number of problems being presented by the client. Sometimes, a single or a few sessions are all that is needed. At other times, longer periods, possibly months or up to a couple of years may be needed. The counsellor is there throughout to assist the client in their development.

What are the possible benefits of counselling?

The main benefit of counselling is that it helps person to have a life which she/he can more fully enjoy

and appreciate. It can help to become the sort of person she/he wants to be.

She/he might use it to:

- feel better about her/his-self;
- feel more at peace, more comfortable, or more secure in the world;
- feel more successfully (and more joyfully) connected with others;
- reduce stress (which promotes physical health too);
- work through problems with a skilled, and compassionate professional;
- learn new behaviours and/or responses which;
- understand own thoughts, feelings, and responses better;
- speak with a skilled and interested professional about fears and perceptions;
- talk with a compassionate professional about troubling or private concerns.

Counselling is not Coaching

There may be a superficial similarity in that both of these activities are one-to-one conversations, but their tone and purpose are very different:

- **Counselling** begins with a problem;
Coaching can begin with a goal or aspiration.
- **Counselling** is sought by people having difficulties;
Coaching is used by high achievers as much as beginners or people who are stuck.
- Many (but not all) forms of **Counselling** focus on the past and the origins of problems;
Coaching focuses on the future and developing a workable solution.

Teach Yourself Better Counselling

Friendly environment: Think about what makes good counselling difficult at your facility—for example, lack of privacy. Talk with colleagues about what you yourselves can do to make counselling easier—for example, taking the client outside to talk.

If appropriate, discuss solutions with your supervisor—for example, hanging a blanket across a corner to create a private place for counselling

Role-playing: Try role-playing with a colleague. One of you can play the role of counsellor. The other person can pretend to be a client; imagine the client's character, life situation, and the decisions that he or she is facing. Then act out the counselling session. Other colleagues can watch. Afterwards, discuss what went well and what could be improved. Discuss other approaches to the needs of this "client." Everyone's comments should be clear but gentle.

Supporting materials: Keep reference materials handy so that you can easily find answers to clients' questions. Collect good pictures to show clients. Try out the pictures with clients and see what works best.

Observation: Ask a colleague to watch you counsel a client and then to make comments. (Get the client's permission first.) Your colleague can use the skills checklist (see below).

KEY WORDS FOR LEARNING BETTER COUNSELLING

"One way I will improve my counselling today is..."

As a health care provider, you ask clients to change their behaviour for better health. In the same way, you want to change your own behaviour to be a better provider. Change is easiest one step at a time. You can make a commitment to improve one counselling skill in the certain period of time.

Check Your Counselling Skills (Checklist)

You check yourself or ask a colleague to watch you (with the client's permission) and check your skills.¹

	Yes	No
Greet — Did you/ he/she		
Welcome each client on arrival?		
Meet in a comfortable, private place?		
Assure the client of confidentiality?		
Express caring, interest, and acceptance by words and gestures throughout the meeting?		
Explain what to expect?		
Ask — Did you/ he/she		
Ask the client's reason for the visit?		
Encourage the client to do most of the talking?		
Ask mostly open questions?		
Pay attention to what the client said and how it was said, and follow up with more questions? Put yourself in the client's shoes—understand without expressing criticism or judgment?		
Ask about feelings?		
Ask the client's preferences?		
Find out about need? (For example STD/HIV prevention?)		
Tell — Did you/ he/she		
Start discussion with the client's preference?		
Tailor and personalize information?		
Give information important to the client's decision?		
Avoid "information overload"?		
Use words familiar to the client?		
Use samples, drawings etc.?		

Help — Did you/ he/she		
Let the client know that the decision is hers (or his)?		
Help the client identify the full range of possible choices?		
Help the client think how the various choices would affect her or his own life?		
Advise without controlling?		
Let the client decide?		
Ask the client to state her or his decision?		
Reflect the client’s decision to confirm it?		
Make sure the client’s choice is based on accurate understanding?		
List any medical reasons for making a different method choice, and check if the client has any of these conditions?		
Explain - Did you/ he/she		
Provide what the client wants, if no medical reason not to?		
Explain side effects? Specific medical reasons?		
Check the client’s understanding?		
Ask for any questions?		
Explain any printed instructions and give them to the client?		
Return — Did you/ he/she		
Plan the next visit, if needed?		
Invite the client to come back any time, for any reason?		
Refer the client for any care you cannot give?		
Thank the client for coming and invite the client to send or bring others?		

Pattern of sessions

In counselling there is normally a familiar pattern of sessions:

- Introduction,
- Information Gathering,
- Discussion,
- Conclusion and

What follows is the framework for an Initial Visit, Middle Visit, and Final Visit.²

Initial Visit Pattern

First impressions really are lasting impressions. It is important to be timely and friendly.

Introduction – the first 10 minutes

Greet the client warmly – smile and shake hands. Escort to your office.

Offer a chair and a drink of water.

Your client will be nervous – not knowing what to expect. So explain to her or him right away what she or he may be wondering about – briefly. Your credentials, the forms that will need to be filled out: the assurance of confidentiality, the duration of the visit, etc.

Don't forget to assure the client that there will be time to find out what brings her or him in here. Given the amount of paperwork that normally has to be filled out, she or he will begin to question the value of this.

Information Gathering – about 20 minutes

Discussion / Counsellor Input – about 10 minutes

This is your opportunity to provide input. To tell the client what you think she/he is saying and to develop a list of concerns. The client can then be asked if what you are hearing is what she/he is saying. Ask the client to rate the concerns from most problematic to least, and ask which one she/he would like to work on first. You may not have all the resources you need at hand – but you now know what you have to do some homework on!

I am a big fan of “mapping” as the first homework assignment - filling out a week-long time sheet where they can write down when the problem happens and what is going on at the time.

Conclusion – about 10 minutes

Assure the client that she/he can “do this.” If you honestly feel that client can't, this is a sign you need to refer.

It is crucial that the client have a printed copy of services available to her/him.

Make certain the client knows that she/he can always reach you – by answering machine and by email. That you will respond briefly, and the client can discuss the stated concern(s) at the next meeting.

End all counselling sessions on a positive note. The client should be able to list a few things that she/he has to look forward to over the next few days.

Set the next appointment time and date.

Middle Visit Pattern

If the client hasn't already, remind her/him to sign in with reception.

Introduction – the first 10 minutes

Greet the client warmly – smile (and shake hands if hand is extended or is appropriate.) Escort to your office.

Offer a chair and a drink of water.

Give the client the chance to get things off her/his chest before you move to info gathering. These concerns may be spurious – but may be pre-occupying. Or these concerns may form the major part of this session.

Explain how this second (third, etc.) visit will look. That you will review what happened last visit and what has happened since then. You will continue to work on current challenges as indicated last time – or others that may take precedent.

NB: If the client is feeling no better or in fact feels worse, this may be out of your scope of practice. Set up a referral now. It can always be canceled.

Information Gathering – about 20 minutes

Review what happened last time – to make sure you are on the same page. If there was homework – review it; if the homework was not done, ask why?!

Work with the primary concerns of the day.

As always, try to let the client do most of the talking. If she/he is avoiding talking about concerns, bring her/him back on track.

Discussion / Counsellor Input – about 10 minutes

This is your opportunity to provide input. In fact you may have been already, but if you know you have reserved some time to reflect on what is being said, you will be less likely to interrupt, to talk.

Conclusion – about 10 minutes

Restate briefly what has happened and what the client is hoping to achieve – getting approval at each assertion.

Again, assure the client this is “doable.” If this is beyond your scope of practice, you need to refer NOW.

NB: Check to see if the client did book or have the health assessment. If not, have her/him book it using the phone in the office.

End on a positive note!

Set the next appointment time and date if it has not been pre-booked.

Final Visit Pattern

There is really is no such thing. Clients often drift off after a session or two. Also, even if you have seen the client on numerous occasions – she or he may need to come back. This ending may be more like a vacation break.

Introduction – the first 10 minutes

Greet the client warmly – smile (and shake hands if hand is extended or is appropriate.) Escort to your office.

Offer a chair and a drink of water.

Give the client the chance to get things off her/his chest before you move to info gathering. These concerns may be spurious – but may be pre-occupying. Or addressing this could take up most of this session.

Explain how this “final” visit will look. That you will review what has happened thus far and look positively toward the future.

Information Gathering – about 20 minutes

Review what happened last time – to make sure you are on the same page. If there was homework – review it.

Work with the primary concerns of the day. In a “final visit”, the client may express concern of feeling orphaned.

As always, try to let the client do most of the talking. If she/he is avoiding talking about concerns, bring her/him back on track.

Discussion / Counsellor Input – about 10 minutes

This is your opportunity to provide input. Hopefully by now the client is very good at coming up with her/his own strategies.

Conclusion – about 10 minutes

Restate briefly what has happened over the past few weeks and what the client has achieved.

Assure the client that he or she can “do this.” It is crucial that the client have a printed copy of services available to him / her, that they are not lost.

Make certain the client knows that she or he can always reach you somehow – for example, by email or by sending a letter. Chances are they won’t “hound” you – but they may very well send you a thank you note.

As always, end on a positive note. The client should leave able to easily list the good things in her/his life.

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- 1 Study tip: Try to improve one step each week for 6 weeks, until all steps are improved.
 - 2 What matters most of all is the client gets to talk and talk and talk AND be truly heard!

Gather Method in Counselling

Principles for Good Counselling

1. **Treat each client well.** All clients deserve respect, whatever their age, marital status, ethnic group, sex, or sexual and reproductive health behavior.
2. **Interact.** Each client is a different person. Ask questions, listen, and respond to each client's own needs, concerns, and situation.
3. **Give the right amount of information**—enough for the client to make informed choices but not so much that the client is overloaded.
4. **Tailor and personalize information.** Give clients the specific information that they need and want, and help clients see what the information means to them.
5. **Help clients remember instructions.**

The Elements of Counselling

Counselling often has 6 elements. You can remember the 6 elements with the letters in the English word **GATHER**. Or you can find words in other languages to help you remember.

Counselling should suit each client. Not all clients need to be counseled in this order. Not all clients need all 6 **GATHER** elements. Some will need an element repeated. Counselling should change to fit the client's needs.

I. Greet Clients

- Give clients your full attention as soon as you meet them.
- Be polite, friendly, and respectful: greet clients, introduce yourself, and offer them seats.
- Ask how you can help.
- Tell clients that you will not tell others what they say.
- Explain what will happen during the visit.
- Conduct counselling where no one else can hear.

The provider's friendly, respectful greeting makes the client feel welcome. It makes a good connection between provider and client right from the start. A good connection builds trust, and clients rely on providers that they trust. This good connection should be kept up. Throughout every visit, all clients deserve understanding, respect, and honesty from everyone they meet.

Make sure each client is greeted in a friendly, respectful way as soon as she or he comes in. The staff member who first greets clients should understand how important this job is. Try to have places for clients to sit while they wait. Make the waiting area cheerful and interesting. For example, you can find or make posters that give useful health information. Have brochures and pamphlets for clients to look at.

If a client will be examined or undergo a procedure,

explain what will happen clearly and with reassurance. Point out the staff member who can help if a waiting client needs something or has a question. Be sure every client has privacy from being seen or heard by others during counselling and during any physical examination or procedure.

Tell clients that information about them and what they say will not be repeated to others (confidentiality).

Key words for greeting

Experienced health care providers know “key words.” These words and phrases help put clients at ease. They help clients recognize and express their needs. They help clients make good decisions for themselves. Key words save time, too: They go quickly to the heart of the matter.

Here are some providers’ “key words” for greeting clients. Of course, the right words may be different in different cultures.

“Welcome to [name of health care facility or organization]. My name is [give name]. I am please that you have come.”

“How can we help you today?” (Respond to the client’s answer by explaining what will happen next. For example, you might say, *“Have you visited us before? Please tell me your name so that we can give your records to the nurse.”* OR: *“Please have a seat here. We will be able to help you in about [state how many minutes].”*)

II. Ask Clients about Themselves

- Ask clients about their reasons for coming.
- Help clients decide what decisions they face.
- Help clients express their feelings, needs, wants, and any doubts, concerns, or questions.
- Ask clients about their experience with the reproductive health matter that concerns them.
- Keep questions open, simple, and brief. Look at your client as you speak.
- Ask clients what they want to do.
- Listen actively to what the client says. Follow where the client leads the discussion.
- Show your interest and understanding at all times.

Express empathy. Avoid judgments and opinions.

- Ask for any information needed to complete client records.

Why Ask Questions

In GATHER, A stands for “Ask.” The provider questions effectively and listens actively to the client’s answers.

Why ask questions?

- To learn why the client has come.
- To help the client express needs and wants.
- To help the client express feelings and attitudes, and so to learn how the client feels.
- To help the client think clearly about choices.
- To show the client that you care.
- To learn the client’s knowledge and experience.
- To learn about behavior and situations that could affect the client’s health choices.

You may need to ask all clients certain questions for your records. But the most important questions bring out what clients really want and how they feel. The best questions lead to answers that suggest more questions—like conversation between friends. No list of standard questions suits all clients.

How can you “question effectively”?

- Use a tone of voice that shows interest, concern, and friendliness.
- Use words that clients understand.
- Ask only one question at a time. Wait with interest for the answer.
- Ask questions that encourage clients to express their needs. Examples are: “How would you feel if you...”
- Use words such as “then?” “and?” “oh?” These words encourage clients to keep talking.
- Avoid starting questions with “why.” Sometimes “why” sounds as if you were finding fault.
- Ask the same question in other ways if the client has not understood.

Responding to Client's Feelings

Health concerns can be a very private matter for clients. When they talk about these subjects, they may feel embarrassed, confused, worried, or afraid. These feelings affect their decisions. Some feelings may make choices difficult. Some feelings may lead to choices that clients regret later.

How can you help clients deal with their feelings? First, ask about feelings and help clients talk about them. Give your full attention. Listen actively and question effectively. Watch clients' body movements and expressions. These can help you learn what clients feel.

Once you recognize clients' feelings, let them know in clear and simple words that you understand. This is called "reflecting feelings."

You cannot change clients' feelings. Only they can do that. But when you reflect feelings, you are showing that you understand. You also are saying that it is all right to feel that way.

As clients talk about their feelings, they understand themselves better. Then they may find it easier to make wise and healthy choices.

Advising Without Controlling

Most clients want to make their own decisions with some advice or guidance from the provider. Two principles are important to giving advice:

Each client's wishes—and not the provider's wishes—determine how much advice to give. Different clients will want more or less advice.

Good advice helps clients make their own decisions. Good advice should not be controlling—that is, it should not make decisions for clients.

Examples:

Telling the client clearly that the decision is hers or his, while offering help, too: *"Together we can think through your decision, but the choice is yours."*

Helping clients think about the effects of their choices—both good and bad: *"The Pill gives upset stomachs at first. What if this happened to you?"*

Helping clients think about their own lives: *"With your schedule, what might remind you to come to the clinic every day?"*

Taking cues from the client: *"You said that you had several sex partners in the last year. This makes me think that you may need to protect yourself from STDs."*

Respecting each client's decisions about their own lives: *"I understand that you must leave home and work in the city most of the time. Since that is so..."*

III. Tell Clients about Their Choices

In GATHER, T stands for "Tell." The provider responds to the client's situation, needs, and concerns. The provider tells the client information that helps the client reach a decision and make an informed choice.

To make informed choices and good decisions, clients need clear, accurate, specific information about the range of their choices.

- Help clients understand their possible choices.
- Information should be tailored—that is, important to the client's decision.
- Information should be personalized—that is, put in terms of the client's own life.
- Advantages and disadvantages; possible side effects and complications.
- Ask if the client wants to learn more.
- Use samples and other audiovisual materials if possible.

Tailored information is information that helps the client make a specific decision. In the "Ask" step of GATHER, you can learn what decisions the client is facing. Then, in the "Tell" step, you can give specific information that helps the client make those decisions. You can skip information that makes no difference to the client. Information that makes no difference can overload and confuse the client.

Personalized information is information put in terms of the client's own situation. Personalizing information helps the client understand what the information means to her or him personally.

Eg. Ask what out-patient treatment regimen client want? (if there are options available)- what is the most

important- (For example—very convenient; discreet etc.); tell what is the option is not available;

IV. Help Clients to Choose

- Tell clients that the choice is theirs. Offer advice as a health expert, but avoid making the clients' decisions for them.
- To help clients choose, ask them to think about their plans.
- Help clients think about the results of each possible choice.
- Ask if the client wants anything made clearer. Reword and repeat information as needed.
- Check whether the client has made a clear decision. Specifically ask, "What have you decided to do?" Wait for the client to answer; it is very important to ask the client this question because: the question makes clear that a decision is needed. the question makes clear that the decision belongs to the client.

V. Explain What to Do

In GATHER, E stands for "Explain." The provider explains to the client how to carry out the client's decision.

After the client has made a choice:

- Give supplies, if appropriate.
- If the method or services cannot be given at once, tell the client how, when, and where they will be provided.
- Explain when to come back for follow-up or, if needed.
- Explain any medical reasons to return.
- If possible, give the client printed material to take home.
- Tell clients to come back whenever they wish, or if there are medical reasons to return.

Tips To Help Clients Remember

The way you give information—especially

instructions—can help clients remember them:

1. Keep it short. Choose the few most important points that the client must remember.
2. Keep it simple. Use short sentences and common words that clients understand.
3. Keep it separate. Keep important instructions separate from information that does not need to be remembered.
4. Point out what to remember. For example, "These 3 points are important to remember:...." Then list the 3 points. Most important to remember is *what* to do and *when*.
5. Put first things first. Give the most important information first. It will be remembered best.
6. Organize. Put information in categories. For example: "There are 4 medical reasons to come back to the clinic."
7. Repeat. The last thing you say can remind the client of the most important instruction.
8. Show as well as speak. Sample flip charts, wall charts, and other pictures reinforce the spoken word.
9. Be specific. Use specific words, every 2nd day (not 3 times a week), or in the morning and evening (not 2 times per day).
10. Make links. Help clients find a routine event that reminds them to act—for example, "Please come back for your next check-up after your birthday."
11. Check understanding. Ask clients to repeat important instructions. This helps them remember. Also, you can gently correct any errors.
12. Send it home. Give the client simple print materials to take home. Review this material with the client first.

Tips on Using Audiovisual Materials

Audiovisual materials help clients learn and remember. These materials include sample drugs, wall charts, take-home pamphlets and wallet cards, flip charts, audiotapes, videotapes, drawings, and diagrams. Even simple, handmade audiovisual materials are better than none at all. Here are some tips on using audiovisual materials:

1. Make sure clients can clearly see the visual materials.
2. Explain pictures, and point to them as you talk.
3. Look mostly at the client, not at the flip chart or poster.
4. Change the wall charts and posters in the waiting room from time to time. Then clients can learn something new each time they come.
5. Invite clients to touch and hold samples.
6. If possible, give clients pamphlets or instruction sheets to take home. These print materials can remind clients what to do. Be sure to go over the materials with the client. You can mention information, and the client will remember it when he or she looks at the print material later.
7. Suggest that the client show take-home materials to other people.
8. Order more take-home materials before they run out.
9. Make your own materials if you cannot order them or if they run out.

VI. Return for Follow-Up

In GATHER, R stands for “Return.” All clients should be invited to return to their health care provider whenever there is a reason.

At the same time, clients should not be made to come back when not necessary for unneeded follow-ups.

At a follow-up visit:

- Ask if the client has any questions or anything to discuss. Treat all concerns seriously.
- Ask if the client is satisfied. Have there been problems?
- Help the client handle any problems.
- Ask if any health problems have come up since the last visit. Check if these problems make it better to choose another method or treatment.
- Check if the client is using the treatment correctly.

Key words for returning

“Please come back any time, for any reason.”

“I hope we see you again.”

Making the client feel welcome *back* is as important as making the client feel welcome the first time.

Reasons to Return

There are many good reasons for for example, the client:

- Has questions or problems or wants advice.
- Wants help with side effects.
- Brings spouse, friend, or relative for services or information.
- Wants to check on a rumor.

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Coaching¹

Coaching is not Training

While training and coaching both promote learning, they do so in different ways:

- **Training** is about teaching specific skills or knowledge;
Coaching is about facilitating someone else's thinking and helping them learn by working on live work issues.
- **Training** usually takes place off-site or in dedicated training sessions;
Coaching takes place in the office and (when carried out by a manager) can be integrated into day-to-day workplace conversations.
- **Training** is more typically carried out in groups;
Coaching is usually a one-to-one process and is tailored to the individual's needs.
- **Training** is usually delivered by an external consultant or dedicated internal trainer;
Coaching can be delivered by an external consultant or by a manager.

Although they are distinct activities, training and coaching can work very well when used together. One classic obstacle encountered in business training is the difficulty of transferring skills and enthusiasm from the training room to the workplace. Coaching is an excellent way of helping people *apply* what they learn from a course to their day-to-day work.

A research study found that post-course training had a dramatic effect on the effectiveness of one training program².

Coaching is not Mentoring

There are some superficial similarities between coaching and mentoring, as they are both typically one-to-one conversations aimed at facilitating professional development, but there are also significant differences:

- A **Mentor** is usually a more senior person who shares experience and advises a junior person working in the same field;
A **Coach** is not necessarily senior to the person being coached, and not typically give advice or pass on experience; instead s/he uses questions and feedback to facilitate the other person's thinking and practical learning.
- A **Mentor** is not typically the line manager of the person being mentored, but someone who is available for advice and guidance when needed;
Coaching is frequently delivered by line managers with their teams.

Coaching is not Counselling

Again, there may be a superficial similarity in that both of these activities are one-to-one conversations, but their tone and purpose are very different:

- **Counselling** and therapy deal with personal problems;
Coaching addresses workplace performance.
- **Counselling** begins with a problem;
Coaching can begin with a goal or aspiration.
- **Counselling** is sought by people having difficulties;
Coaching is used by high achievers as much as beginners or people who are stuck.
- Many (but not all) forms of **Counselling** focus on the past and the origins of problems;
Coaching focuses on the future and developing a workable solution.

1 <http://www.wishfulthinking.co.uk/2008/01/28/formal-and-informal-coaching/>

2 Executive Coaching as a Transfer of Training Tool: Effects on Productivity in a Public Agency Journal article by Gerald Olivero, K. Denise Bane, Richard E. Kopelman; Public Personnel Management, Vol. 26, 1997

The Coaching Difference

While there are similarities with other interventions such as mentoring, counselling and consultancy, There are also key differences. Lets imagine you are about to bake a cake and you want some input from another person. How might a coach, mentor, counsellor, consultant or trainer help you?

A COACH would ask you questions about what end results you want and check if you had everything you needed, what other equipment/ingredients you might need, and check with you that it matched your priorities.

A MENTOR would share his or her recipe with you and his or her experience of how he or she does it

A COUNSELLOR would explore anxieties you had about baking the cake

A CONSULTANT would evaluate the situation, provide three or four recipe options and discuss which was appropriate for you.

A TRAINER would demonstrate how it was done, give you the equipment and ingredients you need, and observe while you are baking it giving feedback when needed.

MENTORING: The key difference between coaching and mentoring is that mentors bring their range of expertise, knowledge and experience, which is passed on to the mentees where appropriate. So if a senior manager is mentoring someone junior to him or her in the organisation, he or she is modelling and

sharing his or her experiences of what it's like to be doing the job and giving a feel for 'how we do things around here'

COUNSELLING: Counselling supports people in working through emotional distress or anxieties that prevent them from functioning as well as they'd like to. The counselling conversation can spend a lot of time looking at the past and how people have got to where they are

CONSULTANCY: Consultants work in organisations in numerous ways, often to define problem areas/ inefficiencies and give advise to develop solutions. They bring knowledge and expertise in their areas of work and pass advice on to their clients. Coaching is not about giving advice, though helping coaches really access their own expertise is a key part of it.

TRAINING: Great Training is about equipping people with new skills and knowledge to help their personal and /or professional development. The skilled trainer will train/teach people the relevant new information and, ideally (but rarely) address all four KASH aspects of their subject area (Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, Habits) Coaching is not about training someone to do something brand new but it is a great way to support teaching/training to really embed the learning, as highlighted by the following research

QUIZ – what interventions do you feel would be appropriate in each of these situations

1. A new employee joins an organisation and is on his or her first day at work
2. A manager conducting appraisal with his or her team
3. A graduate who has identified that he or she would like to work towards being program manager
4. A team member who's been off work with depression
5. An employee who wants to learn about presentation skills

Answers

1. Training/Mentoring
2. Coaching/ Mentoring
3. Mentoring / Coaching
4. Possible counselling (Maybe psychotherapy in extreme circumstances)
5. Training. (Coaching is not a panacea for everything)

Directive or non Directive, that's the question

There are different school of thought whether coaching is directive or non directive. Non directive coaching is hugely effective, as individuals are experts in their life and they're far more likely to put their own ideas into action, rather than when they are being told what to do. While coaching may be non directive, it is without doubt directional, as it is about moving forwards and the coach will ensure the direction stays on track, according to what the coaching wants to achieve. Above all coaching is about being appropriate for the individual.

NON-DIRECTIVE
Listening
Questioning
Clarifying
Creative Thinking
Ideas Generation
Giving Advice
Training
Telling
DIRECTIVE

Remembering the primary purpose of coaching is to generate awareness, encourage responsibility and facilitate change, more of this takes place higher up the ladder. The top of the ladder is where non-directive coaching takes place, using highly tuned listening, great questioning and clarity seeking. A consultant or trainer would communicate up and down the whole ladder, using listening skills through to telling others what to do. A mentor would certainly be up to at least midway on the rungs of the ladder. Again what is appropriate for the person and the situation. For leaders or managers it is often more of a challenge to operate at the top of the ladder as they are used to problem solving, giving solutions and telling people what to do. Leaders and managers who address non directive coaching as a practised skill will reap the rewards of seeing an improvement in the progress, productivity and performance of themselves, their team and their organisation. They will know when and how to use it to best effect and when purely telling people, advising or mentoring them is appropriate.¹

¹ Extract taken from emotional intelligence Coaching – Stephan Neale, Lisa Spencer-Arnell and Liz Wilson

How to F.R.A.M.E. the Coaching Conversation: Tips for New Coaches

Coaching happens through conversation. But not all conversations are coaching.

How do professional coaches do what they do? What makes *their* conversations

different from conversations with friends, colleagues, relatives, and strangers? What do they *know* that others don't?

The first thing that coaches know is that coaching takes practice - hours and

hours of practice. That's one of the reasons why the International Coach Federation requires that coaches log a minimum of 200 hours of 1-on-1 professional coaching.

frame the coaching conversation is as follows:

The F.R.A.M.E. Coaching Model©

- F F.O.C.U.S. each interaction
- R REACT non-judgmentally
- A ASK thought-provoking questions
- M MONITOR progress and learning
- E ENCOURAGE continued growth

F.O.C.U.S. each interaction

So how *does* a coach help people focus? Taking the use of acronyms one step further, we can look at it from the perspective of the person being coached:

- F as in **FACE IT** - Just getting people to talk about where they're stuck, or what they might be avoiding, is often enough to help them stare down their 'scary monsters' and get back on track. So coaches have people talk about what's *really* important.
- O as in be more **OPEN MINDED** - Basketball coaching legend John Wooden said it best, "It's what you learn *after* you know it all that counts." Helping people realize that there may be *other* ways of thinking/feeling about things than how they typically do, is often incredibly liberating and helps them think more creatively and expansively.
- C as in recognize the **CHOICES** - Once the creative juices start flowing, the next task is to help the client brainstorm a number of concrete alternatives as to how *s/he might* move meaningfully forward. But make sure that you're not the one providing all the answers - that's not coaching, that's consulting. The more you can encourage your client to come up with seemingly absurd ideas, the better.
- U as in **UNAMBIGUOUSLY** move forward - Once a variety of choices are identified, coaches help people pick one (or more than one), develop specific assignments and plans to get things going, and establish accountabilities to insure proper follow-through.

- S as in SOLIDIFY the learning - Results are nice, but for learning to stick, it's essential to talk about the insights, discoveries, and Lessons Learned along the way. As Vernon Law said, "Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterward." A good coach makes sure the lessons are clearly understood.

REACT non-judgmentally

A big problem that many face when non-experienced coaches try to coach them is that they feel like they're being judged. Thus, being able to react in a supportive and respectful way is an essential element in effective coaching. Don't make it about whether you agree or not; make it about the client's clarity and perspective.

Your job as coach is to ask questions to facilitate that clarity and perspective.

Friends often have a hard time doing that because friends typically have already

decided for a person what's in their own best interest. Spouses/significant others

often have a hard time doing that because their world will dramatically change

based on whatever conclusion is reached. And colleagues often have a hard time

doing that because their judgment is often affected by both sets of conditions. But very few of them are trained in the ways of coaching, and as such, they rarely recognize the biases they bring to a coach-like conversation.

To be truly objective and impartial - yet caring and supportive - can be a fine line to walk. But a coach needs to or the individual will shut down and no longer share

what they're really thinking and feeling.

ASK thought-provoking questions

Questions are a coach's stock and trade, and many coaching schools talk about the importance of asking "powerful" questions. There are two basic types of questions:

questions that gather information, and questions that deepen the learning of the person being asked. The latter category is far more powerful and thought provoking.

Here's the test: if a client is telling you things s/he has already thought about or felt, then you missed the mark. If, on the other hand, new thoughts, feelings, realizations, ideas, insights, and directions start to 'pop', then you're in the zone. Consider the following examples:

Gather Information Questions Deepen the Learning Questions

What have you tried so far? What haven't you tried yet?

Why are you stuck? What would make that easier for you?

What do you mean? What aren't you saying?

What are you waiting for? What are you ready to do?

Why did you do it that way? What have you learned so far?

See the difference? Now which set of questions do you think would help move someone forward? And whatever you do, don't ask "Why?" Rarely does a *why* question yield an answer you can do much with.

MONITOR progress and learning

It's one thing to say you're going to do something, but it's entirely another thing to actually do it. So it's not surprising that one of the key roles a coach plays is to hold people accountable for the commitments they make. They do this by asking three

Key questions:

- WHAT will you do?
- By WHEN will you do it?
- HOW will I know?

Want to become a better coach? Ask everyone you coach these three questions! Executives require something a little different, though. Interestingly, the most significant difference between life coaching and

business or executive coaching is this - executives don't typically need the accountability piece as much as their nonexecutive counterparts. They already know how to follow-through on their commitments - that's what helped get them promoted into the executive ranks to begin with. So when coaching executives, the more you can engage them in the conversation the more likely it is that they'll come up with a very clear set of realizations and Next Steps. They'll then be off and running.

ENCOURAGE continued growth

In addition to helping clients move meaningfully forward, coaches can help people want to *continue* on the path of ongoing growth and development. They do this by helping clients recognize victories otherwise overlooked. They do this by championing their clients to recover more quickly when things *don't* go as hoped. And they do this by acknowledging that the twists and turns along the way are a sure sign of progress. (After all, if the person wasn't going anywhere, there'd be no new twists or turns showing up.)

But even more importantly, encourage your clients to celebrate both their successes

AND failings - the successes for what they enable, and the failings for what they teach. And that's the greatest coaching tip of all.

GROW Model¹

The **GROW model** (or process) is a technique for goal setting and problem solving. It was developed in the UK and used extensively in the corporate coaching market in the late 1980s and 1990s. There have been many claims to authorship of GROW² as a way of achieving goals and solving problems. GROW is very well known in the business arena but it also has many applications in everyday life. The particular value of GROW is that it provides an effective, structured methodology which both helps set goals effectively **and** is a problem solving process.

It can be used by anyone without special training. While there are many methodologies that can be used to address problems, the value of GROW is that it is easily understood, straightforward to apply and very thorough. In addition it is possible to apply it to a large variety of issues in a very effective way.

Stages of GROW

There are a number of different versions of the GROW model. This version presents one view of the stages but there are others. The 'O' in this version has two meanings.

G	Goal	This is the end point, where the client wants to be. The goal has to be defined in such a way that it is very clear to the client when they have achieved it.
R	Reality	This is how far the client is away from their goal. If the client were to look at all the steps they need to take in order to achieve the goal, the Reality would be the number of those steps they have completed so far.
O	Obstacles	There will be Obstacles stopping the client getting from where they are now to where they want to go. If there were no Obstacles the client would already have reached their goal.
	Options	Once Obstacles have been identified the client need to find ways of dealing with them if they are to make progress. These are the Options.
W	Way Forward	The Options then need to be converted into action steps which will take the client to their goal. These are the Way Forward.

As with many simple principles any user of GROW can apply a great deal of skill and knowledge at each stage but the basic process remains as written above. There are numerous questions which the coach could use at any point and part of the skill of the coach is to know which questions to use and how much detail to uncover.

1 Whitmore, Sir John. Coaching For Performance.

2 Graham Alexander, Alan Fine and Sir John Whitmore

The GROW Model

Goal

- What is the subject matter or the issue on which you would like to work?
- What form of outcome are you seeking by the end of the coaching session?
- How far and how detailed do you expect to get in this session?
- In the long term what is your goal related to this issue? What is the time frame?
- What intermediate steps can you identify, with their time frames?

Reality

- What is the present situation in more detail?
- What and how great is your concern about?
- Who is affected by this issue other than you?
- Who knows about your desire to do something about it?
- How much control do you personally have over the outcome?
- Who else has some control over it and how much?
- What action steps have you taken on it so far?
- What stopped you from doing more?
- What obstacles will need to be overcome on the way?

- What, if any, internal obstacles or personal resistance do you have to taking action?
- What resources do you already have? Skill, time, money, enthusiasm, support, etc.?
- What other resources will you need? Where will you get them from?
- What is really the issue here, the nub of the issue or the bottom line?

Options

- What are all the different ways in which you could approach this issue?
- Make a list of all the alternatives, large or small, complete and partial solutions/
- What else could you do?
- What would you do if you had more time, a larger budget or if you were the boss?
- What would you do if you could start again with a clean sheet, with a new team?
- Would you like to add a suggestion from me?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each of these in turn?
- Which would give the best result?
- Which of these solutions appeals to you most, or feels best to you?
- Which would give you the most satisfaction?

Will

- Which option or options do you choose?
- To what extent does this meet all your objectives?
- What are your criteria and measurements for success?
- When precisely are you going to start and finish each action step?
- What could arise to hinder you in taking these steps or meeting the goal?
- What personal resistance do you have, if any, to taking these steps?
- What will you do to eliminate these external and internal factors?
- Who needs to know what your plans are?
- What support do you need and from whom?
- What will you do to obtain that support and when?
- What could I do to support you?
- What commitment on a one-to-one scale do you have to taking these agreed actions?
- What prevents this from being a ten?
- What could you do or alter to raise your commitment closer to ten?
- Is there anything else you want to talk about now or are we finished?

Employee Coaching: Knowing when to step in and when to hang back

By F. John Reh

A lot has been written about why managers should coach employees. A lot also has been written on how to coach employees. You can find many articles on the Pygmalion Effect and the Galatea Effect, which explain how employee coaching works. Very few articles help you know when to coach employees. That's what this article does.

Before Coaching Employees

Most of the time, a manager should **not** coach their employees. To understand that statement, it helps to know what employee coaching is and what employee coaching is not. Giving employees the knowledge and skills they need to perform their job tasks is not employee coaching; that is employee training. On the other hand, employee coaching is an on-going process of helping employee identify and overcome the hurdles that prevent them from excelling at their jobs.

Note that employee coaching involves **helping** employees identify solutions to their performance barriers. You are not coaching your employees when you **tell** them what to do.

When Not To Coach Employees

Before you can effectively coach employees you must know that they are properly trained and that

they know what is expected of them. These are the times to NOT coach employees:

- Their training is not complete
When an employee has not been completely trained it is a waste of your time and theirs to try to coach them in those aspects of their job. If they have been properly trained in part of their job, you can coach them in that part, but not in the areas where they have not yet been trained. Do the training first. Then do the employee coaching.
- They do not know what is expected of them
It is pointless to coach employees who don't know what is expected of them and know how that is measured. Remember that employee coaching is designed to help them overcome performance barriers. If they don't know what performance is expected of them they won't know how to get there. Set clear objectives for your employees. Then do the employee coaching.
- When you are in a hurry
Employee coaching takes time. When you are in a hurry, you will not do a good job. You will not take the time to **help** them identify solutions, but will be more likely to just **tell** them what to do. Make time to do it right. Then do the employee coaching.
- When you are angry or upset

When you are upset, you won't exhibit the enthusiasm and friendliness you need to be effective as an employee coach. You may not be fair or equitable. You may give even subtle signals to the employee that could undermine the coaching you have been doing up to this point. Get your emotions in check. Then do the employee coaching.

In the first part of this article we discussed what employee coaching is and what it is not. We listed times when a good manager would continue to monitor employee behavior, but would not step in and coach their employees. Other times, a good manager must step in and coach.

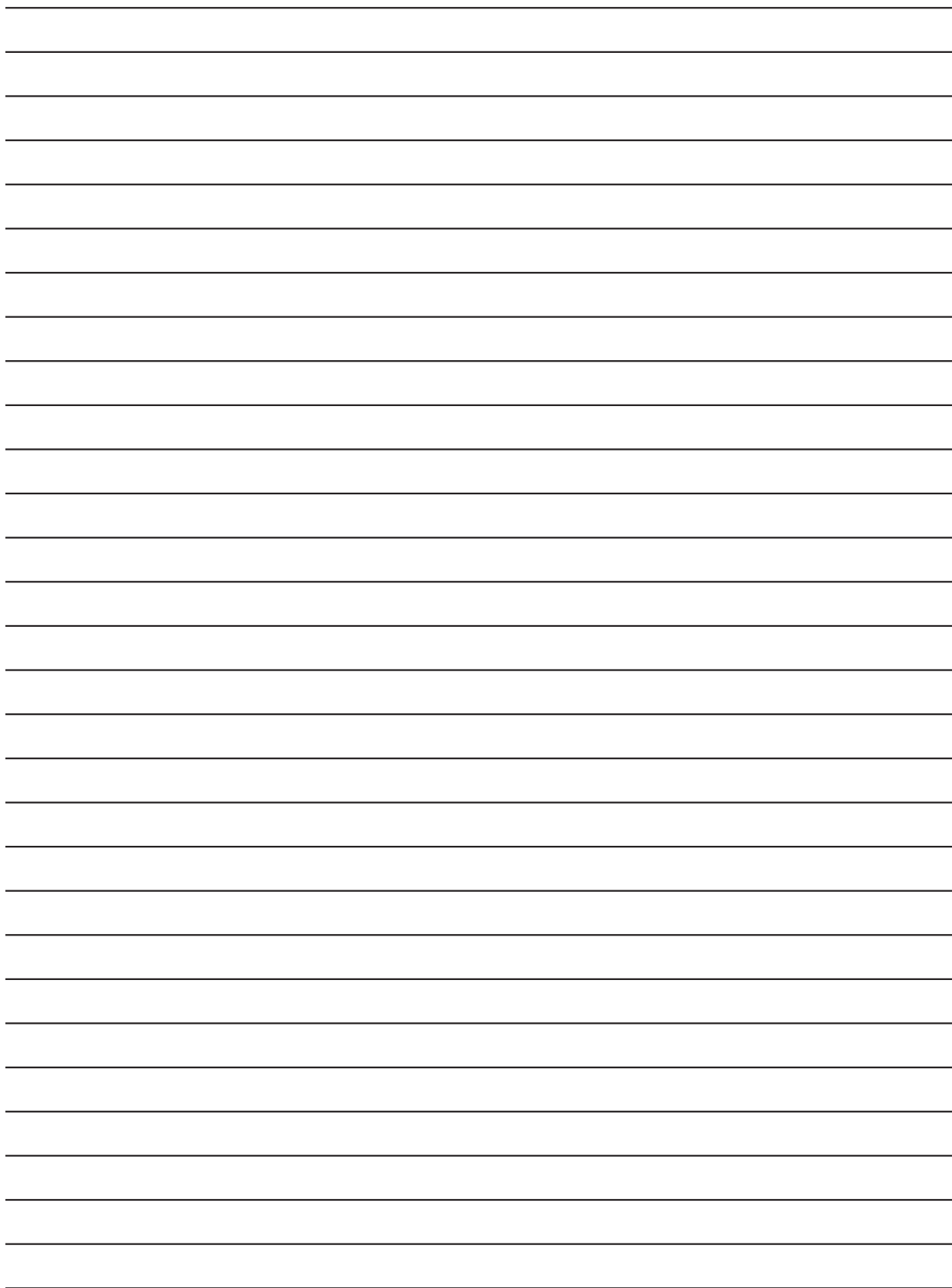
When To Coach Employees

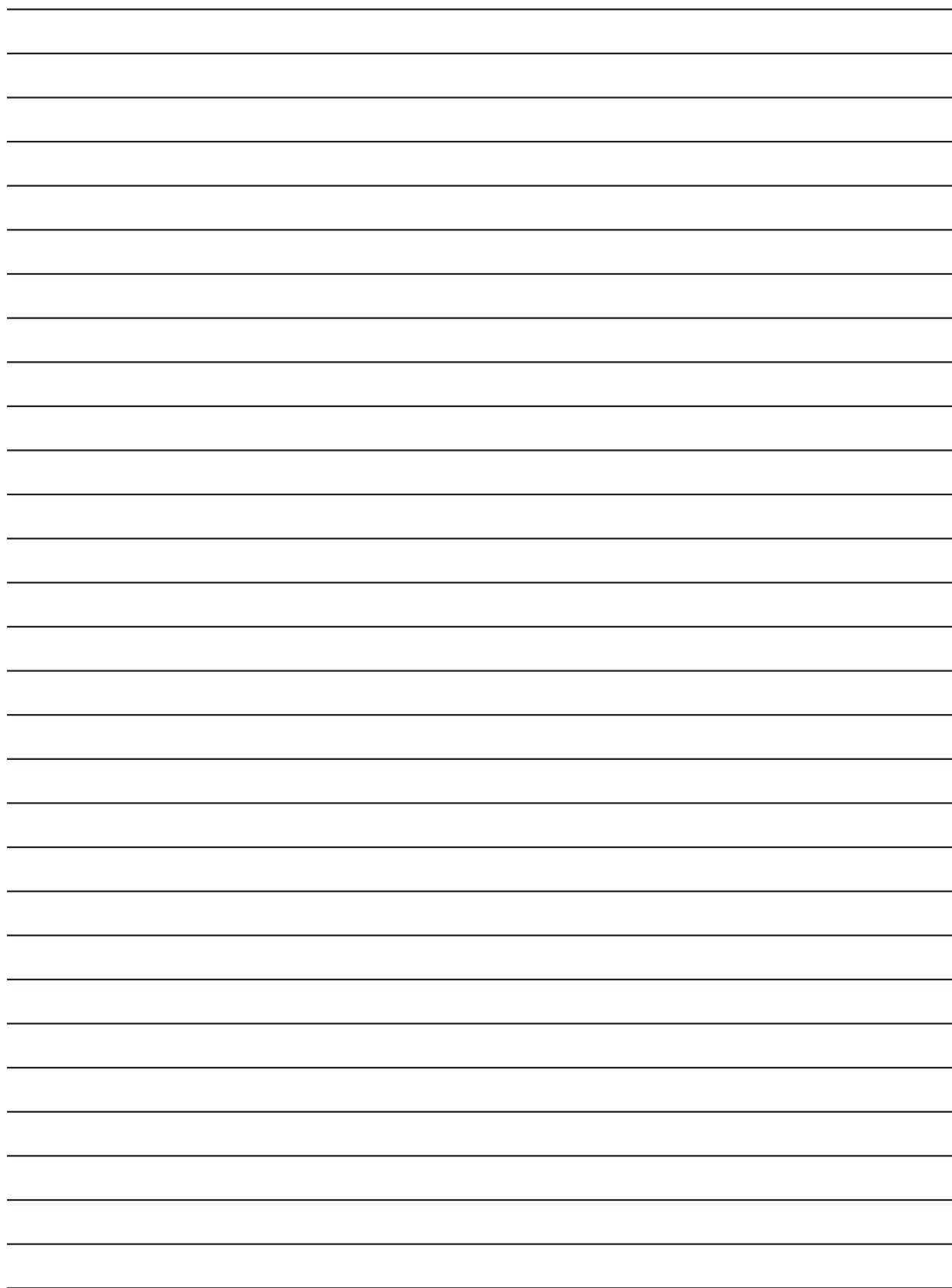
We need to let people to make their own mistakes so they can learn from them. We can train them and advise them, which will help some of the time, but actual experience is often the best teacher. A good manager, therefore, will hang back and resist the impulse to jump in every time an employee encounters difficulty. A good manager will always monitor what their employees are doing, but will not intervene to coach their employees except in the following circumstances.

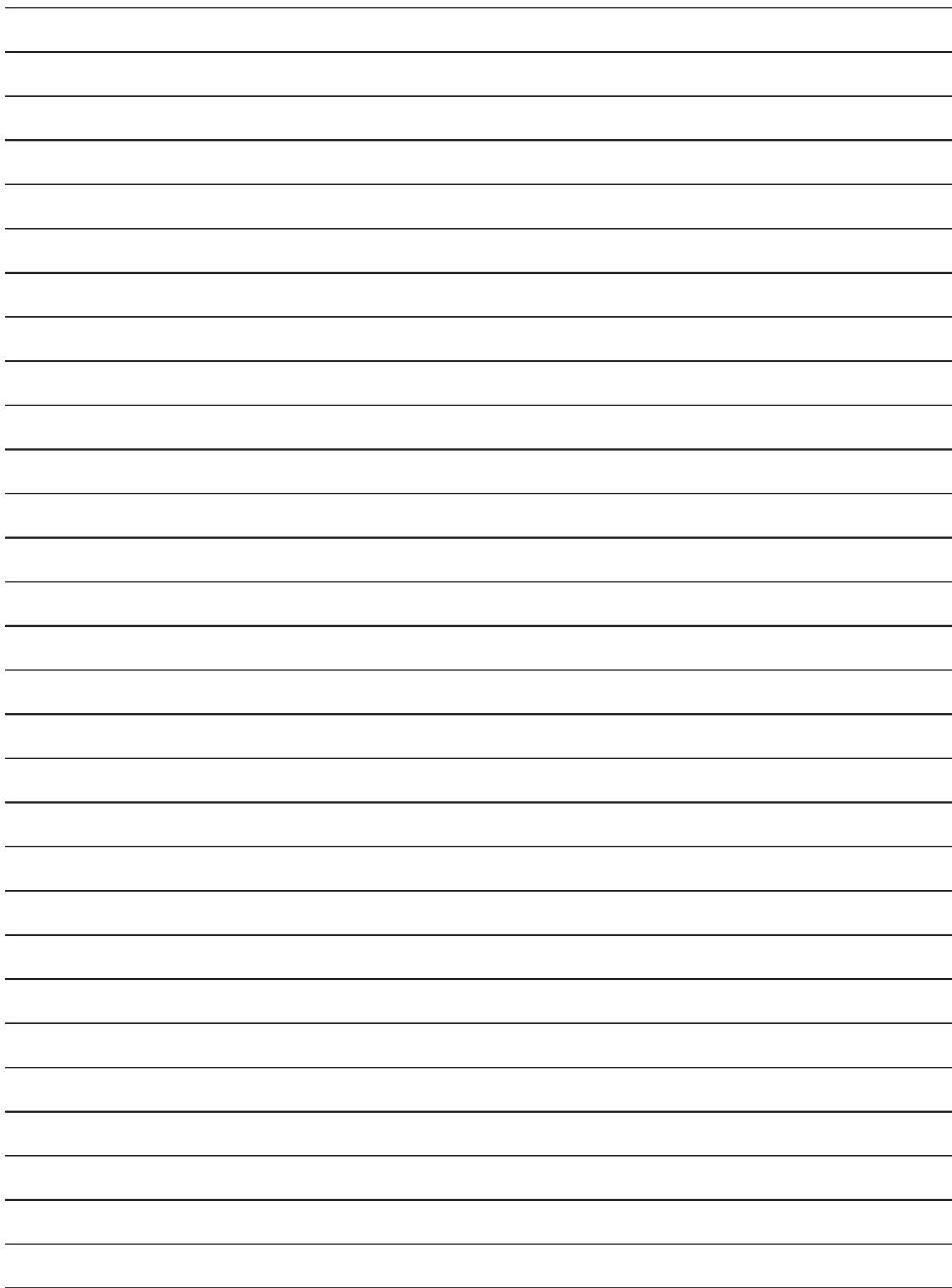
- *Their current behavior poses a threat to themselves or someone else*
When an employee is doing something that could cause harm to themselves or someone else, you have to step in. This is one instance where you can't let someone "learn from their mistakes". You need to provide coaching. Rather than tell them the solution, suggest a couple of alternatives and let the employee figure out which is best. Make sure they understand why the behavior they were planning is inappropriate.
- *There are ethical or legal ramifications of their actions*
You can't allow employees to do things that are illegal and you shouldn't allow them to do anything unethical. Whether their planned behaviour is illegal/unethical because of intent or ignorance, you can't allow it. As with dangerous

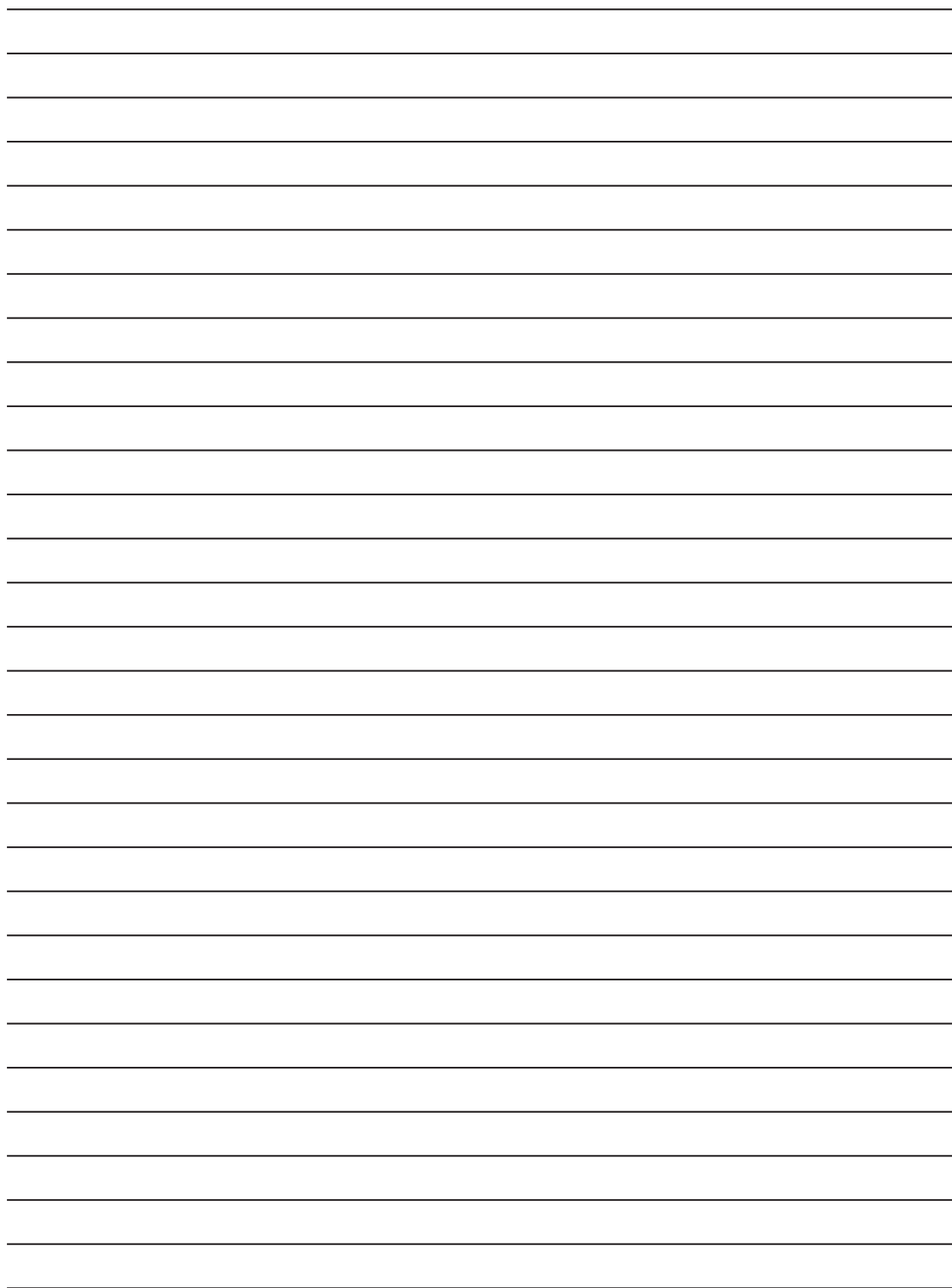
behaviours, provide alternatives, let them decide, and explain why the planned behaviour was a poor choice.

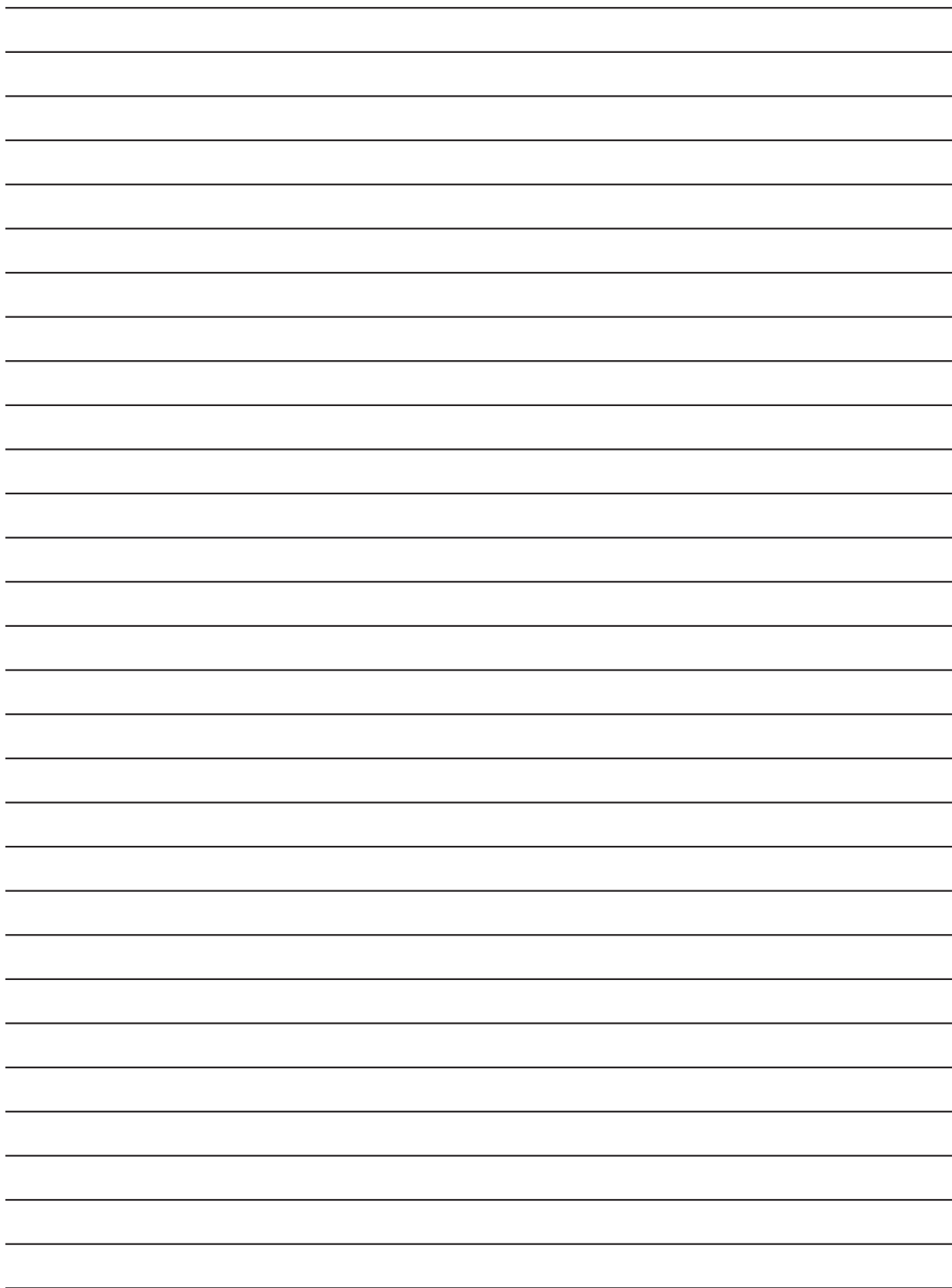
- *They are hurting their team membership*
You need your employees to work together as a team. If one member of the team is doing something that will cause the others to exclude him or her from the team, you have to step in. If an employee always takes credit for the teams' work, you need to coach them. If an employee in a close area, like cubicles, always yells into the phone and disturbs those around him, you have to step in and help him find a different behaviour.
- *They are repeating failed behaviours*
When employees have repeatedly tried to solve a problem, and their solution isn't going to work, you need to step in. Often we try something and it fails. We try it again to make sure we did it the way we meant to and it still fails. If they keep trying, they aren't learning and you need to coach them.
- The impact on the company financials is severe
Almost any mistake is going to cost the company money, either directly or in lost profits. You can't step in every time an employee might make a mistake just to save money. Consider it an investment in the employee's learning and development. However, if their planned action would have a significant negative effect on the company financially, you have to step in. You have a responsibility to the company to protect its fiscal assets that is as great as the responsibility to develop its human assets. Provide the employee with alternative behaviours, let them figure out the appropriate choice, and explain why you had to step in.













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