



Butler Coaching Collaborative
GSSW | University of Denver

Butler Coaching Collaborative

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INTRODUCTION

The Butler Coaching Collaborative (BCC) is an integral part of the Butler Institute for Families at the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work. The BCC is based on the belief that organizations that embrace a culture of learning and holistic staff development are not only nurturing a worker's well-being, but also contributing to the overall success of that worker's organization. When organizations create more opportunities for learning, accomplishment, and growth, workers become more optimistic about their abilities and more enthusiastic about contributing to their workplace (Center for Workplace Mental Health, n.d.). This vision of growth and well-being is the foundation of our coaching approach, which draws upon holistic and client-centered interactions designed to increase awareness and evoke transformation. Coaching as a structured practice within organizations builds upon the timeless tradition of coaching that has been practiced across cultures for centuries.

“Becoming a coach has been a ‘freeing’ experience for me. Practicing the coaching skills helped to rid me of always having to have the solution. This practice has allowed me to approach my work in many different capacities as a leader in my organization. I’m more intentional about active listening, asking impactful questions, and ‘bottom-lining.’

These skills help me to navigate the complexities of leading people while meeting my organizations’ expectations in an efficient way.”

-Kimberly Davis, Unit Manager, Training and Professional Development, Georgia Division of Family & Children Services

At the BCC, we view coaching as a well-established practice that has been refined over time to suit the unique needs of modern organizations. Our approach integrates these time-honored principles into the fabric of your organization, fostering a holistic, interconnected community where personal and professional growth flourish.

The BCC defines coaching as "a developmental process, centered on holistic and client-centered interactions designed to increase awareness and evoke transformation."



OUR WHY: PEOPLE TRANSFORMATION → SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

Within organizational development, coaching can be a powerful catalyst for advancing equity. Coaching has been practiced in many ways across diverse cultures as individuals and communities support one another to grow and develop. It has the power to be a transformative force, both at the individual and systemic levels. It's more than a set of tools: Coaching is a dynamic process that, when applied with intentionality and purpose, supports individuals' and organization's inherent creativity, resourcefulness, and wholeness, which in turn supports their capacity to begin dismantling systemic inequities within organizations. This intentional application aligns with our core values, steering us toward a future where coaching becomes one of the approaches organizations use to support holistic staff development while also effectively shaping systems transformation in equitable and inclusive ways.

“Coaching is a transformative process... I have seen the coaching process help leaders implement change projects in their agencies designed to help children and families stabilize. I have had the opportunity to work with individuals who have made significant progress during challenging times in their lives, coming to critical decisions that made their lives better. I have watched as the right question brings that ‘a-ha’ moment for people who have been struggling, or perhaps didn't look at things quite in that way, who then can move forward.”

-Colleen Cox, Practice Improvement Specialist, University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work, The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center

When an individual or organization considers making a transformation, what they are ultimately looking for is a shift in what they are doing (behavior) or how they are being (presence). Training is often the first tool organizations consider using to support a transformation. Yet



“I was introduced to coaching through [the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute] and it came at the perfect time. I had just become the supervisor of a manager of a small team, that had strong feelings about being supervised by someone ‘outside’ of their team. There was resistance and sometimes downright hostility from the beginning. Coaching was a revelation. Approaching supervision from a coaching perspective changed the way we related to each other, because I was operating from a place of belief, and release. I wasn't trying to make her see the value in my thoughts, or my leadership anymore. Instead, I was working with her to explore and develop her leadership skills and support the direction she wanted to move her team towards. The shift was profound.”

- Myra McNeill, Academy of Professional Coaching Participant

transformative change requires more than just intellectually understanding the purpose and need. In fact, to make equitable, sustainable change, the rational mind and the emotional core must actively be engaged, aligning the head and the heart. That is where developmental coaching comes in because we focus on the whole person, the various layers that contribute to growth and the context the client is working in, to create meaningful change.

Additionally, studies have begun to show that if successfully implemented, staff and leadership development programs, like coaching, can improve employee retention, productivity, and communication (Novitasari, 2021; Park et al., 2021). The importance of coaching is also highlighted in [implementation science](#) as one of three drivers required for successful implementation outcomes.

“ Coaching is an essential tool in personal and professional development. If more leaders had these skills, our workspaces would be greatly enriched.”

- Myra McNeill, Academy of Professional Coaching Participant

According to the National Implementation Research Network (Metz et al., 2020), coaching is effective because:

1

NEWLY LEARNED BEHAVIORS ARE CRUDE.

Training is designed to introduce learners to a set of new skills. Coaching is designed to help learners unpack the nuances of those new skills and apply them effectively to various situations.

2

NEWLY LEARNED BEHAVIORS ARE FRAGILE.

When agency practice shifts are made, they can affect whole systems that may react unfavorably. Coaching supports the learner in sifting through this “noise” to identify effective change mechanisms within the service population and the system itself.

3

NEWLY LEARNED BEHAVIORS ARE INCOMPLETE.

As good as trainings are, there are limitations in applying those early skills because of time and environment. Coaching reinforces learners to apply new skills in “real-life” situations and deepen their understanding of the elements required for sustained change.

In addition, developmental coaching helps individuals more effectively integrate skills because it connects them to their values and motivation. In fact, Wang et al. (2021) found when coaching focuses on an individual’s internal motivators, emotions and unconscious assumptions their job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and psychological well-being is increased. At the BCC, we value coaching’s impact on personal and organizational transformation. We also recognize that individuals who provide coaching support—be they professional coach practitioners or managers/leaders who use coaching skills— also need training and development opportunities to establish and improve their skills.

OUR APPROACH: BEING AND DOING

For authentic, personalized, equitable, and sustainable growth, the BCC uses a [developmental coaching approach](#). Developmental coaching considers the whole person—the mindsets, values, assumptions, and beliefs that drive people’s behaviors. It involves bringing awareness to and aligning these core aspects to support a person’s intended behavior changes. This approach

believes everyone is naturally creative, resourceful, and whole and focuses on the coaching client's potential.

Developmental coaching challenges some of the dominant cultural norms in our society, including the glorification of busy-ness, while also valuing various states of "being" alongside "doing." Developmental coaches encourage clients to pause, reflect on their motivations and desired outcomes, and then take thoughtful and intentional action, recognizing the diverse values and perspectives that shape our society. This approach leverages the neuroscience that explains that humans learn and develop by integrating connections between new ways of thinking and approaching a subject with attempts at new behaviors and actions (Smith et al., 2019).

This developmental approach contrasts with a "performance coaching" approach, which is what we may imagine when we think of sports coaching or technical coaching, both of which focus on actions and behaviors. A performance coach offers their own experience and expertise to guide a client's approach to technical changes or challenges, while a developmental coach facilitates using the client's own wisdom, resourcefulness, and creativity.

Further, a developmental coaching approach honors diversity and inclusiveness, recognizing that individuals come from various cultural backgrounds and may face systemic barriers that are difficult to overcome. It is essential for the developmental coach to be aware of their own cultural background and biases. By embracing this awareness, the developmental coach can engage each individual holistically, creating a supportive space for them to define their motivations and desired outcomes. This approach cultivates a coaching experience that meets a client on their terms, taking into account the unique and powerful ways they navigate the world. It also acknowledges the complexities that can arise due to systemic barriers and unconscious biases, encouraging a more inclusive and empathetic coaching experience.

OUR HOW: 8 ESSENTIAL SKILLS

As we continue to discuss the essence of developmental coaching, it is important to consider not only the “doing” but also the “being” of a coach. The BCC’s coaching approach focuses on eight essential skills that empower a coach to collaborate or partner with their client to increase their client’s awareness and catalyze transformation. These skills are used interchangeably throughout the coaching relationship, adapting to the individual’s unique needs and desires. The circular graphic below shows the fluid nature of these skills when a coach practices them during developmental coaching sessions. Descriptions of the coaching skills are below the graphic.





STAY CURIOUS

Assume a beginner's mindset by stepping away from preconceived notions and be guided by an authentic interest in and inquisitiveness about the person's story. Seek to understand the person within their unique context, which may include their identities, environments, experiences, culture, values, and beliefs.



BELIEVE IN THE WHOLE PERSON

Recognize each person's vast potential and possibilities, moving beyond a problem-focused approach. Acknowledge the person's internal resources and their ability to make resonant choices that create awareness and evoke transformation.



PROVOKE DEEPER THINKING

Facilitate a person's insight and learning by using varied tools and techniques, such as powerful questions or invoking imagery, that help the person explore beyond their current perspective. Challenge the person in a way that evokes awareness and notice what is working to enhance progress.



WITHHOLD JUDGEMENT

Center a person's perspectives and actions based on their own values and beliefs, rather than applying judgment based on your values and beliefs. This includes both your positive and negative evaluations of another person's perspectives and actions.



LISTEN DEEPLY

Listen with profound openness and attunement to understand what the person is saying and feeling while also considering the bigger picture. This listening allows you to intuitively sense the person's feelings and energy in the moment. This supports the individual's self-discovery and empowerment for personal growth.



ASK POWERFUL QUESTIONS

Ask questions that inspire discovery, insight, commitment, or action, focusing on what a person desires and creating greater clarity, possibility, and new learning.



CULTIVATE CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

Relate and work effectively in culturally diverse contexts. Have an awareness of how your values, beliefs, and experiences shape your worldview and are influenced by the cultures you have interacted with as well as the identities you hold. Explore, interact with, and honor various worldviews equally, without filtering these through your own biases.



DANCE IN THE MOMENT

Remain fully present, flexible, and attuned to the person you are coaching, allowing the conversation to flow in the direction they choose while holding space for their agenda. Trust in the inherent value of the process beyond just the desired outcome.



“Allowed me to connect and engage with [others] in ways that give them power to engage in their own solutions, with me as a guide and support. It has kept me out of the judgment zone more frequently and allowed more thoughtful conversations to take place.”

-Melissa Eloff, Staff Development Director, Erie County, Department of Social Services

“The most impactful takeaway from the [coaching] academy was the importance of listening deeply. During interactions with my colleagues and members of the community, I have strived to listen for ‘what’s beneath the surface’ to engage and build connections in a deeper and more meaningful way.”

-Kyle Hogan, Clinical Practice Coach, Fairfax County Department of Family Services

“I am in awe of those moments when a powerful question or a symbolic image is identified and energizes the client to think in an expanded, insightful, and creative way.”

- Ann Sullivan, Academy of Professional Coaching Participant

OUR EVIDENCE: RESEARCH AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Cultivating a coaching culture with well-trained coaches is a valuable investment of an organization's time and resources. There is overwhelming evidence, spanning peer-reviewed journals, the rich history of coaching practices over time, and the personal experiences of individuals, that underscores the benefits of coaching for both organizational culture and individual professional and personal growth. Research shows that coaching yields a positive return on investment through increased employee self-efficacy, improved work effectiveness, and strengthening employee's commitment to their organization.

Studies have shown that utilizing coaching as a tool to support employee growth has significant positive effects on coping, goal-directed self-regulation, performance/skills, well-being, and work attitudes (Theeboom, 2013; Burt, 2017). More recently, research on coaching's impact has shown that it supports an employee's commitment to an organization but also creates a learning environment that fosters belonging, self-efficacy, optimism, and endurance (Novitasari, 2021; Park, 2021.) Additionally, research shows that coaching benefits all levels of an organization. For instance, executive coaching supports leaders in developing their awareness, confidence, clarity, and focus (Halliwell et al., 2021).

Understanding coaching's effectiveness through the lens of neuroscience can be as complex as the brain itself. Yet with technological advances, substantial scientific research has emerged to support the efficacy of developmental coaching. For example, functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) of the brain has shown that when a coach focuses on the whole person and centers coaching on a person's aspirations and dreams versus challenges, the brain's Default Mode Network (DMN) is activated. The DMN allows for "neural mechanisms that encourage the individual to be motivated, willing to tackle difficulties, and open to new ideas" (Boyatzis & Jack, 2018, pg. 3). Yet overall, coaching leverages the brain's neuroplasticity. Change is often difficult in part because our brain has established deeply ingrained patterns that are resistant to change. The stories we tell ourselves are rooted in neural pathways that seek homeostasis. Coaching encourages us to craft new stories, and thus rewires the brain.



“The powerful lessons I was able to FEEL from the training and hands-on practice as the interviewer and interviewee were an influential eye opener to where I really was and how that felt for who I thought I was. I sat back and literally looked at my tagline of: ‘Walking alongside others on their journey.’ I humbly worked through the rest of the extensive training and supportive feedback, with an improved version of myself. I have learned new skills to authentically hear the person, inquire on additional supporting details, and provide opportunities for the speaker to reach their own decisions with guided coaching for their own story and journey.”

-Michelle Forliti, Student Support Coordinator, Child Welfare Program, Social Work Department, Minnesota State University, Mankato

“In my experience, when I pair the coaching techniques I have learned and refined through my work at [the Butler Coaching Collaborative] with a client who is ready to engage in meaning making - magic happens.”

-Ann Sullivan, Academy of Professional Coaching Participant

“Coaching has changed and supported my work with leadership in our organization. It increases critical thinking and reflection, which are both so important in leadership roles. It also has enabled them to feel supported in an authentic way. Leadership can be isolating at times, and having a coach gives that leader a safe space to reflect on and process their work.”

-Margery Ruschel, Supervisor Support Trainer & Implementation Lead on Leadership Academy, Allegheny County

OUR SERVICES: ORGANIZATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL

All BCC coaches have received their certification from an International Coaching Federation accredited educational program. We offer a range of coaching services to individuals and groups. We also offer coach certification training, technical assistance, and training to help organizations successfully implement coaching within their workplaces.



COACHING IMPLEMENTATION

The BCC provides technical assistance in the form of assessment, evaluation, and consultation for coaching programs/services already embedded within an organization as well as the implementation of coaching programs/services within an organization. We collaborate with organizations to determine their needs related to embedding coaching within their organizational structure and help guide the process to meet their specific needs.



COACHING TRAINING

Butler's Coaching Collaborative (BCC) recognizes the vital role coaching can play in professional development, and we are committed to empowering you with the skills needed for success. Our comprehensive coaching training programs are designed to create a transformative impact on your workforce.

FOUNDATIONS OF COACHING



For a general understanding of how coaching works, our Foundations of Coaching training offers a cost-effective solution to introduce coaching principles across your organization. This virtual five-module series, facilitated by International Coaching Federation -certified coaches, promotes individual and collaborative learning. Participants gain foundational knowledge and skills, with a focus on how coaching can bring about positive transformations within the organization and its workforce.

ACADEMY OF PROFESSIONAL COACHING



The Academy of Professional Coaching (APC) will take you even deeper with your coaching skills as it prepares you for a coaching certification, ensuring you develop the expertise to support a skilled workforce. This program, featuring instruction by International Coaching Federation-certified coaches, blends experiential and virtual learning, fostering engaging interactions among a cohort of professional peers. The APC is accredited through the International Coaching Federation, as a Level 1 coach education provider.



INDIVIDUAL COACHING



Our certified coaches offer virtual, one-on-one coaching for individuals related to a variety of issues/topics, via a platform like Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Our coaches are prepared to support clients on topics such as:

- Personal and professional development
- Leadership development
- Performance/skills development

GROUP COACHING

Group coaching occurs virtually through platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams to create a supportive environment for shared learning, goal setting, deepening awareness around key issues, taking action, and ensuring accountability.



Some of our previous group coaching experiences include:

- Role-focused groups (e.g., middle managers) for continuous role development (i.e., become a more confident leader). This type of coaching group tends to be ongoing, meeting at regularly scheduled intervals.
- Topic-specific groups (e.g., managing conflict) to support skill development. This type of coaching group is typically time limited and meets at regularly scheduled intervals (e.g., 6 weeks).
- Team/Unit-specific groups to strengthen and enhance team/unit dynamics for a time-limited period.

INDIVIDUAL/GROUP COACHING ADD-ONS



In addition to coaching services, our coaches offer optional nondiagnostic assessments for individuals/groups as standalone services or for an additional fee in conjunction with individual or group coaching. Our coaches can work with you on administering the following tools:

- Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (individuals or groups)
- Intercultural Development Inventory® (individuals or groups)
- Murphy-Meisgeier Type Indicator for Children®



You can learn more about the BCC and our coaching team at our website:
<https://socialwork.du.edu/butler/butler-coaching-program>.

“I highly recommend the Butler coach certification program. Butler’s approach allowed me to try out skills at every step of the learning journey alongside other bright, dedicated professionals from across the country. As an APC participant, I jumped right into trying on skills in session one! The team were gifted in scaffolding the learning by starting with the foundations of the model and building up to advanced skills in a format that allowed me to observe demonstrations and practice my skills with joy, curiosity, humor, and support!”

-Ann Sullivan, Academy of Professional Coaching Participant

HONORING OUR COMMUNITY

In addition to the specific resources that have informed our work and that we have cited throughout this document, we recognize that the BCC is a constantly evolving space that reflects our team's collective experiences, energy, and wisdom. This includes the lessons and wisdom that have come from our relationships with all the participants and partners of the BCC's educational programs who have informed what we offer.

The BCC intentionally nurtures this inclusive space and these relationships so that we can continue to evolve and provide the best possible coaching program and services to our clients and community.



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