

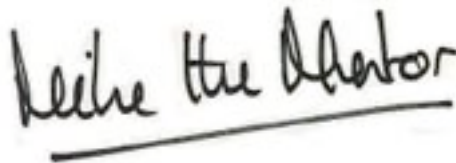
Mentoring for Change

leadership, coaching, mentoring, storytelling

Welcome to the Mentoring for Change newsletter. In this issue:

- The 6 Levels of Coaching
- The Stories of Mullah Nasrudin
- Charisma

With best wishes

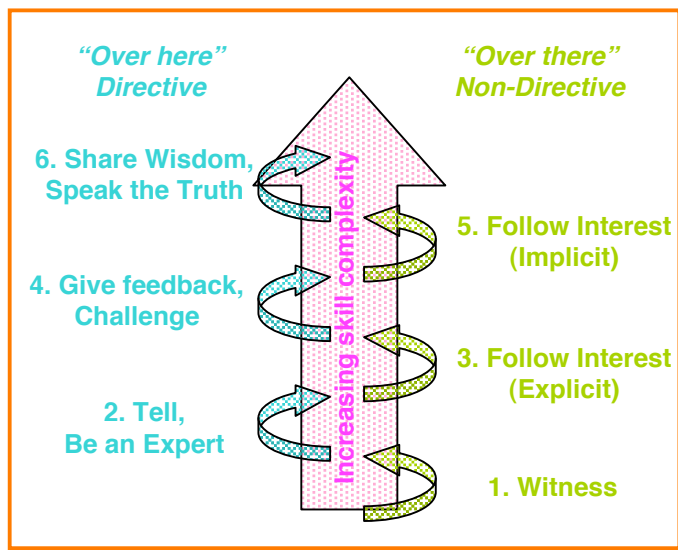



The 6 Levels of Coaching

One way of looking at different types of coaching intervention is to place them on a spectrum from Non-Directive to Directive:

- **Non-Directive** interventions are those in which the coach uses what is going on for the coachee to help the coachee move forward – ie following the coachee’s interest by using what is “**over there**”
- **Directive** interventions are those in which the coach uses what is going on for them (the coach) to help the coachee pursue their agenda or achieve their goals – ie, using what is “**over here**”, for example by sharing knowledge or giving feedback.

However, I find it more helpful to think of the range of possible interventions to not merely be a spectrum but



an ascending path of increasingly complex interventions.

On the coach training programmes I run at the School of Coaching (www.theschoolofcoaching.com), most of the participants come on the programmes already very comfortable with the Telling and Being Expert style of coaching (2). They are very familiar with using their own expertise and experience to tell others how to solve a problem or approach a task. This is an important skill, but one that has clear limits. For example, it can be demotivating and disempowering. But its most fundamental limitation is that it means that the coach can never coach someone who knows more than they do – to do this the coach has to learn to help the coachee use their own resources, for example by following the coachee’s interest (3). One way we do this at the School is by taking participants onto the tennis court for a day where they have the powerful, and often transformative, experience of successfully coaching a fellow participant to improve their tennis despite not only knowing nothing about tennis coaching, but in some cases despite having never played tennis before!

Only when an aspiring coach has mastered the ability to use the coachee’s experience to inform the coaching can they really start to use their own “over here” experience effectively. The next level of complexity is when the coach is able to use what they are observing and thinking to give feedback, to challenge, and to create and apply hypotheses (4).

This ability starts to sensitise the coach to the interests the coachee has which they are not expressing and which they may be unaware of. Following this implicit interest (5) requires a higher level of skill and sensitivity since it is more easy to get this wrong than when following the coachee’s explicitly stated interest.

The Stories of Mullah Nasrudin



The Mullah Nasrudin stories originated as Sufi teaching tales in the Middle East but their appeal is universal. Nasrudin is the wise fool who says the unsayable, plays the fool, tricks us into seeing clearly, and turns our thinking upside down.

The Nasrudin stories can seem rather inane and shallow – a statement of the obvious – but that is where their strength lies. They invite us to see every day reality through fresh eyes – the reality that is always in front of us but which we forget to notice.

Peter Hawkins has updated the Nasrudin stories for the world of the modern organisation and corporate advisors in "The Wise Fool's Guide to Leadership", O Books, 2005. Here is one of his stories:

To What End

The board of a large company were working on their mission statement.

"What is your fundamental purpose?" asked Nasrudin.

"Our mission is to create constantly increasing dividends for our shareholders," they declared.

"To what end?" asked Nasrudin.

"So they make increased profits which they will want to reinvest in our company," they said.

"To what end?" asked Nasrudin.

"So they make more profits," they said, becoming somewhat irritated.

"To what end?" asked Nasrudin nonchalantly.

"So they re-invest and make more profits."

Nasrudin pondered this for a while and thanked them for their explanations.

Later that week they had arranged to visit Nasrudin's house to work further on the Mission Statement. They found him in his garden stuffing oats into his donkey.

"What are you doing?" they asked. "You are giving that poor beast so much food that it will not be able to go anywhere."

"But it is not meant to go anywhere," Nasrudin replied. "Its purpose is to produce manure."

"To what end?" they asked.

"Because without it I can not grow enough oats in my small allotment to feed this greedy beast."

More information, and another story, at <http://www.nasrudin.org>

The ability to discern the coachee's implicit intent provides the basis for the next more complex level of intervention where there is scope for powerfully sharing our wisdom and insights (6). And there is the danger that, if we misjudge our intervention, we may deny the coachee the benefit of having the insight themselves.

And sometimes the most powerful thing we can do for our coachees – and the simplest – is to witness them and see them as they are (1).

As is usually the case with these multi-level models there is no one best intervention – that depends on what the moment calls for. But the more flexibility we can have in using the different interventions the more effective we can be as coaches.

Charisma

Famelab, a recent Channel 4 TV programme, was exploring charismatic communication. It equates charisma with being emotionally contagious – that is with having an exceptional ability to induce one's own feelings and emotions in others. This is an ability we all have though it is often unconscious. We've all had the experience of coming home after a good day at work or wherever feeling great – and within 5 minutes of walking

in through the front door being in a foul mood because our partner or spouse has had a terrible day and has 'shared' this by evoking the self-same emotions in us (or maybe this just happens to me!).

This set me thinking about charisma and coaching. Humans are emotionally open loop – we close the loop by resonating emotionally with others. This happens in our coaching sessions – we are affected by our coachee's emotional state which can allow us to pick up what is going on for our coachees even when they are unaware of. And we also affect their state. We can try to be emotionally neutral (does such a state exist?) or we can use this connection for the coachee's good. Our ability to use our emotional state then becomes another intervention to add to our repertoire. In a future newsletter I'll present the Sentic States model which explores the 7 fundamental emotional rhythms we can express.

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