



# **Advanced Leadership Course**

*A Practical Intensive in Emotional  
Maturity, Deeper Connection, and  
Bold Decision-Making*

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# Session Seven

## *The Coaching Process*

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# Schedule

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<b>7:30 AM</b>	○ Arrival, light breakfast, getting present
<b>8:00</b>	○ Triads: Debriefing Session 6
<b>8:30</b>	○ Understanding Triangles
<b>10:00</b>	○ BREAK
<b>10:15 AM</b>	○ Coachability and the Coaching Process
<b>11:00</b>	○ Coaching Clinic: Part I
<b>12:00</b>	○ LUNCH
<b>1:00</b>	○ Coaching Clinic: Part II
<b>2:15</b>	○ Integration, Homework, Evaluations
<b>2:30</b>	○ Day Concludes

# Opening Debrief

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**Format:** Groups of three

**Time:** 25 minutes

In session six, you made a commitment and chose a between-session activity. This debrief will be an investigation into what you noticed about yourself while doing each one.

## Part One:

1. What was the shift you committed to?
2. Did you follow through? If yes, what did you notice and what happened? If not, what got in the way?
3. What was the most challenging part of the experience?

## Part Two:

1. Which option did you choose and why that one?
2. What happened when you did? Give the context briefly.
3. Where did you notice the impulse to explain, soften, deflect, or control the other person's reaction?
4. What did you do to make it safer than it was intended to be?
5. What part of the experience are you least likely to admit?

**Observers:** Help the speaker see what they might be avoiding.

# Fundamentals of Triangles

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## Triangles in Coaching:

Every coaching conversation that involves a real-life dilemma is, by default, a triangle. Someone walks in talking about a situation with another person, and the coach is now the third point: who's aligned with whom, who's the outsider, whose anxiety is dictating the direction in the relationships. Recognizing triangles is fundamental to coaching practice.

### 1. Anxiety and Maturity Shape the Triangle

The intensity of a triangle is determined by two forces: the anxiety of the participants and their level of emotional maturity. When maturity is high, people manage relational tension without pulling others in. When anxiety is high, positions harden, sides get taken, and the triangle becomes entrenched.

### 2. Structure: Two Insiders, One Outsider

A triangle has two people who are emotionally aligned and one who is excluded. This configuration stabilizes anxiety temporarily, but it's never static; roles shift as emotional pressure moves through the system.

### 3. The Pull Toward Togetherness

Triangles exert pressure toward emotional alignment. The outsider feels the discomfort of exclusion and instinctively moves to get back inside, often displacing one of the current insiders. The whole system rotates around this pull.

### 4. Insider Feels Like Connection. Outsider Feels Like Rejection.

Being on the inside feels like approval and belonging. Being on the outside feels personal, even when it isn't. These positions are fluid and shift unconsciously as anxiety rises and falls.

## **5. Position Shifts are Automatic**

People move within triangles instinctively, trying to reduce their own discomfort. These unconscious shifts perpetuate the tension rather than resolve it; the triangle reorganizes, but the underlying pattern stays intact.

## **6. Approval-Seeking Keeps Triangles Alive**

The drive to seek approval and avoid rejection is the engine of most triangles. Anxiety pushes people to manage tension through relational maneuvering rather than direct engagement. Rejection-avoidance, more than anything else, is what keeps the triangle spinning.

## **7. Resilience to Rejection, Not Avoidance of It**

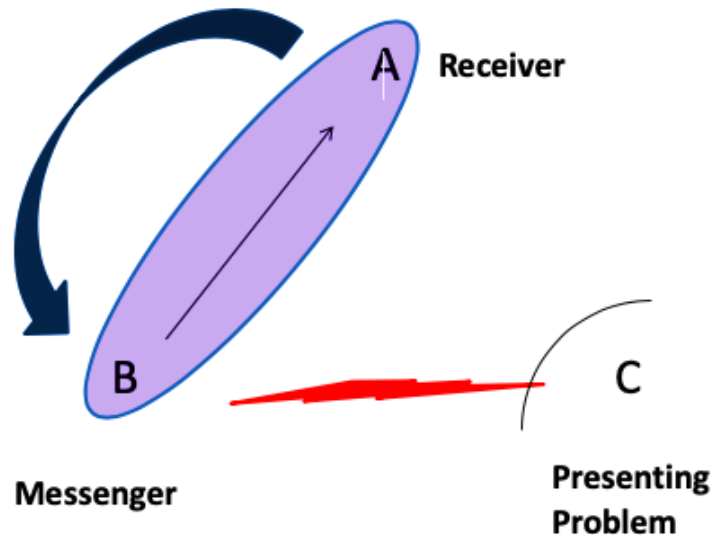
The goal isn't to stop caring about rejection. It's to build enough resilience to function clearly in its presence: to stay thoughtful rather than reactive, and to maintain influence inside the triangle without being governed by the fear of being on the outside.

## **8. Self-Regulation Makes Everything Else Possible**

The natural response to rejection or discomfort is defensive and reactive. Growth comes from reflection; the willingness to pause before acting, to choose a response instead of being hijacked by one.

## Common Relationship Triangle

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- 1. Tension between B and C exceeds B's tolerance level:** Anxiety builds between B and C, and B feels unable to manage the emotional discomfort on their own.
- 2. B recruits A as an ally:** To stabilize their emotional state, B seeks support from A, bringing A into the relational dynamic.
- 3. B frames C as the problem to A:** To justify their discomfort and seek validation, B tells A that C is the source of the tension, shifting responsibility away from B.
- 4. The instinctual drive for emotional closeness pressures A to align with B:** A feels natural pressure to maintain harmony and connection with B, leading them to agree – consciously or unconsciously – that C is the problem.
- 5. If A aligns with B, the triangle solidifies:** A and B form an emotionally comfortable alignment, with B avoiding responsibility for their part in the tension and C being marginalized as the "problem."

# Getting “Caught” In Triangles

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Getting caught in triangles often involves behaviors that perpetuate relational tension and prevent others from taking responsibility for their relationships. These include:

1. Taking responsibility for resolving the problem between two others.
2. Acting as a go-between, carrying messages instead of encouraging direct communication.
3. Trying to protect others from discomfort, denying them opportunities for growth.
4. Lacking confidence in others’ ability to navigate their own relationships.
5. Attempting to force harmony by trying to get others to like each other.
6. Using “teaching” about triangles to manage anxiety instead of addressing the underlying dynamics.
7. Allowing your intolerance of emotional discomfort to undermine others’ maturity and responsibility.

# Emotional Maturity

## Modifying the Emotional Pressure of the Triangle

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Emotional maturity involves modifying the emotional pressure of triangles through thoughtful and deliberate actions:

1. Maintaining neutrality and resisting the instinct to take sides.
2. Observing relational dynamics broadly, avoiding blame or scapegoating.
3. Developing the capacity to remain in an outside position without feeling threatened or pressured to align.
4. Normalizing rejection as a natural part of relationships and managing it without reactivity.
5. Viewing yourself and others with realistic compassion, recognizing shared humanity.
6. Building direct, one-on-one relationships that are not governed by third parties, while staying emotionally connected to both sides of the triangle.
7. Cultivating the ability to work and live closely and cooperatively, balancing individuality with connection.

# The Importance of Coachability

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Not everyone benefits from coaching. The goal is to only coach individuals who are coachable; not to convince the unconvinced, and not to drag anyone toward their own development.

## What coachability really looks like:

1. A strong interest in growth – professionally and personally.
2. Willingness to look at one's own contribution – responsibility before blame.
3. Openness to being challenged; not just tolerant, but seeking it.
4. Genuine interest in noticing oneself operate, especially under pressure.
5. Favoring accuracy – about self and others – over comfort.
6. Owning the logistics, initiating sessions, showing up prepared.
7. Taking real risk; bringing substance to the table.
8. Doing the thinking and action work between sessions.

## Requiring Coachability:

1. When coachability is absent, the coach defines themselves:
  - *“I'm not going to work harder on your development than you are.”*
  - *“I'm happy to give five minutes to understanding your case against someone who isn't in the room – but the remainder of the meeting I expect to spend on you looking at you.”*
  - *“I will wait to meet again until you're ready to look at your own role in this.”*
  - *“I don't coach people who already have it figured out.”*
  
2. When coachability is present, the coach names it:
  - *“Your openness here is exactly what makes this work.”*
  - *“This is the kind of thinking that moves things forward.”*
  - *“If you want to grow, I will give you everything I have.”*

# Coaching: Core Purposes

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The primary purpose of coaching is promoting **self-responsibility and emotional maturity** in the coachee.

**Effective coaching cultivates the capacity to:**

## 1. Gain Clarity

- Expose hidden patterns in one's own thinking and behavior.
- Challenge the internal stories that continuously operate without scrutiny.
- Notice system patterns: who acts, who freezes, who accommodates in response to an individual shift in behavior.

## 2. Take Responsibility

- Reduce the impulse to wait for others to change first.
- Set and hold boundaries using clear “I” positions.
- Replace judgment with curiosity – ask better questions, seek deeper insight.

## 3. Build Courage Despite Discomfort

- Strengthen one's response to uncertainty by learning to manage discomfort.
- Remain non-reactive to complexity instead of rushing to fix.
- Model active humility – stand firm without needing to dominate or retreat.

## 4. Stay Accountable

- Commit to action, especially in moments of hesitation.
- Honor one's word. Follow through as a discipline, not as a reaction to crisis.

# Coaching Assumptions

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- 1. Self-Responsibility First:** No ownership = No coaching. The coach is committed to growth and agency.
- 2. Relationship, Not Transaction:** Change happens through engagement, not instruction.
- 3. Ask, Don't Tell:** Disrupt assumptions – powerful questions reframe perspectives.
- 4. One-Size-Fits-One:** Coaching meets the person where they are, then nudges them past it.
- 5. Presence Defines the Space:** The coaching tone reflects the coach's capacity to be clear, accountable, and courageous.
- 6. Accountability is Everything:** Change only sticks when it's measured and acted on.
- 7. Coaching Requires "Coachability":** If growth is resisted, coaching is futile.
- 8. Coaching is Not About Performance:** The goal is the coachee's development, not the coach's showcase.
- 9. Listening over Fixing:** Silence is a mindset. Use it to hear the anxiety, the assumptions, and the avoidance underneath what's being said.
- 10. Discomfort is a Requirement:** Growth requires pressure – the willingness to stay in conversations and situations that instinct says to leave.
- 11. Define Yourself Clearly:** Say what you stand for; set clear boundaries without apology.

# Coaching in Practice

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## 1. Establishing Connection

- Demonstrate authentic curiosity and presence.
- Maintain regular and meaningful one-on-one contact.
- Listen actively to the emotions, assumptions, and where the anxiety is.

## 2. Requiring Coachability (see above)

- Define expectations for self-reflection and growth up front.
- Define oneself out of conversations where the coachee resists personal ownership.
- Take clear “I” positions when coachability is absent.

## 3. Advanced Listening

- Observe verbal, vocal, and visual cues – notice what the coachee isn’t noticing.
- Identify patterns in the way the coachee thinks, before engaging in problem-solving.
- Resist the urge to fix; silence often does more work than insight.

## 4. High-Impact Questioning

- Craft questions that trigger clarity, responsibility, and emotional maturity.
- Avoid “why” questions that provoke defensiveness – use “how” and “what” questions. Examples:
  - *“What part of this situation is within your control?”*
  - *“What are the patterns you notice in your response to similar challenges?”*
  - *“What is keeping you from addressing this directly?”*
  - *“How do you plan to move forward and navigate this skillfully?”*

## 5. Strategic Self-Disclosure

- Share personal insights when they highlight learning moments.
- Model emotional honesty while maintaining professional boundaries. Example:
  - *“My biggest regret is not stepping in with a stronger voice in defense of my younger siblings growing up.”*

## 6. Managing Relationship Triangles

- Avoid rescuing or becoming a mediator in conflicts.
- Invite a “what’s my part” mindset rather than enabling blame-shifting.
- Skillfully redirect when the coachee is focused on someone who isn’t in the room.

## 7. Reverse Role Play

- The coach takes on the role of the coachee to model higher-maturity responses.
- Help the coachee broaden their range of responses by showing them a different version of themselves in action.

## 8. The Invested Observer

- The coach provides real-time coaching with two people in conflict, both present.
- The coach engages in a one-on-one coaching conversation with one person about the relationship while the other watches, then switches. The observation itself becomes part of the intervention.

# Coaching Skills Clinic

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**Preparation:** Each person should come to this session prepared with a real situation that is current, unresolved, and uncomfortable. Examples could include: A relationship where something is stuck, a conversation that keeps getting avoided or a dynamic where the same pattern plays out regardless of what's been tried. The less polished the situation, the more useful it is here.

## 1. Live Coaching Demonstration (40 minutes)

- **Round 1 (20 minutes):** One participant brings their situation to the facilitator coach for a live coaching conversation; the rest of the group observes. The demonstration focuses on the facilitator's ability to demonstrate:
  - Courage when questioning
  - Strategic self-disclosure
  - Holding firm on coachability standards
  - Skillful handling when the coachee tries to make it about someone else
- **Round 2 (20 minutes):** A second participant brings a different situation in the same format.

## 2. Small Group Coaching Practicum (60 minutes)

Participants break into triads, one group of four if needed. Each triad includes a coach, a coachee, and an observer. Each participant rotates through all three roles.

- The coachee brings their real situation.
- The coach practices:
  - Establishing a strong coaching stance without over-functioning.
  - Asking questions that promote maturity.
  - Holding the coachee accountable for their own insights.
  - Taking "I" positions when coachability waivers.
- The observer watches for:
  - Where the coach stepped in too early.
  - Where the coach avoided the harder question.
  - Where the coachee deflected and the coach let it go.
  - What the coach's own anxiety looked like in the room.
- After each rotation, the observer delivers feedback directly: what they saw, not what they think should have happened.

## Assignment: Coaching in the Wild

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Before the next session, have one real coaching conversation using what was practiced in the clinic.

**Step 1:** Identify a direct report, a peer, or a family member who is currently stuck in a pattern and looking to you for help. This is probably someone you've been over-functioning for, solving problems they should be solving, or absorbing anxiety they should be sitting with.

**Step 2:** Engage in a coaching conversation with them – consciously avoid giving advice or strategizing. The only agenda is helping them see their own role more clearly.

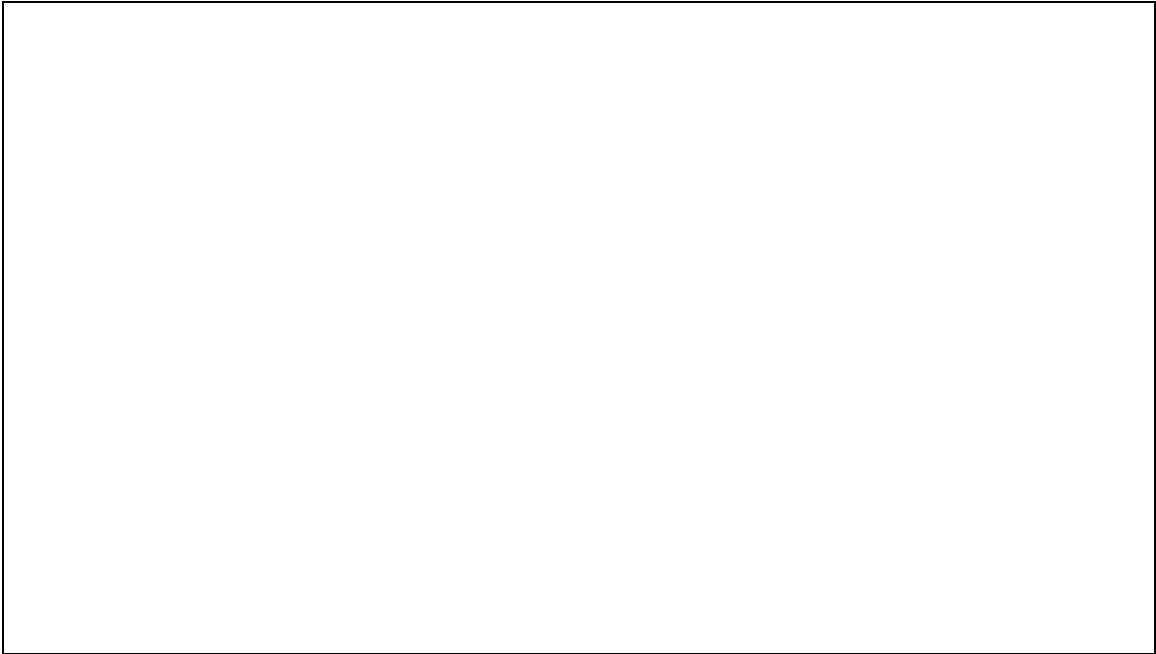
**Practice holding three disciplines:**

1. **Ask, don't solve.** When the impulse to fix hits, ask a question instead. Track how many times the urge shows up.
2. **Take an “I” position.** At least once, say out loud what you think, what you see, or what you're unwilling to do. Resist softening it into a suggestion.
3. **Let the discomfort stay in the room.** When the silence gets heavy or the other person pushes back, don't rescue the moment. Notice what happens when nobody rushes to make it comfortable.

**After the conversation, record your responses to the following questions:**

1. What went well in your mind?

2. What skills / strategies from the course did you actively practice?



3. What would you do differently next time?



# Notes

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