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AVANTI ACADEMY IN PRACTICE

Ask, Don't Tell

Coaching conversations in practice

Workbook

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How to use this workbook

Each part of Ask, Don't Tell includes a short Try it activity. When the narration invites you to pause, turn to the matching sheet here and take ten minutes or so to work through it for your own role. There are no right answers. The point is to leave with something you will actually do. Keep your completed sheets: they make a useful record for supervision, appraisal or your personal development plan.

Part 1 · What a Coaching Conversation Is

Mapping your conversations

Look back over the last week. List the times people brought you a problem, name the kind of conversation each one needed, and mark where you answered before asking. Then choose one person to coach next week and draft your opening lines.

The problems people brought me this week, and who brought them
Which were training, coaching, mentoring or support conversations
Where I answered before asking anything, and what that cost them
One person and one topic I could coach next week
My opening lines: the purpose, which hat I am wearing, and the limits

To reflect on: *Think of the last problem someone brought you. What might have happened if you had asked one open question before giving your answer?*

Planning a coaching conversation

Plan one real coaching conversation for the coming week. Choose the person, be honest about the purpose, draft one open question for each stage from opening to close, and decide where, when and how you will record the step they agree.

Who I will coach, and the problem they keep bringing me
The answer I am already carrying, which I will put to one side
Is this about development or performance, and how will I say so?
My questions for the goal, reality, options and commitment stages
Where and when we will meet, and how I will record the agreed step

To reflect on: *Think of someone who keeps bringing you the same kind of problem. What might be getting in their way, and what goal would they choose for themselves?*

Auditing your questions

Choose one ordinary one to one this week. Afterwards, write down the questions you asked and sort them into open, closed, leading or stacked. Plan your swaps, then try asking and what else twice and one scaling question next time.

The questions I actually asked, as near word for word as I can recall
Which were open, closed, leading or stacked together
A why question I could turn into a what or a how
What I heard after asking and what else
Where I jumped in, and what I will try next time

To reflect on: *In your last one to one, how many of your questions were genuinely open, and how often did you speak before the other person had finished thinking?*

Your coaching week

List the questions you answer most often, who asks them and whether they could solve them. Choose a mode for each, write your first coaching line, and note when you will still direct. Find a peer to think with, then review the week on Friday.

The questions I answer every week, and who brings them
For each: direct, coach or mentor, and why
My first coaching line, and the moments I will still direct
A peer I could think with, and when we could meet
By Friday: who brought ideas as well as problems?

To reflect on: *Which question do people bring you every week that they could answer themselves, and what would you need to do differently for them to start?*

Finding the stuck point

Recall a coaching conversation that got stuck. Write down the words the person used, the belief that seemed to drive it and the thinking pattern it resembles. Plan two questions to test it, and note your organisation's routes to support in case you need them.

The conversation, and the words the person used about themselves
The belief that seemed to be doing the talking
Which pattern it resembles: all or nothing, catastrophising, mind reading or a should
A question about the evidence, and a small test they could try
My routes to support: employee assistance, occupational health, others

To reflect on: *Think of a conversation that kept going round in circles. What belief might have been doing the talking, and what question could have helped test it?*

My coaching practice plan

Write a one page coaching practice plan. Choose one specific skill, name the real conversations where you will practise it, ask a colleague to observe or form a triad with you, agree ground rules, and set a date to review what has changed.

The one coaching skill I will practise
Where and how often I will practise it, including on busy days
Who will watch me, and the ground rules we will agree
What I would notice if it were working
My review date, and what might come next

To reflect on: *When did anyone last watch you coach or manage a conversation and tell you specifically what they saw? Who could you ask?*

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