

Getting in the Coach's Mind-Set

Coaching demands your empathy, self-awareness, and self-discipline. Run through this list briefly before each coaching session to get yourself into the right mental space to engage productively with your employee.

CLEAR YOUR MIND. Shut down your email and your phone. Take some deep breaths to ensure that you will be fully present.

RETURN TO YOUR LAST CONVERSATION. Review your notes from the last meeting with your direct report to reconnect with her situation and what you're working on together.

PREPARE TO BE CONSTRUCTIVE. Think about a friendly conversation you can lead with to connect. Remember to maintain eye contact and an open posture. Allow time for the other person to think and speak—don't interrupt.

PREPARE TO BE NEGATIVE, IF YOU MUST. If you have difficult feedback to give, think about how you will deliver it. Avoid talking about your employee's motivations or intentions. Focus on future effort: Can you suggest specific actions to improve performance?

REFLECT AND SYNTHESIZE. Prepare to mirror what your employee says, without agreeing or disagreeing. Keep the following phrases top of mind:

- "I hear what you're saying."
- "I'm following you. Could you say more?"
- "You seem worried about ..."
- "It sounds like your main concern is ..."
- "These seem to be your main points ... Is that right?"

KEEP YOUR EMOTIONS IN CHECK. It's normal to feel frustration, anger, and doubt when you're watching someone grow, but you must manage these feelings privately. Remember to be patient while your employee is learning.

GET YOUR AGENDA STRAIGHT. Before you start the coaching session, focus your mind one last time on your top priorities for this meeting (see **Employee's Follow-Up Meeting Agenda** or the **Coaching Plan**).