

Collegial Coaching

Components

What is Collegial Coaching? Collegial Coaching is a process in which two or more professional colleagues work together for a specific, predetermined purpose in order that professional performance can be improved as well as validated. The purpose may be to reflect on current practices or to expand, to refine, and build new skills. Collegial Coaching can be utilized to share new ideas; to teach one another; to conduct observations of meetings or workshops; or to solve problems in the workplace. Collegial Coaching is non judging and non evaluative. Collegial Coaching is focusing on the collaborative development, refinement and sharing of professional knowledge and skills, as well as developing alternative behaviour.

There are a variety of Collegial Coaching terms and models: technical coaching, peer coaching, team coaching, cognitive coaching, and challenge coaching are a few of the more common types of coaching used.

Each model is slightly different but all have the same final goal – to improve professional performance – and all involve the use of peers/colleagues to achieve this goal.

Collegial Coaching has been developed by professionals in the field of teacher training. The concept is convincing and practice oriented; it can easily be transferred to other professional fields.

Why Collegial Coaching?

Statistical support for Collegial Coaching comes from many sources. Bruce Joyce states following figures:

- 5 % of learners will transfer a new skill into their practice as a result of theory;
- 10 % will transfer a new skill into their practice with theory and demonstration;
- 20 % will transfer a new skill into their practice with theory and demonstration, and practice within the training;
- 25 % will transfer a new skill into their practice with theory and demonstration, and practice within the training, and feedback;
- 90 % will transfer a new skill into their practice with theory and demonstration, and practice within the training, feedback, and coaching.

Benefits

After a period of practicing Collegial Coaching you may hear professionals saying:

“The level of trust we developed made it possible for us to support and listen to one another.”

“The feedback has also given me insight into what is actually going on through another pair of eyes. I feel that my effectiveness has been greatly increased through the Collegial Coaching process.”

“It brought to life a lot of things I knew I should do and had tried, but had not continued. It gave me an impetus, having a coach / colleague I respect.”

Some of the benefits reported by professionals who have been involved in Collegial Coaching are

- enhanced sense of professional skill;
- increased ability to analyse the own way of working;
- better understanding of what we know about best practices;
- wider repertoire of professional skills;
- deeper sense of efficacy;
- stronger professional ties with colleagues;
- more cohesive organizational culture and working climate.

How to do a Collegial Coaching

Make sure you have a team with an open and trustful working spirit. The minimum number would be one colleague, the maximum number a team of five to six members. Reserve enough time during the team meeting or invite for a special Collegial Coaching session. Act along the following steps:

1. Collect the cases of your team mates (there might be several cases asking for a coaching).
2. Select the case to be checked according to the interest, importance, urgency. Prospective cases (there will be an immediate step to be taken) provoke more passion than retrospective cases (lessons to be learnt).
3. Distribute roles: In groups of more than four members it is advisable that one assumes the role of a facilitator (checking the time frame and orienting the discussion if needed).
4. Expose the case: Describe the situation, tell the "history" of your case, make clear why this case is important to you, explain what you feel being difficult, share what you already tried out, and formulate a clear question the coaching should focus on.
5. Clarify questions of understanding asked by the coaches. Keep this step as short as possible! Coaches should restrict to what they really need to know.
6. Open a dialogue among the coaches. The person having exposed his case listens carefully, but does not intervene in the discussion. The dialogue may relate to
 - the facts you perceived during the exposure of the case ("the red thread", key words characterizing the challenge, surprising facts);
 - what you perceived regarding the way the case has been exposed (voice, tone, body-language related to a special moment in the story);
 - the own feelings you had during the presentation;
 - what you perceive as the core challenge or what you assume might be a hidden challenge not mentioned by the presenter.
7. Optional: The presenter of the case comments on what has been said so far and states in how far his own perception of the case has already changed. He repeats or reformulates his question for the coaching (focus question).
8. The coaches resume their dialogue. In the second part they might share
 - a) their hypotheses and fantasies about the case;
 - b) questions they would clarify if they were concerned;
 - c) information they feel important to know if they were concerned;
 - d) experience they gathered in a similar case;
 - e) possible solutions they would go for.

It is up to the facilitator to structure the discussion. The presenter only intervenes if the dialogue goes completely “off-road”, i. e. the presenter is no more able to relate it to his main question.

9. The presenter of the case states what elements of the dialogue attracted his interest and what was most meaningful to him.

In a common discussion the whole team might clarify and probe the most promising track(s) and analyse benefits and possible risks.

The most promising option might be explored through a role play, tentative action or comparison with a real similar case.

10. The presenter states what will be the next steps he is going to do. If needed, he may ask a team member to act as an accompanying coach (observer) in this next step.
11. The group reflects about the process and shares learning insights. Most often, other team members profit as well of the coaching by discovering parallel aspects with cases they are facing.

Time frame for a Collegial Coaching

If there are only two persons (the coached person and a coach), 10 to 30 minutes will do.

If you conduct a more formal Collegial Coaching in a group (the coached person and four coaches), half an hour to one hour and a half will be an appropriate frame.

Who is a good coach?

Any team member or colleague can be a good coach. The following prerequisites are helpful:

- Own experience in a similar situation.
- Capacity to understand and analyse social systems.
- Ability to reframe an experience (transfer it into another context).
- Empathy with others.