

Coaching as a Leadership Style

Robert F. Hicks (Ed.)
Routledge, New York and London (2014)
182 pp., US\$54.95 (paperback)
ISBN: 9780415528061 (paperback)

Robert F. Hicks is a licenced psychologist holding an appointment as Clinical Professor of Organizational Behaviour in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Texas, Dallas (TX, USA).

This book arose from his experience over three decades of teaching leadership and coaching skills to doctors and senior executives in health systems. The basic premise of this guide is that leadership and coaching go hand in hand, and require appreciation of the importance of group cooperation and the sociopolitical environment of healthcare delivery. It recognises the realities of individuality and autonomy that typify health professionals, and deliberately guides the reader towards the development of competencies required for transformational leadership. This is achieved through a systematically presented four-stage coaching framework, namely Support for Thought, Challenge for Thought, Support for Action and Challenge for Action. These four components are explained in separate chapters, with an introductory definition of the component, useful references to evidence-based research underpinning the approach and examples of conversations in the clinical setting to illustrate the component.

As a medical practitioner academic with a research background in organisational management, I approached the

book with some trepidation, expecting either an esoteric treatise in management lingo or an elementary how-to book for management dummies, but found, to my delight, a clearly presented and well-targeted book for practicing clinical leaders who need to act as mentors and supervisors.

Particularly useful are the numerous examples of realistic conversations in the clinical setting that effectively illustrate the key points; they strike a chord because of their telling familiarity. It is a testament to the effectiveness of this book as a guide that I have found myself using the learning in my day-to-day interactions with colleagues and that the book is by my bedside because I dip into it frequently. It also raises the consciousness of practitioners to the language they use and the effects of the conversations depending on the phrases and words used. This is a guide that needs repeated reading as some might find the segmented nature of the framework somewhat confusing but, as one delves further and translates its approach to leadership practice, it becomes a truly transformational guide.

*Maria Theresa Ho
Flinders University
Adelaide*