Coaching for Behavior Change

Pilot Project

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Michigan Nutrition Network at the Michigan Fitness Foundation

An External Evaluation Report

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Coaching for Behavior Change: Pilot Project

at the Michigan Fitness Foundation

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INTRODUCTION

The Michigan Nutrition Network (MNN) at the Michigan Fitness Foundation supports and oversees SNAP-Ed programming throughout the state of Michigan as one of the state’s Implementing Agencies. Ultimately, these programs are intended to promote health and wellness among community members through positive behavior change. There is ample research to indicate the importance of certain healthy behaviors (e.g. eating more fruits and vegetables, exercising regularly) and most individuals in SNAP-Ed programs understand their importance. However, the challenge is getting individuals to enact this knowledge by actually changing behavior patterns and making healthy life choices; this requires motivation. Research has shown that techniques such as motivational interviewing can be effective in helping individuals to make positive behavior changes to address a number of issues including health promotion. Therefore, MNN decided to pilot a project to train 37 staff members from SNAP-Ed programs in a coaching model to assess the applicability of established coaching skills in their work. This training and the applicability of the coaching skills in a variety of contexts was explored in the current evaluation study. Data sources included observational field notes, focus groups, follow-up interviews, written trainee reflections, and a series of customized online surveys. These various data sources were triangulated to assess the effectiveness of the training and support provided to SNAP-Ed staff, the applicability of coaching skills to their work, and perceived impact of this approach.

The impetus for this pilot project, called Coaching for Behavior Change, was MNN’s desire to explore how coaching skills coupled with SNAP-Ed programming can move participants toward lasting behavior change. The Coaching for Behavior Change project was designed for those who are implementing nutrition education and physical activity promotion or for those who are supervising SNAP-Ed program implementers. This pilot involved the training of 37 staff and/or supervisors from SNAP-Ed programs. Training and support were provided by Leadership That Works (LTW) over an eight-month period and the major training components include two multi-day coach trainings, six peer learning circles (via telephone), and three individual sessions with a mentor coach by phone. In the end, it was expected that
trainees would develop basic coaching skills including: 1) Asking empowering questions; 2) Coach’s stand; 3) Making requests; 4) Offering challenges; 5) Acknowledging; 6) Creating accountability; 7) Moving into action; 8) Self-managing; 9) Visioning; and 10) Values. In addition, it was expected that participants would explore ways to apply these skills in SNAP-Ed settings. For additional information about coaching skills, readers are referred to the supplemental materials prepared for MNN by LTW¹.

In order to provide meaningful results, support program improvement, and drive decision-making, an evaluation must have a clear focus as well as an appropriate design. A pilot project makes it possible to assess the feasibility of an idea, develop instrumentation, and identify areas of relative strength and weakness in the early links on the chain of logic that is supposed to lead to behavior change. Based in the literature (references available upon request), goals of this project, and conversations between MNN, LTW, and the evaluator, the current evaluation design was framed around five guiding questions: 1) How effective was the training model?; 2) What impact did the training have on trainees’ knowledge of the key coaching skills?; 3) What impact did the training have on the trainees’ confidence to use the key coaching skills?; 4) What impact did the training have on the trainees’ actual application of the key coaching skills?; and 5) What impact and/or benefits seem to have come from this training? To address each of the guiding questions, multiple data sources and a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods were used so that results could be triangulated to confirm key findings.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

MNN invited volunteers from their SNAP-Ed programs throughout Michigan to participate in this project. It was explained to participants upon enrollment that this was a pilot and evaluation would be an important aspect. It was made clear that agreement to participate required a commitment to attend and engage in all aspects of the training program as well as the evaluation. In total, 37 trainees were recruited and agreed to all stated commitments. Because all trainees were made aware that evaluation was an important aspect of this project, volunteering and committing to participate in the project represented implicit consent to be involved in the evaluation study. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Western Michigan University.

Data Collection

As noted above, the methods of data collection included online survey administration, observation, written trainee reflections, focus groups and follow-up interviews. A series of online surveys developed specifically for this project were administered anonymously via Survey Monkey. These surveys are described in detail below, but all involve a combination of forced choice (Likert-type) items as well as open ended items for narrative comments. Observations documented in ethnographic field notes were conducted by Dr. Wright in person at the two multi-day training sessions and on three of the Peer Learning Circle conference-style phone calls. A written reflection on their application of the coaching skills was completed by participants at the second multi-day training. Also at the second multi-day training, Dr. Wright conducted two focus group interviews that were guided by a written protocol. At the end of the project, follow-up interviews were conducted with selected educators and managers from the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids as this organization had the largest degree of participation in the project. Notes were taken at the time of these focus groups and interviews and they were audio-recorded for further review and analysis.
Observation of both training sessions, as well as written trainee reflections and focus group interviews conducted at the second training, took place at the Dominican Center at Marywood in Grand Rapids, MI where the multi-day trainings took place in November 2012 and January 2013. Follow up interviews with selected participants were conducted at the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids offices in Grand Rapids, MI. Other data that were collected virtually included all online surveys and observation of the Peer Learning Circle phone calls.

Instrumentation

*Training Feedback Survey.* This survey was designed to be administered after the multi-day training sessions and is comprised of four different sections. The first section contains seven items rated on a scale of 1-5 (1=very unsatisfied; 2=unsatisfied; 3=not sure; 4=satisfied; 5=very satisfied). All of these items were designed to evaluate various aspects of the training experience such as effectiveness of the presenters and the balance of lecture and active learning experiences. The second section is comprised of eight open response items also designed to evaluate the training but allowing for more participant voice. The third section contains ten items rated on a scale of 1-5 (1=very low; 2=low; 3=moderate; 4=high; 5=very high). All of these items evaluate the participants’ current level of understanding on the key coaching skills taught in the training. The fourth section contains ten items rated on a scale of 1-5 (1=very low; 2=low; 3=moderate; 4=high; 5=very high). All of these items were designed to evaluate the participants’ current level of confidence in applying the key coaching skills. A slightly modified version of this survey was administered after the second training meeting.

*Peer Learning Circle Feedback Survey.* This survey was designed to be administered after the Peer Learning Circle phone call sessions and is comprised of five different sections. The first section contains seven items rated on a scale of 1-5 (1=very unsatisfied; 2=unsatisfied; 3=not sure; 4=satisfied; 5=very satisfied). All of these items were designed to evaluate various aspects of the experience such as quality of the discussion and the balance of facilitator and trainee talk. The second section is comprised of five open response items also designed to evaluate the training but allowing for more participant voice. The third section contains ten items rated on a scale of 1-5 (1=very low; 2=low; 3=moderate; 4=high; 5=very high). All of these items evaluate
the participants’ current level of understanding on the key coaching skills taught in the training. The fourth section contains ten items rated on a scale of 1-5 (1=very low; 2=low; 3=moderate; 4=high; 5=very high). All of these items were designed to evaluate the participants’ current level of confidence in applying the key coaching skills. The fifth section contains ten items rated on a scale of 1-5 (1=not at all; 2=once or twice; 3=three or four times; 4=at least once a day; 5=multiple times each day). On each of these items participants are asked to report how frequently they had used the various coaching skills in the past week.

*Leadership Coaching for Behavior Change Mid-year Reflection.* This written self-reflection consists of four open-ended questions related to the participant’s application of the coaching skills in their work. The questions address the following topics: situations where they have used their coaching skills, barriers to using coaching skills in their work, support needed to overcome these barriers, and other comments they would like to share.

*Focus Group Protocol.* The focus group interviews were semi-structured in that they were guided by a protocol structured around five major topic areas and associated prompts. The major topic areas address background information, training and support, application of coaching skills, impact, and additional comments or suggestions.

*Final Evaluation Survey.* This survey was designed to be administered after the formal training and support activities came to an end and is comprised of eight different sections. The first section contains nine items rated on a scale of 1-5 (1=very unsatisfied; 2=unsatisfied; 3=not sure; 4=satisfied; 5=very satisfied). All of these items were designed to evaluate the various components of the training (multi-day meetings, peer learning circle calls, etc.) as well as the training and support overall. The second section is comprised of three open response items also designed to evaluate the training but allowing for more participant voice. The third section contains ten items rated on a scale of 1-5 (1=very low; 2=low; 3=moderate; 4=high; 5=very high). All of these items evaluate the participants’ current level of understanding on the key coaching skills taught in the training. The fourth section contains ten items rated on a scale of 1-5 (1=very low; 2=low; 3=moderate; 4=high; 5=very high). All of these items were designed to evaluate the participants’ current level of confidence in applying the key coaching skills. The
fifth section contains ten items rated on a scale of 1-5 (1=not at all; 2=once or twice; 3=three or four times; 4=at least once a day; 5=multiple times each day). On each of these items participants are asked to report how frequently they had used the various coaching skills in the past week. The sixth section contains three open response items that relate to the participants application of the coaching skills, e.g. which skills have they used more often and in what settings. The seventh section is comprised of 10 items rated on a scale of 1-5 (1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=not sure; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree). All of these items address perceived impact and benefits of the coaching project. The eighth and final section simply provides one more open response opportunity for participants to share their comments or suggestions including thoughts on how they would like to see the project move forward.

Follow-up Interview Protocol. These interviews were semi-structured in that they were guided by a protocol designed to elicit specific information. First, participants were asked to give their overall impression of the training program and its impact on their work. Next, they were asked to provide feedback on preliminary interpretations of the evaluation. And finally, they were asked to share their perspectives on organizational changes that might stem from participation in such a project.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores were used to analyze quantitative items from the various surveys. Item level analysis as opposed to scale scores were the focus. These quantitative ratings were summarized as they related to each survey administration. Moreover, as many sections are replicated in the various surveys, changes over time were assessed relative to the participants understanding, confidence, and application of the various coaching skills. Qualitative data from focus group interviews, observational field notes, written reflections, and follow-up interviews were analyzed inductively to identify patterns and trends.

In the final analysis, quantitative and qualitative findings were triangulated to address the guiding evaluation questions noted above. Because the majority of data sources were quantitative and allowed for various direct comparisons to be made, these were treated as the
primary basis for interpretations. The qualitative data sources reflected on the same topics and were used in the following ways when triangulated with the quantitative data to address the guiding evaluation questions: 1) to confirm or disconfirm the quantitative findings; 2) to add insight and context that might aid the interpretation of the quantitative findings; and 3) to meaningfully integrate participant voice into the presentation of final results.
KEY FINDINGS

Key findings are organized into five sections that correspond to the guiding evaluation questions: 1) How effective was the training model?; 2) What impact did the training have on trainees’ knowledge of the key coaching skills?; 3) What impact did the training have on the trainees’ confidence to use the key coaching skills?; 4) What impact did the training have on the trainees’ actual application of the key coaching skills?; and 5) What impact and/or benefits seem to have come from this training? In each section, relevant quantitative findings are summarized first. Next, relevant qualitative findings are summarized and triangulated with the quantitative findings.

Section One: How effective was the training model?

Quantitative Findings. Participants had four opportunities to rate the effectiveness of the training they received quantitatively via surveys that were administered online. The first was administered after the first training session (T1), the second after the first Peer Learning Circle (PLC1), the third after the second training session (T2), and the last after the official end of the training period (Final). The following tables summarize their perceptions of various aspects of the training in terms of the combined percentage of participants who provided positive responses, i.e. Satisfied or Very Satisfied.

Table 1 summarizes the proportion of positive ratings on six items that were administered after the two face to face training sessions. It is clear that the participants’ perceptions of the various aspects of the training were highly positive and very consistent for both of the face-to-face trainings. In fact, the lowest rating was 88.5% and all others across both trainings ranged from 96.1% to 100%. It should also be noted that 100% (n=26) positive ratings were also given on an item about the “quality of training materials” after T1. This item was not included on the survey after T2 because no new training materials were introduced at that time.
Table 1. Participant perceptions of the effectiveness of face-to-face trainings as indicated by the percent of participants rating Satisfied or Very Satisfied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Positive ratings after T1 (n=26)</th>
<th>Positive ratings after T2 (n=31)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of the presenters</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the training</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>96.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of material covered</td>
<td>96.1%</td>
<td>96.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance of the material and skills taught to your work</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>96.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance of lecture and active learning experiences</td>
<td>96.1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The training overall</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because the nature of the Peer Learning Circle training component was fundamentally different, another series of items were administered after PLC 1. Table 2 summarizes the proportion of positive responses to these items. Also, because there was more variation in the ratings for these items than those presented in Table 1, the rating average is also included in Table 2. All items received between 81% and 100% positive ratings which is positive. However, the rating averages reveal there was a range in the strength of these perceptions from a low of 3.76 for Relevance of the discussion to your work to 4.24 for Effectiveness of the person facilitating the session.
Table 2. Participant perceptions of the effectiveness of Peer Learning Circle training as indicated by the percent of participants rating Satisfied or Very Satisfied as well as rating average.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Positive ratings after PLC 1 (n=21)</th>
<th>Rating average (n=21)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of the person facilitating the session</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization and flow of the session</td>
<td>81.0%</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the discussion</td>
<td>81.0%</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of time devoted to the call</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance of the discussion to your work</td>
<td>81.0%</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance of facilitator and participant talk</td>
<td>95.2%</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Peer Learning Circle experience overall</td>
<td>81.0%</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final evaluation (n=24) of the project also included a number of items that assessed training effectiveness. The summary of positive responses to these items is presented in Table 3. Participants were consistently positive about the face-to-face trainings, the effectiveness of their individual coaches, and ongoing support overall. However, perceptions of the Peer Learning Circles were less positive. While two-thirds, 66.7%, of respondents gave positive ratings about the effectiveness of the facilitators, only one-third, 33.3%, gave positive ratings about the usefulness of these sessions.
Table 3. Participant perceptions of training effectiveness as indicated by the percent of participants rating Satisfied or Very Satisfied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Positive ratings on final evaluation (n=24)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of the presenters in Training 1</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of Training 1</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of the presenters in Training 2</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of Training 2</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of active learning experiences</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of the Peer Learning Circle facilitators</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of the Peer Learning Circles</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of their individual coaches</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of the coaching model to their work</td>
<td>95.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing support overall</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Triangulation with Qualitative Findings. The qualitative findings related to training effectiveness were very consistent with the quantitative findings. Overall, participants were very satisfied with the training and support they received. The following quotes represent the tone and content of many of the comments made by participants:

- “The support was great!”
- “The training was so safe and engaging”
- “Presenters did a great job creating a comfortable atmosphere/learning environment. Lots of demonstrations and plenty of time to experiment with the skills being taught. Did a good job adapting the workshop to the audience”
“I also really liked the opportunity to have a personal coach, which was helpful in learning not only something about myself but also observe how a seasoned coach uses the skills”
“The presenters did an amazing job at taking the material and making it practical. This training truly has made a change in how I relate to people and engage with them on a daily basis”

Also consistent with the quantitative findings were comments that indicated the Peer Learning Circle calls were perceived as less effective than other elements of the training. For example, in the Final evaluation, when participants were given the opportunity to respond to the open-ended question, “What did you find least helpful?” 18 of 21 respondents mentioned the Peer Learning Circle calls. Typical comments included:

“Sometimes I felt I wasn’t as engaged in the monthly phone calls as I could have been however I was re-inspired once I was on them”
“I think some of the learning circle phone calls were a bit redundant. My favorite one was the last one where we spoke about change”
“The calls-so many of us are crazy busy, and it’s hard to stop in the middle of the day for this type of thing”
“The peer learning circle calls were at times repetitive and difficult to fully engage”

Some of the more specific issues and criticisms of the calls related to “background noise”, “flow of the conversation”, “too many people on the line”, “time lapses”, and difficulty “understanding what people were saying”.

Regarding suggestions to improve the trainings, participants were generally in agreement that the overall training model worked. Although a range of minor suggestions were offered, such as more focus on using coaching in group settings and exploring particular topics in more depth, e.g. culture, the general message was that participants wanted more of the
same. In particular, there was a consistent focus on more interaction as revealed in the following quotes:

- “If possible, more face to face contact throughout the year”
- “Possibly breaking into small groups of similar people in similar situations when doing the phone support meetings each month”
- “More access to an experienced coach and one on one sessions”
Section Two: What impact did the training have on trainees’ knowledge of the key coaching skills?

Quantitative Findings. Participants were surveyed at four points in the pilot project to assess their level of understanding related to the 10 key coaching skills. All surveys were administered online. The first was administered after the first training session (T1), the second after the first Peer Learning Circle (PLC1), the third after the second training session (T2), and the last after the official end of the training period (Final). In the following tables, the changes in understanding are represented by the combined percentage of participants who provided positive responses, i.e. High or Very High, when asked to assess their level of understanding. In Figure 1, for example, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Asking Empowering Questions” was at 83.3% after T1. This figure dropped to 47.6% after PLC1, rose to 96.8% after T2, and was 95.7% at the Final measurement.

Figure 1. Changes in understanding related to “Asking Empowering Questions” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.
As seen in Figure 2, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Coach’s Stand” was also at 83.3% after T1. This figure dropped to 66.7% after PLC1, rose to 96.8% after T2, and was 91.3% at the Final measurement.

Figure 2. Changes in understanding related to “Coach’s Stand” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.

Figure 3 illustrates that the percentage of positive ratings related to “Making Requests” was at 58.3% after T1. This figure dropped to 33.3% after PLC1, rose to 83.9% after T2, and was 82.6% at the Final measurement.
As shown in Figure 4, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Offering Challenges” began at 70.8% after T1. This figure dropped to 47.6% after PLC1, rose to 83.9% after T2, and was 82.6% at the Final measurement.
As seen in Figure 5, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Acknowledging” was at 100% after T1. This figure dropped to 71.4% after PLC1, rose to 96.8% after T2, and returned to 100% at the Final measurement.

Figure 5. Changes in understanding related to “Acknowledging” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.

![Bar chart showing percentage changes over time](image)

Figure 6 illustrates that the percentage of positive ratings related to “Creating Accountability” began at 87.5% after T1. This figure dropped to 61.9% after PLC1, rose to 83.9% after T2, and ended at 82.6% at the Final measurement.
Figure 6. Changes in understanding related to “Creating Accountability” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.

As displayed in Figure 7, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Moving into Action” was 62.5% after T1. This figure dropped to 40% after PLC1, rose to 83.9% after T2, and dropped slightly to 73.9% at the Final measurement.

Figure 7. Changes in understanding related to “Moving into Action” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.
Figure 8 illustrates the percentage of positive ratings related to “Self-managing” began at 70.8% after T1. This figure dropped to 42.9% after PLC1, rose to 87.1% after T2, and ended at 95.7% at the Final measurement.

Figure 8. Changes in understanding related to “Self-managing” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.

As displayed in Figure 9, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Visioning” was also at 70.8% after T1. This figure dropped to 45% after PLC1, rose to 87.1% after T2, and was 82.6% at the Final measurement.
Figure 9. Changes in understanding related to “Visioning” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.

As depicted in Figure 10, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Values” was at 83.3% after T1. This figure dropped to 47.6% after PLC1, rose to 90.3% after T2, and remained at 90.3% for the Final measurement.

Figure 10. Changes in understanding related to “Values” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.
Table 4 shows the first and last measures for trainees’ understanding of the various coaching skills. It should first be noted that the percentage of positive perceptions increased for eight of the skills and remained the same for another (Acknowledging) that started at 100% and therefore had no room for improvement. A decrease was seen in only one case, Accountability. However, as displayed in Figure 6, this does not appear to be a meaningful change. It is also noteworthy that positive ratings on understanding for five of the 10 skills exceeded 90% by the end of the project. Although it did improve from 62.5% to 73.9%, Moving into action, received the lowest proportion of positive ratings in the final assessment of understanding.

Table 4. Changes in the proportion of positive ratings on understanding related to the coaching skills as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaching Skill</th>
<th>T1 (n=24)</th>
<th>Final (n=23)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empowering questions</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>95.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches’ stand</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>91.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Requests</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledging</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving into action</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>73.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-managing</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>95.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visioning</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>90.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Triangulation with Qualitative Findings. Qualitative data relating to increases in understanding are consistent with the quantitative data presented showing increases in knowledge as well as data relating to overall effectiveness of the training. In talking about how their understanding had grown, many participants referred to what they learned from the trainers, their individual coaches, their peers, and their own practice:
o “It really brought the concept of coaching full circle, as at first I was not sure how it was going to be a useful fit in SNAP-Ed”

o “I liked the idea of the follow up session a few months later to reinforce the learning and add to it”

o “Getting feedback and support from other program staff in how to implement these skills in their everyday work”

o “I got a great understanding of the coaching model and the practice brought me into the role”

o “Having our own coaches model how it is done”

o “The fact that there was on-going support was a huge plus and gave us the opportunity to be accountable to what we had learned and continue to learn from others”

Even though the effectiveness of the Peer Learning Circle calls was questioned by many participants, there were several that acknowledged learning from this component and appreciated its contribution to the learning process. One participant stated in the Final evaluation, “I can see the reason for the calls – because this type of follow up brings everything we’ve learned back to our brains”.

Section Three: What impact did the training have on the trainees’ confidence to use the key coaching skills?

Quantitative Findings. Participants were surveyed at four points in the pilot project to assess their level of confidence related to the 10 key coaching skills. All surveys were administered online. The first was administered after the first training session (T1), the second after the first Peer Learning Circle (PLC1), the third after the second training session (T2), and the last after the official end of the training period (Final). In the following figures, the changes in confidence are represented by the combined percentage of participants who provided positive responses, i.e. *High* or *Very High*, when asked to assess their level of confidence. In Figure 11, for example, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Asking Empowering Questions” was at 75% after T1. This figure dropped to 42.9% after PLC1, rose to 80.1% after T2, and was 91.3% at the Final measurement.

![Figure 11. Changes in confidence related to “Asking Empowering Questions” as indicated by the percent of participants rating *High* or *Very High*.](image)

As depicted in Figure 12, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Coach’s Stand” began at 62.5% after T1. This figure rose to 71.4% after PLC1, continued to rise to 87.1% after T2, and leveled off at 82.6% for the Final measurement.
Figure 12. Changes in confidence related to “Coach’s Stand” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.

Figure 13 illustrates that the percentage of positive ratings related to “Making Requests” started at 37.5% after T1. This figure dropped slightly to 33.3% after PLC1, rose to 61.3% after T2, and continued to rise to 78.3% for the Final measurement.

Figure 13. Changes in confidence related to “Making Requests” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.
As shown in Figure 14, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Offering Challenges” began at 50% after T1. This figure dropped to 42.9% after PLC1, rose to 64.5% after T2, and stayed essentially the same, 65.2%, for the Final measurement.

Figure 14. Changes in confidence related to “Offering Challenges” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.

Figure 15 shows the percentage of positive ratings related to “Acknowledging” was at 87% after T1. This figure dropped to 61.9% after PLC1, rose to 96.8% after T2, and dropped slightly to 91.3% for the Final measurement.
Figure 15. Changes in confidence related to “Acknowledging” as indicated by the percent of participants rating *High* or *Very High*.

As displayed in Figure 16, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Creating Accountability” was at 66.7% after T1. This figure dropped to 52.4% after PLC1, rose to 74.2% after T2, and dropped back to 65.2% for the Final measurement.

Figure 16. Changes in confidence related to “Creating Accountability” as indicated by the percent of participants rating *High* or *Very High*.
Figure 17 shows the percentage of positive ratings related to “Moving into Action” began at 66.7% after T1. This figure dropped sharply to 23.8% after PLC1, rose to 61.3% after T2, and dropped down to 56.5% for the Final measurement.

As shown in Figure 18, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Self-managing” began at 41.7% after T1. This figure dropped sharply to 23.8% after PLC1, rose sharply to 74.2% after T2, and rose again to reach 82.6% at the Final measurement.
As displayed in Figure 19, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Visioning” began at 50% after T1. This figure dropped to 28.6% after PLC1, rose sharply to 74.2% after T2, and dropped to 65.2% at the Final measurement.
Figure 20 illustrates that the percentage of positive ratings related to “Values” began at 70.8% after T1. This figure dropped to 55% after PLC1, rose to 77.4% after T2, and was 78.3% at the Final measurement.

Table 5 shows the first and last measurements for trainees’ confidence using the various coaching skills. It should first be noted that the percentage of positive perceptions increased for eight of the skills and remained nearly the same for Accountability, which dropped just slightly from 66.7% to 65.2%. The one clear decrease related to Moving into action, which dropped from 66.7% to 56.5%. By the end of the project, positive ratings related to confidence on four of the 10 skills exceeded 80%. In addition to being the only skill that saw a noteworthy drop in the proportion of positive ratings, Moving into action received the lowest percentage of positive ratings in this category, 56.5%.
Table 5. Changes in the proportion of positive ratings on confidence related to the coaching skills as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaching Skill</th>
<th>T1 (n=24)</th>
<th>Final (n=23)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empowering questions</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>91.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches’ stand</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Requests</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>78.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledging</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>91.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving into action</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-managing</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visioning</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>78.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Triangulation with Qualitative Findings.** Similar to the quantitative findings reported above, qualitative data indicate that participants’ confidence grew throughout the project. Several participants expressed increasing feeling of confidence coming through practice that was embedded in the training. Below are two quotes that represent this perspective:

- “I really appreciated how interactive the training was and how much we were able to practice in different ways”
- “I liked the peer-teaching- it gave us the opportunity to do 2 things: if you were one of the individuals able to teach, you were able to get feedback regarding coaching skills; also, I enjoyed being able to watch my peers and the way they used coaching skills in a teaching setting”

At the same time, some participants seemed to feel increased confidence and command of their abilities because the training validated some skills they already had. This observation is typified in the following quotes:
“I often use coaching skills while teaching nutrition education to adults participating in our SNAP-Ed programs. I believe that I have been using a mixture of skills before ever attending the coaching training, however, now I am more intentional about how they are used and I believe that each lesson is more effective because of it”

“As discovered in the last training session, we as classroom educators are already using a lot of the coaching skills such as asking powerful questions, championing, acknowledgements, requests/challenges, and visioning”

“The opportunity to see how we are already using coaching while teaching a group”

Both the qualitative and quantitative findings related to confidence demonstrate impact, but it should not be assumed that improvement were automatic or necessarily the same for all participants. The following quotes give voice to some of the struggle and hard work that can be required to build confidence:

“I have only encountered my own barriers of not feeling like my coaching was enough or my questions were strong enough – lack of confidence”

“But the more persistent I’ve been, the better it has worked. So I’ll keep trying”

In the end, the strongest message related to this topic is the importance of connecting new understanding to practical experience. This may be why one participant made the following comment regarding the strengths of the overall training program, “The practical aspects of the training...practice, practice, practice”!
Section Four: What impact did the training have on the trainees’ actual application of the key coaching skills?

Quantitative Findings. Participants were surveyed at three points in the pilot project to assess the level to which they were applying the 10 key coaching skills. All surveys were administered online. The first was administered after the first Peer Learning Circle (PLC1), the second after the second training session (T2), and the last after the official end of the training period (Final). In the following tables, the changes in application are represented by the combined percentage of participants who provided positive responses, i.e. High or Very High, when asked to assess their level of application. In Figure 21, for example, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Asking Empowering Questions” was at 38.1% after PLC1. This figure rose to 58.1% after T2, and rose again to 73.9% at the Final measurement.

Figure 21. Changes in frequency of application related to “Asking Empowering Questions” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.

As shown in Figure 22, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Coach’s Stand” started at 57.1% after PLC1, dropped slightly to 54.8% after T2, and rose finally to 78.3% at the Final measurement.
Figure 22. Changes in frequency of application related to “Coach’s Stand” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.

Figure 23 illustrates the percentage of positive ratings related to “Making Requests” started at 14.3% after PLC1, rose to 41.9% after T2, and leveled off at 40.9% at the Final measurement.

Figure 23. Changes in frequency of application related to “Making Requests” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.
As displayed in Figure 24, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Offering Challenges” started at 28.6% after PLC1, rose to 41.9% after T2, and rose again to 52.2% at the Final measurement.

Figure 24. Changes in frequency of application related to “Offering Challenges” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.

![Bar chart showing changes in percentage of positive ratings related to “Offering Challenges”]

Figure 25 illustrates that the percentage of positive ratings related to “Acknowledging” started at 47.6% after PLC1, rose to 67.7% after T2, and reached its height at 87% at the Final measurement.

![Bar chart showing changes in percentage of positive ratings related to “Acknowledging”]
Figure 25. Changes in frequency of application related to “Acknowledging” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.

As displayed in Figure 26, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Creating Accountability” began at 19% after PLC1, increased to 29% after T2, and ended at 43.5% at the Final measurement.

Figure 26. Changes in frequency of application related to “Creating Accountability” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.
Figure 27 demonstrates the percentage of positive ratings related to “Moving into Action” started at 19% after PLC1, rose to 32.3% after T2, and reached 39.1% at the Final measurement.

As shown in Figure 28, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Self-managing” started at 23.8% after PLC1, increased to 61.3% after T2, and rose finally to 78.3% at the Final measurement.
Figure 28. Changes in frequency of application related to “Self-managing” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.

Figure 29 displays the percentage of positive ratings related to “Visioning” started at 25% after PLC1, dropped slightly to 22.6% after T2, and rose finally to 39.1% at the Final measurement.

Figure 29. Changes in frequency of application related to “Visioning” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.
As illustrated in Figure 30, the percentage of positive ratings related to “Values” started at 33.3% after PLC1, increased to 48.4% after T2, and rose to 60.9% at the Final measurement.

Figure 30. Changes in frequency of application related to “Values” as indicated by the percent of participants rating High or Very High.

Table 6 shows the first and last measures for trainees’ self-reported application of the various coaching skills. From PLC1 to the Final evaluation, the proportion of positive responses increased for all 10 skills. In the end, positive ratings on understanding for five of the 10 skills exceeded 60%. The skill with the highest proportion of ratings, 87%, was Acknowledging while Moving into action and Visioning were the lowest at 39.1%.
Table 6. Changes in the proportion of positive ratings on application of the coaching skills as indicated by the percent of participants rating *High* or *Very High*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaching Skill</th>
<th>PLC1 (n=24)</th>
<th>Final (n=23)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empowering questions</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>73.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches’ stand</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>78.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Requests</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledging</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving into action</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-managing</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>78.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visioning</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Triangulation with Quantitative Findings.* Throughout the training program, as assessed by a variety of methods, participants reported applying the skills they were learning. At several points in the evaluation, they were asked to give examples of their application. Most of the examples related to their professional roles in SNAP-Ed programs. As most participants were educators, these were the most typical scenarios as illustrated in the following representative quotes. The following three related to teaching groups or classes:

- “I find myself asking more empowering questions and challenging students at the end of lessons to make new choices”
- “I wear my coach’s stand daily. I have used empowering questions throughout all of my classes. I also find myself self-managing more”
- “The skills that can be used in a group setting have been the most useful to me such as, open ended questions, acknowledging, championing, challenging, and accountability”
However, there were also several examples about application in individual sessions like these:

- “On a daily basis with clients in the fitness facility setting – especially empowering questions and acknowledging. I have also used goal setting with many people trying to move into action”
- “A young woman who wants to lose weight and has a slightly distorted body image; it was a perfect opening for coaching to ask empowering questions and acknowledge what she was doing because she was feeling badly about herself”

Of course, several participants in the training were managers and or administrators. These individuals offered varied examples of how they integrated the skills and other aspects of the training into their work:

- “I have used them with the administration in getting their ‘buy in’ on our project and making them more accountable and invested in the efforts we are setting forth in their schools”
- “Primarily working with others, team environments, and supporting colleagues”
- “I have mainly used these skills in my position as a manager of staff doing direct service work”
- “Since I’m an administrator, rather than an educator, I use these skills less directly than most staff—but I do use it when dealing with co-workers and in meetings”
- “(I) used an acknowledging exercise in a staff meeting. Partly used this skill as a demonstration, but also as a team building exercise between co-workers in different departments”

It was acknowledged throughout the training that many people use these skills in their personal lives and that, in fact, this can be an additional benefit to learning coaching skills. Not only were participants encouraged to make these connections, they were asked in various data collection activities to share some of these experiences. The following experiences show the ranges of application that seemed to occur beyond the professional realm:
o “I used coaching in regards to a difficult family relationship. One of my personal coaching sessions involved this and then I was able to help another family member through a crisis involving this family member. It really ended up helping the situation and gave me a new outlook on what was happening”

o “I have been using coaching with my daughter as she has been working on fitness goals”

o “My husband was stressed about staying on top of his reporting at work. I decided to use coaching because usually I would just tell him what I think he should do and then we argue because he doesn’t feel like I am listening. I used powerful questions, acknowledgment, and requests & challenges”

o “I used coaching while working with a neighbor who was struggling with her teenage son. I decided to use coaching because it was obvious she cared deeply for her son, yet was extremely frustrated and not sure what to do”

From all these examples, it appears that participants readily saw the application of these skills in a wide-range of interactions. It may be that the perceived benefit and value of using these skills had a snowball effect and encouraged even greater application.
Section Five: What impact and/or benefits seem to have come from this training?

Quantitative Findings. Overall, participants were positive about the impact and other potential benefits of the coaching skills they learned and the project overall. Table 7 displays the proportion of positive ratings from these items (n=24) in terms of the percent that Agreed or Strongly Agreed. All (100%) reported that they hoped to continue using coaching skills in their work, found the project beneficial to them personally, and would like to receive continued training and support. A high proportion, 85%, also reported they were more effective in helping their SNAP-Ed participants change their behavior. Four items related to potential impact of the project on the participants place of work. In response, 95.2% indicated the project had fostered a community of learners, 76.2% felt it had improved the organizational culture/climate, 66.7% felt it had brought about concrete changes in daily practice, and 57.1% felt it had brought about concrete changes in the way staff are trained and/or evaluated.

Table 7. Participant perceptions of impact and additional benefits as indicated by the percent of participants rating Agree or Strongly Agree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Positive ratings on final evaluation (n=24)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Were more effective in helping their SNAP-Ed participants change their behavior</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoped to continue using coaching skills in their work</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found the coaching project beneficial to them personally, i.e. beyond work</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would like to receive continued training and support on coaching</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt the coaching project had fostered a community of learners in their place of work</td>
<td>95.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt the coaching project had improved the organizational culture/climate at their place of work</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt the coaching project had brought about concrete changes in their place of work related to daily practice</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt the coaching project had brought about concrete changes in their place of work related to the way staff are trained and/or evaluated</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Triangulation with Qualitative Findings. Many of the findings reported in Table 7 are consistent with the positive feelings expressed by participants in other areas of this evaluation. In addition to the items in the Final evaluation, the impact of this training on the workplace was examined in focus groups and follow-up interviews as well. It was clear from all these data sources that there are perceived benefits to entering this type of training as part of a larger group. This is conveyed in the following quotes:

- “I thought it was very beneficial to complete the trainings as a team. Since my entire team went through the training together, we were able to adopt the coaching model as daily practice in our workplace”
- “I also thought the group sessions were very helpful and contributed to team building”
- “We were able to engage in professional development with our co-workers and get to know them better. We also had people that supported us and helped us grow in our profession as well as in our personal lives”
- “I think if we are committed to keeping each other accountable at work with co-workers and supervisors that will be helpful”

On the other hand, those who went through the training as the sole representatives from their organization or with a smaller team were aware of missing this benefit. On this topic, it was said:

- “I feel it would be a great benefit for more of our organization to be trained”
- “This training has been very beneficial. I wish our whole staff could have attended. I think having all levels of programming on the same page would be great”

Regardless of how large their team was, some participants noted that they felt this experience fostered a sense of community across MNN programs and organizations. One explained, “I loved being able to form connections with people who are doing the same programming as me in different areas of the state. I also love that I am learning skills to be a better educator and person.”
CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear from multiple data sources that this training program was effectively delivered and well received. Participants expressed strong, consistent feelings of satisfaction for the face-to-face trainings and their individual sessions with a professional coach. However, participants were ambivalent about the Peer Learning Circle calls. While many could see the value of these calls, there were also many points of dissatisfaction noted with regard to this training component. Therefore, if this project were to continue or expand, serious consideration should be given to the Peer Learning Circle calls. This component should be significantly improved or perhaps discontinued.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that this training program was effective in increasing participants’ understanding, confidence, and application of a set of 10 discrete coaching skills. The ultimate aim of integrating coaching skills into the practice of SNAP-Ed program staff is to foster positive behavior change among their clients. However, the chance of realizing these long term outcomes hinges on successful learning and effective application by the educators. The data contained in this report clearly indicate that the training program is effective in bringing about these intermediate outcomes. It is recommended that training and ongoing support focused on these key coaching skills be continued and expanded.

Perhaps one reason the coaching training was so well perceived was that participants attributed a range of benefits, both personal and professional, to the experience. Participants were clearly able to find ways to apply the coaching skills in their work as educators and/or managers in SNAP-Ed programs. Moreover, many of them shared examples of applications in their personal lives. Unlike many professional development experiences, this one appeared to be perceived as relevant, meaningful, and beneficial. This broad view of coaching and the ‘real world’ application of the skills should continue to be encouraged in future trainings.

Although the sample in this study was relatively small, it did provide the opportunity to explore the influence of work context on participant experience. More specifically, it was possible to assess some potential strengths and benefits that might come from going through this training as part of a team or organization with a larger presence/commitment. Focus group
and interview data, for example, indicated that the YMCA of Grand Rapids team did benefit from involvement and support by upper administrators as well as managers. Moreover, the educators from this organization seemed to benefit from greater peer support and feelings of being part of a community of practice. These factors seemed to facilitate changes in the participants’ place of work and may therefore, enhance the chances of sustainability. While the quantitative results on these topics could not be disaggregated to compare results from YMCA vs. other participants, it is suggested that these issues be tracked and further examined in future projects of this type.

As noted in the introduction, one function of pilot studies can be to develop instrumentation and appropriate methodologies. The number of customized instruments created in the current evaluation proved to be feasible and yielded relevant data that was helpful in providing feedback and guiding programmatic decisions. The instruments and methodology developed here may be among the most rigorous developed thus far to evaluation coach training. These should be employed in similar projects in the future and it is suggested that the psychometric properties of the survey instruments be assessed. If they prove sufficiently strong, these instruments should be published as they may prove beneficial to fields of coaching, evaluation, and/or nutrition education.

In addition to a fairly small sample size, it should be acknowledged that response rates presented a limitation in this evaluation. For example, after the first training, only 24 of 37 participants (64.9%) completed the corresponding survey. The response was slightly lower, n=21, yielding a 56.8% response rate after the first Peer Learning Circle call. Participants were reminded of the importance of this evaluation at the second training which translated into a higher response rate, n=31, i.e. 83.8%. Unfortunately, the number responding to the final evaluation survey fell again to n=23 and a response rate of 62.2%. Given that these surveys were administered online, response rates above 50% would be generally considered acceptable. However, because of the stated commitment to participate in the evaluation as part of the training experience, these results were disappointing. Nonetheless, the high degree
of consistency in responses and the confirmation of interpretations that emerged from data triangulation bode well for the trustworthiness of these results.

In closing, this pilot project appears to have been a success. With some minor adjustments, the basic training approach applied here should be continued and expanded to the extent possible. All indications at this stage are that this training approach may lead to changes in educator practice that could have a meaningful impact on client outcomes. As an intervention approach, this concept appears reasonable and merits further exploration. Future studies of this approach should explore the sustainability of changes in trainees’ practice, their implementation with clients, and possible client level behavior changes and health outcomes.
Coaching Tips

1. The greatest value to your clients comes from your willingness to explore places where you and they don’t already have the answers.

2. Be more interested in their ideas and what is possible than in your ideas.

3. Your personal experiences or smart suggestions might generate excitement momentarily, but do not empower people in the long run.

4. Your job as coach is to ask the questions that clients do not ask themselves, and to challenge them in ways they do not challenge themselves.

5. Use your Coach’s Stand! Choose the attitude that will most empower your client and you as their coach.

6. Your goal in any coaching is to help the client shift how they relate to a given situation or issue, (not just solve it).

7. Focus on evoking your client’s curiosity and exploration about their life and situation.

8. Make sure you are working with your client on something that matters to them!

9. Find a way to welcome every part of your client, without judgment. This will help them to be more creative.

10. Take Risks! Be Experimental! Do not try to do it “right”.

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The Coach’s Stand

Coach’s Stand – Answer this question: “What is the attitude I choose to have about human beings that will bring out the best in the people around me?”

Some questions you can ask yourself before each coaching interaction:

- What matters most to this client?
- How can I stop problem solving and start trusting my client’s inherent creativity?
- What are the untapped resources in my client’s life?
- How can I remember this client’s inherent resourcefulness?
- How do I empower my client to see a full range of choices?

Changing the Mindset

**From Problem Focus**

- Tells/Directs/offer answers
- Requires compliance
- Knows the answer
- Points out errors
- Delegates responsibility
- This is a “problem to be solved”
- Focus is on what is wrong that needs fixing

**To People Focus**

- Asks/Requests/Listens
- Seeks commitment
- Seeks the answer
- Celebrates learning
- Models accountability
- This is a person with assets to develop
- Focus is on empowerment and growth
Balancing ACTION and LEARNING

Coaching involves both Action and Learning. Clients who are only in action burn out quickly. Clients who only learn about themselves never make things happen in their lives.

ACTION:
Examples of how a coach facilitates action:
• Develops personal leadership skills
• Creates a compelling personal vision
• Sets stretch goals and build accountability structures
• Identifies and remove obstacles
• Provides structure and support for risk taking
• Supports a life transition

ACTION Skills:
• Goal setting
• Accountability
• Powerful Questions that probe for possible actions
• Requests
• Challenges
• Brainstorming action steps

LEARNING
Examples of how a coach facilitates learning:
• Brainstorms new possibilities and stretches beyond self-limiting beliefs
• Gains clarity and focus
• Explores growth and development potential
• Gets to the heart of the matter and awakens commitment
• Learns about personal values
• Builds confidence and integrity

LEARNING Skills:
• Accountability: when a client fails on accountability, find out what they have learned about themselves.
• Brainstorming options based on past learning
• Visioning tools
• Values clarification
• Powerful questions that probe for personal learning
• Acknowledgement
Coaching Skills

Acknowledging – helping clients see, and take in, things they may not see about their strengths.
Example: “You have showed such courage in going for this new job.”

Asking Empowering Questions – asking open-ended questions to evoke self-reflection, clarity, insight and action.
Example: “What is important about this?” “What stands out to you?” “What is next?”

Challenging – requesting your client stretch beyond their limitations. A challenge is more than a simple request. It pushes people beyond what they think is possible so they stretch their thinking and sometimes results in doing more than they originally thought possible.
Example: “I challenge you to give up saying “I can’t.” Your client can accept or deny the challenge, as well as re-negotiate it.

Establishing Accountability – creating structures to verify the action plan is on track or to remind clients to actively live their values, vision or goals.
Example: “What will you do? When will you do it? How will I know?”

Moving into Action – co-creating or requesting movement toward goals that are aligned with your client’s values, vision, and desires. This could include brainstorming all the possible ways a client can create forward movement.
Example: “What can you do this week to make this real?”

Requesting – asking for a specific action without being attached to the outcome. Client responds with yes, no, or counter-offer. Requests begin with “will you?”
Example: “Ebony, will you spend 10 minutes a day on your goals?”

Self-Managing – Putting attention on your client without getting caught in your own internal reactions. Resisting judgment, giving advice, or holding back.
Example: Your client comes with a crisis in their family. It is the same crisis you are facing in your own family. As coach, you notice you are triggered, and promise to take time for yourself after the session. Then you step into curious client-focused listening.

Setting Goals – setting intentions for desired outcomes and making plans that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time bound and communicated.
Example: “What will you create and how will that look when it is complete?”

Visioning – exploring the big picture and creating a visual picture of what is possible for the client.
Example: “Gil, take away all the limits and imagine you are successful beyond your wildest dreams. What do you see?”
Listening

**Self-focused Listening**
Self-focused listening includes listening to your thoughts, body, emotions and intuition.

**Client-focused Listening**
In client-focused listening you narrow your focus so that all your attention is on the other person.

**Transformational Listening**
Transformational listening is about listening for openings, new possibilities, emerging opportunities and forces that generate change. What else is possible for this person?
Empowering Questions

✓ Are open-ended; don’t have yes/no answers
✓ Build awareness of values
✓ Move client toward creativity
✓ Elicit new learning or new action

TIPS:
- Start with “What” or “How,“
- Do not start with “Do you...” or “Are you...”
- Limit use of “Why” questions
- Keep your questions short and simple and only ask one at a time!
- Ask questions that the client does not already know the answer to.
- Stay curious!

Probing Questions
What do you notice?
What else?
What do you want?
What’s important about that?
What are you excited about?
What are you overlooking?
What’s going on?

Clarifying values
What do you care about in this situation?
What value does this experience have for you?
What do you want? If you get that, then what do you want?
How does this plan honor your values?
What are you committed to?

Setting Stretch Goals
If you knew you’d succeed, what else would you do?
What’s the big picture?
What action would really excite you?

Expanding Options
What is possible?
If you had a magic wand, what would you do?
What impact would you like to have?
What actions are possible now?
What are your choices?

Getting Support
What do you need help with?
Who can help you with that?
What resources do you need?
What request can you make?
Who has the answer?
If you knew they’d say yes, whom would you ask for help?
Who has done this before?

Action Questions
What’s next?
What do you choose to do about it?
How do you plan to achieve that?
How can you break that down into smaller steps?
What are you going to do? By when? Who will you tell?
How will I know you’ve completed this?
Is there anything else you need to do?
On a scale of 1-10, how committed are you to this plan?

Breaking through Barriers
What’s stopping you?
In an ideal world, how would you face this problem?
What would motivate you to change?
What does it cost if things remain the way they are?
Pretend you know the answer...
If you had to find a way, what would it be?
What are you resisting?
What are the obstacles?
What will get you going?

Reducing Overwhelm
What can you say “no” to?
What can you stop doing so that you can make room for what’s important?
What are you doing now that’s working?
If you only focused on one thing, what would it be?

Eliciting Learning
What might you do differently next time?
What can you do to create more balance in your life?
When you’re at your best, what’s different?
What do you know in your gut?
What do you really want?
Components of a Request

1. A request starts with “will you?” or “would you be willing to...”

   Not “Don’t you think it would be a good idea to...” or “Do you think you could maybe....”

2. Requests include:
   - Action
   - Defined Time Frame
   - Something Missing
   - Conditions of Satisfaction

3. Ask for a response
   - Yes
   - No
   - Counter offer
A challenge is a BIG request, one that takes the client’s breath away.

The purpose of challenge is:

• To help the client see that there is more possibility for them
• To show your confidence in the client
• To encourage them to do more than they might have done before.