Leadership Coaching Example
Supporting Middle Management Growth

SITUATION: John is a middle manager whose defensiveness is resulting in complaints regarding leadership style. This, in turn, is creating stress for John as he attempts to settle into his new position. The complaints are “loud” enough that John’s boss is aware of them and realizes John’s ability to succeed is being compromised by his own behavior.

ACTION: With John’s concurrence, his boss requested the assistance of a leadership coach. After an initial consultation with John and his boss, several coaching goals were established. John and his coach then began a series of weekly consultations where they discussed what was happening on the job, how his defensiveness was showing up, and then devising strategies to change his leadership style.

In this case, John had to learn how to distinguish between events over which he had control versus those events out of his control. John needed not only to understand the control issues but also the impact that his behavior had on others. Finally, John had to be able to quickly identify the “triggers” that caused his defensive behaviors and learn how to “self-manage” in terms of controlling reactions to the triggers. This was challenging and was not immediately successful. Over time, however, John became more skilled at self-managing his behavior, resulting in improved relationships.

RESULTS: After six months working with his coach, John, his boss and his coach assessed John’s progress. They agreed that:

- John had achieved better communication with staff
- John developed values that were then communicated to the staff and from which he led this team
- John learned how to self-manage and became less defensive and more open
- Complaints were significantly reduced
- Staff were more motivated and involved