



# The Peer Coach Role

You and your coachee will likely spend the majority of each coaching session reviewing and discussing the video recording of an operation selected by the coachee. Together you will identify and describe specific episodes of interest in the video for collaborative reflection and analysis. You will work to identify areas of strength and areas of improvement based on tangible examples. Based on this collaborative analysis of the video case, you will support your coachee in generating informed hypotheses about how to improve and translating those ideas into specific, actionable goals that he/she will work on prior to the next coaching session. You will also support your coachee's efforts to track and objectively assess his/her progress in working toward those goals between sessions.

During each coaching session you assume different roles at different times, depending on the circumstances. At times, you may act as a source of expertise and information. You may take on the role of diagnostician. However, your primary role should be to serve as what Edgar Schein (2011) calls a **process consultant**:

*At the core of this role is the assumption that [coachees] must be encouraged to remain proactive, in the sense of retaining both the diagnostic and remedial initiative, because only they own the problems identified, only they know the true complexity of their situation, and only they know what will work for them in the culture in which they live. (p. 120)*

As a process consultant you will focus on the communication process – to build trust, to develop a shared understanding of the case and your roles in the partnership, and to empower the coachee to remain proactive in problem solving and goal setting.

There are two main activities we have identified for a coach: (1) asking good questions, and (2) giving constructive feedback. You should seek to employ four modes of joint inquiry (Schein, 2011) that are well-aligned with the principles discussed during training: (1) pure inquiry, (2) diagnostic inquiry, (3) confrontational inquiry, and (4) process-oriented inquiry. Knowing the technical terminology is not important, but these categories can provide a framework to illustrate examples of powerful questions you might use. There is a great deal of evidence that questions are a particularly effective way to communicate with peers and tend to be much better received than declarative suggestions or commands. You will use your judgment to decide when particular questions are appropriate and when to provide constructive feedback in support of that inquiry.

The next two pages provide an overview of the modes of inquiry with examples of strategies and question prompts you may find helpful. Remember, concentrate on the content not the terminology. Following this, you will find an introduction to constructive feedback with similar examples and strategies.



# Four Modes of Inquiry for the Peer Coach

MODE OF INQUIRY	STRATEGIES & QUESTIONS
<p><b>1. Pure Inquiry</b></p> <p>The goal in this mode is to develop a full picture of the coachee’s situation and demonstrate your commitment to listening carefully in order to understand. This includes eliciting details of what occurred, what the coachee has tried so far, and what kind of help is expected and would be useful. This mode precedes the other modes of inquiry.</p>	<p>Be silent and wait for the coachee to initiate the conversation.</p> <p>Prompt case description.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“Tell me what’s going on...”</i></li> <li>● <i>“What brings you here?” or “How can I help?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Tell me more about that.”</i></li> <li>● <i>“What else is relevant to this situation?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Tell me more about your particular situation/context.”</i></li> </ul> <p>Ask clarification questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“What do you mean by...?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Could you tell me more about...?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“I’m not sure that I fully understand...”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Could you give some examples?”</i></li> </ul> <p>Check your own understanding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“What I hear you saying is...”</i></li> <li>● <i>“You seem to be concerned about...”</i></li> <li>● <i>“So, what you are wondering about is...”</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Diagnostic Inquiry</b></p> <p>The purpose of this mode is to engage the coachee in reflection and diagnosis through guided questioning related to (a) personal reactions, (b) causes &amp; motives, (c) actions taken or contemplated, and (d) systemic considerations.</p>	<p>Personal reactions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“How did you respond?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Why do think this is an issue now?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Why do you think you reacted that way here?”</i></li> </ul> <p>Causes &amp; motives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“What conditions might have contributed to X occurring?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Are there other possible explanations for Y?”</i></li> </ul> <p>Actions taken or contemplated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“What have you tried so far? Why?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“What have you considered? Why?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Can you imagine another approach to this?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“What is another way this might have played out?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“What else could have happened in this situation?”</i></li> </ul> <p>Systemic considerations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“How did X contribute to what you did in the situation?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“What aspects of the situation can you imagine changing?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“How might others respond if you tried that?”</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Confrontational Inquiry</b></p>	<p>Personal reactions.</p>



<p>In this mode, you interject some of your own ideas through questioning, suggesting alternative possibilities at this point that may not have been considered by the coachee. The goal is not to <i>be</i> confrontational, but instead to be mindful that this form of inquiry could be perceived as confrontational unless done sensitively, attending carefully to the coachee’s reactions. The same categories addressed in diagnostic inquiry are useful here.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“Did that make you feel rushed?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Did you visibly react to that?”</i></li> </ul> <p>Causes &amp; motives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“Do you think that might have occurred because of the location of your first assistant?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Could you have informed your tech that you might need a different instrument earlier in the case to pre-empt the delay here?”</i></li> </ul> <p>Actions taken or contemplated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“Could you try one of these options?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Next time, you might consider doing....”</i></li> </ul> <p>Systemic considerations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“How might the team dynamics have contributed?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Do you think a team meeting prior to the start of the case could have helped avoid these issues?”</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Process-Oriented Inquiry</b></p> <p>The focus in this mode is on the communication processes between the coach and coachee during the video review.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>“How is the video-review process working for you so far?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Are we getting anywhere?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“Are my questions helpful? Would you like to me take on a different role in the process?”</i></li> <li>● <i>“What is your involvement right now in the process?”</i></li> </ul>

*Adapted from Schein (2011)*



## Phrasing Constructive Feedback

Constructive feedback is descriptive, specific, and non-judgmental. It is focused on your observations of behaviors and the impact of those behaviors, rather than on your assumptions or inferences (Chen, 2003). It is followed by an opportunity for the coachee to consider the feedback and respond. When offering constructive feedback, you should be mindful of your tone, the clarity of your comments, and the timing of the feedback. Additionally, you should attend to the amount of feedback you provide so as not to overwhelm the coachee with too much information.

These guidelines and the examples below are intended to help you become increasingly mindful of your language when offering feedback. It is important that you develop a trusting relationship in which both you and your coachee can speak openly, including the capacity to make suggestions and give constructive feedback.

Instead of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <i>"You shouldn't stand like that."</i></li></ul>	You might try... <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <i>"Here I noticed that your arm position was tight to your chest. This looks like it made it difficult for you to..."</i></li></ul>
Instead of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <i>"The resident was too timid. I don't like how he hesitated when..."</i></li></ul>	You might try... <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <i>"The resident paused here for a couple of seconds before he... This led to..."</i></li></ul>
Instead of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <i>"Don't do that again before checking with the anesthesiologist."</i></li></ul>	You might try... <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <i>"At this point, you started closing before you checked in with the anesthesiologist."</i></li></ul>
Instead of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <i>"Nice job there."</i></li></ul>	You might try... <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <i>"Your movements looked very fluid and natural. The extra time you spent positioning the retractor seems to have made it much easier to see."</i></li></ul>