

Coaching Questions: Nature of Coach/Client Interactions

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The following set of questions, revised from those offered many years ago by Gordon and Ronald Lippitt in *The Consulting Process In Action*, (La Jolla, California: University Associates, 1978, pp. 52-53) provide guidance for the coach and client in the establishment of a consistent and productive coaching process:

- (1) How can I legitimize for clients their sharing of pain, problems and sense of failure without also stimulating their sense of hopelessness, victimization or defensiveness?
- (2) How can I ask probing questions in a way that is respectful of my client's legitimate claim to privacy and in a way that will not mobilize disruptive feelings of irritation and hostility toward me?
- (3) How can I listen to and encourage the unloading of problems without appearing to accept the client's own perceptions of the source(s) of the problem – including the client's projections of blame onto other people and the client's inaccurate attributions of causation with regard to the exposed problems?
- (4) How can I demonstrate expertness and establish my credibility as a potential source of help without creating client dependency and without creating an expectation in my client that I will solve the problem? In other words, how do I avoid taking on ownership for the problem being presented by my client?
- (5) How can I explain readiness to work on change without appearing to assume too soon that a lot of change is going to be needed? Is the option of non-change available in this coaching engagement?
- (6) How can I bring up and explore questions of compatibility between our interpersonal styles (as coach and client) without sounding too clinical, doubtful or demanding?
- (7) How can my relevant experience and training as a leader, member of an organization, and coach be communicated without it sounding like a sales pitch or sounding like an offer to take over ownership of the client's problem?
- (8) How can I be reassuring to my client without being interpreted as saying the problem is minor or can be easily and quickly solved? How can I indicate that I have addressed similar problems myself or with other clients without diminishing the distinctive challenge(s) being faced by my client?