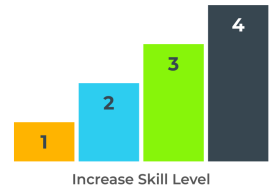


Everyone starts with Level 1. Then pick one move from the level that matches where you are as a coach, and grow from there.

Example moment: A teacher snaps, “I’ve been teaching for 16 years. I know what I’m doing, so what are you going to do that I’ve never seen? And you only taught for six years.”



Level 1: Regulate YOURSELF (all coaches)

You are only in control of YOUR response.

Breathe first Do: Take one slow, deep breath (4-5 seconds) before you say anything. This will give you time to anchor into your purpose rather than be reactive. Try: <i>Breathe in, breathe out, then respond.</i>	Relax your body Do: Unclench your hands, drop your shoulders, soften your face. Remember: <i>Your body signals calm before your words do.</i>
Name your feeling silently Do: Notice what you feel so it doesn’t drive what you say. Think: <i>“I’m feeling defensive right now.”</i>	Check your story Do: Separate the story you’re making up from the facts and evidence that you know. Think: <i>“The story I’m telling myself is that she thinks I’m not qualified. What do I know for sure? She’s frustrated.”</i>
Don’t defend your credentials Do: Skip the degrees, trainings, and wins. It turns the talk into an unnecessary contest. Skip: <i>“Well, I have a master’s degree and...” or “In my classroom...”</i>	Don’t make it about you Do: Recognize that the pushback isn’t a personal attack. Remember: <i>You aren’t there to defend your position as a coach. It’s about the impact of teaching on students.</i>

Level 2: Hold the Space (For those building confidence in hard conversations)

Navigate the initial interaction.

Let it land Do: Pause for several seconds and say nothing. Many teachers will backtrack on their own. Try: <i>Nothing. Stay calm and wait. (You may need to practice this often.)</i>	Ask them to repeat it Do: Calmly ask them to say it again so they hear how it came out. Say: <i>“I want to make sure I heard you. Can you say that again?”</i>
Lower your voice and slow down Do: Answer with less heat, not more. Your calm sets the temperature. Say: <i>“Okay. Let’s talk about it.”</i>	Pause the conversation, not the relationship Do: End for now and name when you’ll come back. But you MUST go back. Say: <i>“Let’s pick this up tomorrow. I’ll come by at [time].”</i>

Level 3: Defuse (For those who are ready to bridge the relationship)

Take away the argument.

Agree with what's true

Do: Acknowledge the true part first. It's hard to argue with someone who agrees with you.

Say: "You're right. You have 16 years, and I have six. I'm not here because you don't know what you're doing."

Name the feeling, not the attack

Do: Respond to what's underneath the words.

Say: "It sounds like coaching feels like someone is questioning your experience."

Get curious

Do: Ask a question that moves them from attacking to explaining.

Say: "What would make coaching worth your time?"
"What's been frustrating about coaching so far?"

Say the story out loud

Do: Share the story your brain is generating and invite them to correct it.

Say: "The story I'm generating in my head is that coaching feels like a judgment of your teaching. Is that close?"

Level 4: Redirect and Lead (For experienced coaches)

Lead the conversation forward and get back to coaching.

Reframe your role

Do: Clarify that coaching is support toward a goal, not a contest of experience.

Say: "I'm not here to show you something you've never seen. I'm here to be a second set of eyes on [goal]. The best athletes in the world still have coaches."

Bring the data

Do: Move the focus off the two of you and put it on the data.

Say: When you hear, "My kids can't do that," pull up report card and/or benchmark data and ask: "What will you do for the ___% of students who can?" Tone is everything here: curious, not "caught you."

Define "professional" together

Do: Ask how the teacher defines a professional relationship, then agree on what it looks like for the two of you.

Say: "What does a professional coaching relationship look like to you? How can we work together so this feels like a professional relationship for both of us?"

Set a respectful boundary

Do: Keep the door open while naming the expectation.

Say: "I want to keep talking about this, and I need us to do that respectfully and productively."

Whatever move you choose, remember to keep practicing and keep going back. One hard moment isn't the end of coaching.