

# **DSLIP - Action Learning Sets (ALS)**

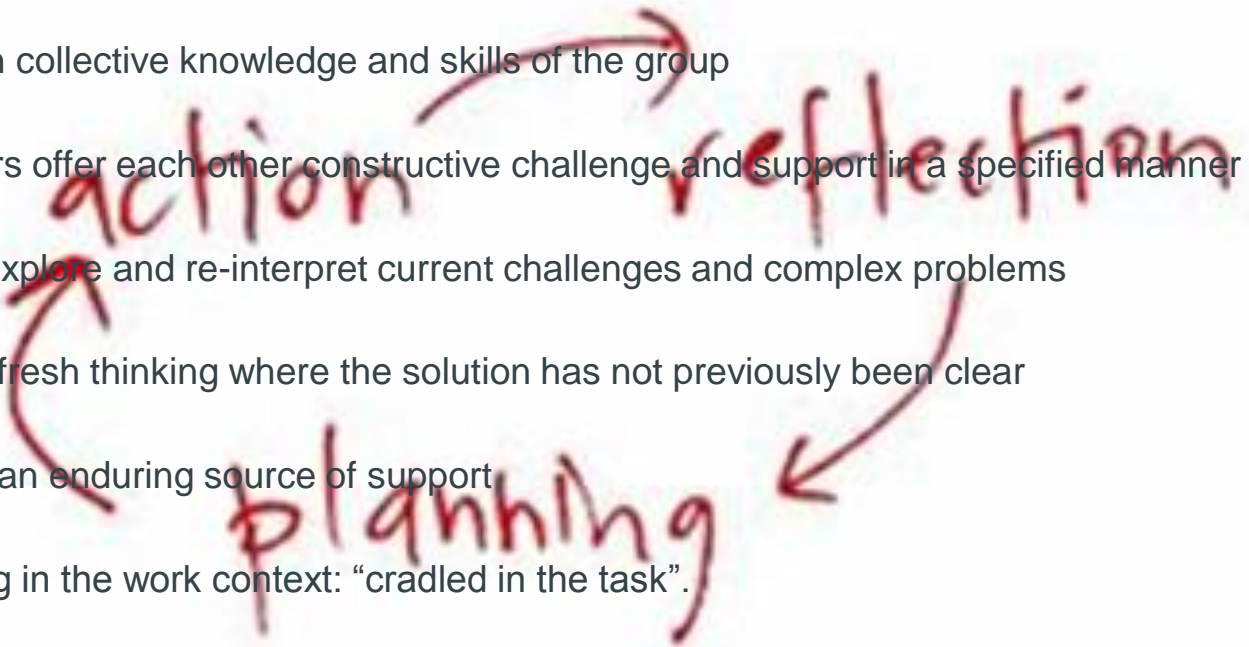
## Session objectives:

- Introduce the action learning set as a development tool
- Utilise the experience and wisdom of your peers to think differently about a work challenge
- Practice your coaching skills

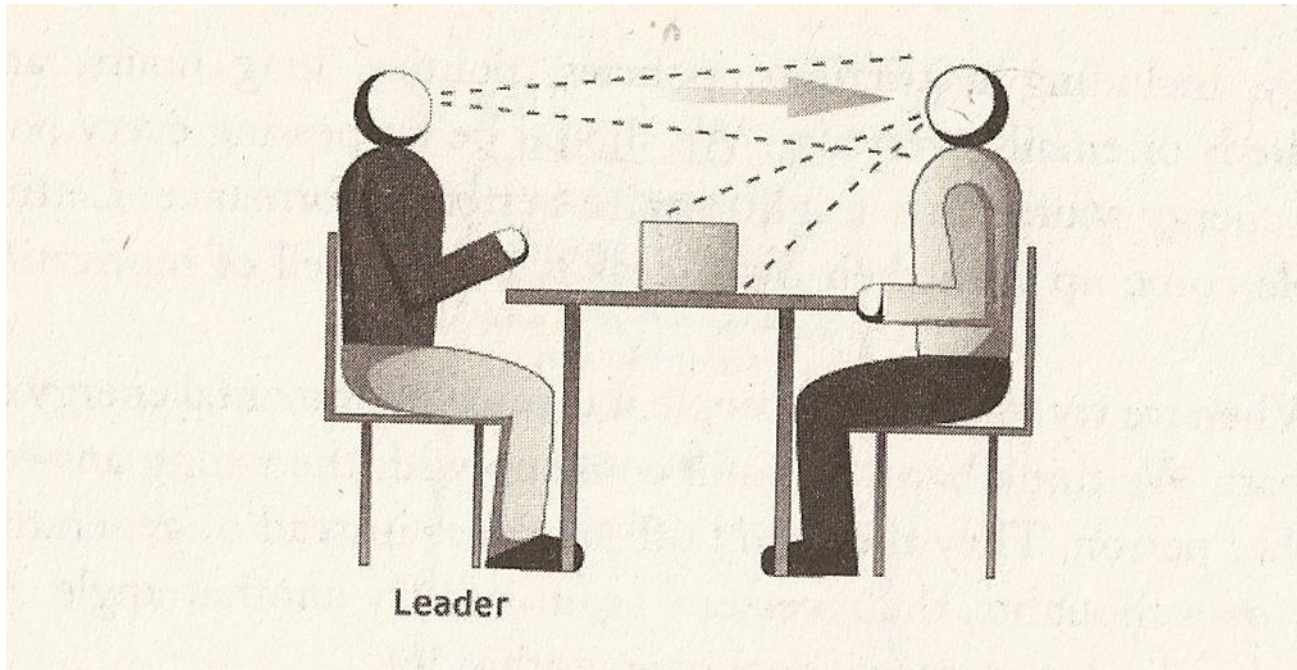


# What is an Action Learning Set (ALS)?

- Structured meeting between 5 and 10 peers
- Can be as long as a day or short as two hours
- Draw on collective knowledge and skills of the group
- Members offer each other constructive challenge and support in a specified manner
- Group explore and re-interpret current challenges and complex problems
- Identify fresh thinking where the solution has not previously been clear
- Can be an enduring source of support
- Learning in the work context: “cradled in the task”.



# Coaching



*“Enabling others to have their own insights”*

# Coaching

## What it is

- The task of the coach is to use listening skills, questioning which guides reflection to create highly effective conversations.
- Coaching encourages individuals to think for themselves and trusts that the individual can create insights and ideas to move their situation forward

(Julie Starr – The Coaching Manual)

## What it is not

- **Telling people what to do**
- **Solving people's problems for them**

# Listening skills - levels of listening



# Asking questions.

- **Keep them simple**
- **Have a purpose in mind**
- **Influence without being controlling**
- **Use more open questions**

## Asking questions – keep them simple.

“When you consider your motivations around this and what causes you to want to earn more money, what does this lead you to realize?”

versus

“What is it about money that is so important to you?”



# Asking questions – have a purpose in mind

## Clarification

- Encourage objective thinking
  - Questions about the issue so far
  - Gathers and highlights important information.
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- **What successes have you had so far?**
  - **Where did you go for the resources?**
  - **How did you decide to do it that way?**
  - **What, where, when, how?**  
(Why questions can lead to a defensive response)

## Influence thinking

- Shifts attention
  - Influence to think differently – i.e. identify opportunities
  - Influence someone to action
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- **What other options are available to you?**
  - **How could you use this to your advantage ?**
  - **What could you do about that right now?**

# Asking questions – influence without being controlling.

- Asking someone a question automatically influences the direction of their thoughts.
  - Don't imply assumptions in questions - “What did you feel about that – frustrated?”
  - Don't imply criticism - “What made you act in such a hostile manner towards her?”
  - Don't imply blame – “What could you do to completely resolve the situation for everyone involved?”

# Asking questions – open & closed questions.

## ▪ Open questions:

- They require the respondent to *think* and *reflect*
- They will release *opinions* and *feelings*
- They hand control of the conversation to the *respondent*.

*What other approaches have you considered?*

## ▪ Closed questions:

- They give you *facts*.
- They are *easy* to answer
- They are *quick* to answer
- They keep control of the conversation with the *questioner*.

*Have you considered any other approaches?*

# Coaching Model



John Whitmore – GROW model

# Example Questions

## GOAL:

- What is the aim of this discussion?
- What is it that you ultimately want to achieve?
- How will you know when you have achieved it?
- What might be a short-term goal along the way?
- When do you want to have achieved it by?

## REALITY:

- What is happening right now?
- Who else is involved?
- How do you feel about the situation?
- What is the effect on other people?
- What have you tried so far?
- What happened as a result?
- What stopped you from doing more?
- What's missing in this situation?
- What do you have that you're not using?
- What's really going on here?

## OPTIONS:

- What options do you have?
- What else could you do
- What would you do if you had complete control?
- What would you do if you had more time, money, resources...?
- If you could only change one thing in this situation, what would it be?
- What have you tried when you've been in a similar situation in the past?
- What would an expert do in this situation?
- (Would you like a suggestion from me?)
- What are the pros and cons of each option?

## WRAP UP :

- So what are you going to do?
- How does that contribute to achieving your goal?
- When are you going to do it (be specific)?
- What might stop you from doing it?
- How will you avoid that from happening?
- What support do you need?
- How will you make sure that you get it?
- On a 1-10 scale, how willing are you to take this action?

# Process

Step	Action
1.	Agree the ground rules – Chatham House etc.
2.	<b><u>The issue</u></b> - everyone is encouraged to think of an issue if possible( ONE minute each to outline your issue).
3.	As a group decide on which issues to tackle today (likely two or three in the time permitted. The rest of the group can bring issues to the next ALS).
4.	<b><u>Challenge expanded</u></b> - first person then has time allocated to give more detail.
5.	<b><u>Clarification questions</u></b> - all set members are invited to ask questions so that they understand the issue fully.
6.	<b><u>Exploration questions</u></b> - each member offers a question to expand thinking or test assumptions Avoid telling each other what to do.
7.	Facilitator might stop the session in order to raise awareness on matters of process.
8.	<b><u>Action identified</u></b> - first person reflects back on what he/she has heard and what he/she intends has to take forward – outlines their Actions.
9.	Set has a chance to challenge any assumptions and actions to make sure the issue is fully addressed.
10.	First person gives a commitment to group – with obligation to report back at the next Set.

# What Type of Issue?

- There is no one Right or Wrong answer
- You 'own' it, i.e. one where you are/have taken responsibility for solving it.
- It must be a real issue and it must be current.
- It is causing you to question and hesitate? It can be big or small, simple or complex, at an individual or an organisational level.
- It must be a stretching objective – not something that you actually can already achieve and is therefore the subject of a light or easy discussion in the ALS.

**Any questions?**