



# COACHING SKILLS 101

## What is Coaching?

Coaching is a leadership approach that empowers others to find their own solutions. It centers on deep listening, asking thoughtful questions, and building trust. Unlike managing (which directs tasks) or mentoring (which shares personal expertise), coaching encourages self-reflection, clarity, and confidence in others.

## Core Coaching Skills:

### 1. Active Listening

- Listen to understand, not just to respond
- Minimize distractions and stay present
- Use verbal cues like "I hear you," "That makes sense"
- Reflect back what you hear: "What I'm hearing is..."

### 2. Asking Open-Ended Questions

- Start with "What," "How," or "Tell me more"
- Avoid yes/no questions, asking why, or advice masked as questions (e.g., "Have you tried...?" = advice)
- Example prompts:
  - What would success look like here?
  - How are you feeling about this?
  - What's one step you could take next?

### 3. Pausing and Staying Curious

- Allow silence to do the work—count to 3 before responding
- Avoid filling the gap with advice or solutions
- Use curiosity-driven prompts like:

- "Say more about that..."
- "What else comes up for you?"

## 4. Giving Feedback with Empathy

- Use the SBI Method:
  - **Situation** – What was the context?
  - **Behavior** – What did the person do?
  - **Impact** – How did it affect others?
- Example: “In yesterday’s team meeting (Situation), you interrupted your colleague twice (Behavior), which made the conversation feel tense and cut off (Impact).”
- Pair it with a question like: “How did you think that landed?”

## Quick Coaching Conversation Structure

1. **Build Connection:** Set the tone with presence and empathy
2. **Explore the Topic:** Use open-ended questions and active listening
3. **Clarify the Goal:** Help them define success or outcomes
4. **Identify Barriers or Needs:** Stay curious, pause, and dig deeper
5. **Co-Create Action:** Ask what they’ll try and how you can support them

## Common Coaching Traps to Avoid

- Jumping in with solutions too quickly
- Asking leading questions (“Have you considered...?”)
- Talking more than the person you’re coaching
- Confusing coaching with therapy, venting, or performance correction only

Coaching isn't about having all the answers—it's about creating space for others to discover them. Start small. Even pausing before you respond can transform a conversation. Focus on presence over perfection: show up, listen deeply, and trust that asking the right question can do more than offering the right advice.

Choose one skill from this guide to intentionally practice in your next one-on-one. Maybe it's staying curious a little longer. Perhaps it's shifting from advice-giving to reflective listening. Progress happens in moments.

**Remember:** Coaching builds trust, accountability, and capacity in your team.

A horizontal banner image at the top of the page shows a group of diverse people in an office environment. A woman with curly hair is laughing heartily in the center, with others around her also smiling and laughing. The image is slightly blurred and has a soft, warm tone.

# We are all in this together!