

The IDEA Coaching Pathway: Coaching the Person (instead of just the problem)

By Terry B. Walling



One of the key differences between “The IDEA Pathway” and other coaching models is the blend between Coaching and Mentoring. “Coaching pulls things out. Mentoring puts things in.” When coaching others, the discussion often comes to a point when you realize that you may have some insights or observations that would be helpful for this person to hear. “The IDEA model still affirms conventional coaching wisdom, which holds that most answers are already in the coachee and it’s the coach’s job to pull them out. But the IDEA model creates space for coaches to sensitively share what they sense God doing and to offer what has been entrusted to them when the time is right.”

As Christians, we want to help those we coach to overcome problems. But each person’s greater need is to be sensitive to the work that God is wanting to do inside of us. Therefore, in The IDEA Pathway “we coach the person and work the problem. We don’t coach the problem and work the person.”

The IDEA Pathway gives an excellent way to help others grow in their walk with Christ and develop leaders.

Below are the nuts and bolts of The IDEA Pathway.

There are 4 postures that help a coach “minister the person more than addressing the problem”.

POSTURE #1: SOVEREIGN MINDSET

GOD OFTEN USES THE PRESENTING ISSUE TO SURFACE THE REAL ISSUE

The question isn't whether God is at work; the question is: what is God at work doing? And the even greater question is: do we, God's people, have the courage to join God's work?

POSTURE #2: COACHING + MENTORING

BREAKTHROUGH COMES THROUGH COACHING WITH PERIODIC MENTORING

“Many of those who approach a coach are wanting the input of the coach (i.e., they want mentoring). It's helpful not to jump automatically to mentoring and the “telling” mode, but instead to offer input while maintaining a coaching posture. At strategic moments in the conversation, coaches can switch “hats” to that of a mentor, advisor, or spiritual guide, and then return to a coaching posture.” Staying in the coaching mode the majority of the time allows for the coachee to discover problems and solutions. “If advice, counsel, and/or new information are offered too soon in the conversation, those being coached are robbed of the power of discovery and ownership of the issue. However, if the mentoring is offered at the right time, it's possible to see the conversation move forward with the coachee still setting the agenda and taking responsibility for the issue.”

POSTURE #3: THE POWER OF ALIGNMENT

GOD IS ALREADY AT WORK, SO COACHING IS ABOUT ALIGNING WITH GOD'S WORK

The prize of surrender is revelation.

POSTURE #4: THE IMPACT OF DISCOVERY

GOD USES THE COACHING RELATIONSHIP TO DEEPEN OWNERSHIP OF HIS WORK

“Coaches ask questions to draw out assumptions, identify motivations, surface paradigms, and reveal self-limiting beliefs...The IDEA Coaching Pathway intentionally focuses the early efforts of the coaching conversation on the importance of discovery. More than just gaining an awareness of the issues, the early questions and looking at the topic from a diversity of angles promotes discovery and future ownership of the change that will be needed.” If people can *articulate their thoughts* they can then *own the steps* to overcome the problem. If they can't articulate the issues, they are less likely to take ownership of solving the problem.

The IDEA Pathway (4 stepping stones. Each stone has 2 parts.):

1. IDENTIFY

~Identify with the person:

“Identifying with the person is a discipline of valuing a person enough to see the world from his or her perspective... Coachees will surface a variety of things related to lives and their current circumstances. These life situations may not be, in the end, the topic of the coaching conversation, but they’re invaluable for the coach to know as background for the issues that will be discussed.”

Example Questions:

- “How have you been?”
- How are things?
- How’s work? Home? Kids? Church? Ministry?
- What are some challenges right now?”

~Clarify the core desire:

“What distinguishes a helpful time of dialogue and an effective coaching conversation is gaining clarity on the outcome for that conversation early on.”

The end result that you agree on should:

Be *specific* (you know what you are going after)

Be *intelligible* (you know when you have accomplished the goal)

Be *time-sensitive* (you can achieve the goal in the time allotted)

Example Questions:

- “What would be most helpful to talk about in our time together?”
- What’s a core issue that you would like to go after in our time?
- What would be most helpful for us to address?
- What could we talk about today that would make the most difference in your journey or situation right now?”

2. DISCOVER

~Uncover the backstory

“To uncover the story behind the story, expanding questions that are open, pure, empathetic, and probing in nature are required.”

Example Questions:

- “Where would you like to start?”
- What issues do you feel would be most helpful to talk about as we begin to explore this issue?

- Talk about what you see as the keys related to this core issue we are trying to address. What are the circumstances that are contributing to this?
- What do you see to be some of the other factors that are driving this?
- What are the factors you have bumped into in the past as this has surfaced?"

~Surface the challenges

“Good coaching challenges assumptions and often helps reveal self-limiting beliefs...One of the core gifts that the coach brings to the conversation is helping the coachee synthesize their insights into points of challenges or obstacles...How God is at work may be a blind spot to the coachee.”

Example Questions:

- “When you’ve gotten here before, what have been some of your responses?
- As you listen to yourself, what are you hearing to be your significant challenges?
- What do you see to be the key obstacles that are holding you back?
- What could move you and this situation forward?
- What haven’t we talked about that’s important?
- What have others said to you in terms of being key to this issue?”

3. EVALUATE

~Discern the Spirit’s leading

“For coaches, it’s critical to maintain a listening posture to what the Spirit may be saying and doing. But what the coachee senses God is doing is most important. If feedback by the coach is needed, it’s important that the coach “go slow” with the sharing. Spiritual feedback should be done succinctly, in humility, and offered as a “potential way” God may be at work.”

Example Questions:

- “How do you see God at work in all of this?
- What are you hearing in terms of God’s desires for you in all of this?
- What issue of character might this be touching?
- How does all of this fit with what you see God doing shaping you? Your leadership?
- Talk about how God might be using this to clarify your influence as a leader.
- What areas might this be touching in regards to struggles or wounding?”

~Pinpoint the issue

“Self-evaluation is always the best form of feedback. Allowing the coachee to have “first crack” at what needs to be addressed, and giving themselves their own input, is by far the most beneficial way for feedback to occur...Premature

feedback can risk robbing the individual of ownership of the issue. Rightly timed feedback can lead to the desired breakthrough.”

How to give feedback:

“The coach first gains permission to provide feedback. They take off the coach hat and put on the mentor/advisor hat. In giving feedback, three keys should be kept in mind:

- Be specific
- Use concrete examples to help illustrate
- Never try to convince, but rather offer information for consideration”

Returning to Coaching:

“The most important moment in the giving of feedback comes in making sure the coach returns to the coaching posture—putting the coaching hat back on signals the need to process the information shared, and helps the individual being coached to have the freedom to process the relevance of the feedback.”

Example Questions:

- “What are you hearing in all of this?”
- If you were to sum up our discussion, what would you say is the issue that you need to address?
- How would you evaluate what you need to do?
- If you were to pinpoint the problem or issue, what do you think it is?
- Of all that you could address, what do you think is the most important for you to go after?”

4. ACT

~Chart the next steps

“Coaching is about action, not just reflection...It’s crucial that the action steps come from the coachee. Authorship of action is tied to ownership of action.”

“**SMART** action steps are often the first baby-steps to long-term change.

- *Strategic*: It’s a behavior goal that addresses the jugular issue
- *Measurable*: It’s a tangible behavior goal that when it is achieved in can be recognized
- *Achievable*: It has the potential of being accomplished in a reasonable period of time
- *Relevant*: It’s a behavior goal that directly relates to the issue that needs to be addressed
- *Time-framed*: It has a deadline and offers accountability in terms of completion”

Example Questions:

- “What actions do you feel you need to take to move this issue forward?”
- Which one of two steps do you feel would be most strategic in addressing the issue?
- Are these goals achievable given your current situation and time availability?
- In what way are these goals tied to helping us address what we need to go after?
- How will you know when you are working against this step?”

~Affirm the takeaways

“The value of naming the takeaway also helps the coach and coachee be able to recognize the growing self-awareness occurring within the individual.”

Example Questions:

- “What is one question that someone can ask you to help you stay on track?”
- How can I (or others) best help you stay accountable for your action steps?
- What’s one takeaway from our time together today?
- What was your highlight from our time together?
- What part of our coaching conversation was most important to you and for you today?”

COACHING AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

“Coaching is about facilitating discovery rather than delivering content.”

“Why do so many illuminating experiences such as retreats, conferences, and powerful talks or sermons often dissolve with little life change? Usually it’s because of the lack of alongside, relational support to help turn resistance and realities into ongoing, new behavior.” As we seek to develop others, one of the greatest ways we can help is by coming alongside and giving relational support."

“Four personal, leadership development moments that occur in the lives of all Christ-followers.” (Look for these!)

1. TRANSITIONS:

God often brings those in transition to the coaching relationship.

“A Christ-follower knows that they cannot go back to where they were, but they are not sure which way forward is best.”

“Transitions do come to an end. Once they end most people typically move on to what’s next. They take with them whatever they were able to process and gain.”

How to coach through transition:

- “In IDENTIFY, the coach can normalize many of the emotions of a transition.
- In DISCOVER, the coachee has a safe place to unpack both the struggles and challenges of transition.
- In EVALUATION, the coach and coachee can look to what the Spirit is seeking to reveal and teach.
- In ACT, the coach can help the coachee make sure they are staying present and processing all that is occurring, as opposed to racing ahead.”

2. AWAKENING: CALLING

God uses coaching to help Christ-followers clarify their life calling.

“Calling is about life direction. It occurs in each of our lives to summon us not to vocational ministry, but to a life of purpose and value much deeper than a job or title...Calling is about clarifying what’s important (core values), what we desire from our relationship with God (being), and what God desires from our lives (doing).”

How to coach people to clarify their calling:

- “In IDENTIFY, a coach helps surface the issues of day-to-day life, purpose and meaning.
- In DISCOVER, the coach can help a coachee uncover the work God has been doing in past development to point to issues of calling.
- In EVALUATION, the coach and coachee seek to discern God’s desires and His imprint on the individual’s influence.
- In ACT, the coachee can begin to chart next steps based upon the new clarity and set a new course direction.”

3. DECIDING: CONTRIBUTION

God uses coaching to help us decide when to say no in order to say yes.

“Contribution is about bringing clarity to God’s shaping work by clarifying issues of role, core functions, and intentional choices that move us closer to the good works that God authored before time began (Ephesians 2:10).”

“Christ-followers need the safe place of a coaching relationship to say “no” to the good in order to say “yes” to the best.”

How to coach people to identify their unique contribution:

- In IDENTIFY, a coach hears about the demands, the never-ending tasks, and the weight of responsibilities.
- In DISCOVER, the unfolding of the story reveals the deep longings for something more and the challenge of deciding what will not get done each day.
- In EVALUATION, the coach and coachee seek to determine God’s best: of all the things that could be done, what does God want, and what should be done?
- In ACT, the coachee authors tangible steps that move beyond calling into unique contribution.

4. FINISHING: CONVERGENCE

How to coach people to discover what has been entrusted to them and how to and best pass on their insights and skills to others.

- “In IDENTIFY, a coach hears about the desires and struggles of knowing how to have influence without position.
- In DISCOVER, backstory lessons begin to emerge that point to insights and deposits that God has made into a life.
- In EVALUATION, the coach and coachee seek to determine what needs to be entrusted to others, as well as who and how the empowerment needs to occur.
- In ACT the coachee charts the steps, deciding to live intentionally for Christ to the end, and set in motion ways to outlive one’s days.”

UTILIZING THE IDEA COACHING PATHWAY

This method of coaching can be used in a variety of conversations ranging from 10 minutes to 1 hour, depending on the time available and the topic being discussed.