



## **A Potential Coaching Model for Staff and Student Emotional Well-Being**

### ***What is Coaching?***

A Coach is a facilitator, a guide and a support. Coaching offers individuals and/or groups the opportunity to externally mull over thoughts and processes in order to reflect on, problem solve and/or assimilate ideas. It is an opportunity to develop new learning about themselves and others and process the everyday challenge if working in a tough environment, i.e. a school.

### ***Coaching for Well-Being***

In our current society, trauma is common. Trauma is a response to any event/s encountered as an out of control, frightening experience that disconnects us from all sense of resourcefulness, safety, coping and/or love (*Tara Brach, 2011*)

Trauma is not an event itself, but an emotional response to an overwhelmingly painful and stressful event where there was no-one there to help you with what was happening at the time (*Margot Sunderland, 2016*)

If we are not supported and enabled to work with trauma, we encounter what is known as *Secondary Trauma*. This is what is encountered by working with individuals who have been repeatedly exposed to first hand trauma.

### ***Coaching v Mentoring***

In some contexts coaching and mentoring are used almost as interchangeable terms. However, there are certain key differences. Mentoring is a structured, sustained process for supporting professional learners through development. Mentoring is usually carried out by an expert or someone senior to the mentee.

Coaching is a structured, sustained process for enabling self-reflection and the development of a specific aspect of an individual or an individuals practice. It is a framework of support to enable a person to generate knowledge and problem solve from within their own skillset.

### ***What would it/could it look like?***

- Coaching sessions can be individual or small groups (class teams?)
- The focus of a coaching session is usually selected by the coachee.
- It's purpose is the exploration of a strategy/ difficulty. This may be tensions, tricky children, (or parents or colleagues) new processes, integration of ideas~ anything that could impact on relationships and wellbeing for adult or child.
- Coaches are not in any position of line management or seniority. Coaches support and facilitate the exploration of a process from an impartial point of view
- The role of the coach is to provide questions for clarification, guidance, challenge of limiting beliefs and support the coachee to reflect and problem solve.

### ***Why do I need it?/ Do I have to?***

Primarily, coaching is about supporting staff well being. It is the protection of secondary trauma for dedicated individuals who work in challenging and traumatic environments. It is an opportunity to reflect. 'Me time' if you like. Dedicated time to offload, process and think about anything that might be causing challenge. An opportunity to 'let stuff go' rather than internalise and/or take home anxieties and issues.

Coaching should not be mandatory.

### ***How long and how often would a session be?***

About 45minutes to an hour, monthly, termly or as required

### ***Am I marked, graded or reported on?***

No, it is not about performance, rather a focus on well-being

Aside from the usual reporting for safeguarding reasons, content of every coaching session should be kept confidential. Coachees will be supported to reflect on every session and develop personal actions for themselves. There is no accountability to the conversations, although themes of sessions would be reported in a confidential manner to senior leaders for consideration. (e.g. lots of people are talking about being exhausted/ the challenge of the playground etc.)

### ***Yes, but is this about learning? What's the point?***

Yes, this is about learning, and sustainability for staff and pupils. The Body holds the Score (Van Der Kolk, 2009). If we are suffering stress, our bodies as well as our minds hold onto it. As we ruminate, we generate a greater load of cortisol in our bodies, thus impacting our immune systems and making us unwell. Over time, this build up is toxic to our bodies and brains. We are unable to think clearly, behave irrationally and ultimately burn out.

Given opportunity to talk to someone who will simply listen, research shows a reduction in the impact of stress by up to 35% (Sunderland, 2016). This is even before we are supported to problem-solve and process. By talking to someone, we can generate positive neurochemicals which counteract the impact of stress on the brain and body, and generate a whole list of benefits including making us feel happier, more connected, laughter, better mental clarity making us more efficient, effective and able to tolerate more stress. Thus, how we are then impacts on who we are with. Happier teachers, means happier children. Happier children, leads to better learning.

### ***So what could it look like in my school?***

Three possible routes/ options are:

- External coach coaches all staff/teams~ regularity to suit you, visiting to coach teams and/or individuals. This would establish purpose, structure and process, but is possibly not a long term sustainable model)
- Development of an internal coaching model~ Senior leaders are coached by external coach, (for however long a period) and in turn supported to coach their colleagues internally.
- No external coaching (or limited senior leaders) Support provided to develop policy and procedures for coaching at the school. Setting up of an internal model, overseen by an experienced coach.

*Coral Harper*

*Cwtch Consulting*

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