



13 Systemic Team Coaching Conversation Starters

Introduction

Every year Peter Hawkins produces 13 one-liners on Systemic Team Coaching that the various people who had trained with me from many places in the world had found most helpful. Peter created them as paradoxical messages that would stimulate new thinking and invited readers to imagine each as a message in a Christmas cracker, which for those of you not familiar with this tradition, is something that you pull open at the Christmas dinner table and inside is a small present, paper hat and a joke or motto. Here are his 13 latest Systemic one-liners:

1. We need to coach the connections, not the person

For coaching to move beyond very expensive personal development for the already highly privileged, we need to coach the connections: the connections between the leader and their team; between the team and the team of teams; between the organization and all the stakeholders; between the various functions and between the organizational issues.

2. Turn blame into need and complaint into request

The biggest loss of energy and time in team meetings comes from spending time on polluting BMWs. This stands for Blame, Moan and Whine. We can make a big difference by turning every blame or complaint about the present or past into a clear request about the future. See also my blog on "[Grumble to gratitude](#)".

3. Discover the extra team member beyond the persons in the room; she is called synergy

Many teams tell me how pressured and over-worked they are. To one leadership team of 6 who expressed this, I said, 'You are not making use of the 7th member of the team.' They asked who the seventh member was. I said, "she is called synergy."

4. Team coaching requires a team of team coaches

To work systemically it is often more effective to co-coach a team, with two systemic team coaches. In that case, it is essential for the co-coaches to turn up as a team, one that is more than the sum of its parts and not as a relay-race.

5. The team is not your client but your team coaching partner

When team coaching, the team is our coaching partner, and the client is all their stakeholders that the team serves and co-creates value for.

6. An effective team takes responsibility for each other's performance, learning and well-being

I gleaned valuable insights from my colleagues in team coaching, highlighting the shift from individual accountability to the cultivation of collective mutual responsibility.

7. Is your inner team more than the sum of its parts?

I wrote a blog on this earlier in the year. We all play many roles in life and how we work as a team makes a big difference to both the quality of our lives and the positive difference we can make in the world. Do your internal team members collaborate or compete with each other? [Is your inner team more than the sum of it's parts.](#)

8. A purpose without a plan is a dream

We discover our purpose by discovering what we can uniquely do that our stakeholder's world of tomorrow needs, if we do not turn this purpose into a plan, it remains a dream, and we are surrounded by unmet needs.

9. When we are in the spotlight, only the ones behind us can see our shadow

Carl Jung said that the greater the light, the darker the shadow. This is particularly true for nearly all strong and charismatic leaders. We all need help from those who are behind us and in our shadow: our team members, followers, our children and our partners.

10. When the rubber hits the road, the road nearly always wins

Reality is stronger than the best developed strategies and plans of any individual or group. As one of my teachers said, "Those who do battle with the reality of what is, never win." So, we need to welcome reality as our teacher and partner.

11. To work from source is to realise that the source is not only inside you nor only outside you.

When our work is in flow and we are working from source, we are not doing the work by ourselves, but in partnership with the world beyond us when the inner and outer merge.

12. We are not our emotions but the space in which they happen

The more we can witness our own emotions without identifying with them, the greater our ability to witness the emotions of others with compassionate empathy, without becoming collusive or reactive.

13. "Beauty is love made sensate."

Let me end with this wonderful quote from my friend and teacher Elias Amidon, as it captures in five words much of what I am writing about in my book which is to be published by Routledge in 2024: "Beauty in Leadership and Coaching: and the transformation of human consciousness."