

CHAPTER 3

The GROWTH Coaching System

Coaching has been growing in popularity over the last few decades and is now used across a broad range of professional settings (Bachkirova, Spence, & Drake, 2017; van Nieuwerburgh, 2016). The GROWTH Coaching System has been developed for use within educational settings. As an education-focused methodology, it is having significant positive impact in schools and colleges (Campbell, 2016a). This system weaves together several interdependent components, which are explained in this chapter.

The GROWTH Coaching System has been developed and refined over many years through a combination of practice, theory and research. Practicality, accessibility, immediacy and difference making have been fundamentally important principles that have governed the development of this coaching system.

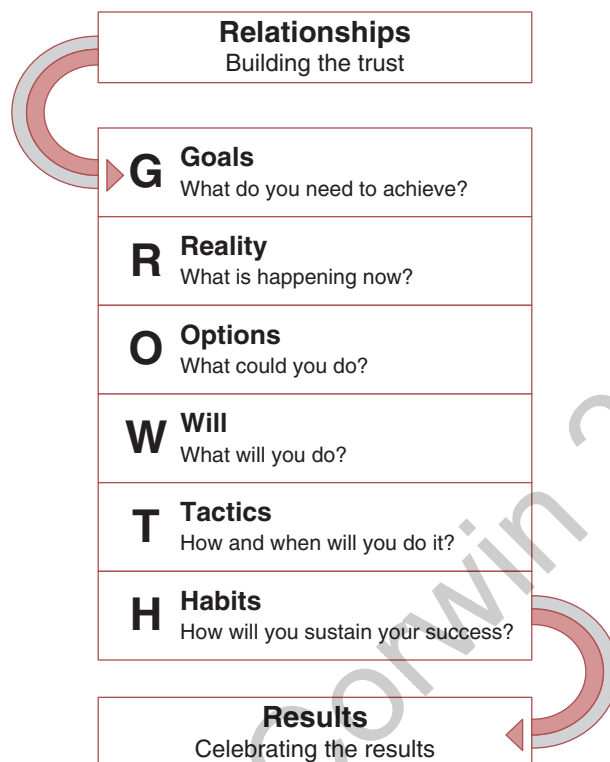
WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THE GROWTH COACHING SYSTEM?

The core elements that contribute to this coaching system are the **GROWTH Model**, the **Eight Key Coaching Skills** and the **Coaching Way of Being**. These elements provide a strong and stable foundation on which to base both formal coaching and the informal coaching approach conversations referred to in Chapter 2. The system is underpinned by evidence-based theories and supported by documentation tools that encourage and help track sustainable change.

ELEMENT 1: THE GROWTH MODEL

A central component of this system is the GROWTH model. This simple framework provides an easy-to-apply, flexible structure to any coaching interaction. The process is made up of eight steps (see Figure 3.1).

FIGURE 3.1 The GROWTH Model



SOURCE: Campbell, J. (2016b). Framework for practitioners 2: The GROWTH model. In C. van Nieuw-erburgh (Ed.), *Coaching in professional contexts* (pp. 235–240). London, UK: SAGE. © Growth Coaching International.

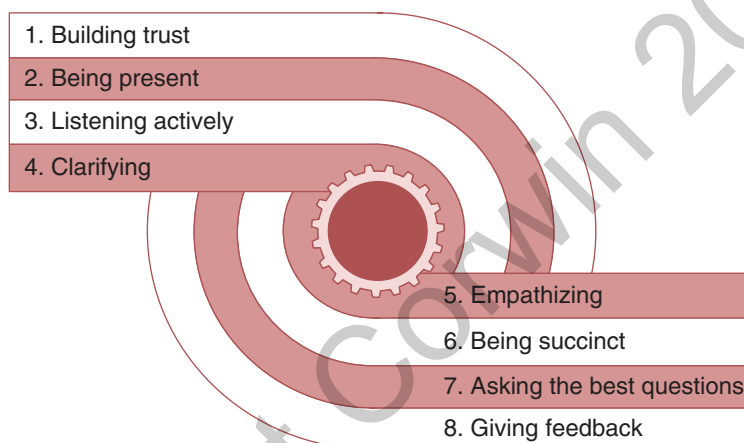
The GROWTH model can be considered a form of scaffolding that supports the coachee to explore ways of undertaking meaningful change. The idea of the scaffolding suggests that the model is similar to the temporary and often adaptable support structure on a construction site that enables a substantial building to emerge. Scaffolding provides an external frame necessary for the building to develop, particularly in the early stages; it initially overshadows the building but eventually recedes as the structure emerges. The scaffolding is never an end in itself but merely exists to enable the building to begin. Similarly, this model enables new insights and preferred futures to be created, implemented, sustained and enjoyed. The GROWTH model is described in detail in Chapter 4.

ELEMENT 2: KEY COACHING SKILLS

Since coaching is, at its heart, a conversation, the skills that enable effective coaching are essentially interpersonal communication skills. Many

people, especially educators, already demonstrate many of these skills, but in coaching contexts they are refined and nuanced in particular ways. For example, the skill of listening used in interpersonal interactions by most people all day and every day, is refined and deepened in ways that befit the more focused, purposeful and respectful context of a coaching conversation. Similarly, questions used in a coaching context are less about seeking information and more about stimulating insights and awareness in the person being coached.

FIGURE 3.2 Eight Key Coaching Skills



SOURCE: © Growth Coaching International.

Each of these eight communication skills permeate the various stages and steps in the GROWTH model (see Figure 3.2). Every one of the skills plays a role in weaving together the rich conversational ‘building’ that develops. The use of these skills in a coaching context are outlined below.

1. Building Trust

Coaching conversations take place in a relationship – two people engaged in moving a topic forward in some way. It is the quality of this relationship that will impact what emerges. Trust is central to this coaching relationship. High levels of trust lead to relational safety, creativity, insight and risk taking (Covey & Merrill, 2008). Therefore, it follows that low levels of trust may lead to doubts about whether the coaching relationship is worth continuing.

COACHING TIPS: Building Trust

- Bring a curious, non-judgemental approach.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Demonstrate that you have the best interests of your coachee at heart.
- Do what you say you will do.
- Be open and honest.
- Be prepared to show vulnerability.
- Clarify expectations.
- Demonstrate your competence in the coaching process.

2. Being Present

Of all the coaching skills, it seems that being present has become the most difficult to master in recent times. Our contemporary world is one of stimulation and distraction, which sometimes work against the ability to provide full, focused attention in a coaching conversation. There are few greater gifts we can give another person these days than being present. When this is offered in abundance in coaching it makes a noticeable contribution to the quality of the thinking and insight that emerges. Further, since full and focused attention is so rare in our everyday conversational environments, it is also one of the most powerful ways to build trust.

3. Listening Actively

Closely related to providing full and focused attention is the ability to listen in ways that go beyond the conversational listening that dominates regular interactions. Listening at a level that really hears not only words but also emotions is enormously affirming, generating insights and self-understanding. Indeed, in coaching contexts it is more helpful that the focus of listening is in helping our coachees better understand themselves so that they can 'own the issue', develop clarity, explore options, and move to action. Listening in a coaching context is not a quest for more information; rather, it is a process that enables your coachee to listen to herself, prompting growing awareness and insight.

4. Clarifying

Clarifying is a way of ensuring that the listening has worked. Clarifying consists of confirming that the coach has heard and understood what the coachee has said and intended. It may sound easy, but getting to shared meaning in most

interactions involves more than someone making a statement and assuming that it has been received and understood in the same way that it was intended. Actively clarifying acknowledges these challenges and seeks to close any gaps in moving towards shared meaning. In coaching contexts, the clarifying process should be focused on the coachee (rather than the coach) gaining greater clarity.

COACHING TIPS: Being Present, Listening Actively and Clarifying

- Make eye contact without staring.
- Prepare yourself to 'be there' by avoiding obvious visible and audible distractions, phones, printers, others passing by, and so on.
- Write reminder notes that prompt you to redirect your attention whenever it might wander. These can be helpful as you prepare for coaching.
- Practise being present and listening in a focused way in *all* your interactions.
- Listen and notice patterns of language and expression.
- For some people, taking notes conveys a sense of focused attention. For others, note taking can cause anxiety. Check with your coachee and adapt your approach accordingly.
- Use your coachee's words in reflecting back to help them clarify.

5. Empathizing

Feeling heard is very affirming. In the clutter and noise of modern life it can be easy to be misheard or not heard at all. Being able to demonstrate empathy conveys the sense of 'she gets it!' Knowing that someone gets your situation, even though that person may not necessarily agree with your position, is an important relational connector and provides a basis for moving forward. Without this sense of being heard and understood the coachee will feel compelled to convince and justify the current position, which can get in the way of attempts at moving forward.

COACHING TIPS: Empathizing

- Listen specifically for the emotional content.
- Develop your vocabulary of feeling words.
- Demonstrate that you are working at grasping their perspective by asking questions and explicitly seeking to confirm meaning.

6. Being Succinct

This is a more challenging coaching skill. As we have already argued, coaching is a self-directed learning experience in which the coachee does most of the thinking and talking, not a transfer of information from the coach to the coachee. In this context, it helps if the coach's verbal interventions are short, to the point, and add value.

COACHING TIPS: Being Succinct

- Focus on listening most of the time.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Be comfortable with silence to allow thinking time.
- Use short questions, 'What else?' or question prompts such as 'So ... ?'

7. Asking the Best Questions

Skilled questioning is fundamental to impactful coaching. Coaches can use a variety of questions to support the thinking of their coachees. Open questions encourage exploration while closed questions can help the coachee to gain clarity. Mastering the subtle nuances of questioning in a coaching context takes practice and commitment but doing so will make the difference between average coaching and transformational coaching. 'To question is to wield a powerful linguistic blade. It is necessary to ensure the blade is used to reveal strength and beauty rather than to carve away these same qualities' (McGee, Vento, & Bavelas, 2005, p. 382).

COACHING TIPS: Asking the Best Questions

- Use *What* questions frequently.
- Be careful with *Why* questions, because these can sometimes lead to defensiveness.
- Use open questions – 'Can you say more about that?'
- Use closed questions – 'When will you start on that?'
- Ask: "What else?" often.
- Questions that explore metaphors introduced by the coachee can be helpful. For example, if a coachee commented on an aspect of the current chapter of her career, a helpful question might ask about the title of the next chapter in her career.
- Direct your questions to resourceful areas: 'How were you able to be so successful in that situation?'

8. Giving Feedback

Giving feedback is one of the skills of coaching that helps ensure that coaching conversations go beyond being merely pleasant social interactions. Skill in giving feedback is a critical part of helping the coachee gain greater insight and awareness about herself and the situation on which the coaching focuses. Feedback given and received well can enable significant growth and learning to occur. We discuss this topic in greater detail in Chapter 7.

Above, we have surveyed eight key coaching skills. Some of these are addressed in greater detail later in this book. Now, we turn our attention to the coaching way of being, one of the foundational elements of effective coaching.

ELEMENT 3: THE COACHING WAY OF BEING

Given the highly relational nature of coaching, how you ‘show up’ in the coaching interaction is an important (if not the most important) component of the GROWTH Coaching System. The American philosopher Emerson once stated, ‘What you do speaks so loudly I can’t hear what you say’. This quote neatly highlights how the way in which we present ourselves in coaching interactions can have a significant influence on how the coaching relationship might unfold.

What Constitutes a Coaching Way of Being?

Practitioners have explored this area since the term *way of being* was first introduced by Carl Rogers (1995). We argue that a Coaching Way of Being includes a confluence of

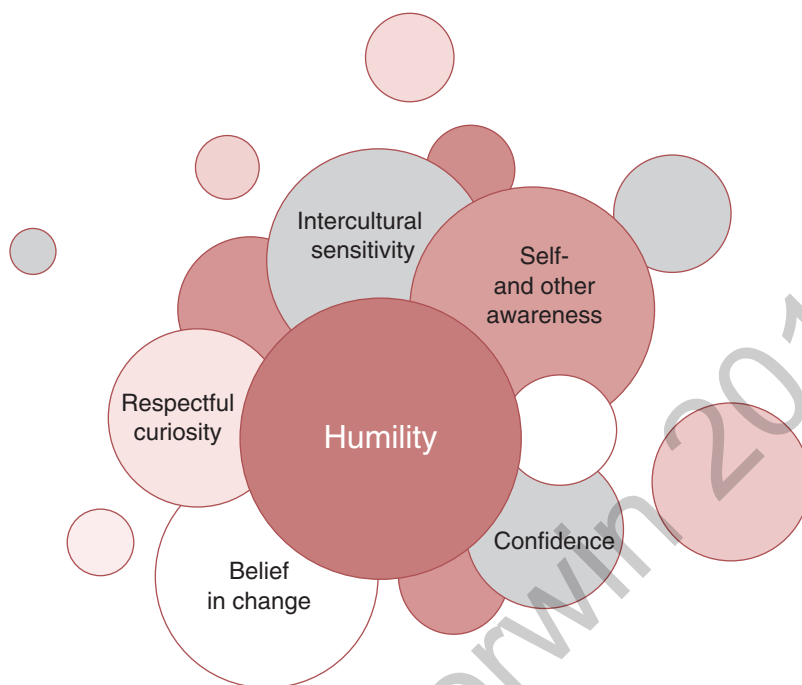
- qualities such as humility, curiosity, generosity;
- skills related to Emotional Intelligence;
- beliefs including positive regard for the coachee; belief in her ability to change and grow; and
- principles including partnership and respect.

This Coaching Way of Being provides the relational climate in which the models and tools of coaching can be introduced (see Figure 3.3). When safety and trust exist it is more likely that the coaching relationship will flourish and that your coachee will achieve the kinds of insight and growth that make the interaction satisfying for both parties. Interestingly, of all the skills and knowledge that effective coaches need to learn, the Coaching Way of Being is probably the most difficult.

‘If you change the conversation, then there’s every chance you will change everything around it.’

– Paul Jackson
and Janine Waldman,
Positively Speaking (2011)

FIGURE 3.3 The Coaching Way of Being



SOURCE: © Growth Coaching International.

How Might You Begin to Develop Your Coaching Way of Being?

Some of the more recently developed tools relating to exploring Emotional Intelligence (EI) (David, 2016; Freedman, 2007) can be helpful. While we would consider the Coaching Way of Being as more than simply EI, this framework helps make the topic tangible and accessible. More important, EI can provide a way into developing and growing in this area. In recent years, numerous workshops, websites, assessment tools and books have been produced on this topic, and most of these are a helpful place to start when seeking to reflect on and enhance your Coaching Way of Being.

Further, commonly used personal profiling models can also play a role in helping people grow in self- and other awareness. Some commentators have asked challengingly, ‘Do you know what it is like to be on the other side of you?’ (Kubicek & Cockram, 2015, p. 2). Profiling tools, especially those with a multi-rater component, can be helpful in providing a response to this question. Increasing self-awareness is a first step towards identifying development areas and working intentionally to refine and enhance effectiveness.

COACHING TIPS: Emotional Intelligence

- Try to be aware of, and understand, your moods, emotions and motivations as well as their effect on others. People often see a leader's emotional reaction as the most legitimate response and then model their own on it.
- Suspend judgement – think before acting. For instance, if you become annoyed by someone's actions, express your feelings by writing them down. Once you've recorded what has irritated you, list the ideal win-win outcome from your next communication with that person. Such a delayed response will help prevent you from saying something that you might later regret and give you the space to plan for a better outcome.
- Demonstrate empathy by treating people according to their emotional reactions. Sometimes it's too easy to get caught up in the task we want others to achieve and ignore how they are responding as individuals.
- Find common ground and build rapport with others. Take the time to inquire about other people's dreams and aspirations. Constantly focus on their needs, their wants and their desires.

Above, we have presented the main components of the GROWTH Coaching System. We shared the GROWTH model and then identified the eight key skills of an effective coach. The Coaching Way of Being is also briefly explored. A few additional elements of the GROWTH Coaching System are discussed below.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES UNDERPINNING THE GROWTH COACHING SYSTEM

While the System gives great emphasis to coaching tools that lead to practical outcomes, it is based on a solid theoretical footing. The interrelated fields of Appreciative Inquiry, Positive Psychology and Positive Organizational Scholarship have emerged independently over the last 20 years or so. While there are some significant differences between these approaches, there are many points of intersection. Some of these common themes include an emphasis on

- exploring strengths rather than weaknesses;
- uncovering what is working rather than what is not working;
- giving more attention to exploring the desired future than focusing on problems in the past;

- hope, optimism and a focus on the future;
- language and how it plays a part in shaping and reshaping perceptions; and
- small step approaches to change.

In recent years, the solution-focused approach has come to play an increasingly influential role within the GROWTH Coaching System (see Chapter 5).

It has been exciting to see emerging research that supports these strengths-based approaches. Many educators have intuitively recognized the importance of these concepts but it is only in recent times that empirical research has provided scientific support for these approaches (Biswas-Diener, 2010; Jackson & McKergow, 2002; Joseph, 2015; Macdonald, 2011; Orem, Binkert & Clancy, 2007). For more detailed information on these perspectives, and the solution-focused approach in particular, see Chapter 5.

COACHING DOCUMENTATION

An important component of the GROWTH Coaching System is the documentation that records the goals, actions and progress of the coaching process. Over the years, the value of recording goals and actions has proven to be a particularly helpful part of the formal coaching process. Committing goals and actions to written form achieves several things:

- It helps bring further clarity to the topics discussed.
- It provides evidence of commitments and helps build accountability into the coaching process.

'It is often wonderful how putting down on paper a clear statement of a case helps one to see, not perhaps the way out, but the way in.'

– A. C. Benson

- It provides a way of clarifying and drawing together the various threads of the conversation at the end of the session into concise action points. This helps with keeping the coaching succinct.

- It provides evidence of progress.

When formal coaching is reaching its conclusion, it is helpful to invite coachees to reflect on where they were in relation to various goals at the beginning of the coaching process. Without the opportunity to return to statements and ratings made weeks or months earlier, it is sometimes difficult for coachees to remember where they were when the coaching process began and therefore how much progress has been achieved.

- At a practical level, it provides a way for busy school leaders to keep all documents related to the coaching process – goal tracking,

actions, handouts, feedback surveys and so on in one place. More important, it helps provide a reminder of the coaching story that began in the first session.

- These ways of documenting progress in coaching can all be made more efficient, accessible and faster via various software programmes and apps. Some have been specifically designed for coaching, but any generally available electronic note-taking programmes (e.g., Evernote or OneNote) can be used.

Watch It in Practice

A Typical Coaching Session



In this chapter, we have explored the model, skills and way of being of coaching. Watch the video to see an example of a typical coaching session. It may be helpful to make some notes about the key skills and coaching way of being that you notice while watching the session.

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CONCLUSION

The GROWTH Coaching System is more than the sum of its various parts; each component interweaves with the others to provide a robust, flexible, theoretically sound, highly practical and well-proven coaching methodology. The system has been widely used in schools and provides a way of making coaching and a coaching approach accessible, learnable and usable. Since we believe that schools are conversational communities and that dialogue is a central component of change, conversations that are based on the elements outlined in the GROWTH Coaching System will help schools move towards becoming transforming communities.

EXPLORE FURTHER

- To learn more about other coaching conversation frameworks, read Whitmore's *Coaching for Performance*.
- To learn more about coaching skills, read van Nieuwerburgh's *An Introduction to Coaching Skills*.
- To learn more about Way of Being, read Rogers' *A Way of Being*.
- To learn more about developing Emotional Intelligence, read Bradberry and Greaves' *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* and Freedman's *At the Heart of Leadership*.

SMALL STEP STARTER

1. **Coaching Way of Being:** The Coaching Way of Being component of the Growth Coaching System can be challenging to explore but it is an influential factor in the approach. When the skills and the coaching framework are anchored in a human being whose coaching presence radiates warmth, authenticity, and a sense of ‘this person is here for me’, then the coaching skills and tools are greatly enhanced.

We can have blind spots in this area, however. As indicated above, various multi-rater and profile tools can help uncover Coaching Way of Being blind spots. Another simple way to develop in this Coaching Way of Being element is to invite feedback from close friends and colleagues.

You can set this up by

- Giving some context to the questions. For example, ‘I am interested in exploring the way I come across as a coach in our coaching sessions, and I wonder whether you would be prepared to provide some feedback?’
 - Inviting comment on some of the key Coaching Way of Being concepts – ‘humility’, ‘warmth’, or demonstration of ‘partnering’. Perhaps you might even provide a short written definition of the Coaching Way of Being, highlighting the key aspects about which you would like feedback.
2. **Listening:** The skill of listening is arguably the most important of all the key coaching skills in the GROWTH Coaching System. Being skilled in this area can also help develop your Coaching Way of Being. One strategy that will help you refine the way you listen is to focus on listening as a way to help the people you are listening to gain insights. Often we approach listening as a way of gaining information but in coaching it helps if our listening is focused on helping our coachees to listen to *themselves*.

This week, in your regular interactions with others, make a point at different times to focus on listening to bring clarity to your colleagues or friends rather than listening for information for yourself. Notice what difference this shift in mindset might bring.

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