

EXAMPLE OF A COACHING CONVERSATION

Introduction

Educators may find it useful to adopt a coaching style conversation when discussing some issues which don't have simple answers. This is an example of such a conversation using the OSKAR framework which is a solution focused approach.

Each stage of the model is discussed with some possible questions provided as an example. As with any framework it is intended to offer structure but not a straight jacket and should be used flexibly. A key skill is in asking open questions to encourage reflection and change. Directly giving advice is generally avoided.

This framework is only one way of addressing such issues; it is based on the belief that learners are the expert in their own situation. Our role as educators is to bring forth their resourcefulness & support them to address issues raised.

The stages of the model are

Outcome including Platform Building
Scaling
Know How
Affirms and Action
Review

Platform Building

The idea of a platform is used to convey suggestions of a solid foundation and of a departure point for change. During this stage it is important to clarify what it is important for the doctor to change or improve. Change typically occurs when the benefits of change outweigh the benefits accruing from the current situation so exploring the benefits of the change to the doctor and others such as colleagues is vital. It is important to limit the number of areas that are worked on because the majority of people find it difficult to change more than a small number of things at once.

<p>What is it important for you to change / improve? What will be the benefits of the change e.g. to you, to colleagues, to patients What would be the positive knock on effects of the change? How important is it to change on a scale of 1-10?</p>

Dr D was disappointed that his colleague feedback indicated that a significant proportion of staff rated his communication with staff as below benchmark levels. During the discussion it became clear that this was an area he wanted to improve because he recognised that he was often slow to respond to

messages and did not keep on top of e-mails. He identified that he would feel less stressed if he kept on top of these and that there would be further benefits for his colleagues and patients if he acted in a timelier manner.

Outcome

During conversations of this nature it is easy to become very focused on the problem and on what is going wrong. It can be tempting for the educator to explore in great detail what is currently happening. This approach may be useful and it is vital to ensure that the doctor feels heard but it has limitations. Too great a problem focus tends to be depressing and leads to a lack of confidence that the issue can be solved. In addition detailed questioning often adds to the educator's understanding of the situation but does not move the learner on because they are simply sharing with you what they already know.

A more productive approach is to identify what would be happening if the problem was solved and encourage a description of this future scenario. It is important to concentrate on the observable rather than on feelings. A good way of getting to this is asking for a description of what would be captured on a video camera. Typically the description goes so far and then stops. At this point it is often helpful to summarise what has been said and then to ask "What else?" This simple question often leads to further clarity of the ideal.

Imagine the issue was solved. What would be happening? What would you be doing? What would others see and hear?

What else?

Dr D described an ideal situation in which his overall communication with staff was much improved. He was making sure he greeted staff in the mornings, stopped doing other things when one of them was talking to him and responded to messages promptly. When prompted further he identified that there would he would be seeking to use the three minute rule which he had heard about on a time management course. By this, he meant that if he could do something within three minutes he would do it rather than putting it off.

Scaling and Know How

This stage is about finding out what is already working? In almost all cases some aspects of what has been described as the ideal happen at least some of the time. This is an opportunity to identify resources and skills that have been helpful before and could be used again. The focus is on elements of the ideal that are present rather than those which are absent.

On a scale of 1-10 where 1 is none of this and 10 is all of this where are you now? This is "n"

What makes it n? (rather than less than n)

When is it better than this?

Dr D decided that the current situation was 5 out of 10 because his feedback was still pretty good. He was able to identify that on one ward it worked much more smoothly because he spent bigger chunks of time there. He recognised the benefits of having better relationships with the staff on that ward. He didn't put tasks off until later.

Affirms and Action

There is now an opportunity for the educator to be affirming about what is already working well and then to move to identifying some specific small actions that the doctor can take to help movement towards the ideal. Having identified what would be happening if the issue was resolved and what is currently happening change can be unlocked by clarifying what would be happening if the situation was a little better. This then leads on to the identification of small steps that can be taken to improve the situation.

What would be happening if you were at n+1? What would you be doing?
What would others see and hear?
What small steps can you take to get you to n+1?
What and when will you actually do?
Who can support you in making these steps?
What will be the first signs of change?

The educator was positive and encouraging about the fact that in some situations in what was working much better. This led to a discussion about what was different about this ward. Dr D identified that he needed to aim to spend longer blocks of time on each ward rather than rushing between them. He would start using the three minute rule.

Review

At the next meeting there would be a review focusing on what is better and what would be the next signs of progress.

OSKAR FRAMEWORK

Outcome

- Build the platform
- What is the objective of the coaching?
- What do you want to achieve today?
- What do you want to achieve in the long term?
- The future perfect

Scaling

- On a scale 1 to 10 where are you now?
- You at n now. What did you do to get this far?
- How would you know when you had got to n+1?
- Other scales as appropriate

Know-how

- What helps you perform at n already?
- What's working already?
- When do bits of the solution happen?
- What helped you achieve similar things?
- How have other people achieved this?

Affirm and Action

- What has impressed you so far about the coachee?
- What is the next small step?
- What would it take to get to n+1?

Review

- What's better?
- How did you do that?
- What effects have the changes had?
- What are the next steps?