

PART III: The Coaching Kata

Learning to Coach the Improvement Kata Pattern

PART III of the Handbook is a set of practice routines for learning how to coach someone who is practicing the scientific pattern of the Improvement Kata. Coaching the Improvement Kata is a **skill like any other, which means that learning it typically begins with some structured practice in small steps.**

Why does a Learner need a Coach? Because alone we don't see the errors in our practice and thus don't correct them!

To help the Learner become more proficient in using the scientific pattern of the Improvement Kata -- to make it a habit -- the Coach pays attention to the Learner's current application of the Improvement Kata pattern and sets specific practice goals for improving targeted aspects. The Coach keeps the Learner moving ahead in skill development and ensures the Learner is successful in using the IK pattern to navigate uncertain territory and achieve a challenging real Target Condition.

PART III

TWO CHAPTERS ON THE COACHING KATA

CHAPTER 8

Routines & Guidelines for IK Coaches



Chapter 8 presents a set of routines and guidelines for anyone who wants to practice and learn how to teach the Improvement Kata pattern.

CHAPTER 9

How to Do a Coaching Cycle



Chapter 9 walks the Coach step-by-step through how to practice a daily coaching cycle in the **EXECUTING** phase of the Improvement Kata.

Chapter 8

The Coaching Kata - 1

ROUTINES & GUIDELINES FOR IMPROVEMENT KATA COACHES



THIS CHAPTER COVERS THE FOLLOWING TOPICS

Look for the icons

Giving Feedback



Qualification for Coaching



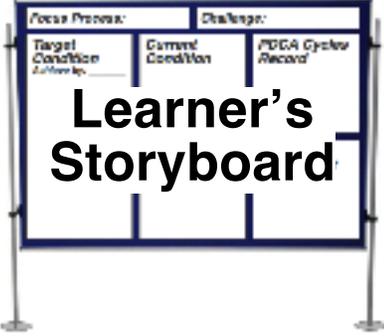
The Five Coaching Kata Questions



Coaching Cycles



Using the Learner's Storyboard



The Threshold of Knowledge



Role of the 2nd Coach



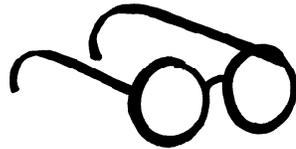
ORIENTATION

Planning

Understand the Direction



Grasp the Current Condition

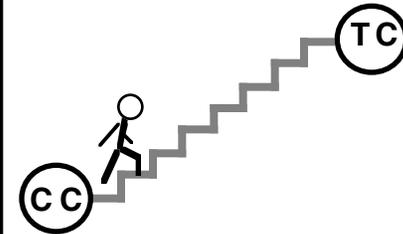


Establish the Next Target Condition



Executing

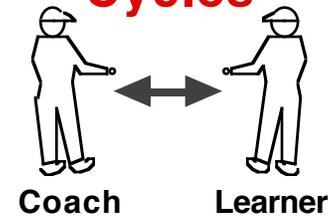
Iterate Toward the Target Condition



You Are Here

'Planning' Coaching Cycles

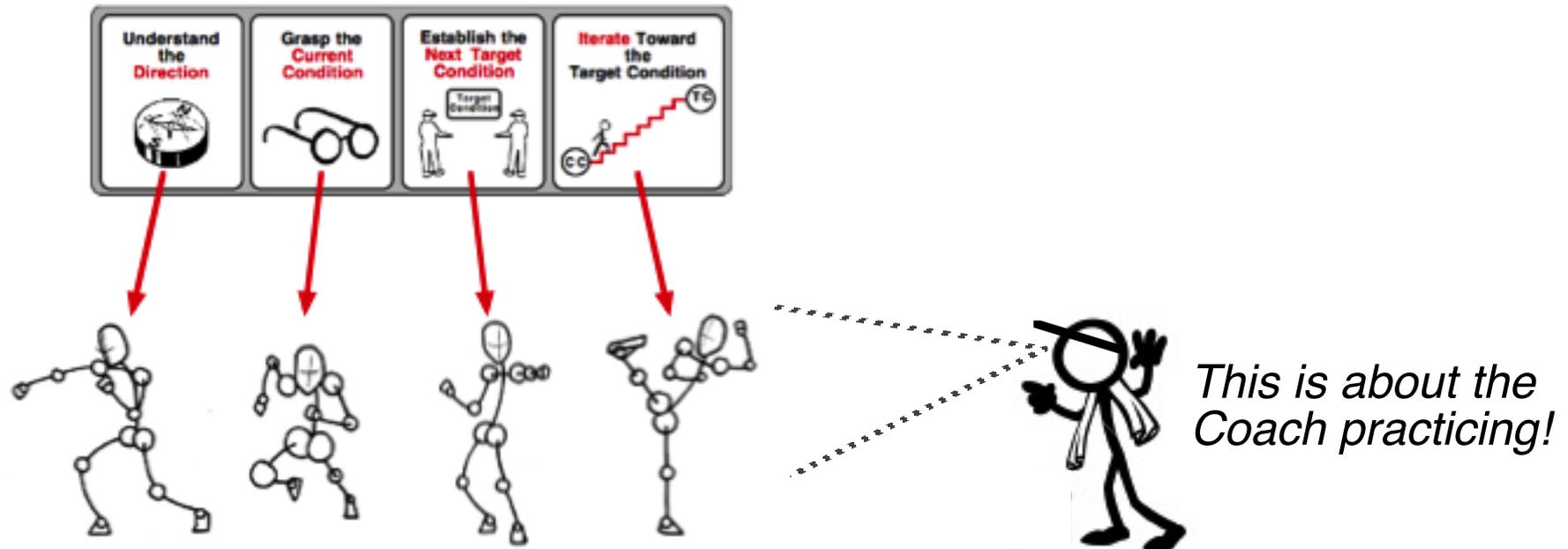
'Executing' Coaching Cycles



THE COACHING KATA IS NOT A GENERAL COACHING ROUTINE

A golf coach can't teach you how to play guitar. The Coaching Kata is a practice routine that's specific to teaching a scientific thinking pattern like the Improvement Kata.

The IMPROVEMENT KATA PATTERN



These are **PRACTICE ROUTINES** for learning each step of the Improvement Kata pattern
(HANDBOOK PART II)

The **COACHING KATA** is a set of practice routines for learning how to teach the Improvement Kata pattern
(HANDBOOK PART III)

GIVING FEEDBACK TO THE LEARNER

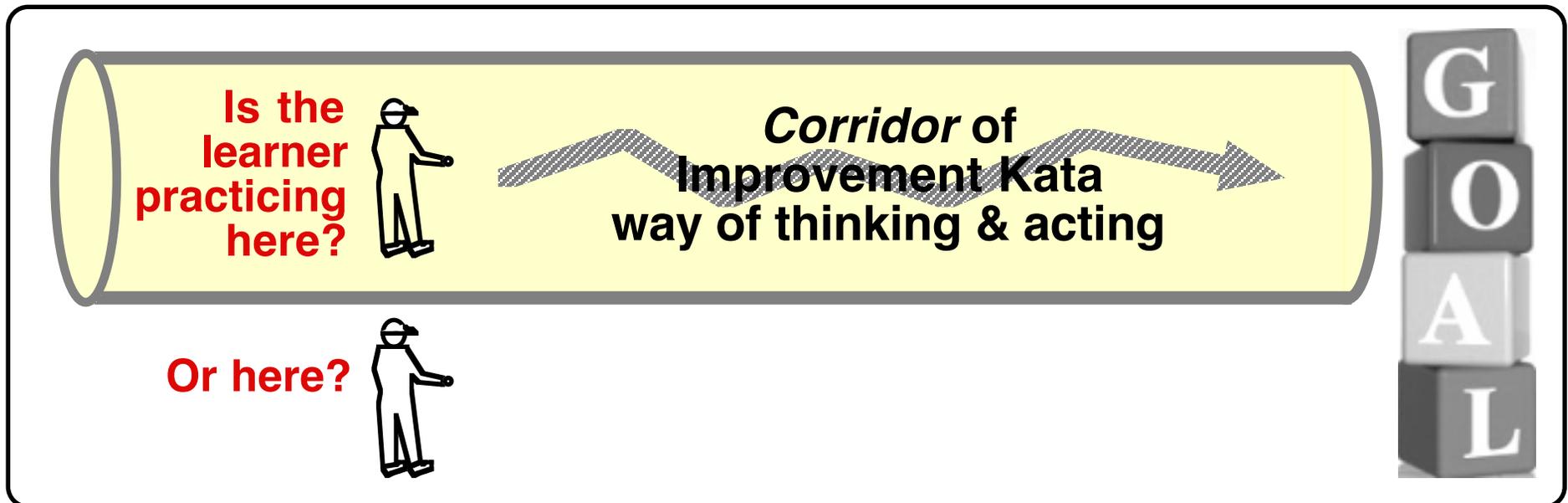
The effectiveness of the Coach's coaching, and the Learner's learning, depends on the Coach doing something with the Learner's responses to the Coach's questions, in a way that leads the Learner to higher skill and a richer understanding than s/he previously had. What should the Learner practice next?





WHAT YOU'RE DOING AS AN IK COACH

Your task is to determine whether or not the Learner is practicing within the scientific and systematic **corridor of thinking and acting specified by the Improvement Kata**, and to introduce procedural course corrections as necessary.



When the Learner gets outside the Improvement Kata corridor the potential for learning (for increasing the Learner's IK skill) is great. In this case you either provide a procedural input right away, or allow a small failure to occur and then provide the input.

CORRECTING THE LEARNER

It's not *practice makes perfect*, it's correct practice makes perfect

The Learner will naturally default back to his or her existing ways of thinking and acting. The Coach is ensuring that the Learner practices the right pattern the right way so that it becomes a habit that is readily available.



Of course, this requires that the Coach (manager) has first learned how to apply the Improvement Kata him- or herself, through practice.

Photos from "The Karate Kid," 1984



THE INTENTION OF COACHING IS NOT AUDIT AND COMPLIANCE

The purpose of coaching is this...



Helping the Learner learn the scientific Improvement Kata pattern

Not this...





THE LEARNER NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

Novice Learners need the Coach's experience and supporting feedback in order to get comfortable and skillful with operating in the uncertain 'learning zone'

The norm in many organizations



You're trying to develop exploratory mindset by coaching the Learner in practicing the Improvement Kata pattern



Improvement Kata coaching is not about criticism and control. Being allowed to have many failed experiments is essential for scientific working and learning. The Coach must understand this in order to be accepted by the Learner as a teacher.



WHAT IS THE LEARNER READY FOR?

One of the main responsibilities of an IK Coach is to sense what the Learner is ready for next, and to tailor the feedback and practice accordingly. In particular, a challenge for the Coach is to ensure that the Learner periodically experiences positive emotions while practicing. Brain science shows that if we practice but are not enthusiastic about it, then the new patterns won't be learned no matter how much we practice.

This doesn't mean that the Learner has to be enthusiastic right from the start or all the time. But the Coach must ensure that the Learner periodically feels a sense of progress and success.

The Coach is trying to help the Learner develop new habits of thinking. This requires striking a balance between going through the structured practice routines of the Improvement Kata model and the Learner having a positive emotion. On the one hand, having the Learner mindlessly repeat routines usually fails to generate positive feelings about practice. On the other hand, abandoning the practice routines means the Learner is unlikely to change their existing habits of mind.

So in each coaching cycle the Coach should be assessing what the Learner is ready for next and adjusting accordingly. The Coach knows the thinking pattern s/he is trying to impart, but each Learner will "get it" through a somewhat different path of practicing. The Coach should be experienced enough to see and to handle this variability in their Learners.



HOW CAN THE COACH TELL HOW THE LEARNER IS THINKING?

By observing, asking questions and listening!

The Coach asks questions not to direct the Learner to a particular solution (though it can sometimes feel that way to the Learner), but (1) to discern *how* the Learner is thinking & working and (2) to find the current Threshold of Knowledge.

The Coach should usually not be directive about *what* the Learner is working on. That comes out of the iterative process of experimentation, and neither Coach nor Learner know in advance what solutions will lead to the target condition. However, the Coach can be directive about *how* the Learner should proceed.

Specifically, after you've observed the Learner and listened to the Learner's response(s) to questions you may be directive about the next procedural step. This is done to teach the desired pattern and to get the Learner into the Improvement Kata corridor.

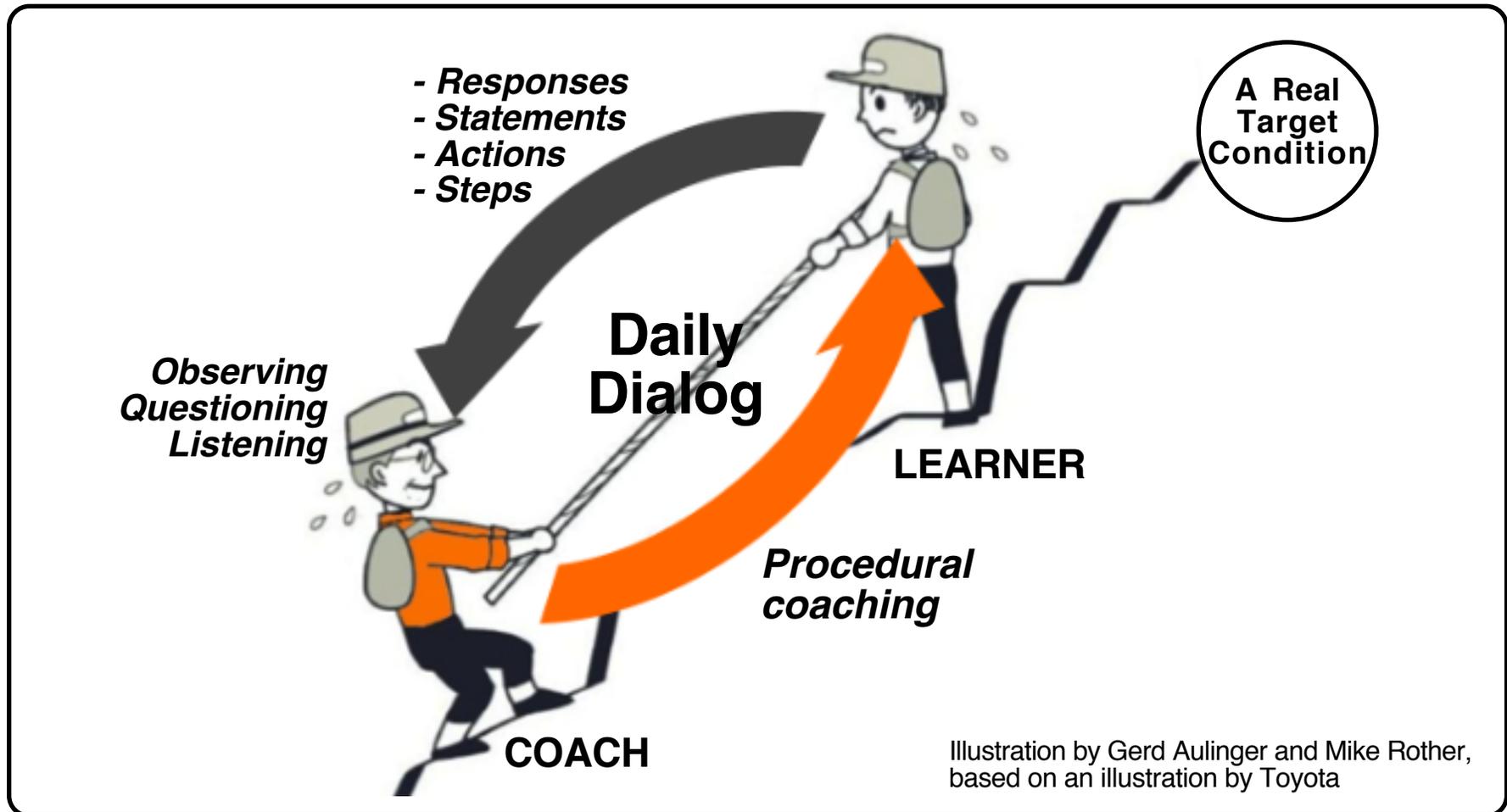
Skill-coaching involves more than just asking questions. The Coach is concerned about the Learner practicing correct Improvement Kata procedure and will often give targeted procedural inputs. Being able to judge the Learner's process and provide appropriate feedback is why the Coach must have prior personal experience with applying the Improvement Kata pattern.



HOW IT WORKS

Co-dependency between Coach and Learner

The Learner does the WHAT by taking steps and conducting experiments



The Coach teaches the HOW of the Improvement Kata procedure



IT'S A “SEE-COMPARE-INSTRUCT” PATTERN OF COACHING

- 1** SEE - Try to understand how the Learner is thinking
(Coach is in an observing / questioning / listening mode)
- 2** COMPARE - Compare this to the desired pattern -- “the corridor” -- specified by the Improvement Kata
(Coach is in a judging mode)
- 3** INSTRUCT - Introduce a course adjustment if necessary
(Coach is in an instructing or guiding mode)



The **SEE-COMPARE-INSTRUCT** pattern can be repeated several times within one coaching cycle

ASK YOURSELF



- 1** How does the Learner seem to be thinking?
Observe, ask and listen.
- 2** What *thinking* pattern do I want to see at this point?
Think about the Improvement-Kata pattern from your own experience applying it.
- 3** Is a course adjustment necessary? What Improvement-Kata *behavior* pattern do I want the Learner to practice next?
Correct at this point, or let the Learner fail and then instruct.



GIVING FEEDBACK TO THE LEARNER IN STAGE 1 OF THEIR IK PRACTICE

In Stage 1 the Learner is trying to execute the kata exactly, and you're instructing the Learner in the steps and techniques of that Kata

To give constructive feedback you should have a genuine interest in the Learner being successful in applying the Improvement Kata toward their target condition.

Observe and question the Learner → Compare what you see and hear to the desired way of working (specified by the Improvement Kata) → Give feedback and a specific next practice goal → Repeat in the next coaching cycle.

Your task is to spot, and have the Learner work on, a current area of weakness in practicing the Improvement Kata.

You should expect and allow the Learner to make small mistakes in applying the Improvement Kata. These are important moments, from which the Learner learns how to correctly apply the Improvement Kata pattern.



GIVING FEEDBACK TO THE LEARNER IN STAGE 1 OF THEIR IK PRACTICE

- ❑ Your feedback should contain specific comments:
 - (A) What specific aspects of the Learner's Improvement Kata procedure fit the desired pattern. (Positive feedback.)
 - (B) What one or two aspects the Learner should work on next, including what exactly the Learner should do in order to practice and improve in those particular areas. (The Learner may also have suggestions for how to improve.)

Specific feedback is more useful for skill development than general statements such as “*nice work*” or “*needs improvement*”.

- ❑ Since you’re doing coaching cycles with the Learner frequently there’s no need to try to correct many errors in one coaching cycle.
- ❑ Errors should often be corrected immediately. In Stage 1 of practicing the IK pattern it’s often best to give feedback right away, rather than waiting until the end of the coaching cycle, to avoid cementing a bad habit. If the Learner makes a misstep, stop and deal with it, because it’s a teachable moment. (Note: this interrupting can be overdone).

When you interrupt a coaching cycle to correct an error it’s often a good idea to ask the Learner to restart the coaching cycle from the beginning or to repeat that section of the coaching cycle. This drives home the pattern and is a standard technique in music practice.



GIVING FEEDBACK TO THE LEARNER IN STAGE 1 OF THEIR IK PRACTICE

❑ Another strategy is not to correct the Learner immediately and instead allow the Learner to make a mistake and let the experience be the teacher. You should provide enough leeway for the Learner to make (and learn from) harmless mistakes. This works best when the Learner's next step is cheap, small and short; i.e., feedback and the next coaching cycle will happen soon. You have to decide on case-by-case basis when to use this strategy, which is part of your skill as a Coach.

❑ Since beginner Learners often feel stress about being in the uncertainty zone, the Coach should transmit confidence that the target condition can be achieved by applying the pattern of the Improvement Kata.

It's important for the Learner to derive motivation from periodically feeling that they're successfully moving closer to the target condition and getting better at the Improvement Kata pattern. If the Learner is not getting this feeling periodically then something in your coaching needs to be adjusted.



THE NATURE OF YOUR FEEDBACK CHANGES AS THE LEARNER'S IK SKILL INCREASES

Stage of Learner's IK Practice & Skill	Nature of Your Feedback	Closeness of Your Coaching*
<p>STAGE 1: FOLLOW (Practice the Kata exactly)</p> <p>At first the Learner repeats the structured practice routines with discipline, trying to execute them without variation.</p>	<p>Emphasis on <i>Instructing</i></p> <p>When the Learner first starts practicing the Improvement Kata pattern the Coach's role is to teach the Learner the steps and techniques of the Improvement Kata.</p>	<p>Close coaching (daily) on focused, simple applications of the IK pattern.</p>
<p>STAGE 2: DETACH (Personalize your practice)</p> <p>Once the basic forms have been absorbed and can be executed successfully the Learner can make modifications to his/her practice.</p>	<p>Emphasis on <i>Coaching</i></p> <p>As the Learner develops and demonstrates technical understanding of the Improvement Kata pattern, the Coach and Learner discuss and agree on appropriate training requirements.</p>	<p>Close coaching (daily) on a wider and more complicated range of applications of the IK pattern.</p>
<p>STAGE 3: FLUENCY (Intuitive operating)</p> <p>At this stage the Learner has absorbed the Improvement Kata to such an advanced level that s/he can be creative and unhindered while still working within the principles.</p>	<p>Emphasis on <i>Counseling</i></p> <p>As the Learner matures s/he will determine his or her own training requirements. The coach's role becomes one of a colleague providing advice and support as and when required.</p>	<p>Coaching can be less frequent.</p>

*How closely the Coach coaches the Learner depends on the Learner's current skill level. The Coach naturally has to spend more time with beginner learners than with proficient learners.



THE COACH'S NOTEBOOK

Maintain a notebook record of your coaching cycles, to keep track of key-point reminders for your next coaching cycle with a Learner. It's useful to have a single book for recording items such as the following:



EXAMPLE NOTEBOOK PAGE FORMAT

Learner:

Coaching cycle date:

Start and end time:

Focus Process:

Learner's next step:

What are your impressions of the Learner's current approach to applying the Improvement Kata?

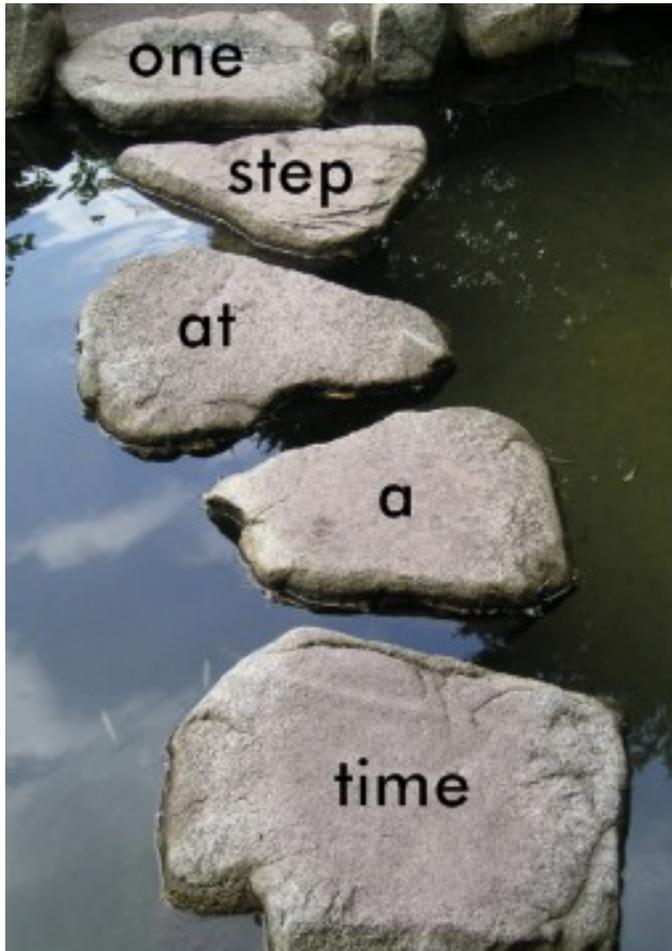
What aspect of their IK procedure should the Learner work on improving between now and the next coaching cycle? (Feedback given to Learner)

Other notes:





GAINING PROFICIENCY A STEP AT A TIME



Your Learner can only take a step at a time toward the target condition. Likewise, you shouldn't overload the Learner with advice about what to practice. Remember, the next coaching cycle, i.e., the next feedback opportunity, is coming right up.

In a coaching cycle ask yourself...

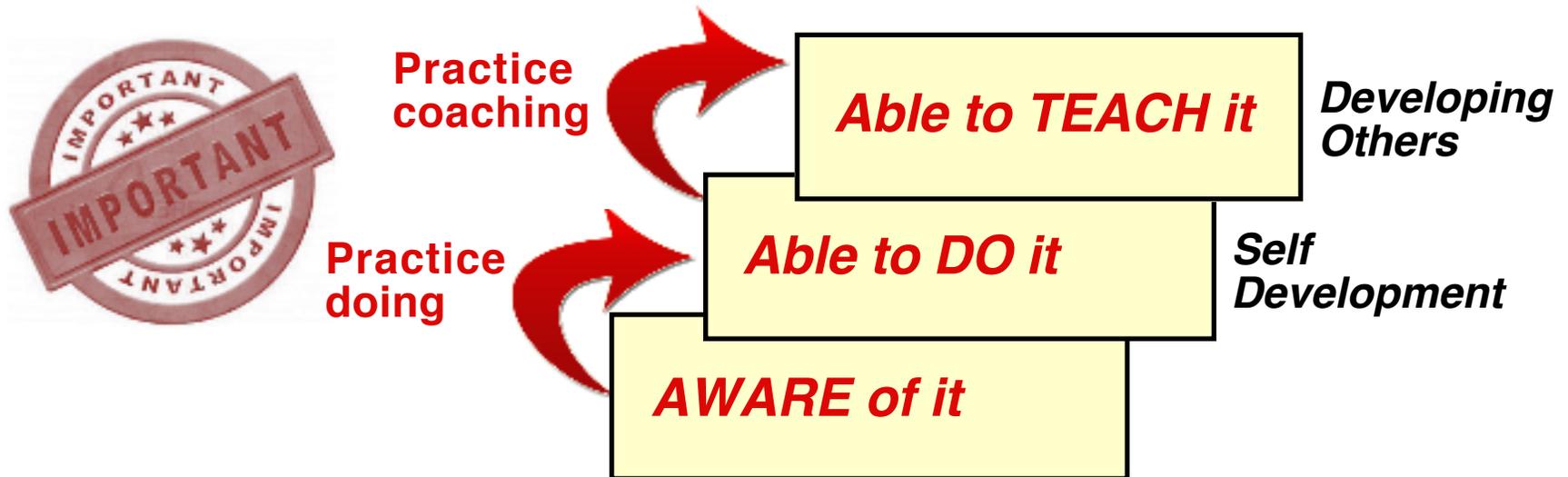
what one or two aspects of the Improvement Kata do you think the Learner should practice in the next round...

as s/he takes the next step toward the target condition?



QUALIFICATIONS FOR BEING AN IMPROVEMENT KATA COACH

- ❑ Since you need to judge if the Learner is following the Improvement Kata pattern correctly and provide procedural inputs, you must have experience carrying out the Improvement Kata yourself. To coach the Improvement Kata pattern you need to understand the Improvement Kata pattern from your own personal experience.



- ❑ You must become knowledgeable about the focus work process that the Learner is improving. However, you can do that in parallel while you coach the Learner.
- ❑ You must be willing to practice and learn a different approach to managing, which involves guiding and teaching a scientific *procedure* rather than directing the content of the Learner's actions.



A GOOD IMPROVEMENT KATA COACH



- **Highly experienced in both the pattern and philosophy of the Improvement Kata (Credible)**
- **Keen observer of people: technical and interpersonal skills**
- **Listens more than talks**
- **Pulls best from Learner instead of pushing knowledge into head**
- **Frequent, specific feedback for small intervals of Learner's work**
- **Truly cares about the Learner's learning**
- **See coaching as a process of *mutual* development and trust**

List by Jeffrey Liker



JOB DESCRIPTION FOR AN IK COACH

The role of the Coach is to manage the Learner's practice

Just repeating a series of steps is not enough for the Learner to develop new skills and mindset. How the Learner practices and their emotions during their practicing play a large role.

An important ingredient is the Learner's success and joy in (a) overcoming obstacles and achieving an appropriately challenging (for the Learner) Target Condition through application of the Improvement Kata pattern, and (b) progressively mastering the Improvement Kata pattern.

To cope with the discomfort, plateaus and setbacks that come with any skill-building and learning process the Learner needs support. The Coach helps the Learner see when s/he might be acting in ways counter to their skill-building goals and to configure the next practice activity to make new progress.

Your objective as a Coach is not just that the Learner achieves their Target Condition, but that the Learner is able to and *wants to* use the Improvement Kata pattern. With this in mind, a job description for an Improvement Kata coach, especially with beginner Learners, might be:



TO MANAGE THE LEARNER'S PRACTICE. Accompany the Learner and give procedural guidance as needed to ensure that although the Learner struggles, s/he is successful in learning to use the Improvement Kata pattern to achieve challenging, real Target Conditions.

Someone's learning is in your hands. In other words, the Coach is responsible for the Learner's success!



BEGIN YOUR COACHING ONE ON ONE

One Coach, One Learner



Start by coaching Learners one at a time, not in groups of Learners:

- **Each Learner will have different focus-practice needs at different times.**
- **Different Learners learn at different rates.**
- **Different Learners learn in different ways.**

Since a coaching cycle only takes 10-15 minutes, you can still meet with multiple Learners every day. The standard “Starter Kata” format of the Five Questions, PDCA Cycles Record and Learner’s storyboard help you more easily shift from coaching one Learner to the next.



STAGES OF YOUR COACHING-KATA PRACTICE

You're going through a coaching-skill learning process

STAGE 1: FOLLOW (Practice the Coaching Kata exactly)

At first you repeat the forms with discipline, executing the Kata without variation. It may feel awkward when you start, but as you go through repetitions it becomes more flowing.

Any time you learn a new skill you're a beginner in that area, which means starting with some repetitious exercises.

STAGE 2: DETACH (Personalize your Coaching Kata practice)

Once the basic forms have been absorbed and can be executed successfully you can make modifications to your practice. You now appreciate and use the Kata because you understand the technical wisdom -- the "why" -- within them, and you adapt the patterns to your situation.

STAGE 3: FLUENCY (Intuitive operating)

At this stage you've absorbed the patterns of the Kata to such an advanced level that you can be creative and unhindered -- spontaneous and efficient -- while still working within the principles. The underlying truth of the Kata remains, but you almost forget the technique and aren't limited by a conscious thought process. Your mind can now operate on a higher level than previously possible.



THE FIVE COACHING KATA QUESTIONS

This is a Starter Kata for the Coach, shown here on the Coach's 5Q card

COACHING KATA

The Five Questions

- 1) What is the **Target Condition**?
- 2) What is the **Actual Condition** now?
-----(*Turn Card Over*)----->
- 3) What **Obstacles** do you think are preventing you from reaching the target condition?
Which ***one*** are you addressing now?
- 4) What is your **Next Step**? (next experiment) What do you expect?
- 5) When can we go and see what we **Have Learned** from taking that step?

**You'll often work on the same obstacle for several PDCA cycles*

Reflect on the Last Step Taken

Because you don't actually know what the result of a step will be!

- 1) What did you plan as your **Last Step**?
- 2) What did you **Expect**?
- 3) What **Actually Happened**?
- 4) What did you **Learn**?

----->
Return to question 3

The card is turned over to reflect on the Learner's last step

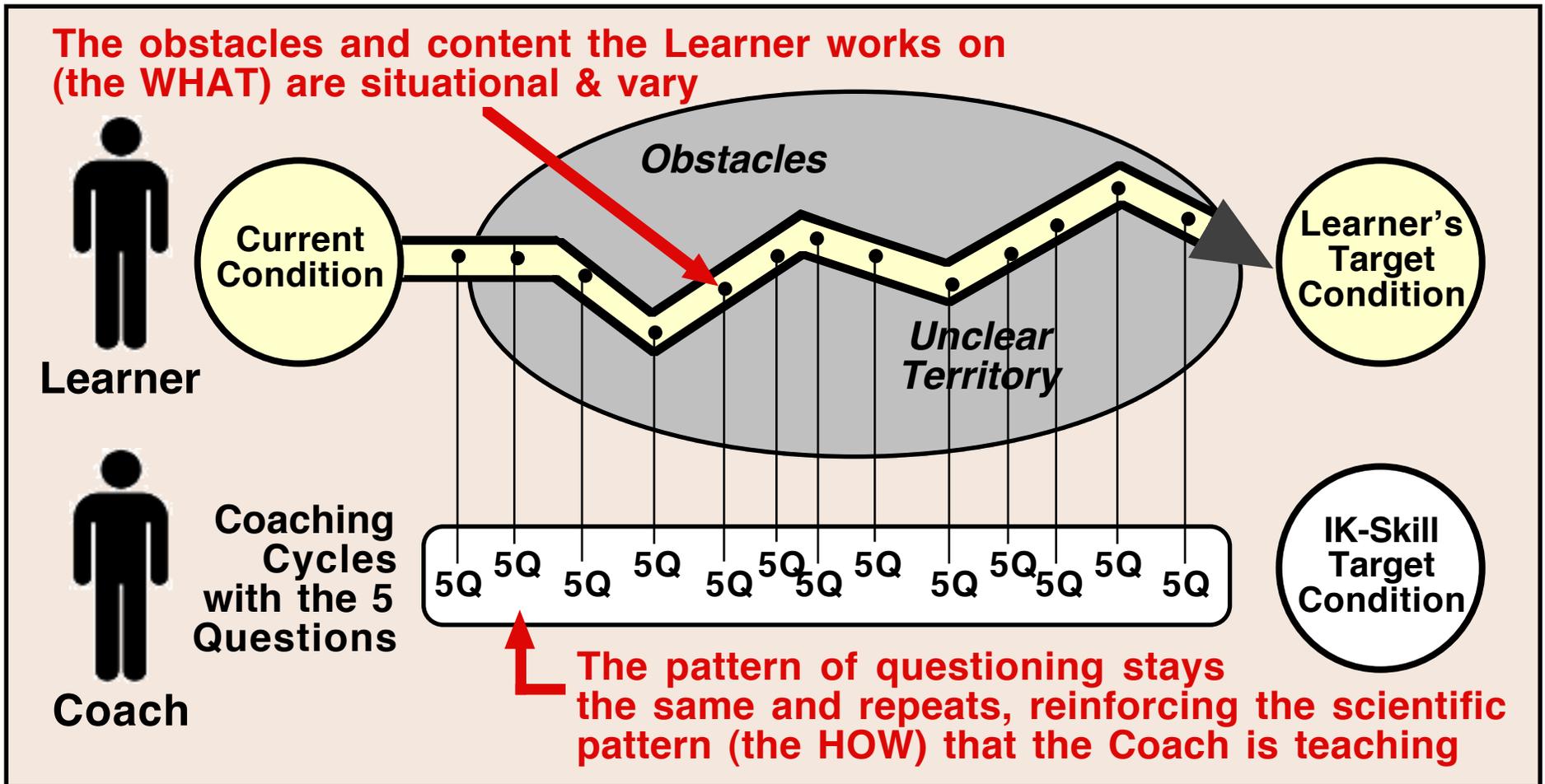


The power of the Five Questions is great, when you know how to ask them and how to respond to the answers you get.

Get the card in the Appendix or at: <http://tinyurl.com/katacard>

PURPOSE OF THE FIVE QUESTIONS (A) TO REINFORCE THE PATTERN OF THE IK

The Coach uses the same pattern of questioning in every coaching cycle



The Five Coaching Kata Questions help the Coach teach a systematic, scientific way of thinking. The Learner knows what basic questions the Coach will ask in the next coaching cycle, and prepares his or her information on the storyboard accordingly.

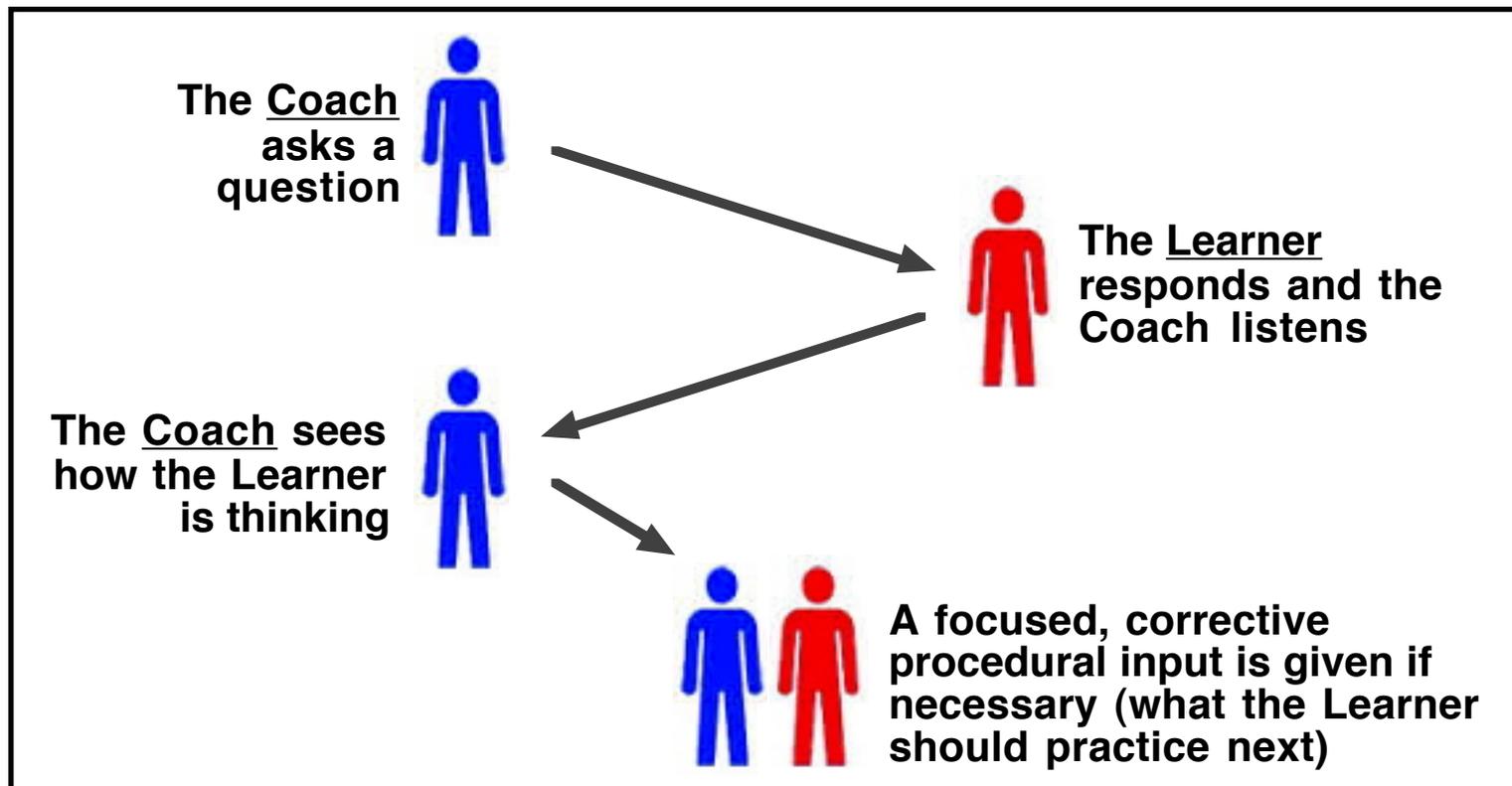


PURPOSE OF THE FIVE QUESTIONS (B) ***TO HELP THE COACH SEE HOW THE LEARNER IS THINKING***



The Coach's job is to provide corrective procedural inputs, to ensure that the Learner is proceeding (practicing) according to the scientific pattern of the Improvement Kata.

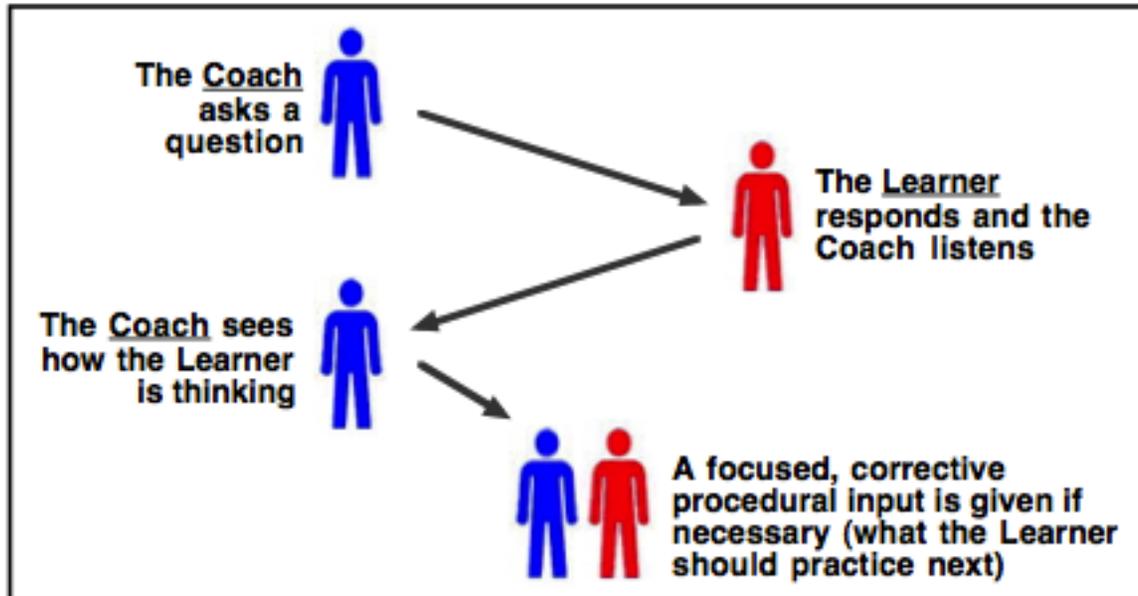
However, the Coach cannot provide such input until the Learner has said or done something, which shows how the Learner is currently thinking. It works like this:





IT'S THE SAME AS IN SPORTS AND MUSIC

Asking the Five Coaching Kata Questions helps the Coach see the line of reasoning being used by the Learner, and then to keep the Learner practicing in the corridor of the scientific thinking pattern of the Improvement Kata



The 5Q process is like a Golf coach saying, *“Please swing the golf club a few times so I can see what you are doing,”* or a Music teacher saying, *“Please play a bit so I can see.”*

However, since the Improvement Kata pattern is a mental process, the Coaching Kata Five Question approach is: *“I’m going to ask you these questions. How you respond will help me to understand how you are currently thinking.”*



MASTERING THE 5 COACHING KATA QUESTIONS HELPS THE COACH ACHIEVE SEVERAL THINGS

- Helps you determine if the Learner's thinking is inside or outside the 'corridor' specified by the Improvement Kata pattern.
- You put the focus on facts and data; on what we know and not just opinions.
- You guide a process of experimenting, whereby the Learner compares predicted and actual outcomes, and adjusts the course accordingly.
- You teach a systematic process for learning.
- You impart importance and urgency.

The Five Coaching Kata Questions...

--> Should be used at all levels of an organization to help create scientific thinking. They hold everyone to the same standard of requiring data from experiments for decision-making.

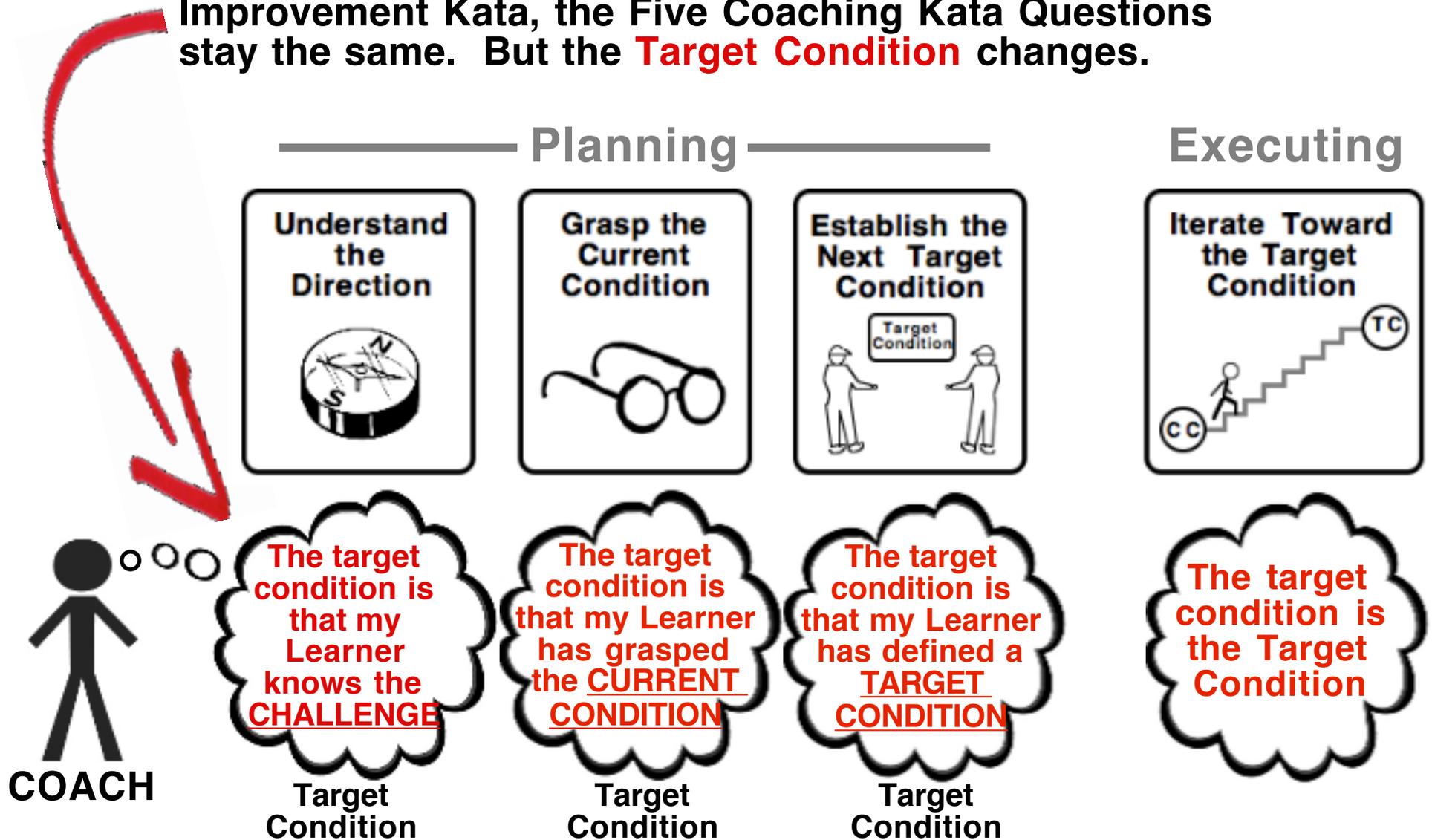
--> Don't demand that you know all the answers when you start. You proceed through experiments, each based on what you learned in the previous step.

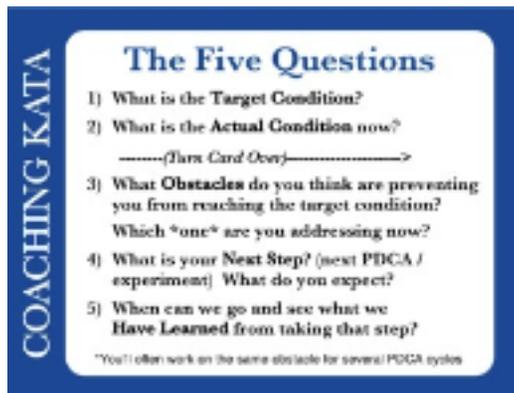
--> Their structure is easy to learn, although it takes practice to master them.

5
QUESTIONS

THE FIVE QUESTIONS USED AT ALL STEPS OF THE IMPROVEMENT KATA PATTERN

As the Learner goes through the four steps of the Improvement Kata, the Five Coaching Kata Questions stay the same. But the **Target Condition** changes.





STICK TO THE 5Q SCRIPT UNTIL YOU INTERNALIZE ITS PATTERN

Ask the questions exactly as they are written on the card when you conduct a coaching cycle. No improvising until you've at least reached Stage 2 of practicing your coaching skills. This way every Learner gets a consistent version of the coaching dialog.

It can feel awkward at first to follow a structured dialog when you're not used to it. Many people think a coaching dialog is like a conversation, but with the skill-development focus of the IK/CK it is not. It's a structured dialog with the goal of effective information exchange and development of scientific skills and mindset.

A common mistake that beginner coaches make is to deviate from the script of the Five Coaching Kata Questions. This diminishes the strength of the pattern you're trying to develop, both in your mind & behavior and in the Learner's. If the Learner sees you varying from the basic pattern they will tend to vary from it as well; way too soon when they are still in Phase 1 of their kata practice. This can lead to simply sticking with current thinking; not developing new skill and mindset.

A guideline is to stick to the script for six months to a year with each new Learner. Let the pattern sink in and become a well-established habit for both of you. Once you and your Learner have a consistent and well-developed routine and understand the "why" behind the 5 Questions, you can consider modifying the routine if necessary.



YOU CAN OF COURSE ALSO ASK “CLARIFYING QUESTIONS”

Beyond the questions written on the card, you can also ask **clarifying questions** -- to probe the Learner’s thought process, gain more information and find the current Threshold of Knowledge -- at any point in the coaching cycle. Clarifying questions help you understand what's going on in the Learner's thinking, and help you develop a scientific mindset in the Learner.

Clarifying questions are not intended to lead or persuade the Learner. Their purpose is to help the Coach see and understand the Learner’s current way of thinking, so the Coach can cultivate systematic, fact- and data-based thinking.

An example clarifying question is, *"Can you please show me?"* Going to the focus process and observing what the Learner is talking about gives you facts that go beyond data on the storyboard. Checking the reality of the situation helps you to discern how your Learner is thinking, which guides your next coaching inputs for the Learner.

Several suggested clarifying questions for the Executing phase of the IK are provided in the next chapter.

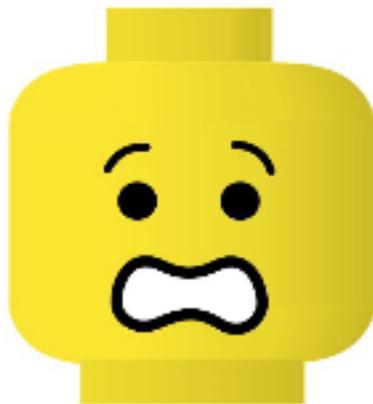


BUT BE CAREFUL ASKING “WHY?”

The Lean community promotes “*asking why five times*” as a means to help get to the root cause of a problem. This is a team brainstorming technique, not a coaching technique.

If you ask the Learner “*why*” it can easily feel confrontational rather than constructive, especially if you ask “*why*” repeatedly.

As a Coach, you’re asking questions to help you SEE the Learner’s current thinking pattern, and for that purpose it may be better to say, “*Tell me more about...*” or “*Can you show me?*”





COACHING CYCLES

The main forum for coaching

A coaching cycle is a structured face-to-face dialog between the Coach and the Learner that is conducted at least once daily, taking 5-20 minutes. This is the Coach's primary routine for teaching scientific thinking.



The purpose of daily coaching cycles is to review the problem-solving *process* and ensure it proceeds effectively / scientifically.

A coaching cycle is used to guide the Learner through the steps of the Improvement Kata by providing *procedural* inputs and course corrections, as the Learner applies the Improvement Kata pattern step-by-step to a challenging, real situation.

Problems are not solved in coaching cycles. That happens through iteration (experimenting) toward the Target Condition.

A coaching cycle is a pause; i.e., a forum for the Coach and Learner to reflect on the last step, introduce course corrections if necessary, and plan the next step. Coaching cycles give managers and supervisors a structured approach for (1) facilitating the development of Improvement Kata skill and self-efficacy in their Learners and (2) further developing their own coaching skills.

PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND COACHING CYCLES

For both the Coach and the Learner

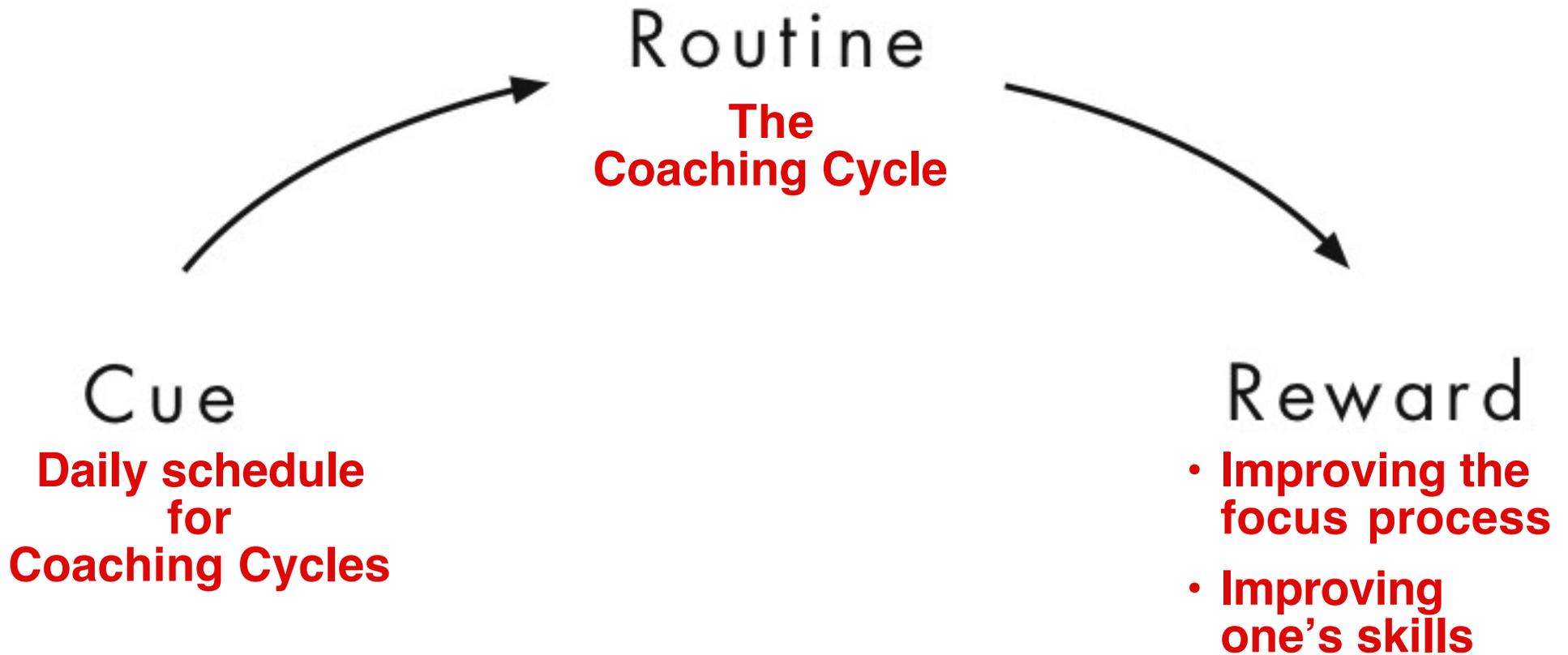


Illustration from "The Power of Habit" by Charles Duhigg



COACHING CYCLES ARE USED TO TEACH THE IMPROVEMENT KATA PATTERN

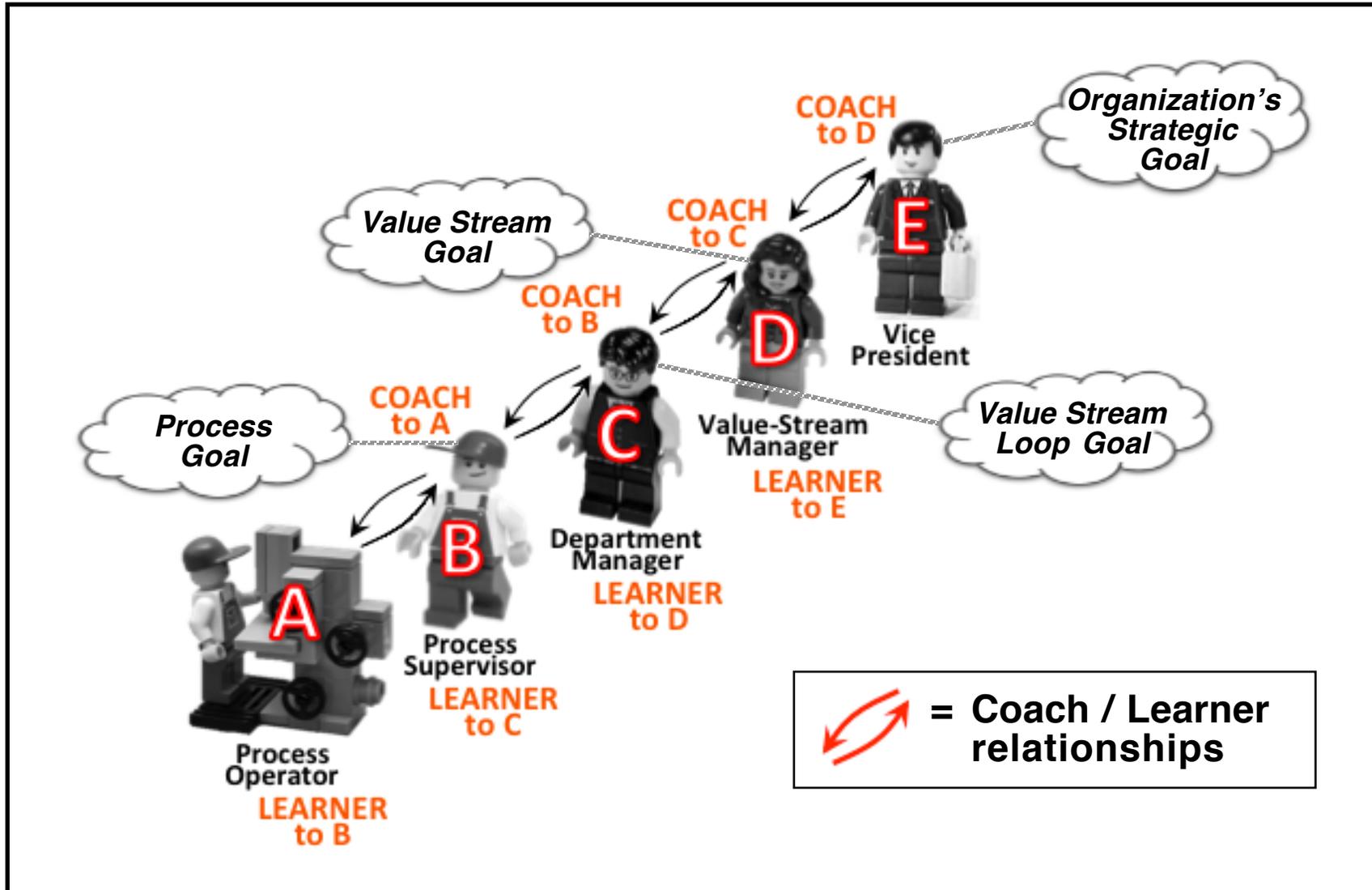
Coaching cycles are used to guide the Learner through the steps of applying the Improvement Kata pattern to a real work process. They are a way to guide and give feedback to Learners in their Improvement Kata practice.

COACHING CYCLES ARE A FORUM FOR:

- Assessing the current status of:
 - (a) The Learner's thinking
 - (b) The focus process.
- Finding the current Knowledge Threshold.
- Giving procedural guidance:
 - (a) To help the Learner be successful in designing and achieving a real, measureable, challenging, dated target condition through application of the Improvement Kata pattern.
 - (b) To help the Learner internalize the Improvement Kata pattern in a learn-by-doing manner.
- Practicing and improving your coaching skill.



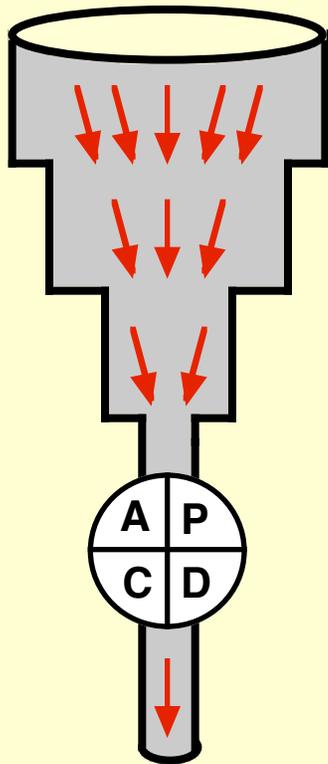
COACHING CYCLES ARE CONDUCTED UP-AND-DOWN AN ORGANIZATION





COACHING CYCLES ARE BUILT AROUND THE FIVE COACHING KATA QUESTIONS

These Five Questions = One Coaching Cycle

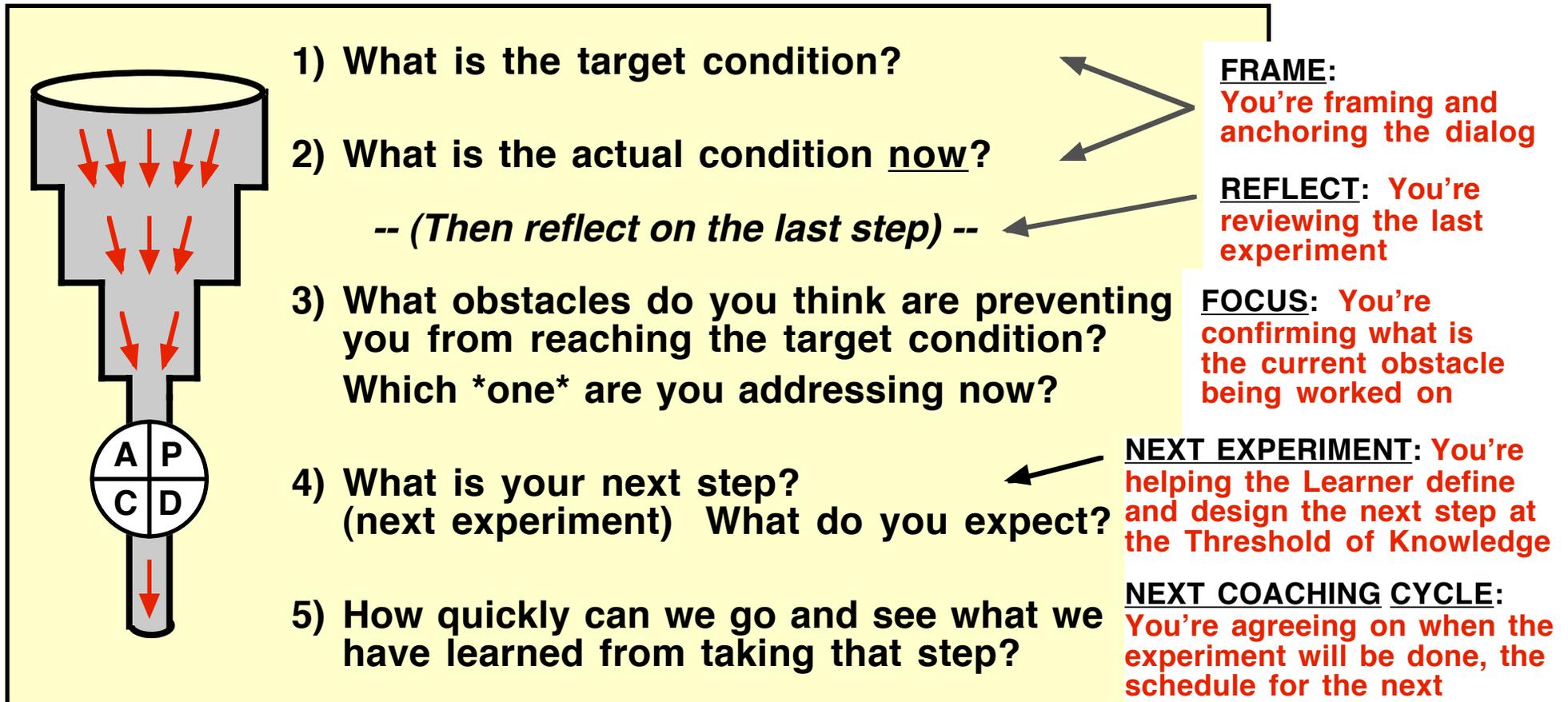


- 1) What is the target condition?
- 2) What is the actual condition now?
-- (Then reflect on the last step) --
- 3) What obstacles do you think are preventing you from reaching the target condition?
Which **one** are you addressing now?
- 4) What is your next step?
(next experiment) What do you expect?
- 5) How quickly can we go and see what we have learned from taking that step?



EACH COACHING CYCLE SHOULD LEAD TO AN EXPERIMENT* (A NEXT STEP)

Identify the Threshold of Knowledge & conduct the next experiment there, to see beyond that point with facts and data



*(Remember, an *experiment* is a learning-experience that doesn't necessarily involve making a change. For instance, further analysis or go-and-see qualify as experiments.)

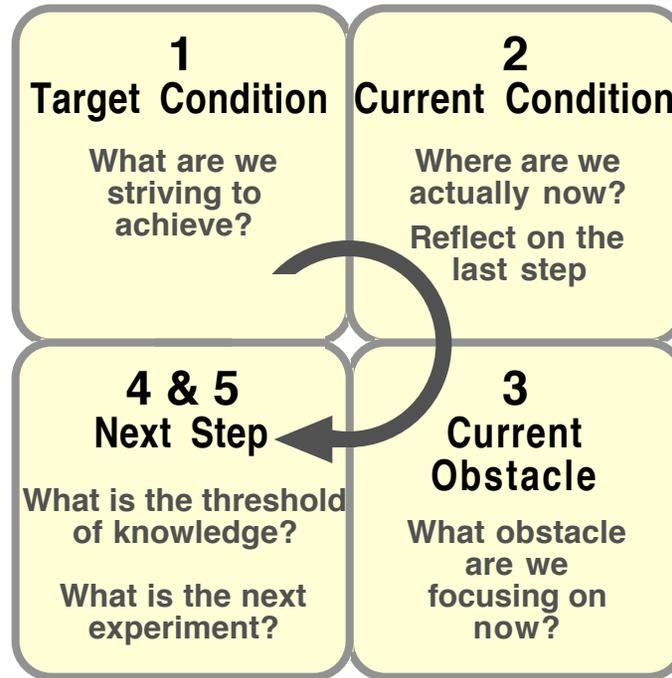


THE COACHING-CYCLE PATTERN

Follows the Five Coaching Kata Questions

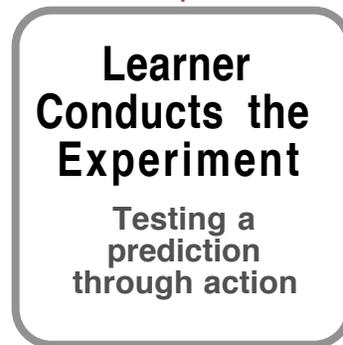


The Five Coaching Kata Questions follow a scientific pattern of thinking and acting, and provide a structured practice routine for both the Coach and the Learner.

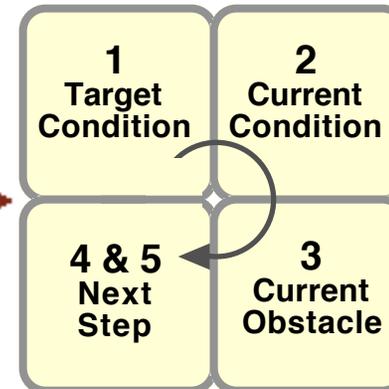


Reflection :

- What did you plan as your last step?
- What did you expect?
- What actually happened?
- What did you learn?



Next Coaching Cycle



Based on a diagram by Don Clark



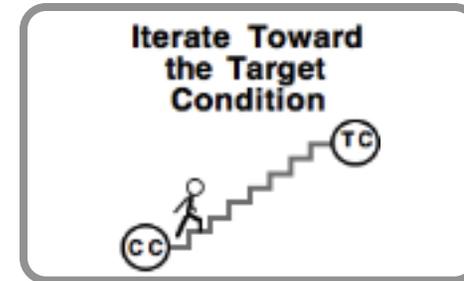
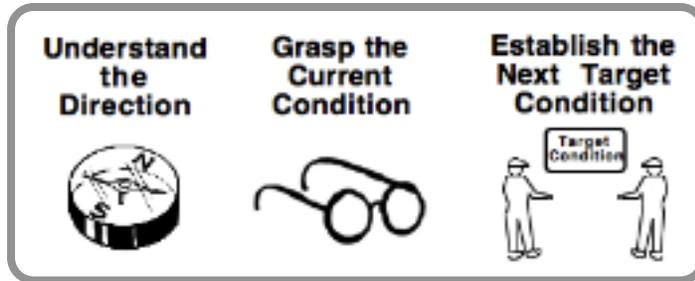
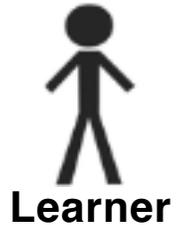
KEEP YOUR FIVE-QUESTION CARD IN HAND DURING A COACHING CYCLE



The 5Q Card is available
in the Appendix or at:
<http://tinyurl.com/katacard>

- The card is your script for conducting coaching cycles.
- The card helps you acquire the habit of the coaching pattern, especially in Phase 1 of your coaching practice.
- In each coaching cycle you'll ask all questions on the front and back of the card, one at a time.
- **You're teaching the Learner a systematic, scientific way of thinking by using the same pattern of enquiry in every coaching cycle.**
- Be sure the Learner has a Five-Question Card too. Coaching cycles are not a 'gotcha' exercise.

COACHING CYCLES - TWO PHASES

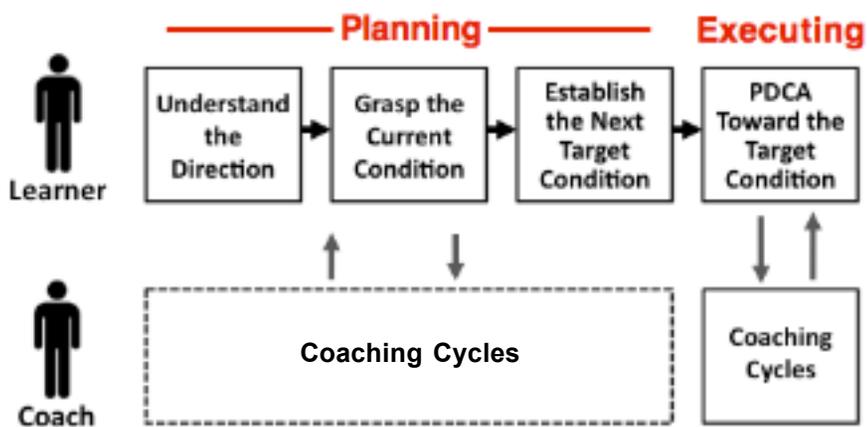


In the **PLANNING PHASE** of the IK, before the Target Condition has been Set:

These are daily, person-to-person coaching cycles done as the Learner carries out the first three steps of the Improvement Kata. The Coach escorts the Learner through the IK routines for understanding the direction, grasping the current condition and establishing the next target condition while using the Five Coaching Kata Questions.

In the **EXECUTING PHASE** of the IK, after the Target Condition has been Set:

These are daily, person-to-person coaching cycles done as the Learner performs the fourth step of the Improvement Kata. The Coach escorts the Learner through the routine for iterating toward the established target condition while overtly asking the Five Coaching Kata Questions.



COACHING CYCLES IN THE **PLANNING** PHASE OF THE IMPROVEMENT KATA

An important gauge of a Learner's progress is how well s/he can carry out the "Understand the Direction," "Grasp the Current Condition" and "Establish the Next Target Condition" steps in the PLANNING phase of the Improvement Kata. Taking time and iterating to gain the perspective and understanding that these 3 steps provide is a vitally-important foundation for the EXECUTING phase. One of the most common mistakes is trying to get into the Executing phase too soon, before we've had a chance to analyze and learn more about the situation.

Interestingly, a Learner may in sum get more repetitions of the IK routines of the executing phase than of the routines for up-front analysis and planning, and can therefore develop a bias toward the executing phase. Good coaching in the planning phase is important to prevent the Learner from developing a habit of too hastily rushing through that phase and moving ahead based on their preconceptions.

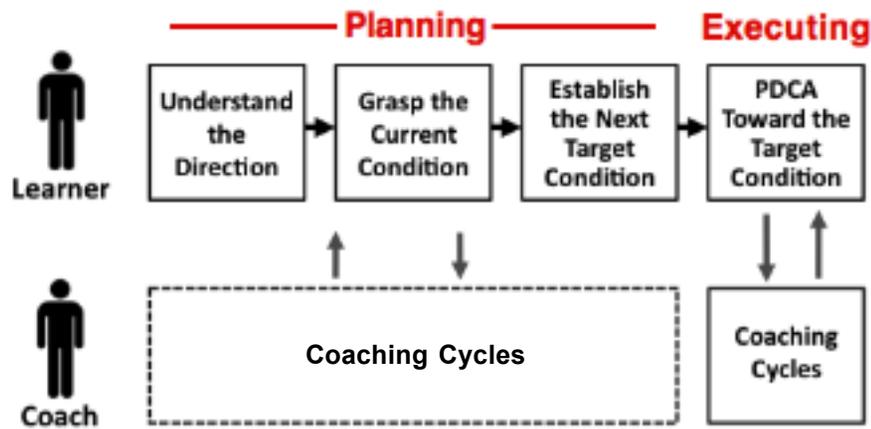
Whether or not the Learner adequately does the up-front work of the planning phase is an indicator of their experience as an Improvement Kata practitioner and your skill as a Coach. **Note that good coaching in the planning phase can be more difficult than in the executing phase, because there are a variety of routines to learn there.**



THE 5 QUESTIONS IN THE PLANNING PHASE

In planning-phase coaching cycles the Coach has to decide how overtly to ask the Five Questions. Once the Learner is somewhat experienced you can ask the Five Questions in any phase of the Improvement Kata and it will make sense. With a beginner Learner in the planning phase you might use the Five Coaching Kata Questions a little more like an internal guide for yourself. For example:

STEP 1 OF THE IK: Target condition = the Learner understands the challenge		
THE 5 QUESTIONS	What the COACH says	What the LEARNER might say
Q1) What is the target condition?	"What step of the Improvement Kata are we in? What is the current target condition?"	"Understand the Direction."
Q2) What is the actual condition now?	"What's the actual condition now? What do we know so far?"	"I know we have a goal of a 10% cost savings."
Q3) What obstacles do you think are preventing you from reaching the target condition? Which one are you addressing now?	"Well, that's just a metric, not a challenge. Where should the challenge come from?"	"I'm not sure. Our leaders?" <i>(Note: This is the Knowledge Threshold in this coaching cycle)</i>
Q4) What is your next step? What do you expect?	"The challenge comes from the level above you, and is often derived from a future-state value stream map. Who has responsibility for your value stream's future-state map?"	"Tom Smith. I can meet with him to learn more about the design for our value stream and what it means for my process."
Q5) How soon can we find out what we have learned from taking that step?	"Great, how soon can we find out what we have learned from taking that step?"	"I should have the information tomorrow at this time."



COACHING CYCLES IN THE **EXECUTING** PHASE OF THE IMPROVEMENT KATA

The Executing phase of the Improvement Kata has the most consistently-structured routines for the Learner. Here the Coach should ask the Five Coaching Kata Questions in every coaching cycle exactly as they are written on the card.

This phase is where the pattern of scientific thinking and acting tends to fall into place for the Learner, through daily practice of a simple, repeating, scientific cycle. Understanding the value of the Improvement Kata pattern, and developing an inclination to apply it to any goal, generally happens here.



The next chapter provides step-by-step instructions for conducting a coaching cycle in the executing phase

SCHEDULE COACHING CYCLES FOR EVERY DAY



Coaching cycles typically take 5-20 minutes. If they consistently take longer than that it may indicate a flaw in the coaching.

For each of your Learners, schedule a regular coaching cycle at a set time near the start of the workday. The first coaching cycle should be early in the day so the Learner can take the next step that day if possible.

Companies that use coaching cycles often have a “Kata Time Zone” (for example between 9:00 and 11:00 AM) during which managers don’t do email, meetings or phone calling.

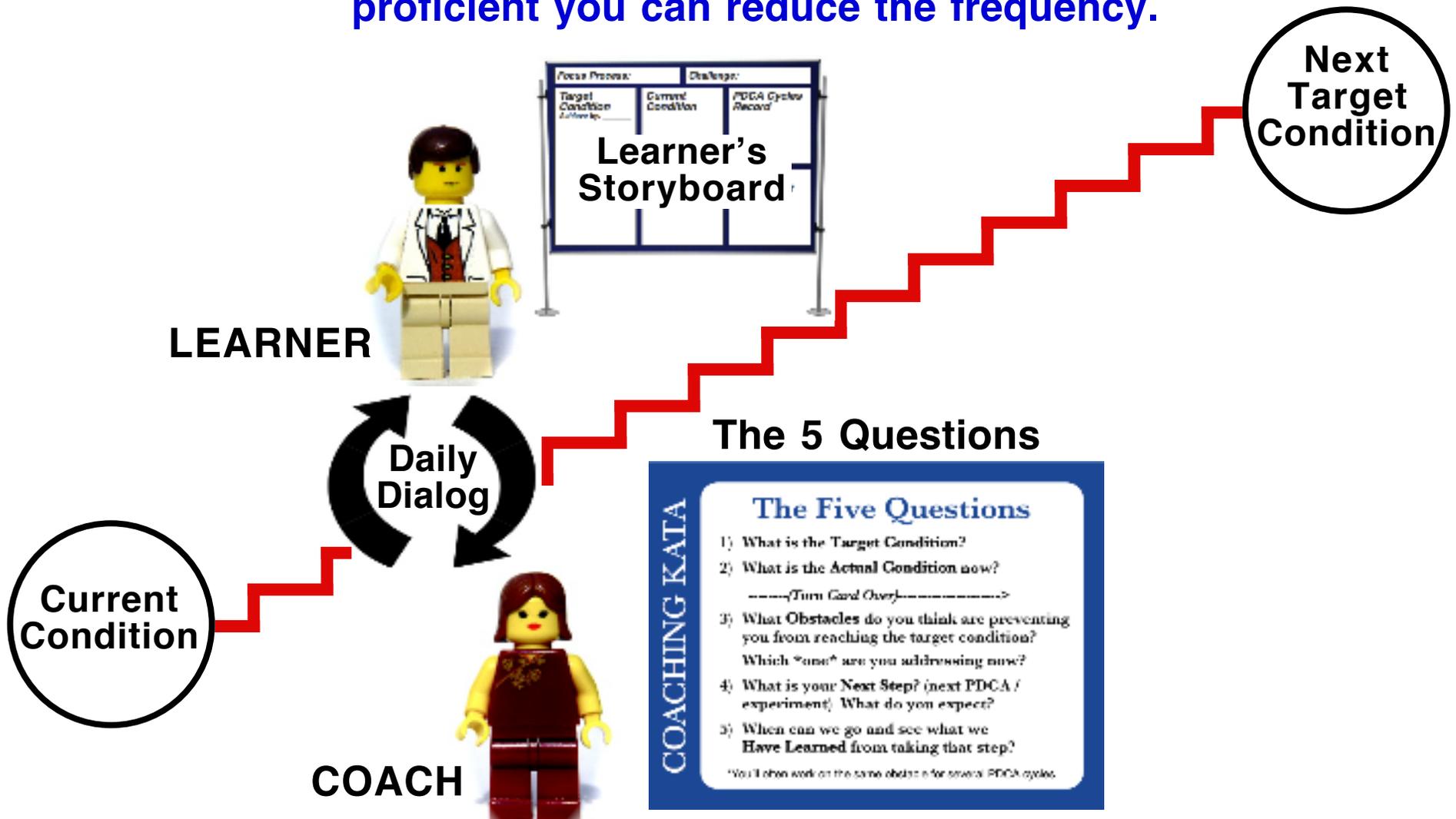


After the morning coaching cycle, the Coach & Learner may do more coaching cycles that day as needed, since the Learner’s steps and the follow up should be as rapid as possible.

Beyond the coaching cycle, you may also decide to accompany the Learner in taking the next step, to observe the Learner in action and provide additional coaching.

WITH BEGINNERS, TRY TO DO A COACHING CYCLE EACH TIME THE LEARNER TAKES A STEP

A coaching cycle and any corrective input should happen as quickly as possible after the Learner takes a step. As the Learner becomes proficient you can reduce the frequency.





A COACHING CYCLE SHOULD NORMALLY TAKE 10 TO 20 MINUTES



With practice, you should be able to conduct most coaching cycles with the Five Questions in 10-20 minutes.

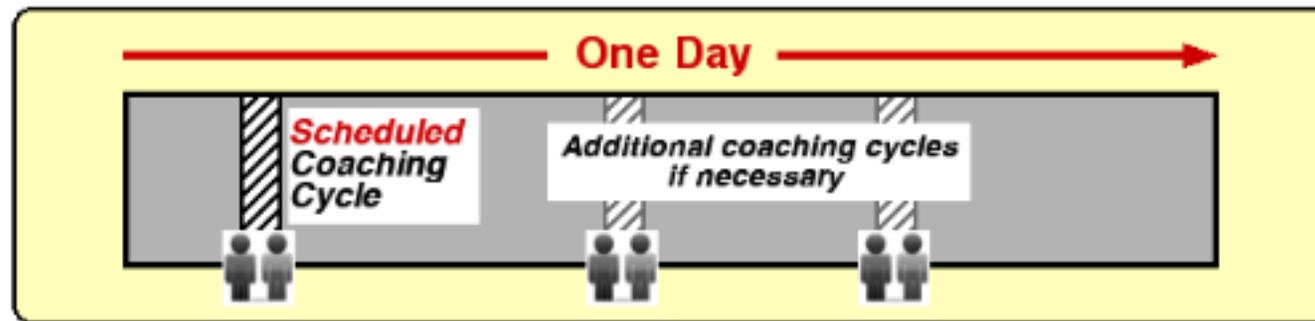
It only takes 10-20 minutes because the coaching cycle is about reviewing the process of experimenting, not a forum for doing the experimenting itself. Questions at the Threshold of Knowledge aren't answered through deliberation and dialog in a coaching cycle, but through experiments between coaching cycles.

The Learner develops answers at the Threshold of Knowledge by conducting experiments *between* coaching cycles. The coaching cycle itself is about reviewing the last experiment and planning the next experiment.

WHY SCHEDULE COACHING CYCLES EVERY DAY?

FOR THE COACH:

- > A beginner coach needs frequent practice. You are practicing to develop and keep improving your coaching skill.
- > The scheduled coaching cycle is a *cue* or *trigger* for the Coach and the Learner to practice their IK/CK behavior patterns.
- > To be consistent in providing feedback to the Learner.



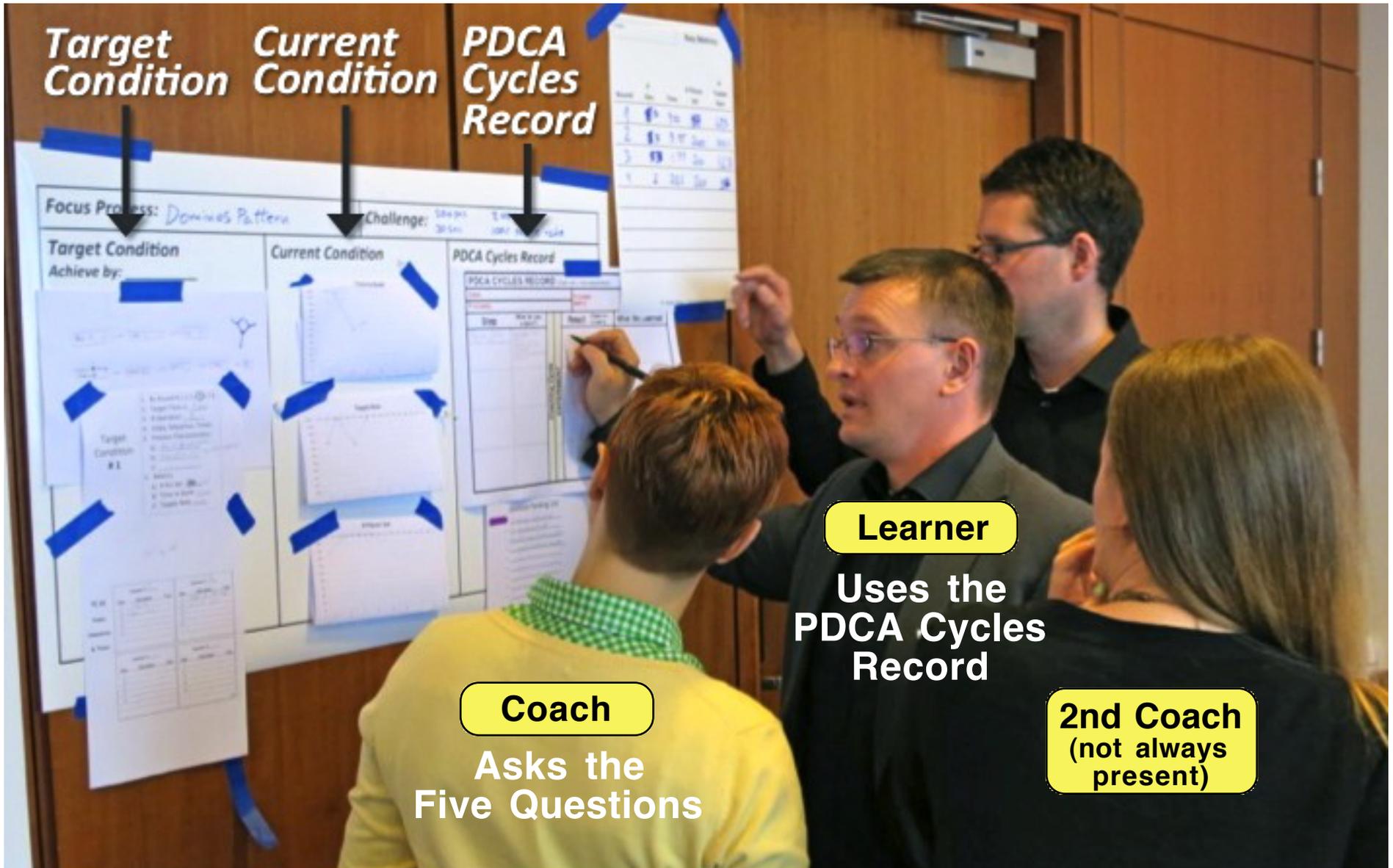
FOR THE LEARNER:

- > Training only once every few days would mean the Learner has too much time between training sessions to develop Improvement Kata skill and mindset. Short, frequent practice is better for the Learner in developing new and effective habits.
- > You're teaching the Learner to conduct simple, rapid and frequent experiments toward the target condition. If coaching cycles are infrequent then the Learner's steps will tend to get too big.



DO COACHING CYCLES AT THE LEARNER'S STORYBOARD

And as close to the focus process as possible



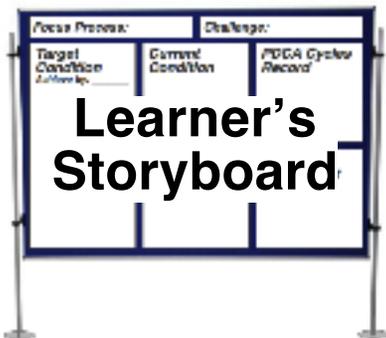
Learner

**Uses the
PDCA Cycles
Record**

Coach

**Asks the
Five Questions**

**2nd Coach
(not always
present)**



USING THE LEARNER'S STORYBOARD

The Learner's storyboard is a tool to support practicing the Improvement Kata and Coaching Kata routines. Once you've done some coaching cycles, the layout and information on the storyboard should flow naturally with the sequence of the Five Coaching Kata Questions.

The Learner owns the storyboard and he or she should be the one updating it, not the Coach. Before the next coaching cycle begins, the Learner should have updated the storyboard based on the last experiment.

The Learner knows the Five Questions that are going to be asked (many users post the 5 Questions on the storyboard). So a coaching cycle is not a "gotcha" exercise, nor a freewheeling conversation, but a structured dialog designed as an information exchange that allows the Coach to discern what coaching the Learner should receive next.

Encourage the Learner to keep the storyboard neat, capturing all key detail but in a simple and organized format that follows the Five Coaching Kata Questions. Updating the storyboard is important for cultivating the Learner's sense of ownership of the target condition and the process of experimenting toward it.

Details often need to be modified or added while the Five Question dialog is happening and insights are gained. In these cases the Learner should update the Storyboard directly; during the coaching cycle. (Keep a pencil and eraser at the storyboard.)

USING THE LEARNER'S STORYBOARD

- ❑ **Have the Learner point.** Pointing connects the question you're asking with a clear answer from the Learner, and encourages the Learner to capture necessary information in written form on the storyboard *before* the coaching cycle.

- ❑ **When answering the Coaching Kata questions, ask the Learner to read only what he or she has written on the storyboard and then be silent.** For instance, the Learner should simply read what he or she has written on the PDCA Cycles Record in advance, and then just wait. This does three things:
 - 1) It allows the Coach to see how the Learner has been thinking, and then add clarifying questions and course corrections as needed.
 - 2) It teaches the Learner to prepare for the coaching cycle, with the necessary information recorded on the storyboard forms beforehand.
 - 3) It prevents the Learner from verbally making up answers during the coaching cycle dialog.

The Learner may struggle with the idea of just reading what they have already written down, even if it is good. They often want to discuss the whole story. Reading may seem too mechanical at first. As you get used to it though, you'll find that it avoids long winded explanations and gets the coaching cycle to the heart of the matter. It helps keep each coaching cycle short and focused on facts & data.

Learner's Storyboard



Coach

5-Question Card

Focus Process: FS3

Challenge: Defect Reduction (in %)

Target Condition: 5-10-14

Actual Condition Now: 11-17-14

PDCA Cycles Record: [Table with columns for Cycle, Plan, Do, Check, Act]

Obstacles Parking Lot: [List of obstacles]

Other Details: Bad wire - R, [unclear]

Process Performance Efficiency: [Line graph showing efficiency over time]

WIP at INC: 24

Defects: 37%

ESH: 100%

B5H: 2.0 Days

Number of PA's: 11

Planned: 8.0 Days

WIP at INC: 31

Defects: 6.0%

ESH: 100%

B5H: 2.3 Days

Number of PA's: 11

PDCA Cycles Records

Obstacles Parking Lot

Learner

Run Charts

-- A COACHING CYCLE --



In each coaching cycle watch for the Learner's ***THRESHOLD OF KNOWLEDGE***

*Finding the current knowledge
threshold and planning the next
experiment there is a core element
of a coaching cycle*

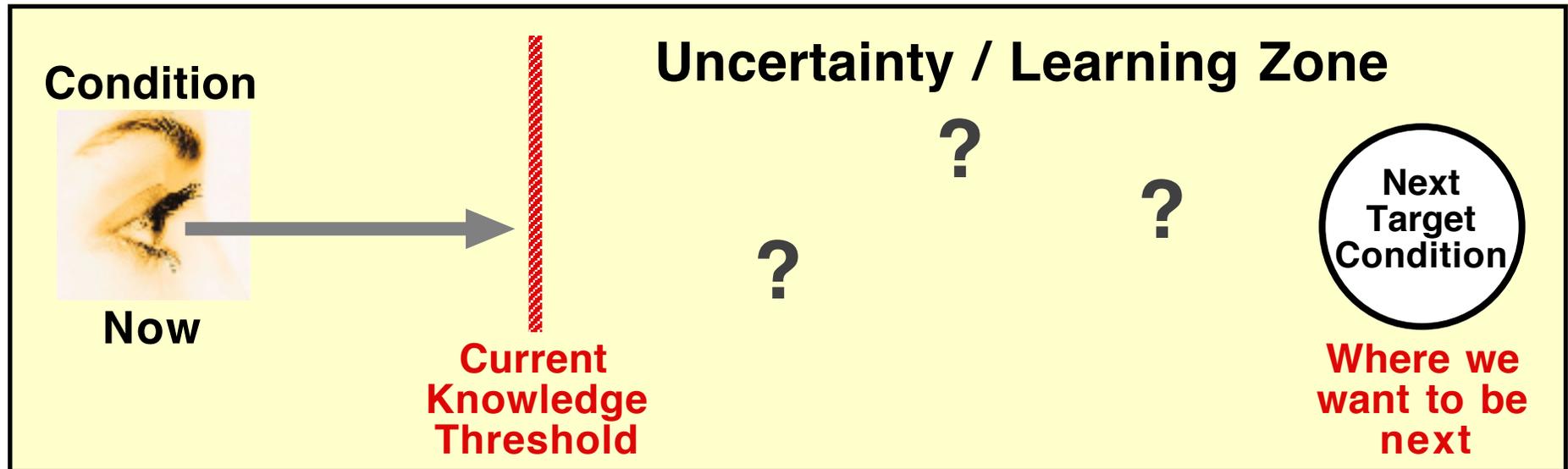




THE CURRENT KNOWLEDGE THRESHOLD IS THE POINT AT WHICH THE LEARNER HAS NO FACTS OR DATA AND STARTS GUESSING

Example: *You don't actually know what tomorrow's weather will be.*

Example: *You plan a step, but you don't actually know what the result of that step will be.*



There's a knowledge threshold in every coaching cycle.

When you hit a knowledge threshold, plan the next experiment there!



RECOGNIZING A KNOWLEDGE THRESHOLD

They can be difficult for beginner coaches to spot because the learner is hesitant to say *“I don’t know”*



At any point in asking the Five Questions you may notice that a knowledge threshold has been reached. Develop an ear for it. When the learner starts using imprecise words such as...

*“I think” - “probably” - “maybe” - “could” - “most likely”
“well...” - “on average” - “let’s reduce/increase it by 50%”*

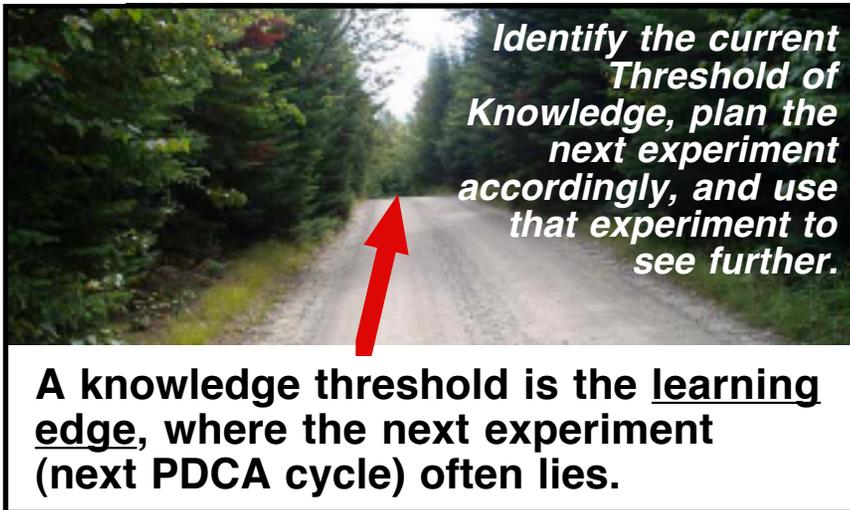
...it’s a sign of a knowledge threshold. The Learner has moved from facts and data to guessing.

Overconfidence can also be a sign of a knowledge threshold.



HOW TO HANDLE A KNOWLEDGE THRESHOLD

This is critical Coaching Kata thinking & behavior



Two key points to remember as a Coach are: (A) there is always a knowledge threshold, and (B) a knowledge threshold is not a problem. On the contrary, it's what we're looking for as we strive for the Target Condition. It tells us what we need to investigate and work on next.

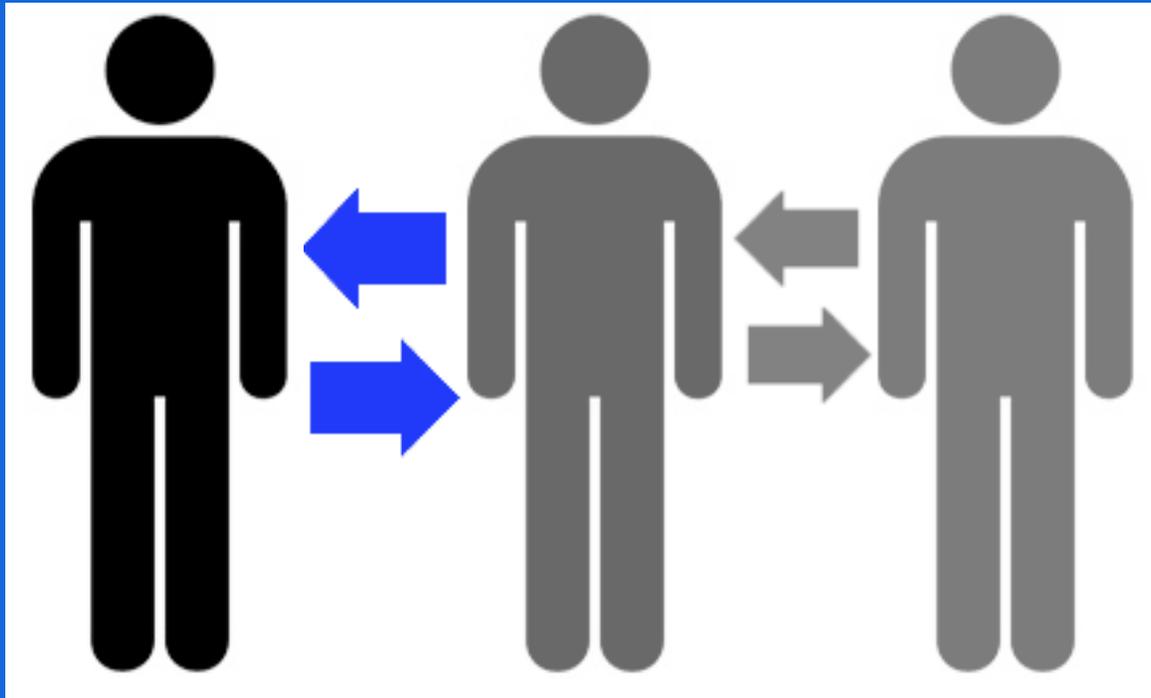
This is an important moment for teaching the Learner what it means to think and act scientifically.

WHAT TO DO

- Congratulations, you found it! Focus your coaching cycle and your coaching input here. Use hearing the imprecise words from the Learner as a cue to ask clarifying questions and to go-and-see.
- The Learner shouldn't try to move beyond a knowledge threshold via conjecture. Teach the learner to see further by experimenting. Don't deliberate about what's beyond the knowledge threshold. Deliberate instead about how to conduct the next experiment.
Ask: "What do we need to learn now?" "How will we test it?" "How will we measure it?"
- Within the pattern of the 5 Questions, have the Learner set up and conduct the next experiment, then do another coaching cycle. The Learner should use the PDCA Cycles Record.

Guidelines for the 2nd Coach

Coaching the Coach



THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF THE SECOND COACH

The role of the 2nd Coach is to manage the Coach's coaching practice

The apparent simplicity of the Five Coaching Kata Questions makes coaching seem easier to learn than it is. We underestimate what's involved in coaching and what it takes to learn it. It takes considerable practice with feedback to master the intent and pattern of the Coaching Kata.

If the Learner isn't learning the Improvement Kata or a team is not achieving its Target Conditions then the problem usually lies in the coaching. For the Coach, coaching cycles are not only a means of teaching the Improvement Kata but also their own experiments whereby the Coach checks and reflects on the process and result of his/her last coaching.

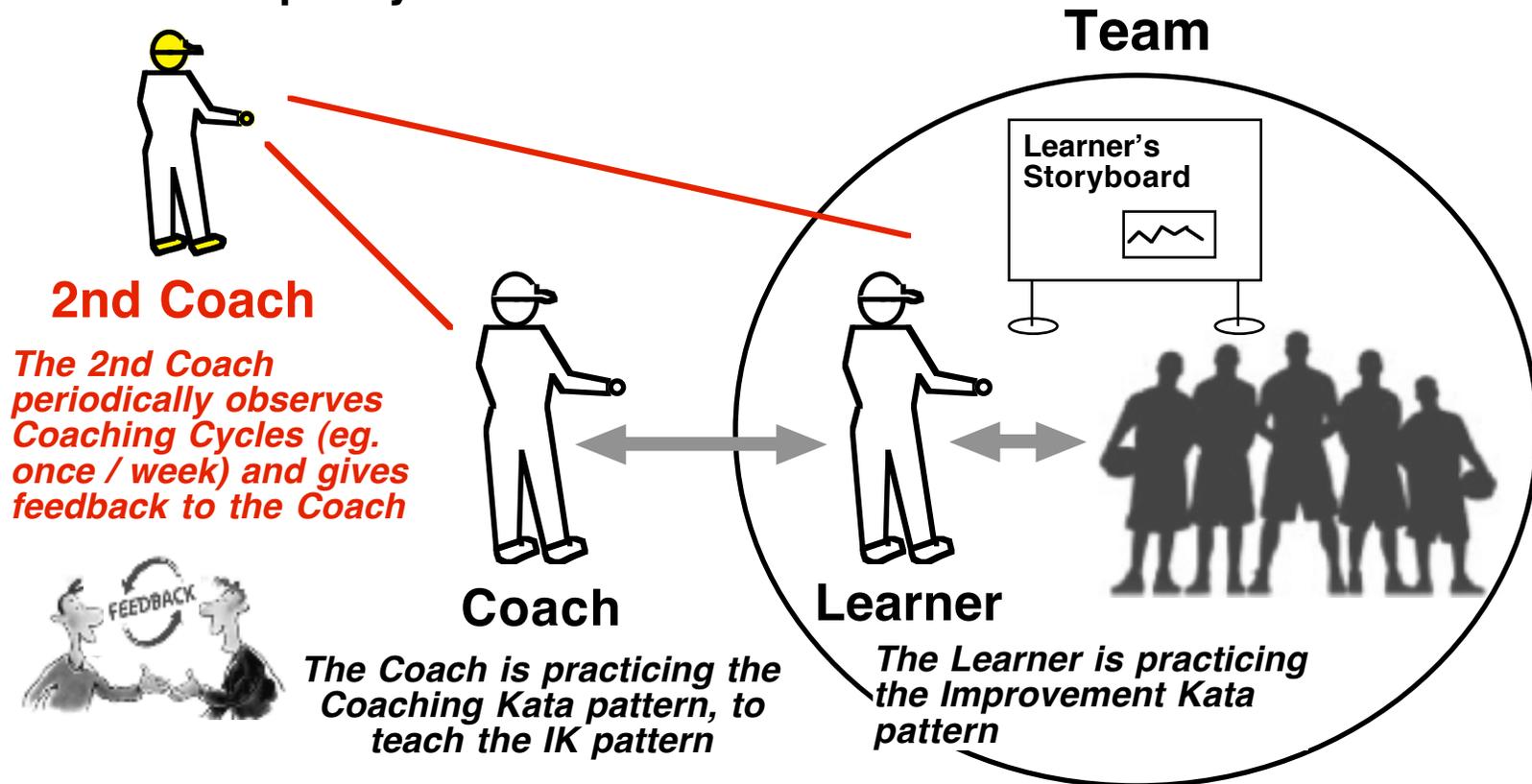
In other words, the Coach is deliberately *practicing* the Coaching Kata, and for this s/he needs someone with coaching experience to periodically observe him or her in conducting coaching cycles and to provide feedback. To *coach the coach* in other words.

The periodic presence of an experienced second coach during coaching cycles is essential if you want to develop managers with effective coaching skills.

WHAT THE 2nd COACH DOES

The 2nd Coach ensures that a Coach is teaching/coaching the Improvement Kata correctly, by periodically observing the Coach's coaching cycles to get a real grasp of the Coach's current coaching practice, and providing corrective feedback accordingly.

After the coaching cycle is finished, the 2nd Coach gives the Coach feedback on his coaching. Note that some Coaches prefer to get this feedback alone, while others like to have their Learners there. It's up to you.



2nd Coach Task

OBSERVING COACHING CYCLES

The 2nd Coach helps the Coach practice and learn effective Improvement-Kata coaching skills.

This is done by periodically observing coaching cycles in action and providing immediate feedback to the Coach.

Once a Coach has passed Stage 1 the 2nd coach doesn't need to watch every one of the coach's coaching cycles. Determine the frequency based on the coach's current capability and need.

COACHING CYCLE OBSERVATIONS		Process:
Coach:		Date:
Learner:		Start/End:
Question	COACH	LEARNER
Review Challenge		
Q1: Target condition?		
Q2: Actual condition now?		
Reflect: PDCA Cycles Record		
Q3: Obstacles? Which one?		
Q4: Next step? PDCA Record		
Q5: When see what learned?		
What is the knowledge threshold?		Impressions:
Key point(s) for this Coach to practice next:		Next coaching cycle:

The 2nd Coach can use the *Coaching Cycle Observations Form* for this purpose (see Appendix). This form is kept simple since note taking during a coaching cycle has to be fast.

To help evaluate the coaching cycles s/he is observing, the 2nd Coach should refer to the individual points in the coaching-cycle instructions in this chapter and the next chapter.

WATCH FOR COMMON COACHING ERRORS

Coach asking error	What is it	Feedback/Countermeasure
1. Closed Question	Can be answered simply <i>yes</i> or <i>no</i> .	Start question with " <i>what</i> ," " <i>how</i> " or " <i>Tell me more about...</i> "
2. Solution-Oriented Question	Advice disguised as a question.	Broaden the question.
3. Seeking the One True Question	Trying to ask the perfect question. Trying to achieve too much at once.	Coach only needs to help Learner to the next step (next PDCA).
4. Rambling Question	Asking the same question repeatedly in different ways.	Be silent for a moment or two while you formulate your question.
5. Interpretive Question	Too much interpretation of what the Learner said.	Coach should incorporate the Learner's words in their question.
6. Rhetorical Question	Statement of coach's opinion posed in question form.	Change your viewpoint.
7. Leading Question	Pointing the Learner to an option the Coach already has in mind.	Add options to the discussion.
8. Failure to Interrupt	Being too timid to interrupt and refocus the dialog.	Interject with a question that brings the coaching cycle back to focus.
9. Interrupting	Commenting while the Learner is talking.	Count 2 seconds after Learner stops speaking.
10. Confrontational "Why" Question	Seeming to challenge the Learner's motive and actions.	Replace " <i>why</i> " with " <i>what</i> ." or " <i>tell me more about...</i> "

Excerpted from *Coaching Questions: A Coach's Guide to Powerful Asking Skills*, by Tony Stoltzfus, Pegasus Creative Arts, 2008



GIVING FEEDBACK TO THE COACH

Feedback guidelines, 2nd Coach --> Coach

Give feedback to the Coach *after* the coaching cycle. Ask if they prefer feedback with the Learner present or in private.

1) Ask the Coach for their impressions of the coaching cycle:

- How do you think the coaching cycle went?
- Is the Learner working at their Threshold of Knowledge? How can you tell?
- What did you want to pay particular attention to in this coaching cycle?

2) Give your feedback on the coaching cycle, but do not make value judgements. Focus on concrete observations you made.

- I observe that...

3) What is the Coach concentrating on for the next coaching cycle?

- What do you want to pay particular attention to in the next coaching cycle with this Learner? (Just one point please!)
- How do you hope this will influence the Learner?

Questions by Bernd Mittelhuber

Agree on the date & time for next coaching cycle to be observed

THE 2nd COACH'S NOTEBOOK



The 2nd Coach should maintain a notebook of his/her observed coaching cycles, to keep track of observations and feedback given to the Coach.

Do this by keeping your completed “Coaching Cycles Observations” forms plus any other notes in a binder.

Include the three feedback guidelines on the previous page in your notebook for reference.

COACHING CYCLE OBSERVATIONS		Process:
Coach:		Date:
Learner:		Start/End:
Question	COACH	LEARNER
<i>Review Challenge</i>		
Q1: <i>Target condition?</i>		
Q2: <i>Actual condition now?</i>		
Reflect: <i>PDCA Cycles Record</i>		
Q3: <i>Obstacles? Which one?</i>		
Q4: <i>Next step? PDCA Record</i>		
Q5: <i>When see what learned?</i>		
What is the knowledge threshold?		Impressions:
Key point(s) for this Coach to practice next:		Next coaching cycle:



--- Guidelines for IK Coaches - Summary ---

WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE YOU CAN BE A GOOD COACH

Becoming an effective Improvement Kata coach takes a little more than internalizing the *Improvement Kata* and *Coaching Kata* routines.

It's easy for a coach to feel important, even superior, because of their experience and knowledge.

As a coach, be sure to check: How do you feel when you conduct coaching cycles with your learners? Do you feel like you're in a special position of honor and influence -- at the top or over others in importance or ability -- or do you feel like you're part of a larger team, working together to meet a challenge?

Ideally you coach with the realization that you too are learning. You're not at the top of anything, but on a path like everyone else.

And it's a great path to be on!

KEEP PRACTICING AND USING YOUR COACHING AND TEACHING SKILLS!



Everyone in a managerial or supervisory role is essentially a teacher developing the next generation. By you practicing the pattern of the Coaching Kata you're developing management habits and management mindset to power the future of your organization.

As you move through your organization or to another organization, take the Improvement Kata and Coaching Kata with you. Once you've learned their patterns and acquired the habit they can be applied to any goal at any level.

**NEXT, LET'S GO THROUGH AN
EXECUTION-PHASE
COACHING CYCLE STEP-BY-STEP**