

Building Leadership for Health



Notes on Mentoring and Coaching

Notes for course leaders

- ❑ This is intended as a discussion document not a course.
- ❑ But you might want to consider using it as the basis for a session at which leaders and mentors meet.
- ❑ One way of approaching this is to arrange leader “Buddying” where two leaders act as mentors to each other.
- ❑ As always you would need to adapt this to your particular circumstances.
- ❑ If possible get someone who has experienced mentoring or coaching to speak to the group.
- ❑ There are many firms offering executive coaching - some are very good, but beware there are also many who have dubious qualifications and/or are simply failed leaders.
- ❑ There are also many courses available to train people as executive coaches – again some are good; beware of others.

Thinking it through: Mentoring and coaching

- This is a guide for mentors and coaches
- For discussion with leaders they work with
- To help think through the relationship
- There is no prescription for this
- Each mentor/coach has their own approach
- And brings different skills and experience
- But you do need to be clear about
 - The relationship, the process, the dialogue and
 - What can help or hinder.

What are mentoring and coaching ?

- Facilitating a leader's personal and professional development and performance, by helping them to reflect on and learn from their experience and expand their options for authentic behaviour
 - A mentor provides support and an opportunity for reflection based on shared experience.
 - A coach brings skills in the process of facilitating personal and professional development.
 - Both should draw on frameworks that aid understanding of leadership issues (the BLfH courses provide many)
 - Neither should treat leadership as a "performance" but as a reflection of the authentic life and work of the leader
 - They must not be confused with counselling which is concerned with addressing psychological dysfunctions

Agreeing the relationship;

What are your boundaries?

- ❑ You are not a counsellor, give emotional support but;
 - Focus on work related behaviour, if psychological problems arise suggest professional help, beware of co-dependency
- ❑ You may be friendly but you are not there as a friend
 - Agree to maintain your objectivity tell the truth as you see it
- ❑ You are not their boss
 - So don't lead them, instruct them or judge them
- ❑ You may give advice but don't take decisions
 - Always make it clear that it is their responsibility
- ❑ Coaching/mentoring is a confidential relationship
 - If you report to the organisation the leader must agree it.

The Skill of Listening

A basic skill for mentors and coaches

- Concentrated listening requires
 - **L**et go of your concerns to focus on listening
 - **I**ntent and commitment to listening
 - **S**oak up the message before responding
 - **T**ransmit your understanding back to the speaker
 - **E**cho to check your understanding
 - **N**on judgemental attitude don't agree or disagree

What is co-dependency?

- Co -dependency occurs when
 - Someone exhibits too much, inappropriate, care and concern for someone who comes to depends on his or her approval and control.
 - Both invest too much in the relationship it can lead to withdrawal from others and depression.
- This psychological problem is extreme but
 - Mentoring/coaching can build up dependency and
 - While shared introspection is useful
 - Make sure you keep a balanced approach.
- I find a sense of humour helps!

Agreeing the relationship;

Recognise that...

- Mentors/coaches can't be good at everything
 - State clearly what you find difficult or don't understand
- It is not an ego trip for mentors/coaches
 - Don't talk too much, don't compete
- Theories help but don't provide answers
 - If you use a reference why not look through it together
- A leader's first work relationship is with the team
 - A coach/mentor is not an alternative to talking to the team
- Coach/mentors need to understand the organisation
 - But they are not there as advisers to the organisation

Agreeing the relationship;

Establishing a contract (formal or informal)

- Is there a specific aim for coaching/mentoring
 - E. g. support during organisation transformation
- Or timescale
 - One year or three years – until promotion
- How often will you meet, where, for how long?
 - Monthly – quarterly, somewhere safe, uninterrupted
- What will you prepare for the meetings?
 - Questions, diary, experiences, references
- What will be recorded?
 - How confidentiality will be guaranteed
- How will you communicate between meetings?
 - By email/phone not more than once a week in general
- How will the contract be terminated?

Agreeing the relationship:

The approach

- There are four broad theoretical approaches to coaching and mentoring:
 - Behavioural: problems and solutions
 - Humanistic: current feelings and attitudes
 - Cognitive: ways of thinking and behaving
 - Psychodynamic: understanding of behaviour
- To understand the basis for these approaches you may wish to go on a course but as a start it may be helpful to agree to focus on a balance of:
 - Leadership issues and problems
 - Personal development and interpersonal issues
 - Thinking through general leadership issues
 - Providing personal advice and support

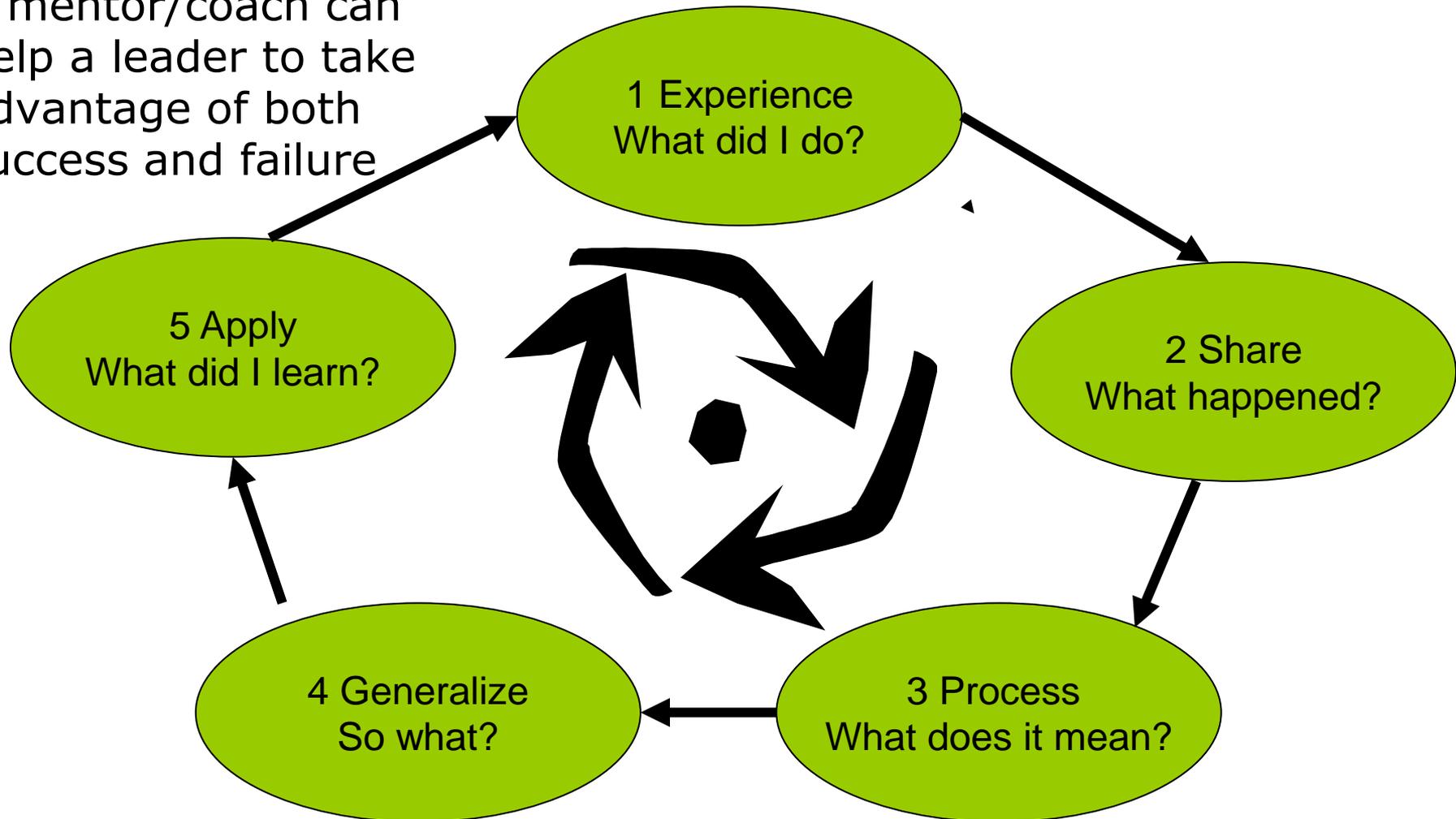
The Process:

The learning cycle

- ❑ Coaching /mentoring sessions will vary to respond to current situations and needs but it is helpful to set an outline plan for
 - Understanding personal qualities
 - Understanding the situation and parties involved
 - Identifying leadership challenges and goals
 - Identifying ethical issues and boundaries
 - Exploring options for action
 - Reflecting on lessons from success and failure
 - Persevering as a leader
- ❑ This learning cycle can be applied to a long term programme of mentoring and coaching and/or
- ❑ To address specific leadership development issues.

The Learning Cycle: Reflecting on success and failure

A mentor/coach can help a leader to take advantage of both success and failure



The Learning Cycle:

Understanding the situation

- ❑ It may be helpful to assess the situation to draw up a simple SWOT analysis
- ❑ But recognise that while some people find charts and diagrams helpful others don't.
 - So maybe just talking through the issues, the personalities and the relationships will help.
 - One approach is to role play to try to imagine how other people or groups might react, e.g. to a radical proposal.
 - With two people it is easier to assess what reactions might be and to take a realistic balanced view of options.

The Learning Cycle:

Exploring options for action

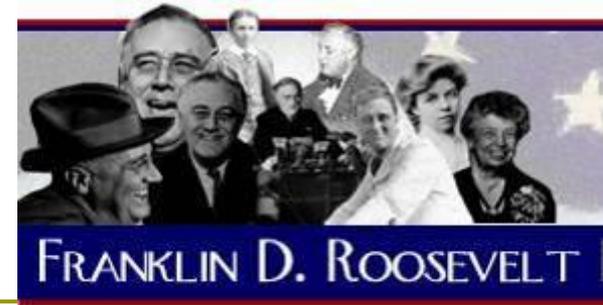
- The role of a mentor/ coach is to provide mental space to permit the leader to explore options.
- This can be stimulated in many ways...
 - What if.....?
 - What would you really like to do if you could..?
 - Why not...?
 - I remember a similar sort of problem....
- It is not the coach/mentor's role to produce solutions as this can inhibit the leader
- Rather they should encourage and support wider thinking and trying out ideas in a safe way.

The Learning Cycle:

Initiating action

- ❑ While there is a need for detailed evaluation of options and action planning these steps should be taken within the organisation.
- ❑ Coaching/mentoring focuses on helping the leader prepare him or herself to initiate action rather than these detailed tasks
- ❑ This may involve thinking through:
 - A checklist of what they need to do,
 - How they will communicate the action,
 - How they will delegate
 - How they will approach senior staff
 - How they will clear space for action (what they won't do)
- ❑ The role of the coach/mentor is to listen, support, encourage and question - not to advise.

The Learning Cycle: Perseverance



- ❑ As Franklin D. Roosevelt put it, simply:
 - *"Do something, if it works, do more of it, if it doesn't, do something else"*.
- ❑ Accounts of his life reveal that he was far from a simple man, he shows the courage needed to learn from success and failure in personal and political life and the perseverance he needed as a leader.
- ❑ He attributed this to the support of his wife Eleanor.
- ❑ It is with this sort of encouragement and good humour that a mentor/coach can help a leader to reflect on what works and what doesn't and to gain the courage and self belief to carry on.

A sense of purpose.....

- Some people find a work life goal helpful, mine is
 - “To improve public sector leadership and management as a contribution to a better, fairer society”
- I find this helpful to remind myself
 - Of what I am trying to achieve and have achieved
 - Of what my priorities at work should be
- I have other goals for my personal life
- And I try not to be boring on this subject
- It may be worthwhile exploring with a mentor
 - Your work life goals
 - Your personal development goals

The Dialogue:

Preparation

- ❑ Agree the topics you will cover and materials you will bring to the meeting
- ❑ A learning log/ leadership diary can be very useful to record:
 - Lessons learnt from reflection
 - Resolutions for personal development
 - Critical incidents
 - ❑ Where a leadership issue is raised
 - ❑ Where the leader needs to reflect on what to do next
 - ❑ Lessons to be learnt from success or failure

The Dialogue:

Agenda

- Agree an agenda for your meetings, and
- What you hope to take from the meeting
- Your agenda might include:
 - Learning cycle stages
 - Critical incidents from your learning log/diary
 - Options for action
 - Reflections and action
- This should not be a highly formalised or constrained agenda – leave time for personal issues and worries.
- But it is useful to make sure you have time to cover everything you need to discuss

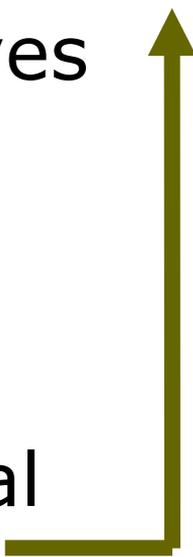
The Dialogue:

Some insights

- Coaches sometimes claim special skills in
 - Rapport building, active listening, neuro-linguistic programming, kinesics, learning styles analysis, empathy, deep questioning.
- There is no scientific basis for any of these but they offer some interesting insights:
 - Build a trusting relationship based on shared values
 - Listen carefully, think about what is said and why
 - Watch for body language
 - Remember that people learn in different ways
 - Match your approach to the others needs and mood
 - Ask open ended questions, follow up points
 - Summarise and check your understanding
 - Allow time for reflection in the conversation
 - A pause or a look can often be a very effective question
 - Don't talk to much.

What helps:

The 7 steps cycle for problem solving

1. Describe the situation and context
 2. Define the objectives and problem precisely
 3. List clarifications and learning objectives
 4. Search for additional information
 5. Propose possible solutions
 6. Evaluate and select
 7. Check if the solution solves the original problem. If not start the next cycle
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What helps:

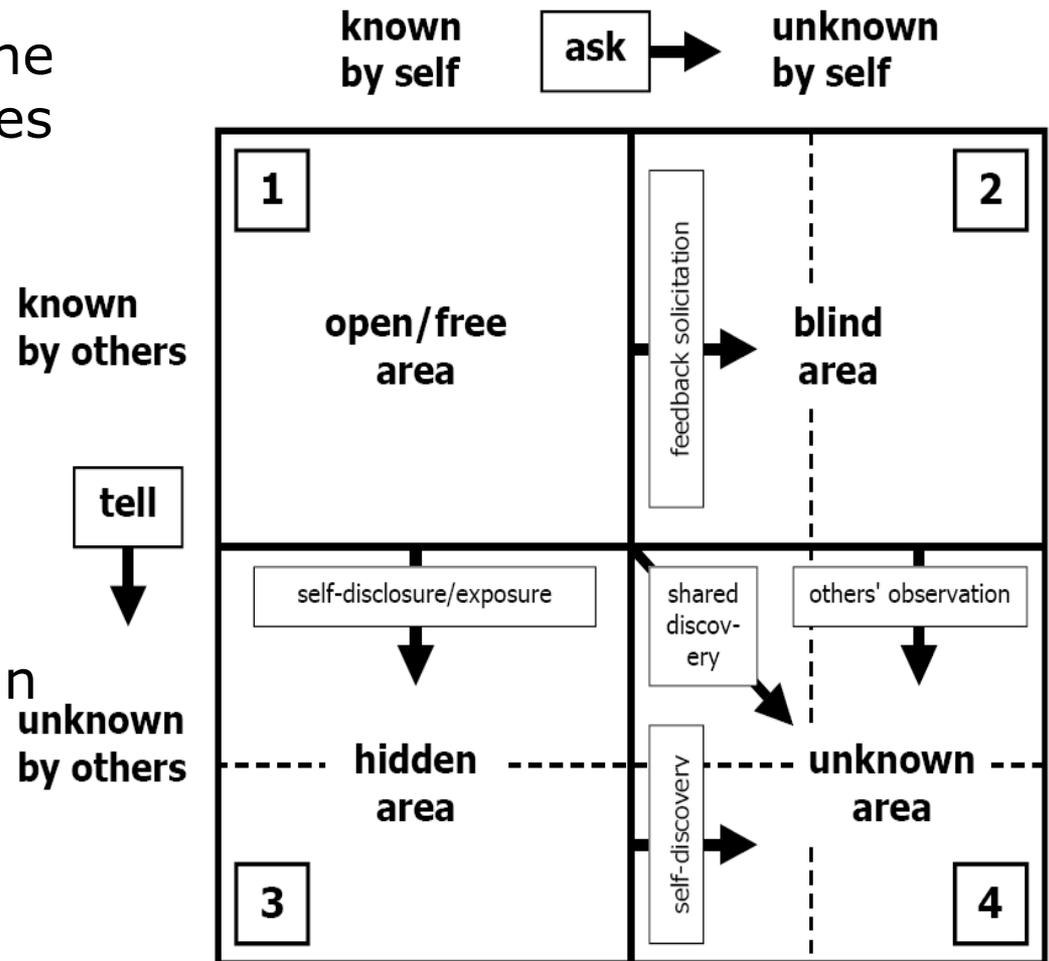
Theoretical frameworks

- The BLFH courses are full of theoretical models
- They are designed to look simple but they are not
- Try applying theoretical thinking to your issues
- And/or try reading some of the source books
- Then discuss the issues with your mentor/coach
- As examples try looking at models of
 - The learning organisations
 - Managing change/organisational transformation
 - Measures of management style
 - Emotional Intelligence
 - Authenticity
 - Innovation

What helps:

Johari* Window on self awareness

- Asking others reduces the blind area, telling reduces the hidden area
- Can provide a basis for mentoring
- But be careful with this there are reasons for these boundaries
- *Developed by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in 1954



What helps and what hinders: Pursuing what you are good at.....

- Isaiah Berlin quoted an ancient Greek parable: “The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.”
- Think about what



- Jim Collins uses this idea to help you find your “hedgehog concept” see <http://www.jimcollins.com/>
- Look through this with your mentor, but it’s a bit American!

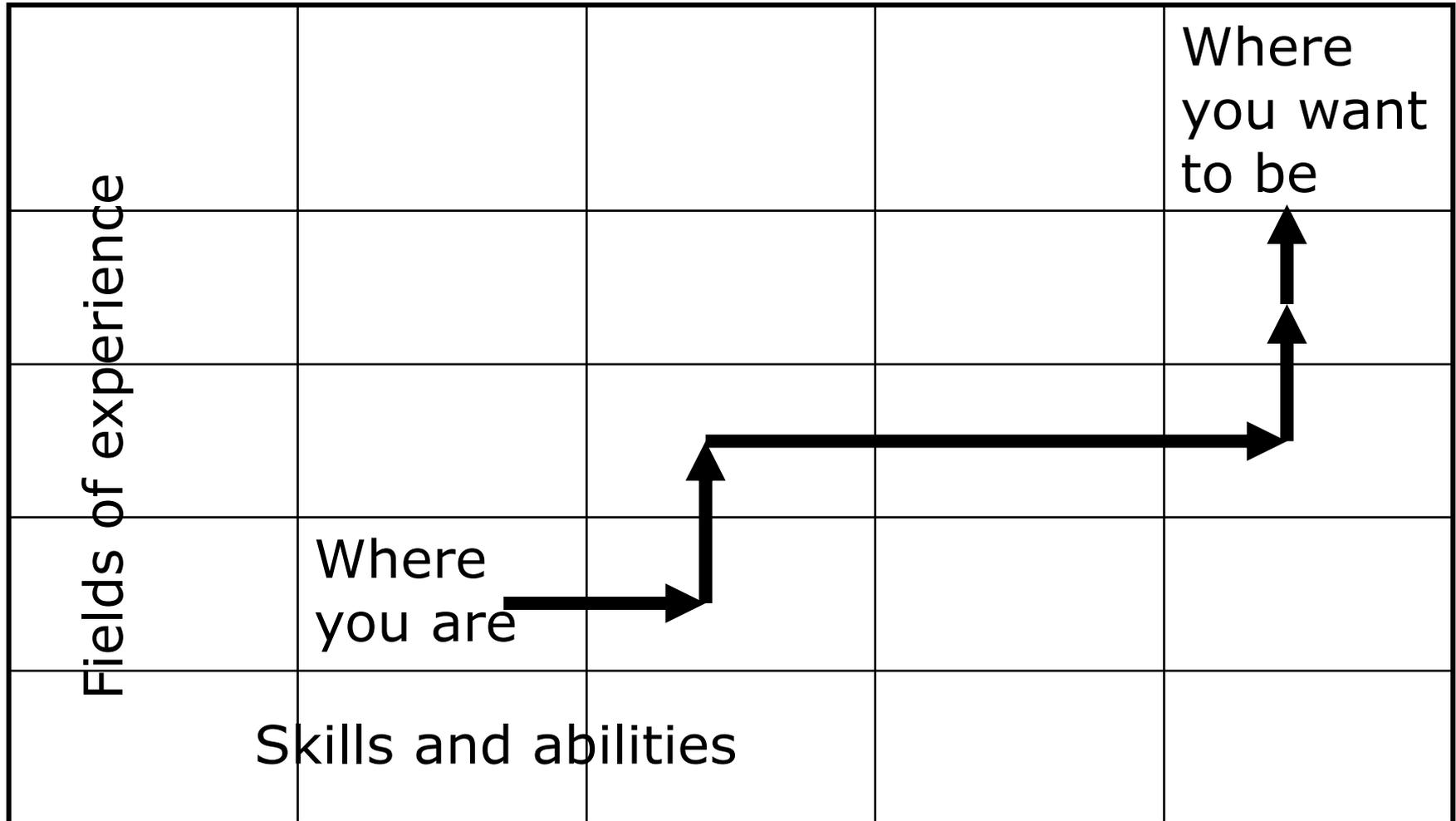
What helps:

Thinking about development

- Try using this simple technique
 - Set out your skills and abilities on one axis
 - And your fields of experience on the other
 - You can develop a new skill in a field you know
 - Or use existing skills to move into a new field
 - So you can move up and across (see next)
 - Draw many different versions of this, redefining
 - Skills and experience and where you want to be
 - This can help you think through your options
- You can adapt this approach to other problems i.e. developing your team or influencing organisations

What helps:

Thinking about career development



What helps and what hinders: Things to watch out for

- Coaching/mentoring can be valuable when used
 - In a controlled way by leaders
 - As a reinforcement for action
 - As a preparation for engagement with colleagues
 - Rather than as a substitute
- But if misused coaching/mentoring can:
 - Reinforce inflated ideas of self importance
 - Devalue relationships with others
 - Lead to over simplistic approaches
 - Create co-dependency between coaches and leaders
 - Be used as a substitute for therapy

What helps and what hinders:

Mentor/coach knowledge and experience

- Knowledge of the theories and practice of
 - Industrial sociology/psychology
 - Organisational development
 - Management science and
 - Leadership
- Are essential but experience and communication skills are equally important
- The process is very helpful in developing the skills and confidence of the coach/mentor
 - It widens and shares experience
 - Reinforces reflection and
 - Encourages reading around the topic

Notes on reading

- ❑ I encourage you to use mentoring, these are my tips but
- ❑ Find the approach that suits you best, try reading:
 - Sabine Dembkowski, Fiona Eldridge and Ian Hunter's **The Seven Steps of Effective Executive Coaching**
 - David Clutterbuck and David Megginson's '**Techniques of coaching and mentoring**' - readable, practical, not pretentious
 - David Parsloe and Monica Wray's '**Coaching and mentoring: Practical ways to improve learning**' which is more extensive and a bit more thorough but perhaps a little less practical.
 - Jenny Rogers "**Coaching Skills: a handbook**" is also good.
- ❑ But don't overcomplicate it - just get started Graham Lister

