



# From Mechanic to Gardener: Cultivating the Modern Sea Kayak Coach

A practical guide to learner-centered coaching in dynamic environments.



# Two Coaching Philosophies: Which are you?



## The Mechanic

- Follows a rigid blueprint.
- Assumes all learners are the same.
- Focuses on replicating a “perfect” stroke.
- Delivers instructions.
- Fixes problems.

*Instruction*



## The Gardener

- Cultivates a rich learning environment.
- Understands each learner is unique.
- Focuses on developing adaptable, resilient paddlers.
- Shapes discovery.
- Nurtures growth.

*Cultivation*

This deck is about building your gardener’s toolkit.

# The Bedrock: Why We Cultivate, Not Command



## 1. Ecological Dynamics

- ✓ **What is it?**  
Skill emerges from the interaction between the paddler, the task, and the environment. Learning arises from exploring constraints and affordances.

### In Sea Kayaking

This explains why adaptability is key. It moves us beyond 'textbook technique' to build resilient decision-making in unpredictable water.

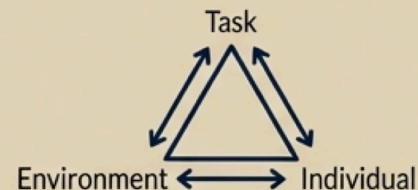


## 2. Nonlinear Pedagogy

- ✓ **What is it?**  
A learner-centered approach that embraces messy, non-linear progress. Improvement might be slow, rapid, or even regress at times.

### In Sea Kayaking

It encourages coaches to support the person, not just perfect the stroke. Progress looks different for everyone.



## 3. Constraints-Led Approach (CLA)

- ✓ **What is it?**  
The practical application. Instead of telling, the coach designs the learning environment by manipulating task, environmental, and individual constraints.

### In Sea Kayaking

Set up a small breaking wave zone and ask 'How can you stay upright?' instead of listing instructions for a low brace.

**Coach's Goal: Shape rich, variable environments where learners explore and adapt, not just copy.**

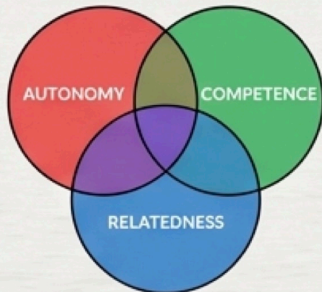
# Tending to the Learner: Motivation, Mindset, and Overload

## 1. Fostering Motivation (Self-Determination Theory)

Learners thrive when 3 psychological needs are met: Autonomy (control over their learning), Competence (feeling capable and improving), and Relatedness (feeling connected to others).



**Coaching Takeaway:** Build sessions that let learners choose, feel progress, and belong.

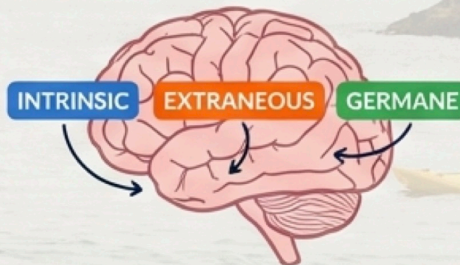


## 2. Managing Overload (Cognitive Load Theory)

The brain has limited bandwidth. Too much information at once prevents learning. Reduce extraneous load (e.g., too many words) to help learners focus.



**Coaching Takeaway:** Less is often more. Reduce noise, chunk information, and avoid info-dumping.

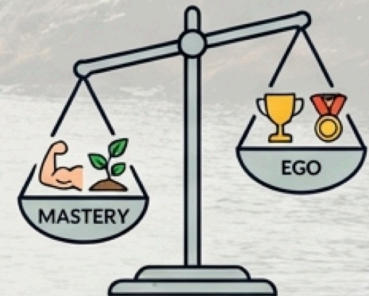


## 3. Shaping the Climate (Motivational Climate)

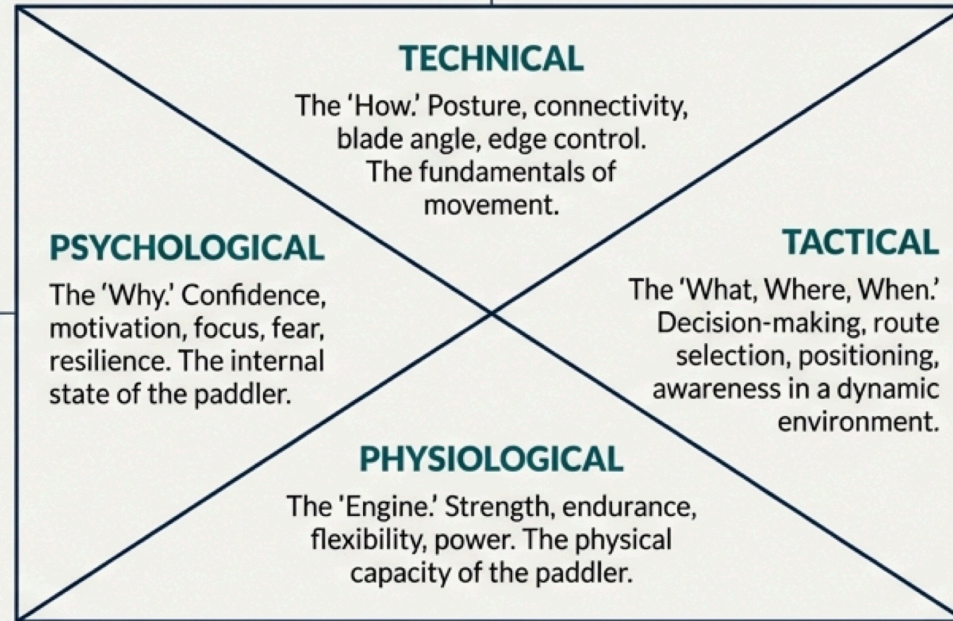
Shift from an Ego-oriented climate (winning, outperforming others) to a Mastery-oriented one (effort, personal growth, learning from mistakes).



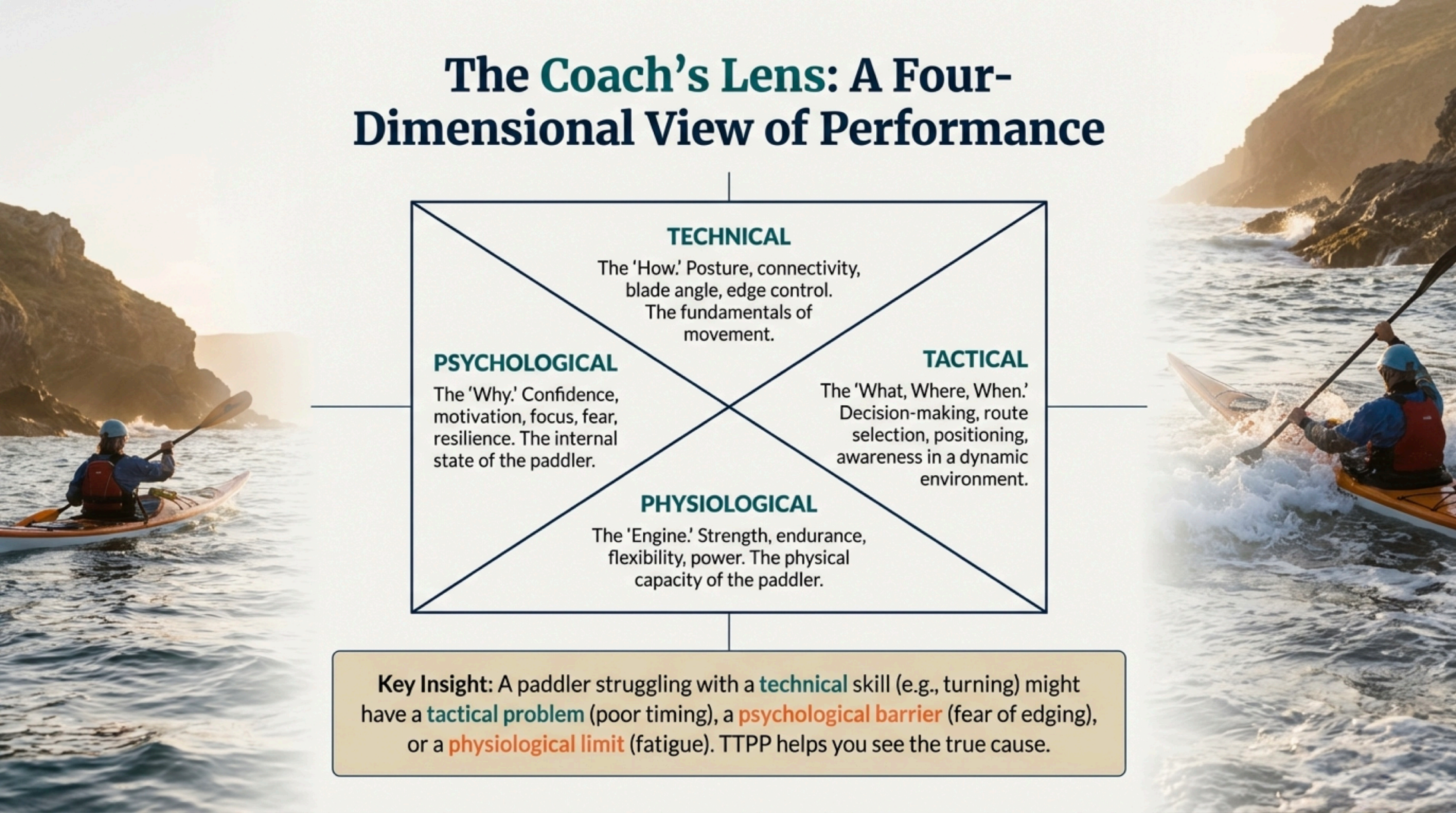
**Coaching Takeaway:** Shape the tone. Reward effort and curiosity, not just performance. This builds confidence and resilience.



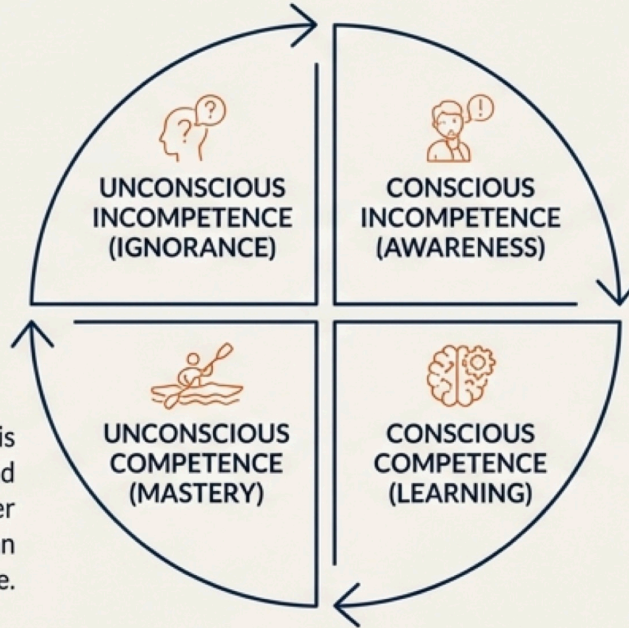
# The Coach's Lens: A Four-Dimensional View of Performance



**Key Insight:** A paddler struggling with a **technical** skill (e.g., turning) might have a **tactical problem** (poor timing), a **psychological barrier** (fear of edging), or a **physiological limit** (fatigue). TTPP helps you see the true cause.



# Mapping the Learner's Path



**Aware:** First contact. The learner is introduced to the skill. They require high support, clear demos, and physical guidance.

**Practice:** The learner can try the skill with guidance. They are refining consistency and building confidence. Success is variable.

**Acquired:** The skill is effective, adaptable, and repeatable. The learner needs less support and can perform under pressure.



## Coaching Takeaway:

Tailor your approach to the learner's stage—not the group average.



"Where is this learner on the Aware ↔ Acquired path... and what do they need next?"

# Coaching Judgment: The Two Minds of a Paddler



## Classical Decision-Making

Slow, logical, step-by-step. Used for planning a journey using weather, charts, and flow rates.

### When to Use:

On shore, with time for analysis.



## Naturalistic Decision-Making

Fast, intuitive, based on experience and pattern recognition. Used for deciding to abort a surf launch mid-move.

### When to Use:

On the water, under pressure.



## Heuristics & Satisficing

**Heuristics:** Simple rules of thumb ("Keep at least one kayak's length between you and the rocks").

**Satisficing:** Choosing an option that is "good enough" rather than perfect, especially under pressure.



**Coaching Takeaway:** Train both types. Teach logic on shore, but develop intuition through rich, real-world experience. Use simple, memorable rules to support decisions in complex environments.

# How to Design for Deep Learning

## Structuring Practice



### Massed

Lots of reps, little rest (for fitness/confidence).



### Distributed

Shorter bursts, more rest (reduces fatigue, aids retention).



### Blocked

Same task repeated (useful early on).



### Varied

Changes in task or context (builds adaptability).



### Bilateral

Practice on both sides (key in kayak strokes).

## Skill Acquisition Methods

### Whole-Part-Whole

Experience the full skill, isolate a component for refinement, then return to the full skill. Balances context with detail.



### Chaining & Sequencing

Break complex actions into logical, linked steps. Can be done forwards (step 1 -> > 2 -> 3) or backwards. Builds confidence through small wins.



🔍 “Does my practice structure match the skill, the learner, and the environment?”

# Your Coaching Voice: A Spectrum of Styles

Style	Description	Example in Sea Kayaking
Command	"Watch me, then copy."	Best for new or safety-critical skills.
Practice	"Paddle around the buoy, then we'll tweak."	Consolidating technique.
Reciprocal	"Pair up and give each other feedback."	Builds peer interaction.
Guided Discovery	"What happens when you...?"	Promotes problem-solving.
Convergent Discovery	"Can you work out the best edge to...?"	Clarifies technical understanding.
Divergent Discovery	"How many ways can you...?"	Encourages creativity.
Self-Check	"Use this checklist to review your rescues."	Encourages independence.



## Why Style Choice Matters

- Builds learner autonomy
- Matches the stage of skill acquisition
- Shapes the learning environment

## Key Tip from Paddle UK Coach Trainers

"Mix styles. Start with Command for safety, shift to Practice for repetition, and use Guided Discovery to challenge decision-making."

# Teach Without Talking: Implicit vs. Explicit Learning

## Explicit Learning - Learn By KNOWING



### What is it?

Conscious thought and instruction.  
"Rotate your hips here."



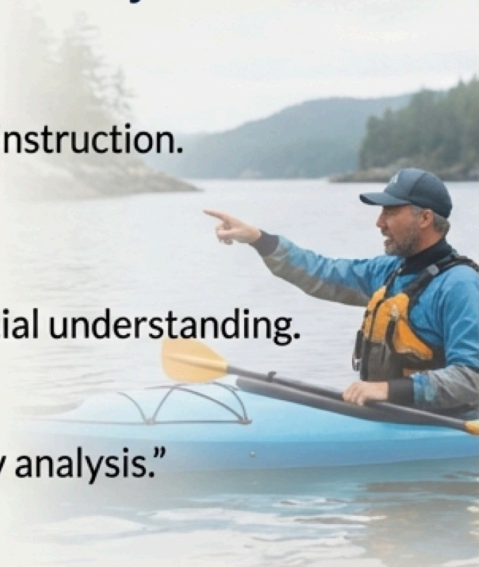
### Pros

Structured, good for initial understanding.



### Cons

Can lead to "paralysis by analysis."  
Fragile under pressure.



## Implicit Learning - Learn By DOING



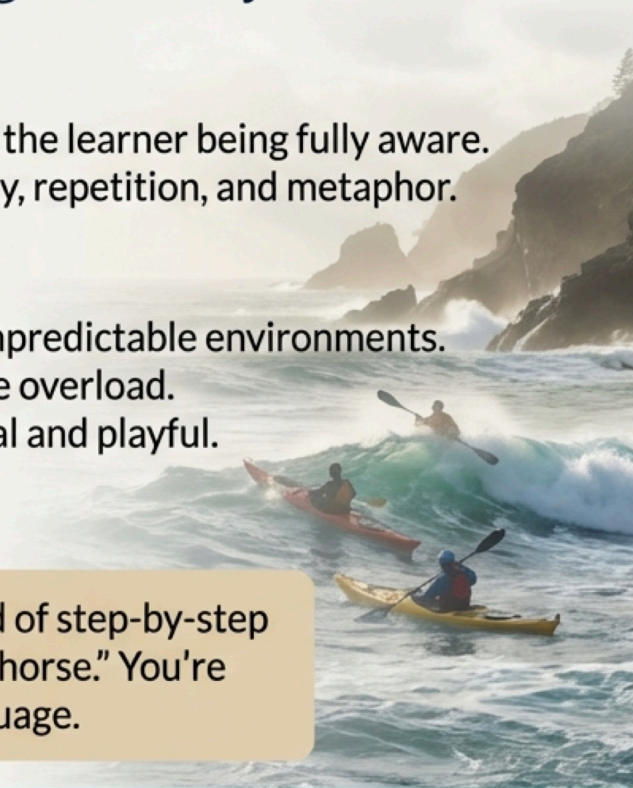
### What is it?

Happens without the learner being fully aware.  
Through discovery, repetition, and metaphor.



### Pros

More robust in unpredictable environments.  
Reduces cognitive overload.  
Feels more natural and playful.



**Powerful Example:** Helping a paddler brace in rebound. Instead of step-by-step feedback, you ask them to "stay tall and imagine you're riding a horse." You're guiding body response without overloading with technical language.

**Coaching Takeaway:** Use metaphors, movement cues, and practice tasks to teach without over-talking.

# The Art of Feedback: Fostering Reflection, Not Just Correction

## Knowledge of Performance (KP)

About how the skill was done.  
*"Your edge was steady and well-timed."*



## Knowledge of Results (KR)

About the outcome.  
*"You cleared the eddy line."*



## Intrinsic Feedback

What the paddler feels for themselves.



## Extrinsic Feedback

Comes from a coach, peer, or video.



## The Coach's Role

Mix your feedback sources. Encourage peer and video feedback. Ask questions that prompt the learner to tap into their own intrinsic feedback.



## Coaching Takeaway


Help paddlers reflect, not just receive.





## Powerful Questions to Ask

- What did you feel?
- What went well?
- What felt difficult?
- What will you do differently next time?






# Bringing It All Together: Anatomy of a Modern Session Plan

 **Session Focus:** Tactical – Route Finding & Group Awareness

 **WHO - The Learner:** Aspiring leaders, confident paddlers but may lack group awareness.

 **WHAT - The Learning Outcome:** Choosing efficient and safe lines based on conditions.

## HOW - The Session Flow:

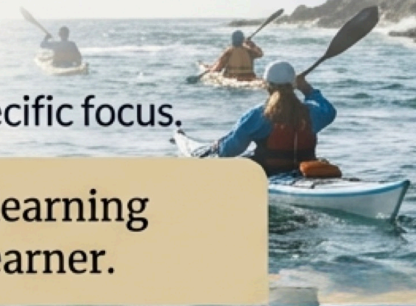
-  1. **Discussion Task (on beach)** – *Coaching Style: Guided Discovery*
-  2. **Paddle to Feature** - Coach leads.
-  3. **Group Task** – Learners lead sections. - *Coaching Style: Divergent Discovery*
-  4. **Peer Observation Task.** – *Coaching Style: Reciprocal*
-  5. **Reflective Recap.**

## Constraints to Manipulate:

- **Environmental:** Moderate tide flow, dynamic features like rocks and clapotis.
- **Task:** Learners must make decisions as a group; peer observation cards require specific focus.



**A great session plan is a hypothesis, not a script.** It intentionally blends learning theories, coaching styles, and session structure to meet the needs of the learner.



# Your Practical Toolkit: The TTPP Skill Development Planner

## TTPP Performance Model & Skill Development Planner

**Instructions:** Choose a skill (e.g. low brace, sweep turn, surf entry). Then, break it down using **TTPP** – Technical, Tactical, Psychological, Physiological – and outline progressions based on learner needs and environmental considerations.

### Skill Performance Breakdown:

Skill:	Environment:
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### Performance Recording & Analysis

TTPP	Key Components	Observation Clues	Development Ideas / Progressions	Tool Used	What It Shows	How You'll Use It
Technical	e.g. posture, blade angle, rotation, edge, connectivity	Look for clean entry, rhythm, body movement	Static drill → slow speed → dynamic → pressure	Phone / GoPro / Coaches Eye	Real-time movement, replay, slow-motion	To spot technical patterns & share with learner
Tactical	e.g. decision-making, timing, boot positioning	Are they choosing efficient lines?	Questioning, scenario-based tasks, simulated challenge	Peer Notes (TTPP format)	External observer input	Supportive feedback and performance mapping
Psychological	e.g. confidence, anxiety, resilience, focus	Body language, vocal tone, hesitancy, persistence	Gradual exposure, praise, visualisation, confidence anchors	Self-Check (post-video)	Self-reflection on posture, timing, emotion	Encourages ownership and self-correction
Physiological	e.g. strength, endurance, mobility, recovery	Fatigue, struggle with repetition, tight movement	Work:rest ratio, mobility prep, chunked practice blocks			

### Progression Plan (Next Steps for This Learner)

Priority Area	Next Activity / Focus	Planned Outcome
Technical		
Tactical		
Psychological		
Physiological		

### Reflection Prompt (for coach or learner)

- "What did I learn from this performance?"
- "What needs to change in my coaching approach?"
- "What progression will help this learner improve in this specific environment?"

## How to Use It



**1. Breakdown & Observe:** Choose a skill (e.g., surf entry). Break it down using TTPP. What are the key technical, tactical, psychological, and physiological components? What observation clues are you looking for?



**2. Record & Analyze:** Use tools (GoPro, peer notes, self-check) to capture performance. This provides objective data for both coach and learner.



**3. Plan & Progress:** Based on the analysis, identify a priority area and define the next activity and desired outcome. This creates a clear, personalized progression plan.



This tool encourages ownership and self-correction in the learner and provides a structured framework for the coach. It makes your coaching specific and evidence-based.

# Sharpening the Saw: The Power of Reflective Practice

Reflection is the process of thinking about an experience to improve future performance. It turns experience into learning.

## For the Learner





## Technique

Use a simple whiteboard or journal after a session. Ask: "What went well? What was difficult? What will I do differently next time?"

## For the Coach

### Tool

The 'Coaching Behaviours Checklist - Peer Observation Tool' provides structured, supportive feedback from a peer.

Coaching Behaviour 	✓ Seen?	Examples/Notes 
Adapted to the learners' needs	✓	
Used an appropriate coaching style	✓	
Supported decision-making or reflection	✓	



**How do I support reflective habits in my learners and in myself?**

# Cultivating Your Own Philosophy

All these models and theories are just tools. The real question is:  
**What kind of coach do you want to be?**

Curiosity Adaptability Empathy  
Resilience Confidence **Growth** Adventure  
Mastery Integrity Patience Passion Respect  
Trust Vision Wisdom Humility  
Courage Fairness Generosity

Pick three values that will be the foundation of your coaching garden.

A mechanic can build a thousand identical kayaks. A gardener helps grow a thousand unique paddlers, each one strong, adaptable, and ready for the sea.



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<b>Tactical</b>		
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<b>Physiological</b>		

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Priority Area	Next Activity / Focus	Planned Outcome
Technical		
Tactical		
Psychological		
Physiological		



# Coaching Behaviours Checklist – Peer Observation Tool

## Purpose:

Use this sheet to observe a peer's coaching session. Note down *specific examples* of how they support learning, manage the group, and respond to individuals. Be ready to offer supportive, constructive feedback.

## Feedback Notes

- **What went well?**  
(e.g. strong communication, positive environment)
- **What could be developed further?**  
(e.g. more feedback opportunities, clearer structure)
- **What did you learn by watching this session?**

Coaching Behaviour	✓ Seen?	Examples / Notes
Clear <b>session goal</b> stated		
Adapted to the <b>learners' needs / skill level</b>		
Used clear, confident <b>communication</b>		
Adjusted <b>positioning</b> to observe/support safely		
Used an appropriate <b>coaching style</b>		
Provided <b>timely, relevant feedback</b>		
Created a positive, <b>encouraging environment</b>		
Supported <b>decision-making</b> or reflection		
Reinforced learning with <b>progression or challenge</b>		
Stayed <b>aware of environmental risks</b>		
Used <b>questioning</b> to check understanding		
Session had <b>flow and structure</b>		
Responded well to <b>unexpected changes</b>		

# Coaching Styles – Learner Handout (Blank Template)

Style	Description (write your own)	When is this useful?	Your Sea Kayaking Example
<b>Command</b>			
<b>Practice</b>			
<b>Reciprocal</b>			
<b>Guided Discovery</b>			
<b>Convergent Discovery</b>			
<b>Divergent Discovery</b>			
<b>Self-Check</b>			

## Reflection Prompts

1. Which style do you use most often in your coaching?
2. Which style would you like to experiment with more?
3. How do you decide which style to use in a session?