

Let's pause now to view the five whys conversation in Activity 28.

Activity 28. Five Whys: Max's Case

Video 5.1. Five Whys: Max's Case: <https://bcove.video/2xl2pAg>

As you watch Video 5.1, observe how the coach facilitates each part of the five whys conversation. Consider the following:

1. How is the connect question different from those you have seen before?
2. How did Rachael get Amanda to narrow the focus for this conversation?
3. What points did the coach make when explaining the process of five whys?
4. How did Rachael move away from the answer that went out of the circle of influence?
5. Name three different ways Rachael started her five whys questions to make the questioning more conversational.

Reflection questions:

1. What are the similarities and differences between this five whys conversation and your team's problem-solving conversations?
2. How did using the strength charts help?

Now it's time for you to try your hand at analyzing five whys conversations. The practice exercises in Activities 29 and 30 will increase your awareness of what to look for in a productive five whys conversation.

Activity 29. Spotting Key Points in a Five Whys Conversation

Read the coaching conversation that follows to identify the following coaching strategies:

1. Four ways the coach asks the why question without saying "why."
2. One paraphrase he uses for clarification.
3. How the coach handles the teacher's judgmental statement.
4. How the coach keeps the conversation from jumping from executive function issues (reasons why Terry gives up) to academic issues (Terry's writing problem).

Coach: Why do you think Terry gives up so easily?

Teacher: He's just not motivated.

Coach: Because there's always a reason for low motivation, what do you think makes him want to give up in your class?

Teacher: Sometimes he just sits and stares, and then he starts goofing around with people sitting close to him.

Coach: And he decides to goof around instead of starting his work because . . .

Teacher: Because he's avoiding doing his assignments.

Coach: Why do you think he wants to avoid assignments when there are negative consequences to that?

Teacher: I don't think he believes he can do well, so he just doesn't try. But really, he's very capable.

Coach: So you're saying that if he can't get an A, he doesn't want to try? Are we talking about a perfectionist here?

Teacher: No, "perfectionist" doesn't fit, but I do think lack of self-confidence is part of the problem. Actually, he struggles with getting his thoughts on paper. He's fine orally, but writing things down is the real problem.

Coach: I'll note that we should address the writing problem when we get to the academic five whys, but now let's go deeper into Terry's lack of belief in his own ability. What do you attribute that to?

Teacher: I don't know what causes lack of self-confidence. Maybe it's his home situation.

Coach: We can start with the strength chart on problem solving [see Appendix A, p. 164] to help identify both Terry's strengths and growth opportunities that affect self-confidence. See if any of these ideas fit:

- Is he overwhelmed and doesn't know how to break things down into bite-size pieces?
- Does he set realistic goals for himself?
- Does he think that his effort, skills, and strategies simply result in more failure and that it's not worth the risk of being embarrassed?
- Does he see grades and feedback on mistakes more like a punishment than feedback? He might not give himself credit for small successes.

Teacher: Any of those could be the answer for Terry. I want to choose all of them.

Coach: We want to make sure you don't overextend yourself or Terry. If we write the first part of the DATA goal so it includes several of those points, the goal statement would read, "If we teach Terry to break tasks into manageable chunks, set goals for himself, and track his own progress, he will see that his efforts pay off in growth and he will complete more work." Can the two of you handle all of that at once? Limiting how many things we work on simultaneously is a wise decision. Of course, we can apply the DATA goal and action plan designed for one student to an entire group with similar needs. That would make the extra effort easier to handle.

Reflection questions:

1. At what point in the conversation did you see the teacher switch from blaming the student to understanding that there is a skill that needs to be taught?
2. What useful coaching pointers did you take from this conversation?
3. Use the strength charts to identify a specific skill needed by one of your own “unmotivated” students.

Strength Charts and the DATA Goal

If the teacher cannot come up with an answer to a why question, the strength charts offer many possibilities. In the video in Activity 28 (p. 95), you saw how Rachael referred to the strength charts to move the conversation forward and transition from five whys to the DATA goal. These charts are helpful in two ways: They identify skills the student already has and pinpoint areas that need to be strengthened. By uncovering missing or weak skills, the teacher often spots new learning opportunities that could unleash student potential.

These charts are beneficial as long as they are not introduced into the conversation too soon. The coach always explores the teacher’s insights about the student *before* offering a tool that could possibly sidetrack important thinking. Save the charts for after you have asked at least three why questions. Introducing them too soon may take the teacher down the wrong path. Let the teacher keep what he or she thinks is going on in the student’s head as the primary way of drilling down to the root cause. It’s not necessary to use the charts at all if the teacher is able to identify unexplored causes without them.

In Activity 30, we will look at how the teacher and the coach create a new DATA goal for Max.

Activity 30. New DATA Goal: Max’s Case

Video 5.2. New DATA Goal: Max’s Case: <https://bcove.video/2RxIvc3>

As you watch Video 5.2, consider the following questions:

1. How is Max’s DATA goal connected to the five whys?
2. What question does the coach use to help Amanda determine the second part of the DATA goal (both the time frame and assessment measure)?
3. How is the fact that Amanda doesn’t have hard baseline data on Max for these two skills (follow-through on two-step tasks and be able to retell details about text features) going to affect the DATA goal?

