

A basic scaffold for coaching

Coaching should be closely tied to the research on feedback and self-regulation. These two bodies of research strongly suggest that successful individuals establish for themselves a clear standard of what success looks like, are able to self-assess relative to that standard, and can use that self-assessment to design and execute actions that will move them closer to that standard. Our model uses the language of feedback questions as described by Hattie & Timperley¹ in their meta-analysis of effective feedback.

The following table is designed to provide guidance on questions to ask in order to scaffold the self-regulation of the person being coached. The coaching questions are only examples to illustrate the questions that might be asked during a coaching conversation.

Feedback question	Coaching questions
1. Where am I going?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is your long term goal? What other goals do you have to consider? What do you want to get out of our conversation today? What problem are you trying to solve? What would it look like if this were working the way you wanted? What is the top priority here?
2. How am I going?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where are you relative to where you want to be? What is your evidence? How do you know that that's really what's going on? Is there another possible explanation for what happened? What data do you have that would be useful here? Are there other data that you need to collect?
3. Where to next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What options have you considered already? How does this move you closer to your goals? What is your theory of action? What have you done in similar situations in the past? What alternatives are available to you? What else could you do? What are you going to do and when are you going to do that? What support do you need? Is there anyone else who should be part of this?

¹ Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81-112.

Note that the questions are asked in the order in the table during a planning conversation. But sometimes the client is responding to a current situation or concern, in which case the second question is addressed first.

Additional Considerations

While using the frame of self-regulation as the over-arching guide to the coaching session, also bear in mind the following, which connect to the Cycle of Inquiry:

1. **Establish and connect to goals.** There should be a goal for each coaching conversation (“Tell me what you want to get out of this conversation”), and it should be clear how the topic under discussion connects to larger goals for improvement (“How will taking that step also move you closer to establish a climate focused on student learning?”). The goals include the competencies that the client is expected to learn and demonstrate.
2. **Challenge assumptions.** The coach should not take the client’s statements at “face value”. Use additional questions to uncover underlying assumptions and challenge them (“Tell me how you know that. Are there any other possible explanations?”)
3. **Design and implement a trajectory for the coaching session.** The coach’s responsibility is to hold all the thinking and offer it back to the client for
 - **examination** (“OK, I hear you saying that three things are important here. Would you like me to tell you what they are?”),
 - **prioritization** (Which of these things is the highest leverage? How are you going to decide which one to tackle first?)
 - **design** (“What do you want to do about that? What do you think that’s going to look like?”)
4. **Look for opportunities to collect data.** The coach should help the client be aware of what data might be collected and/or examined; the various types of data at various scales; and the need to be grounded in data (“How are you going to know whether that action is working the way you intended? How will you know?”)
5. **Consistently capture and celebrate the learning.** Every situation offers opportunity for meaning-making and reflection. The coach should prompt the client to make that learning explicit (“What can you take from this situation that will help you in the future? Why do you think that is? How would you explain that?”)