

COACHING TIPS

By Robert Silverstone

There are two primary tools of the coach. Listening and questioning.

1. LISTENING

There are three levels of listening:

a. Level 1

At level one, others are speaking and you relate what they are saying to your own personal experience.

*For example, person A says "I was stuck in traffic for an hour."
You respond with "So was I."*

This is the most common level of listening, the level at which most of us operate most of the time. Coaching at this level of listening is typically ineffective.

b. Level 2

At level two, when others speak you are focused on them and hear everything they say. You are curious about them and their experience. There is no internal thought reference to yourself or response given with respect to your personal experience.

In the same example, person A says "I was stuck in traffic for an hour." You might respond with "What did you do?"

This higher level of listening puts you in a better place to provide coaching to person A.

c. Level 3

At this level you are completely connected with the other person at an intuitive level. You not only hear the words, but also the feel the emotions behind the words.

Again, using the same example, person A says, "I was stuck in traffic for an hour." You might respond with, "I can hear the tension in your voice, how did it make you feel?"

At level three, you are at the deepest listening level with person A and now in a position to facilitate the best possible coaching.

2. QUESTIONING

There are two types of questions:

a. **Closed-Ended**

A closed ended question is one which calls for an answer which is either "yes" or "no."

For example, "Are you going away this weekend?"

This kind of question does establish some facts but does not invite opinions or promote conversation.

b. **Open-Ended**

An open-ended question calls for a fuller response than yes or no.

For example, "What are you doing this weekend?"

This kind of question is designed to show more interest and encourages the other person to reveal more information than does a closed-ended question.

In coaching situations, it is usually more helpful for the "client" to be asked open-ended questions. It helps promote more open dialogue and provides you, the listener and coach, with much more meaningful information with which you can be more constructive and proactive as you move closer to resolving issues.

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Sound listening and questioning skills are the hallmark of a good coach. They are skills that require practice and patience. Once mastered, they establish healthier communication, a higher level of understanding and provide your "client" with the essential feeling that they have been "heard."

For more information about this topic, The GROW Principle, or the author, please visit www.robertsilverstone.com or contact Robert Silverstone at robert@robertsilverstone.com