WORKSHEET + WORKED EXAMPLE

What Kind of Help Would Be Useful?

An agreed way to help, with a boundary and a next step.

10 minutes | Coaching / Mentoring / Listening / Advising

Use it in three moves

1. Ask what the person hopes to get from the conversation.
2. Agree a mode of help and check before changing it.
3. Confirm the next step and whether the support was useful.

Make space for the situation

Ask what is happening and what the person hopes to leave with. Avoid deciding their need from a job title or mood.

Offer a choice of help

Ask whether they want to think it through, hear your experience, be heard, or get a recommendation. They can want more than one.

Choose the mode together

Coaching: explore their thinking. Mentoring: offer relevant experience with limits. Listening: make space without rushing to fix. Advising: give a recommendation and reasoning.

What Kind of Help Would Be Useful?

YOUR WORKING NOTES / CONTINUED

Keep the role and decision boundary clear

A manager can listen with care; that does not make them a therapist. Do not promise secrecy or take over a decision without saying so.

Write the next question or offer

Match the words to the agreed mode. Ask permission before switching to advice.

Check usefulness and follow-through

Ask whether the support fitted. Record only the practical agreement you both want to keep.

A question for me

Did I answer quickly because they needed an answer, or because uncertainty was uncomfortable for me?

See one way through

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE / NOT THE ANSWER TO YOUR SITUATION

Make space for the situation

A colleague is unsure how to approach a stakeholder who keeps changing the brief.

Offer a choice of help

Would it help to talk it through, hear something I tried, have me listen for a bit, or get my view on a next step?

Choose the mode together

They want to think first, then hear a recommendation if they are still stuck. Start with what changed and what they have already tried.

Keep the role and decision boundary clear

I can help with the work conversation and clarify escalation. They own the first discussion; I will join if they ask or if the decision requires my authority.

Write the next question or offer

What is the most important thing you need the stakeholder to understand? Later: would you like a possible opening, or more time to think?

Check usefulness and follow-through

They will confirm the current brief in writing. I will help if the scope remains disputed. Check back after the conversation.

The thinking behind it

An offer of help can quietly remove someone's agency. Ask what they need and be explicit when your authority, rather than their choice, determines the next step.

The collection's Four Roles worksheet distinguishes coaching, mentoring, counselling, and consulting. This original workplace aid reframes counselling as supportive listening within a manager's role. These are choices for a conversation, not clinical services or fixed identities.

Gaurav Jain · Leadership tools

Read You Have a Culture Problem by Nic Payne