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A Canadian case study conversation

Mentorship in elite women's ice hockey

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Section One: EMPATHY – a mentoring conversation between a sports coach mentor and mentee

Step One: Background

Context of the conversation: The following chapter conversation involves a discussion between a head coach (mentor) and his assistant coach (mentee) after the completion of their athletic season. Both individuals work in the sport of ice hockey,¹ which is considered the national winter sport in Canada.

The mentor has known the mentee for 10 years. He served as her mentor when she was an athlete and continues to mentor her now that she is an up-and-coming assistant coach. The conversation included in this chapter is part of one of the year-end discussions between the coach mentor and his mentee. At this point of the conversation (see transcript below), the coach mentor is pushing the mentee to reflect on her coaching knowledge and skills.

Location: The conversation below took place in the head coaches' office at the hockey arena in the location where the coach mentor and his mentee work. It occurred after the hockey season ended, following a loss in the national championship game in double overtime.

Timing: The mentor and mentee met for 30 minutes. Below is a six-minute extract from their conversation.

Focus: The aim of this face-to-face conversation between the mentor and mentee is to help the mentee reflect on the past season and to set some goals for the summer (off-season) in relation to improving her coaching knowledge and behaviours.

Biography of sports coach mentor: Peter Smith, 64, has been a head coach for women's ice hockey at McGill University in Canada for 17 years (since the inception of this sport at this university). During his tenure, he holds a .711 winning percentage, and his team has qualified for the Canadian national championship