

Guiding Questions for *The Art of Coaching*

Elena Aguilar



© Elena Aguilar. *The Art of Coaching: Effective Strategies for School Transformation*.
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INTRODUCTION

1. What is your definition of coaching? How do you describe it?
2. Have you ever been coached? If so, describe that experience.
3. What would a transformed education system look like to you?
4. Which inequities do you see in your education context? How do you describe them?
5. If you work exclusively as a coach (if that's your title!), what do you hope to get from this book?
6. If your work is not as a full-time coach, then what do you hope to get from this book?



CHAPTER ONE

1. How do your beliefs about school change and transformation compare with the author's?
2. What do you think makes coaching a potentially powerful way of learning?
3. On pages 8 to 9, the author summarizes the Annenberg Foundation's research on coaching. Which pieces of this research are compelling to you?
4. In the section titled, "The Necessary Conditions," the author shares her thoughts on the conditions necessary for coaching to be effective. What do you agree or disagree with? What might she be missing in her assessment?
5. What comes up for you in the section "Speaking of Race" (pp. 14–15)? What do you think about the "three truths" that the author posits?



CHAPTER TWO

1. Which ideas are most useful to you—given your position—in this chapter?
2. Which ideas can you apply to your work context?
3. What kind of coaching—facilitative or directive—is most comfortable for you to do? If you've been coached, what kind of coaching (facilitative or directive) did you receive? How did you feel about that kind of coaching? How did it work for you?
4. What might be challenging for you about delivering facilitative coaching?
5. What might be challenging for you about delivering directive coaching?
6. How is the model of transformational coaching that the author presents different to other models of coaching you've experienced?
7. Which ideas resonate with you in the author's definition of transformational coaching?
8. What questions come up for you about transformational coaching?
9. What is your vision or mission for yourself in your work?



CHAPTER THREE

1. Describe a belief you held as a child or young adult that you no longer hold. How did that belief change?
2. Do you think you might have some beliefs about your work (about teachers, administrators, students, and so on) that might not serve you or the communities you support? Can you identify those beliefs and describe them?
3. What's your response to the author's statement that beliefs are "just mental creations"?
4. What did you learn by reading about the Ladder of Inference? How do you think the concept of the Ladder of Inference could help you in your work? What questions do you have about the Ladder of Inference?
5. Do the core values exercise that's available on the author's website. What are your core values?
6. Do you think you might have any beliefs that conflict with core values? If you suspect this might be so, which beliefs conflict?
7. Write your own coaching manifesto or name and describe your beliefs about coaching and your work.



CHAPTER FOUR

1. Of the theories that are reviewed in this chapter—adult learning, emotional intelligence, systems thinking, change management, systemic oppression, and inquiry thinking—which ones are you already familiar with? How has knowledge of that theory helped you in your work so far?
2. What do you see as the potential for working with the coaching lenses? How do you think these could help you in your work?
3. Which of the lenses feels most understandable and usable? Which ones do you want to learn more about?
4. Write about a coaching situation in which you're struggling or with which you struggled the past. Now select a few lenses and think about the situation through those lenses. Ask yourself some of the questions associated with that lens. What new insights do you get about this situation?
5. In Table 4.1, the author shares her “Coaching Conversation: Debrief Plan” that's based on the lenses. How did the conversation that she had with the teacher (described on pages 66 to 69) match up to the plan? What do you think was the impact of having created the plan?
6. Which feelings came up for you when reading and reflecting on this chapter? What memories and thoughts came to mind?



CHAPTER FIVE

1. What helps you trust another person in your workplace? Which kinds of actions enable you to build trust in another and which kinds of actions erode your trust in others?
2. Of the “Ten Steps to Building Trust,” which ones do you already do? Which are new ideas that you’d like to try?
3. Of the activities named that help build trust, which ones might be most challenging to do? How can you prepare yourself for that challenge?
4. Think about a client you’re coaching. What indicators do you have that he or she trusts you? How might you explore this client’s levels of trust?
5. If you’ve coached someone and trust has broken down, what do you think led to that breakdown? What was your role in it? In retrospect, can you see some things you might have done to repair trust?
6. How might having a coaching agreement support your work? What might the conversation sound like when you introduce this idea to a client?



CHAPTER SIX

1. How does the author's farming metaphor for coaching that opens the chapter help you think about your work? What other metaphors could represent coaching for you?
2. What might be challenging for you about doing the kind of exploration discussed in this chapter?
3. What do you think would be the benefits of doing the kind of exploration discussed in this chapter?
4. Of the ten steps in exploration, which ones have you done? Which would you like to try?
5. What other questions could you ask a client during the exploration stage?
6. Take the Myer-Briggs Type Indicator test. What did you learn about yourself from doing this? How might this help you when coaching a client?
7. Which kinds of "fires" do you see in the school(s) in which you coach?
8. Respond to a few of the questions on the "Coach Reflection: Stage of Exploration" (p. 117). How might you use this self-awareness when coaching?



CHAPTER SEVEN

1. How has your coaching work been directed or guided? How does this differ from the author's suggestions for creating a work plan?
2. How do you think a work plan might help in your work?
3. Of the ten steps to developing a work plan, which ones might be the most challenging?
4. Think of one client you're coaching and review step five, "break down the learning." How could you incorporate these ideas into the work you're doing with this client?
5. What do you think might be some challenges to developing and using a work plan?
6. Which component of a work plan might be most impactful in the coaching you do?



CHAPTER EIGHT

1. What do you know about yourself as a listener? What do you feel are your strengths as a listener and what are your areas for growth?
2. How do you communicate nonverbally and verbally that you're listening to someone else? What do you do or say to show that you're listening?
3. What thoughts and feelings come up for you around silence? How do you feel when you're sitting in silence with another person?
4. How comfortable do you feel asking probing questions? What feels challenging about asking probing questions?
5. Which kinds of questions feel most comfortable for you to ask?



CHAPTER NINE

1. McNeil and Klink write, “The process of coaching requires both backbone and compassion.” What does this mean to you? How does this apply to your work?
2. What’s an image that might represent facilitative coaching for you?
3. Think of a client for whom the cathartic approach might be helpful. What makes you think this could be an effective approach to take? How do you think your client might react?
4. What might be hard for you about using the cathartic approach?
5. Of the three facilitative stances—cathartic, catalytic, and supportive—which stance feels most comfortable to use?
6. Which stance do you think would be most effective if a coach used it with you?
7. Which of the facilitative stances do you think you use most often in your coaching? Which stance might be your default stance? (We all have default stances!)
8. Which facilitative stance might you want to practice using more? Why?



CHAPTER TEN

1. What kinds of coaching activities have you done in the past? Of those mentioned in this chapter, which might you like to try?
2. Think of someone you've coached with whom you've been stuck—he or she just wasn't making the progress you'd hoped to see. Consider the ideas in "Scaffolding the Learning." Is it possible that you were coaching outside of his or her ZPD? What might indicate that you were working outside of his or her ZPD?
3. Think of a client you're working with who is making steady progress. Are there any activities in this chapter that might help this client progress even farther? Which ones might you suggest to your client?
4. Respond to some of the questions in Exhibit 10.1 "Question Stems to Explore Symbolic Thinking." What did you learn about yourself by answering these questions?



CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. Have you ever had any mental models that might have held you back? How did you shift those?
2. Which kinds of “rut stories” do you hear most often in your work context?
3. Think of a rut story that you recently heard. Which questions might you ask to help your client transform this into a river story?
4. Of the coaching approaches discussed in this chapter (confrontational, informative, and prescriptive), which one do you think you most often use? What makes you feel comfortable about using that approach?
5. Of the coaching approaches discussed in this chapter (confrontational, informative, and prescriptive), which one feels the hardest to use? What makes it feel challenging?
6. Can you identify any of the institutional mind-sets you hear in your work context? Can you see an impact on stakeholders when some people hold this mental model?



CHAPTER TWELVE

1. Of the activities described in this chapter, which ones have you used in your work? Which ones would you like to try?
2. Think of a time when you've received feedback on your work. How did the experience compare to the suggestions for feedback offered on pages 215 to 217?
3. What is challenging for you about doing observations and giving feedback? How might those challenges be mitigated by the suggestions in this chapter?
4. Think about a client you're working with who has articulated some learning goals for your work together. Which of the activities in this chapter, or in Chapter Ten, might help him or her make progress toward goals?



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. What are the greatest differences between your weekly schedule and the one presented on page 233?
2. Of the different areas in which a coach can work (described on page 232), in which area would you like to spend more time? How might dedicating more time to that area help your coaching?
3. Think about an upcoming meeting you have with a client and then use the planning tool on page 235 to prepare for it. Answer any or all of the questions. What did you learn from planning for this session?
4. What helps you feel grounded and calm before coaching? What else could you try to help yourself get internally prepared for coaching?
5. Of the elements described in the “Arc of a Coaching Conversation” (page 238), which ones do you already do? Which component might you like to try?
6. How do you feel when clients express emotions during coaching sessions? Which strategies do you use to help them manage their emotions? Which strategies do you use to manage your own emotions about their emotions?
7. Of the ideas presented in this chapter, which ones would you like to try incorporating into your practice? Select two and try them for a couple weeks and see what happens.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1. How might you use any of the ideas presented in this chapter in your work?
2. How do you reflect on your work with your clients? How do you engage them in this reflection?



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1. How do you develop your skills as a coach? How would you describe your professional development?
2. Of the ideas in this chapter, which ones would you like to try in order to develop your practice?
3. Of the rubric domains described on the transformational coaching rubric, in which do you feel you excel? What are your strengths?
4. Next time you're in conversations with a client, or with anyone, listen to your own listening. What do you notice?
5. After a coaching conversation, use Exhibit 15.3, "Coach's Documentation and Reflection Log." What did you learn from responding to these prompts?
6. Who else might you be able to collaborate with on your own professional learning? How might you go about building your own community of practitioners to learn with?



CONCLUSION

1. Which of the ideas discussed in the conclusion resonate with you?
2. How do you think about “The Road Ahead”?
3. Who are your “fearless ancestors” (p. 290) who have persevered through adversity?
4. Who inspires you in your work?