



Influencing Better Health & Safety Conversations

Using coaching techniques helps us engage and influence more effectively when we are having health and safety conversations.

It helps us stay 'neutral' and helps the person we are having these conversations with often get 'unstuck', either in their thinking and/or solutions. It draws on their knowledge, experiences, identified gaps, empowers them to find solutions and take responsibility for their actions.

These type of health and safety conversations provide learning and insights for you and the recipient. They create shared knowledge, build respect, and grow influence. They are actively seeking to raise awareness and find solutions.

When having these conversations, you are doing four things:

- 1. Questioning** – to understand their perspective
- 2. Listening** – what are they saying? And what aren't they saying?
- 3. Reflecting** – back what you have heard, and what you have not heard
- 4. Supporting and encouraging** so that the person feels heard and involved.

The questions you ask are the most power tool in these conversations:

Ask **What** questions approx. 70% of the time. 'What' questions discover both the problem/situation and solution, for example:

- What do you think is working well?
- What is your greatest challenge?
- What is stopping us being safe?
- What do you think is the right thing to do?

Ask **How** questions approx. 20% of the time. 'How' questions discover solutions, for example:

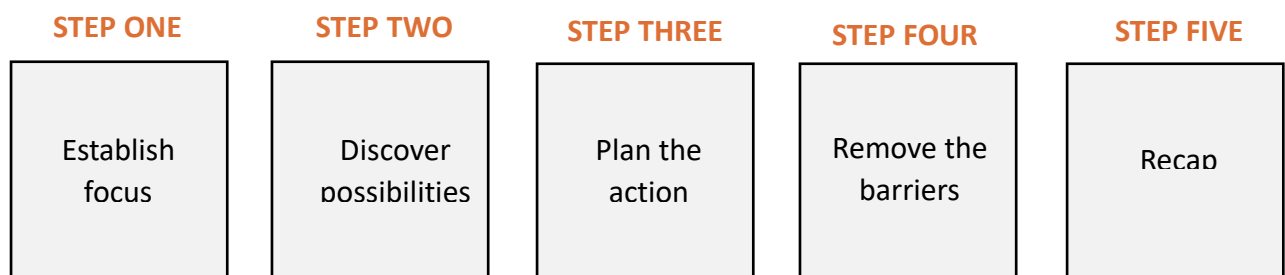
- How could you change what is happening?
- How do you see this working?
- How should we do this?

Ask **Where, When, Who** questions approx. 10% of the time. These questions are about taking action/responsibility, for example:

- Where would you go for more information, support, resources?
- When will you do this?
- Who do you need help from?

Avoid **WHY** questions, if possible, as 'why' can make people feel they have to explain/justify their behaviour making them feel defensive. They then stay stuck in the challenge

A helpful Coaching Conversation Model (Coach)



Typically, a coaching conversation happens in these five steps:

1. Establishing the focus of the issue/situation.

Where we either notice the need to talk or get invited to talk about safety. At this stage you are establishing the 'focus' of the situation. You are asking lots of 'what' questions to get to the heart of the matter, being curious and encouraging.

2. Discovering possibilities/solutions.

At this stage we have established what the situation is and that we are interested in supporting them. Now the focus turns to exploring possible solutions – again, we are using mostly 'what' questions here.

3. Planning the action/next steps.

Once solutions emerge then it's our role to help them plan the next steps – this part is all about the actions they will take. So questions here start with – who, what, where, how. The practical bits.

4. Removing barriers

It's important to identify any potential barriers that may arise and solutions to those barriers. Otherwise, the plan might fail, for example:

- What might stop this from working?
- Who could be a barrier to this succeeding?
- What help do you need?

5. Recap the conversation.

At the end of the conversation, reflect on where you think the conversation went, what actions they have committed to acknowledge them. If needed, hold them to account for achieving them.

- Here is what I think we have discussed?
- When do you want to meet again to go over this?

Sometimes the talking moves around between steps and you may need to guide the person.

For more ideas on how to talk about health and safety, visit www.farmwithoutharm.co.nz/workshops.