

SURFACE TO SOUL

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Direct Communication Strategies

Experienced coaches rarely ramble. They are clear, concise, and laser-like with their words, offering one question or statement at a time. They are comfortable with silence and lengthy pauses. They tell the truth, say what needs to be said, yet do so in a grace-filled manner. Seasoned coaches use direct communication strategies that may include moments of interrupting, advising, directing, and messaging. Each strategy is summarized below.

INTERRUPTING

Most of us have experienced interruptions that are distracting or annoying, but effective interrupting is truly an art. As a coaching skill, masterful interrupting holds great benefit for the coachee, bringing them back on task, or helping them to "bottom-line" (get to the point). Coaches interrupt within an environment of trust and intimacy, in which the coachee trusts the skill of the coach and knows that the coach has their best interest in mind. Interrupting can stem from deep listening, as a means of getting at something even deeper that needs to be said. Interrupting is a platform from which to catapult the coachee forward. When is it appropriate to interrupt someone you are coaching? Here are several ways that a coach may interrupt someone during a coaching session:

- Say their name and ask for permission, e.g. "(Name), may I interrupt you?"
- Break in with, "Let's push the pause button for a moment," or "I'd like to step in for a moment."
- Bottom-line it for them, e.g. "(Name), here's what I'm hearing..."

ADVISING

One of the myths of coaching is that coaches never give advice. There are times, however, when the coach has expertise and experiences that may positively impact the client's progress.

Clients may want advice from their coach when appropriate and when asked for. The problem with giving advice is that most people offer advice in ways that are disempowering to others. They need to unlearn how to *give* advice, and then re-learn how to advise. Newer coaches are usually advised to avoid offering advice until they have learned how to effectively coach without giving advice. Consider using the following phrases when offering advice:

- Here's what I've seen work. Tell me if it sounds like it's worth experimenting with.
- That's a tough one. Here's what I advised another person and this is what happened.

DIRECTING

Directing is a technique for re-focusing or steering the person or group back toward their goals. This is useful for the coachee who frequently goes off on tangents or easily loses sight of the big picture.

Examples of directing include:

- Hold that thought and let's talk about...
- For the past several weeks we've been focusing on ABC, is it time to move on to XYZ?
- Congratulations. Let's move on.

MESSAGING

Messaging is a "truth" that, if heard, will help the other person to understand and act more quickly. It is a "blending" of acknowledging and tapping into the other person's greatness. Examples of messaging include:

- Tell them who they are. "You are someone who is..."
- Endorse what they have accomplished. "Wow. Look what you've accomplished. Congratulations."
- Tell them what's next. "You probably need to start focusing on XYZ, because you've moved past ABC."
- Tell them what you want for them. "What I want for you is..."



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