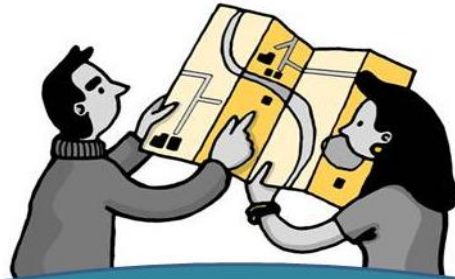


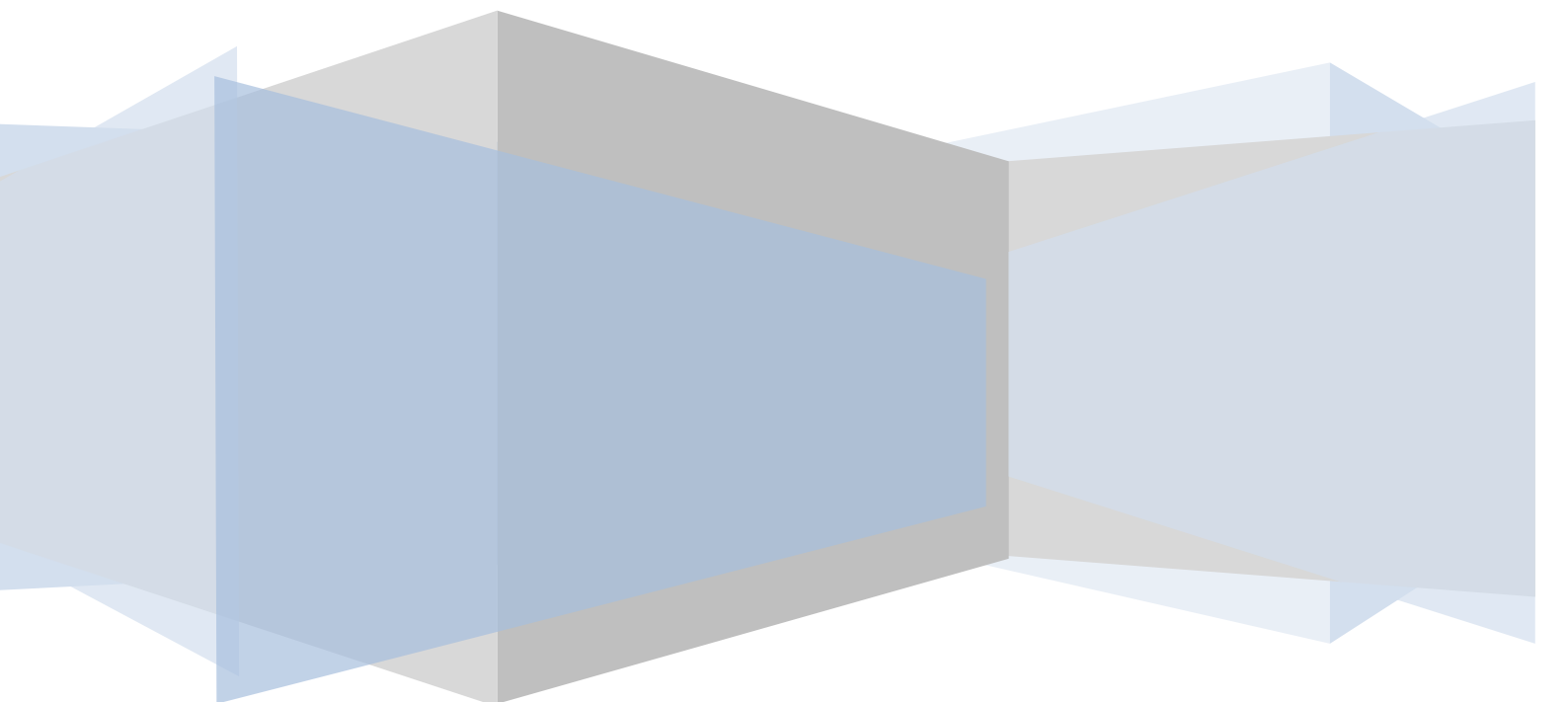
University of  
Hertfordshire



# ‘Better Together’

**Establishing an effective and sustainable (relational) peer coaching process for staff in the Higher Education Sector: an exploratory project**

**Dr Kathy Weston & Sally Graham**



Our sincerest thanks go to the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education for funding this project and in particular to Sweta Purohit, Dr Kevin Flinn, and John Simpson for their encouragement and interest in the project. Thanks also to all those who participated in a Better Together workshop and subsequent peer coaching activities.

*“Instead of pouring knowledge into people’s heads, we need to help them grind a new set of glasses so they can see the world in a new way. This means challenging the implicit assumptions that have shaped the way people have historically looked at things” (John Seely Brown).<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> As cited in Conversations as Core Business Process. In The Systems Thinker, Vol. 7, No. 10 1996/7.

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## 1 Executive summary

This report presents the findings from a small, qualitative project which aimed to explore strategies for establishing an effective and sustainable (relational) peer coaching process for staff working across the Higher Education Sector.

The original aim was to explore the feasibility of establishing a sustainable peer coaching model in a HEI, and beyond that, an inter-institutional peer coaching network. We set out to answer the following questions:

1. Was there an appetite for peer coaching, a need?
2. What would a peer coaching model look like? How would it function?
3. What were the barriers to establishing one, and sustaining interest long term?
4. What benefits could it bring to individual members of staff, team working, and the university as a whole?
5. How might an inter-institutional peer coaching network be established?

### 1.1 Method

We attempted to whet the appetite of potential participants towards peer coaching, through initial half day 'Better Together' workshops, which we offered to four UK HEIs, including our own. These workshops took place over the period of one year. Twenty members of staff attended in total.

We hoped these workshops would mark the beginning of staff engagement with a peer coaching network internally and beyond with other HEIs. The workshops were well received and it was clear that staff relished time together to talk, listen and think through workplace problems and solutions together. It was palpable that an ethos of collegiality was strong within each institution, but equally that the demands of the job meant fewer opportunities to share thinking and actively listen to peers. A coaching approach to workplace conversations was regarded by all, as a potentially valuable way forward.

Despite enthusiasm towards the approach, engagement in **peer coaching partnerships** beyond the workshop was low. Less than half the participants expressed an interest in actively coaching a colleague and only 4/20 took this opportunity forward. The latter group were all based in our home institution. We received feedback on non-engagement from staff in other HEIs which led to the following reflections:

- Disclosure of potentially difficult or challenging workplace matters to external parties can feel compromising in a recognised climate of 'increased competition' for funding and resources across the sector (Bolden et al, 2012:11).
- Participants must willingly volunteer for peer coaching rather than feel they have been instructed to participate by a line manager/team leader.
- It takes a considerable length of time to establish trustful relationships with potential project participants working in HEIs other than our own.
- Institutional variance is widespread across areas such as internal politics, culture and ethos, impending funding and structural changes. Parachuting in, and offering to set up a peer coaching network in a context where the cultural and political sensitivities are not entirely understood, was problematic.

Our methodology evolved as we took steps to generate further data within our own institution around how an **effective peer coaching model** could be established and successfully sustained. As such, the 'Better Together' workshop resources and approach were embedded within an internal eight day course on leadership and coaching, attended by

middle and senior managers. From this cohort, we were able to add to our sample of Better Together coaches and evaluate the experiences of eleven members of staff who had begun to coach peers. We were also able to gather the views of their coachees on the perceived effectiveness of the process.

In total, the findings in this report are based on interviews with 14 individuals who coached peers over the course of one year, and a sample of their respective coachees (n=8).

## 1.2 Main findings

- There is a discernible appetite for 'colleagueship' (Bolden, 2012:18), within Higher Education, and in particular, opportunities for colleagues to be together and engage in thoughtful dialogue.
- A peer coaching model for staff can be an effective and fruitful approach for HEIs to foster. Even with only a cursory knowledge of coaching and little formal training, peer coaches can successfully engage colleagues and help them navigate work place challenges. It is a highly reciprocal process, with both coaches and coachees reporting positive impact on them as individuals, and their practice.
- There are indications that participants in this activity feel happier at work, confident, better informed about their place of work, supported, and keener to remain in post.
- When colleagues approach work through the lens of 'coaching', work problems and challenges are more easily tackled. A relational coaching approach appears to offer an effective approach to difficult conversations, workplace dynamics, team meetings and overall communication between peers. It gives staff a framework for conversations, a language to challenge with, and an inner confidence stemming from a sense of belonging to a peer group committed to working in the same way.
- There is evidence that a peer coaching model works optimally when whole teams adopt the same approach.
- Being able to positively impact on individuals and their practice builds confidence in coaches and can greatly enhance their leadership capabilities.

## 1.3 Conclusions

HEIs are facing significant challenges in an era dominated by financial cuts and complex change. This has undoubtedly affected those working within them, who report in particular, reductions in available budgets and a simultaneous greater workload. As a recent Leadership Foundation publication made clear, 'colleagues' are highly valued by one another, and considered an important source of leadership guidance (Bolden et al, 2012:11). Despite this, there is little time in the working week for staff to enjoy 'thinking time' together, to actively listen to one another and engage in constructive conversations, i.e. those which clarify thinking and lead to action. Findings from this project indicate that there is good reason to believe a peer coaching framework in a HEI might help create a formal sanction and support for more constructive peer conversation and activity.

A peer coaching process can provide a context and a structure within which colleagueship can flourish, and enhanced professional conversations take place. The experience of coaching colleagues can enrich, hone and develop key conversational skills transferable to one's everyday professional practice. In realising the potency of coaching and the impact it can have on others, peer coaches develop a strong sense of feeling valued, and personal agency, which can lead them to apply a coaching approach in everyday interactions with others. As such, they display courage and resilience in tackling difficult conversations and a deeper awareness of their own leadership capabilities.

## 2 Aims of the 'Better Together' Project

As outlined in our University of Hertfordshire bid for Small Project Funding, 2012, The principal aim of this project was to put in place an effective and sustainable peer coaching process for staff across three different HEI contexts. The main objectives were to:

- Identify any known barriers/facilitators to establishing peer coaching in a HEI department.
- Establish a clearer view on the benefits or otherwise of a relational peer coaching model for HEI departments and those that work in them.
- Support three HEIs in creating and sustaining an internal coaching network within individual departments/schools/faculties and create an action learning network for project partners to join.
- Enable staff to enhance their own coaching and leadership capabilities through reflecting on their own practice and progress during the project.
- Reflect on lessons learned throughout the project.
- Develop a range of resources to support UH and other HEIs in valuing and embedding a sustainable and effective (relational) peer coaching model at work

### 3 Context

The HE sector is undergoing complex change and as a result, anxiety and uncertainty is affecting those working in this context. A recent survey by the group PA consulting illustrates this point. They surveyed sixty senior leaders within Higher Education and discovered a pessimistic mood, replete with predictions of increased public funding cuts to universities and an apprehension that perhaps that some universities might even risk closure. The authors of the report detected that the focus of university leaders had shifted away from an interest in government policy and funding, and was now increasingly engaging in a "competitive battle for fee-paying students", with a "new imperative" to offer "attractive and rewarding learning experiences", including better student access to academic staff (Burns, 2013).

When asked what they 'look for' from people in academic management roles, academic staff in one recent study said they greatly valued processes that relieve work pressures and create an enabling environment in which they can pursue their academic work with few distractions (Bolden et al, 2012:18). However, the expectation on staff to help deliver a better student experience whilst also publishing at a level to satisfy the demands of Research Excellence Framework (REF)<sup>2</sup> can cause stress. Academics are expected to be *'forward thinking, empowered and energetic'* (Bolden, et al, 2012) when it comes to their work yet face fragmentation of their roles, and a more competitive environment in HE overall. This can mean less time and space available for peer discussion, to explore new thinking and generate collaborative opportunities.

It is against this background that we set out to explore how to build coaching capacity within any HEI department. We speculated that the benefits of coaching for an institutional organisation might include growth and retention of key talent, fostering healthier relationships and improved overall performance. Participants in the coaching process may be enabled to think more clearly, make more effective decisions, develop greater resilience and think more innovatively. Arguably, these are skills and attributes to be valued most highly in the current climate.

Relational coaching is one style of coaching which we considered might offer a central vehicle for developing an effective peer coaching model within Higher Education. Relational in this context means *'acknowledging the inherently mutual nature of all social process, and prioritising 'the importance of the co-created, 'here-and-now' relationship as the central vehicle for development and transformation'* (Critchley, 2010).

Peer support mechanisms employing mentoring strategies are already well embedded at undergraduate level within Higher Education (Boud *et al*, 2001; Falchikov, 2001). Peer support is a well-established and successful method of retaining first year undergraduate students, engaging students in their learning, refining their critical thinking skills and enhancing their overall experience of university. Less well established are peer coaching processes for staff across the sector. The best example we found of an established coaching and mentoring programme within a UK university was one based within the University of

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<sup>2</sup> The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the new system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions.



York where the development of coaching skills for managers has formed an integral part of a Leadership programme.<sup>3</sup>

Within the public sector more broadly, there is a swell of interest in developing coaching conversations, as a means of building resilience and developing the leadership capabilities of staff. There is also an emerging research interest in how coaching cultures within organisations might directly and positively affect end user experience (Stokes et al, 2013).

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<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/coaching/>

## 4 Methodology

Our proposed methodology outlined in our original submission to the LFHE was to work with three HEIs helping establish peer coaching partnership in each, and then work to develop equivalent partnerships across these institutions. We began by offering half day workshops to staff in each institution. Broadly, these workshops allowed participants to reflect on the nature of professional conversations, introduced skills at the heart of relational coaching<sup>4</sup> and allowed them take part in a variety of exercises designed to highlight how a coaching approach to conversations can help can shift an individual's perspectives and move them forward.

In the latter stages of the project following a presentation at a conference<sup>5</sup> we were given the opportunity to work with a fourth HEI, which we took up. As a result, by May 2013, we had delivered the Better Together workshop in four HEIs, including our own, and to a total of 22 staff members.

Take up in active coaching partnerships beyond workshops was low, except in our own institution where four members of staff engaged in the process. We therefore supplemented emerging data by embedding the Better Together material and resources into an internal Leadership programme called '*Leading through Coaching*' available to professional and academic staff within our university and led by Sally Graham, Head of the Centre for Coaching and Mentoring.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the four members of staff who had engaged directly with the Better Together project from day one, we soon had a cohort of eleven others who were using the resources and had also actively begun to coach peers. In addition to these main interviews, a sample of individuals who had been coached gave their views as to the perceived value (if any) of being coached by their peers. In total, we interviewed 22 individuals.

Interviews took place in person and by phone, and lasted on average twenty five minutes each. Interviews explored (a) participants' general experience of peer coaching, (b) impact (if any) the experience had on their individual or team capacity and practice, (c) any identifiable impact on the wider institution. Participants also partook in informal supervision sessions which occurred every 6-8 weeks throughout the project. Data was generated from these conversations also.

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed thematically. Impact data was supported by that which had been gathered independently by the Development Facilitator within Human Resources at UH.

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<sup>4</sup> These are: listening, being present in the 'here and now', paying attention to the coaching relationship and its core elements such as creating a reflexive space to reflect on personal learning.

<sup>5</sup> The Collaborative Action Network Conference November 2012.

<sup>6</sup> This course was commissioned by the Head of Leadership and Organisational Development at the University of Hertfordshire and considered to be a crucial step in the development of a coaching culture at the University. The cohort featured in this report represent an overall cohort of 24 UH staff, (14 academic and 10 professional). The stated aims of the course were to: develop knowledge and skills in the field of coaching and mentoring deepen understanding of the role of coaching and mentoring in facilitating the learning of others, identify how coaching can facilitate leadership development and be used in leadership roles.

## 5 Project engagement

On-going institutional changes across the participant HEIs made organising the initial workshops in HEIs more difficult than initially thought. There were several discernible reasons for this:

- Being generally ‘time poor’ was a prominent reason participants felt reluctant to commit to the time needed to attend a session with us.
- A sense of uncertainty and anxiety over potential role changes or overall job security meant that staff seemed less able to sign up to workshops months in advance. At least three individuals signed up, and subsequently left one university before the project began.
- Not having a pre-established relationship with staff with other HEIs made engagement more difficult.

In total 22 individuals from across four HEIs participated in the Better Together workshops. Most had been working in a role that contained a coaching element already and had a real interest in pursuing a coaching career. A majority held senior positions within their departments. Pre-workshop interviews revealed a palpable sense of pressures at work and some demoralisation and anxiety over job roles. Most were dealing greater workload following structural changes within the university. In the interviews before workshops took place, many expressed the hope that learning about coaching would lead to more constructive professional conversations, and ultimately a better work environment.

### 5.1.1 Workshops

‘Better Together’ half day workshop introduced participants to the idea of relational coaching and contained reflections around the attributes of a ‘good’ conversation generally and in particular, what makes a ‘good’ work-place conversation. We discussed the art of active listening, the idea of ‘critical moments’ in coaching, the ethical issues that arise when coaching peers, and introduced participants to a 3D model for professional conversations which we invited them to take away and use. The workshops also involved several practical exercises around coaching (for full details of workshop content: see Appendix A). Following the workshop, participants were given a ‘reading pack’ which contained key literature on coaching and were offered the chance to join an online forum/network, where they could discuss their peer coaching experiences with others. Lastly, we invited them to keep a reflective journal. Overall,

- Participants expressed gratitude that they had an opportunity to come together as colleagues in a thinking space to reflect on the nature of professional conversation.
- Participants across the four HEIs fed back that they had greatly enjoyed the workshops and felt that they have been beneficial, thought provoking and useful. For a majority, the activities on ‘listening’ were most impactful.

#### Some selected comments:

*“I learned that I have coaching potential and I enjoyed the process of thinking more deeply about professional conversations. I think I did help someone look at their problem in a different way and this was useful for us both”.*

*“I think it is amazing what can be covered in a short space of time if you have considered conversations”.*

*“I found it really good to have **time to reflect**”.*

*“The workshops have provided me with a **really good opportunity to focus on a key challenge** at work and to think more deeply about those work relationships”.*

*“I am suddenly **aware of my own body language**”.*

*“I am reflecting on whether this is something that I would like to explore further with formal training. **It is so important to listen to people and to be heard.**”*

*“**I have learned about the power of listening**, of gaining perspectives, and how coaching can help you learn about yourself”.*

*“Holistic listening really works!”*

*“**It is really important to be heard**, and to hear others.... we should do more of it”.*

*“Coaching is very powerful, am very surprised by my reactions, **can see the potential.**”*

## 5.2 Establishing peer coaching pairs

Despite enthusiasm towards the approach, engagement in **peer coaching partnerships** beyond the workshop was low. Less than half the participants expressed an interest in actively coaching a colleague and only 4/20 took this opportunity forward. The latter group were all based in our home institution. We received feedback on non-engagement from staff in other HEIs which led to the following reflections:

- Disclosure of potentially difficult or challenging workplace matters to external parties can feel compromising in a recognised climate of ‘increased competition’ for funding and resources across the sector (Bolden et al, 2012:11).
- Participants must willingly volunteer for peer coaching rather than feel they have been instructed to participate by a line manager/team leader.
- It takes a considerable length of time to establish trustful relationships with potential project participants working in HEIs other than our own.
- Institutional variance is widespread across areas such as internal politics, culture and ethos, impending funding and structural changes. Parachuting in, and offering to set up a peer coaching network in a context where the cultural and political sensitivities are not entirely understood, was problematic.

Within our own institution, getting a peer coaching network off the ground has worked well since the beginning of this project and continues to do so. Despite interest from participants in making connections with HEI staff in other institutions, we were unable to attract sufficient interest in doing this. We detected a reluctance of disclosing workplace issues and concerns with external parties. The increasing competition characterising the sector, inter-departmentally and at inter-institutional level has the potential effect of deterring collaborative working in this way.

A known barrier to coachees talking openly, albeit within an agreed confidential relationship, is that it can invoke feelings of vulnerability. A truly effective coaching conversation gets to the heart of work related matters but *can* touch on personal issues. Trust is a vital component to this relationship working well.

Reluctance to be paired with those working in other HEIs extended to joining the online coaching network that we offered to participants. A reluctance to put oneself ‘out there’ even within the confines of privately administered online group proved unattractive.



### 5.3 Lessons Learned

- We underestimated the time that would be required to establish a strong rapport and build trust with other HEIs.
- In retrospect, we should have tried to start with making a strong connection between our own institution and one with a pre-existing peer coaching programme such as the University of York, rather than attempting to make first time connections with several at once.
- Formal certification as a recognised 'peer coach' may be an effective 'carrot' towards engagement and active participation in any HEI.
- Without a carefully articulated agreement between universities re the boundaries that might frame inter-institutional peer coaching relationships, it cannot be expected that participants will feel sufficiently 'safe' enough to engage in them.

## 6 Peer coaching: impact data

The data presented below has been generated from interviews with those who have had the experience of peer coaching a colleague over a period of time, for at least four-six sessions, each lasting at least 40 minutes. The cohort of coaches (n=14) comes from two different routes within our own institution but all coaches accessed the same Better Together resources delivered by Sally Graham, Head of the CCM (UH). Their experience of coaches and that of the coachees they were matched with (n=8), were categorised thematically around perceived benefits of taking part.

To summarise, all interviewees reported that the experience of coaching a peer had impacted on them as individuals, and on their professional practice. Specifically, there was evidence of **impact** in relation to:

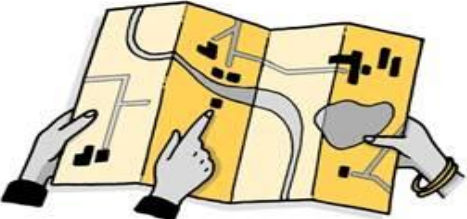

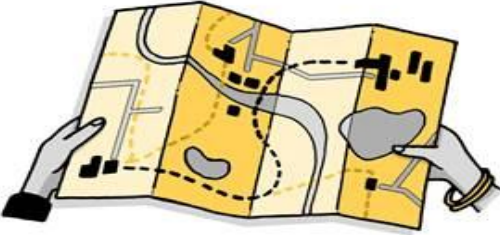
- **Ability to hold more challenging professional conversations**
- **Honing of specific skills (questioning, listening, reflecting)**
- **More effective team working**
- **Deepened understanding of one's leadership style and capability.**

Each of these points is now considered in turn.

### 6.1 Ability to hold more challenging professional conversations

As part of the Better Together workshop, participants were introduced to a 3D model for professional conversations developed by the Head for the Centre of Coaching and Mentoring at UH (Graham et al, 2012). This model provides a structured framework for professional conversations and also operates as a tool through which reflection can take place more systematically. It has three stages of '*discovering*', '*deepening*' and '*doing*' and the model is accompanied with some suggested conversational prompts for each stage (see below).

## 3D Approach: Enhancing Leadership through Conversation

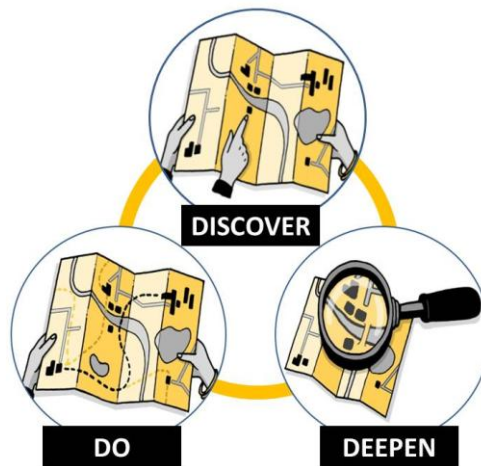
<p><b>DISCOVER</b></p> <p>Be attentive  Engage in active listening  Facilitate exploration through questioning  Identify an agreed focus</p> 	<p><b>DEEPEN</b></p> <p>Surface assumptions  Take different perspectives  Identify new insights  Foster positive thinking</p> 	<p><b>DO</b></p> <p>Identify strategies for change  Clarify intended actions  Align actions to strengths  Reflect on the learning</p> 
<p>What would you like to talk about?</p> <p>So tell me a bit more about...</p> <p>I notice that... I wonder if...</p> <p>You seem to be saying...</p>	<p>Why do you assume...?</p> <p>What might be another view...?</p> <p>What seems to be significant?</p> <p>What could you change?</p>	<p>Let's clarify achievable steps...</p> <p>What will you do?</p> <p>What will enable you to do this?</p> <p>How has this conversation made a difference?</p>

Sally Graham [s.f.graham@herts.ac.uk](mailto:s.f.graham@herts.ac.uk)



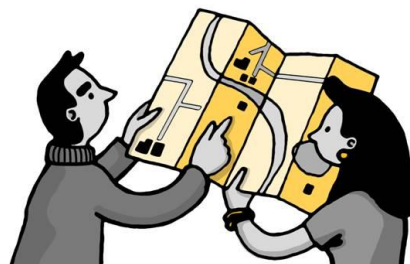
The conversation is divided into three parts:

- **Discover** – to identify **critical moments** from coaching practice, i.e. those moments or incidents, which stand out as significant. Exploring commonplace incidents can help focus reflection and question the often taken-for-granted values and beliefs that underpin one’s thinking, perceptions and actions.
- **Deepen** – Develop greater understanding of the issues raised by making new connections and gaining new perspectives.
- **Do** – Set targets that incentivise changes to professional practice, embed new ideas and create potential solutions.



**Other key features of this approach include:**

- principles of co-agency and shared responsibility
- learning through collaborative exchange
- focus on creating contexts for rich conversations
- opportunities for joint enquiry, evaluation and development work
- building capacity through connecting individuals and groups in fostering social responsibility.



We offered the metaphor of two people reading a map together to further explain our approach to Better Together participants. A coaching conversation can develop a shared understanding of where each other are on this metaphorical landscape as well as initiating different perspectives, new insights, and a possible shift to another part of the map.

**6.1.2 Impact findings**

The 3D model was mentioned by half the sample of peer coaches, as being something they refer to regularly now in their professional roles. In the context of a busy working day, staff

could use it as a mental prompt whilst coaching peers or indeed whilst leading team talks. Consider these comments:

*"I really enjoyed learning about the 3D model. I am quite a controlling person. This trusting in the process was an important thing for me to do. **I use it in my day to day context now.**"*

*"The 3D model is **really useful** and in my head...when I do coaching on a one to one basis."*

*"I found the strategy of 'Discover, Deepen, Do' in conversations **very helpful** and after we had discussed this, I put this into practice and did get to the 'do' in my conversation."*

*"The 3D model is **simple, yet so effective**. I have conversations with members of my team – things may emerge but I pay attention to what keeps coming up.. I may do a bit more research and look at it from different perspectives. Having the 3D model gives you the ability to talk about it. You don't have to be defensive about other ways of thinking."*

*"I plan chats with team members now, **[the 3D model] structures our conversations.**"*

Interviewees referred repeatedly to the 'confidence' that they had gained from peer coaching. The 3D model seemed to provide a theoretical framework and a language with which to begin 'difficult' conversations. Becoming more confident in helping others bred a sense of agency amongst peer coaches which affected their everyday approach to workplace relationships too. This was the case for **all** peer coaches interviewed. Consider these selected comments:

*"There was a sense of helplessness before. I felt I couldn't do anything about [workplace problems] I was helpless. I wasn't a player, I had no agency. **Through coaching, I realised that I can do things that can change people.**"*

*"**Coaching someone else has given me strength back.** What my coachee has done for me, is made me realise that I have these skills and can put them into action."*

*"**I have learned directness.** Before I would have been disempowered and silenced by the strategies of others. Now I have the strength to think this is what it is and I am not going to put up with it. I am going to open up this conversation."*

*"I have **regained a sense of value.** I have been able to share and transfer knowledge to another person."*

*"I think I am **far more overtly assertive** than I was".*

*"I felt really useful and **I sort of discovered myself**, parts of myself I did not know about it, I can be brave with someone who is more senior position wise and help her to get through something that she needs help on. I felt really proud of myself".*

*"I now have the skill set to be able to **push the boundaries a little bit more.** Techniques we learned from the course gave me the strength to do it."*

*"I always knew what I wanted to say in our team meetings...but often would think afterwards that 'I wished I had said that'. Now I have the **confidence to articulate what comes to my mind.**"*

*"I now have the **confidence to deal with problems** I am having with a particular member of my team. I was able to bring things to a head with more confidence. That has been a benefit to the team."*

*“I have tried to be **less fearful in my conversations**. I feel that instead of running away and mulling it over... I actually put it out there as something that is part of the equation. Isn't that leading?”*

*“My **newfound coaching skills help in relationships** with the [name] team who can be a bit tricky sometimes.”*

*“I have **more awareness around people**, things they do, the way they work. Having that awareness about things....It has broadened my whole thinking.”*

## 7 Honing of specific skills

All interviewees appeared to have adopted a 'coaching mindset' when returning to their working roles and were able to pin-point key coaching skills that they have learned or refined. They made mention in particular, of being able to listen and question more effectively; skills that they already used in their everyday roles. However, they discovered that these skills could be developed and refined further. Amongst those for whom coaching had been an integral part of their job role, there had been deeper learning. At least half of those interviewed, expressed surprised at this.

### 7.1.1 The ability to listen

*"I learned that listening is an area I can get a lot better at as an individual. Some of the exercises were so thought provoking. I thought I was a great communicator when actually I had some distance to go!"*

*"I have discovered that employing active and **empathetic listening has enabled me to build a secure connection** so that team members feel safe to explore ideas, to change their behaviour and improve their practice."*

*"My body language has changed. I truly listen to other people...I don't make assumptions. **My conversations are really different now.**"*

*"90% of my time is spent with rest of my team. They all have issues and need guidance. **Coaching gives me a way of dealing with them.** I have learned [through peer coaching] how to identify assumptions, or the use metaphors when people speak. Now, it rings a bell when I am talking to people....I really pick up on that now. If it is appropriate, I will bring it to their attention."*

*"I have become much better at listening, waiting for people to finish etc."*

### 7.1.2 The ability to question

In addition to listening skills, participants referred to a newfound ability to question others more effectively; the adoption of a more open style of questioning facilitating coachees' thinking processes and encouraging them to come up with solutions themselves.

Some selected comments include:

*"There is something about the art of questioning – that really stuck with me, **if you ask in a certain way, you will get a certain answer.** I am very careful now, how I go about how I getting information from my team. I am very conscious about that. I want them to be open and honest and give me their thoughts".*

*"Previously [named colleague] came to me for answers all the time. Now I ask her questions and she makes her own mind up."*

*"I always thought I was good at communicating, but then I discovered peer coaching, and really understood the art of questioning. It has made me communicate better than I ever thought I could. I now know I wasn't communicating effectively. **It helps you communicate without having to tell someone how to do something.**"*

*"For me personally it has had a large impact because of the situation I work in. The big changes [in the sector] have been difficult for all of us. After the course, I started to coach other people at work and I did that really well. I thought, **'wow! I can do that'. I can steer***

*conversations round and try to change things by using some of the techniques I had learned from coaching.”*

*“Professional conversations have got so much better. I can’t quantify it, the fact I am able to approach things in a more general discussion way and they are responding much better. It is the language, my approach. I can see it is appreciated”.*

## 7.2 A new approach to team working

Within our interview sample, strong examples emerged as to how a coaching approach had impacted on team working. This was particularly the case when every team member had accessed the Better Together project. As these interview extracts below reveal, participants’ individual experience of peer coaching had led to a whole team impact upon returning to their day to day roles:

**Team member 1 (leader):** *“the whole team has got a lot stronger and that coaching dynamic is now embedded in what we do and how we approach things.’*

*“In the past, when we used to have our team meetings, we would always just look at last actions and do an update. Now I have added something else to the table – they can bring any issue to the table. They can bring it to the table and have an open discussion where everyone’s ideas are included and listened to and you take a bit from everyone. It is important to me to give my team more voice.”*

*“On a professional level, when I am holding team meetings, **I deal with things differently now...**I ask how staff are, how they are feeling. How I approach and manage my colleagues is completely different. I now ask...have you been ok with that? Have you got any concerns? Before [coaching experience] I was always very task oriented.”*

*“I didn’t use to have a strategy but that coaching method and style and language works for me now. The impact can be very subtle in terms of how I work with my team... **I am more comfortable delegating, taking responsibility for questioning, asking the team questions so they can make their own mind up.** It has been really nice to see them more empowered.”*

**Team member 2:** *“We have more **challenging conversations**, really get to the bottom of things, perhaps reflect on things more...that has changed and enhanced day to day operations within the team”.*

*“We all started coaching each other, not formally, but informally. Occasionally, this means you have to hear some things you don’t want to hear. It is good at the end of the day. You just have to toughen up a bit. We are more **robust and more tolerant of each other** as well now.”*

*“**I use open questioning a lot now.** Recently one of my team kept coming in late to work. Instead of berating her, I used a coaching approach. We talked it through. I shared some of my experiences with her. I would never have done that before. I read about that in coaching. That is one of the tools that I now use more of in my team...much more self-disclosure. She totally got it. She got quite emotional and thanked me for telling her.”*

**Team member 3:** *“In my day to day role, I have lots of one to one conversations with my [team members], all these **conversations have been so much richer, so much better.**”*

*I use a different approach when in team meetings -We sit in a room and go through issues on the agenda. Once we have done that... I now ask if there is anything else [team members] are concerned about."*

In addition to evidence of 'team culture' being impacted, there is also evidence of improved self-efficacy in their management of others. As **Team member 2** explains:

*"I feel they can throw anything at me now and I can handle it. I would have run to [Team Leader 1] before. Now I feel like I have been armed with the tools and techniques that actually I should be able to do that myself."*

Similarly, three members of another team, in this extract, reflect on the changes to their practice that stem from their experience of peer coaching. In particular they discuss how they have developed a greater resilience and strength, not just individually, but as a team, from adopting a coaching approach. They began to model this approach in their conversations with other on daily basis. The result is a sense of empowerment, the emergence of leadership skills and a newfound assertiveness to tackle issues directly.

**Team member A:** *"The coaching helped us as a team having more strategic conversations. It has made our team....we have become a stronger hub. The coaching culture is taking over, we are using the skills.....the team is more receptive to them."*

*"I remember saying to the others, if we are going to move forward as a team, we are going to have to sing off the same hymn sheet. I would never have said that before and now the whole team have come on board."*

**Team member B:** *"We have **rediscovered skills** from doing something different. It has worked well in our small team. We are coaching each other."*

*"Prior to the project, I feel like I didn't have a voice, **now I have influence**. Perhaps I am having the conversation differently now?"*

*"[Team member C] communicates differently now. **Her confidence has soared**. She is quite assertive actually. She puts her foot down. I have seen a big assertiveness in meetings. That is definitely new, she would have never done that before, she would have sat there and internalised it"*

**Team member C:** *"We are helping each other with insights on each other's behaviour"*

*"Before coaching [a peer], I would have given [members of his team] more mentoring... ideas...tell them that they could do it like that, like this, now I am **better at helping them solve their own problems** so they can take ownership over them more. Now I am about getting them to think about different options themselves."*

The data above has resonance when talking about the link between coaching and the development of leadership capability as it is clear that peer coaching has given participants an opportunity to develop their capacity to lead others. As Lee (2007) notes in his book on Leadership and Coaching, *"organisations need individuals who can shape and realise success, drawing on their own ability to influence, inspire, collaborate, manage and above all lead. The challenge of developing such qualities is that they cannot be simply learned from a textbook or workshop"*. As the section below demonstrates, the acts of reflection integral to coaching can give individuals the self-awareness necessary to engage with colleagues more authentically. Lee rightly remarks that this quality of authenticity is a hallmark of truly effective leadership.

### 7.2.1 The importance of reflection

We asked all Better Together participants to keep a learning log, detailing evidence of what is termed in coaching as ‘critical moments’ that they had encountered during the experience of coaching peers, and the learning that may have emerged as a result. These **learning logs honed participants’ ability to critically reflect**, analyse and learn from such situations. 12/14 participants did so. They became practised at the skill of reflecting on practice – they used it as a tool for observing how their own management or leadership style was evolving. Reflective practice within coaching is considered a necessary prelude to ‘acting differently’ (Clutterbuck and Meggison 2006:430). As these extracts from ‘reflective logs’ reveal, there is evidence of participants using their ability to reflect to make direct changes at work:

*“[Reflection] is the most difficult thing. Yet, when you do it, **you can get so much from it.**”*

*“Now, I try and build in reflection time before or after a conversation with my team. Doing that degree of absolute **mindful listening is so beneficial.**”*

*“I found using the learning logs so useful as a model. I **really loved reading on a deeper level** and I found that structure very helpful to take elsewhere”.*

*“In terms of my own practice, **I will be renewing my personnel training** to ensure that it emphasises the importance of listening and that it provides structured training to enable individuals to develop their listening skills.”*

*“I have observed that **strategies I am adopting from coaching are leading to improved connections at work** and are transforming the quality of the conversations I am having with those I manage.”*

### 7.3 Participants report more positive attitude to work and greater morale

Being part of a ‘coaching partnership’ was an activity that they all peer coaches thoroughly enjoyed. On a personal level, participants felt ‘more valued’ at work, with the majority reported feeling ‘happier’ in their work role. When asked to explain why, interviewees described a newfound sense of agency: *“being able to make a difference”, “using skills I never get a chance to use”, “really being able to make a difference to someone else’s life”, “using skills that I am developing... it has made me feel more useful,” “since starting to coach, I feel people value me more. There is an exponential difference”.*

Coaches and coachees co-created solutions to the everyday workplace challenges instigated by structural changes within the university. A positive approach to work stemmed not just from greater agency but from developing an awareness through coaching conversations that certain issues are actually generic across the university and that really, *‘we are all in the same boat’*. In this sense coaching may reduce a sense of isolation, help cultivate collegiality and that crucial sense of being valued.

Consider the following participant reflections:

*“**I recognise now what coaching can do.** It can add to the quality of the life of all employees in the long run. Some colleagues may feel they are not being valued, coaching can change that.”*

*“I found out that it is not just me...the same problems exist for everyone. It made me feel a lot better. **I feel value in myself and my team”.**”*

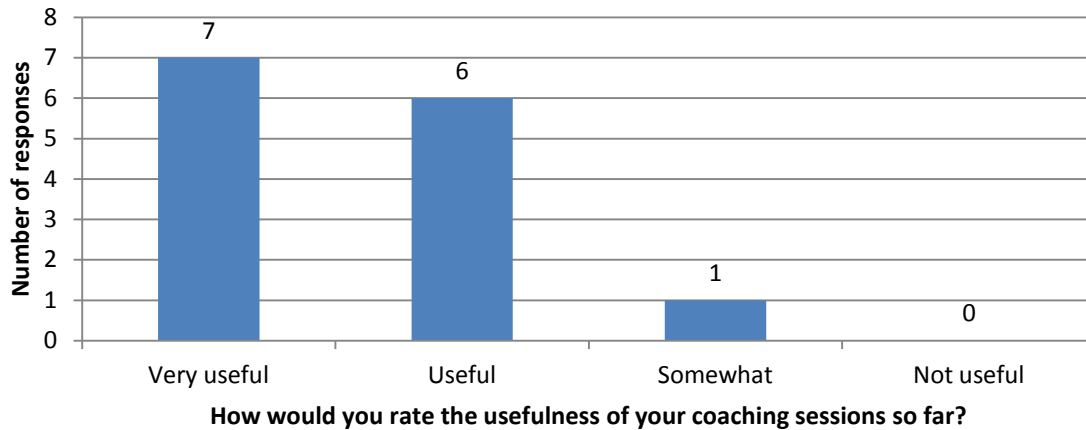




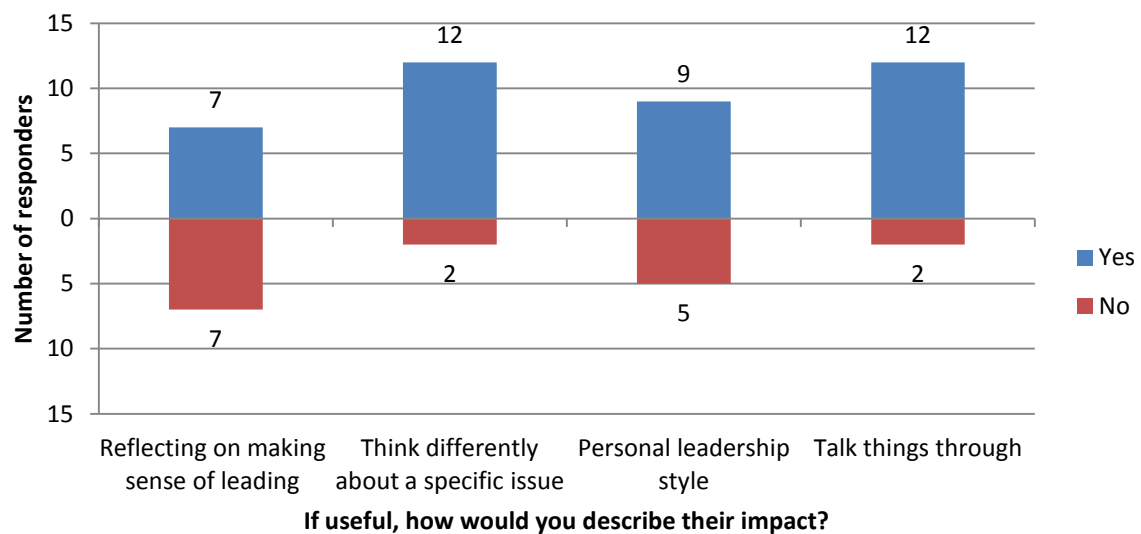
## 8 Feedback on the experience of being peer coached

One of the most interesting findings that emerged from coaching partnerships was that despite participants initially having little confidence in their own ability to coach, most coachees felt that the sessions had been 'very useful'. See graph 1 below:

**Chart 1: Coachees response to 'usefulness of coaching sessions'**



**Chart 2: Coachees response to 'what was the impact of the sessions?'**



Qualitative feedback from seven coachees **during the period of being coached** shed light on reasons why they considered coaching was having an impact:

*"My [peer coach] provided a listening ear for me."*

*"It has made me realise is that I can reframe things happening to me in the workplace."*

*"It was a very interesting experience. It was validating for me ..It was a time just to talk about my successes and things that had not been done so well. It was an hour when I was away from all my stuff."*

*"I had not realised how useful it would be having someone describe the things I do to someone in a different field of operations. Doing this has made me more aware of the minutiae and of the need to take account of it."*

*“My coach is a very experienced manager and has assisted with a number of different approaches which I have used.”*

*“The experience met my expectations to a far greater degree than I had anticipated. The coach-coachee relationship has enabled me to approach problems in a different manner with positive results”.*

*“The outcome of being coached has been that my manager has actually highlighted what she perceived as my strengths and rationale for why I am giving additional roles and responsibilities”.*

*“I have received more compliments about my work during this process than before.”*

*“The coaching has been invaluable and should be available to everyone.”*

*“My coach has enabled me to appreciate that I am more valued than I think I am and for that I will always be grateful. She has also given me alternative ideas as to how to deal with work related problems”.*

Further qualitative feedback was generated from interviews with coachees **following the completion** of their coaching partnerships. These interviews again revealed how valuable the experience had been:

*“it was great to be able to discuss my work and issues at work with someone in the same organisation and with whom I could discuss matters freely and openly. Through being coached, my eyes were opened...**it helped me have a different perspective**. It is a luxury and so important to be able to speak to someone who is not involved in what you are doing. Changed practice? Yes it did. I realised I was always looking at things from my perspective and not from other people’s. It made me understand other people better. It kind of made me reflect on the fact that I was closed to other people’s viewpoints.”*

*“It has helped me model an approach to others...The great thing is someone is listening to you. It widened my view. I would be the first person to say it was fantastic, everyone should have a coach!*

*“It was a **very positive experience**. There were a number of work situations that I brought to the table and I got clear solutions of how to take it forward. These had an immediate impact.”*

*“It was very interesting and liberating to be linked with someone else from the university. It was quite **challenging** in a way. She would ask me questions such as why are you not applying for that role? Why not? I realised I looked at options in a way that I was limiting myself.”*

*“To have the **space to think through issues** related to learning and management and work.... I valued that a lot. It gave me the opportunity to work through a strategy at work, which I then implemented with success. It was great to be able to speak to someone who had a different perspective from my own”.*

*“It was so handy to speak to someone from a different department. They gave a **different perspective, a different emphasis**. Peer coaching could have its place in the university, especially if the coach is removed from the specific discipline, people not caught up in the same politics and pressures.”*

## 8.1 Participants deepened their understanding of leadership style and capability

Coaching peers allowed participants to become more self-confident in dealing with others, more confident about delegating and empowering others to take action where necessary. Coaching gave them a structure and a language within which their professional conversations could take place. Here are some selected comments participants made on their [revised] views of leadership following the experience of coaching:

***“If people ask me now, what is your leadership style? I say it is a coaching style. I have a different perspective on leadership, it doesn’t have to be old style, it progresses through the interactions you have with people...coaching has that in its heart, It made me think what sort of leader do I want to be?”***

***“Coaching has positively influenced my change leadership by building connections with the team. Using coaching, I have been able to create the environment to encourage suggestions for change in behaviour so the team becomes more effective and comfortable in their role”***

***“My experience of coaching has influenced my change leadership in that I recognise the importance of the relationship. If coaching is a mind-set, then so also is personal development through reflection and mindfulness...on a personal level I have been transformed, and feel grateful for the opportunity.”***

***“The actual practice [of peer coaching] got my mind going on lines that it had not been going on for some time. I found that benefited my wider strategic thinking in work and ultimately improved my leadership skills.”***

## 8.2 Coaching peers enhances understanding of institutional context

Participants relished opportunities to get know and network with others across the university. The learning came from understanding others’ day to day role, the challenges they face, but also in discovering generic themes and difficulties encountered by others at work, and hearing about their approaches to solving them. Professional and academic staff enjoyed learning more about each other’s worlds through coaching pairings.

### Selected comments:

***“It is always helpful to understand other parts of the institution. You don’t get really opportunities to do that”.***

***“As a university, if you get people that understand each other’s perspective more and **you have an understanding of different roles and contexts.** There is a power in that. Processes within HE can sometimes negate against collaborative working.”***

## 8.3 Is there sustainable impact?

Talking about coaching together informally and being in coaching pairs created strong relationships and connections which spanned departments and role hierarchies across the university.

As shown above, there is strong evidence that coaching skills have become embedded in participants’ everyday practice, enhancing individual confidence, improving the quality of conversations and creating a new communicative framework which allows more robust and

effective team working. The thinking that has taken place through coaching has extended into other areas of work/study life for participants. Knowledge gained was impacting other areas of the university as these participants explain:

***“I am thinking of revisiting my [named module] and try and re-develop that and re-enhance that to incorporate more listening into it”***

*“I am planning an enhanced course which will be able to support our managers, not just in terms of how they can put the message out there in terms of the communications, but **how they can have stronger conversations?**.”*

*“I have used those [Better Together resources] within the [named school] so the impact [of the coaching] is broader, wider, deeper.”*

## 9 Conclusions

This small scale qualitative study explored the feasibility of establishing an effective peer coaching network within and across HEIs. We have been successful at making staff across four HEIs aware of the potential benefits of coaching and now have a good understanding of the barriers to establishing peer coaching within this particular context. Most importantly, trust is a pre-requisite for engagement in a framework of this type.

Developing a cadre of internal coaches has been straightforward in our own work setting because there is an institutional incentive to develop leadership capability and human resources have embedded peer coaching into their leadership programmes directly. Parachuting in and offering to set up a peer coaching network in other HEIs where the organisational culture does not officially endorse a coaching approach and where political sensitivities are not entirely understood can be problematic. Increased competition for funding and resources across the sector can also work against the openness and trust required for inter-institutional peer working to take place.

This project highlighted:

- A great appetite within HEIs for collegiality and opportunities to experience holistic listening and dialogically richer conversations with colleagues.
- What an organisation with a coaching culture may look and feel like to be part of.
- How deeply those working in HE wish to feel 'valued' in their professional roles.
- The potency of a peer coaching approach for transforming ways of thinking, feeling and behaving in relation to others (Hawkins and Smith, 2011:231).
- The interpersonal skills that can be developed through coaching others, all of which are entirely transferable.
- The strong, positive impact peer coaching practice can have on individuals' levels of confidence, agency and self-efficacy in their roles.
- The reciprocity of the peer coaching relationship.
- How coaching conversations can lead change and improve performance.
- How peer coaching activity can nurture effective leadership capability.

We believe that effective leaders are those who are aware of the coaching skills they have and are able to judge when and where to utilise them to maximum effect. They act more knowingly, making conscious choices during conversations with different people, always instilling a sense of effective leadership. Leaders are responsible for creating the right context for constructive interactions between staff that enable them to reflect on/learn from real experiences and subsequently improve their own professional practice.

There was a general consensus amongst those who had experienced peer coaching that a coaching approach was now very much 'part and parcel' of their role at the university. In this way, it promises to be a sustainable approach. However, the growing number of internal peer coaches requires administrative management from within the university. It is our view this should be an individual or individuals based within Human Resources.

### 9.1 Lessons for HEIs

With employees in HE required to work smarter and harder under increasingly tight budgetary constraints, effective leadership and constructive inter-personal relationships become ever more important. Change is not something we do *to* colleagues; it is something

we do in collaboration *with* them. Change is a non-linear process where responsiveness to shifting circumstances is just as important as adherence to rigid plans and processes drawn up at the outset. Supporting people through transition is often seen as an add-on or an afterthought.

Coaching in a HE context offers a potentially powerful and sustainable vehicle for helping staff cope with change, whilst developing effective leadership skills within organisations seeking to maximise performance during difficult times. Collegiality can provide an antidote to the real pressures and demands of university working life.

There is value to setting up peer coaching mechanisms informally. However, to be able to cascade it, a formal offering of some accreditation may become a valuable ‘carrot’ towards participation.<sup>7</sup> All of the coaches involved in this project said they would appreciate formal acknowledgement of their role and input into the coaching process. As one participant put it:

*“Having that formal accreditation following the peer coaching experience is becoming important to me. It means I am recognised for having that [coaching] mind-set within the university. It is like a professional code”.*

If a peer coaching model is attractive to staff, it may quickly generate a large cohort of peer coaches who will need some sort of group supervision to quality assure. *Which* supervisory model is a question that needs considering. Which model can accommodate the volume of coaches generated? Growing an internal group of coaches also raises practical but important issues relating to space. Does the institution have appropriate room spaces not just for peer coaching to take place, but where supervisory conversations may occur? Who is the best person to lead them? Which department or body within the HEI should manage the peer coaching programme? In our view, it may work best when the core administration for the programme is done by HR.

## 9.2 Inter Institutional peer coaching

Setting up peer coaching pairs in HEIs where we did not have pre-established relationships proved a difficult task. Each HEI had its own staff issues, institutional and team politics, pressures and stresses. It was difficult to expect longer term engagement and time commitment from staff not personally known to us, and who were dealing with large workloads at the time of the project.

Authentic conversations between staff across HEIs require a firm basis of trust. Establishing this is no easy task. Should a peer coaching network be established inter-institutionally, the question still arises, who will provide the formal umbrella of supervision that will undoubtedly be needed? Individual HEIs may run co-coaching supervisions but it is advisable that a body oversees this work. The Leadership Foundation would be an ideal candidate to provide the formal network that HEIs could sign up to, and to perhaps provide supervision to those acting as coaches. There may be potential ways of peer coaching and supervision occurring via technologies such as Skype.

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<sup>7</sup> At the University of Hertfordshire, we are currently in the process of seeking validation for our planned certification procedures for peer coaches.



## 10 Plans for Dissemination

As part of our dissemination activity, we have delivered or planned talks at key conferences and still aim to write up the project findings in relevant journals. Here is a list of our aims and achievements to date:

### 10.1 Conference workshops

- Conducted a workshop at the Collaborative Action Research Network CARN conference (Nov 2012) entitled *“Better together: an interactive workshop exploring how workplace conversations, relationships and performance may be transformed through peer coaching”*.
- Attended EMCC European conference in Dublin 26-28<sup>th</sup> June 2013 and engaged in dialogue with the coaching community about learning from our project.
- Paper accepted at the European conference of the EMCC, Athens, Greece, November 2013, entitled *“Better Together? A look at what works when setting up a peer coaching network in Higher Education.”*

### 10.2 Publications

- Aim to publish report on LFHE website.
- Aim to publish report on UH Centre for Coaching and Mentoring website, Winter 2013.
- Explore publication in ENGAGE, Leadership Foundation publication.

### 10.3 Resources of use to other HEIs

The project allowed us to create resources which may be beneficial to the sector. They include: the 3D model for professional conversations in the workplace and a short video resource on peer coaching in HEIs – which we will disseminate through the University of Hertfordshire’s Centre for Coaching and Mentoring. Our online network for coaches or those interesting in coaching is available to join upon request See: [www.centrecm.ning.com](http://www.centrecm.ning.com)



## 11 Looking forward

It may be useful for future research may focus on:

- Appropriate models of supervision for informal peer coaching mechanisms in a HEI. Which type of supervisory model would work best? What are the particular ethical complexities that might arise? How often should supervision take place? Should the supervisors receive support and supervision themselves from an outside organisation, such as the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education?
- Evaluating the longitudinal impact of a peer coaching culture on team effectiveness, institutional performance and student experience.
- Exploring how technology can help establish and sustain peer coaching relationships in HE but also across HEIs.

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13 Appendix A



**Leadership  
Foundation**  
for Higher Education



# **‘Better Together’**

**HEI Peer-Coaching Project**

**Sally Graham & Kathy Weston**

# Welcome!

Exploring strategies for establishing an effective and sustainable (relational) peer coaching process for staff working across the Higher Education Sector

**Leadership Foundation in Higher Education (LFHE) /  
University of Hertfordshire**



**Sally Graham**

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**Do your everyday conversations with  
colleagues enhance your practice?**

**How?**

**Where and when do they happen?**

I don't usually plan my conversations they just happen...

I'm often surprised how much I learn from talking to others...

I'm often surprised how much people have to say outside of meetings...

I tend to talk about things that are at the front of my mind...personal and immediate matters...

The conversations I have often occur when I'm 'out and about' on the campus...

I don't think there are set rules to how people talk – we just seem to take turns...

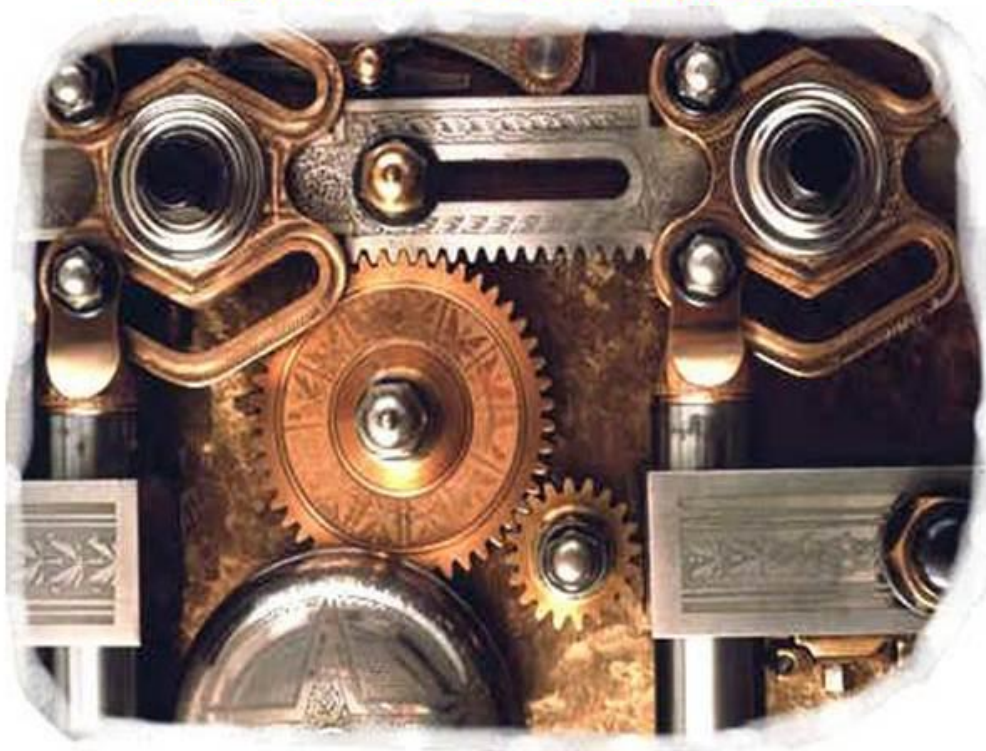
The topics we chose to talk about are improvised their not prescribed – they just happen...

I often tell stories when I'm trying to explain things...



# Working Together?

Do you see organisations as machines, workers as cogs and management as a control process...





## Beliefs that can follow:

- power of problem solving to change organisations
- power of instruction to change organisations
- that emotions are problematic
- power of criticism to motivate change



# An alternative approach?

Organisations as living human systems...

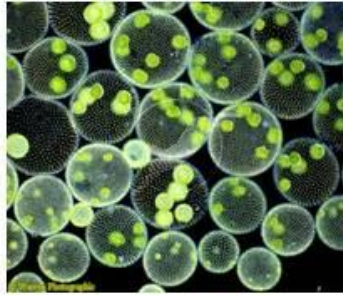


‘complex responsive processes of relating...’ Prof Ralph Stacey

# Organisations as systems...

'made up of parts that are interdependent, inter-reliant, and interconnected.'  
(French & Bell 1999)





## Beliefs that can follow:

- power of appreciation to promote growth
- power of inquiry
- power positive emotional energy to achieve change
- power of talk to change things



# 'Great Expectations – Are you ready?'

**HE Academy Conference  
University of Manchester  
3 July 2012**



## Academic Leadership – reflections (2)

.. “What we have discovered, and rediscovered, is that leadership is not the private reserve of a few charismatic men and women. It is a process ordinary people use when they are bringing forward the best from themselves and others. **What we’ve discovered is that people make extraordinary things happen by liberating the leader within everyone.**”

Kouzes and Posner 2002 “The Leadership Challenge”

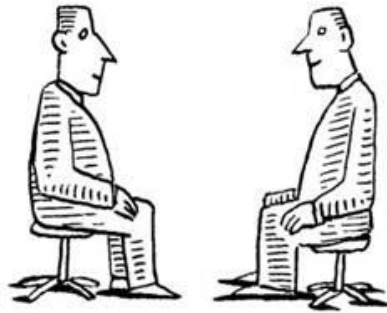
**The report concludes with a series of implications and recommendations, including the value of:**

- (a) engaging hearts and minds;
- (b) nurturing the next generation and taking the long-view on academic careers;
- (c) creating space to thrive;
- (d) stimulating a culture of debate and enquiry;
- (e) creating and embedding structures and processes that support relevant identities;
- (f) building a sense of community and encouraging citizenship;
- (g) providing informal mechanisms for participation and engagement;
- (h) managing performance by strengthening shared identity;
- (i) negotiating and engaging with academics as professionals;
- (j) safeguarding 'membership' of the academic community; and
- (k) creating opportunities for a collective voice.

<https://www.lfhe.ac.uk/protected/acleadbolden.pdf>



# What is Conversation?



**‘Conversation is** not just about conveying information or sharing emotions, nor just a way of putting ideas into people’s heads... conversation is **meeting of minds with different memories and habits.** When minds meet they don’t just exchange facts: they transform them, reshape them, draw different implications from them, engage in new trains of thought. **Conversation doesn’t just reshuffle the cards: it creates new cards!**

Theodore Zeldin (1998: 14)



In 2010, Bryan Berg in 44 days built this replica of the Macao, China, luxury resort out of 218,792 freestanding playing cards.

**‘Conversation doesn’t just reshuffle the cards:  
it creates new cards!’**

**Theodore Zeldin (1998: 14)**

# Conversation skills?



**listening**



**questioning**

# The art of listening



## **TASK 1: Listening to others** (4/5 people)

- One person talks about an issue
- Each person listens for one of the following: content/feelings/assumptions/metaphor and imagery/body language
- Listeners feedback to the talker
- The talker gives feedback on the experience
- As a group discuss the impact of focused listening

## **TASK 2: Listening to yourself** (in pairs)

- Identify one person as the talker and the other as the listener
- The talker tells a story
- The listener focuses on noticing their own feelings and responses
- Finally the listener gives feedback by saying  
‘I notice that as you’re speaking that... I’m now wondering...’

# The experience of **conversation**?

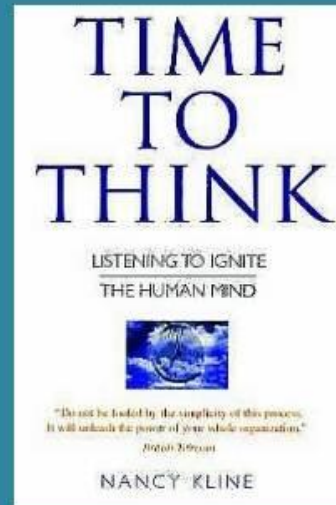
**'We know we are engaged in a conversation...when we experience:**

- A sense of being listened to and of listening to others;
- **An atmosphere of trust and openness;**
- A liberty in expressing thoughts and feelings;
- **A sense of what is happening has some importance and value;**
- Affirmation of our self-value and the value of others;
- **Knowing that something is different as a result;**
- The development of shared meanings and understandings;
- **A sense of equality between participants.'**

Lewis, S, Passmore, J & Cantori, S (2011: 73)



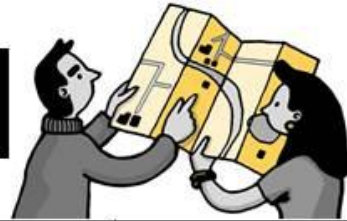
**‘A sense of being listened to and of listening to others...’**



**‘The quality of a person's attention determines the quality of other people's thinking.’**

**Nancy Kline (2009)**

***Time to Think: Listening to Ignite the Human Mind***



# ‘Better Together’

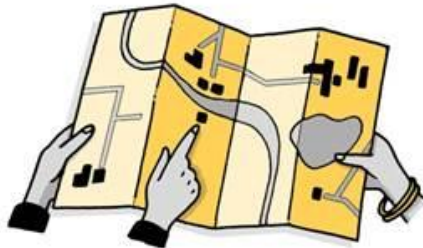
Enhancing Leadership through Conversation

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s.f.graham@herts.ac.uk / k.l.weston@herts.ac.uk

## 1. DISCOVER

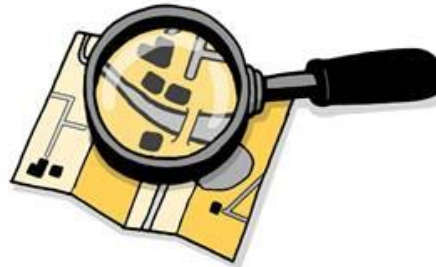
Be attentive  
Engage in active listening  
Facilitate exploration through questioning  
Identify an agreed focus



What would you like to talk about?  
So tell me a bit more about...  
I notice that... I wonder if...  
You seem to be saying...

## 2. DEEPEN

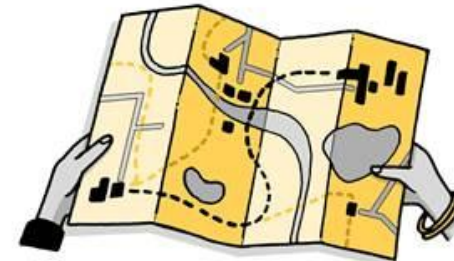
Surface assumptions  
Take different perspectives  
Identify new insights  
Foster positive thinking



Why do you assume...?  
What might be another view...?  
What seems to be significant?  
What could you change?

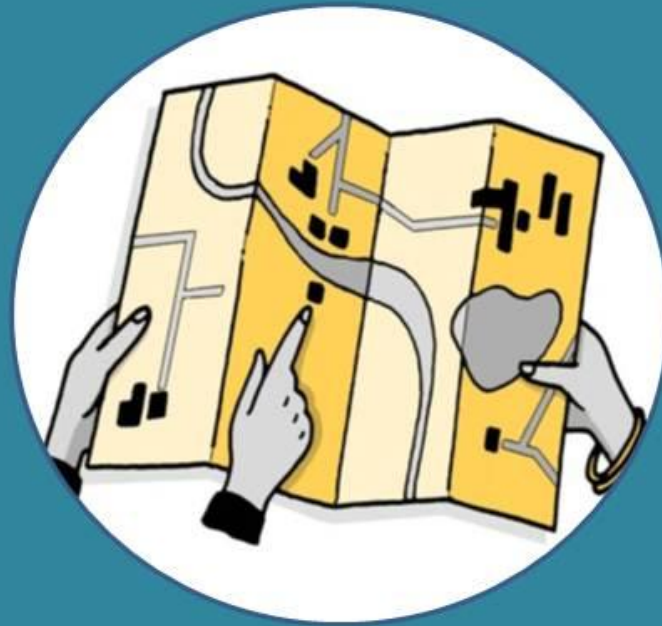
## 3. DO

Identify strategies for change  
Clarify intended actions  
Align actions to strengths  
Reflect on the learning



Let's clarify achievable steps...  
What will you do?  
What will enable you to do this?  
How has this conversation made a difference?





**Be attentive and engage in active listening**  
Facilitate exploration through questioning  
Identify an agreed focus

# DISCOVER

*Suggested prompts:*

**What would you like to talk about?**

**So tell me a bit more about...**

**I notice that... I wonder if...**

**You seem to be saying...**





## **Surface assumptions**

Take different perspectives

Identify new insights to foster positive thinking

# DEEPEN

*Suggested prompts:*

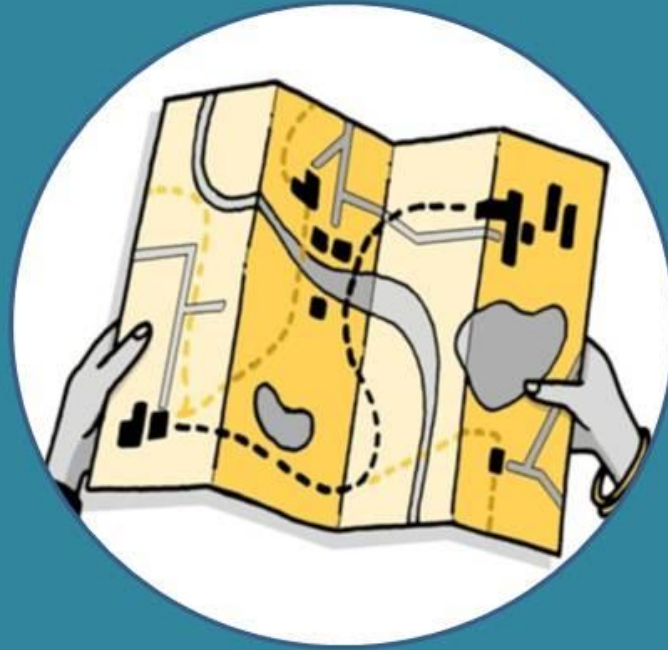
**Why do you assume...?**

**What might be another view...?**

**What seems to be significant?**

**What could you change?**





## **Identify strategies for change**

Clarify intended actions

Reflect on the learning

# DO

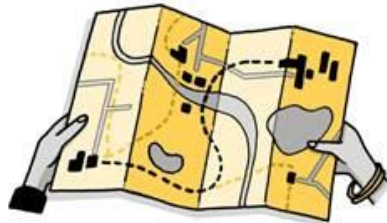
*Suggested prompts:*

**Let's clarify achievable steps...**

**What will you do?**

**What will enable you to do this?**

**How has this conversation  
made a difference?**





Learn through analysing  
'critical moments'



Gain new insights through  
reading key literature



Develop  
coaching skills



Share  
thinking

**'Better Together'**

Become more self-aware through identifying and learning to analyse 'critical moments' occurring in our work lives

Gain new insights through personal reflection, reading, and conversations with colleagues and project partners

Develop leadership potential through coaching colleagues in our own workplaces

Engage in online discussions, to share thinking and new insights



**'Better Together'**



# http://centrecm.ning.com/



The image shows a screenshot of a web browser displaying the homepage of the Centre for Coaching and Mentoring. The page features a green header with the University of Hertfordshire logo and the text 'Centre for Coaching and Mentoring'. Below the header, there is a navigation menu with options like 'INVITE', 'MY PAGE', 'MEMBERS', 'EVENTS', 'FORUM', 'VIDEOS', 'GROUPS', and 'MY NETWORK'. The main content area includes a forum section with several posts, such as 'Creating an Ethical Coaching Community...', 'worth a laugh?', 'Coaching Market Analysis', and 'Questions from a newbie...'. A red arrow points from the text 'Share thinking...' to the forum section.

Share thinking...

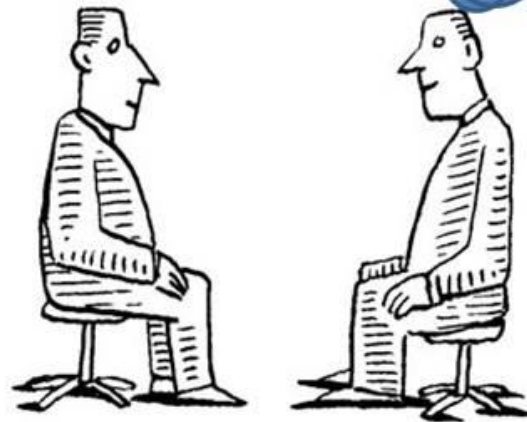
I have deepened my understanding through...



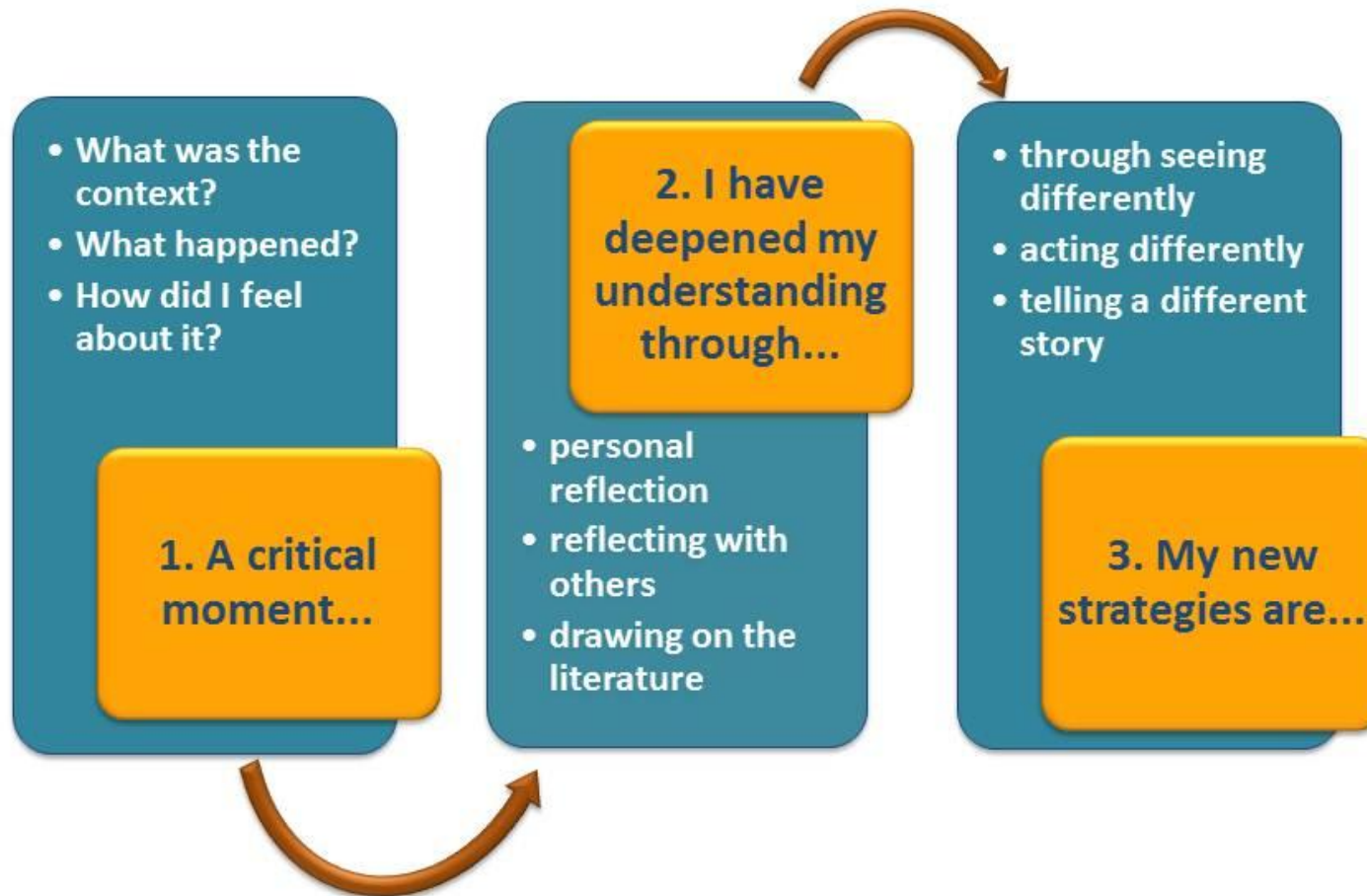
## Identifying my learning in 'critical moments' ...

I can't find time to read everything I'm asked to so I'm thinking of asking someone I've met on the same course if we could be reading buddies. That way we can both do some of the reading and meet up from time to time to discuss it. What do you think?

Wow! He can find solutions himself! I've been wanting to tell him to do that but I sense it's much more powerful now that he's come up with it himself. What skills did I use? Why were they effective?



# Critical moments...



# http://centrecm.ning.com/



The image shows a screenshot of a web browser displaying the homepage of the Centre for Coaching and Mentoring. The browser window title is "Centre for Coaching and Mentoring - Windows Internet Explorer". The address bar shows the URL "http://centrecm.ning.com/". The page features a green header with the University of Hertfordshire logo and the text "Centre for Coaching and Mentoring". Below the header, there is a navigation menu with options like "INVITE", "MY PAGE", "MEMBERS", "EVENTS", "FORUM", "VIDEOS", "GROUPS", and "MY NETWORK". The main content area includes a forum post titled "Creating an Ethical Coaching Community..." and a sidebar with a user profile for "SALLY GRAHAM" and a list of events, including "ILM Level 5 Certificate in Coaching and Mentoring". An orange arrow points from the left towards the forum section, with the text "Learn Together..." written inside it.

What would you like to talk about?



# References...

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