

## Coach, Mentor, Teacher, Parent, Mediator, Cheerleader: Who are You?

Adapted from *The Everything Managing People Book*, Gary McClain, Ph.D. & Deborah Romaine

- **Coach: Bringing Out the Best in Others**
  - While other supervision styles you adopt as supervisor tend to focus on each individual's needs and capabilities, the role of coach additionally requires you to bring people of diverse skill levels and backgrounds together to work as a unified team, in such a way that the synergy among them generates a product or result that surpasses each individual's abilities. *It's nothing more than ongoing reinforcement of what employees are doing and learning.*
- **Mentor: Trusted Guide**
  - Mentoring extends beyond teaching in that it relies on establishing a relatively long-term relationship that revolves around sharing and mutual respect. A mentor shares knowledge, as well as, wisdom – a fine line, perhaps, but a crucial distinction. *Knowledge is having the right words; wisdom is knowing when and how to say them – and when to keep them to yourself.*
- **Teacher: Imparting New Skills**
  - A teacher is someone with expert skills and knowledge who has the ability to share this expertise with others. A good teacher—one whose students learn—improves both the individual and an organization. *But is isn't always easy to find a balance between “let me show you” and “get out of the way, I'll do it myself!”*
- **Parent: Setting Limits**
  - In the role of the parent, you are often training your employees in basic behaviors. This differs from teaching them skills. Training, in this context addresses such rudimentary ideas as identifying circumstances in which it is okay to laugh and those in which it is not okay. You might constantly find yourself reminding staff to remember to “*warmly*”, greet parents during arrivals!
  - Sometimes being parental also means providing a listening ear. It might mean listening to complaints and even whining, and being able to listen between the lines to understand the real issues. You often must sense when your employees feel overworked, and help them to prioritize their tasks and responsibilities so they can still eat and sleep. *And sometimes being the parent means being firm and saying, “Yes, I understand is a lot, but you have to perform at this level if you want to provide quality child care to the children in your classroom.”*
  - Remember, though, that you are not, of course, really a parent to your employees, and the work group is not really a family. There are important differences, many of which are performance-based. Your employees are

adults, and have adult rights and responsibilities. It does not serve them well, in the long run, for you to make decisions for them as you might your own children. They have been hired to perform specific tasks and accomplish particular goals. You can restrict your daughter's television when she forgets to do her chores, but it's a more serious matter when an employee fails (by forgetting or by intent) to complete an assignment. The lines are always clear, but it's essential for you to know where they are.

- **Mediator: Finding Balance**

- To mediate is to be in the middle or intervene to settle a dispute between two parties. Mediation is the process of finding common ground, of seeking win-win solutions to differences and disagreements that will be acceptable to both parties.
- You might help employees resolve disagreements among themselves, investigate disputes between staff and parents, and among staff.  
***Mediation is more effective, and successful, when it is a process of collaboration rather than compromise.*** This is more than just word play. Collaboration comes from the Latin collaborare, meaning "to labor together." Compromise, despite its core word "promise," implies giving up something of value, or conceding, to reach agreement. The implications are important because they set the tone for the discussion. Few people are happy when compromise means they get less than they hoped for or expected, yet most are pleasantly surprised to get more.

- **Cheerleader: Rallying the Troops**

- ***Leading the cheering section demonstrates that you believe in your team and its ability to succeed, despite anything!*** This is important, and becomes critical in times of change.