

ENABLE: A Solution-Focused Framework for Individual and Team Coaching

Coaching frameworks

There are a number of well-known frameworks that can be used to structure coaching conversations. These include:

- I-GROW (Issues, **G**oal, **R**eality, Options, **W**rap-Up; Whitmore, 2002);
- PRACTICE (**P**roblem Identification, **R**ealistic goals, **A**lternative actions, **C**onsidering consequences, **T**arget feasible solution, **I**mplement **C**hosen action, **E**valuation; Palmer, 2007, 2008).
- SPACE (**S**ocial context, **P**hysiology, **A**ctions, **C**ognitions, **E**motions; Edgerton & Palmer, 2005).

Frameworks such as these can provide structure and momentum to a coaching conversation, while acting as an *aide-memoire* to both coach and coachee as to possible areas of inquiry. This article introduces a solution-focused coaching framework – ENABLE – that I have developed in the course of my coaching work with individuals and teams.

Solution-focused coaching

A solution-focused coaching approach is underpinned by a number of core principles adapted from Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (Berg & De Jong, 2002; de Shazer, 1985, 1986), including:

- It is not necessary to understand the origin of a 'problem' in order to begin constructing a solution; instead, the coach can support the coachee to obtain clarity about the *preferred future* they would like to see happening.
- There are always *exceptions* in the coachee's life or experience – times when aspects of the preferred future

are already happening (even if only in part). These represent valuable sources of learning, and the coach can actively guide a search for such exceptions.

- Coachees are resourceful people who bring *strengths, skills* and *qualities* to the engagement. The coach can attempt to elicit these and support the coachee to harness their resources as they begin to move towards their preferred future.
- Coaches can work with coachees to support them to build on what is already working in their life or situation, and to look for new opportunities to utilize their existing strengths and resources.
- Throughout the session, the coach listens for examples of successes and strengths. At the end of a coaching session, the coach can provide the coachee with feedback about these to enhance their sense of self-efficacy.

The above components of solution-focused coaching can be represented using the acronym ENABLE, thus:

Elicit preferred future
Notice exceptions
Activate strengths and resources
Build on what's working
Look for opportunities
Efficacy-supportive feedback.

Elicit preferred future

Key question: "Imagine a time in the future when you have had the impact you want to have... What does that look like?"

The coach can support the coachee to describe a vision of their preferred future that is clear, specific and detailed. This then

provides focus and direction to the coaching engagement, and can serve as a powerful motivator.

Notice exceptions

Key question: "What are the signs now of your preferred future already happening?"

At this stage the coach can support the individual or team to identify *specific examples* of times when their preferred future is already happening. *Scaling* questions can be used to good effect to support this exploration, e.g.

"On a scale from 0-10, where 10 is that your preferred future is already happening, where are things now? Why there and not any lower?"

These exceptions then become a platform for the activation of the individual or team's resources.

Activate strengths and resources

Key question: "What helped to achieve those successes?"

Having brought exceptions to the coachee's attention, the coach can guide an exploration of the *actions* that helped to achieve them. The coach can listen for strengths and qualities shown by the coachee. It is here that it can be helpful for the coach to have a vocabulary of strengths and qualities so as to support the coachee in recognizing the nature of what it is they are doing well.

Build on what's working

Key question: "How can you build on your existing successes to move forward?"

The coach can support the coachee to identify ways in which they might:

- Move a step closer towards their preferred future,
- Further utilize their existing resources.

The aim is to generate a series of possibilities to support forward movement.

With teams, this stage can support the cross-fertilization of successful practices. In such circumstances, the key question becomes: *"How can you learn from each other's successes to further develop your practice?"*

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Look for opportunities

Key question: "How can you go about that in the coming days or weeks?"

If the last stage of the framework is about *possibilities*, then this stage is about turning those possibilities into *action*. The coach can support the coachee to identify specific times or situations when the ideas generated at the previous stage can be made a reality. The emphasis is on identifying specific, concrete actions that the coachee can implement.

Efficacy-supportive feedback

Throughout the conversation, the coach listens for strengths and qualities shown by the individual or team, and then provides specific feedback about these at the end of the session. This 'E' could also be substituted for **Evaluation**, as the coach and coaching participant review the effectiveness of any actions taken.

I hope that the ENABLE framework proves helpful in supporting you to remember some of the components of the solution-focused approach, and invite you to apply it in your own work with individuals, teams and/or groups.

References

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