



Cultivating Brilliance

Most people don't wake up wanting to be mediocre. As children, we design visions of profound success and happiness. Still, one day, we reflect that while we may appear successful to the outside, we don't *feel* as though we've tapped all our talents to create a truly fulfilling life. We've plateaued. And we don't like it.

One of the most powerful, reliable ways to break through is to work with a partner who, when they speak with us, is intently focused solely on our complete success. Most people don't have someone like this in their life. And such a partner is so valuable, they are willing to pay for it. Thus, the rise of coaching as a profession.

Adopt the behaviors
and beliefs of
skillful professional
coaches to inspire
brilliance in
yourself and others.

Though skillful and effective, coaches are no magicians. If you want to improve your relationships, your results, and your satisfaction in every aspect of life, borrow the behaviors of the coaching trade and become a leader who cultivates excellence in yourself and others.

This may sound daunting. Managers lament to us that they don't have time to add yet another development conversation to their busy work day. We agree. Instead, we weave these behaviors into existing conversations in ways that elicit better results.

Coaching conversations don't have to be long. Inspiration can come in an instant. You can probably recall a moment in your life when a comment, question, or gesture made a profound difference.

For evidence that a brief conversation can be meaningful, look to Hawaii. Hawaiians can have a meaningful exchange using ONE WORD: *Aloha*. Most people know that Aloha means both "hello" and "goodbye." They may not know that there's a much deeper, heartfelt meaning. With "Aloha", Hawaiians convey grace, respect, and goodwill. Hawaiians speak of the *Aloha Spirit* that imbues their world, creating a shared, sacred space.

The ALOhA™ model for evoking brilliance has four steps: 1) **Assess**, 2) **Learn**, 3) **Offer help**, and 4) **Action**.

Coaches embody this model as follows:

1. They **assess** all aspects of a situation—self, other, and situation—before deciding how to react in conversation. They examine the baggage they bring to the conversation in the form of assumptions,

Aloha:

Folk etymology claims that the word is derived from the Hawaiian words *alo* meaning “presence”, “front”, “face”, or “share”; and *ha*, meaning “breath of life” or “essence of life.”

beliefs, moods, etc. and consciously make an effort to set a positive intention for the conversation and leave unnecessary baggage at the door. If the baggage comes along, they admit it. This could look like a manager saying, “I had a terrible morning and it has nothing to do with you. I am doing my best to leave my morning behind me and be here for our conversation.” Or, “I have a lot of emotion wrapped up in this project.”

2. Once in conversation, coaches listen before they jump. They ask questions to **learn** about the situation instead of making unchecked assumptions. They speak less than the other person. They ask open-ended questions that begin with “What,” “When,” and “How” to help gather information.
3. Once they achieve shared understanding, coaches **offer help** strategically. They may share an observation, give feedback, praise, or advice. Or, they may help someone find a new way of looking at the problem that opens up possibilities. We refer to this last mode as recasting.
4. Finally, they help people take decisive, effective, strategic **action**.

Not rocket science. But not easy either. We’re simply not conditioned to behave this way in conversations. Most of us make assumptions, act on them, and leave a quick conversation with mutual *mis*understanding. People often leave the same meeting with different understandings of what happened and what’s expected.

Moving at warp speed, we’ve misplaced our curiosity, believing that taking time to really understand someone will create a drag. But it’s the haphazard conversations that slow us down and challenge our success. One of the easiest ways to offend someone is to tell them

“I know how you feel.” People want to *feel* understood, and *feel* seen. Telling them we know how they feel, although it may take less time and may even be sincere, only pushes brilliance further away.

While it may take some effort and practice, it’s worth it to build the capability to slow down, increase your curiosity, and really understand the person before offering help.

Become skillful at ALOhA™ conversations and you’re likely to experience the following:

- Your name shows up on people’s “Most Influential Persons” list
- People will want to help you achieve your goals
- Your company will save money on leadership coaches and team performance consultants

We invite you to inspire brilliance. **Aloha.** 



Resources

Coaching: Evoking Excellence in Others by James Flaherty

Leadership Chronicles of a Corporate Sage: Five Keys to Becoming a More Effective Leader by Susan Bethanis

Co-Active Coaching, 2nd Edition: New Skills for Coaching People Toward Success in Work and Life Laura Whitworth, Karen Kimsey-House, Henry Kimsey-House, Phillip Sandahl