

Coaching Change with Teachable Moments

It was one of the greatest sermons ever preached, but it still was not getting through. The world-weary fisherman sat quietly among the nets in his boat, listening attentively, but his heart was still untouched by the message. Then the teacher tried a different tack. “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” Simon answered and said, “Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing—but I will do as you say and let down the nets.” Peter was stunned by a tremendous haul of fish that nearly swamped his boat. That experience did what words could not: he fell down at Jesus’ feet and called Him Lord. Jesus replied, “Do not fear; from now on you will be catching men” (Luke 5:4–10).

This story reveals some interesting facts about change. What motivated Peter to change was not just hearing about God: it was the personal experience of God’s power. Peter was transformed by that event because it dramatically altered his whole frame of reference about who Jesus was.

Think about something that transformed *your* life—that afterward, you were never the same. It may be a teacher who believed in you and influenced your career, or the birth of your first child, or a time when you saw God move unmistakably, like Peter did. When people are asked what has transformed them, they invariably cite two things: experiences and relationships. Words alone are not what transform us. God uses experiences and relationships to prepare the soil of our hearts so that *then* the seed of the Word can penetrate and take root. What this means is that working at change in others is all about leveraging the real-life experiences and relationships a person is having that open their heart to change in certain areas

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You probably see things that need to change in the lives of those around you. We all have issues. But just because you see something does not mean this is God’s time to work on it. People are not transformed because someone *tells* them about their weaknesses. *God* initiates the process of growth by bringing a teachable moment into a person’s life (like Jesus did with Peter) that *motivates* the individual to change from the inside out.

The coaching approach is based on the understanding that transformation starts with God, with experiences, not words. Knowing what to do does not produce transformation; it is being motivated to do it. In other words, *“Information does not produce transformation.”* That is why coaches use questions instead of giving advice: people are much more likely to act on their own convictions than on what they are told to do. Even if you think you have the “right” solution for another person, you’ll be a lot more effective biting your tongue and helping that individual figure things out on his or her own. Telling people what they ought to do is disempowering, and often ends up making them less motivated to change than they were before.

Ways to Keep Motivation High

Below are several ways to keep motivation high in your coaching relationships:

- **Start with one goal.** Success breeds success. It is much better to start with one thing and add a second goal if you have the energy, than to set the bar too high and fail to do half your steps.
- **Don't set any goals you won't meet.** If you are not sure you are going to get a step done, hold off until later. And if you do not really want to take a step, cross it off your list. Make it a habit that when you set out to do something, you get it done.
- **Celebrate progress.** If you meet an important objective, make a big deal of it. Be sure to affirm your coachee's progress toward the goal. It is easy to focus on mistakes, but that is demotivating.
- **Meet regularly.** For accountability to work, you need to know you will be asked about your steps—and that does not happen if you are not getting together consistently. Make your investment in your coaching relationship pay off by being consistent.

Adapted from the [Peer Coach Training Workbook](#)
by Tony Stoltzfus, <http://www.CoachingPastors.com>