

What is Transformational Coaching?

There are many approaches to coaching in schools. **Transformational coaching** is the model that Elena describes in *The Art of Coaching*, and that we practice and teach.

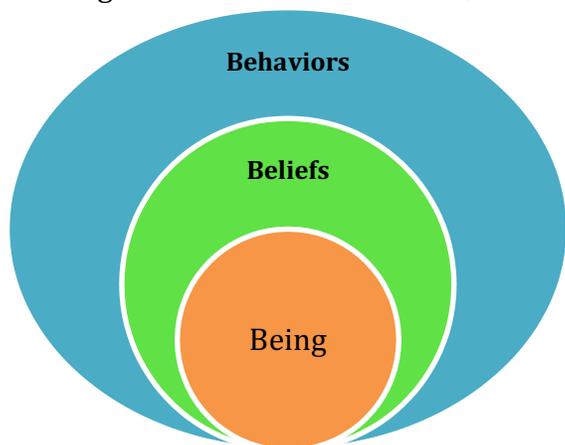
THE THREE Bs: Transformational coaching provides strategies to explore three domains of who we are: our **behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being**. We call these “the three Bs.”

BEHAVIORS: When we coach around behaviors, we explore classroom management, lesson planning, assessment practices, content and curriculum, and so on. We coach around instructional practices. This is what most coaches in schools focus on.

BELIEFS: When we coach around beliefs, we explore beliefs about student behavior, teaching, learning, content/curriculum, and so on. *All of our behaviors emerge from beliefs*—whether we’re conscious of it or not. A transformational coach works to surface the beliefs that lie below behaviors. Some of our beliefs serve us and our students well, and some beliefs do not. A transformational coach who is committed to meeting the needs of every child may need to explore beliefs and may need to help a client shift beliefs that aren’t in service of every child.

WAY OF BEING: When we coach around a way of being, we help a client cultivate awareness of how they are showing up for themselves and to others. Our way of being has a great deal to do with our sense of identity—which can fluctuate and change, but which is also anchored in socio-political identity markers that rarely change (such as our race or ethnicity and gender). Our emotions often reflect our way of being, and emotions are commonly expressed through body language—so a transformational coach pays close attention to a client’s emotions and nonverbal communication. A teacher’s way of being could be authoritative, or meek and passive, or fearful, or calm and focused, or strong and compassionate, or charismatic and engaging.

Our way of being often shapes our beliefs, which then fuels certain behaviors. Without attend to ways of being and beliefs and behaviors, our coaching may not be transformational.



REFLECT:

- Think about a teacher you’ve coached. In which domain (behaviors, beliefs, ways of being) has your coaching been focused?
- Reflect on this teacher’s areas for growth. Which domains do you suspect they fall into? Are they behaviors? Beliefs? Ways of being? Or a combination?

Three Steps in a Coaching Conversation

A coaching conversation can be thought of as a dance with three basic steps: Listening, thinking and responding.

Listening

- Listening is the first step in establishing real communication. The way you listen is determined by your purpose.
- Communication happens when the message the speaker sends is the same message that the listener hears.
- To ensure that we get the message that the speaker sends, we must begin with listening to understand.
- As we heighten awareness of how we listen and what we think when we're listening, we can make choices about where our mind goes.
- We can use active and intentional listening strategies to ensure that we understand.

Thinking

- We are always thinking—even when we're listening—but in this step we start thinking for a purpose beyond understanding. We think so that we can facilitate reflection, problem-solve, guide learning, surface unrecognized possibilities, and so on.
- Thinking tools help to broaden the available range of coaching strategies.
- We all have default ways of thinking and sometimes these create blind spots. Thinking tools can help us reduce our blind spots.

Responding

- We can take facilitative or directive stances when responding, and responses can be catalytic, cathartic, supportive, informative, prescriptive or confrontational.