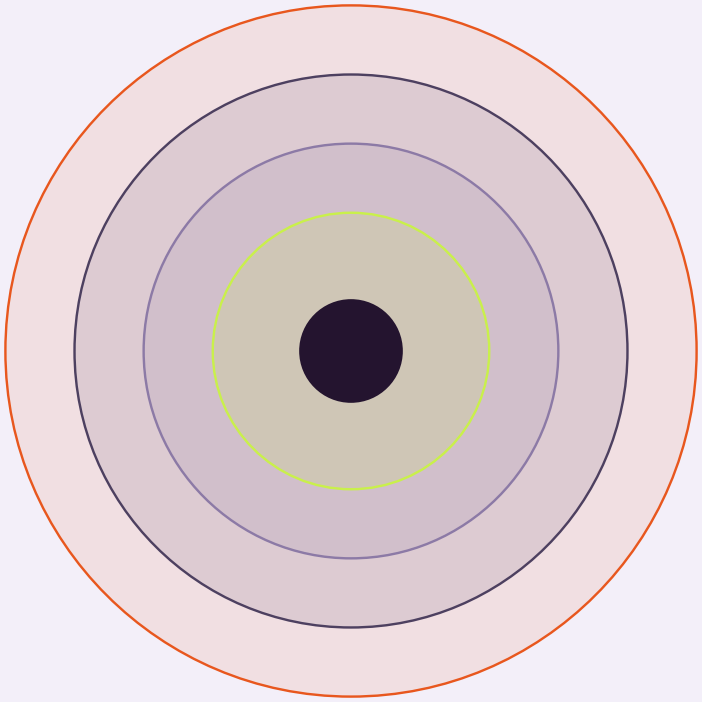


The Coaching Habit

A reading of the book by Michael Bungay Stanier (2016)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of The Coaching Habit, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Say less, ask more. Seven questions — from “What's on your mind?” to “What was most useful for you?” — that turn a manager's ten-minute conversation into coaching, plus a blunt account of why advice-giving feels like leadership and quietly builds dependence.

Below are the 8 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Stay curious a little longer, and rush to action and advice a little more slowly.

The whole book in one instruction. Not never advise — advise later, after the question has done its work, when you actually know what you are advising on.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The first challenge someone names is almost never the real challenge.

Which is why so much well-meant help solves the wrong problem beautifully. The Focus Question exists to make room for the real one to surface.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

"And what else?" is the best coaching question in the world. Ask it three times before you let it go.

The first answer is the rehearsed one, the second is the tidy one, and the third is usually the one worth talking about. Stanier's guideline is at least three, rarely more than five.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Giving advice feels like leadership and quietly manufactures dependence.

His Advice Monster comes in three flavours — Tell-it wants to be the clever one, Save-it wants to rescue, Control-it cannot bear to let go. All three end with the work back on your desk.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Cut the preamble. Ask one question, then stop talking.

Framing, softening and stacking a second question on the first are all ways of rescuing yourself from the silence. The silence is where the thinking happens.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Never start a question with "why". Why asks for a defence; what asks for information.

"Why did you do that?" gets you a justification and a slightly colder room. "What were you hoping would happen?" gets you the actual reasoning.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Coaching for performance is about today's fire. Coaching for development is about the person who keeps lighting it.

Most managers only ever do the first. The Learning Question at the end of a conversation is the cheapest way to start doing the second.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A habit needs a trigger, a version small enough that you cannot talk yourself out of it, and a plan for the day you forget.

His New Habit Formula: when this happens, instead of the old move, I will do this specific small thing. A vague intention to "ask more questions" gives the old habit nothing to beat.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Write the seven questions on a card
- [ ] Name which Advice Monster is yours
- [ ] Write your New Habit Formula for one question
- [ ] Rewrite your standing one-to-one agenda
- [ ] Delete “why” from your question stock

KEEP UP DAILY

- [ ] Ask “And what else?” three times before you respond
- [ ] Count to three after asking, and say nothing
- [ ] Run the 3P check when a conversation stalls

30 days · Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Write the seven questions on a card

Kickstart, AWE, Focus, Foundation, Lazy, Strategic, Learning — in that order, in the exact words.

Keep it where you take calls. You will not remember them under pressure, which is the only time they matter.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Name which Advice Monster is yours

Tell-it (I have the answer), Save-it (they cannot cope without me), or Control-it (letting go is unbearable).

Yours is the one you would defend hardest. Write down the last three times it showed up.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Write your New Habit Formula for one question

"When someone brings me a problem, instead of proposing a solution, I will ask what the real challenge here is for them." One trigger, one old habit, one new move — on paper, not in your head.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Rewrite your standing one-to-one agenda

Replace the status update with "What's on your mind?" at the top and "What was most useful for you?" at the bottom.

The middle can stay as it is; the two ends do most of the work.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Delete "why" from your question stock

List the why-questions you actually use — why did you do that, why is this late — and write the what-version of each.

"What led to that?" "What is getting in the way?" Keep the list until the swap is automatic.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Ask “And what else?” three times before you respond

Every time someone brings you something.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6 ○
7 ○	8 ○	9 ○	10 ○	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Count to three after asking, and say nothing

The silence belongs to them.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Run the 3P check when a conversation stalls

Ask whether the real issue is the Project, the People, or the Pattern.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

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December 2026

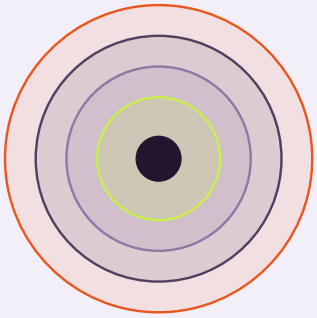
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Stay curious a little longer, and rush to action and advice a little more slowly.

MICHAEL BUNGAY STANIER