

A Coaching Approach in Residency Education

Guiding Toward Core Outcomes: A Faculty Development Framework

A coaching approach reflects both a coaching mindset and a set of coaching skills

Coaching Mindset

- Nonjudgmental curiosity
- Positive regard for the resident
- Assumption of developmental capacity
- Respect for resident agency within program expectations

Coaching Skills

- Active listening to understand the person
- Open-ended, non-leading questions
- Naming observations factually without judgment
- Framing and reframing to broaden perspective
- Partnering to make progress rather than defaulting to advice

Drawing on principles of appreciative inquiry, faculty use these conversations to strengthen residents' metacognition capacity to self-reflect, self-assess, and self-direct. This fosters self-efficacy and higher-quality internal motivation while supporting development as Master Adaptive Learners and progress toward required outcomes.

Faculty Practices in Coaching Toward Outcomes

- Invite residents to interpret performance data before offering faculty interpretation.
- Explore alignment and discrepancies between resident self-assessment and program or CCC feedback while preserving agency.
- Clarify motivational drivers related to ILP goals, including confidence, readiness, and importance.
- Partner to refine broad goals into specific, measurable, time-bound objectives aligned with required outcomes.
- Elicit potential barriers and identify strategies that leverage strengths, resources, and reasonable requests for support.
- Co-create a structured follow-up plan to review progress, normalize setbacks as data, and recalibrate goals as needed.

Balancing Autonomy and Accountability

- Preserve resident ownership when learners are progressing within program expectations.
- Clarify required standards when gaps emerge.
- Negotiate how those expectations will be incorporated into the resident's plan.

Sample language:

- *"These goals are obviously important to you. What thoughts have you given to growth opportunities highlighted by the CCC in meeting your outcomes? How might you incorporate one of those?"*
- *"Your last two rotations noted documentation concerns. What might be important to consider over these next 3 months as we look at your goals?"*

Coaching does not remove program expectations. It clarifies them and supports meaningful responsibility for meeting them.

Scope

This coaching approach applies when residents are progressing within program expectations. When performance falls below required standards and formal remediation is indicated, program policies guide next steps. Coaching skills may still be incorporated within remediation plans, but structured remediation processes are outside the scope of this article.

Impact

When applied consistently, a coaching approach builds durable skills of self-reflection, goal refinement, and adaptive learning, along with meaningful ownership of development. Over time, this strengthens progress toward the resident's long-term career goals, community needs, program requirements and ABFM Core Outcomes while cultivating physicians who can continue to adapt and grow throughout their careers.