



Paul Tevis

Avoiding the “Coaching” Trap

A photograph of a busy Nashville street at night, overlaid with a blue and purple gradient. The street is filled with cars and a bus. In the background, there are numerous neon signs for various businesses, including "Robert's Western World Home of the Nashville Family Rock Heaven", "JACKS BAR-B-QUE", "THE STAGE ON BRADWAY", "BIG TIME BOOTS", and "Raw".

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"Masks are required at Agile2022 in ALL conference spaces unless you are eating or drinking, a conference speaker making a presentation (keeping a 6-ft distance), or taking a quick photo or selfie.

"We want to make sure everyone stays healthy – and FEELS safe and comfortable. Let's look out for each other and wear our masks!"

Hi, I'm Paul Tevis

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I am Organizational Effectiveness consultant with Helping Improve.

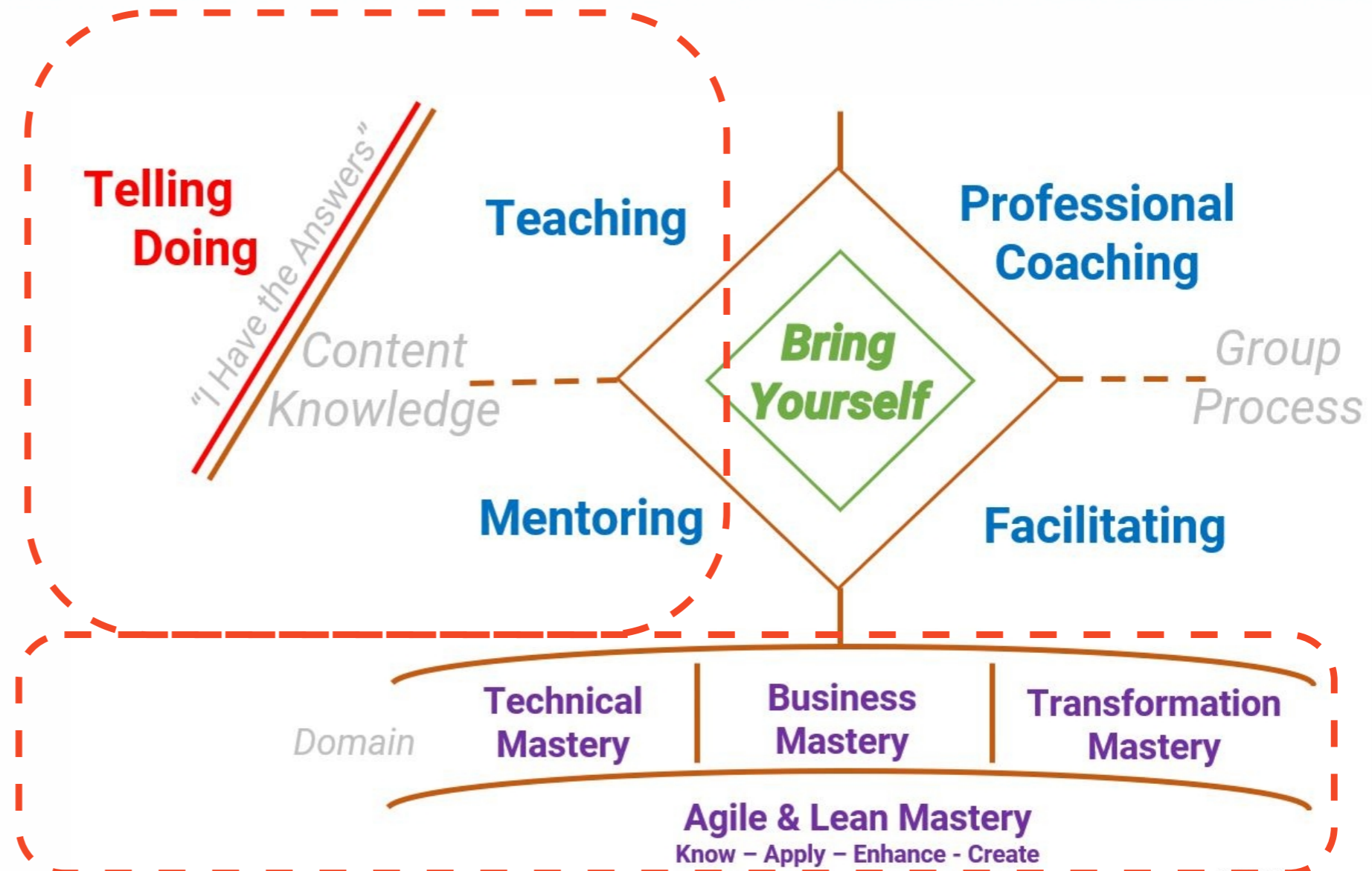
I help companies achieve better results through process improvement and leadership development.

What is "Coaching"?

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"Coaching" is grounded in content knowledge.

It often happens in the moment and is unsolicited.



Adapted From ACI Agile Coach Competency Framework www.agilecoachinginstitute.com
www.HelpingImprove.com/agile-coaching-framework-visual-walk-through

What is "Coaching"?

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"Coaching" is (usually) intended to be helpful, but for some reason isn't. Some possible synonyms:

- Feedback
- Suggestions
- Advice
- Judgment

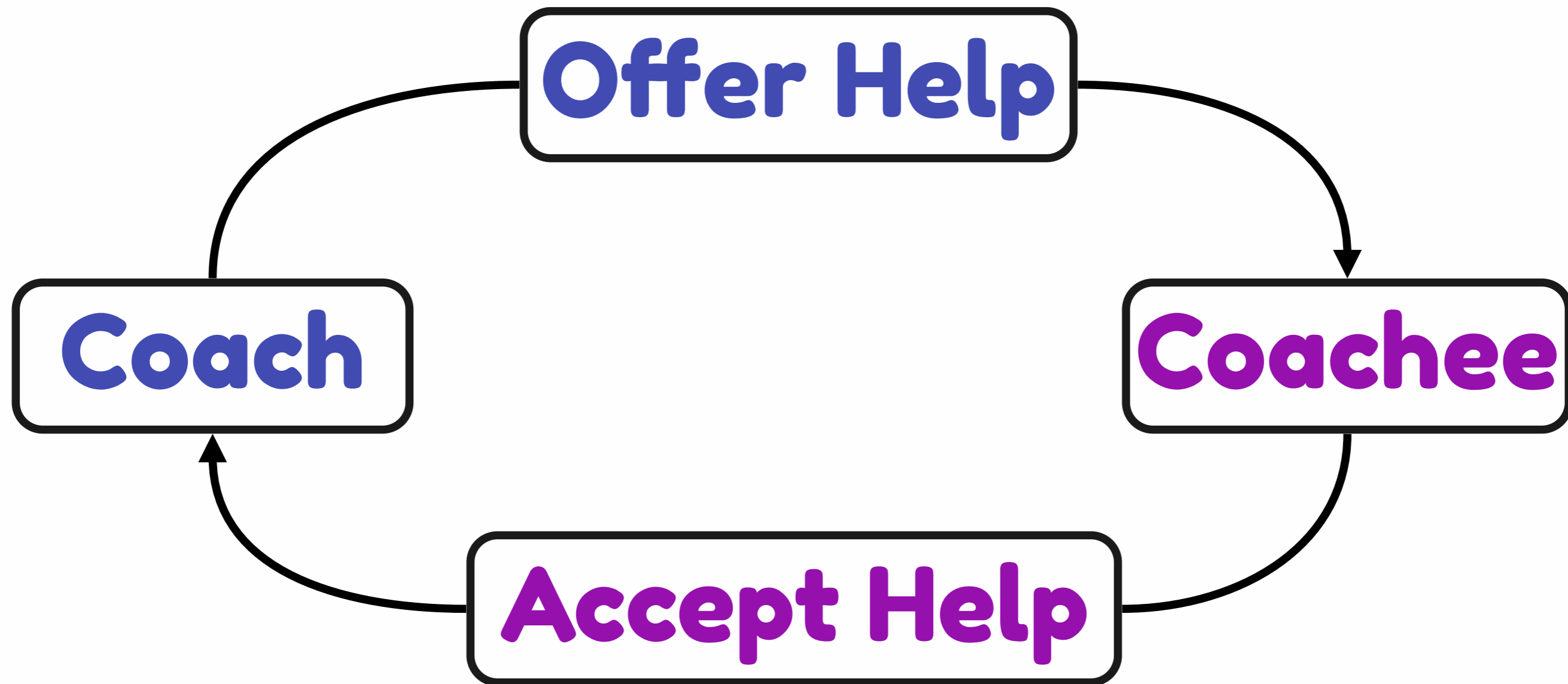
In a group of two or three, briefly discuss:

**When you have been “coached,”
what form did it take?**

The purpose of coaching is to influence future effective behavior.

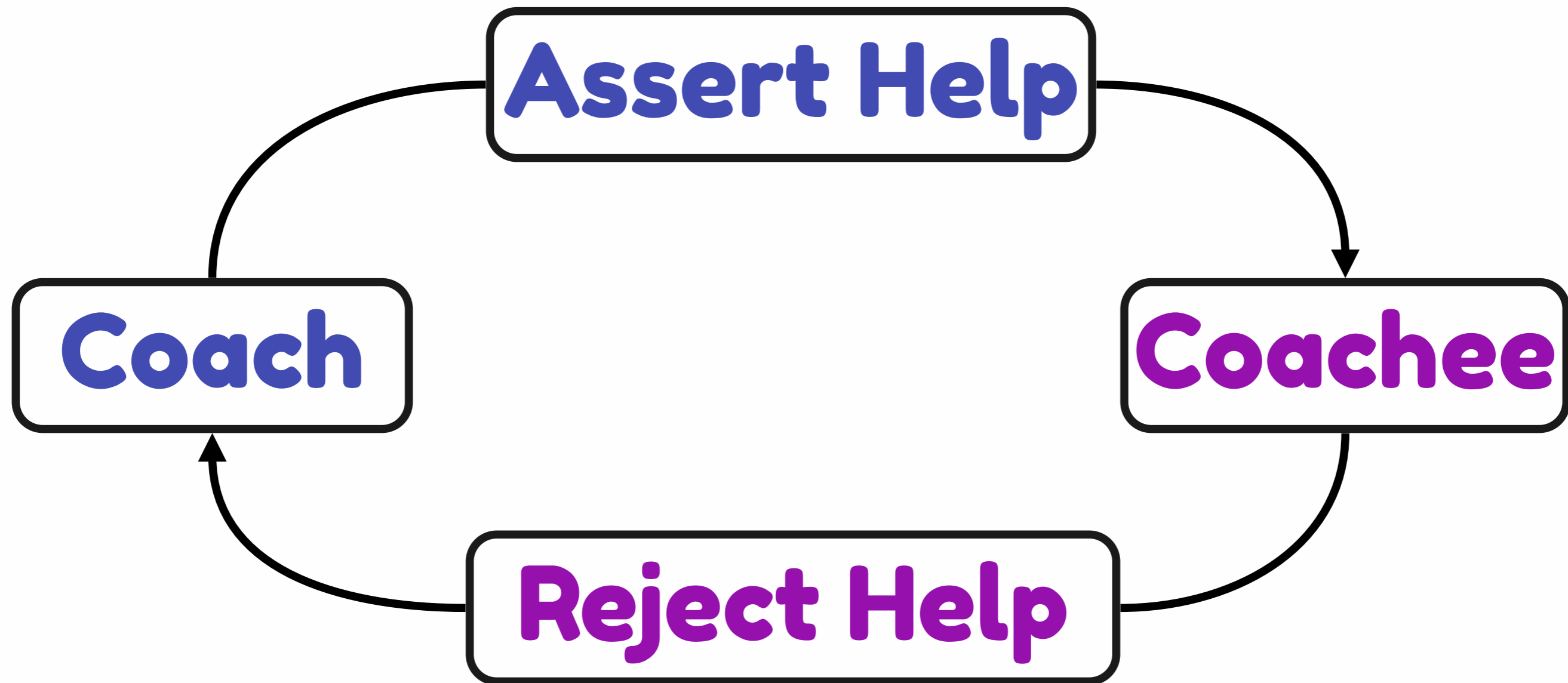
What We Want

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The "Coaching" Trap

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"The problem with help is that you never know when it is going to strike."

– Mary Beth O'Neill

Coaching is a Partnership

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Coaching is about the partnership as much as it is about the content.

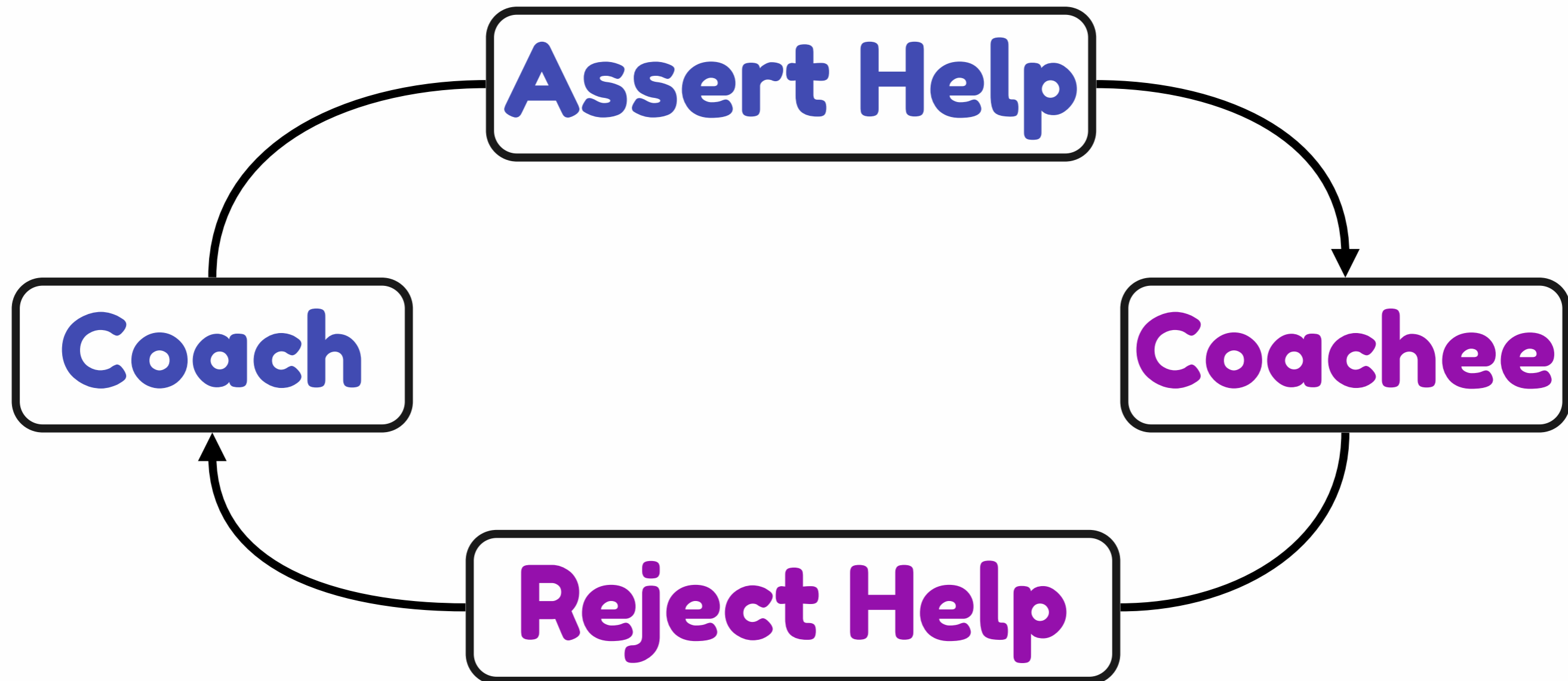
“Helping situations are intrinsically unbalanced and role-ambiguous.”

– Edgar Schein

"At the beginning, every helping relationship is in a state of imbalance. The client is 'one down' and therefore vulnerable; the helper is 'one up' and therefore powerful. Much of what goes wrong in the helping process is the failure to acknowledge this initial imbalance and deal with it."

The "Coaching" Trap

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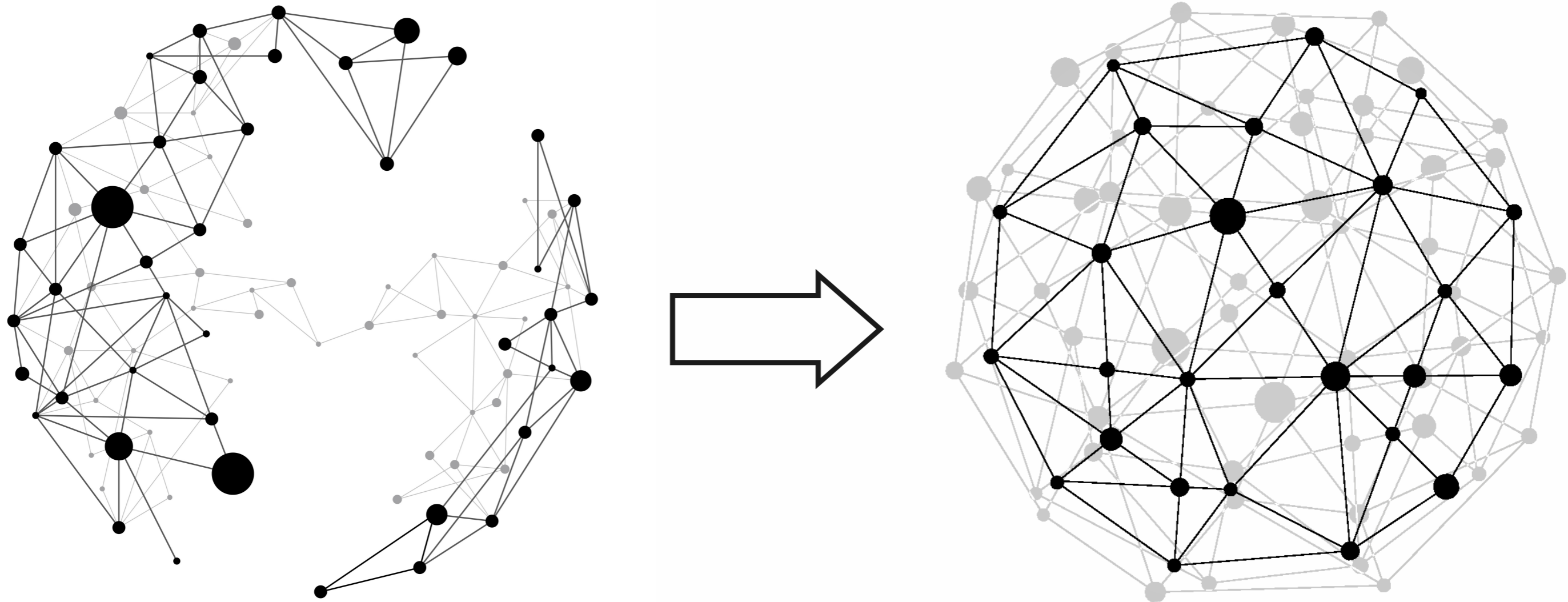
Conditions for "Helpful" Help

- Mutual Purpose
- Mutual Respect
- Mutual Understanding

Mutual Purpose and Mutual Respect
are about establishing a helping
partnership. These create the
"relationship container."

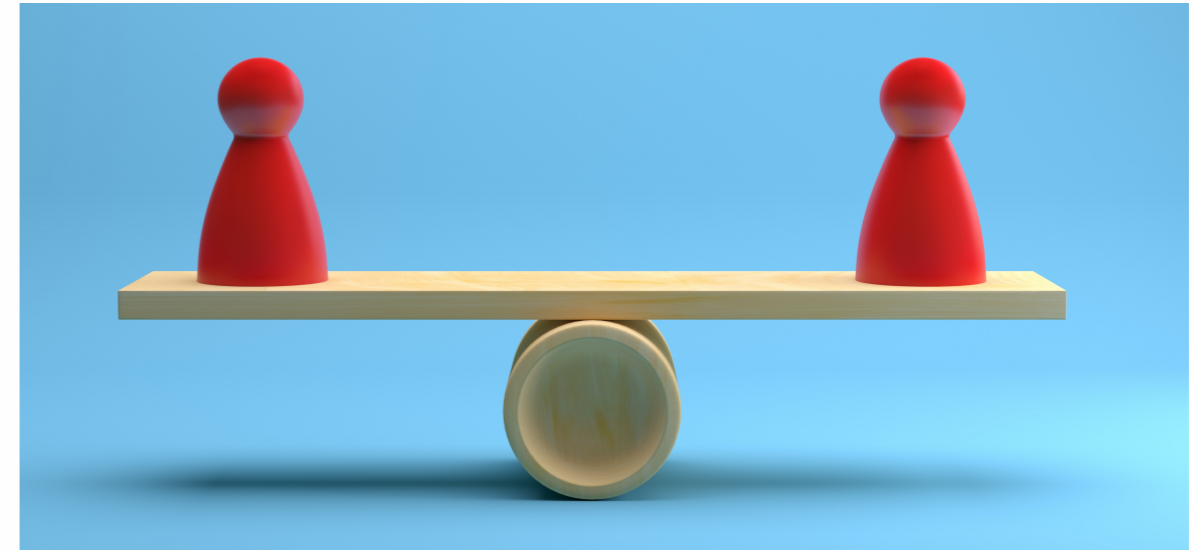
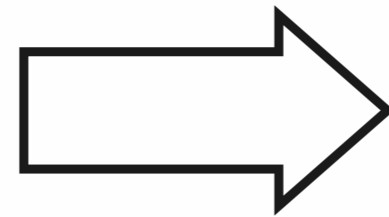
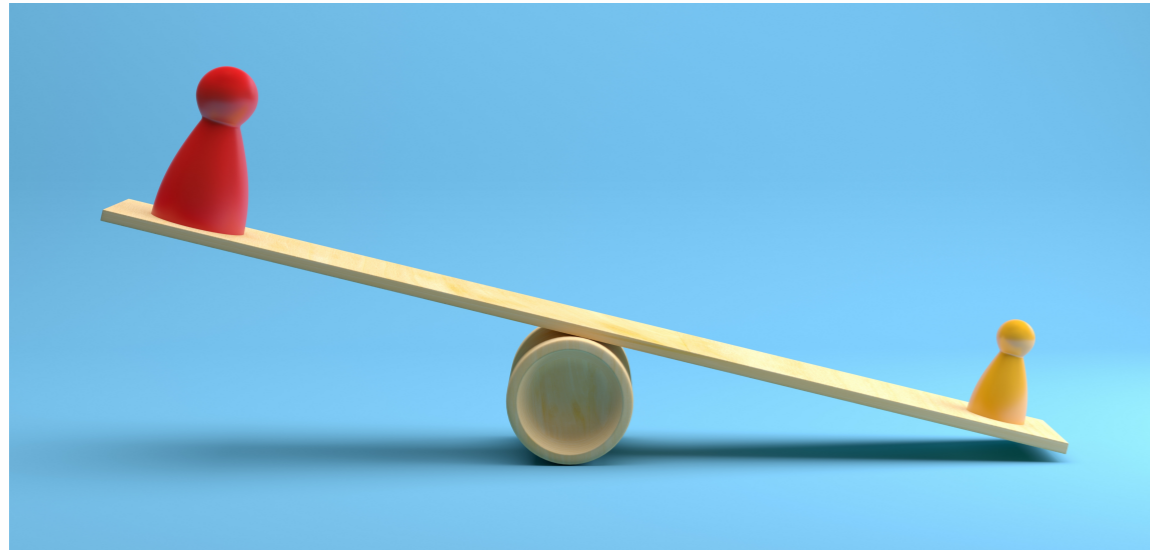
Stronger Container

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Building Partnership

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Balancing the Relationship

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How does Mutual Purpose
balance the relationship?

More clarity,
less ambiguity

Less
personal

Shared
goal

???

How does Mutual Respect
balance the relationship?

Levels the
playing field

Allows
vulnerability to be
present (for both)

Willingness to
consider other
viewpoints

???

Building Partnership

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Mutual Purpose

Mutual Respect

As Coach

As Coachee

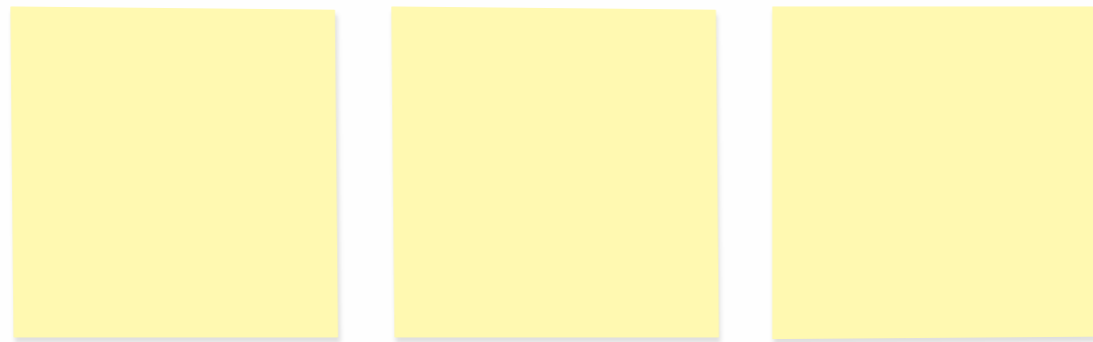
Building Partnership

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Mutual Purpose

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Building Partnership

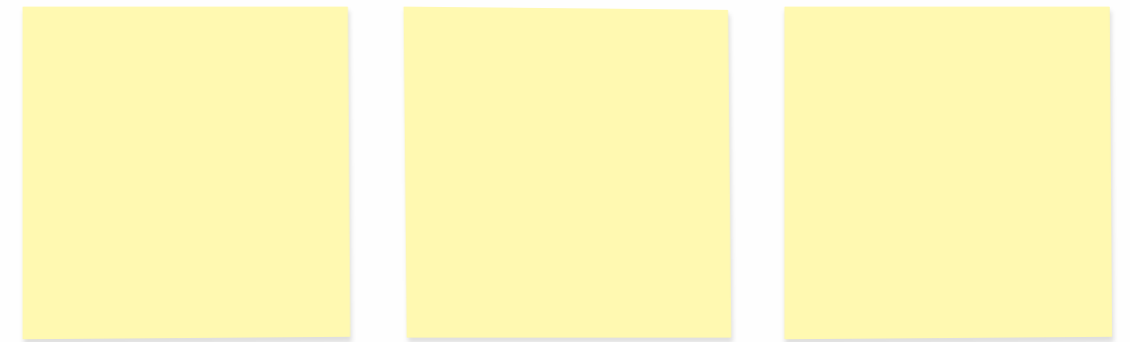
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Mutual Purpose

Mutual Respect

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Building Partnership

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Mutual Purpose

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Building Partnership

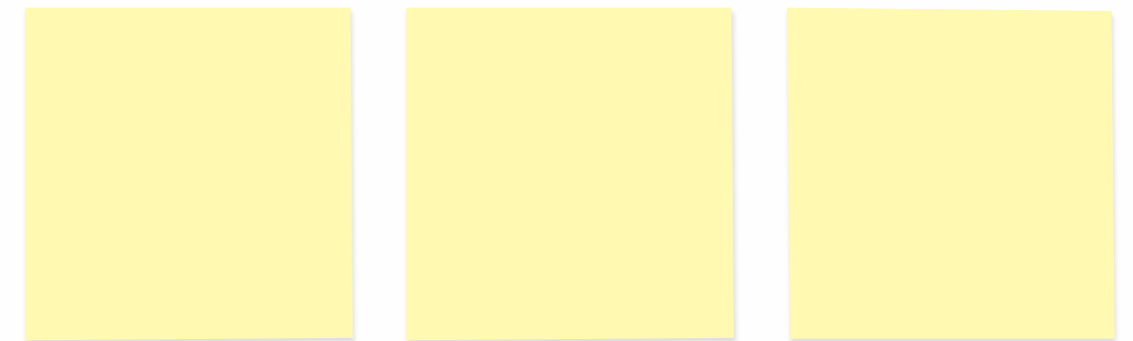
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Mutual Purpose

Mutual Respect

As Coach

As Coachee



Mutual Understanding is the result of a process. That process often begins with one of four "moves."

From the Human Systems Dynamics Institute
hsdinstitute.org

Encouragement

Expressions of gratitude or support

Information

Observations about behavior and/or
impact

Evaluation

Comparison to some standard

Advice

Suggestions for improvement

Types of "Coaching" Help

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Encouragement

Expressions of gratitude or support

Information

Observations about behavior and/or impact

Evaluation

Comparison to some standard

Advice

Suggestions for improvement

*Adapted from Thanks for the Feedback
by Douglas Stone & Sheila Heen*

Your Situation

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Think of a "coaching" situation you were part of, either as coach or coachee.

Which type of "coaching help" was the opening move?

1. Which of the four things is being offered?
2. Is that the right thing to offer from the coach's point of view?
3. Is that the right thing to offer from the coachee's point of view?

“If people don’t want your feedback, you’ll never succeed in reaching them, no matter how smart or wonderful you may be.”

– Jerry Weinberg

After the opening move, your best option for moving toward Mutual Understanding is getting curious about what's going on with the other person – and with yourself.

Turn *judgment* into
curiosity

From the Human Systems Dynamics Institute
hsdinstitute.org

Turn *disagreement* into
shared exploration

From the Human Systems Dynamics Institute
hsdinstitute.org

Turn *defensiveness* into
self-reflection

From the Human Systems Dynamics Institute
hsdinstitute.org

Turn *assumptions* into
questions

From the Human Systems Dynamics Institute
hsdinstitute.org

Standing in Inquiry

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Turn *judgment* into
curiosity

Turn *disagreement* into
shared exploration

Turn *defensiveness* into
self-reflection

Turn *assumptions* into
questions

From the Human Systems Dynamics Institute
hsdinstitute.org

Think back to the same "coaching" situation.

- How did you stand in inquiry?
- What else could you have done to stand in inquiry?

Conditions for "Helpful" Help

- Mutual Purpose
- Mutual Respect
- Mutual Understanding

This is not a sequence; you're likely doing all these at the same time.

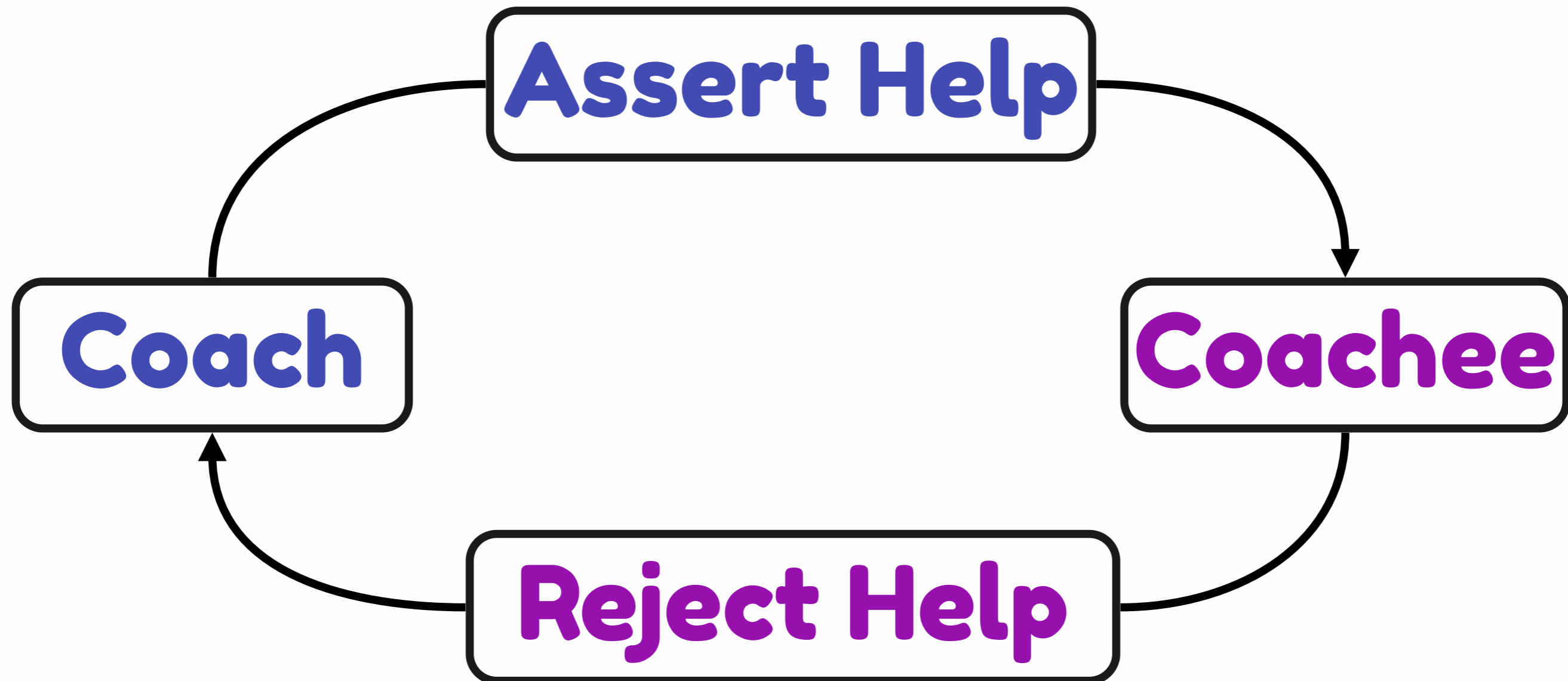
Learn to notice when one is lacking and turn it up.

- Act as though the intent is to encourage future effective behavior.
- Treat it as “well-intentioned and unskillfully done.”
- Recognize what type of help you want/need/are open to (and aren't getting).
- Practice "standing in inquiry."

- Recognize the role ambiguity and status dynamics.
- Reinforce mutual purpose and respect.
- Tune the type of help being offered to what the other person wants/needs/is open to.
- Practice "standing in inquiry" to increase mutual understanding.

The "Coaching" Trap

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What We Want

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