

COACHING FOR SOP

SUMMARY

Coaching promotes desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the social worker, making a positive impact on the organization, children and families. (Cox, Bachikirova, & Clutterbuck, 2010).

SUPERVISOR'S ROLE

- Coaching is a framework for supervision in general; a style wherein supervisors ask thoughtful questions and encourage learning and critical thinking
- A supervisor's ability to ask powerful questions when working through challenges (as opposed to providing concrete answers) is a key hallmark of coaching.

SKILLS-BASED COACHING MODEL

- The model can be used by supervisors to help social work practitioners integrate new learnings into practice. It includes
 - Joint Planning* (the "coaching conversation") during which the coach and learner have a thoughtful conversation and come up with goals and a plan for integration.
 - The worker must at some point *demonstrate* her/his use of the new skills with a skilled practitioner (or his/her supervisor/coach) watching so as to
 - reflect on their use of the new skill, and then
 - have a thoughtful, *reflective* conversation and receive *feedback*.

COACHING QUESTIONS TO PROVOKE THINKING

- Questions like the ones below are designed to elicit thoughtful responses when working through complexity and challenges. Remember, if the challenge is not technical, asking a good question in lieu of giving the answer is advisable!
 - What did you learn (from the class, experience, etc.)?
 - How would someone you admire deal with this situation?
 - What is the most challenging part of this for you?
 - Give me two options.
 - Can you think of four different ways of tackling this situation?

SETTING GOALS

- As Antoine de Saint-Exupéry said, "a goal without a plan is just a wish."
- If a worker returns from an SOP class and wants to integrate new learning into practice, they must do some planning.
- Spend time with your worker talking about what they learned and what they want to do differently as a result of the class. What are they not doing that they want to do?

- Try asking following questions when setting goals:
 - What did you learn from class that you would like to use?
 - What's the first step? Second? Third?
 - What would be a milestone on the way?
 - What do you need to do right now to radically increase the chance of success?

A WORD ABOUT ADVICE

- The lure of giving advice in an effort to be helpful is strong; however, advice does not allow the learner to explore their own solutions, and does not build critical thinking skills.
- Here are some tips for when to utilize coaching instead of giving advice/the answer:
 - Have you already helped the social worker with the same scenario more than one time? If yes, coach!
 - Has the social worker attended a class or other learning event? If yes, coach!
 - Is this an adaptive challenge (one that doesn't have a concrete answer)? If yes, coach!
- The best response to a worker saying, "I don't know," is "Pretend like you do," and then let your worker answer the original question.

TRY ON THE "SCARF" MODEL

- Learning SOP practices and strategies, like learning anything new, requires staff to take risks. When stakes are high and stress levels match, the supervisor can help create a learning environment by utilizing the SCARF model (Rock, 2008).
- The SCARF domains describe the social threats and rewards that are particularly impactful on behavior, attitudes and even cognition. The five domains are: 1) Status, 2) Certainty, 3) Autonomy, 4) Relatedness, and 5) Fairness.
- Tips for mitigating a threat response:
 - Share the SCARF model with your staff so that it can be used to predict possible future responses, regulate real-time responses and explain past responses.
 - Own your ability to "SCARF" staff you supervise. Even the most supportive leaders have the ability to send staff into a status threat response simply by doing even the most innocuous of things. The biggest mistake a supervisor can make is believing they won't SCARF their staff.

REFERENCES

Cox, E., Bachikirova, T., & Clutterbuck, D. (2010). *The complete handbook of coaching*. London: Sage

Rock, D. (2008). SCARF: A Brain-based Model for Collaborating with and Influencing Others. *NeuroLeadership Journal* 1-1.