Talking to a Young Person about Coaching

Coaching can be a fantastic experience for many young people troubled by their mental health. For some young people, accessing help can be daunting and even unwanted. As someone who cares for a young person, it can be difficult to face these barriers to help. In these instances, the guidance below could be of help.

Readiness

Everyone needs to be in the right mindset for coaching to have a positive impact. There has to be a desire for change, and some idea of what that change would mean. A person also needs to be willing to act on a regular basis. This could mean implementing coping strategies, communication, or noticing bad habits. If someone is not considering nor willing to change, coaching is unlikely to help

Choice

Coaching is a choice that a young person gets to make for themselves. They must consent to the support upon referral, so it is very important that what they want is considered. If they say they don't want it, this has to be accepted. The best outcome is that coaching is explained to them in an in depth, one on one conversation followed by some time to decide.

Eligibility

Before making a referral, take a look at all eligibility criteria. This is not only to avoid disappointment, but also shed light on how serious things may be. For example, if they are already accessing mental health support elsewhere, this could clash with coaching and make things worse. Also consider if their problems are too complex for coaching. Whilst they may be willing to engage with it, coaching is still a lower level of support, and their expectations may not be met.

Starting the conversation
Attending mental health support can be challenging enough for an adult. Now imagine how your younger self would react. Being honest, many young people do get confused, and their imaginations take them to varying places. Take time to ask questions about what they think coaching is and what they imagine. Discussing this together can not only connect you, but ensure they are included in the decision.

Explaining Coaching
There is no perfect script when it comes to describing coaching to a young person, and their understanding of the world matters here. Here is a summary of coaching to help:

Coaching is person centered
The support is tailored to the young person's needs and wants. It is not a one size fits all approach.

Working on the problems
The coaching can help the young person reflect on the problem, how it affects them, how it started and what they think they can do. The coach may bring some suggestions or hints to help them come up with ideas.

Focused on moving forward
Goals, future experiences and life stages are well-considered in coaching. We can't change the past, but we can look forward to the future.

Developing positive coping strategies
Anxiety, anger, stress are common occurrences in life. These feelings can be unfamiliar and frightening. Learning coping strategies that soothe and relax can help someone manage, but also make them stronger. In time, these feelings may not be as hard to deal with.

Wellbeing
There is always a focus on wellbeing in sessions, and what makes up good wellbeing. This includes the 5-ways to wellbeing which are to connect, give, be active, keep learning and take notice. What they mean and how they play into our lives will be looked into.

Tips for Talking

- Be comfortable with talking. Think about anything you're uneasy about and decide if you're able to have the conversation. Is there someone else who could put things more delicately?

- Choose the time and place. Allow the time to have a deep conversation. This gives the young person space to think or ask questions. Do so in a quiet safe space without interruption.

- Voice your concerns about their wellbeing ONLY. Try not to make it about anyone else, their shortcomings or possible consequences. They already know.

- The purpose of coaching is to support and guide someone to better mental health. It focuses solely on the young person's wellbeing and mindset. Assure them that this is all about them.

- Confidentiality applies to coaching, meaning the young person's sessions are kept secret unless there is a safeguarding issue. Assure them they can find some free space to say whatever they feel with judgement.

- Consider alternatives if they're not up for it. Is there something that can be done in school, home or anywhere else to help them?