

Coach the People You Care About

Eight Coaching Skills for Helping Others
Meet the Challenges of Work and Life



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The big picture...

Have you ever thought of yourself as a coach? Have you ever been in a relationship where you advised or encouraged someone?

This book is for people who are in a position to help others learn and grow stronger for the challenges of life and work—managers, co-workers, mentors, consultants, trainers, parents, teachers, friends, family, coaches, and counselors.

Very likely you identify with one or more of these roles. Surely you know people who want to improve their chances for success. Some of these folks may have already asked for your help.

Top executives and elite athletes may be able to invest in professional coaching, but that's not the case with many others. Most people “get by with a little help from their friends.”

This book was written to help you be there for the people you care about when they need your help. Its purpose is to remind you of the best way to use eight valuable coaching skills while the people you're helping try to make changes in their behavior—not an easy task for anyone.

Being an effective coach isn't about solving people's problems, motivating them or giving advice. Instead, you need to:

- Listen to Understand
- Coach People to Think
- Offer Encouragement
- Guide Learning from Experience
- Express Appreciation
- Give Feedback Constructively
- Give Feedforward
- Hold Accountable

Coach the People You Care About is a how-to book in the sense that it clearly outlines the best practice models, along with tips that will help you coach more effectively. This makes it more of a reference book than an instructional manual.

The material here was inspired by the online coaching and development system, *Strong for Performance*. One of its innovative features is a built-in “Coaching Network,” an application that helps individuals involved in self-development get coaching from people who care about their success. This book was written to help these “peer coaches” give the most effective support possible.

You can print pages for your own use and also give digital a copy to anyone you feel will benefit from it.

Someday, you may be working on your own personal development, and you may want other people’s input, advice, ideas, information, encouragement, accountability, and support. Hopefully, what they do for you will be helpful. Feel free to give them a copy of this book.

This book is a valuable reference, but reading the summaries won’t be enough to make you a better coach. You’ll find that mastering a coaching skill is a lot like mastering a skill in a sport, such as learning how to hit a golf ball out of a sand trap. The real learning happens as you practice the skills in real life, helping others. With enough practical experience you can make these coaching skills a habitual way of relating to people. Like any skill, this will take a lot of repetition over time.



You’ll get there, so be patient and forgiving with yourself, because you’ll make mistakes. Simply accept that mistakes and failures come with the territory—and learn from them. If you persist, the percentage of successes will increase. The key is to learn something from every success and every shortfall.

Learning experts have known for decades that adults learn best from experience in the real world. In order to learn from your mistakes, you'll want to follow an experience with reflection. The key is to ponder these four questions in roughly this order:

- ***What happened?***
- ***Why did it happen?***
- ***What were the consequences?***
- ***In a similar situation in the future, what will you do differently?***

As you use coaching skills and learn from your experiences, revisit the best practice models in this book to make sure you're on track—that you're ingraining the *right* way of doing things.

The hard part will be setting aside old habits. The more you apply a skill, the easier it will get to do it right. Each time you consciously use one of the coaching skills, concentrate on improving one aspect. With enough practice, the skill will begin to feel natural, which means that you'll use the skill automatically, without trying.

Wishing you great success!

Denny and Meredith

1

Listen to Understand

Communication can be tricky. But when others are trying to tell you something, what they have to say may be important to you. Here's how to make sure you actually "get the message."

1. Sense the "listening moment."

Recognize when someone is trying to tell you something.
Know when it's time to stop conversing and start listening.

2. Focus your attention.

When listening, don't do anything else. For the moment, make the speaker feel like the most important person in your world.

3. Listen for the meaning.

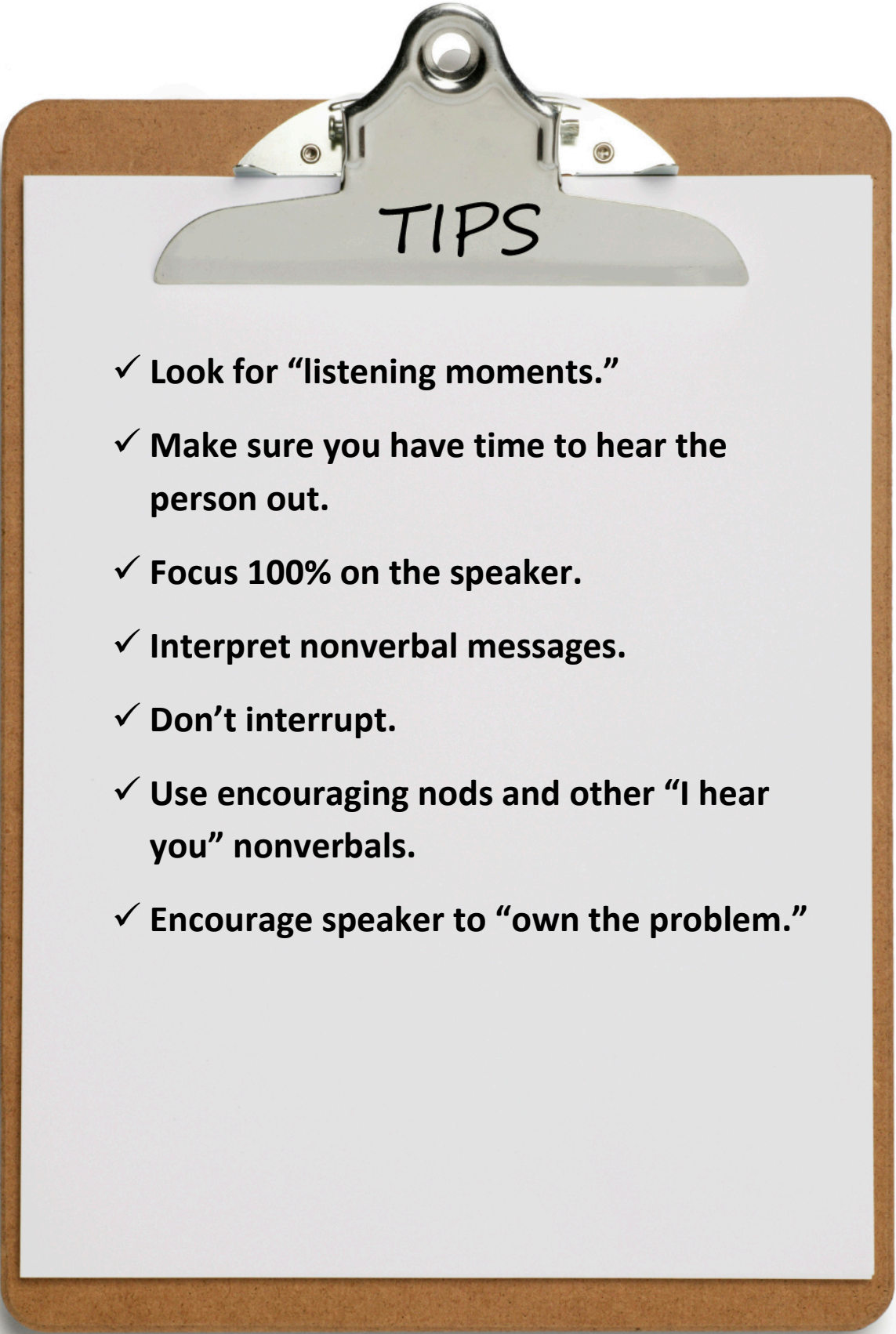
Notice what is said and how it's said to learn why the person is telling you this.

4. Check the meaning.

Consider both verbal and nonverbal messages and tell the speaker what you believe you understood.

5. Ask for more information.

Encourage the speaker to continue, and keep checking until you're sure you've understood the whole message.



TIPS

- ✓ Look for “listening moments.”
- ✓ Make sure you have time to hear the person out.
- ✓ Focus 100% on the speaker.
- ✓ Interpret nonverbal messages.
- ✓ Don’t interrupt.
- ✓ Use encouraging nods and other “I hear you” nonverbals.
- ✓ Encourage speaker to “own the problem.”

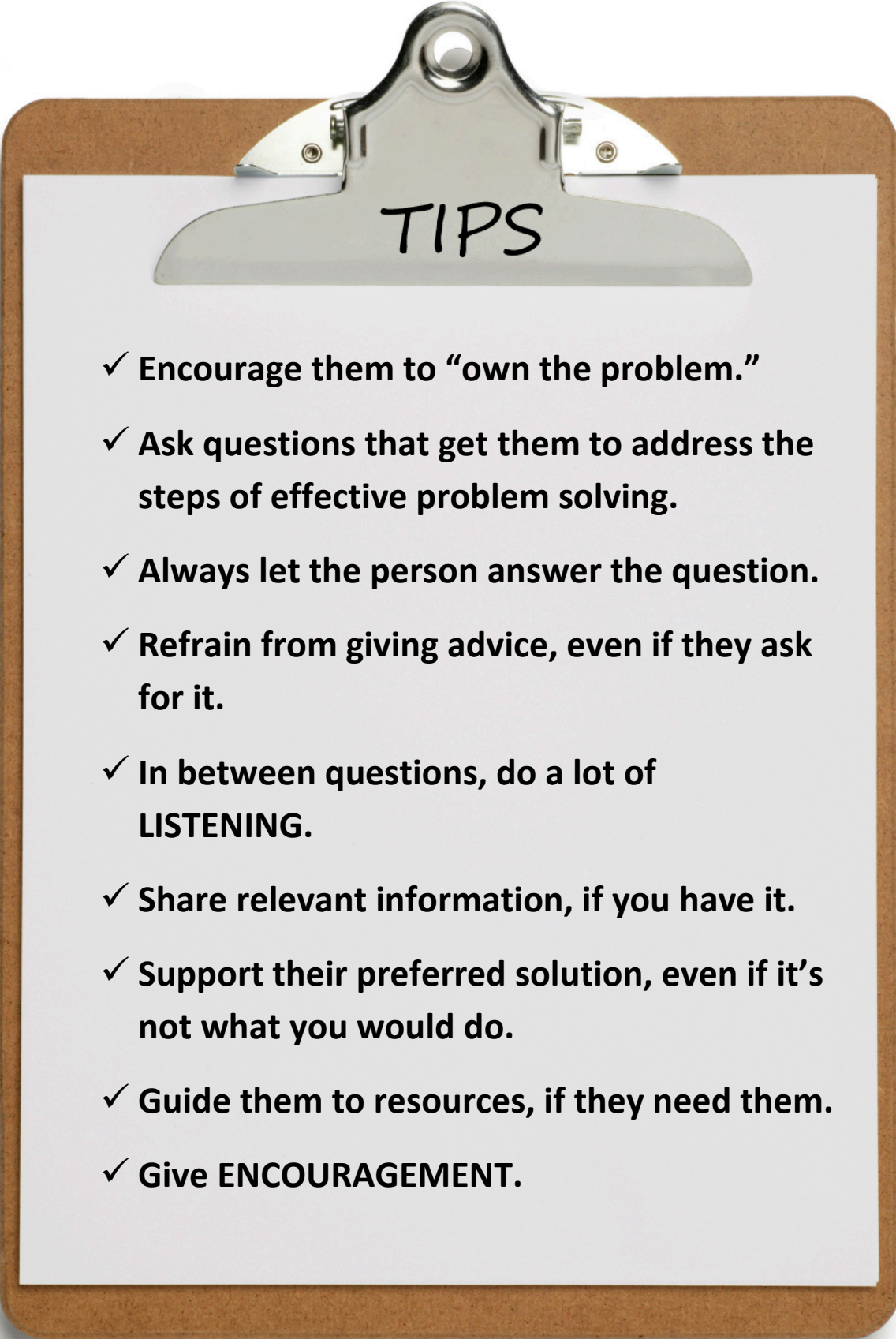
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Coach People to Think

When others are having trouble, the most helpful thing you can do is to help them to think for themselves. When people work through their issues, they come up with better solutions and become more confident in their ability to deal with challenges.

- 1. Resist the temptation to solve the problem or give advice.**
- 2. Ask questions that get the person to think. Some examples...**

- How would you like me to help you with this?
- How much does this matter to you?
- How long have you been concerned about this?
- What do you believe is going on?
- How did you feel about that?
- What do you think about that?
- What's your opinion?
- What does this mean to you?
- What does this tell you?
- What ideas do you have?
- What are some other ways to resolve this?
- What would you like to do?
- If you do that, what do you think would happen?
- What do you need to do to make this happen?
- What would success look like to you?
- What support would you like from me?



TIPS

- ✓ Encourage them to “own the problem.”
- ✓ Ask questions that get them to address the steps of effective problem solving.
- ✓ Always let the person answer the question.
- ✓ Refrain from giving advice, even if they ask for it.
- ✓ In between questions, do a lot of LISTENING.
- ✓ Share relevant information, if you have it.
- ✓ Support their preferred solution, even if it's not what you would do.
- ✓ Guide them to resources, if they need them.
- ✓ Give ENCOURAGEMENT.

3

Offer Encouragement

Faced with a setback, most people recover, take heart and continue striving. But sometimes a situation can feel devastating. The negatives can seem so troubling that they lose sight of the positives. A goal can seem unrealistic, not worth the effort. Encouragement can help them get back on their feet.

1. Listen.

Always do this first to learn what happened and find out how discouraged the person really is.

2. Affirm.

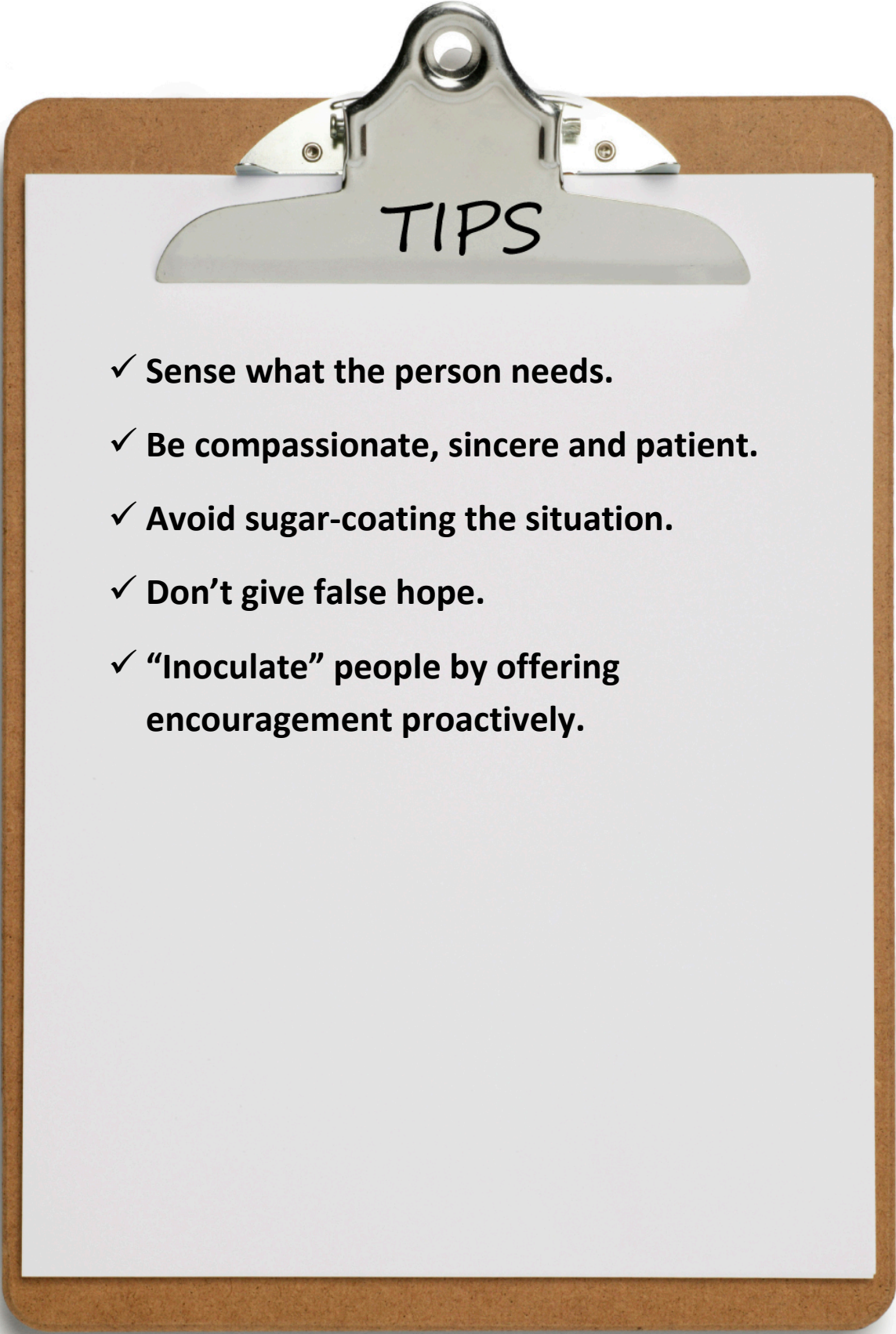
Remind them of their strengths and past achievements.

3. Offer Perspective.

Help them recognize the upsides, possibilities and opportunities in the situation.

4. Support.

Confirm your trust and confidence in the person and your belief in what they're doing, plus your willingness to be there with help and resources, if needed.



TIPS

- ✓ **Sense what the person needs.**
- ✓ **Be compassionate, sincere and patient.**
- ✓ **Avoid sugar-coating the situation.**
- ✓ **Don't give false hope.**
- ✓ **"Inoculate" people by offering encouragement proactively.**

4

Guide Learning from Experience

People make mistakes all the time, but they can learn from them. They can even learn from their successes. But this doesn't happen automatically. To learn from an experience, they have to reflect on what has happened. The problem is, people don't always do this. When it's important to avoid repeating a mistake, you can spot a "learning moment" and skillfully help a person think about the event to gain a valuable lesson from it. You do this by asking these five questions:

1. "What happened, and how do you feel about it?"

Who did what? What was the sequence of events?

2. "Why did it happen that way?"

Cause and effect? Motives? What helped or hindered?

3. "What were the consequences?"

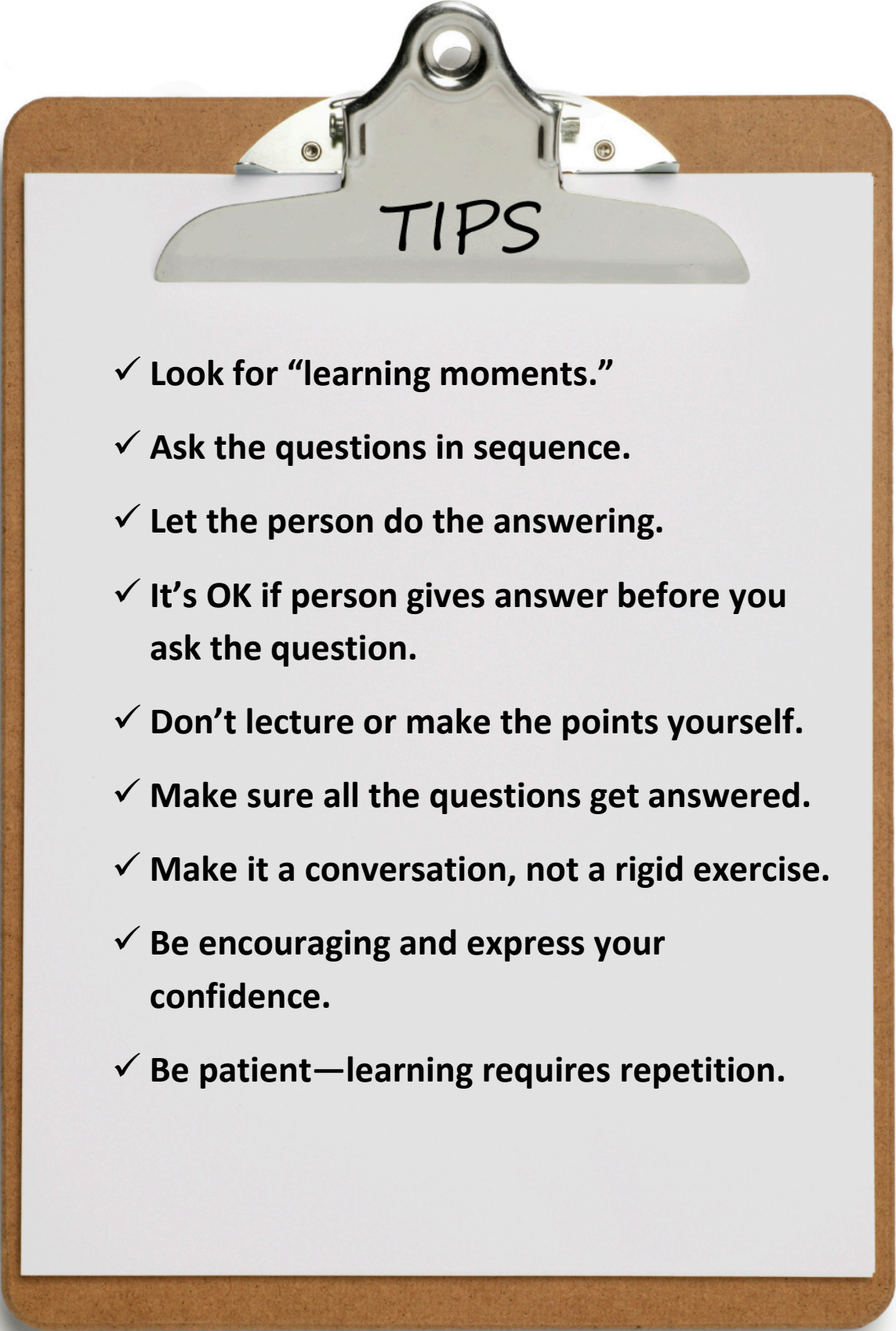
Outcomes? Benefits? Costs? Problems? Resolutions?

4. "What would you do differently?"

What lessons were learned? What basic principles?

5. "What are your next steps?"

What will you do now to begin implementing this learning?



TIPS

- ✓ Look for “learning moments.”
- ✓ Ask the questions in sequence.
- ✓ Let the person do the answering.
- ✓ It’s OK if person gives answer before you ask the question.
- ✓ Don’t lecture or make the points yourself.
- ✓ Make sure all the questions get answered.
- ✓ Make it a conversation, not a rigid exercise.
- ✓ Be encouraging and express your confidence.
- ✓ Be patient—learning requires repetition.

5

Express Appreciation

Given how powerful positive feedback is, it's amazing that people don't give it very often. Most people feel unappreciated. They believe their best efforts usually go unnoticed. While you don't want to give praise for every little thing they do, you should try to "catch people doing things right." To make your appreciation effective, follow these guidelines:

1. Describe the specific behavior.

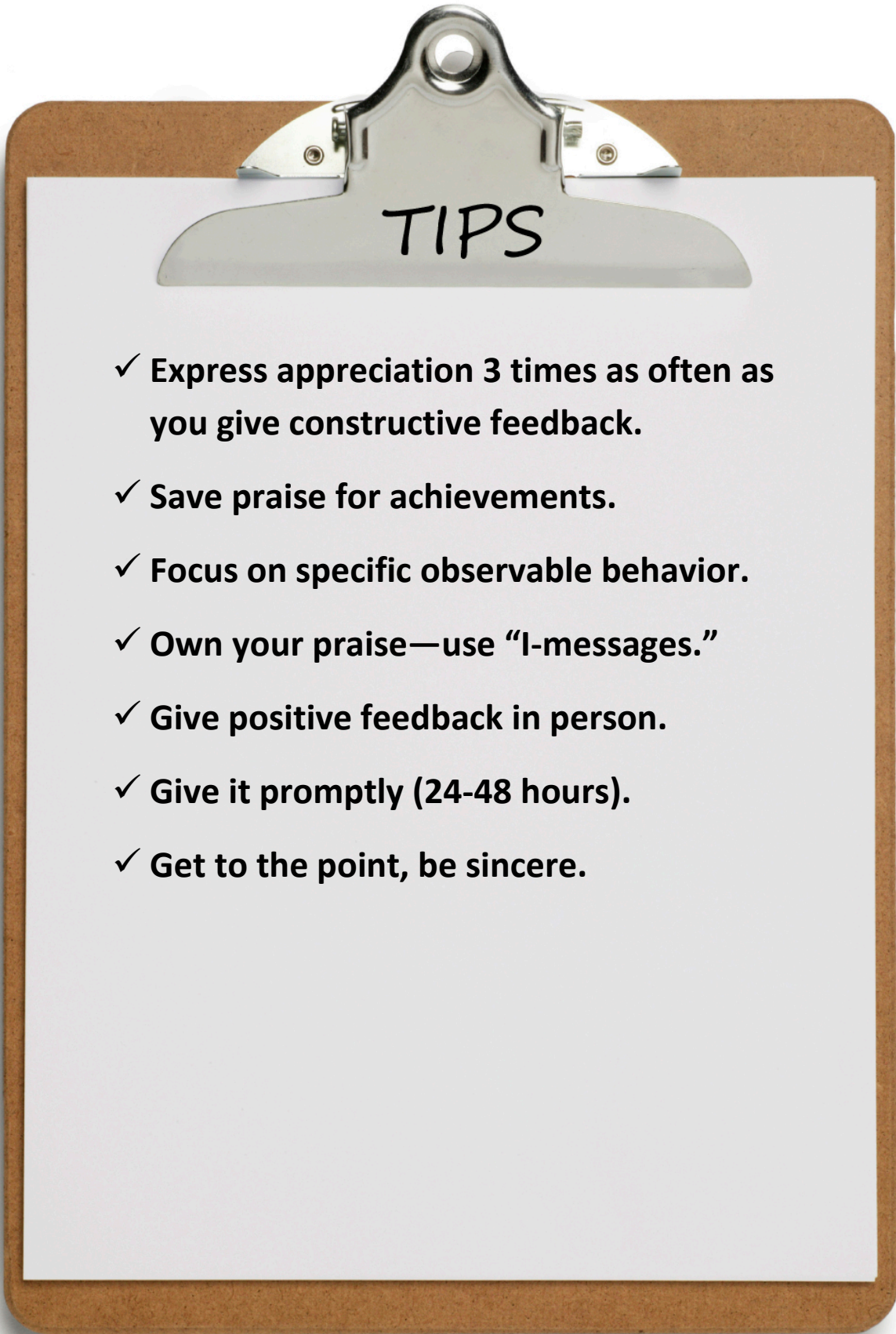
No opinions or generalities. Focus on what the person did that delighted you.

2. Share your reaction.

Describe your positive feelings, so the person understands how important the action was to you.

3. Explain why—the impact.

To appreciate why you care about what happened, the person needs to understand the positive consequences.



TIPS

- ✓ Express appreciation 3 times as often as you give constructive feedback.
- ✓ Save praise for achievements.
- ✓ Focus on specific observable behavior.
- ✓ Own your praise—use “I-messages.”
- ✓ Give positive feedback in person.
- ✓ Give it promptly (24-48 hours).
- ✓ Get to the point, be sincere.



Give Feedback Constructively

People forget. They lose sight of the big picture, or they misunderstand what's expected. So they come up short. It's important to hold up a mirror to behavior, because others don't always know whether they're on track or in trouble. Instead of criticizing or avoiding confrontation, you can point out issues in a way that people will accept it.

1. Affirm the good.

To defuse defensiveness, mention *at least one* thing you liked.

2. Describe the behavior.

Focus on the unacceptable action. Be specific and factual.

3. Share your reaction.

Express your feelings—surprise, concern, or disappointment

4. Explain why—the impact.

Describe the consequences of the action.

5. Restate the expectation.

Describe the specific behavior you want and why.

6. Encourage.

Remind them of your confidence in them—and your support.



TIPS

- ✓ Only address issues the person can do something about.
- ✓ Focus on one issue at a time.
- ✓ Ask if feedback is welcome.
- ✓ Calm down before giving feedback.
- ✓ Focus on specific observable behavior.
- ✓ Own your feedback—use “I-statements.”
- ✓ Give constructive feedback in person.
- ✓ Give it promptly (24-48 hours).
- ✓ Keep it private.



Give Feedforward

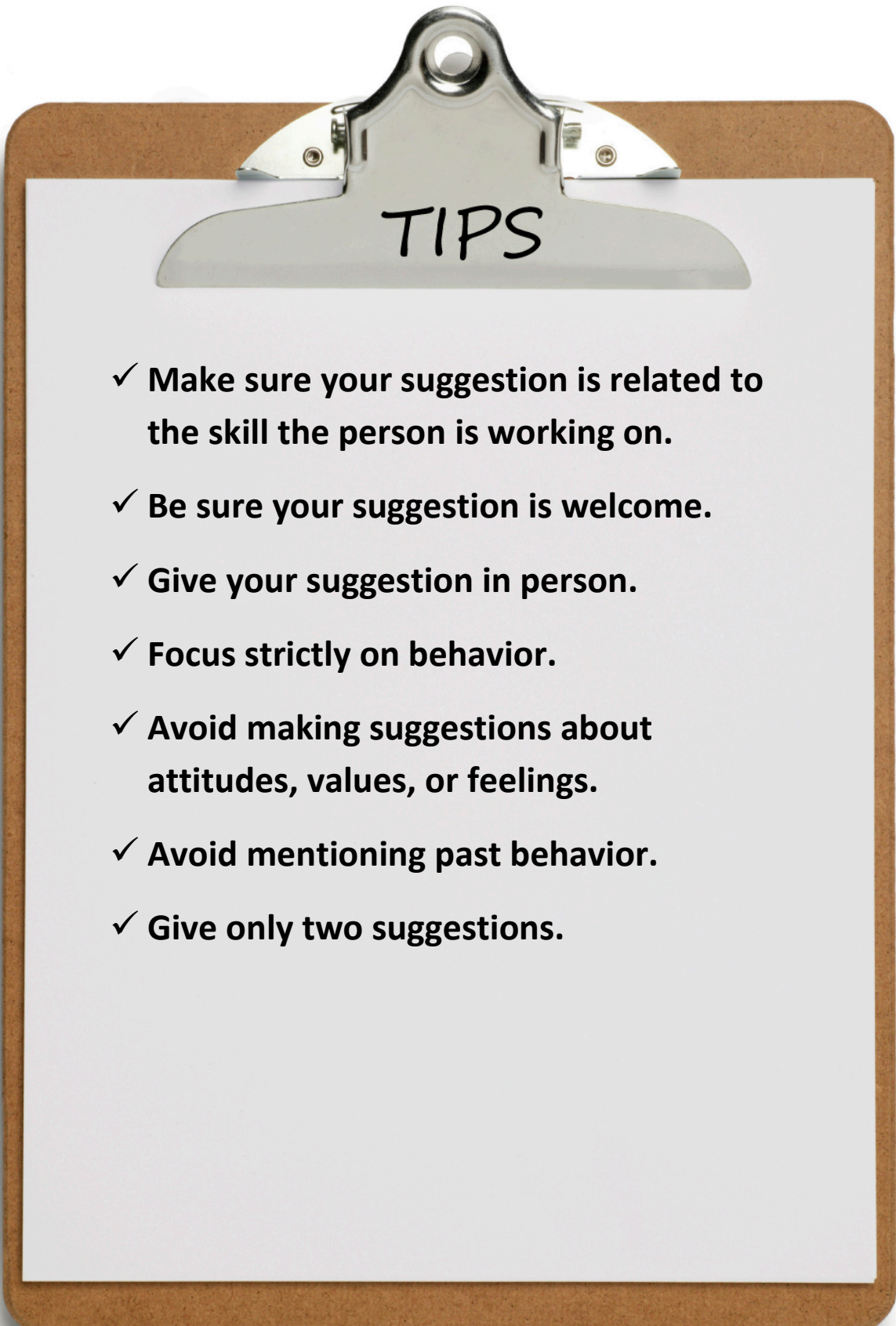
Yes, feedback can help someone focus on a high priority area for development. But when people are doing the hard work of changing their behavior, what they need most is to focus on their goal, not their past behavior. What they need are specific suggestions for being more effective in the future. This is what is meant by feedforward. The approach is simple.

1. Make sure your suggestions are wanted.

People who are working on self-development may ask for your ideas. If not, check to be sure they welcome your input.

2. Give one or two suggestions for improving the behavior pattern.

Never give more than two suggestions. Describe specifically the behavior you believe will help them be more successful.



TIPS

- ✓ **Make sure your suggestion is related to the skill the person is working on.**
- ✓ **Be sure your suggestion is welcome.**
- ✓ **Give your suggestion in person.**
- ✓ **Focus strictly on behavior.**
- ✓ **Avoid making suggestions about attitudes, values, or feelings.**
- ✓ **Avoid mentioning past behavior.**
- ✓ **Give only two suggestions.**



Hold Accountable

It takes a lot of commitment and effort to learn a new skill or change an aspect of behavior. Along the way, one should ask: *Did you do what you said you would do? Are you making progress?* If you don't check, you won't know. The person may be off track and not realize it.

Knowing that someone will check not only verifies progress, it's a motivator to follow through and do the work. And evidence of progress inspires more effort.

If you agree to be someone's accountability coach, discuss the parameters of the relationship:

- 1. Confirm the goal.**

Get the person to state the desired end result.

- 2. Decide what to measure.**

What actions will produce the result?

- 3. Make a list of accountability questions.**

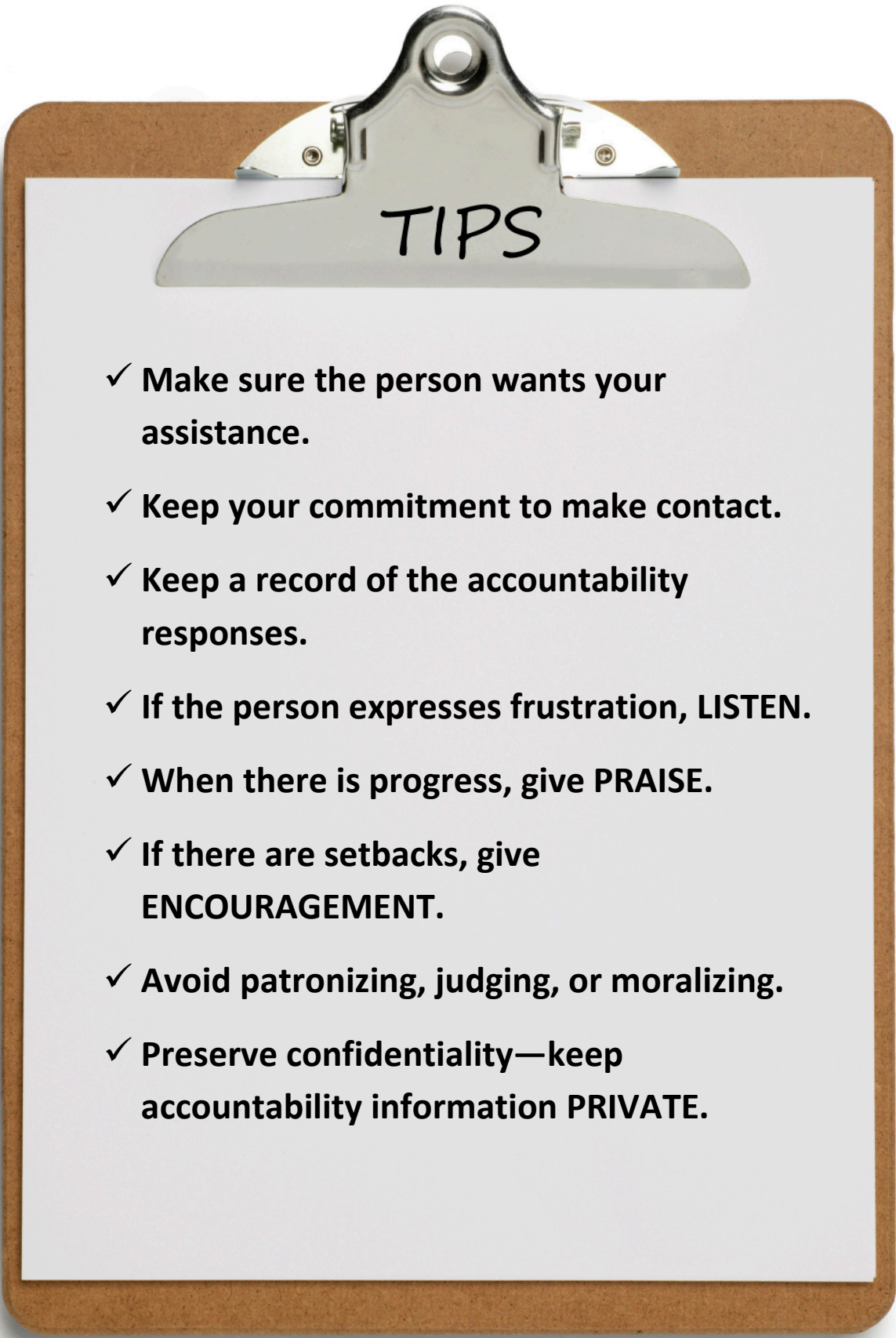
Did you...? How many...? How often did you...?

- 4. Set up accountability conversation.**

Which questions? When to ask them? How to make contact?

- 5. Be there—ask the questions.**

Follow through on your commitment to hold the person accountable.



TIPS

- ✓ **Make sure the person wants your assistance.**
- ✓ **Keep your commitment to make contact.**
- ✓ **Keep a record of the accountability responses.**
- ✓ **If the person expresses frustration, LISTEN.**
- ✓ **When there is progress, give PRAISE.**
- ✓ **If there are setbacks, give ENCOURAGEMENT.**
- ✓ **Avoid patronizing, judging, or moralizing.**
- ✓ **Preserve confidentiality—keep accountability information PRIVATE.**

About the Authors



Denny Coates is Co-Founder and CEO of Performance Support Systems and author of assessment and development systems that have been used by millions of people worldwide. His current focus is to help parents raise adolescent children to become happy, capable, independent adults. He is the author of the book, *[How Your Teen Can Grow a Smarter Brain](#)*, as well *[Conversations with the Wise Aunt](#)* and *[Conversations with the Wise Uncle](#)*. Visit <https://DrDennyCoates.com>, connect with Denny on [LinkedIn](#), or contact him at DrDennyCoates@gmail.com.



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