# VOCIS
## VOCATIONAL TRAINING OF THE INNER SELF

# Start a peer coaching process

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Start a peer coaching process

(IO4 Peer Coaching)

Ruth Baker

## How to use the guidelines

These guidelines are part of the material created by the VOCIS partnership and are designed to be used by groups of peers or by coaches working with groups of peers. It provides information and exercises to get started. Why not integrate the material into workshops showing the potential of peer coaching for a great variety of fields?

- You are an individual wishing to benefit from a peer coaching process:

The guidelines give you the necessary information to start a successful peer coaching process. To take full advantage of the process, we recommend to develop your self-regulation competences: Fill in the diagnostic toolkit's online questionnaire on www.vocis.org to get an overall view of your self-regulation competences and exercises for further development.

- You are a coach or trainer:

Please have a look at the various materials to be found on our website for individual and other types of coaching, especially the methodological guidelines and the case studies.

*"Peers, whether in teams or not, can create a habit of making one another part of their own solution, rather than ruminating in venting conversations, or commiserating together without owning any part of the needed change."*

*(Natalya Pestalozzi on mangementconcepts.com, 2016)*

## Topics Covered

- What is Peer coaching/definition
- Aims
- The approach which underpins all interactions
- Moderator standards and considerations
- Peer Coaching Models
- Key roles and responsibilities
- Challenges in peer coaching
- Considerations when setting up a peer coaching group

## What is Peer Coaching

Peer coaching can be defined as a confidential process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices; expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace (Robbins, 1991).

Peer coaching usually entails a group of organised professionals with the same knowledge, skill level, and status. Peer coaching is a confidential, non-evaluative process where groups of two or more people come together to process, reflect upon and/or discuss topics relevant and particular to the group aims.

## Aims

VOCIS Peer Coaching aims to increase the competencies and skills of its group in order for them to better cope with professional constraints and to achieve a higher a level of self efficacy at work. The model aims at enabling teams and individuals to consider alternative actions.

More specifically, VOCIS Peer Coaching aims to promote competency in the areas of self-regulative functions and sub functions e.g.

- Goal Setting
- Self-Care
- Self-Compassion
- Problem Solving

In order to establish a good working model to help achieve this aim, the use of VOCIS diagnostic toolkit is recommended. The tool can be accessed on the VOCIS website http://vocis.org/methodology-tools/diagnostic-toolkit/.

## The attitude which underpins all interactions

As with all peer coaching sessions, it is important to create a confidential and non judgemental space to allow for the possibility of exchange and change to happen. Therefore, we suggest that you think about an attitude which might underpin the interactions within the group. For example, the Person Centred approach (Carl Rogers) is based on the idea that given the proper conditions, all individuals can gain a stronger and healthier sense of self and self-belief includes the three core or 'active' conditions in all interactions within the group:

- **Congruence** – be completely genuine with self and others,
- **Unconditional positive regard** – must be non-judgemental and valuing of self and others,
- **Empathy** – strive to understand self and others. Some practical tips of showing empathy for others can be found on https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/EmpathyatWork.htm.

In a real sense this can be practical actions such as the below suggestions:

- **Active Listening** – this includes paying attention, showing that you're listening, provide feedback on the conversation, defer your own judgement and ensuring that you respond appropriately to the conversation. More information on https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/listening-skills.html.

- **Offering support** – verbally tell the group that you are there to support them.

- **Positive body language** – avoid crossing your arms as this can make you appear closed off, lean in to the conversation slightly to let the other person know you are listening intently etc.

- **Asking Open Ended Questions** – these are questions which invite the individual to tell you more information and prevent just a yes or no answer. For example: 'Tell me about your day so far'.

- **Expressing Kindness and Compassion** – reassure the group about items that are being discussed and avoid using judgement. There are some useful tips about compassion in the workplace available on http://www.chopra.com/articles/10-ways-to-bring-more-compassion-to-the-workplace#sm.0001t72o425dqdn4vos10d639xpez.

## Moderator standard and considerations

There are different formats for the Peer Coaching group. Counselman (2004) suggest a leaderless group in which all the members take responsibility for the group work. While others like Thomasgard (2003) suggest that groups utilize rotating presenters or co-moderators to run the group sessions. This provides more opportunity to practice supervisory skills and is a more structured and fair way to present cases. Once again, it is up to the professionals in the group to determine how they would like the group sessions to be structured, however some elements which they may want to consider are listed in the guidelines of WhyDev http://www.whydev.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/WhyDev-Peer-Coaching-Guidelines.pdf.

## Coach Standard

It is important when choosing a coach that you consider the match between the coach and the group you wish them to work with.

- Do you think this person will gel with the group?
- Does he or she understand the needs of the group?
- Does he or she have sufficient skill and experience to facilitate successfully?

A coach is not going to assume a role of knowing more than the group. Coaches act as a sounding board for the group, listening to their issues and encouraging them to reach their own answers for their problems.

Some suggestions are:

- Career Guidance Practitioners
- Counsellors
- Job Coaches
- Teachers and Facilitators

While a trained coach is always preferable, sometimes, there will be situations where trained coaches are only available for a short time or not at all, depending on resources. There are some guidelines that can be followed for when groups are required to take on the moderator role without a coach or shortly after the introduction to the method by a coach. The role of moderator can be rotated throughout the group over time, so the responsibility does not fall to just one person at all times. It is important to remember that the VOCIS process can be used without the help of professional coaches.

A useful guide to follow are the points we alluded to earlier, specifically regarding attitudes which underpin all interactions. For a moderator in a peer coaching session, it is important to actively listen, reserve judgement and refrain giving too many of your own opinions. Allow the presenter and group members to discuss their problems and invite them to explore these more with open ended questions. It is important to remember that you are not expected to know the answer to the problem as the moderator, but to guide the conversation loosely and allow the group to come up with their own solutions. If as a moderator you feel you have something useful to add you should try to wait until the end of the session to ensure the group has time to discuss all their own solutions and then ask if they would like to hear your input. A useful document to read about this in more detail is available on http://www.whydev.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/WhyDev-Peer-Coaching-Guidelines.pdf.

## Peer coaching form

The form which peer coaching can take are many. For some it might focus on instructional strategies, curriculum content, specific people, particular problems such as mental health, or instructional skills such as questioning techniques or process skills to generate higher-order thinking. These activities can involve two people or a larger group. Identifying an appropriate form of peer coaching is dependent on the focus of each group and this section does not aim to be a guide for this process. The form we describe here is specifically tailored to facilitate the objectives of the VOCIS project, namely the ability of individuals to cope with professional constraints. Our very simple form of peer coaching is listed below in a step by step process:

| VOCIS Peer Coaching Step by Step | |
|---|---|
| STEP 1 | Introduction of the problem and what the person wants to clarify or gain insights about |
| STEP 2 | Questions to the person who brings in the problem or the case |
| STEP 3 | Coaching, finding hypotheses, deepening (without bringing in solutions) |
| STEP 4 | Development of solutions |
| STEP 5 | Lessons learned and feedback |

Participants are asked to do some thinking before the coaching session to help frame the difficulty that they wish to bring forward. N.B It is also recommended that each individual completes our VOCIS diagnostic tool and makes reference to the difficulty in relation to this. This tool will allow coaches to plan their sessions with the best outcomes for participants. The tool can be found at the VOCIS website.

## Key roles and responsibilities

When beginning your own peer group, it may be a good idea to agree key roles and responsibilities from the beginning. Research shows that clarity about what is expected can avoid problems due to a lack of understanding about roles, priorities and preferred means of engagement or feedback (Proctor & Inskipp, 2009). We have therefore provided a definition for the three roles as we see them.

### Role of the Group Member

- Prepare for the peer coaching session by 'loosely' reflecting on the problem you would like to discuss before coming to the group.

- Keep to the required 5-10 minute allocation for disclosure.

- Endeavour to be fully honest and open in your disclosure.

- Be open to hearing constructive feedback.

- Adhere to the agreed group rules.

- Be respectful of the moderator and presenter.

- Be mindful that you do not overly detract from the presenter's topic.

- Adhere to the VOCIS attitude in all interactions.

- Endeavour to practice new self-regulating skills and application of same.

## Role of the Moderator

- Organise all elements for a successful and comfortable peer coaching block. Aspects to consider include
    - booking a suitable room,
    - arranging a time that suits group work (morning/afternoon),
    - ensuring a brief of the activity has been sent to the group members and outlining what is expected from them in the group,
    - the day of the session the moderator should ensure the room is set up in a comfortable way e.g. circle of chairs and the room temperature is pleasant,
    - at the first session it could be helpful to get the group's feedback on any of these elements for the next session.
- Facilitate group member sessions.
- Provide a caring and confidential space for all members to share.
- Encourage and contain each member in their live experience within the group process.
- Nurture a safe environment where each member is respected and respectful of their fellow members.
- Actively encourage conversation which focuses on VOCIS peer group aims.
- Mindfully incorporate VOCIS exercises with each session.
- Manage time.

## Role of the Presenter

- Prepare for their session by 'loosely' reflecting on their situation before coming to the group.
- Keep to the required 5-10 minute allocation for disclosure.
- Endeavour to be fully honest and open in their disclosure.
- Be open to hearing constructive feedback.
- Adhere to the agreed group contract.
- Be respectful of the group members and moderator.
- Adhere to the VOCIS approach in all interactions.
- Endeavour to practice new self regulating skills and application of same.

## Considerations when setting up a peer coaching group

Some of the below things may be helpful when getting a VOCIS new peer group together.

- Where will the group be held (on or off site)? Some groups may prefer to work offsite as it gives a fresh space to discuss their difficulties. Others may have no issue with this and find the proximity of the group being held on site to be convenient. The group should decide what feels more appropriate to them as both can work in this context.

- How the room should be set up? The room should be quiet and inviting and away from other activities. Groups work best when chairs are arranged in circles where everyone feels a sense of equality with one another and the flow of communication is enhanced (Gladding, 1994).

- How many people should be in the group? Remember: as the number of people increases, so do the group dynamics! Research shows that a 'reflective group model' works best in a group of between 4 and 7 people.

- What materials might be needed? For example: Self-regulation exercises and interventions, pen and paper, flipchart and markers.

- Have a clear agenda and clarify with the group the purpose of the session! What it is for? And equally: what it is not for?

- Make sure everyone is clear about his/her roles and responsibilities during the session, including confidentiality in the group.

- Establish some contract and ensure everyone commits to them.

- Set a time for the session in a quiet and comfortable environment where people are likely to feel at ease about opening up and sharing.

- Adopt a matching facilitation methodology, and allow others to take the facilitation lead as they develop their skills. There are many different types of facilitation methodology, review this useful paper if you would like some guidance on the various forms available:
  https://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/com/ogm-old/Facilitation.pdf.

- Always record and share the decisions or actions that are agreed in the session.

## Group Prompts

When entering a peer coaching situation, it may be helpful to print this particular page and bring it with you, allowing you to check some prompts and reminders if you feel the group is moving away from the intended activity or has reached a difficult topic.

## Practical Actions

- Active Listening
- Offering Support
- Positive Body Language
- Ask open ended questions
- Express kindness and compassion

| VOCIS Peer Coaching Step by Step | |
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The step by step guide will be very useful to remind yourself of the process if you lose track at any point and need to readjust the conversation.

Remember, peer coaching can take many forms. So try not to be too restrictive with the group and allow for natural deviation from the steps described above without becoming too worried.

## You can find more information in the following textbooks:

Counselman, E. & Weber, R. (2004): Organizing and maintaining peer supervision groups. Int J Psychotherapy, 54(2): 125-43. Retrieved from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15103999.

Gladding, S. T. (1994): Effective group counseling. ERIC, University of North Carolina.

Mind Tools: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/EmpathyatWork.htm (accessed 30/03/2017).

Office of Quality Management (2000), https://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/com/oqm-old/Facilitation.pdf.

Proctor, B. & Inskipp, F. (2009): Group supervision. In: Scaife, J. (Ed.): Supervision in Clinical Practice: A Practitioner's Guide (2nd ed.), pp. 137-163. London: Routledge.

Robbins, P. (1991): How to Plan and Implement a Peer Coaching Program. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Rogers, C. (1951): Client-centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications and Theory. London: Constable.

The Chopra Centre: http://www.chopra.com/articles/10-ways-to-bring-more-compassion-to-the-workplace#sm.0001t72o425dqdn4vos10d639xpez (accessed 30/03/2017).

Thomasgard, M. & Collins, V. (2003): A comprehensive review of cross-disciplinary, case-based peer supervision model. Families, Systems, and Health, 21, 3, 305-318.

# VOCIS – Vocational Training of the Inner Self

## How to prepare yourself for a peer coaching session

### Your goal

After the peer coaching session you return to your organization/workplace with feedback, advice, and action ideas from a group of peers on an important issue, opportunity, challenge or problem you are currently facing.

### Ahead of the first meeting, think about your overall situation

- What is it about your job that is keeping you up at night?
- What is your single biggest supervisory problem? Your biggest opportunity?
- How do you handle the different stages of change? Are there issues at work that may bring up resistance from your staff/colleagues?
- How do you typically deal with conflict? Does this method prove to be effective in your workplace?
- What are you spending most of your time on at work? Do you feel like you are using your time effectively?
- What is your preferred decision making style? How do your staff/colleagues generally respond to decisions you make?
- How do you typically communicate about decisions and changes with your staff/colleagues? How do they generally respond to your communication efforts?
- Are there aspects of the culture of your workplace that impede your success or happiness at work? Do you have ideas about what needs to change?
- What are your personal long-range goals in your job? Do you anticipate any specific obstacles to reaching them?
- What things are you now doing that you would like to stop doing or would like to turn over to someone else?
- Does your boss make your job easier or more difficult? How have you handled your relationship with him or her?

If you are in a managing position:

- How would you rate the performance of each of the people you supervise? How well do you do in holding them accountable?
- Are you new to the role of manager at your organization? Do you feel that you and others have fully made the transition and are clear on expectations?

## Identify your issue

Before meeting your peers, start thinking about the subject you want to present and the elements needed in order to give a good insight to your peers.

In order to have a successful exchange, please choose a subject corresponding to the experience of your peers. It may be a good idea to exchange CVs ahead of the first meeting. Ask your coach or the peer group initiator about the group members.

## Write down your issue

- Brief statement of the issue:

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- Relevant background information:

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🌀 Who are the people involved?

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🌀 How have you tried to address the issue so far?

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🌀 List up to three specific questions or items you would like your colleagues to address with you.

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**Very important!**

**In order to play fully their role of resource, peer coaching sessions should be <u>strictly confidential</u>, any sharing of information should be explicitly agreed on among peers.**

This text is mainly a short version of material shared by the University of Washington's HR department *https://www.washington.edu/admin/hr/pod/docs/coachingcircles.pdf.*

*Your feedback to*

# VOCIS – Vocational Training of the Inner Self

## Materials concerning Peer Coaching (IO4)

### Personal details

*Your coaching activities are*

☐ your main profession          ☐ embedded in your professional activities

*Your Gender*

☐ Men          ☐ Women

*Your Age*

☐ <30          ☐ 31-40          ☐ 41-50          ☐ 51-60          ☐ 60<

*Your Training as a Coach*

☐ no training          ☐ further education          ☐ diploma

*Main groups of your usual coaching activities?*

☐ Trainers     ☐ Teachers     ☐ Coaches     ☐ Professionals     ☐ Students

☐ Unemployed people          ☐ Other:……………………………………………………………………

Please note that this survey is anonymous. If you have any questions regarding the materials or the questionnaire, please contact:

Name                                    First name:

Tel.                                       E-mail

## Feedback to VOCIS – Peer Coaching

*Date (Day/Month/Year):*

*Country:*

🌀 1. Please describe your experience with the materials!

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🌀 2. In your opinion, what are the key strengths of the materials?

A ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
B ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
C ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

🌀 3. What are the main weaknesses?

A ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
B ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
C ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

🌀 4. How clear and user friendly are the materials?

| *Very high* | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | *Very low* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | |

*Any comments?*

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🌀 5. Which group(s) do the participants belong to?

☐ Trainers     ☐ Teachers     ☐ Coaches     ☐ Professionals     ☐ Students

☐ Unemployed people     ☐ Other:…………………………………………………………………………………………………………

6. What main positive feedback did you receive from the participants?

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7. What main negative feedback did you receive from the participants?

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8. What information has been more helpful to you as a coach?

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9. What else would you need in addition to the information provided?

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10. Suggestions for improvement? Feedback you'd like to give to the VOCIS team?

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**Many thanks for your collaboration! Your VOCIS team**

**Materials regarding modules for initial training and further education will be published in the coming months. We would be delighted to inform you: please sign up to the newsletter of vocis.org!**