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A MUST-HAVE RESOURCE FOR EVERY COACH, LEADER AND PROFESSIONAL.

30 COACHING TOOLS

and

APPROACHES

That Actually Work

Practical methods for real conversations,
real people, and real change



BETTER
CONVERSATIONS



CLEARER
THINKING



STRONGER
DECISIONS



CONFIDENT
ACTION



HEALTHIER
RELATIONSHIPS



MEANINGFUL
CHANGE



FRED CLEMENTS

EXPERIENCED. PRACTICAL. HUMAN.

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Published by Clements Consultancy

Website: clementsconsultancy.com

Author: Fred Clements

Book title: 30 Coaching Tools and Approaches That Actually Work

Subtitle: Practical Methods for Real Conversations, Real People and Real Change

First edition: 2026

Cover design, diagrams and interior layout: Clements Consultancy

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Dedication, preface and author reflections are personal to the author and are included to give context to the practical use of the tools and approaches described.

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DEDICATION

To my wife, my children, my grandchildren, my family, my church community and my friends, thank you for your love, prayers, encouragement, patience and support.

To every person I have had the privilege of coaching, mentoring, managing, supervising or learning alongside: this book exists because real people, in real conversations, taught me what actually works.

Above all, I give honour to the Head of my life, my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for giving me the ability, the insight and the gift to serve others; for allowing that gift to make room for me; and for taking me to places I never imagined I could reach by myself.

PREFACE

In today's fast-paced and increasingly complex workplaces, the quality of conversations matters more than ever. Teams do not thrive simply because they have the right structures, policies, strategies, or performance targets. They thrive when people are able to think clearly, speak honestly, take responsibility, and find practical ways forward.

Coaching has been central to my work for many years. My experience has taken me through Adult Social Care, local government, organisational development, leadership development, coaching, mentoring, training, supervision, private sector consultancy, and a period working within NHS Community Mental Health services. Across those different settings, I have seen the same truth repeated many times: the right conversation, at the right moment, can make a significant difference.

This book brings together 30 coaching tools and approaches that I regularly use in practice.

They are not the only tools I have ever used. There are many more models, frameworks, and methods that can support coaching, leadership, supervision, learning, and organisational change. But the tools in this book are my go-to approaches. They are the ones I return to because they help people think, reflect, decide, act, and grow.

Some are well-known coaching models. Some come from NLP, supervision, leadership development, psychology, learning theory, or organisational change. Some I have adapted through experience. Some I have developed myself. What they have in common is that they are practical. They work in real conversations with real people.

My first experience of coaching came through a former manager. I had gone to him for advice about a problem I was facing. Instead of giving me the answer, he asked me a

question. I answered it, and then he asked another. Then another. After a while, I became slightly irritated and asked why he kept asking questions instead of simply telling me what to do.

His answer stayed with me.

He explained that when people come to you with problems and ask for advice, much of the time they already have the answer somewhere within them. They may not have clarity yet. They may not have confidence. They may not have the words for it. But often, the answer is closer than they realise.

That moment changed the way I thought about people.

It taught me that coaching is not about rescuing people with our wisdom. It is about helping them access their own. It is about creating the kind of conversation where people can pause, think, reflect, challenge their assumptions, understand their options, and decide what they will do next.

This book is written for coaches, managers, supervisors, leaders, HR and OD professionals, trainers, mentors, and anyone who wants to have better developmental conversations. Whether you work in the public sector, private sector, voluntary sector, or in independent practice, the heart of coaching remains the same: helping people think more clearly, take responsibility, and move forward with greater confidence.

It is not designed to be a textbook of abstract theory. It is a practical working guide.

My hope is that you will not just read these tools, but use them. Try them in real conversations. Adapt them to your own style. Reflect on what happens. Notice what works. Over time, they will become part of your own practice.

Coaching is not about having a clever model for every situation. It is about being present, listening well, asking better questions, offering appropriate challenge, and helping people move from confusion to clarity and from intention to action.

These are the tools and approaches I reach for most often.

I hope they serve you well.

Fred Clements

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book has been written as a practical working guide, not as a textbook to be read once and placed on a shelf.

You can read it from beginning to end, but you do not have to. It is designed so that you can return to it when you need a particular tool, approach, question, model, or way of thinking. Some chapters will be useful before a formal coaching session. Others may help you prepare for a supervision conversation, a leadership discussion, a team development session, or a difficult conversation where someone needs clarity and support.

The book is organised into six sections. The first section focuses on the foundations of coaching practice: the core skills, mindsets, and conditions that make good coaching possible. The second section helps with clarity and direction. These tools are useful when someone is unsure what they want, what matters to them, what is driving them, or where the real issue sits. The third section focuses on structuring learning and action. These models help turn conversation into insight, and insight into movement. The fourth section explores mindset, responsibility, and emotional state. These approaches are useful when someone feels stuck, overwhelmed, reactive, uncertain, or caught in unhelpful thinking. The fifth section looks at feedback, awareness, and relationships. These tools help people understand themselves, communicate more effectively, and notice patterns in how they relate to others. The final section moves into supervision, teams, organisational practice, and change. These approaches are especially useful when the issue is not just about the individual, but also about the wider system around them.

Each chapter follows a practical structure. You will find an explanation of the tool or approach, when it can be useful, how to apply it, questions you can ask, and points to

watch out for. The aim is not to make you follow a rigid script. The aim is to give you enough structure to use the tool with confidence while still adapting it to the person, the context, and the conversation in front of you.

The tools in this book work best when used with judgement. A model can help you think, but it should never replace your presence, listening, ethics, or common sense. Sometimes the most powerful thing you can do is ask a simple question and stay quiet. At other times, the person may need more structure, more challenge, or more direct guidance.

Use these tools as a starting point. Practise them. Adapt them. Notice what works. Reflect on what you might do differently next time.

The more you use them, the more they will become part of your own coaching practice.

For companion videos, coaching resources and further practical content, visit the Clements Consultancy YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@FredClementsConsultancy>

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to 30 Coaching Tools and Approaches That Actually Work.

If you are holding this book, it is likely because you find yourself in the thick of it - managing people, leading projects, supporting change, developing others, or helping individuals and teams think more clearly in the middle of complex working life.

My name is Fred Clements. For many years, I have worked in and around people development, coaching, leadership, organisational development, training, mentoring, and supervision. My journey has included Adult Social Care, local government, private sector work, consultancy, leadership development, and a period within NHS Community Mental Health services.

I have spent much of my career in the messy middle - that space where strategy meets reality. I have seen carefully written plans struggle because the conversations underneath them were not strong enough. I have also seen individuals, managers, and teams move forward because one well-timed question helped someone see the situation differently.

This book comes from that practical place. It is not a collection of abstract theory. It is a working toolkit for people who want coaching to make a real difference.

The Modern Coaching Landscape: From Remedial to Essential

When I first entered the workforce, coaching was not always understood in the way it is today. In some organisations, being offered coaching could feel like a sign that something had gone wrong. It was sometimes seen as remedial - something used to fix a problem or correct a weakness.

That view has changed significantly. Today, coaching is much more widely recognised as a developmental, reflective, and performance-enhancing approach. It is used to support

leaders, managers, professionals, teams, and practitioners through pressure, complexity, transition, uncertainty, and change.

In many workplaces, the old command-and-control style of leadership is no longer enough. People still need direction at times, but they also need space to think, take responsibility, build confidence, and develop their own judgement. If every answer has to come from the manager, the organisation becomes slow, dependent, and fragile.

Coaching offers a different way. It helps people develop ownership. It builds confidence. It encourages reflection. It strengthens decision-making. It supports learning, resilience, and accountability.

That does not mean coaching is the answer to every situation. There are times when people need instruction, advice, training, mentoring, support, or clear direction. But when the purpose is to help someone think better, take responsibility, and move forward, coaching can be one of the most powerful approaches available.

Defining Coaching

There is a lot of consultant-speak around coaching, but I prefer to keep it practical. For me, coaching is a focused conversation that helps a person think more clearly, access their own resources, and take meaningful action.

It is not about the coach having all the answers. It is not about rescuing someone. It is not about showing how clever the coach is. At its best, coaching helps people discover what they already know, challenge what is getting in the way, and decide what they are going to do next.

It is also helpful to be clear about what coaching is not.

Coaching and Mentoring

A mentor often draws on their own experience. They may say, "I have walked this path before; here is what I learned." Mentoring can be extremely valuable, especially when someone needs guidance, wisdom, or sector-specific insight. Coaching is different. In coaching, the coach does not need to be the expert in the coachee's job. The coachee remains the expert in their own context. The coach is responsible for the process - the quality of attention, questioning, challenge, reflection, and structure.

Coaching and Training

Training is usually about building knowledge or skill. If someone does not know how to use a system, follow a process, or carry out a task, they may need training. Coaching is more often about thinking, behaviour, confidence, judgement, motivation, responsibili-

ty, and action. Someone may already know what to do but still be avoiding it, overthinking it, resisting it, or lacking confidence to move forward.

Coaching and Therapy

This distinction matters. Therapy often works with deeper psychological distress, trauma, mental health issues, and past experiences that require clinical skill and care. Coaching may touch on emotion and personal history, but its primary focus is usually present and future action. A coach should know the limits of their role. If a person needs therapeutic support, clinical intervention, or specialist mental health help, the ethical response is not to keep coaching beyond your competence. It is to signpost or refer appropriately.

In short, coaching is a purposeful, future-focused conversation that helps people think, learn, decide, and act.

The Power of the Toolbelt: Scaffolding, Not Scripts

New coaches often ask questions such as, "What do I say if the person stops talking?" or "How do I stop the conversation becoming just a chat?" This is where tools and approaches help.

I think of the tools in this book as scaffolding. When you are working on a building, the scaffolding is not the building itself, but it gives structure, safety, and access. In the same way, a coaching tool is not the conversation itself. It simply provides a structure that helps the conversation become clearer, safer, and more useful.

I was reminded of this recently when I built a gazebo. To do the job properly, I needed the right tools. I used a spirit level. I used a power drill a great deal. I used a circular saw and another powered saw for cutting timber. I had plenty of other tools available, but many of them were not needed for that particular job.

That is how practical work often is. You may own many tools, but when you are doing a specific task, you reach for the ones that fit the job.

Gardening is different. If I am working in the garden, I am more likely to use shears, hedge cutters, secateurs, and pruning tools. I would not reach for the same tools I used to build a gazebo. Different work requires different tools.

Coaching is similar. There are many tools, models, frameworks, and approaches available. I have used far more than the ones included in this book. But these are my go-to tools and approaches - the ones I return to because they help in real conversations.

A tool is not a script. If you use it mechanically, the conversation will feel wooden. But if you use it with judgement, it can help both coach and coachee.

A good tool offers two things. First, it gives the coach somewhere to stand. When the conversation becomes complex, emotional, circular, or unclear, a model can provide structure and direction. Second, it gives the coachee a way to think. Many people come to coaching because their thoughts feel tangled. A good tool helps them slow down, separate the strands, and see the situation from a different angle.

The tool should never become more important than the person. The model is there to serve the conversation, not dominate it.

The Practicality First Philosophy

I have a very low tolerance for fluff. If a model sounds impressive but cannot be used in a real conversation, it has limited value. If it requires so much explanation that the coachee is confused before you begin, it may not be the right tool for the moment.

The tools and approaches in this book have been selected because they are practical. They are the ones I return to because they help people think, reflect, decide, act, and grow.

They can be used in formal coaching sessions, leadership conversations, supervision, training, mentoring, team development, organisational development, and everyday workplace discussions. Some are useful in a planned one-hour session. Others can be helpful in a short conversation when someone needs clarity quickly.

That said, simple does not always mean easy. Some tools can be introduced quickly, but using them well takes experience, judgement, and practice. A model may look straightforward on paper, but knowing when to use it, how far to take it, how to adapt it, and when to stop requires skill.

Some tools also build on each other. For example, a coach who has not yet developed strong listening skills may struggle to use deeper questioning well. A leader who has not created psychological safety may find that even a good feedback model lands badly. The tools matter, but so does the maturity of the person using them.

I could write a whole separate book on the NLP tools I have found useful. Some of my favourites are included here, but others require more training, more practice, and more care than would be appropriate in a general practical handbook. I have deliberately focused on tools and approaches that can be taught, practised, and used by coaches, managers, leaders, supervisors, and people-development practitioners.

My philosophy is simple: theory is only useful if it survives contact with real life. A tool earns its place when it helps someone make sense of a situation, notice what is happening, take responsibility, and identify a practical way forward.

The Mindset Behind the Models

Although this is a book of coaching tools and approaches, I want to offer one important warning. A tool is only as effective as the person using it.

You can use a well-known model and still have a poor conversation if you are not truly listening. You can ask a technically good question and still miss the person in front of you. You can follow a process and still avoid the real issue.

Good coaching requires more than technique. It requires presence, patience, curiosity, humility, courage, and respect. It requires active listening - not simply waiting for your turn to speak, but listening for meaning, emotion, assumptions, patterns, and what is not being said. It requires empathy - the ability to understand another person's world without taking it over. It requires curiosity - the willingness to replace judgement with interest. It requires challenge - not harshness, but the courage to name what may need to be noticed.

It also requires discipline. Coaches, managers, and leaders often want to fix, rescue, advise, or take control. Sometimes that may be appropriate. But often, the better response is to pause, ask, listen, and allow the other person to do the thinking.

As you move through these chapters, remember that the tool is the map, but you are the guide.

How to Navigate This Handbook

This book is designed as a practical resource. You can read it from start to finish, but you can also dip into it when you need a particular tool or approach.

The chapters are grouped into six sections: Foundations of Coaching Practice; Creating Clarity and Direction; Structuring Learning and Action; Mindset, Responsibility and Emotional State; Feedback, Awareness and Relationships; and Supervision, Teams and Organisational Practice.

Each chapter follows a practical structure. You will find an explanation of the tool or approach, when it may be useful, how it can be applied, questions you can ask, and points to watch out for. Use the structure, but do not become trapped by it. Adapt the tools to your own style and to the person or group in front of you.

A Call to Action

The world does not need more people who merely know about coaching. It needs more people who can coach. Knowledge without application is just an intellectual exercise. My encouragement is simple: use the tools. Try them in real conversations. Reflect on what happens. Notice what works. Notice what does not. Adapt your approach and keep learning.

Do not wait for the perfect coaching client or the perfect coaching session. Start with the conversations already in front of you.

Look at your diary. Think about a conversation where you would normally give advice, offer a solution, or tell someone what to do. Ask yourself whether there is an opportunity to pause and help the other person think instead.

Coaching is a craft. It develops through practice.

You will sometimes ask a clumsy question. You will sometimes use the wrong tool. You will sometimes speak too quickly or miss something important. That is part of learning. The key is to reflect, adjust, and keep improving.

The tools and approaches in this book have served me well in real conversations with real people. I hope they help you strengthen your own practice and make a meaningful difference in the conversations that matter.

Let's get to work.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF COACHING PRACTICE

I mentioned earlier that I recently built a gazebo.

The reason I decided to build one myself was because of what happened to the previous one. A few years ago, during one of those rare but memorable UK heatwaves, we bought a metal-framed gazebo for the garden. The weather was beautiful, around 33 degrees, which is pretty hot for us in the UK, and the gazebo gave us some welcome shade.

It lasted a good two or three years. Then one winter we had a bad windstorm. The first storm tore the fabric. The next strong wind damaged the metal frame so badly that it was no longer salvageable.

That experience taught me something very practical. If something is going to stand up to pressure, it needs more than a pleasant appearance. It needs a strong structure and, most importantly, solid foundations.

So when I eventually decided to build my own gazebo, I approached it differently. I did not begin with the roof covering or the finishing touches. I started with the base. I wanted it properly grounded. I used thicker timber. I built a stronger frame. I paid attention to the structure because I knew that if the foundation was weak, the whole thing would eventually fail.

Coaching is no different.

Before we rush into models, techniques, clever questions, or specialist tools, we need to ask a more basic question: what is this coaching conversation standing on?

There is a well-known teaching in Scripture about the wise man who built his house upon the rock. When the rain came, the floods rose, and the winds blew, the house stood