Peer Coaching Circles for   
Ongoing Faculty Development

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A Peer Coaching Circle (PCC) is a small group of faculty members from a similar career stage who meet regularly to support each other’s personal and professional goals. PCCs are a solutions-focused mechanism, offering self-sustaining, ongoing access to targeted faculty development.

Peer coaching is distinct from mentoring. We define peer coaching as a focused relationship between individuals of equal status (i.e., at a similar career stage) who support each other through conversations and relationships that develop in a group setting. In a peer coaching circle, each participant serves as both a coach and coachee during each working session; there is no senior coach or subject matter expert in the circle. PCCs offer community and connection with peers, andparticipants gain coaching skills they can use in a range of contexts.

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| **Mentoring Coaching** | |
| Coaching is … | Coaching is not … |
| * Asking questions * Focusing on inquiry * Supporting self-directed learning * Developing actions (behaviors) to move toward goal attainment | * Giving advice * Offering suggestions * Sharing stories |

Successful and sustainable PCCs are viable in a variety of venues, disciplines, and career stages. Successful PCCs require commitment to the structured, intentional process and format.

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| **Dos and Don’ts for Launching a PCC** | |
| DO | DON’T |
| * DO include participants at a similar career stage * DO include participants from different departments or institutions * DO meet regularly and frequently enough to maintain momentum * DO focus on building relationships, community, and trust * DO emphasize asking powerful coaching questions * DO use the PCC meeting structure | * DON’T have a “senior” lead or guide in the group * DON’T predetermine topics for each meeting * DON’T focus on giving advice * DON’T use an ad hoc meeting format * DON’T let some individuals’ work time overtake a meeting, leaving other participants without time to work * DON’T reconfigure established groups without their permission |

During a PCC session, each participant has about 10 to 12 minutes of individual focused work time to address a topic of their choosing with the group.

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| **Structure of PCC Individual Work Time** | | |
| **Action** | **Goal** | **Format** |
| Report back on contract from last session  (1 minute) | Foster Accountability. | For my last contract, I said I will [CONTRACT]. I did [ACCOMPLISHMENT]. |
| Dilemma statement  (1 minute) | Identify the feeling and problem. Then clarify the goal. | I feel [EMOTION] about [SITUATION] and I want [GOAL]. |
| Discussion  (8 minutes) | Support the participant in improving their thinking and identifying potential paths forward that might work for them. | Other participants listen and ask powerful questions (e.g., “How long have you been feeling like that?” or “What has worked well in the past?” or “What would success look like?”). |
| Contract  (2 minutes) | Define concrete action that will be helpful and likely to happen. | For my contract, by [TIME] I will [CONCRETE ACTION]. |

This work was funded in part by the National Institute for Neurological Disorders and Stroke (Grants R25NS076416 and R25NS094094) and the National Science Foundation (Grant HRD1500310) .

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Learn more about coaching and faculty development and this peer coaching circles model in Chapter 32: **“Peer Coaching Circles for Ongoing Faculty Development”** in the *Handbook of STEM Faculty Development*.