

How coaching can help manage personal wellbeing

In this new column, education coaches explain how different coaching techniques could help teaching professionals tackle an issue

WHAT IS COACHING?

Coaching involves two people: the coach and the coachee. It is a confidential, supportive, thinking space that allows the coachee to articulate how things really are for them. The coach helps the coachee explore possible solutions and ways forward that may be helpful. It's not for the coach to tell someone what to do, offer advice or try to solve something for the coachee.

Coaching can support teaching professionals in their roles as it offers the space and time for them to be really listened to, supported and challenged in their thinking and to help find solutions that work for them. In some ways it's about hearing themselves think things out loud or in the words of Charles Handy: "How do I know what I am thinking till I hear myself say it?"

How can coaching help teaching professionals manage their personal wellbeing?

Jacqueline Morley

A good starting point for a coach to open up a conversation is scaling, e.g. on a scale of one to 10... 10 representing 'the best for you' and one the opposite of that. Scaling helps distil very complex information into a reference point for discussion. Whatever number the coachee has chosen, it is their meaning that a coach helps to explore.

Some questions coaches might ask are:

- Explore first 'on a scale of one to 10, how healthy is your work/life balance right now?'
- How did you arrive at this number?
- Where would you like it to be? (This allows exploration of the possible gap between where the coachee feels they are now and the aspiration for where they would like it to be).
- Where is the best it has been? (This question helps explore strategies and experiences that enabled this).
- Where is the worst it has been?

(This allows the coachee to explore how this improved to where they are now).

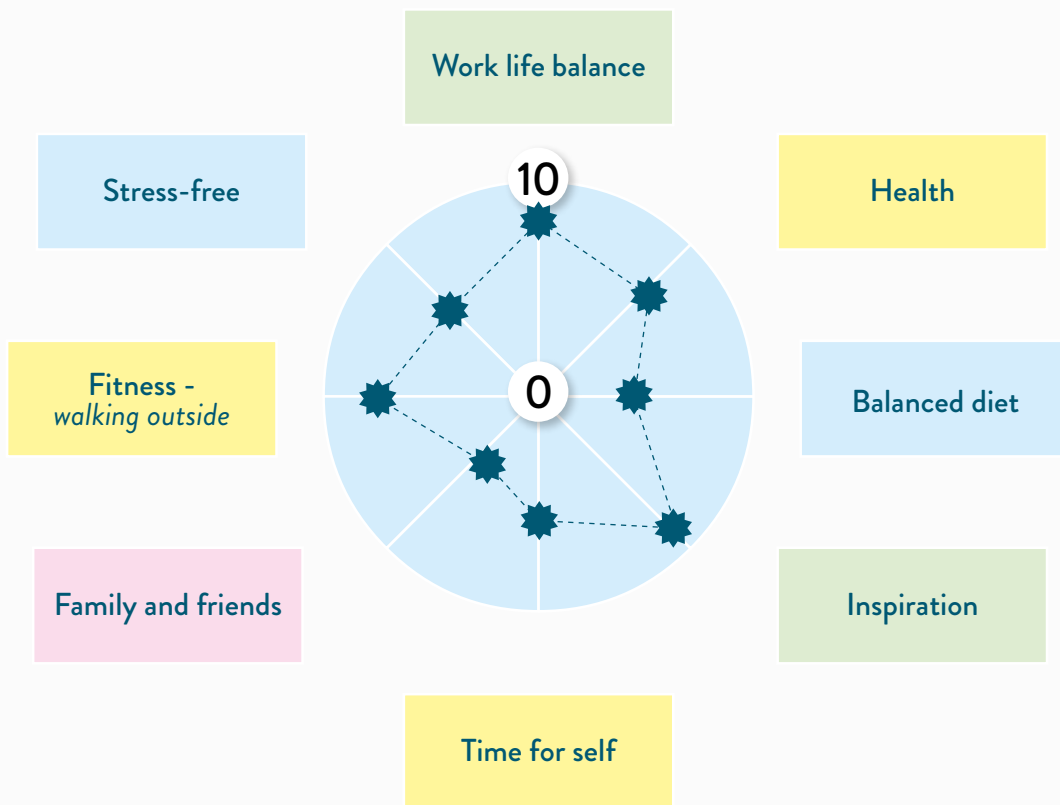
The coach can then start to tease out what the coachee feels is key to their wellbeing. Is it their work/life balance, health, etc. A coaching wheel is a great way to do this and it can also be used to self-coach. Ask the coachee to plot where they are in relation to each of these areas. Coaches can open up the conversation by asking:

- What do you notice?
- What are big issues/questions arising?
- What's working well?
- What do you need to develop/focus on?
- What are the challenges or barriers for you?
- Where would you like to be in six months?
- Identify one or two key action points for you
- Who and what can support you?

Abi Adam:

For me, coaching is about facilitating success and feelings of being successful. Feeling successful can lead to feelings of wellbeing. As

The coaching wheel:



coaches, as long as there are no presenting issues of serious anxiety, depression, risk or other possible mental health issues - which the coach would need to follow established protocols for - it would be a great place to start with what the coachee understands by their wellbeing and what is their definition of success. It can be a game-changing question to ask someone what this means for them. As a coaching culture expands, I believe that professionals will be better placed to outline their own definition of success and emphasise wellbeing for teachers.

I am passionate about promoting self-care for teachers. Acknowledging that we are exposed to significant emotional challenges is important for our wellbeing. We need to try to have

“Start with what the coachee understands by their wellbeing and definition of success”

an appropriate work-life balance, otherwise we risk ‘burning out.’ The current climate of uncertainty and challenging circumstances means that coaches must bring the work of how to deal with dilemmas and live with uncertainty into the foreground. More and more teachers and leaders are being trained in Mental Health First Aid and are tuning into the idea that it is part of a line manager’s role to be aware of the wellbeing of their staff. So, in addition to asking, ‘What do success and wellbeing look like for you?’ I would also be curious to discuss with the coachee if they are making time for themselves, scheduling rewards for themselves and taking time to deal with niggling negative thoughts. Quality coaching conversations can and do make such a difference.

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION FOR OUR COACHES?

Send this to teachingscotland@gtc.org.uk. Thanks to the Professional Update specialists who set our first question.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jacqueline Morley is Senior Education Officer at GTC Scotland.

Coaching has been an ongoing, essential part of her work and professional learning for many years. Jacqueline’s enquiry always revolves round coaching conversations as an enabler to professional learning and development as professionals.



Abi Adam has more than 20 years’ experience in education. Abi is Depute Headteacher at Broxburn Academy in West Lothian and delivers the West Lothian Introduction to Leadership Programme and the Coaching for Success programme to staff in the West Lothian region.

