

Introduction to action learning sets

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Today we are exploring

- ✓ What is action learning? And what it isn't
- ✓ How Action Learning Works
- ✓ Set roles
- ✓ The First meeting
- ✓ A typical meeting
- ✓ Reviewing a set
- ✓ Leaving a set
- ✓ Ending a set
- ✓ Further reading

What does ‘action learning set’ mean to you?

- ✓ When you hear the words ‘action learning’ what do you think of?
- ✓ What do you feel you could get out of taking part in action learning?
- ✓ Have you experienced action learning in the past?
- ✓ How did it feel to take part?
- ✓ What made it successful?
- ✓ What did it help you to do, be or have?
- ✓How did you know it was working?
- ✓ What did you do if it stopped working?
- ✓ What else do you notice?
- ✓ What paperwork helped to make this consistent for you and other participants?
- ✓ How do you feel about using action learning as a process to support parents / coachees that you work with?
- ✓ Explore the resources in the course materials for ideas

What is action learning?

Action Learning builds on the relationships between reflection and action. Learning by experience involves reflection, ie reconsidering past events making sense of our actions, and possibly finding new ways of behaving at future events.

(Mcgill & Brockbank : The Action Leaning Handbook, 2004)

Action Learning

- ✓ Takes place in small groups (known as a set) where members help each explore a particular situation, challenge, or idea through questioning and reflection, with a view to finding a solution or next steps.
- ✓ Talking through ideas and challenges with other people is reflective. Having formal sets allows you to have defined time and space for conversations and reflections to take place.
- ✓ A set will meet over a period of time, which can vary depending on the needs of the set. The frequency of meetings is decided by set members.

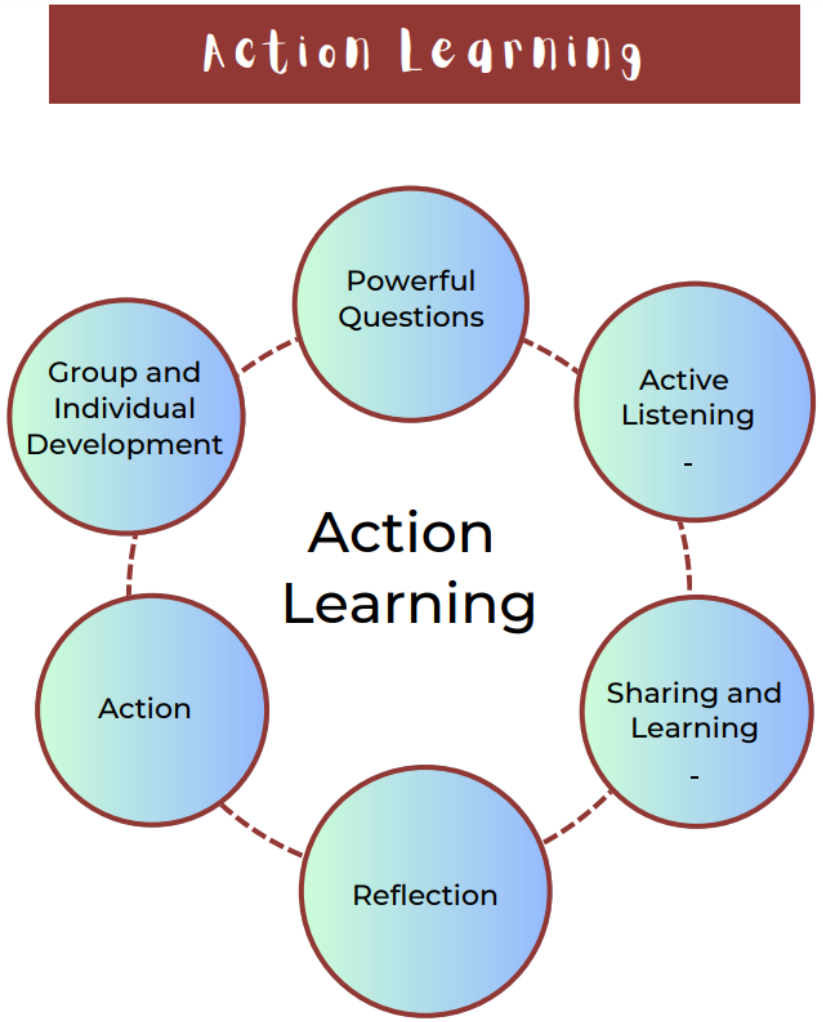
Action learning is not:

- ✓ Training or a lecture
- ✓ Counselling
- ✓ An opportunity for a moan or to offload
- ✓ A place where you will be told what to do

It is a form of group coaching:

- ➢ Coaching principles apply, such as coactive coaching principles of the agenda sitting with the client (presenter) and the client (presenter) being whole
- ➢ Can use coaching questions
- ➢ Silence is helpful for reflection, just as in coaching

Components of action learning



- Between set meetings, presenters take action as agreed

- Members review progress
- Suggest a new problem
- Set decides who presents
- Presenter has 5 mins to present



- Offers of support from set members
- Time for presenter to reflect and review
- Confirm action points
- Members share learning

- Clarifying questions
- Open questions
- Silence

Roles in action learning

Facilitator:

✓Guide the set through the first few meetings

✓Support code of conduct agreement and ensure principles of action learning are followed

✓May take notes of actions agreed

✓Set may start or become self-facilitating

Presenter:

✓ Presents issue or challenge and what they would like to gain by the end of the session

✓ Listen and respond to questions by members

✓Take actions as agreed between sessions

Set members:

✓Coach the presenter, listen and ask open questions

First meeting



- ✓ Agree how the time will be spent
- ✓ If self-facilitiating set: need to decide on a note taker and time keeper for the meeting
- ✓ Allow time for:
  - ✓ Introductions
  - ✓ Decision making: times / dates / number of sessions, code of conduct, reviewing set
  - ✓ Presentations

Typical meeting

Introductions → Bidding round → Individual presenters → Review → Check out

Reviewing the set:

- ✓ Review early on and again after several meetings
- ✓ Review code of conduct and meeting dates / times

Leaving the set:

- ✓ Taking part is voluntary – there are other ways to meet the criteria for the accredited course
- ✓ It is good to reflect on your reasons and feedback to the group so that adjustments can be made in future if required

Ending a set



- ✓ Agree how the time will be spent
- ✓ Allow time for:
  - ✓ Ending activities
  - ✓ Celebrating individual and group achievements
  - ✓ Exploring learning and growth through the process

This session and associated resources has been adapted from The Action Learning Guide: https://www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Action-Learning-Guide-050422.pdf

Further resources

Books

The Action Learning Handbook: McGill and Brockbank, 2004 Online

Resources

'A guide to an Action Learning Sets' by ALS Facilitator Val Theadom: https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/actionlearning-sets-guide-june-2018-by-val-theadom.pdf

What is Action Learning? M.PEdler 2005: https://studylib.net/doc/7602370/what-is-action-learning%3F

Action Learning and Group coaching: https://www.personal-coaching-information.com/action-learning-and-groupcoaching.html#whatis

Action learning guide: https://www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Action-Learning-Guide-050422.pdf

Websites

www.actionlearningassociates.co.uk https://www.managementcentre.co.uk/blog/action-learning-sets-group-problem-solving/

What this means for you

- ✓ You can take part in action learning as part of your accredited Finding What Matters course
- ✓ It can help you to meet the criteria for the Certificate, although there are other ways you could do this
- ✓ It can help you to reflect on:
  - ✓ Aspects of your coaching practice with coachees
  - ✓ Building your coaching business
  - ✓ You experience with dual listening and self-management
  - ✓ Exploring the models or theory relating to coaching
  - ✓ Anything else that will help you to progress through this course

What this means for your coachees

- ✓ You can use the resources here to set up your own action learning sets with your coachees
- ✓ This could be face to face or online
- ✓ It could be related to:
  - ✓ A particular stage in coaching with you such as opportunity for new coachees, or after 6 months of working with you
  - ✓ A particular stage in their parenting journey, age of child, transition
  - ✓ A particular condition or challenge their child faces
  - ✓ Geographical location
  - ✓ Intensive for a reason – summer support
  - ✓ Longer term and less frequent – transition when a child goes to secondary school
  - ✓ Any other criteria that you choose
- ✓ Could be another income stream for you that could be more cost effective for coachees than 1-1 work