

Your medical school may offer coaching. Is it effective?

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About one-third to one-half of U.S. medical schools have academic coaching programs, and many more are poised to add them. It's a new frontier in medical education. And while it's often new to medical students and residents, many times it's new to faculty too.

The AMA Academic Coaching in Medical Education Video Series features nine short videos that explore academic coaching competencies through hypothetical situations involving both experienced and inexperienced coaches. All of these videos can be accessed for free on the AMA YouTube channel and the AMA Ed Hub™.

A corresponding textbook published this spring, *Coaching in Medical Education: Students, Residents and Faculty*, explores how successful medical school coaching programs further a variety of personal goals. These include professional identity formation, academic performance, community building, leadership and lifelong learning skills, and clinical skills development.

For more insight on the new textbook, read this great Q&A with the lead authors, who are: Maya M. Hammoud, MD, Nicole M. Deiorio, MD, Margaret Moore, and Margaret Wolff, MD, MHPE. The textbook is part of the AMA MedEd Innovation Series, which provides practical guidance for local implementation of the education innovations tested and refined by the AMA Accelerating Change in Medical Education Consortium.

How academic coaches are different

The videos were developed to call out competencies, skills and approaches that successful academic coaches use. At only eight to 12 minutes each, the videos can easily be incorporated into training for coaches and administrators.

Academic coaching requires skills that are distinct from those needed in mentoring and advising. The first video in the series, "Coaching Basics," explores this unique relationship.

An adviser, for example, might immediately lay out what a medical student or resident needs to do. Meanwhile, mentors might share their personal experiences early on in medical school or residency. By contrast, an academic coach is someone “who will help you set your own goals through asking a lot of questions, listening and keeping you accountable,” says the video.

The educational video series then looks at coaching competencies in these eight key areas.

1 “Relationship Building”

“Coaches should expect that these first meetings will be their coachees’ first exposure to coaching in an academic setting,” the video’s host notes. Your coach should focus on asking open-ended questions to help you understand your abilities.

2 “Portfolio Coaching”

A good coach will focus on your personal values and how they are expressed in your goals.

3 “Skills Coaching”

In this module, a faculty member provides coaching on communication skills needed to deliver bad news to a patient by directly observing the patient-resident interaction and debriefing afterward.

4 “Well-Being Coaching”

“Watch for some examples where the coach truly views the coachee as the expert in what is needed,” the host says.

5 “Coaching the Struggling Learner”

This module describes how learners can lean on coaches to jumpstart their brainstorming and help them develop new perspectives on problem-solving.

6 “Coaching the Excelling Learner”

The line between coaching and advising can be blurry at times, and a good coach will seek help when working with a highly successful learner.

7 “Coaching the Disengaged Learner”

One-size-fits-all rarely works. “If a learner is assigned a coach whose style may be different from theirs, the coach will need to pay extra attention to adapting their coaching style to one the learner can engage in,” the host says.

8 “The Appreciative Inquiry Model”

This draws on the 5D approach to appreciative inquiry, which calls out five steps for the coach and coachee: define, discover, dream, design and deliver.

An earlier reference, *It Takes Two: A Guide to Being a Good Coachee* (PDF; registration required) focuses on what medical students, residents and fellows need to know to get the most out of a coaching relationship.

Learn more about how medical students can benefit from coaching in medicine.