

Introduction: A New Kind of Friend

Everyone likes to make new friends. But how would you like to make a new *kind* of friend? Friends are those who like being around us and like us for who we are. They are people with whom we share common interests. Peer coaching is a special kind of friendship: the interest we share is personal growth. And peer coaching provides something more than a typical friendship: a structure to foster that grow.

The peer coaching structure is like a greenhouse for growth-centered relationships. A greenhouse is a planned environment that gives plants exactly the right amount of soil, sunlight and water for optimum growth. A peer coaching relationship is similar: a friendship that is structured to provide just the right amount of encouragement, accountability and challenge we need to grow in our walk with God.

Growth-oriented relationships are not new. From the pattern of “day by day attending the temple together and breaking bread in homes” (Acts 2:46) in the early church to the monastic rule, John Wesley’s method and today’s small groups and house churches, accountable relationships have been a part of Christian discipleship since the beginning. They have endured because they are essential to personal growth. In fact, it is impossible to come to fullness in Christ without the help of His body.

The Coaching Approach to Peer Relationships

Peer coaching can revolutionize the way you do growth-centered relationships, because the coaching approach offers some unique dynamics that are missing from the way we usually walk with each other. For instance, mentoring, counseling, and discipling all work by having one person provide wise counsel, direction and insight to another. A mentor or counselor can take the things in your life that need to change and tell you how to change them. The problem is, as soon as we move into an advice-giving mode, we are no longer functioning as peers. A major obstacle to forming healthy peer relationships is our tendency to make them a one-way street where one person is the teacher and the other the student.

Instead of depending on advice-giving, the coaching approach uses intuitive listening and powerful questions to draw others into a dialog with God. When you decide something in your life needs to change, a peer coach pushes you to take responsibility for your situation, look to God for insight, and take action. The beauty of utilizing the coaching approach in peer relationships is that we can help each other grow *and still function as peers*, because we aren’t acting as teachers or advisors. This means that peer coaching relationships remain mutual friendships, and are less likely to become controlling or unhealthy.

A Growth Greenhouse

The eight-week *Peer Coach Training Process* is an effective greenhouse structure for forming growth-centered peer relationships and incubating them until they are strong enough to flourish on their own. You will learn the basics of the coaching approach while building a transparent, accountable friendship with one or two peers. Once you get in the habit of sharing your lives with each other, you will find it easy to continue meeting together regularly on your own. The whole purpose of the training is to make the support, encouragement and accountability of a peer relationship an ongoing part of your life. Peer pairs can even grow and multiply as new members are added to the larger group. And to keep you moving toward the prize, the process is flexible enough to let you set new goals and work on new action steps as God brings new growth areas into focus in your life.

So, welcome to the world of peer coaching! May your relationship with your peer be the catalyst that challenges you to move beyond the ordinary in your life and live an extra-ordinary life for God!



Warning: This Course is Not Normal!

If you have been a Christian for any length of time, you have probably gone through a lot of classes or training programs where the basic format is listening to a teacher and discussing what is said. This is not going to be that type of class! In fact, most of your time will be spent observing demonstrations of actual coaching sessions and then practicing those skills with your peer in real life.

The reason we are using a different training style is that our objective is not to teach you *about* peer coaching, but to get you into the habit of *doing* peer coaching. The aim is to develop skills you practice, not to cram more information into your head. That is what makes this training process abnormal, so to speak. The focus is not on teaching theology, studying the Bible or on Christian world view, but on translating what you likely know by now about the Christian walk into intentional behavior patterns. For instance, you probably already have a good basic understanding of accountability. But who are you accountable to (and for what) on a weekly basis? That is the kind of practical application peer coach training will help you make.

Tell, Show, Discuss, Do

The training method we are using is called “Tell, Show, Discuss, Do.” Here is what that looks like. First, we will *tell* you about a concept or skill through a brief teaching. Next, we will *show* you what that principle looks like in action in an interactive coaching demonstration, then follow it up with a debriefing where you *discuss* what you saw. Then you will take what you have learned and *do* it in a peer practice session. (Most weeks you will actually get a chance to do it twice when you use the skill a second time in your weekly peer coaching session.)

Why do we spend so much time focusing in on one skill or principle? Because doing something takes a more intensive approach than knowing something. Here is an analogy to flesh that out. Most of Jesus’ known teachings are contained in the books of Luke and John—about 100 pages in my Bible. In just one evening, you could read those two books and “know” what Jesus taught. But how long would it take you to actually put Jesus’ words into practice? That is the work of a lifetime (and it would be an incomplete work at that!) The payoff for working more intensively on a few principles is that we gain the confidence and the practical ability to actually use them effectively in real life.



Walking in Relationship

One other unusual facet of this process is that you go through it with another person. You will be forming a close partnership with a peer partner that you choose, and each week you will work on your coaching skills together as you build a growth-centered relationship. So this training requires you to engage relationally as well as mentally: to open up, to share about your own life, to make friends, to set growth goals, to be accountable. Relationships add great richness and depth to the learning process.

So come ready for an exciting learning experience that engages your whole being, as we work to put into practice the greatest commandments: loving the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and loving our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:30–31).

PEER COACH TRAINING



Experience the Power of Authentic, Growth-Centered Peer Relationships

Orientation: Getting Started

Orientation: Getting Started

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Handout: The Power of Peer Coaching

Coaching is Powerful Because...

Why are Peer Relationships Important?

- We were created for community
- It is impossible to fulfill your destiny outside of relationships

Why Use a Coaching Approach to Peer Relationships?

- It provides a structure with flexibility
- You can work on what God is working with you on

What is Peer Coaching?

Definition: *Peer coaching is a structured relationship with a peer that uses a coaching approach to facilitate growth.*

1. **Structure:** Goals, actions, covenant, clear expectations
2. **Relationship:** Change comes through people, not programs
3. **Peer:** Not an authority relationship, but a friendship
4. **Coaching Approach:** Drawing out of you instead of telling you or giving advice
5. **Growth:** A strategic relationship with a purpose: to grow



Handout: Peer Coach Training Overview

Peer Coaching Demo

What stands out to you about the coaching approach?

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Overview: Key Training Objectives

1. Learn the basic coaching skills
2. Build a strong, authentic peer relationship
3. Provide a “greenhouse” structure to help make meeting with your peer an ongoing habit

Training Format

1. Large Group Training Sessions
2. Workbook
3. Peer Partners
4. Action Steps

Outcomes of the Training

- You have developed a close relationship
- You are meeting regularly on your own
- You are equipped to meet long-term without needing ongoing support



Commitment Form

Peer Coach Training walks you through the process of developing a committed, accountable relationship with a peer using the coaching approach, for the purpose of growing in Christ. You will start by getting to know each other and learning the basics of coaching. Gradually, you will build an ongoing peer partnership where you meet weekly for support and accountability for your personal growth goals.

Expectations

Every large group session in the program involves you and your peer working together. Since your peer's experience depends on you (if you drop out or don't show up your peer is stuck without a partner), it is imperative that you make a serious commitment before you begin. Before making a commitment to join in, please think through whether you can reasonably set aside the time and energy both for the training program and to maintain an ongoing peer relationship after it is over.

Here is exactly what you are committing to:

Peer Coach Training:

- Group sessions (check the option that your group is doing)
 - Orientation + eight weekly one-hour sessions
 - Workshop + five weekly one-hour sessions
- Weekly Action Steps: 30 to 45 minutes per week on my own during the training
- Purchasing a *Peer Coach Training Workbook*

Your Ongoing Peer Coaching Relationship

- Consistently meeting weekly or bi-weekly with your peer for 45 minute sessions
- Choosing a personal growth goal you want to work on with your peer, and taking action on it each week
- Supporting your peer in his or her growth goal

I Agree...

"I understand what is expected of me and am ready to make a wholehearted commitment to the peer coaching process. I will make every effort to come to all the sessions (except for illness and emergencies), keep up with the action steps and establish an ongoing peer coaching relationship after the training is over."

Name

Date

Group

