

Side Coaching

In all the lessons offered on OneStopDramaShop.com, as in any teaching situation, the degree and quality of teacher intervention are of terrific importance. In drama, the leader uses side coaching as a means of intervention to give encouragement; assist participants in solving problems or getting through a mental block; keeping participants focused on their task; and helping participants add more detail to their work. Here are some ideas to guide you in drama coaching:

1. Give the participant plenty of time to think before getting started. Frequently, coaches nudge the participants to come up with an idea before they've had time to just stand and think for a moment. One reason for this is concern for the patience of class members who are observing. Encourage the observers to solve the problems themselves mentally. If the rest of the class stays mentally involved with the exercise, they will not become restless. As the activity continues, restlessness may rise but so will the speed at which participants perform. Give them time.
2. Coach when the student has become bogged down and frustrated, not when they are actively searching for a solution. Watch body language to distinguish between clues that indicate frustration and those that suggest thinking.
3. When giving instructions be as explicit as possible. Use questions like "What do you understand?" rather than "Do you understand?" This will assist you in any revisions or clarifications needed in instruction.
4. Give general encouragement while the participant is working or practicing. Don't stop the exercise, the student can receive coaching and work at the same time. Students will learn to hear side coaching while they remain focused on the task. General encouragement like "you can do it" and "remember your goal" is helpful in focusing the participant on the point of concentration.
5. Remind the participant to keep their attention on the point of concentration for the exercise, which is usually a task involved in finding a solution to a given problem, an imagined object, or listening carefully to the lines or sounds created by others.
6. Insist that the participant(s) continue with the exercise while being coached rather than stopping to hear the instruction, then returning to the exercise or scene. They should adjust their work quickly matching the flow of their scene.
7. Coach positively. Focus on what you want done not on mistakes.
8. All coaching comes from the coach. Observers should not call out tips to the participants.
9. Call attention to what has been done well upon completion of the exercise or scene. Seek to have the observing students tell what went well rather than what needed more attention.
10. Coach the observing students to be positive and not make ego points out of criticism.

