

The background features a dark blue, textured surface. In the center, there is a graphic of four stylized human figures in a circle, holding hands. The figures are light blue and semi-transparent. In the foreground, two hands of a different skin tone are shown, also holding hands, positioned on the left and right sides of the central graphic. Two horizontal white lines are drawn across the image, one above and one below the central text.

Peer Coaching Circles

Peer coaching overview

An overview of peer coaching circles

Peer coaching is a form of coaching that relies not on authority or expertise, but on collegial trust, curiosity, and willingness to listen and experiment. In a peer coaching circle, 3 – 4 participants take turns playing the roles of “client” and “coach.” Through active dialog, potential solutions to challenges are posed, reflected on, and committed to. The coaching circle provides support and accountability to all participants. In addition, coaching circles provide participant the opportunity to refine their coaching skills.

How peer coaching works

Each peer coaching session takes place in four phases:

1. Client (participant) shares a **challenge** or problem (with guard rails outlined during session)
2. Coaches utilize **collaborative inquiry** to explore possible solutions
3. All participants use quiet **reflection** to process possibilities
4. Client selects an **action** to commit to

How to run a peer coaching session

Instructions for running a 60 – 75-minute peer coaching circle

1. Agree on how you will manage your time
2. Determine who will be the first “client”
3. The client will state a problem or opportunity they are working through related to program content (*~3 mins*)
4. Coaches will take turns posing questions* of clarity, curiosity, and possibility, engaging with client who will reflect and respond (*~10 mins*)
5. Everyone quietly reflects on the discussion to identify what’s been learned during the period of inquiry (*~2-3 mins*)
6. The client selects – and states -an action they will commit to taking before the next coaching circle (*~2-3 mins*)
7. The next client steps into role and the process repeats
8. At the close, discuss what worked well, and what you might want to do differently next time (*~2 mins*)

Guidelines

Respect confidentiality: what gets shared in the circle stays in the circle

Prepare in advance: outline what you want to discuss and the outcome your hope to achieve

Practice coaching skills: focus on listening, asking questions vs. giving advice

Stay curious: be open to looking at your challenge in a new way

Sample questions for coaching a peer

To better understand what the client wants to achieve

- What do you want to achieve?
- How would you know you have achieved your desired outcome?
- What would success look like?
- How would you feel if you got this sorted?
- Who else would benefit from achieving this goal?
- What in particular do you want to focus on?
- What do you want to achieve in this conversation?

To better understand the client's starting place

- What is happening now?
- What, when, where, how much, how often?
- Where are you on a scale of 1-10, if 10 is (the desired outcome)?
- Are there times it is better?
- When are you at your best, what's happening?
- What have you already done about it?
- What are you observing or assuming about this?

To help the client explore possible paths they could take

- What could you do? What else could you do?
- How would someone you admire deal with this situation?
- Who has the information you need?
- Who has the skills you need?
- Who has the power to effect change in this situation?
- What if this constraint and that constraint were removed?
- If you could do anything about this, what would you do?
- Who can help with this?
- Which option(s) will best move you towards your goal?

To help the client choose which action to take

- What is the first step you need to take?
- So what will you do, and when?
- What else will you do? When?
- What do you need others to do?
- Is your plan realistic?
- Who needs to be involved, consulted, informed or influenced?
- What difficulties could you encounter and how might you address?
- What support do you need to attain your goal and from whom?
- What insights do you have from this conversation?