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Introduction

Empowering conversations have the potential to transform how people see themselves, make decisions, and move forward with confidence. This resource is designed to support emotionally safe, empowering conversations in community and educational settings. It introduces the core coaching skills that help volunteers, teachers, community workers, and anyone in a supportive role create space for others to think clearly, explore possibilities, and find their own way forward.

These skills are not about giving advice or providing solutions. They are about listening with care, asking thoughtful questions, and supporting someone to uncover their own insight and direction. When used well, coaching skills strengthen agency, confidence, and voice, especially for people who may have felt unheard, marginalised, or 'done to' in the past.

Whether you are completely new to coaching or already use some of these skills in everyday conversations, this programme will guide you through the foundations of:

- focused, compassionate listening
- open, curious questioning
- creating emotionally safe conversations
- supporting reflection and insight
- helping others identify next steps without taking over

These skills are powerful because they honour the belief that people are resourceful, capable, and experts in their own lives. Coaching is not about fixing, rescuing, or directing. It is about creating the conditions where someone can think more clearly, feel more confident, and take meaningful action.

What You Will Gain from This Course

Throughout the six sessions, you will develop practical tools and reflective habits that support both your conversations with others and your own personal growth. You will learn how to:

- build trust and emotional safety
- listen in a way that helps people feel genuinely heard
- ask questions that open up new thinking
- stay boundaried while being supportive
- encourage clarity, confidence, and small steps forward

- avoid advice-giving and over-responsibility
- hold space for someone's story without becoming overwhelmed

These skills are relevant in many settings, for example, community groups, classrooms, mentoring relationships, youth work, family support, and everyday life. They help create environments where people feel respected, valued, and able to influence their own path.

How the Course Works

Each session includes a blend of learning, reflection, and practical activities. You will be encouraged to notice your own patterns, strengths, and assumptions as you develop your coaching identity. The focus is not on becoming a professional coach, but on learning how to have conversations that empower others to think, choose, and grow. The aim is to develop everyday relational coaching skills suitable for volunteers, educators and community practitioners.

A Note on Emotional Safety

Coaching conversations can sometimes touch on feelings, uncertainty, or personal experiences. This workbook is designed to support emotional safety by encouraging:

- curiosity rather than judgement
- clear boundaries
- respect for difference
- choice and consent
- compassion for yourself and others

You are not expected to hold anyone's emotional load or solve their problems. Your role is to listen, ask, reflect, and support at a pace that feels safe and sustainable for both of you.

Session One

Understanding Coaching as an Empowering Conversation

Purpose of This Session

This session lays the foundation for all the skills you will develop throughout the course. Its purpose is to build a shared understanding of coaching as a non-directive, empowering conversation that strengthens voice, confidence and agency. This session explores what coaching is, what it isn't, and why it is such a powerful approach in community, education and support settings.

What Coaching Is

Coaching is a collaborative, non-directive conversation that helps someone reflect, gain clarity, and move forward with confidence. It is rooted in the belief that people are resourceful and capable of finding their own answers when given the right space, attention, and questions.

Coaching is not about telling someone what to do. It is about creating the conditions where they can think more deeply, see new possibilities, and choose their own next steps. When used in community, education or volunteer settings, coaching becomes a powerful way to support people who may have felt unheard or 'done to' in the past.

At its heart, coaching is a conversation that helps someone:

- feel listened to
- explore their thoughts and feelings
- understand what matters most
- identify options and possibilities
- take small, meaningful steps forward

It is a partnership — not a hierarchy.

Why Coaching Matters in Community and Support Roles

Many people in supportive roles naturally want to help by offering advice, solutions, or reassurance. While well-intentioned, this can unintentionally take away someone's sense of agency or reinforce the idea that others know best.

Coaching takes a different approach. It strengthens:

- **voice:** helping people express what they think, feel, and want
- **confidence:** supporting them to trust their own judgement

- **clarity:** enabling them to see choices more clearly
- **agency:** encouraging them to take ownership of their next steps

For individuals who have experienced marginalisation, exclusion, or being spoken for, coaching skills can be profoundly empowering.

Key Principles of Coaching

These principles guide the coaching approach used in this course. They are simple, human, and deeply aligned with trauma-informed practice.

- 1. People are resourceful:** Everyone has strengths, insight, and the capacity to make decisions that are right for them. Your role is to help them access that resourcefulness — not replace it.
- 2. The coach does not advise:** The coach's role is to support the person to make their own decisions. Instead of offering solutions, you ask questions that help the person think more clearly.
- 3. The agenda belongs to the individual:** They decide what matters, what they want to explore, and what they hope to achieve.
- 4. Coaching is non-directive:** You do not lead the conversation toward your own ideas or assumptions. You follow their thinking, not your own.
- 5. Coaching is about change and action:** The purpose is to support movement, even small steps, toward something the person wants to shift or understand.

What Coaching Is Not

To keep coaching safe, boundaried, and empowering, it is helpful to be clear about what it *isn't*. Coaching is not:

- counselling or therapy
- giving advice or instructions
- rescuing or fixing
- telling someone what they 'should' do
- taking responsibility for their choices
- a space for you to solve problems on their behalf

Coaching is also not a friendship, although it may feel warm and supportive. It is a purposeful, structured conversation with a clear intention: to help someone think for themselves.

The Power of Non-Directive Support

When someone is given space to think without interruption, judgement or advice, something shifts. They begin to:

- hear themselves more clearly
- notice what matters
- see new possibilities
- trust their own judgement
- take ownership of their next steps.

A gentle example of non-directive support might be: Instead of saying, *'You should talk to them about it'*, you might say, *'What feels important for you in this situation?'*

This small shift keeps the ownership with the other person and invites them to explore their own thinking.

This is why coaching is so effective in schools, community settings, youth work, peer support, and volunteer roles. It restores voice and strengthens confidence.

Coaching skills help you create emotionally safe conversations. They offer the opportunity to support others without becoming overwhelmed and help avoid over-responsibility; encouraging independence rather than dependence. These skills can strengthen confidence and voice and help people identify their own solutions.

They are especially powerful for people who have been marginalised or whose experiences have taught them that their voice does not matter. Coaching helps restore that voice.

Reflection Activity: Your Natural Helping Style *Take a moment to reflect on how you usually support others.*

When someone comes to you with a problem, what do you tend to do first?
☐ Offer reassurance? ☐ Give advice? ☐ Ask questions? ☐ Try to fix it? ☐ Listen quietly?

What feels most natural to you?
What feels more challenging?
What might you want to strengthen during this course?

This reflection will help you notice your starting point as you begin developing coaching skills.

Advice vs Curiosity

Below are some common ‘helping’ responses. Rewrite each one as a *curious, open question* instead of advice.

Advice giving response	Rewrite as a curious question
<i>You should talk to them about it.</i>	
<i>Why don't you just try...?</i>	
<i>I think you need to be more confident.</i>	
<i>If I were you, I'd...</i>	

Reflection

How does it feel to shift from advice to curiosity?

What changes in the tone of the conversation?

Looking Ahead

In the next session, we will explore the foundation of every empowering conversation - how to build trust, safety, and rapport. You will learn how to create the conditions where people feel able to think openly, reflect honestly, and explore possibilities without fear of judgement.