



5 ways to be **more coach-like** in your company

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Everyone has the power to improve the workplace by staying curious longer. Here are five easy ways to put curiosity to work to bring out the best in yourself and those around you.

1. Ask Open-Ended Questions

Asking open-ended questions transforms conversations and leads to deeper engagement. When you ask a question that requires more than a “yes” or “no” response, it encourages others to slow down, share their thoughts, and go into more detail. These answers have more nuance and often reveal unexpected insights. On the other hand, closed questions leave little room for dialogue or discovery.

Especially in a collaborative environment, open-ended questions inspire creativity and innovation. Here are some ways to ask more open-ended questions:

- Start questions with “What” or “How” that can’t be answered with a one-word reply.
- If someone responds briefly, encourage them to elaborate with follow-up questions.
- Don’t rush to fill a silence. Open-ended questions often require time for reflection.



2. Be an Active Listener

Active listening requires being present during a discussion. When your to-do list is screaming at you, it's hard to give your full attention to the person in front of you. However, doing so will help you better understand the speaker's message and intent. Active listeners concentrate on understanding, responding to, and remembering what's said in a conversation. Here are some ways you can be more coach-like by listening actively:

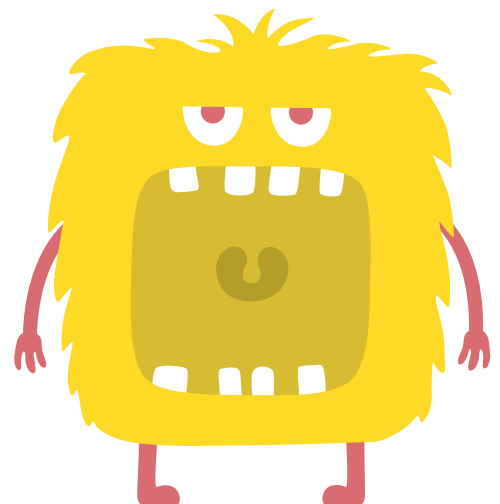


- Signal your engagement by facing the speaker, making eye contact, nodding your head, and maintaining an open posture.
- If you're having trouble staying focused, silently repeat what they're saying to yourself.
- Ask questions if you don't understand something.
- Avoid mentally preparing a response before they've finished speaking.
- Reflect on what they're saying by repeating it using phrases such as, "What I hear you saying is ..."

3. Avoid Advice-Giving

It's not realistic to completely avoid giving advice, but at least make sure you truly understand the issue before you start offering solutions. When you jump straight into advice, it can overwhelm the person you're talking to and shut down communication. You're also more likely to misunderstand the problem and offer bad advice. Avoid offering advice by doing the following:

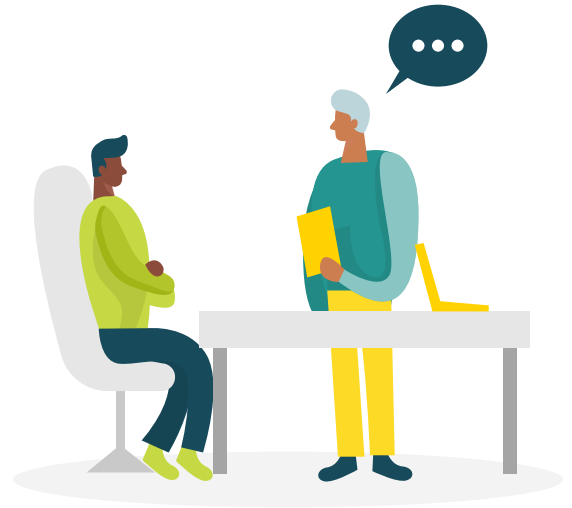
- Shift your mindset from problem-solver to being coach-like. Trust that the person you're talking to can solve their own problems, and you're supporting them through the process.
- Instead of advocating for a particular course of action, ask questions that promote reflection and exploration.
- Offer up choices to promote possibilities, such as, "What ideas do you already have?"
- Help the other person develop problem-solving skills by asking how they've overcome similar challenges or how they believe they should approach this one.



4. Ask How You Can Help

One of the best questions you can ask to be more coach-like is, “How can I help?” Instead of assuming you know what the other person needs, trying to be of service lets you lean into curiosity. It also creates a culture that helps you support your colleagues’ growth, development, and success. The open-ended nature of “How can I help?” avoids leading the conversation in a pre-determined course and stimulates creative thinking. The answer may surprise you. Here are some other ways cultivating a helpful, coach-like approach creates possibilities and sparks action:

- It encourages others to articulate their needs.
- Prompts deeper assessment of the situation before action.
- Signals an openness and willingness to support the other person.
- Invites collaboration and sets the stage for a partnership.
- Encourages a non-directive approach that can lead to more powerful, self-generated solutions.



5. Create Learning Opportunities

Every conversation is an opportunity for all participants to learn and grow. Ending conversations with “What was most useful for you?” gives the person you’re talking to a chance to reflect on what they learned and cement it in their memory. It also provides feedback so you can be more effective in helping others in the future. This type of growth mindset values development and doesn’t fear failure. Encouraging colleagues to view challenges as opportunities to grow and setbacks as learning experiences fosters a positive and empowering environment for everyone. Here are more ways to create learning moments:

- Encourage others to generate their own answers so they’ll retain valuable information and apply it going forward.
- Schedule reflection time each day to practice and celebrate the new things you learned.
- To keep others from feeling overwhelmed by new information, encourage everyone to focus on the One Big Thing or key takeaway from a conversation or experience.
- When asking reflective questions, share your thoughts as well to create an equal exchange of information and strengthen relationships.





Adopting coach-like curiosity at work creates space for autonomy, connection, and growth to flourish. By asking open-ended questions and listening actively, you lay the groundwork for genuine collaboration and discovery; this also steers you away from rapid-fire advice that often misses the mark and creates a pattern of misunderstanding and over-dependence. Try following your curiosity today, and watch how it catalyzes creativity and engagement throughout the team.

