

## **Coaching vs. Teaching or Advising**

Adapted from the book, Extraordinary Golf by Fred Shoemaker

The first step to real improvement is increased awareness of what you are currently doing – helping the student achieve that awareness is the coach's primary role. The genius resides in the student not the coach. The coach's primary job is to help the student become aware that genius and remove the barriers that hinder its expression. A successful coaching session ends with the student trusting him or herself more than the coach.

The ideal coach acts as a clear, non-judgmental mirror that reflects what really happens in the student's efforts. Rather than teaching or advising which suggests that the coach shows you something you didn't know, he or she coaches you to help you bring out and strengthen the innate knowledge that you already have. A coach believes in the learning abilities of the student and is committed that they get the most out of those abilities.

A coach may guide, explain, demonstrate, focus, encourage and show new possibilities but the heart of the coaching interaction is providing feedback that will help them develop an awareness of what they actually do. This is a simple process but hard to perform well. There are a variety of obstacle, the first being the judgments that are all too easy to make.

When you make judgments you don't see what is there, rather you see what you think should be there. Making a judgment means, among other things, that you have removed your attention from the present in order to recall the idealized image to which the comparison (judgment) is being made. Complete awareness requires that you keep your attention fully focused on the present; any judgments that you make will cause gaps in the overall picture.

To review: the key to learning is awareness, and the action-awareness-result feedback loop is the process by which all deep learning takes place. The coach's role is to help increase that awareness, and the most effective coach functions as a mirror from which students get clear, unbiased feedback on what it is they are actually doing.

The most clear and powerful coaching comes when the coach can directly observe the student in action, but it is possible to coach effectively based on either a) the student's reports on what she did/didn't do in a given situation or b) the student acts out or reenacts what they did in the situation during a later coaching session. Once communication between student and coach is established and the agenda set (alignment on goals of the coaching and the duration), the coach-student interaction should consist of the following: the student reports on what he/she did, or is observed to perform an action and then says, "I was aware that I did this," and the coach responds, "I observed that you did that."

Breakthroughs happen when the student is able to ask "What was I aware that I did?" and then ask, "What did I actually do?" and have the answers be same. And it helps to have another set of eyes looking at the process and that is where coaching others to coach you

comes in. Again, the basic interaction is simple: you say what you experienced, the other person says what he or she saw. Just about anyone can help you with this. The goal is for the other person simply to reflect what he or she sees.

But this simple action is not all that easy to perform. People are not by nature objective observers. We all have our own ideas and opinions. On top of this there is the relationship that always exists between two people working together with its emotional and psychological ramifications.

All these factors can combine to make the simple action not so simple so ground rules can be helpful.

### Some Ground Rules for Successful Coaching

1. Coach only when asked. This is of utmost importance. Coaching must be initiated by the student.

So how does a person request coaching? I recommend that people ask in the simplest, clearest way: "I would like to be coached."

2. Coach only what you are asked to coach. The agenda, the area of coaching is determined by the student.
3. Coach only for a specific amount of time. The coach-student relationship is good for certain situations, but if it hangs on and spills over into the normal relationship two people have, it can be a real problem.