

Coaching for Behavior Change

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SUMMARY

Equipping SNAP-Education nutrition educators and managers with coaching skills can help them shift the way they communicate with and motivate people. By adding coaching skills to their existing knowledge and expertise, SNAP-Education staff can move from focusing on problems to supporting, defining and achieving goals. In this training-focused program, it was expected that trainees would develop 10 basic coaching skills and begin applying them to their SNAP-Education work.

The Michigan Fitness Foundation developed this pilot project and worked with Leadership That Works to implement the Coaching for Community Transformation training with SNAP-Education staff.

OBJECTIVE

The Coaching for Behavior Change pilot was evaluated on these guiding questions:

- * How effective was the training model?
- * What impact did the training have on trainees:
 1. Knowledge of 10 key coaching skills?
 2. Confidence to use skills?
 3. Application of skills?
- * What impact/benefits resulted?



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Using the principles of adult learning combined with experiential practice, the program is hands on, lively and rigorous. A thread of cultural awareness is integrated throughout.

The program components included:

- * Training 1: During an initial three-day training, participants were introduced to the concept of coaching and ten basic coaching skills. There were lectures, small and large group discussions, and a significant amount of practice time. They also began exploring how to incorporate coaching skills into their work.
- * Training 2: The two-day training focused on reinforcing the coaching skills, practicing the skills, and integrating the skills into group settings.
- * Peer Learning Circles: To anchor the skills and to help trainees troubleshoot real-life application, these 60-minute teleclasses were held six times—once a month between and after Trainings 1 and 2.
- * Mentor Coaches: Each trainee was matched with an experienced, certified coach for three phone sessions. This allowed participants to experience coaching and be supported during the program.

TRAINEES

Thirty-seven SNAP-Education nutrition educators and project managers, from seven different organizations throughout Michigan participated. The coaching pilot was adopted as a staff-training program by one organization, YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids, for all of their 22 SNAP-Education staff members.

EVALUATION METHODS

Methods of data collection included online surveys, observation, self reflections, focus groups and interviews. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data. Item level analysis was the focus. Qualitative data was analyzed inductively identifying patterns and trends. Findings were triangulated to address the guiding questions noted above.

CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

Participants identified positive benefits of the training/skills they learned; 85% agreed/strongly agreed they were more effective in helping SNAP-Education participants change behavior, suggesting there could be benefits to applying coaching skills to SNAP-Education programming to enhance behavioral outcomes. Participants consistently reported increased understanding of the skills, confidence to use the skills, and ability to implement the skills.

Overall, participants were positive about other potential benefits of the coaching training/skills they learned in the project. In the final evaluation (N=24), the following percent agreed or strongly agreed they...

- * were more effective in helping their SNAP-Education participants change their behavior (85%)
- * found the coaching project beneficial to them personally, i.e. beyond work (100%)
- * felt the coaching project had fostered a community of learners in their place of work (95.2%)
- * felt the coaching project had improved the organizational culture/climate at their place of work (76.2%)
- * felt the coaching project had brought about concrete changes in their place of work related to daily practice (66.7%)
- * felt the coaching project had brought about concrete changes in their place of work related to the way staff are trained and/or evaluated (57.1%)

RESULTS

UNDERSTANDING OF KEY COACHING STRATEGIES

Table 1. Percent of participants rating confidence as High or Very High from the end of the first training session to the final evaluation report.

Coaching Strategy	First Training (N=24)	Final Evaluation (N=23)	Change Over Time
Empowering questions	83.3	95.7	+12.4
Coaching stand	83.3	91.3	+8
Making requests	58.3	82.6	+24.3
Challenges	70.8	82.6	+11.8
Acknowledging	100	100	0
Accountability	87.5	82.6	-4.9
Moving into action	62.5	73.9	+11.4
Self-managing	70.8	95.7	+24.9
Vision	70.8	82.6	+11.8
Values	83.3	90.3	+7

CONFIDENCE TO IMPLEMENT KEY COACHING STRATEGIES

Table 2. Percent of participants rating confidence as High or Very High from the end of the first training session to the final evaluation report.

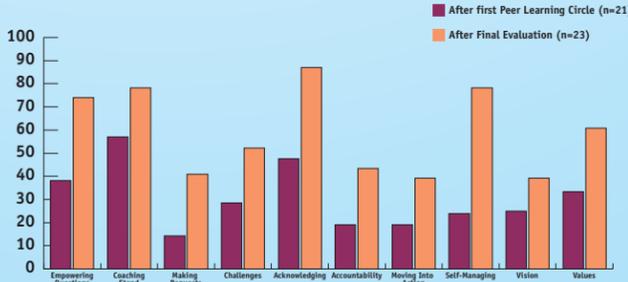
Coaching Strategy	First Training (N=24)	Final Evaluation (N=23)	Change Over Time
Empowering questions	75	91.3	+16.3
Coaching stand	62.5	82.6	+20.1
Making requests	37.5	78.3	+40.8
Challenges	50	65.2	+15.2
Acknowledging	87	91.3	+4.3
Accountability	66.7	65.2	-1.5
Moving into action	66.7	56.5	-10.2
Self-managing	41.7	82.6	+40.9
Vision	50	65.2	+15.2
Values	70.8	78.3	+7.5

APPLICATION OF THE KEY COACHING STRATEGIES

Participants consistently reported increased use of the key coaching strategies over the course of the training. From reports after the first Peer Learning Circle (N=21) to the final evaluation report (N=23) the percent who rated their use as high or very high increased for all skills.



Figure 1. Percent of participants reporting High or Very High use after the first Peer Learning Circle and after the Final Evaluation.



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NEXT STEPS

Based upon its success, this project has moved into Year 2 with the training of a new cohort of participants. The first cohort of participants continue to receive training. Process evaluation results from the year 1 pilot led to the following program modifications:

- * The application of coaching in a group setting was introduced in earlier and more intensively throughout the program.
- * Peer learning circles were eliminated and the face-to-face training opportunities were increased. Two of the face-to-face trainings in Year 2 included participants from Cohorts 1 and 2.
- * With an eye toward sustainability a train-the-trainer model is being considered to further engage returning participants.