Chapter 6  Taking a Coach Approach to Precepting

A. Definitions & Distinctions

Preceptors, mentors, and coaches have a lot in common. Each is interested in the development of individuals. Preceptor is defined as an instructor, teacher, and tutor. Preceptors work with students in the work setting to help the student learn the preceptor’s professional practice role. Preceptors also work with nursing staff – to help new graduates and other new employees acclimate to the staff nurse role or to learn roles in specialties that are unfamiliar. A preceptor has knowledge and expertise in a specific practice area. The preceptor also has experience in the organization and an awareness of the cultural and political climate.

Mentor is defined as a wise and trusted counselor. Typically, mentor/mentee or mentor/protégé relationships are found in business settings within the same company or between a junior and senior person in industry. While a mentor may be an expert resource, the mentor’s expertise extends to the political environment of a company as well as a specific body of knowledge. A mentor will help individuals select experiences that facilitate growth and learning. They will also open doors for people; that is, they help individuals new to an organization or new to an industry gain access to persons and opportunities.

Coaches, on the other hand, work with individuals and teams in a different way. They need not be content experts. Coaches are not teachers in that their primary role is not to be expert sources and give answers. Coaches are not mentors in that their primary role is not to show the ropes to their clients. Rather, coaches help individuals deepen their learning about themselves; identify gaps between where they are and where they want to go; design steps to forward their actions; and, build in accountability along the way.

*Based on the original work of Kathy Phillips, PhD. Senior Development Consultant, Ernst & Young, LLP, Chicago, IL., “Taking a Coach Approach to Precepting,” Preceptor Manual Health Systems Management (Loyola University Chicago, 2003). Revised for the present edition by Bette Case Di Leonardi, PhD, RN- BC, Independent Consultant.
Students often consult with their preceptors for advice about what to do in a given situation. The preceptor can tell the student what to do, can give advice about several approaches and let the student decide, or coach the student to think through the situation and find his best answer. Sometimes telling or giving advice is exactly what is needed. But most of the time taking a coach approach helps the student find the richer answer and facilitates deeper learning.

Coaches typically are neither mentors nor preceptors. However, both preceptors and mentors can increase their effectiveness by using coaching skills. This chapter introduces you to coaching and the skills that will allow you to take a coach approach in your preceptor role.

**A Bit More On Coaching**

The International Coach Federation has adopted a philosophy and definition of coaching for professional coaches (International Coach Federation, 2007).

### ICF International Coach Foundation

**Philosophy**

The International Coach Federation adheres to a form of coaching that honors the client as the expert in her personal and professional life and believes that every client is creative, resourceful, and whole. Standing on this foundation, the coach’s responsibility is to:

1. Discover, clarify, and align with what the client wants to achieve.
2. Encourage client self-discovery.
4. Hold the client as responsible and accountable.

**Definition**

*Professional Coaching* is an ongoing partnership that helps clients produce fulfilling results in their personal and professional lives. Through the process of coaching, clients deepen their learning, improve their performance, and enhance their quality of life.

In each meeting, the client chooses the focus of conversation, while the coach listens and contributes observations and questions. This interaction creates clarity and moves the client into action.

Coaching accelerates the client’s progress by providing greater focus and awareness of choice. Coaching concentrates on where clients are today and what they are willing to do to get where they want to be tomorrow.
Similar to a coach and client, a preceptor and student create an ongoing partnership for a period of time during which the preceptor can support the student to deepen learning, improve performance, and enhance the quality of life for the student in the clinical setting. The preceptor focuses on helping the student gain clarity around learning goals and design actions to achieve them. Coaches and preceptors do this through asking questions, skillful listening, observations, and providing direct honest feedback. Through coaching approaches, they create awareness, explore new perspectives, challenge the student, and enhance learning opportunities.

This chapter introduces skills that facilitate dialogue, personal learning and commitment to action. While these are not the only competencies and skills that professional coaches use, they are basic to a coaching relationship.

**Coaching Skills**

- Listening
- Asking powerful questions
- Creating accountability
- Affirming
- Challenging
- And, putting it all together in a coaching conversation using a model adapted from Whitmore (1998)

**B. Coaching Skills**

**1. The Skill of Listening**

The ability to listen is important for everyone but critical for the preceptor who takes a coach approach. In coaching, listening is a key skill in the coach’s toolbox. Listening should not be confused with hearing. Hearing is a physiological function, while listening is an interpretive one. When we interpret a communicator’s message, we give only a small weight to the words:

- 7% to the words
- 38% to the tone of voice
- 55% to the body language

In other words, body language is most influential in our interpretation of a message, assuming, of course, that we are attending to more than the words.
Chapter 3 offers some tips on listening techniques. In this chapter we create awareness of how we listen. Whitworth, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl (1998) describe three levels of listening.

**Level One:** In level one listening, your attention is on yourself. You hear the words that the other person is saying, but you are thinking about what they mean to YOU. Or, you find you want more details. When listening at level one you are listening TO what the student is saying. Whitworth et al. refers to it as **internal listening.**

Sometimes level one listening is OK; for example, when you want directions, or when you are ordering in a restaurant, or when you are receiving instructions. It is OK for the student to be at this level. In fact, we want students to focus on themselves. But the preceptor needs to be listening more deeply. The preceptor must develop enough self-awareness to know when this is happening.

An example of Level One Listening:

**Preceptor:** “How was your clinical experience this morning?”
**Student:** “I had a terrible morning. The staff was late. My presentation got started 15 minutes after the scheduled time. I had to rush through the most important parts. I felt like I did a really bad job.”
**Preceptor:** “How many staff attended?”
**Student:** “It started with 8 and ended up with 15. So not everybody heard the parts I did give.”
**Preceptor:** “That happened to me one time. I never even completed half the talk I prepared. It is so frustrating.”

In this situation, the preceptor was listening. She even expressed some sensitivity to what the student must have felt. However, her thoughts were on her own experience and did not support the student’s learning.

**Level Two:** In this level of listening, the preceptor takes herself out of the picture and is only concerned with the student’s story. Whitworth et al. refers to this level as **focused listening.** The preceptor is totally with the student and the student’s words - not thinking about the impact on the preceptor. The preceptor asks questions and is listening FOR what the student is saying. Sometimes the message is not in the words, but can be found between the words.

The preceptor will best serve the student by slowly and calmly asking questions in a non-judgmental way - questions that help the student gain a deeper understanding of the situation and the student’s reaction to the situation. The dialogue might go something like:

**Preceptor:** “How was your clinical experience this morning?”
**Student:** “Terrible. Half the staff was late due to an emergency and I only gave half my prepared presentation.”
**Preceptor:** “How important was it that everyone was there? At least you were able
“to practice presenting your material.”

Student: “Yes, but I wanted the staff to learn something too.”

Preceptor: “How else might you help them learn?”

Student: “I could offer a make-up session.”

Preceptor: “Anything else?”

Student: “I can create a handout with the pertinent facts.”

In this situation, the preceptor followed the student’s lead by focusing on what was important to the student – staff learning – not what might have seemed important – low attendance.

**Level Three:** At level three the preceptor is not only listening to the words and for the message, but is also aware of all that you can observe with your senses: what you see, hear, smell, and feel - emotion, body language, tone, energy, and your intuition. Stories have two components: content and feelings. The real message emerges in how the student is telling the story. On the surface the student may make light of an incident, but underneath feel scared, frustrated, or worried about a mistake. The preceptor may have a feeling that the story is really about something else. It is important to acknowledge those feelings and sometimes speculate as to what could be the possible force in the situation. A possible level three conversation might go something like this:

Preceptor: “How was your clinical experience this morning?”

Student: “Terrible, only half the staff showed up for my presentation.”

Preceptor: “You did get to practice your presentation.”

Student: “I know and that was good; but not everybody got to hear it. That really disappointed me.”

Preceptor: “What’s that about? I get the sense you are pretty upset about that.”

Student: “It’s just that the room was half-empty and it felt incomplete.”

Preceptor: “What was incomplete?”

Student: “I guess I felt I could not be successful unless the room was full and all the staff attended. Now, on reflection, that had nothing to do with my presentation. And, I got great feedback from those who were there. I’m glad I’m seeing that distinction. Maybe my morning was not so terrible after all. I feel much better about it.”

In this Level Three example, the preceptor was tuned in to the emotion and feelings the student expressed and created questions that took the conversation down a different path.

2. The Skill of Asking Powerful Questions

**Questions** are a powerful coaching skill. In fact, they are at the core of a good coaching conversation. The idea behind questions is to get people to think and go deeper. Telling an answer to a question or asking closed questions saves people from having to think. Asking open-ended questions causes them to think for themselves. However, asking the same question in different ways not only produces different
answers, but also elicits various emotional responses.

In coaching, the skill of asking questions is important because it creates awareness and responsibility. Generally, people ask questions to get information, such as “What is for breakfast?”, or to resolve an issue, such as “How do I do this?”, or to seek advice, such as “Should I hire the cheaper or more experienced vendor?” In coaching with students, the answers are secondary to the student’s line of thinking. The answer does not have to be totally complete or correct. It simply provides the preceptor with information for follow-up questions.

**How do we ask effective questions?** Here are some general rules.

- **Ask open-ended questions.** “What did you notice?”
- **Make questions simple and short.** “When will you do it?”
- **Use interrogative words.** These are words that seek to quantify or gather facts. For example, what, when, who, how much, how many. *Why* is discouraged because it often makes the student feel defensive. *How* questions get to analytical thinking. John Whitmore suggests rather than *Why,* ask “What were the reasons for…?” And how questions such as “What are the steps…?” These words evoke more specific, factual answers.
- **Focus on detail.** After asking the big broad questions, such as “How was your presentation?”, continue to ask for more detail, such as “What part seemed most interesting to the audience?” “What did you notice about their attention?” “When did you feel confident in your ability?” “What was most difficult for you?” “What would make it easier next time?”
- **Create space for the question to land.** Ask your question and be quiet. So often, we ask a question, explain what we really meant, and then ask another question. The student cannot listen to the question while you are asking another. By being quiet, the question gets to land and the student can take it in and reflect. Sometimes the question is more important than the answer.
- **Listen, listen, listen, and be attentive to answers.** You will know what question to ask next simply by listening to what the student has to say in answer to your question.

**Preceptor:** “What was most difficult for you?”
**Student:** “Trying to remember the content without any notes. I get so nervous.”
**Preceptor:** “How does being nervous affect you?”
**Student:** “It makes things worse because I forget more.”
**Preceptor:** “When was a time when you did not forget?”
**Student:** “When I practiced out loud for several days.”
**Preceptor:** “What technique did you use to practice this time?”
**Student:** “Oh, I see. I did not use that approach. Had I used what worked for me before, I would not have felt this way. I can do a better job next time.”

In the above dialogue, the preceptor created awareness in the student by asking what worked in the past. Responsibility was created when the student recognized she did not
do something that worked for her before; and, she can choose strategies to help herself not be nervous.

- **Ask students questions that allow them to be part of the solution – this gives the student responsibility.** For example, “What are some possible solutions to this dilemma?” “Which one do you want to try?” “How will you move forward?” “When will you complete the project?” In this scenario, the student has built the solution and defined the timeline. That creates responsibility!

- **Ask questions that open the door to a conversation.** For example, “What did you like best about the article?” or, “What aspects of the article did you find most helpful for our meeting today?” Such questions take the student down a mental path of analysis and application. Your question compels the student to think about the article, the learning points derived from it, and how the information can be applied.

3. **The Skill of Affirming or Acknowledging**

Affirming or acknowledging your students helps them know themselves better, gain self-awareness, and gain confidence. In the context of coaching, to acknowledge is to let the student know that you know who they are. It is affirming them in terms of who they had to be in order to accomplish something. It is not a compliment. A compliment is about what they did. For example, “Good job on creating the work schedule for next week ahead of schedule.” This does not say anything about what the student values. An acknowledgement might sound like, “You really had to work hard to get that schedule right.” You are acknowledging the student to BE a hard worker. Using the same situation, you might affirm the student by acknowledging her creativity. “I want to acknowledge the creativity you demonstrated in putting together the schedule. Every patient will get the care they need.”

Acknowledging is more than your opinion: “The way in which you delivered the message to the family was clear and sensitive.” This message, while a compliment, is your opinion of what the student did. To acknowledge, you might say, “It took courage for you to deliver such bad news.” You are affirming the student’s courage. You are acknowledging the student for being a courageous person.

Another example:

**Student:** “Maybe I should not have corrected Mary. I did it in a respectful way, and was direct in pointing out what I thought would lead us to an undesirable outcome. But I felt like I looked like a know it all.”

**Preceptor:** “You could have handled that situation in many ways. What you did was stand up for what you thought was right, and you did it in a professional manner. I want to acknowledge you for being so committed to doing what you thought was right and getting the job done correctly. That’s who you are.”

**Student:** “Yes, that is right! After all, in this case it is important to get the job done right the first time around so we don’t waste time later.”
In the above dialogue, the preceptor is acknowledging the student for her values of commitment and accuracy. When we acknowledge a person it is usually about that person’s values and who he is rather than something he has done. The values might relate to taking a risk, honesty, excellence, collaboration, or other values. Sometimes students don’t even see who they are. Acknowledging them helps them to see their inner strengths in a way they may have missed. Of course the acknowledgment has to be genuine and true. It must be an authentic acknowledgment or it will be ineffective. The deeper learning or self-awareness that comes from an acknowledgment helps the student see himself in a way he might otherwise have missed.

In Whitworth et al.’s (1998) book on co-active coaching, she states that there are two parts to every acknowledgment: delivering the acknowledgment and noticing the impact on the client. That is, to make sure that the acknowledgment was truly on target, notice the student’s reaction. You will know you found the right description of who the student had to be in that situation. It is enormously moving for students to be seen and known in this way. That is the power of acknowledgment.
C. The Coaching Conversation

The GROW Model
(Whitmore, 1998)

Sometimes it’s just easier to give the answer. However, investing a little time in a structured conversation helps a student learn to coach herself and saves time for the preceptor in the future, because the student’s learning is deeper. One mental outline that has proven effective for coaching conversations is the GROW Model (Whitmore, 1998).

A Sample GROW Conversation:

The student, Nora, is meeting with her preceptor for the first time in her clinical setting. Her preceptor is expecting Nora to talk about the goals she wants to accomplish over the next three months. Nora is feeling overwhelmed by the number of opportunities available and is not clear on what she wants to do.

**GOAL SETTING**

**Preceptor:** “Welcome to our agency, Nora. We are all looking forward to working with you. First of all, I’d like to ask you, what you would like to get out of our meeting today?”

**Student:** “Well, I would really like to leave with some clarity around my project.”

**Preceptor:** “What kind of projects have you been thinking about?”

**Student:** “That’s the trouble. There are so many interesting things to do here, I don’t know which one to select. I’d like to focus on project management. I have identified five projects that are scheduled to start in one month.”
REALITY CHECKING
Preceptor: “What do you know about project management?”
Student: “I have taken one course. Also, last summer I led a small project for a community group that focused on the purchase of 10 computers for the agency. I coordinated the purchase, installation, and education components.”
Preceptor: “What skills do you want to develop over the course of the semester?”
Student: “I want to learn how to manage a complex project; and, I would like to do it in the area of change management and information systems.”

OPTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES
Preceptor: “What do you see as options for yourself?”
Student: “Three of the five projects are computer-related. So that might narrow the list.”
Preceptor: “What else do you need to know?”
Student: “I don’t know much about the other two. I guess I need to explore them.”
Preceptor: “What information do you need to be able to make a decision?”
Student: “I need to know their focus, expected outcomes, and projected end dates.”
Preceptor: “Anything else?”
Student: “Yes. I’d like to know who is currently scheduled to be on the project or if I can create my own project team. And, I would like to know the expectations for completion. Now that I think about it, I see that what is important to me is leading the project from start to finish and being able to create the team. That is the experience I really want even more than the computer focus. I know a lot about computers but it is the project management piece that is the new learning for me.”

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?
Preceptor: “So what do you see as your next steps?”
Student: “I will make an appointment with the managers who are responsible for the projects and find out which ones meet my criteria. Then I’ll make a decision about which one will provide me with the most learning opportunities. I’ll get back to you within the next week to commit to one for the semester.”
Preceptor: “Great! See you in one week.”

While this situation is not necessarily critical, it demonstrates how the model can be used to help the student think through the situation and come up with his own best answers. Other questions the preceptor might consider asking in the REALITY section include:

- “What barriers might get in your way?”
- “How do you see yourself handling them?”
- “What other options do you have for moving forward?”

This model is not the answer to all student questions. Sometimes the student simply needs a straight answer to keep going on a project. However, when the student is stuck or when there is a need to clarify the student’s thinking and planning, and there are many
ways out of the muck, this exploratory model provides a framework for gaining new perspectives on an approach to take.

D. Satisfaction Wheels: A Tool to Facilitate Conversation and Assess Satisfaction

Tools help keep the focus on an issue or problem rather than the person. A template can be used to create a tool for a special or unique situation. Such a tool is the balance wheel. Balance wheels provide a visual for the preceptor and student to assess how satisfied the student is with progress towards a particular project goal. The wheel can also be used to assess satisfaction with competencies that are required for successful completion of the practicum.

The sample wheel which follows represents some of the competencies the student should master while in the clinical setting. For example, clinical competencies for this semester might include: communication skills, cultural knowledge, clinical problem-solving, delegation, time management, and technical knowledge. These general competencies have different specific meanings depending upon the role for which the student is preparing: APN or Health Systems Management. The preceptor might use the wheel in conversation with the student. Dialogue is facilitated when the preceptor asks the student to rate her satisfaction or progress for each competency.

- The center of the wheel represents complete dissatisfaction, represented by the number “1.”
- The outer edge of the wheel represents complete satisfaction, represented by the number “10.”
- Assign a number to each competency to represent your personal level of satisfaction.
- If you rated yourself a 5, you might be indicating you need more work in this area.
- After assigning a number to each competency, select one area of focus for a coaching conversation.
After the student rates herself on each competency, initiate a coaching conversation to facilitate the student in creating an action plan. Using the GROW Model, this conversation demonstrates how the preceptor uses the balance wheel as a focus.

**GOAL**
Preceptor: “Which of these areas would you like to focus on today?”
Student: “I’d like to talk about delegation. I rated myself ‘5’ in that area.”

**REALITY**
Preceptor: “What does a ‘5’ look like?”
Student: “I find that I don’t trust other people to follow through so I keep all the work to myself and I’m getting overwhelmed.”
Preceptor: “What else is going on in terms of delegation?”
Student: “Well, I gave one of the new students a report to key into the computer, and it wasn’t anything like what I wanted.”
Preceptor: “Is there anything else?” It is important to be patient with this stage of the conversation to give the student time to think about all the issues that might be involved.
Student: “One other time I delegated an assignment to a new person and she did it entirely wrong.”
Preceptor: “So what would it take for you to rate yourself a ‘10’ in the area of delegation?”
Student: “I would feel comfortable about giving work to the right people. I would also trust that it was going to get done correctly and on time. I would not have so many things on my own plate. And, others would be learning new skills because of the opportunity I gave them to grow through being involved in new projects.”

**OPTIONS**
Preceptor: “That’s a great description of delegating appropriately. So given that you feel you are at ‘5’ today, and you are clear on what a ‘10’ looks like, what are some things you could do to take a step towards a ‘10’ and get to a ‘6’?”
Student: “I suppose I could just keep all the work myself. Then I would know it was done exactly as I wanted it. But that doesn’t address delegating, does it?”
Preceptor: “And, how would that be helping your state of overwhelm? What else might you do?”
Student: “I could give work only to experienced people.”
Preceptor: “OK, what else?”
Student: “I could give better instructions with the work.”
Preceptor: “Is there anything else?”
Student: “I suppose I could find out what the person knows before I actually ask him to do a task.”
WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Preceptor: “That’s great. You have identified some good options. Which would you like to try?”

Student: “I have a new project starting tomorrow. I think I will ask the new student group who has an interest in this area. Then I’ll find out what she actually knows about the topic. Once I know that, I can give her the appropriate amount of information to be successful. And the best part is she will be clear on what I expect as an outcome.”

Preceptor: “When will you let me know how it is going?”

Student: “How about one week from today. I’ll do an assessment of the project, give the student feedback, and then I’ll meet with you at this same time.”

Preceptor: “Great! I’ll look forward to it. Feel free to call on me if I can help you again.” Accountability has been built into the conversation with the student telling the preceptor how she will be accountable.

E. Coaching Techniques for Special Situations

The coaching process assists individuals to explore and reach their own potentials. As a preceptor, you are also guiding the student in developing the knowledge and skills your role requires. Because there are specific skills and experiences that the student must master, the practicum cannot be entirely student-directed. The preceptor may choose some additional coaching techniques to help the student acquire professional role behaviors. The table which follows presents some of the techniques that you may find helpful in particular situations.
# Coaching Techniques for Special Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaching Technique</th>
<th>When to Use</th>
<th>Intended Outcome</th>
<th>Coach’s Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educate</strong></td>
<td>When goals, rules, or conditions change</td>
<td>New knowledge and skills are required.</td>
<td>Articulate performance expectations clearly.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To orient a newcomer</td>
<td>Confidence increases.</td>
<td>Recognize “real life” learning laboratories.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>When the coach is new</td>
<td>A broader perspective is obtained.</td>
<td>Reinforce learning.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>When new skills are needed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Role model.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sponsor</strong></td>
<td>When an individual can make a special contribution</td>
<td>Outstanding skill or contribution is showcased.</td>
<td>“Debureaucratize.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To let an outstanding skill speak for itself</td>
<td>Skill is fine-tuned or perfected.</td>
<td>Dismantle barriers to performance.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Individual is recognized.</td>
<td>Let go of control.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Provide access to information and people.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Encourage</strong></td>
<td>Before or after a first-time experience</td>
<td>Confidence and skills are enhanced.</td>
<td>Express genuine appreciation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>When affirming good performance</td>
<td>Performance improves.</td>
<td>Listen.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>When simple, brief corrections are needed</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Counsel</strong></td>
<td>When problems interfere with performance</td>
<td>Behavior is redirected.</td>
<td>Listen.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>When educating and encouraging fail to attain desired outcomes</td>
<td>Sense of ownership and accountability is enhanced.</td>
<td>Give clear, useful feedback.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>When responding to setbacks and disappointments – to speed recovery</td>
<td>Commitment is renewed.</td>
<td>Facilitate problem solving.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Confront</strong></td>
<td>When emotions have cooled after a conflict</td>
<td>Communication is opened.</td>
<td>Listen.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>When privacy can be assured</td>
<td>A mutual understanding is established.</td>
<td>Give direct, useful feedback.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>When performance does not match expectations</td>
<td>A change of behavior is effected.</td>
<td>Discuss sensitive issues without over-emotionalizing.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trust is established.</td>
<td>Communicate objectively, clearly, directly.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reassignment is considered.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Notice how prominently the skill of listening functions in effective coaching.

You may also seek coaching in your role as preceptor. A faculty member or peer coach can help you to refine your precepting skills. Costa and Garmston (2002) recommend a faculty development approach called cognitive coaching. **Cognitive coaching** is a peer coaching technique. One partner acts as coach, the other partner receives coaching. The coach and partner:

- Discuss the teaching goals of the partner.
- Describe the student encounter in which the partner will work towards these goals. The coach asks clarifying questions in order to fully explore the situation and the alternatives for the partner’s actions.
- Identify a few specific actions that the partner will take during a student encounter to work toward these goals.
- Agree that the coach will observe the encounter and later give feedback to the partner.

The peer coach then observes the partner during the encounter with the student. The peer coach gives feedback to the partner. They discuss how well the planned approaches worked and what additional approaches might be tried in the future. They may agree to continue goal setting, planning, and observing with feedback. The cognitive coaching technique can be applied in a single episode or as an ongoing approach to skill development.

You might find peer coaching helpful when you are trying new approaches such as active listening or the GROW coaching conversation with students. You might also serve as a peer coach for another preceptor.

**F. The Coaching Process in Precepting: In Summary**

This chapter has introduced a number of specific coaching strategies and techniques. Use these approaches with your student as indicated in the context of your preceptorship relationship. The characteristics of the coaching relationship, displayed on the next page, describe the context in which these coaching approaches become most effective.
The role of preceptor is complex; you really serve as teacher, mentor, coach, and colleague. Effective preceptors not only possess excellent clinical and administrative knowledge, but they are savvy enough to navigate the political and cultural waters of an organization.

Often students seek a position in the clinical setting where they studied during their practicum. When that occurs, you have an opportunity to mentor a student whom you formerly precepted. You will no longer be formally evaluating the student’s performance, and the relationship becomes more collegial. As students move into the real world of work they continue to need support and development. The transition from preceptor to mentor can be seamless if the relationship has been professional and collegial from the beginning. It is still important to use coaching skills while designing the new relationship. Identifying learning objectives and agreeing on how the ongoing relationship will look will enhance the mentor/protégé experience.

Some students will want to identify new mentors after they graduate, as a way of furthering their learning and gaining new perspectives on their clinical specialty. Current preceptors can and should be a source to help the student make new internal and external connections for this purpose. Like a preceptor, the mentor is a wise and trusted counselor with rich and deep experience to draw upon. Like a coach, the mentors create environments for their protégés, built on openness and trust to help people believe in whom they are and to believe in their potentials.

G. Conclusion

Chapter 6 has applied the coaching approach to preceptorship and has presented a variety of coaching strategies and techniques.
When precepting puzzles you…
or you have a question, just

Ask the Preceptor’s Preceptor

I’m frustrated because I think my student is missing out on lots of opportunities. The faculty member told me that there’s room for flexibility in scheduling the student’s hours. But the student rarely seems to be around when great learning opportunities present themselves. We’ve had a series of lectures going on to present best practices in her specialty. I don’t think she made it to any of them. Some of my days are more productive than others too, in terms of her learning. There have been a few days when I was fully scheduled with patients and the student wasn’t here – would have been a great chance for her to compare and contrast findings and management, not to mention more hands-on physical assessment experience. I try to let her know about these opportunities, but I think she has some responsibility there too. Shall I just let this go? Am I trying to be too controlling?

A. Tell the faculty member about this. The faculty member will want to know that the student isn’t showing the expected initiative.

B. Let the student know of your concerns. Guide the student in exploring ways to gain maximum benefit from her time in your setting.

C. This is her loss. If she can meet her objectives without capitalizing on all available opportunities, you really don’t need to worry about it.

D. Map out a schedule with the student. Point out those experiences that you think are critical to meeting her objectives. Tell her she must arrange her schedule to be present at those times.

B. is the best answer. As Preceptor’s Preceptor, let me function as a bit of a coach here. In the GROW model, I ask you to identify your goal here. Since you don’t have the opportunity to respond to me, let’s say that you identify your goals as offering the student the best experience possible and feeling more satisfied with the student’s experience yourself. The reality checking piece involves exploring the situation. Does the student know of your perception and frustrations? Is the student aware of these missed opportunities? Does the student see the relationship between these opportunities and learning your role? You and the student need to compare your own personal interpretations of the situation. You also need to explore the realistic possibilities here – which of these opportunities occur at times that can be scheduled in advance? Which would require the student to practically be “on call” if she were to take advantage? How can each of you take some, but not all, of the responsibility for capitalizing upon these experiences? Then you’re ready to explore options. What are the givens in the student’s personal and work schedule? Are there ways for her to create more flexibility? Can you and she take a long-range look at predictable action-packed times? What each of you will do will evolve out of the answers to these questions. Through a questioning process, guide the student in thinking through the consequences of various options and making a plan. Identify each of your roles in carrying out the plan and plan for a follow-up in a week or two on how this plan is working or needs to be adjusted.