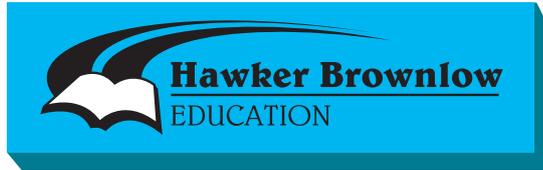
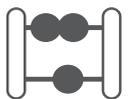


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Thinking & Learning Conference

2014



23-26 May

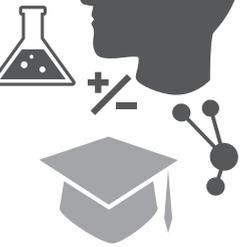
MELBOURNE



Innovate!

Educate!

Inspire!

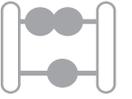


Gavin Grift

Monday 26 May

The Power of Coaching in Schools

Session 2



GAVIN GRIFT



Gavin Grift is currently Director of Professional Learning for Hawker Brownlow Professional Learning Solutions. With experience as a teacher, assistant principal and educational coach, Gavin connects with audiences on topics ranging from Cognitive Coaching and quality teacher practice to professional learning communities, collaboration and learning-centred leadership.

Gavin is an author of numerous articles and books including *Assessing the Whole Child* (2007) and *Teachers as Architects of Learning* (2013). As a PLC at Work™ training associate he led the establishment of the Professional Learning Communities Network to Australian Schools, based on the foundational work of Dr. Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour and Bob Eaker. He also serves as a Global Outreach Consultant and training associate to Thinking Collaborative, which is the home of both Cognitive Coaching (Costa, Garmston) and Adaptive Schools (Garmston, Wellman).

Gavin's combined passion, commitment and style has led him to conduct keynote presentations, workshops, seminars and in-school support days at the systems, school and classroom level both nationally and internationally. All of Gavin's work is devoted to building an educator's capacity to build success in others.

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Picture Synectics

- Team is given a person
- Round robin brainstorm of characteristics
- Sentence completion:
 “(Our person) would make a good coach because _____.”
 “(Our person) would NOT make a good coach because _____.”

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Highlands Ranch, CO

Page 3

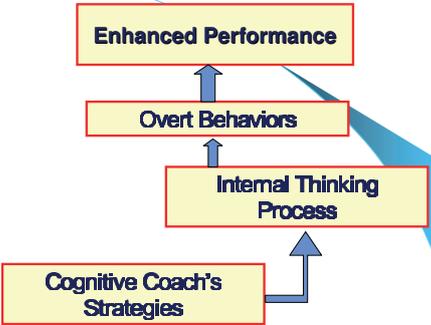
OBSERVING COACHING

Partner “A”
Observe the coach and record behaviors

Partner “B”
Observe the planner and record evidence of thinking



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Enhanced Performance

Overt Behaviors

Internal Thinking Process

Cognitive Coach's Strategies

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Page 4



Page 5

The Mission

The mission of Cognitive Coaching is to produce **self-directed** persons with the cognitive capacity for high performance both independently and as members of a community.

A **self-directed** person is...



SELF-MANAGING:

Knowing the significance of and being inclined to approach tasks with clarity of outcomes, a strategic plan, and necessary data, and drawing from past experiences, anticipating success indicators, and creating alternatives for accomplishment.

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SELF-MONITORING:

Having sufficient self-knowledge about what works, establishing conscious metacognitive strategies to alert the perceptions for in-the-moment indicators of whether the strategic plan is working or not and to assist in the decision-making processes of altering the plan and choosing the right actions and strategies.

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SELF-MODIFYING:

Reflecting on, evaluating, analyzing, and constructing meaning from experience and making a commitment to apply the learning to future activities, tasks, and challenges.

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THINK-PAIR-SHARE

What is your hunch about some of the possible benefits of increased self-directedness in your work?

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Agenda

- Working as a Mediator of Thinking for Self Directedness
- Cognitive Coaching Conversation
- Understanding four Support Functions
- Personal Practice
- Supporting Research
- Implications



COACHING PRACTICE

Think of a colleague you are responsible for building the capacity for...

What's your thinking to how you might support them in their work?

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COACHING PRACTICE

Think of a colleague you are responsible for building the capacity for...

What's your thinking to how you might support them in their work?

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In "light" of this information, what would you commit to...

 **STOP** doing as a listener

 **CONTINUE** to do as a listener

 **START** doing as a listener

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RATING THE RESEARCH!

1. Cognitive Coaching was linked with increased student test scores and other benefits for students.
2. Teachers grew in efficacy
3. Cognitive Coaching impacted teacher thinking, causing them to be more reflective and to think in more complex ways.
4. Teachers were more satisfied with their positions and with their choice of teaching as a profession
5. School cultures became more professional
6. Teachers collaborated more
7. Cognitive Coaching assisted teacher professionally
8. Cognitive Coaching benefited teachers personally
9. Cognitive Coaching benefited people in other fields other than teaching

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--Marilyn Ferguson,
The Aquarian Conspiracy

A belated discovery, one that causes considerable anguish, is that no one can persuade another to change. Each of us guards a gate of change that can only be unlocked from the inside. We cannot open the gate of another, either by argument or emotional appeal.

© Center for Cognitive Coaching,
2003

Chapter 1

The Power of Cognitive Coaching

Gavin Grift



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Gavin Grift is director of professional learning for Hawker Brownlow Professional Learning Solutions. With experience as a teacher, assistant principal and educational coach, Gavin uses Cognitive CoachingSM to connect with audiences on topics such as quality teacher practice, professional learning communities, collaboration and learning-centred leadership. Gavin is an author of numerous articles and books, including *Assessing the Whole Child* (2007) and *Teachers as Architects of Learning* (2013). As a PLC at WorkTM training associate, he led the establishment of the Professional Learning Communities Network in Australian schools, based on the foundational work of Dr. Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour and Bob Eaker. He also serves as a global outreach consultant and training associate to Thinking Collaborative, which is the home of both Cognitive Coaching and Adaptive Schools.

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Becoming a Cognitive Coach

Cognitive Coaching is the single most powerful professional learning experience I have ever had as an educator. So powerful, in fact, that I chose not only to apply it in my work as teacher, coach and leader but also to devote my career to it. I am now a Training Associate with Thinking Collaborative, where I am privileged to perform Cognitive Coaching regularly in schools and facilitate the Cognitive Coaching eight-day seminar to educators across Australasia.

So what is behind the power of Cognitive Coaching? The answer is both simple and complex. The simple answer is that Cognitive Coaching has the potential to change your identity as an educator. It certainly changed mine. Prior to embarking on my Cognitive Coaching journey, my identity as a support provider in education was that of consultant, and I was quite successful in my career at a relatively young age. Both the system I worked within and my experiences had taught me that success came from working hard, learning as much as I could and then applying this knowledge. The more I learnt about effective teaching and learning, particularly if it aligned to the priorities of both the school and the government system I worked in, the more successful I became. The more I knew, the better I perceived myself to be. The more I knew, the more success I had. So what was the problem?



TRANSFORMATIVE TALK

The problem was that my approach didn't necessarily translate into success for others. I may have impacted positively on students, parents and colleagues – and of course I hope that I did – but deep down I'm sure it was more out of accident than design. I had no idea how to grow others. This is the complex part.

If you believe, as I do, that the heart of the work we do as educators is to build success in others, then my identity as consultant was more of a hindrance than help. While I wanted others to succeed as a result of working with me, I was certainly not focused on building self-directedness in others. In fact, this went back to the way I operated as a classroom teacher. I came to realise that the very things I thought were assisting students might have actually been getting in the way.

Costa and Garmston (2006, p. 21), the pioneers of Cognitive Coaching, explain their work through the metaphor of a stagecoach that takes valued persons from where they are to where they want to be. This was especially illuminating to me. The first key words I was drawn to in this metaphor were 'valued persons'. How did I show my students and colleagues that I valued them? The second key word was 'taking'. How did my work support taking a person from where they were to where they wanted to be ?

Of course, consulting is both a necessary and powerful support function, but I am now able to weave it into a more powerful framework. After nearly eight years of working as a Cognitive Coach and as a Training Associate for this work, my identity has shifted to a default of Cognitive Coach.

Six insights for transformative talk

In this introductory chapter, you will learn six insights to support you in using talk as a transformational tool for working with others. Each insight will draw from the work of Cognitive Coaching and from my own experiences in the field. They will provide you with ideas for deepening your learning and application of Cognitive Coaching by challenging you to think about how the maps, tools and skills we learn in the training can be used to serve the students and colleagues you work with every day.

Synonyms of the word *insight* include vision, perception, understanding, intuition and comprehension. This fits with what I want to share. The insights are based on my *perception* of what is most useful for true *comprehension* in coaching; they come from my own *understanding* and intuition about what Cognitive Coaching is and how it supports the growth of others; and my hope is that they will help the reader to create a broader *vision* of what Cognitive Coaching can do for them.

The six insights are outlined in this chapter under the following headings:

1. Look for formal and informal opportunities to coach



CHAPTER 1 – THE POWER OF COGNITIVE COACHING

2. Name and shame unhelpful thinking
3. Know your intentions and choose congruent behaviours
4. Develop your situational flexibility
5. Start small but think big
6. Practise, practise, practise

Each insight has been structured with a definition (*what*) and tips for implementation (how). The insights are not listed in an order of importance. They are not intended to be used as a recipe, but rather to serve as a catalyst for thinking and action.

1. Look for formal and informal opportunities to coach

What?

Formal Cognitive Coaching occurs when you coach using one or more of the three mental maps that Cognitive Coaches employ to structure the coaching conversation; these are the Planning map, the Reflecting map and the Problem-Resolving map (Costa & Garmson 2006, p. 34). People tend to associate formal Cognitive Coaching conversations with planned and cyclical opportunities for coaching.

In contrast, informal Cognitive Coaching describes those occasions when you are coaching without cognitive attention to any of the maps. In essence, you are coaching with the purpose of mediation and subsequent self-directedness. Informal coaching is more likely to happen outside of the teacher observation structure within a school.

Many participants in Cognitive Coaching training sessions will state that they just can't find the time to coach. While it is true that some staff don't have the influence to build coaching structures into the culture of a school, it is also true that all of us have coaching opportunities presented to us everyday. Working in schools is highly interactive; we know that as soon as we pull up in the car park it's 'game on'. We are always interacting, whether with students, staff, parents or members of the wider community, and this provides us with many opportunities for coaching. In fact, any social interaction is an opportunity for us as Cognitive Coaches to practise becoming a mediator of thinking.

How?

It takes a heightened level of consciousness to remind ourselves of the opportunity to coach. As Costa and Garmston (2006, p. 135) explain: 'To make personal change, one must be conscious of one's own inner workings'. When we start to see interactions as opportunities to coach, we commit to our maps and tools with more rigour.

TRANSFORMATIVE TALK

If you think over the conversations you've had at work in the past week, I'm sure you can think of many instances where informal or formal coaching could have been useful. In the following example, compare the words of a coach who does not have a heightened state of consciousness with those of one who does. Both scenarios describe a conversation that informally evolves in the staffroom when most teachers are in class.

Scenario 1

Colleague: I'm so over Ella. She is constantly distracting the other kids and exhausting me. It's like I have two sets of rules: one for her and one for the rest of the class. Her dad just came up to me in the corridor and accused me of picking on her all the time. I'm seriously over it!

Coach: Yeah, it's hard when that happens. I hate when parents do that. They have no idea that that's not going to help. They can only ever see it through the eyes of their child! I know exactly how you feel ... I had the same issues last year when I had Ella.

In the first version of Scenario 1, the coach didn't realise this was an opportunity for coaching. The colleague was reaching out in a heightened emotional state and showed definite signs of being stuck. However, instead of utilising knowledge of the Problem-Resolving mental map, the coach ploughed into a sympathetic, autobiographical response, and the opportunity for mediating thinking was lost.

Scenario 1 revisited

Colleague: I'm so over Ella. She is constantly distracting the other kids and exhausting me. It's like I have two sets of rules: one for her and one for the rest of the class. Her dad just came up to me in the corridor and accused me of picking on her all the time. I'm seriously over it!

Coach: So you're really at the end of your tether ...

Colleague: Yes, I am, and it makes it so hard to deal with her every day.

Coach: Yeah, it's hard ... What you want is to have influence over her behaviour in a way that works for everybody.

Colleague: That's exactly what I want. I just don't know where to start.

In the revised version of Scenario 1, the coach seized on the opportunity for mediation through a heightened consciousness of what was being said. They then used knowledge of the Problem-Resolving map to honour the coachee's existing state and create awareness of a possible desired state – a process that Cognitive Coaches know as *pacing* (Costa & Garmston 2006, p. 194). This exchange represents a coach who sees their default identity as Cognitive Coach – in other words, as mediator of thinking – and applies a formal coaching conversation to an informal exchange in the staffroom. Such work can only occur when a coach is keenly aware of the impact their response behaviours will have on others.



CHAPTER 1 – THE POWER OF COGNITIVE COACHING

2. Name and shame unhelpful thinking

What?

Cognitive Coaching requires the highest level of attentive listening. In his influential work on the seven habits of highly effective people, Covey (2004, p. 235) argues that ‘empathetic communication’ – seeking to understand rather than be understood – is a critical strategy of high achievers. Empathetic listening is also paramount during a coaching conversation, where building self-directedness for the coachee is key. However, many things can get in the way. Unhelpful thought processes that surface during the process of listening are one such obstacle to attentive listening.

In this context, *unhelpful thinking* can be defined as those creeping thoughts that take you away from being truly present with your coachee. In order to put this unhelpful thinking aside, it is important to recognise unhelpful thoughts that are surfacing (*name*), then disregard them or find another way not to follow that train of thought (*shame*). Naturally, your ability to do this is enhanced by maintaining the heightened state of mind already discussed.

How?

If you have experienced the Cognitive Coaching Foundation Seminar, you will recognise the set-aside strategy as a valuable mental model for naming and shaming unhelpful thinking while promoting the empathetic and attentive listening needed to effectively coach. The set-aside strategy encourages us to disregard unproductive patterns of listening, helping us to respond and inquire more successfully. Effective mediators of thinking are able to both recognise and eschew distracting thoughts – known as *set asides* – in order to more successfully serve the person being coached. As Cognitive Coaches, we are encouraged to resist the urge to become:

- autobiographical. When what we hear reminds us of a situation that we have experienced, we respond in ways that bring the focus of the conversation onto us rather than the person we are coaching.
- solution-focused. When we believe we have the best or only solution to the situation, the solution becomes ours rather than the coachee’s own. Again, this makes the conversation about us, minimising opportunities for the coachee to build their self-directedness.
- inquisitive. When what we hear alerts us to a curiosity we have, it takes our listening and therefore our thinking away from the person we are coaching.

Below is an example of how these three set asides can easily slip into an interaction. It takes the form of a meeting between a principal and her Cognitive Coach.

TRANSFORMATIVE TALK

Scenario 2

Principal: I'm still struggling to bring our network principals on board to implement professional learning communities as our number one initiative. They just don't seem to understand what it means in any depth.

Coach: Ah, okay. I've had similar issues in the past and it's always made it so much harder when you feel some just don't get it. There were times when I just went ahead and planned things anyway [autobiographical]. Maybe that's something for you to think about. At least the decisions you make will result in action and maybe bring more of them on board [solution-focused]. Who are the other principals you are working with? I think I might have worked with one of them before [inquisitive].

Can you hear yourself in the above example? How can we begin to break these natural and habitual ways of responding and inquiring?

Here, the power of the paraphrase is critical. Instead of drawing attention onto themselves, the coach reiterates their coachee's problem in different words, in this way both showing their empathy for the speaker and prompting self-directed problem resolution. In some ways, paraphrasing is more of a listening skill than a verbal one, as to do it well requires 100 per cent focus on the coachee. Examine the same scenario again, but where the coach uses paraphrase as a tool to set aside the temptation to become autobiographical, solution-focused or inquisitive.

Scenario 2 revisited

Principal: I'm still struggling to bring our network principals on board to implement professional learning communities as our number one initiative. They just don't seem to understand what it means in any depth.

Coach: Ah, okay. So you're feeling frustrated by their refusal to buy into PLCs because of their lack of knowledge on the concept.

Principal: Absolutely.

Coach: What's your sense of where this lack of understanding comes from?

When a Cognitive Coach is deliberate in their intention to coach, then they must focus on the thinking of their colleague without becoming distracted by the inevitable thought processes that can sometimes be obstructive. A knowledge of the above three set asides, coupled with a commitment to utilising paraphrasing in response behaviours, will ensure greater proficiency in your development as a coach.



CHAPTER 1 – THE POWER OF COGNITIVE COACHING

3. Know your intentions and choose congruent behaviours

What?

Effective Cognitive Coaches develop four capabilities, as taught during the Cognitive Coaching Foundation Seminar. Costa and Garmston (2006, p. 401) define these capabilities as being about

how one uses knowledge and skill. For the coach, these metacognitive functions include knowing one's intentions and choosing congruent behaviours, setting aside unproductive patterns of listening and responding, adjusting personal style preferences, and navigating within and among various coaching maps and support functions.

Knowing your own intentions and choosing congruent behaviours is essential in building momentum, confidence and skill in the art of coaching. When a coach is truly clear about what they want out of a conversation, they can more readily use the tools and capabilities of Cognitive Coaching to support coachees in achieving their desired outcomes. Put simply, this insight asks coaches to act in accordance to their purpose.

How?

People who are starting on their coaching journey often confuse what they want to achieve with the application of the maps, tools and skills of coaching. One example of this occurred while I was coaching a Year Six teacher, who on this occasion was modelling the formula for calculating the area of a two-dimensional shape. He had a shape drawn on the board and proceeded to pose a set of mediative questions to the students: 'What might be some ways we can work this out? What do you think this shape asks us to do? What might be some reasons for needing to work out the area of shapes?'

As the lesson went on, the teacher became more and more frustrated, as the responses he was receiving were low level at best and in many cases non-existent. The question-and-response session also took up valuable time at the beginning of the lesson and didn't allow for much 'applying' time.

So what happened? During our Reflecting conversation, it became clear this was a case of his intention not matching his behaviour. When I asked him what he was trying to achieve, his response was simple: 'I wanted them to know that length times width will give you the area of a two-dimensional shape.' If this was the case, it would have been better for him to have just told the students the formula and modelled it for them. Then, later, he could explore for deeper levels of thinking and connections through mediative questions.

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Examples of a mismatch between how we communicate and what we want are evident in many contexts. Another example of a mismatch follows.

Mismatch

A coach observes unprofessional conduct from a teacher in the way they handle a student's behaviours. During the Reflecting conversation, the coach asks leading questions (dressed up as mediative questions) to ensure the teacher recognises that this conduct is unprofessional and possibly damaging to the child's wellbeing. The conversation quickly becomes uncomfortable for both coach and teacher, and trust whittles away as the coachee tries hard to work out what the coach is actually trying to say. As a result, the coachee becomes more defensive and the coach more agitated.

Match

A coach observes unprofessional conduct from a teacher in the way they handle a student's behaviours. The coach realises that before coaching can begin, certain non-negotiable information must be shared with the teacher, because it is an expectation at the school that professional standards are adhered to. Before initiating the Reflecting conversation, the coach asks the coachee if he can share an observation. The coachee agrees. The coach proceeds to outline the principles of the school's student wellbeing policy in relation to classroom management, then shares data that shows evidence of how a poorly handled interaction can damage the student. The coach explains that he wants to assist the teacher but feels it is important this is made clear.

Having matched their intention to congruent behaviours by imparting this non-negotiable information, the coach then initiates a Reflecting conversation with the long-term aim of self-directedness by asking, 'In light of this information, what seems to be going on for you?'

A Cognitive Coach develops the capability to act on their intention. To repeat, during Cognitive Coaching, you are taking a valued person from where they are to where they *want* to be. If your inclination is to tell the coachee where you think they should be, could be or ought to be, then DON'T COACH! The trick is learning to recognise this in yourself so you can act in a way that is congruent to your intentions.

Develop your situational flexibility**What?**

Patterson et al. (2012) discuss the importance of being alert to what is happening in the moment when conversations go from routine to crucial. They remind us to base our approach on purposeful consciousness of what we observe in others, whether these observations are emotional, physical or behavioural. Similarly, Costa and Garmston (2006) refer to the concept of *situational*



CHAPTER 1 – THE POWER OF COGNITIVE COACHING

flexibility, which describes our ability to react according to the varied roles and responsibilities we take on in our job. They write:

Skillful coaches may depart from Cognitive Coaching periodically to conduct these other forms of interaction (collaborating, consulting and evaluating). Because they continually strive to consummate their identity as mediators, however, they consciously return to the beliefs, values, principles, maps and tools of Cognitive Coaching as their default position. (Costa & Garmston 2006, p. 279)

So, while we strive to have Cognitive Coaching as our default identity, we also develop the skill of responding according to what we notice – from both a physiological and emotional perspective – as well as through a deep understanding of what our role asks from us at particular times. Cognitive Coaches learn to read a situation and respond accordingly, but in a way that continues to build the capacity of others to be successful.

How?

The following story, about my experience with a principal with whom I have worked as Cognitive Coach for the past five years, provides an instructive example of how to develop and implement situation flexibility.



TRANSFORMATIVE TALK

Gavin and Stella's story

My partnership with Stella started when she first took up the role at her school, and she was looking to develop her leadership skills through Cognitive Coaching after participating in the Foundation training herself. One of the areas she wanted to work on was managing her impulsivity when responding to 'difficult staff'. One particular staff member (here referred to as Rose) seemed to be most difficult for Stella to deal with. Rose would often question decisions that were made and respond negatively to her colleagues when she was unhappy with the outcomes of these decisions. Over a period of time, I noticed a pattern in the response behaviours that Stella would exhibit when dealing with Rose. Stella's frustration would lead to a reactionary response that would fuel the conflict, preventing her from using the situation as an opportunity to learn.

While a heightened consciousness is critical to developing your ability to respond with conscious flexibility to colleagues and situations, it also requires practice. When Stella agreed to this, she essentially committed to developing her situational flexibility. Realising that she needed to vary her responses to Rose when tensions emerged, Stella developed some rules to assist her in drawing from what she had learnt at the Cognitive Coaching seminar she attended. These included:

- Listen and look for both verbal and non-verbal clues as to what emotion is being demonstrated.
- Paraphrase where possible to honour the emotion and seek to understand as the first thought (rather than simply thinking, 'Here we go again!').
- Check whether the issue requires an approach drawn from the four support functions taught in Foundation training:
 - ↳ *Coaching*: Stella supports Rose in taking her from where she is to where she wants to be.
 - ↳ *Collaborating*: Stella works with Rose to form ideas on how to move forward.
 - ↳ *Consulting*: Stella provides Rose with information that she believes Rose to be missing.
 - ↳ *Evaluating*: Stella listens but explains to Rose why the decision is non-negotiable or essential to the school's values.

Using these responses with Rose started to pay off for Stella immediately. It enabled her to see that on many occasions Rose had a perspective that was useful, helping Stella to consider when decisions needed to be made or implications needed to be explored. Furthermore, it meant that Rose started to trust Stella and confide in her more often, often bringing up issues that were deeper than what had surfaced in previous conversations. In this way, Stella's ability to become situationally flexible with Rose helped both parties to build a more respectful and productive working relationship.



CHAPTER 1 – THE POWER OF COGNITIVE COACHING

5. Start small but think big

What?

Start where we can and take it everywhere we can. Many participants get excited by the possibilities Cognitive Coaching can bring them, but then become frustrated by the uptake when they go back to their schools. Regardless of the role someone holds in a school, Cognitive Coaching provides participants with the opportunity to help others become successful, both independently and as part of a community. It just takes commitment to start where you can with what you have. In essence, from little things big things grow.

For commitment to happen, a Cognitive Coach must attend to the state of mind of efficacy. People who are efficacious are likely to be resourceful, energetic, and confident. Furthermore, they are aware of what Covey (2004, p. 83) identifies as a key characteristic of proactive people: the ability to devote their energies within their circle of influence, in this way focusing on ‘the things they can do something about’.

How?

As a Cognitive Coach, it’s important to see every interaction as an opportunity for mediation. In this way, we can commit to utilising the maps, tools and skills for coaching on an ongoing basis. This is the same regardless of whether we are employing Cognitive Coaching in our professional lives – with students, colleagues or community members – or within our private lives, with partners, children, relatives and friends.

One successful strategy for starting small that I have both observed and undertaken is to approach a coworker (either a trusted colleague, or one with whom you are seeking to develop higher levels of trust) to work with you on developing your coaching practice. This is not only an opportunity to develop coaching skills that will enhance your capability as a support provider, but also allows you to support your colleague in their work to be successful. In this way, it is genuinely a win-win situation for both the coach and the coachee.

At the beginning of my journey as a Cognitive Coach, immediately after completing the Foundation Seminar, I held an informal meeting for my colleagues on the topic of ‘What is Cognitive Coaching?’ Twenty coworkers attended, and I provided a 30-minute overview of what the work involves. At the conclusion of the meeting, I asked whether anyone there was interested in being coached. 13 people volunteered, with participants ranging from principals and teacher leaders to experienced teachers and graduate teachers.

I committed to meeting with these colleagues at mutually convenient times throughout the year to conduct Planning, Reflecting and Problem-Resolving conversations. I collected participant data, conducted Reflecting conversations and took surveys to build evidence of success for both



TRANSFORMATIVE TALK

the coachee and myself. The data in turn provided an opportunity for me to discuss the benefits of Cognitive Coaching with the school leadership team, and this became the first step towards building a more reflective and collaborative culture. Through starting with what I felt able to do and then committing to doing it, I developed my skills and belief in the work.

I have spoken with participants during Foundation Seminars who have used Cognitive Coaching in a variety of ways, but always with the intention to create success. This leads me to the last of the six insights – which, while seemingly an obvious one, is perhaps one of the most critical in developing as a coach.

6. Practise, practise, practise

What?

For our book *Teachers as Architects of Learning* (2013), my co-author and I researched what it takes to learn something deeply. We found that one of the most prevalent strategies for learning is to ‘do it’, ‘apply it’ or ‘have a go at it’, as this leads to greater commitment and therefore success. The more we do something, the more we refine our skills, both through the learning experience itself and through reflecting on the learning experience. This holds true when it comes to developing our capabilities as a Cognitive Coach.

How?

There are many ways we can practise our Cognitive Coaching skills. Below are ideas I’ve collected from participants who have demonstrated growth in their ability to coach. They are practical methods that encourage commitment to the maps, tools and capabilities of Cognitive Coaching.



CHAPTER 1 – THE POWER OF COGNITIVE COACHING

- ***Seek out opportunities to coach***

One thing that effective Cognitive Coaches do is find opportunities to coach throughout the week and commit to making the most of them. I have seen this play out in different ways. Strategies could include the following:

- Utilise reflection time at the end of a lesson to apply mediative questions.
- One afternoon a week, engage in Reflecting conversation with a colleague on their day, lesson or role.
- Isolate a skill (such as pausing, paraphrasing or posing questions) and devote a portion of the day to applying it.
- Review your timetable, breaking down the week and highlighting key times, meetings, lessons and other opportunities that lend themselves to possible practice of Planning, Reflecting and Problem-Resolving conversations (e.g. parent meetings, leadership reviews, school mentoring programs and so on).
- If you participated in the training with a colleague from the same school or neighbouring area, invite them to join you for regular practice. If there are more than two of you, it could be beneficial to practise with the involvement of a meta-coach.

- ***Watch television***

Watching television with heightened consciousness as a way to build your coaching can be both fun and effective in building your skill set. Here are some ways to achieve this:

- Look for examples of response behaviours that align to Cognitive Coaching capabilities such as paraphrasing, questioning and states of mind. Watching Oprah Winfrey interview people, for instance, is a great way to build awareness of the skills we use to coach.
- When you see an opportunity for Cognitive Coaching, stop the program or turn off the television, then say aloud or write down a paraphrase and a mediative question that you think fit the scenario. (You might want to ensure you are alone in the house so that the rest of your family don't think you've totally lost your marbles!)
- Record yourself coaching, play it back through the television and conduct a self-mediated Reflecting conversation. By doing this, you can explore the reasons that you feel and act the way you do about a conversation. It was through this strategy that I saw how often I nodded in agreement with the coachee, leading me to work on being more 'still' during formal conversations.



TRANSFORMATIVE TALK

- *Target someone*

To get the most out of Cognitive Coaching, it is good idea to organise regular, ongoing practice with at least one willing coachee. If you can do this in both your professional and personal lives, it will provide you with a chance to refine those skills on a regular basis. Some tips include:

- ↳ Explain to a colleague, friend or family member about the training you have been doing. Let them know that you are working at building your capacity to be a mediator of thinking and to assist others in becoming more self-directed.
- ↳ Request permission from this person to help them plan, reflect or work through problems in a Cognitive Coaching capacity.
- ↳ Ensure that you continue to reflect on the coaching practice in order to learn more about the process and how it is serving both you and the coachee.
- ↳ Utilise your learning guide if you need to, at least until some of the mediative questions and principles of paraphrasing becomes more automatic.

These strategies are just some of many that successful Cognitive Coaches undertake to continue their commitment and development. All the training in the world will make little difference unless we look for opportunities and apply the maps, tools and skills we have learnt on a regular basis. As Arthur Ashe, the first African American to win the Wimbledon men's singles title, once said: 'To achieve greatness, start where you are, use what you have, do what you can.'

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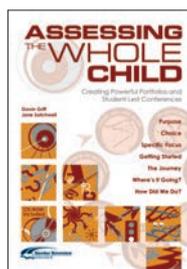
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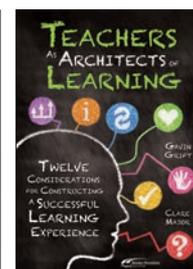


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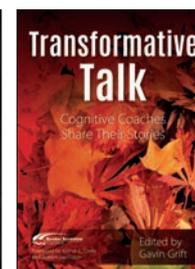
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