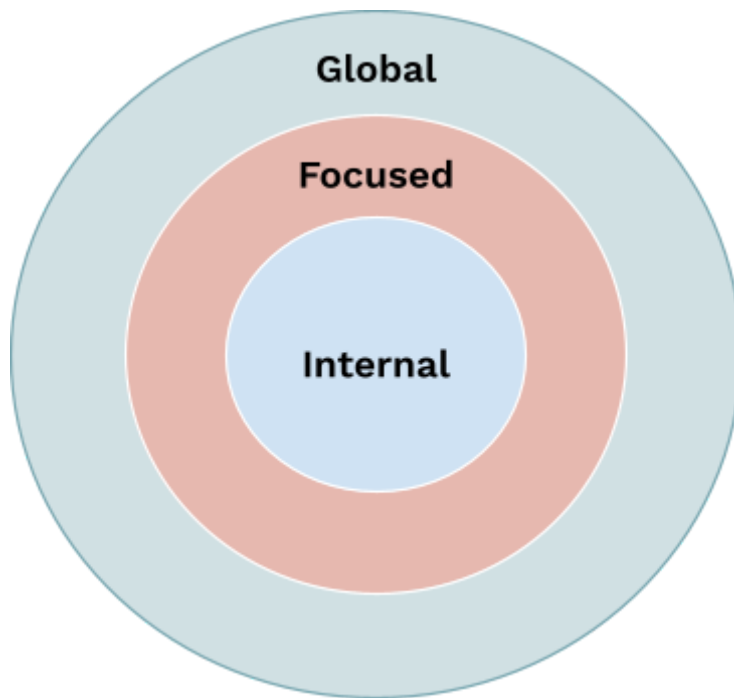


Three Levels of Listening

In coaching, there are generally three levels of listening that coaches use to better understand and support their coachees. The ability to listen effectively at all three levels contributes to building trust, rapport, and fostering positive coaching relationships.



Level 1: Internal Listening

This is the basic level of listening where the coach is focused on their internal thoughts, judgments, responses. While coaches don't normally center themselves in the coaching relationship, they can't help but listen through this filter. The coach might be thinking about their own experiences or formulating advice while the client is speaking. The coach can notice their thinking, but needs to avoid sharing their own thoughts or opinions before the coachee has had the opportunity to fully express themselves. Even then, the coach needs to be careful of being too directive, which can block the coachee from accessing their own resources and wisdom.

Level 2: Focused Listening

At this level of listening, the coach is listening fully to the client's words and body language.

This type of listening can be considered "left-brain" listening, as the coach strives to understand the details of what the coachee is saying. In a coaching conversation, the coach might paraphrase or repeat back what the coachee said to make sure they understood. Or the coach might validate what the coachee is saying by nodding or using phrases like, "Keep going" or asking questions like, "Tell me more" or "What else?"

Level 3: Global Listening

This is the deepest level of listening where the coach not only pays attention to the coachee's words but also to the underlying emotions, values, and potential meanings. This type of bigger-picture listening can be considered "right-brain" listening. The coach is attuned to the client's context and the broader aspects of their life, helping to uncover patterns, assumptions, and possibilities. The coach might ask open-ended questions to explore deeper aspects of the coachee's thoughts, values, and beliefs like, "What else does this remind you of?" or "Where do you imagine that belief comes from?" or "What emotions or needs are coming up for you right now?" or "What meaning do you make of this?" Coaches are better able to listen at this level when they have built trusting relationships with their clients.



Expansive, Integrated Listening Stances

The following stances are ways a coach listens to their coachee. Oftentimes, the coach is engaging in multiple stances at one time, though it's helpful to be aware of how one is listening so they can be more intentional in conversations.

Stance	How to Use this Stance	What it Might Look or Sound Like
Connection	Convey a sense of shared connection with the feelings of the speaker, without turning the focus away from the speaker.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That sounds like a challenging situation. • I hear you. • I can imagine that situation is... • Tell me more about that. • What does this experience remind you of?
Compassion	Form a mental picture of the other person's experience. Demonstrate compassion through mirroring cues such as head nodding or statements or questions that acknowledge emotions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's coming up for you right now? • Tell me a little bit about what makes this challenging for you. • It seems like this is bringing up a lot of emotion. Would you be willing to share? • Is there anything else you feel I should know?
Affirmation	Notice strengths and positives from what the coachee is saying. Identify specific words and actions to address.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I really appreciate how you... • I'm impressed by how you... • Here is the direct impact that I witnessed... • I want to share a strength I've noticed in your (teaching, leadership, etc.)... • It sounds like you handled that well (with confidence, grace, etc.) in a way that got the result you wanted.
Possibility	Listen for opportunities to incorporate what people care about into their vision and/or goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would success look like at the end of this (week, month, year...)? • What most excites you about where you're headed? What concerns you?
Clarity	Paraphrase (without parroting) what the speaker is saying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you hear yourself saying? • I heard you say...When you hear me repeat this back to you, what do you notice? What insights do you have?

*Adapted from Stanley H. King Counseling Institute October 2018 and adapted from Shane Safir, *The Listening Leader*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2017.*



Three Approaches to Coaching: Facilitative, Collaborative, and Directive

At its heart, coaching is about supporting coachees to grow and shift in their beliefs, actions, and ways of being so they can be the best version of themselves. To foster this growth, the coach works to support the coachee in closing the gap between their current reality and their desired one. Instructional coaching in particular falls into three main modes: Facilitative, Collaborative, and Directive (adapted from Knight, 2011). The following is a description of these three modes with examples.

FACILITATIVE COACHING	COLLABORATIVE/DIALOGICAL COACHING	DIRECTIVE COACHING
<p>In the facilitative mode:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The coach is guiding someone toward finding their own insights and understandings. • The coach refrains from sharing their own expertise or suggestions with respect to what the coachee needs to do, and rather, through inquiry, guides the coachee in tapping into their experience and wisdom to achieve their goals. • Facilitative coaching has the greatest long-term impact because the coachee bears the greatest cognitive load. 	<p>In the collaborative mode:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The coach takes a more collaborative stance with the coachee. • The coach shares strategies and options for the coachee, and/or the coach and coachee work on building knowledge and skill together. • The coach serves as a thinking partner, sometimes through facilitative questioning, and sometimes through being more directive. • In this mode, the coach and coachee share the cognitive load. 	<p>In the directive mode:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The coach shares their knowledge, skill, and expertise with the coachee to support the coachee's learning and growth. • Sometimes the coach is directive in order to share information or give advice. Other times, the coach is directive in order to interrupt a coachee's limiting beliefs and/or to interrupt potential inequities. • Directive coaching places the cognitive load on the coach, so this practice is only used when necessary.
<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Listen as the teacher analyzes observation data</i> • <i>Pose questions that clarify and deepen the teacher's thinking</i> • <i>Facilitate a group of teachers as they assess student work</i> 	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Co-develop a lesson or curriculum unit</i> • <i>Problem-solve issues of practice</i> • <i>Analyze examples of student work together</i> • <i>Co-observe another teacher; debrief together</i> 	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Share a process for analyzing student work</i> • <i>Model an instructional strategy</i> • <i>Offer a menu of ways to differentiate instruction</i> • <i>Share thinking that leads to a solution</i> • <i>Reference current research</i> • <i>Provide information</i>

A coaching conversation may contain all three of these modes at any given time. The conversation may start off as facilitative, as the coach learns about the coachee's needs. The conversation may become collaborative if the coach and coachee are reviewing a recent observation or creating content together. The conversation may become directive if the coach has insights they want the coachee to consider before their next meeting.

It is important for the coach to be aware of what mode they are in and the purpose for that mode so they ensure the conversation yields the greatest possible learning and impact for the coachee.



Conversation Stems

Starting the Session	
Establishing the session's focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you like to focus on in our session today? • What do you want to be true by the end of our time together? • What's one thing you'd like to take away from today's session? • If you have a lot of topics on your mind, which one feels like the top priority for you today? • Why is this important for you today? 	
During the Session	
Probing statements and questions (comprehend the issue and explore solutions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this goal align with what's most important to you? • What's motivating you to reach that goal? • What would be different in your life if ____? • If you were able to ____ what impact would that have? • What's at risk if you don't? • How have you successfully navigated this challenge before? • Tell me more about that. • What beliefs do you have about ____? How do those beliefs shape the actions you take? • What can you control in this situation? • What might you lose by ____? • What are your other options? 	Questions that seek clarification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you mean? • What is the part that is not yet clear? • Can you say more? • What do you want?
Questions that assess/evaluate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you make of it? • What do you think is best? • How does it look to you? • How do you feel about it? • What resonates for you? • What message is being offered in this situation? • What meaning are you making from ____? • What's happening that you don't want to happen? 	Questions that envision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you could do it over again, what would you do differently? • If it had been you, what would you have done? • How else could a person handle this? • If you could do anything you wanted, what would you do? • What is possible? • What if it works out exactly as you want it to? • What is exciting to you about this? • What does your intuition tell you?



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's not happening that you want to happen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If this gets resolved, what do you envision resolution will look/feel/sound like? • In ten years from now, what are you hoping to say about this? • What options haven't you considered? • What other angles can you think of? • What is just one more possibility?
Moving Towards Action and Ending the Session	
Questions that evoke action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do you go from here? • What people or resources could help you with that? • What's one thing you could do this week to contribute to your goal? • How committed are you to your next steps? • What might get in the way? How will you address what might get in the way? • How does this action serve you? • How does that action align with your core values? your goals we discussed? 	Reflection questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you know now that you didn't know before this session? • How would you summarize this conversation? • What are you taking away from today's session? • What do you want to say to me the next time we meet?

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Conversation Planning Questions

The following are possible questions a coach might use to prepare for their upcoming conversations.

1. What is the **topic** of this conversation?
2. What is the **quality of relationship and trust** you have with this person/group?
3. If there are low levels of trust and/or you do not have a positive relationship with this person/group, **what might you do to develop/strengthen the relationship?**
4. What are this **person's/group's strengths** and/or core values?
5. What is your **goal for the conversation?** And/or what's **in your sphere of influence** in this conversation?
6. What **disposition do you want to adopt** for this conversation (e.g. open, firm, confident, compassionate)?
7. **What might get in the way** in this conversation? In other words, what barriers might be present in this situation (e.g. identity barriers, policies, expectations)? For whom might these barriers be present?
8. How might those **barriers be addressed?**
9. What **additional learning or internal reflection might you need to do** to prepare for this conversation?
10. **How will you begin** this conversation?
11. What are some **possible questions** you might ask?

