Application and Practice of the Coaching Technique in Heart-to-Heart Talk of University Counselors

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Abstract: The heart-to-heart talk is a significant way of the education communication in the counselors' work. However, for the traditional way of talking with students, the counselors' education work directly aims at the problems of students, in which the students would easily have antagonism, leading to poor education quality. The 'coaching technique' is applied to heart-to-heart talk of counselors through positive communication concepts, it adopts the method of hovering attention to current problems of students, and directly questions towards the goal to trigger the thought of students. Through the coaching technique, the actions of the students are motivated and their studies are promoted, it benefits the university students with self-growth and improves the education efficiency of counselors.

Keywords: Coaching technique; Heart-to-heart talk; University counselors; Positive

1. Introduction

Coaching technique originates from the sports field, and it is found by a tennis coach named W. Timothy Galway in a coaching event by accident. It is said that the good changes caused by affirming the behaviors or performances of a person are much better than that caused by criticizing, denying or correcting them. In another word, positive affirmation has a better effect on a person's benign changes than the negative negation. Later, W. Timothy Galway carried out an in-depth study on this discovery as a research topic, and applied the coaching technique into various fields of our society as well as the colleges and universities.

2. The Core Idea of Coaching Technique

The coach alliance is the core idea of the coaching technique. The relationship between the coaches and the visitors acts as the alliance relation and partnership, and they face and solve the problems of visitors together. Coaches help the visitors to clarify their goals, explore resources, make decisions rationally, plan scientifically, put into practice, change and realize goals through the coaching technique. The coaches listen to the visitors, believe and accept the visitors with no suggestion and an attitude of neutrality in the whole communication process.

For the coaches, they should adhere to four faiths: (a) people are okay; (b) everyone is equipped with enough resources t at present; (c) there is a positive meaning behind each behavior; (d) everyone is capable of changing.

The coaching technique could exploit the inner potential and the external possibility of the visitors. It teaches the visitors how to grow, how to perfect themselves to achieve a balanced and ideal state of life.

3. Common Problems Raised in The Traditional Heart-To-Heart Talk

The counselors serve as the life mentor of university students to grow up and to be a talent person. They are also the intimate friends of the healthy life of the students. The heart-to-heart talk is a common method for counselors to conduct the ideological and political education for university students in their daily work. Through the one-to-one communication, counselors can accurately help the students to grow up better. However, there exist some problems in the traditional heart-to-heart talk of counselors, which affects the work efficiency and education quality.

3.1. The opposite relationship between counselors and students would lead to the antagonism of students

When students encounter some problems, the counselor usually has a heart-to-heart talk with the students at the first time, and helps them to solve problems through one-to-one communication. However, the counselor is the manager who is responsible for educating and managing students by aiming at their mistakes or problems, thus it is easy to lead to the opposite relationship between students and the counselor. Due to the embarrassing relationship, students are easy to have negative feelings, which leads to poor education quality and even damage the relationship between students and counselors.

3.2. It takes a long time for the counselor to talk with students, which affects the work efficiency severely

As is well known that the Rome is not built in one day, the cause of a problem has its historical reasons. The traditional way of talking with students always take great pains to look for the root of the problem, they still analyze why such a problem occurs even when half an hour passed. At the same time, more problems will be involved in the analysis process, and both the counselor and the students feel that instead of solving the problem, they make the problem more complicated. Thus the talk takes a long time and even exerts negative effects.

3.3. One-man show of the counselor results in poor education quality

In the traditional heart-to-heart talk, the roles of the counselor and students are educator and educatee, respectively. The educator plays 'one-man show', and students have few chances to express their opinions. For example, when a student is required to have a heart-to-heart talk with the counselor due to his/her absenteeism, the counselors always ask the question 'why are you absent?'. In general, the student would like to find some reasons to excuse, then the counselor conducts the ideological education, such as educates the student to love study and observe disciplines through presenting facts and reasoning things out. In this process, the students have no chance to voice their own opinions. Although some students usually agree with the counselor apparently to avoid the nagging, they are not touched into the heart. Thus several days later, they may make the same mistake. When having a heart-to-heart talk with the student again, the counselor has to repeat the previous educational content, which is time-consuming and laborious. The education quality of such education mode is unsatisfied, and this is also the reasons why many counselors feel it is difficult to implement the work with students.

4. The Advantages of Coaching Technique in The Heart-To-Heart Talk

The proportion of one counselor in charge of a class is 1:200 regulated by the Ministry of Education, China. The counselor has to face numerous students alone, thus he/she needs to improve the work efficiency to guarantee the education quality. The coaching technique is a significant tool for counselors to improve their work efficiency in heart-to-heart talks

4.1. The coaching technique focuses on the goal, thus it saves both time and effort

Different from the traditional heart-to-heart talk which starts with problems, the coaching technique directly focuses on the goal without wasting time to discuss the root of the problem. The coaching technique holds the viewpoints that it is not likely to have a direct relation between problem-solving and its causes. It is a positive focus in which the counselor has a heart-to-heart talk with students around the desired goal, evaluates the possible solution schemes first, and then gets insight into the talents, techniques and resources of students, finally assists them to copy the past or present successful experience.

4.2. The education quality of coach alliance yields twice the result with half the effort

The coaching technique first emphasizes to establish a strong coaching relationship with students and form a 'coach alliance' with them. Different from the opposite relationship between students and counselors in traditional heart-to-heart talk, the students and counselors are alliances in the coaching technique. The opposite side of them is the dilemma and problems the students are facing at present. The counselor needs to federate with students to work together and helps them get out of the dilemma with the joint effort. The counselor needs to change the concept that 'I am strong' into 'the alliance relationship between my students and me is strong'.

The establishment of a strong coach alliance relationship between the counselor and students depends more on the mutual trust with students which is built on daily life. The first is acceptance, that is to say, the counselor should accept the current situation of students no matter how hopeless they are. The second is the reasonable expectation, which means that the counselor shouldn't have a high exception to make students change dramatically in a short time. If their state doesn't get worse, it proves that the educational work is useful. The third is trust, it means that the counselor should trust students much more than that they trust in themselves. During the heart-to-heart talk with the students, the counselor should firmly believe that they are capable of changing themselves at present, and keep the attitude. The trust from the counselor would motivate the students to take actions, thus the application of coaching technique in the heart-to-heart talk of counselors will improve the education effect significantly.

4.3. The coaching technique focuses on the comprehensive growth of students that helps them but improves the counselors meanwhile

Instead of solving the current problem, what the coaching technique emphasizes is the comprehensive growth of students, and at the same time, the counselor also gains an improvement in the growth of students, this is the Chinese proverb states 'help others, and improve ourselves'. The Chinese proverb can be interpreted from two aspects. The first aspect is to help the others to learn how

to help themselves, it means help students to achieve self-growth regarding the counselor. The second aspect is to help others and improve ourselves. The counselor could gain a comprehensive improvement while helping students to grow up. However, what is the comprehensive growth?

The definition of comprehensive growth in coaching technique refers to that changing the habits of a person through motivating behaviors, triggering study and releasing potential abilities of himself/herself, thus leading to a more fulfilling, balanced and self-realization life. In other words, it is the yearning of students for a good and beautiful life, and isn't the goal for political education works to strive for?

5. Application and Practice of Coaching Technique In The Heart-To-Heart Talk of University Counselor

The flexible application of coaching technique in counselor's heart-to-heart talk has greatly improved the work efficiency of ideological and political education, and it has witnessed the actions and changes of students, which gives the counselor a sense of achievement. Then what methods does the coaching technique have and how to flexibly apply the coaching technique to the counselor's heart-to-heart talk?

5.1. Core method of the coaching technique

The '3F' principle of listening

In traditional heart-to-heart talk, the counselors may not attentively listen to the students, or they might think about the what they will discuss next while listening. Both of them talk about what they want to say without grasping the intention that the other one wants to express. The listening in the coaching technique should follow the '3F' principle: fact, feel and focus. The 3F principle of listening makes the soul and awareness of a person much stronger, the counselor should find what the 3F is from the talk with students. For example, it is the 'fact' that the student has bad performance in the examination, the 'feel' is that he/she feels depressed and sad, the 'focus' intention is that he hopes to do well in the examination. What the counselor should pay particular attention to the 3F principle of listening is that do not judge the talking with students using your own thoughts and inherent ideas, and objectively receive the information in the talking.

The Chinese would like to express their feeling implicitly. They usually express their ideas but bury their feelings in the heart. There is a critical point which needs training in the 3F principle of listening is to learn to distinguish the feeling and idea. If the 3F principle of listening is applied in the heart-to-heart talk between the counselor and the students, the counselor can effectively distinguish the ideas and feelings of students and grasp their intentions behind their words. The talking effect will also be better and more effective.

Powerful questioning techniques

Listening and questioning are two inseparable parts of the heart-to-heart talk. The counselor can grasp the underlying intention of students and focus on their goals through listening, and then question them strongly. The powerful questioning is just like the power button of the VCR, through the questioning, the counselor presses the power button of students' thought, and then students begin to take the initiative to recall and think deeply.

The essential difference between coaching technique and traditional heart-to-heart talk is that the counselor does not answer the students directly, but push them to look for the original intention and their own goals, discovery and organize their own resources, and find the answer to achieve the goal through questioning. In other words, the students can say what the counselor wants to tell them under the inspiration of the counselor. It seems that the counselor does not teach any specific methods to students, but just asks high-quality questions. The powerful questioning usually shows five features: the first one is goal orientation rather than problem-orientated; the second one is "what" instead of "why"; the third is to pay attention to the current and future rather than the past; the fourth one is to guide the actions; the last one is to contain the powerful assumptions.

5.2. Application and practice of coaching technique in the case of heart-to-heart talk

The counselor needs to practice in the work of heart-to-heart talk constantly to have a good command of the core idea and method of coaching technique. It will be easier to understand the application of core coaching technique through rethink with the case study.

Here we give a case study. In the heart-to-heart talk between the counselor and the student who is absent from the final exam, the student seemingly has low energy. The counselor asks: Is there any more important things than the final exams for you were absent from your exam? In this question, the counselor uses 'what' instead of 'why'. In traditional talking, the counselor usually asks the student 'why didn't you took the final exams yesterday?' However, the powerful questioning usually avoids using 'why' to ask an issue with low energy. The student answers: 'I am not good at this course, and I will fail to pass this exam even if I take the exam, thus I prefer to stay at the dormitory.' In traditional heart-to-heart talk, the counselor may ask the student angrily: 'since you are fine, why do you stay at the dormitory?' The energy value of the student will continue to decrease as soon as the word 'why' appears, and he will complain many things such as he can not understand the course, he does not like the major or the teacher of this course, etc.

At this situation, the counselor should pay to hover attention not to discuss 'why, but directly focus on the goal to ask: 'I am wondering what your ideal university life is'. This question reflects the feature of the goal orientation rather than the problem-orientated. The student answers: 'I want to have good academic achievement and look for a good job after graduation.' The energy value of the student increases to some extent when talking about the goal. Aiming the goal, the counselor continues to ask: 'what do you need to do now to realize your goal to have good academic performance and find a good job?' During the exploring process of the student, the measure-type problems can be used to make him/her mark the current state, and then ask him/her how many scores can easily be improved and how to do this. Through a series of powerful questions, the purpose of the counselor is to explore the paths and resources, and motivate the effective actions of students by focusing on their goals. However, it is not that the counselor gives the paths, resources and action plans to students or requires students what should do. On the contrary, it is that the students tell themselves what they want, and only in this way can they stick to take actions.

In a whole process of heart-to-heart talk through coaching technique, the student should be asked to talk about what he has gained, where the counselor has supported him and what the value is in his opinion before the end of the talk. Then the counselor expresses the trust. Of course, the changes of the student can't be realized only through one heart-to-heart talk. The counselor needs to continually follow him until he can 'learn to help himself.'

6. Conclusion

The counselors are not all coaches and students are not all visitors, the purpose of applying the coaching technique to the heart-to-heart talk between the counselors and students can improve the education quality. The key points of the coaching technique in the heart-to-heart talk are to pay attention to the possibility rather than what is lacking, pay attention to the future rather than analysis on the reasons, magnify positive energy and break down negative experiences. The counselor should believe people is okay, and every student has enough resources and abilities to change at present. The counselor should learn to listen, and grasp the real feelings and intentions of students. The counselor should also focus on the goals, and promote the students take positive actions to achieve self-realization with more fulfilling and balance.

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