



Coaching Through Life Changes

Reflection Questions for Coaches when Facing Life Transitions

The following reflection questions are designed to assist sport coaches when faced with a professional or personal life transition, to assist coach developers in mentoring coaches through life transitions, and to stimulate further discussion and examination among sport researchers. The reflection questions are organized into two sections: Professional and Personal. Each section contains questions related to the following sub-topics:

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Professional

New Supervisor

What expectations...

- does my new supervisor have for me as a coach? How will I be evaluated?
- does my new supervisor have for my program/organization/institution? What goals and accomplishments did my supervisor have in their previous program/position?
- does my new supervisor have for work-home life balance? How does my supervisor prioritize work and family?

How will I be supported...

- when players, parents/families, alumni, and community members share concerns with my supervisor?
- on matters related to my program (e.g., finances, scheduling, travel, etc.)? How much input does my new supervisor want?
- when dealing with budget issues and requests?

How will I communicate...

- best with my new supervisor (personal meeting, email, text, etc.)? What method do they prefer and with what frequency of contact?
- my expectations for my program to my new supervisor?
- to my new supervisor the contributions I have made to assist the organization/institution to be successful in the past?
- and best share my knowledge, philosophy, and expertise with my new supervisor?
- challenges my program is experiencing in the past, present, or future?

How will I adapt...

- if my role/responsibilities change under my new supervisor?
- to new systems/protocols implemented by my new supervisor? Am I able to adjust the new system/protocols? Will I be happy about the changes? Do I believe in the changes? If not, how do I communicate with her/him my thoughts?
- to the values of my new supervisor? How do I identify with my supervisor's values? Do my values and the institutional values align with the values of the new supervisor? If not, how will I respond?



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New Job

How will I communicate...

- to connect with players, coaches, parents/families, and co-workers in my new job?
What method has been successful for me in previous roles?
- my support for other coaches and programs in my new job? How do I demonstrate that I value and care about them?
- my experiences/struggles/ideas/coaching philosophy as I transition to my new program? Who may I turn to for support?
- to connect with other coaches and people to create a better network in my new community?
- how my coaching philosophy aligns with the overall vision of the organization?

How will I adapt...

- to fit within the current staff? How were things done previously before my arrival? Was this successful? Would I continue with this approach, tweak it, or use one I have found more effective?
- and improve my skill set to best contribute to my new organization?
- to the different personalities among the staff?

What expectations...

- do I need to meet for my supervisor, organization, and/or community in my new role? How much time do I have to meet these expectations?
- were previously set for the program or coach and were they met?

How will I...

- prioritize my non-coaching responsibilities with my coaching responsibilities?
- acquire new or locate existing resources I need to be successful in my new job?
Are there any gaps in my knowledge or capabilities that I need for this role? How is data being used to drive decision-making in this organization?
- maximize my skills for the benefit of my program?
- maintain a healthy identity and fight imposter syndrome?
- learn about the culture of the team/organization I am entering?
- build a support network of friends and colleagues? Who are the groups of people I wish to connect with?



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A Promotion

How will I manage...

- and prioritize my time and effort to account for new job responsibilities? Where is my time currently being spent? How can I become more efficient?
- and utilize the expertise of others to help share some of my new responsibilities? Who has the knowledge and capability to help me? Who may need some training?
- any new power imbalances with previously equal colleagues?
- new responsibilities and duties while maintaining previous work relationships? How might this change an existing relationship?
- the transfer of responsibilities previously under me to my replacement and delegate appropriately?

How do I...

- understand the expectations others have for me now that I am their supervisor?
- remain authentic in a new position of authority?
- assist others to feel like they are part of the process and share in any success that we have?
- find a good mentor and support system to be successful in my new role?
- improve or refresh my skills in my new role? Where are the gaps in my knowledge and capabilities?
- thank the administration for providing me this opportunity?
- thank my colleagues for fostering the growth necessary to make this promotion possible?
- maintain existing channels of communication and form new ones?



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Staff Changes (working with new hires)

How will I support newly hired staff...

- to understand and be successful in their new role?
- to feel like they are a part of what we do and we value them?
- to feel welcome?
- and orient them within the culture of the program?
- to build the necessary skills, knowledge, and aptitude?
- to feel comfortable communicating their needs to me and others in the organization?
- to earn the respect of our players and be seen as credible?

How will I communicate...

- the introduction of new hires to our players, staff, and parents/families?
- to make sure the newly hired staff is comfortable to give me critical and constructive feedback?
- the allocation of staff (administrative) roles and responsibilities considering new and previous staff members?
- with newly hired staff to get to know them personally, in their lives outside of the job?

How do I...

- evaluate the skills and abilities of my new colleagues? Is there a particular template that I can use?
- best utilize the skills and abilities of my new colleagues for the growth and success of the team?
- nurture the new staff to communicate and share their strengths?



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Change in Competitive Level

How will I learn...

- the coaching skills and competencies I need at this level of competition?
- the rules to be in compliance at this level of competition?
- what skills will my players need to possess to succeed at this level of play?
- what the expectations for competition are at this level? How does my teaching/coaching philosophy interact with the competitive culture?
- from past experiences that might apply to my current situation? How does the current competitive level differ from past experiences?
- what management (i.e., fiscal, recruiting, scheduling, etc.) related tasks are required of me as a coach at this competitive level?

How will I...

- delegate my job responsibilities as a coach if I am now supervising a larger staff?
- gain the respect from players, other coaches, and people at the new level of competition?
- develop a mentorship relationship with other coaches in the profession?
- make new coaching contacts on this new level of competition?
- assess players who can compete at this new level and appropriately replace players with better talent?

Retirement from Non-Coaching Duties (classroom teaching)

How can I use my extra time...

- to better connect and relate to my players?
- to relieve some of the other coaches from a portion of their duties?
- to offer my expertise as a mentor to other coaches and/or players?
- to do more in my coaching role (scouting, recruiting, planning, etc.)?
- to maintain a healthy identity and stay connected to my non-coaching role (professional friends, professional organizations, etc.)?
- to focus on my own mental and physical health?
- to stay engaged in professional development?



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Personal

Marriage

How will I adapt...

- to determine which personal activities I enjoy, and may need to reprioritize?
- to involve my spouse in my role as a coach? How much information on negative experiences do I share with my spouse? How much does my spouse want to be involved in my coaching role?
- to create new boundaries to protect my family time on some weeknights or weekends? How does my spouse support my non-traditional working hours, such as nights, weekends, long hours, travel away from home, and so on?
- to better understand the challenges my spouse will encounter?
- to delegate some responsibilities to free up more time for my family?
- to incorporate my identity as a married person into my role as a coach? How much will I integrate my coaching life and family life?

How will I communicate...

- with my spouse that instability of working as a coach in terms of employment?

How will I support...

- my spouse's interests/career/goals? What ambitions am I willing to sacrifice to support my spouse's ambitions?
- my spouse in feeling like they are a part of the program if they desire? How can I use the strengths of my spouse to help with my coaching situation and help me process any negativity towards me?



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Divorce

How will I communicate...

- to offer encouragement to others when going through a tough time personally?
- to share my personal lessons during the divorce with my players if desired?
- with my coaching staff and supervisors about my marital situation, if I desire to disclose this information?

How do I adapt...

- to maintain a work-life balance by adding daily activities beyond my role as a coach?
- to maintain a positive presence with players and colleagues during the potentially negative time?
- and re-evaluate my ex-spouse's role within my program? How involved was my spouse in my role as a coach and/or with my team?
- to maintain my core values and/or reconsider my life goals?



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Birth of a Child

How will I adapt...

- to delegate and/or share my current coaching duties?
- to create flexibility in my coaching schedule to manage new childcare responsibilities? How do we pay for childcare?
- to be a part of my child's life and still manage my coaching schedule?
- to best include my family in my current coaching situation (attendance at games, practices, etc.)?
- to handle coaching responsibilities and duties during the days right before, during, and after the birth of a child? How do I not bring my work home with me and still be an effective coach?
- to spend time with young children with a coaching schedule (early bedtime)?
- to raise a newborn baby while coaching a season?
- to include a support system of colleagues, friends, and family in helping adjust to being a new parent?
- to continue to nurture my relationship with my spouse?

How will I communicate...

- with my supervisor the need to be more present for my family? What kind of support do I have from the department before, during, and after delivery? Do I have the option of parental leave?
- my additional financial/health care needs, what do I need to share with my supervisor?
- with my supervisor, if my child is born with special needs and I need additional time away from my role as a coach?
- with my staff about my absence during the birth of a child?
- with my players my new responsibilities at home?
- the presence of my family in my coaching life at practices, games, etc.?



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Multiple Children

How do I manage...

- who watches my children while I am gone recruiting/traveling for games on weekends and nights when the daycare is closed? How can I pay for childcare?
- my role as a parent and as a coach? How do I balance giving my time to my children versus giving my time to my players?
- attending as many of my children's activities as possible but still be effective as a coach?
- absences from my children's activities due to coaching responsibilities?

How will I...

- incorporate my children into the program? Will their presence within the program become problematic?
- garner support within the program to assist in childcare? Are there members within the program who are connected with my children's schools/activities?
- continue to make sure my spouse is supported during the season?
- continue to support my children in their interests outside my sport and program?
- continue to nurture my relationship with my spouse?



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Dealing with Loss

How will I find support...

- through my coaching staff and players during this time of grief?
- from my organization/institution while dealing with this personal loss?
- and best communicate my situation with my supervisor and co-workers during this time?
- outside my organization while dealing with a personal loss?

How do I continue to coach...

- and honor the memory of a person I lost in my life, in my role as a coach?
- and use some of the lessons learned from this person in my daily coaching?
- and inspire others to deal with adversity in a positive productive manner?
- and teach my players how to learn from a personal loss and not let it destroy them?
- and ensure my team still receives enough attention and coaching while I am gone or mentally not 100%? How can I ensure the operations of the program are handled?
- and enjoy coaching by modeling healthy coping, grieving, and stress management within my program during times of grief?
- and lead when I need time to grieve? What is the best way for me to grieve?



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Health of a Family Member

How do I...

- modify my workload to ensure availability for family members?
- How do I create flexibility in my daily schedule to help care for a family member?
- best communicate with family members about what needs and expectations they have of me?
- ensure self-care in the space where you are caring for others?
- get family members to medical appointments and juggle coaching meetings, practices, etc.?
- respect the privacy of my family member's health while seeking support or providing answers regarding my absence from my program?
- coordinate with extended family regarding communication, help, and care?
- communicate with colleagues about the situation in my personal life if I desire to share this information?

Empty Nest (children leave home)

How will I adapt...

- to utilize my extra time to make a bigger impact on both my job and my family life. How did I involve my children in my daily routines as a coach and how will I adapt to them not being there?
- to continue to make an impact on my children's lives even after they leave?
- and give others (i.e., spouse, family, etc.) more of my time and talents?
- to continue to nurture my relationship with my spouse?



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Personal Health Changes (related to natural aging)

How will I adapt...

- my teaching/coaching style as I age?
- to take care of myself so I can better take care of others?
- my diet and wellness enhancing behaviors to perform at a higher level?
- and communicate with my staff about my reduced physical role?
- my physical engagements in practices and competitions so I can continue to demonstrate as a coach? What demonstrations do I have to give up? Who can step in to give the demonstrations?
- and use technology to overcome any physical limitations?
- and reevaluate a healthy approach to exercise?
- to develop a support network with others that are dealing with natural aging?
- to learn both professionally and personally?
- to deal with the psychological reality of getting older?



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Traumatic Health Change (a more serious illness)

How will I communicate...

- and delegate my responsibilities in a fair and equitable manner?
- the need to focus on myself rather than others to improve my health? How do I reprioritize what matters to me, my family, and my program? How do I plan for and communicate any changes in priorities? Who can I trust on my coaching staff or within the organization to manage/coach my team in my absence?
- what information to share? With whom? When? How much do I share to not overwhelm others?
- my mental struggle with people around me. What kind of support do I need from my supervisor, department, and family. How will I make sure my players understand the situation and they receive the support they need?
- and decide when it's best to step away? How do I prepare myself to walk away from coaching?

How will I adapt...

- to potential limitations on capacity when returning (travel, hours, etc.)?
- when I return to the previous level of roles/responsibilities, if/when health is restored? How do I schedule/balance treatment/rehab with job duties/expectations?
- if my health diminishes my capacity/aptitude/interest? Does my institution provide for medical leave (terms, process)?
- to the potential medical expenses associated with this change?
- if my perspective changes? How does this impact my coaching philosophy? Am I still a good fit for the job/institution?
- and know what my limitations might be and plan accordingly so as to not put further stress on others.
- and be a better coach, based on what I have learned?
- to incorporate what I have learned into my coaching as an example of responding positively to adversity?



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