

“Story Problems from SeattleCoach”

(real-life coaching scenarios to explore: What would you do?)

Instructions: Pick a scenario to play with. “Coachees” feel free to improvise on the story with your own details. Coaches, if you get stuck, remember to reset, check-in with your partner or observing coach. Make sure you have the starting agenda, the necessary agreements and the alliance. As always, pay attention to your presence and let your self-management work with the places where you want to teach, fix, tell, command, console, advise, mentor rescue, nag or prop up.

1. Kay’s boss wants to promote her to a bigger and more strategic role but Kay is concerned about how her team will operate without her daily tactical work. She’s ready for the challenge but isn’t sure how to begin. You’re tempted to just teach her leadership and delegation skills, but decide that first you’ll try coaching. (What did her boss see in her?)
2. Georgia just got promoted and will be responsible for weekly team meetings. She knows what she likes in a good meeting, just isn’t sure how to create and lead one. She reports that she’s “pretty scared.”
3. John has to do reviews for the first time. He’s been through the training but wants to get more comfortable in giving feedback “in his own way.”
4. Jeff is great at his job and is well-paid for doing it. But he just turned forty-five and is “restless.”
5. Juan wants to get better at managing his immediate responses to stressful situations. He says that his stomach hurts.
6. Frank wants to quit smoking and believes that new doors will open for him if he succeeds.
7. Tracy is getting promoted and has hired you to help her walk through the transition and the first 100 days. There’s not a lot of time for assimilation—she needs to hit the ground running.
8. Wallace knows he needs to step up and do a better job of “influencing up” with his boss and his boss’s boss. He knows he possesses wisdom and expertise that the company can benefit from, but worries about his personal “presence.”
9. Ken is retiring and wants it to go well. Financially, he’s in great shape and he’s “got thirty years to go!”
10. Lola is a new manager and two of her reports (former colleagues) think they’d have been better candidates. She hires you to help her with her leadership presence.
11. Jack and Ru are moving to Europe for a great new role. They are looking for a coach to help them stage the move for maximum family benefit. They have two small sons.
12. Jan’s boss, the CEO, just got fired and the board wonders if she’s interested in the job. (She loved and trusted her boss, doesn’t completely trust the board.)

13. Ben is the leader of a group of energetic Millennials. He's tempted to call them to order and just tell them what to do. But he wants to grow as a director, and he's hired you to help him find ways to lead them "differently."
14. Maggie has a good track record, and had a good rhythm (job, spouse, two children), but her responsibilities at work have grown this year and she's struggling to keep her balance and boundaries.
15. Joe and his wife agree she's traveling too much. There are some new behavior problems with one of their three children.
16. Jamal is a perfectionist—he just cares about excellence! But his team seems worried about letting him down (and sometimes they don't give him difficult news and feedback). There are problems.
17. Katie gets referred to you by her MD who wants her to find ways to reduce her stress.
18. Ron landed a new job six months ago. Thought he'd love it, turns out he hates it. He feels embarrassed and ashamed, hates going to work. And he's nervous about leaving a job after only six months. He's never done that and worries about his resume.
19. Louise explains that she likes it that she's "blunt." But she's getting regular feedback that her forceful approach is getting in the way. She tells you, "I'm open to new tactics if they work. I guess."
20. Johanna is a novice teacher and it's the end of September. Already she's struggling with managing her classroom, organizing her lessons, some grumpy parents and her own insecurity. After a lot of clearing she looks at you and says, "Just tell me what to do to survive until the weekend!"
21. Willem just got the call. Everything is about to change. He's absorbing the shock—but life keeps moving forward. He calls you to help him to triage, make decisions and create a plan.
22. Following some clear warning signs at home and at work, Jeff quit drinking six weeks ago. He's going to AA regularly but needs support and a plan. He's taking it a day at a time but this decision is landing everywhere in his life.
23. Jeremy is about to start a new job. It's a dream job and he'd be thrilled. Now he just wants to get off on the right foot with everyone in his first 100 days.
24. Charles just had a health scare. He's read books on diet, nutrition, weight-loss. He's joined a gym. Information is not the problem and he doesn't need you to be the expert. He just needs to drop forty pounds.
25. Jane's 40-year-old husband died suddenly two months ago. The dust is settling and in the midst of her grief, she's ready to begin thinking about what to do next for herself and her twin three-year-olds. (He was a thoughtful and organized man and had purchased life insurance.)
26. Andrew talks too much. He's a high-value employee, but people stop listening and think he's a know-it-all. He loses influence. His boss calls to see if you can help him. How should you set up this agreement? Should you include the sponsor? Who should tell Andrew?

27. Julie is getting mad. She's already got a full plate but her VP is piling on more without much help in prioritizing. She's knows she's a key player and is far enough along in her career to know and value her gifts and assets well. She asks for help with having boundaries while staying very engaged.
28. Russell just got fired. Out of the blue. Didn't see it coming. Financially, he's got a cushion and his partner works. But he feels shattered and is doubting himself. Why didn't he see this coming? He needs to settle down and figure out his next steps.
29. Chris has to work with a team of engineers in order to succeed. His background is in sales and marketing and the engineers don't seem engaged in his meetings.
30. Stephanie just won the lottery. It was an office pool and she participated at the last minute and each member of her team won \$5,000,000. She's smart, has a good financial planner and a good lawyer. But she loves her work and is single and dating. She wants to continue to live out her values in both work and life while factoring in this big surprise.
31. Kelly is an entrepreneur. He needs help in deciding how to personally talk about and give visibility to his unique service.
32. Jake is going through a divorce. His heart is broken and he's now a single father with custody of two young children. He wants to line up new support and routines for himself and his children. He saw it coming but still . . .
33. Like many Seattle execs, Jordan is well-paid, great at what he does and bored. He turns fifty next year and is ready to think about what it would take to do the best and most meaningful work of his life. He's thought about starting a non-profit, but wonders, is that the only way a person can do truly meaningful work?
34. Susan is on a sabbatical from a large and demanding international non-profit. She's earned this break but find it hard to really step away. The office calls at least twice a week. She's a workaholic and they keep piling on both recognition and more and bigger projects. Her health and relationship have both taken a hit and she wants to go back to work in three months with better boundaries (or something!).
35. Joyce is out of work, doing a job search. She's great at websites (you've seen some) and wonders if you'd be willing to barter coaching for help with your social media and web presence. Could this work? What could go wrong?
36. Maria is new to Seattle. Does everyone have such a hard time getting to know people here? The only people she knows are her co-workers (who are great). But she knows already that wants to put down roots here.
37. Priya is thinking about getting an MBA. There's a chance it will further her career path, but the costs are great: She'd have to keep working full-time while she did it and would have to borrow around \$60,000. She's married with a child.
38. Willow has had a great twenty years traveling the world and volunteering for non-profits. She has made enough to pay the bills and to live simply along the way. But she turns forty in a few months. She has no

savings for retirement and knows she has to start building a more secure financial base. She secretly worries about becoming homeless.

39. Lucy has signed up for a dating service—and for ten sessions with you.
40. Greg is twenty years old and will graduate from the UW next year. Like most students, he's been focused on grades and dating and sports. His older brother has offered to pay for six months of coaching to get ready for life after graduation.
41. An old coachee calls. Ann's been living in Bolivia in a semi-permanent position with a wild life conservation organization. She's in Seattle for six weeks and wants to meet weekly to review things. Maybe it's time to think about concluding her present job and moving into a new chapter. Ann is married (they see each other every three months), 56 years old, in great health.
42. Dan (36 years old and married) has taken five years to be a stay-at-home parent with a four-year-old and a six-year-old. No regrets! But the kids are will be starting pre-school and first grade in the fall and Dan is ready to do a job search. Following a good informational interview, you've met four times and finished The Wheel together. You've got a good alliance. He begins by telling you which wedge is ready for focus today—among other things he's unsure how to talk about the five-year break in his resume.
43. A successful mid-level manager calls. Eric is thinking about his next career move and worried he's not spending enough time with his family. Also, he was an athlete in college and worries that he's not taking time to stay in shape. You've done a good informational interview and begun to establish a solid alliance. This is your first session. Where will you start?
44. Luther is a coach-in-training at Microsoft. His manager is thrilled with what he knows about coaching and wants Luther to coach some of the new hires (who report to Luther's team members). How can he navigate this agreement? And confidentiality? What could possibly go wrong?
45. Toshi graduated from an Ivy League law school, delighting his parents who are prestigious attorneys in town. He's practiced for five years, earning great reviews. Gradually he reveals to you that he's not sure he's "cut out for this work."
46. Lauren just got promoted and already, her energy is focused on the next one. How do you challenge and support her?