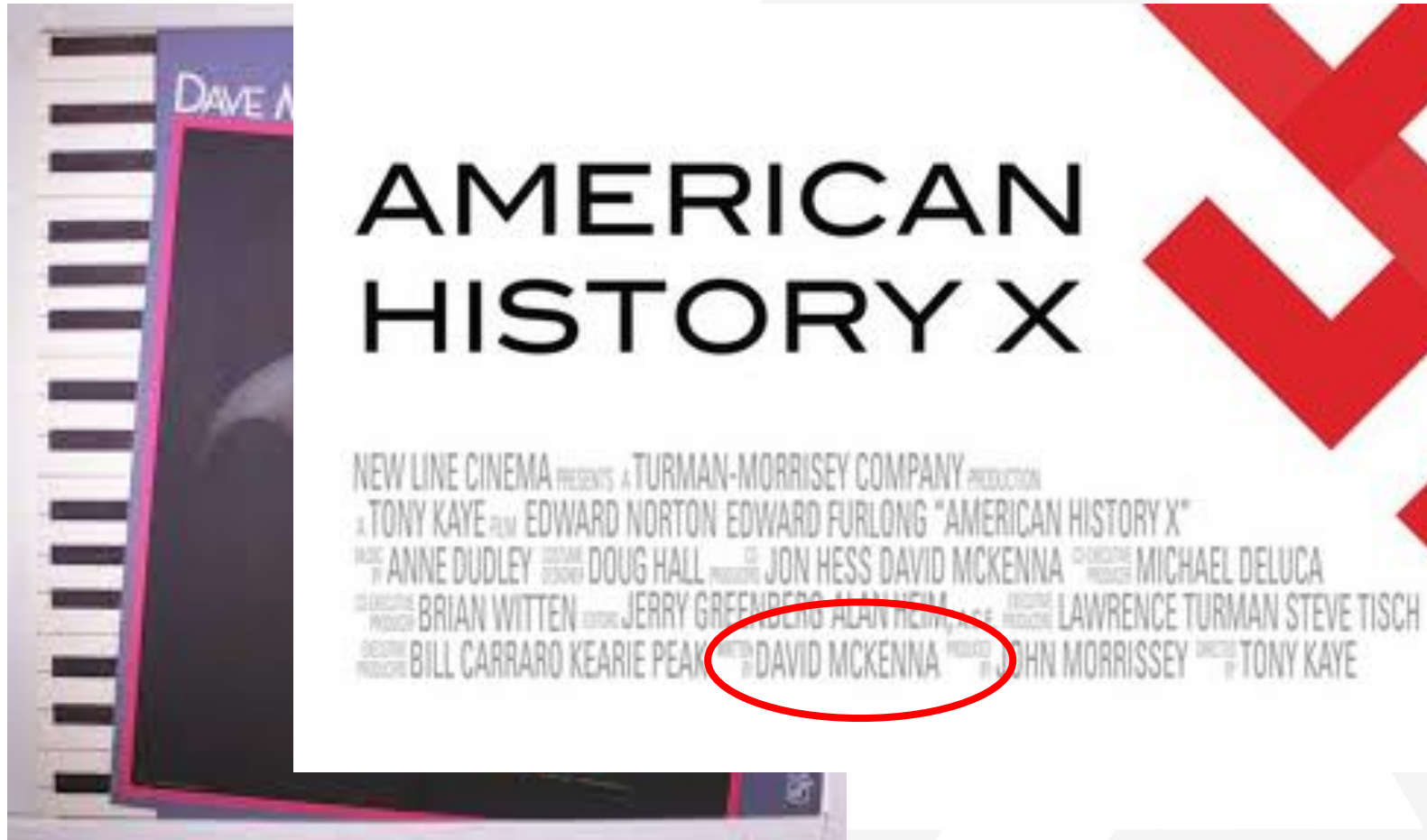


# Building Tomorrow's Mainframe Workforce: Mentorship Strategies for Knowledge Transfer and Talent Development

Dave McKenna – Agile Coach

# Not Me....





# The Art of Scrum

How Scrum Masters Can Lead and Unleash Agility

by David McKenna



**SPC4**

**SCRUM MASTER**

**BLOGGER**

**DAVE  
MCKENNA**

# AGILE SUMMER



## The Mainframe Reality

- High Stakes Reliability
  - Outages make the news
- The Aging Workforce & Retirement
  - Expertise is walking out the door
- Learning curves can be challenging

## Mainframe Skills Crisis

- The aging of veteran mainframe experts is creating a vacuum
  - A concern for long term stability
- The mainframe perception problem
- Most IT degrees don't include a lot of Mainframe skills

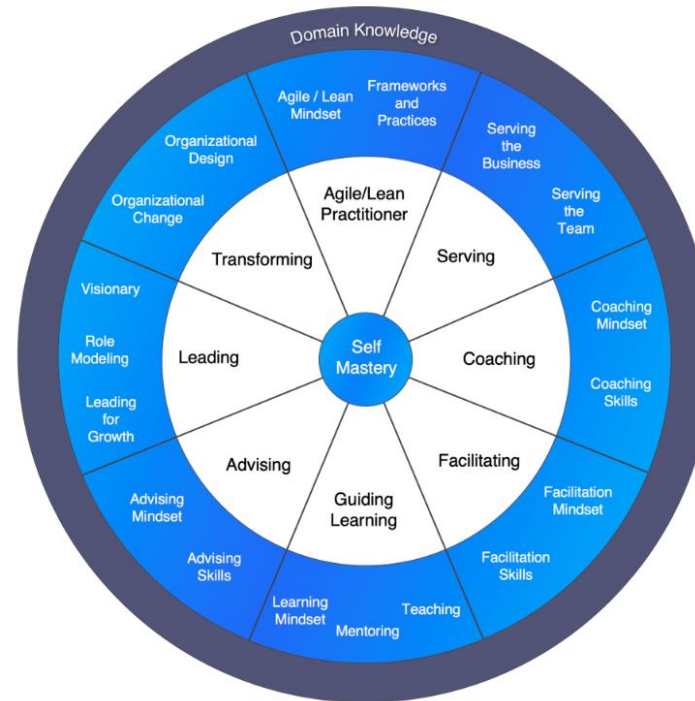


# HOW DO WE ADDRESS THIS?

## This Is a Mentoring Problem

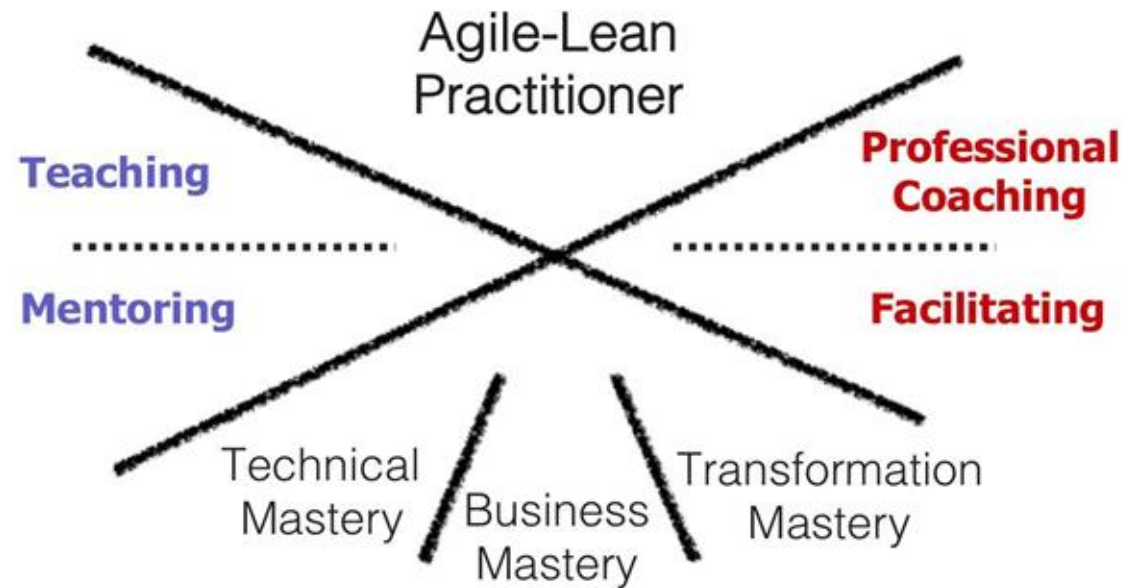
- Docs don't teach judgment
- Automation doesn't replace experience
- AI is brilliant but doesn't excel at creativity, contextual understanding, or relationship building
- Mentoring allows Organizations to treat this transition as a cultural commitment to longevity rather than just a staffing issue, focusing on both technical skills and the "why" behind the systems.

# The Agile Coaching Growth wheel



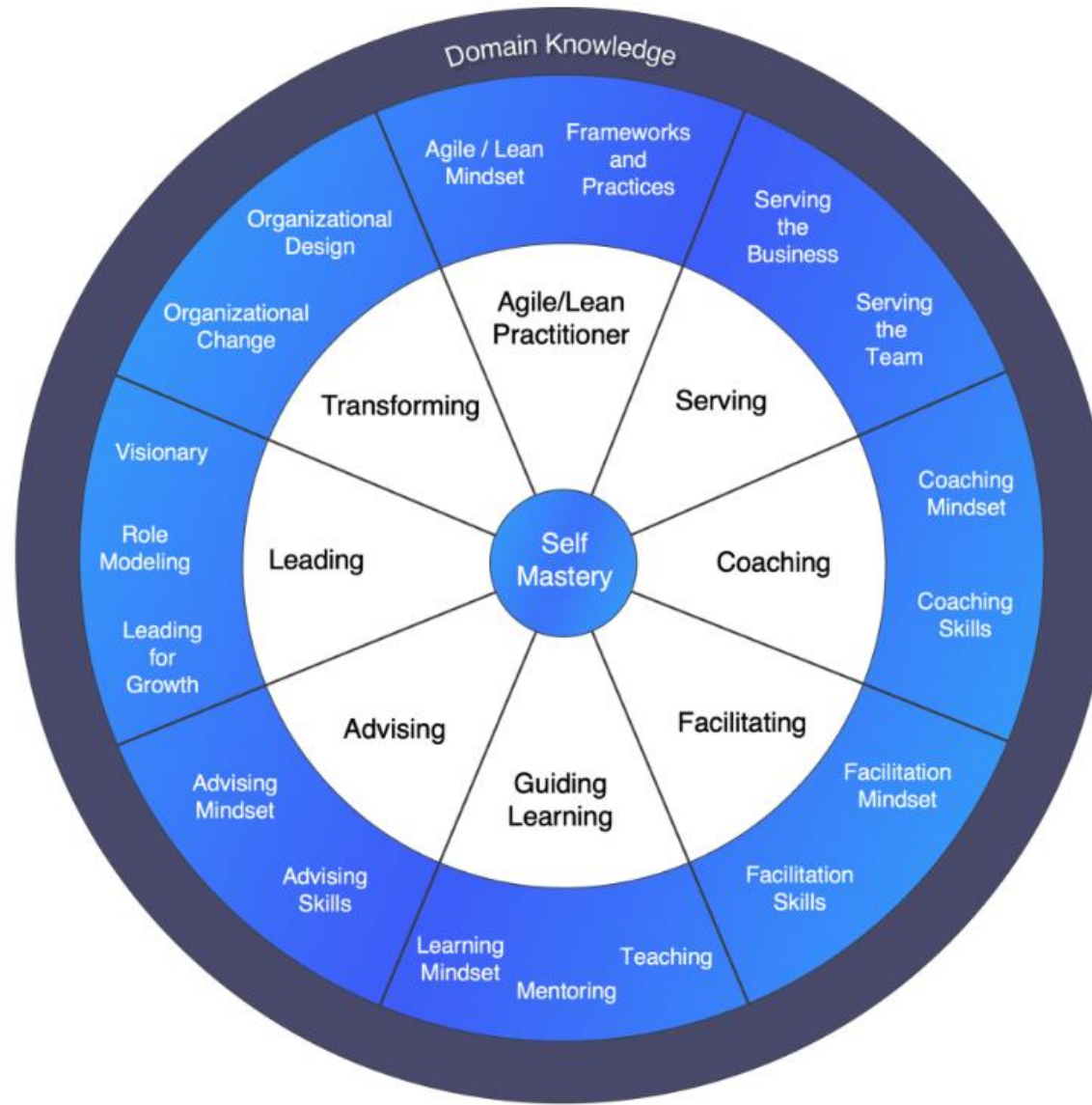
# Agile Coaching Competency Framework

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# Multiple skillsets (or stances) are at play here

- Teaching
- Mentoring
- Coaching
- Advising

# Mentoring: What is it?

- Mentoring provides expert guidance
- Mentors share their knowledge
- Mentees gain valuable insights
- Builds a strong professional relationship

# Mentoring is a two-way relationship

- Make working agreements to work together
- Mentors should allow the mentee to identify the next thing to learn
  - The mentor ensures that learning happens regardless of the mentee's choice
- The Mentor understands their own level of expertise
  - And knows when to seek other experts

# There are many techniques that can be used in a mentoring session


- Storytelling
  - “Been there - Done That”
- Role Playing
  - Create an environment where the mentee can demonstrate their learning
- Feedback

# What Mainframe Mentors Actually Do

- Tell incident stories
- Explain why
- Model calm
- Grow people safely

# Why Mentoring Matters Most Here

- Mentoring accelerates learning
  - At the mentee's pace
- Builds confidence and career clarity
- Transfers tacit knowledge
  - Sharing of not just information, but experiences
- Supports sustainable growth

A photograph of a coach in a red shirt and a white cap adjusting a football player's helmet. The player is wearing a dark jersey with the number 45 and a white helmet with a red 'TT' logo. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

# Coaching happens all of the time

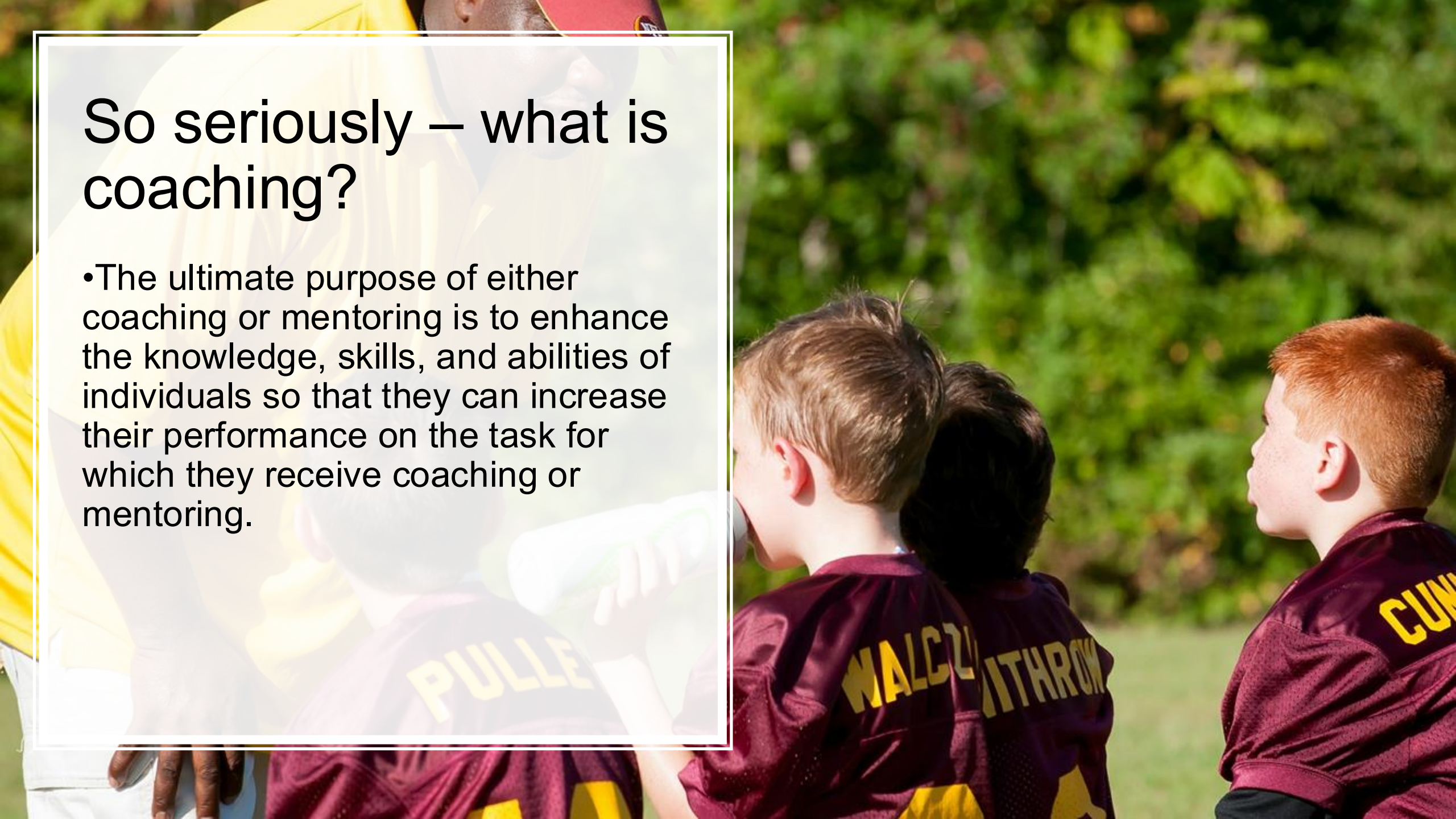
- When the world is changing rapidly, coaching is a critical factor in evolving and succeeding.
- And yes, the world is changing *very rapidly*

Most of us have  
a picture of what  
a coach is from  
youth sports



# So seriously – what is coaching?

- The ultimate purpose of either coaching or mentoring is to enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals so that they can increase their performance on the task for which they receive coaching or mentoring.



# Powerful Questions

- By using powerful questions, the mentor invites the mentee to clarity, discovery, and action at a whole new level
- Powerful questions allow people to
  - Think
  - Produce believable answers
  - Act based on their ideas

# Four Reasons for Powerful Questions

- The Client really knows the information
  - Coaching allows the client to understand this
- Asking creates buy-in
  - People are motivated to achieve their own solutions
- Asking empowers
  - Folks already know what to do, they need someone to convince them to do it
- Asking creates authenticity
  - The fastest way to build trust and transparency

# Powerful Questions

SOFT  
ED

SHARE

EDUCATE • NETWORK • INFLUENCE

|   |  |  |                                     |  |
|---|--|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| What's on your mind?                            | And what else?                               | What's the real challenge here for you?    | What is at risk?                    | What is important about that?                    |
| What might help look like?                      | What could a simpler way look like?          | What's the worst / best that could happen? | What would an experiment look like? | Which part is confusing / annoying / surprising? |
| What's already working that you could build on? | What other angles could you look at?         | How does it look to you?                   | How do you really want it to be?    | What's stopping you?                             |
| How important is this in the bigger scheme?     | In the beginning, how did you want it to be? | What is the lesson from that?              | What is the worst part?             | When is it time for action?                      |
| What is your prediction?                        | What part is not clear?                      | Who's opinion matters on this?             | What have you tried so far?         | What was most useful here for you?               |

# Mentoring vs. Coaching

- Mentoring offers expert guidance and shared knowledge
- Coaching invites clarity, discovery, and action
- Both foster growth and development in individuals

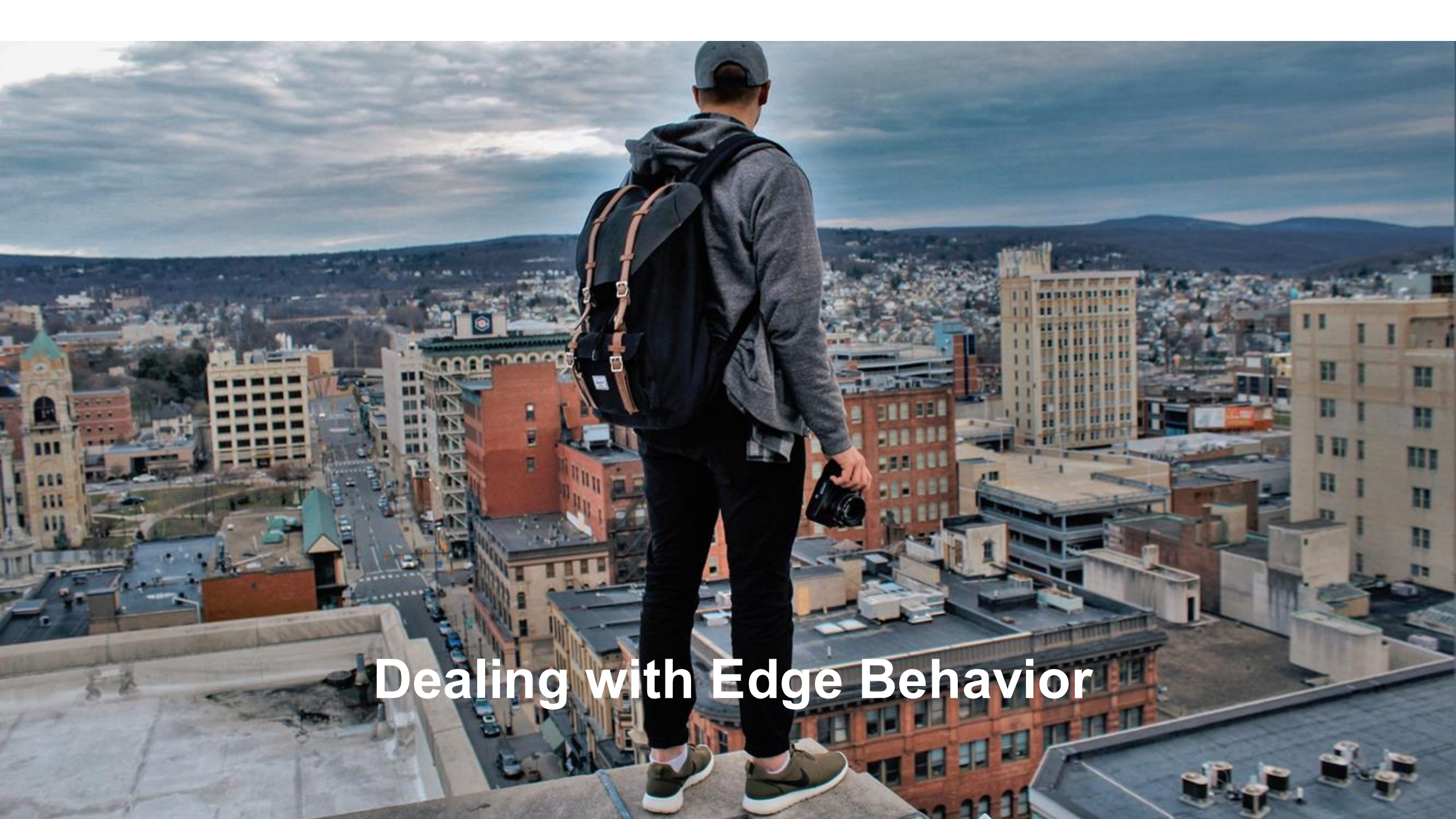
- Meeting them where they are; yet challenging conversations.
- Modeling as Teacher; showing and exemplifying.
- Creating the space to learn from each other.
- Showing Up – Creating a collaborative learning space.

# Common Anti-Patterns

- Hero culture
- Knowledge hoarding
- Over-protecting

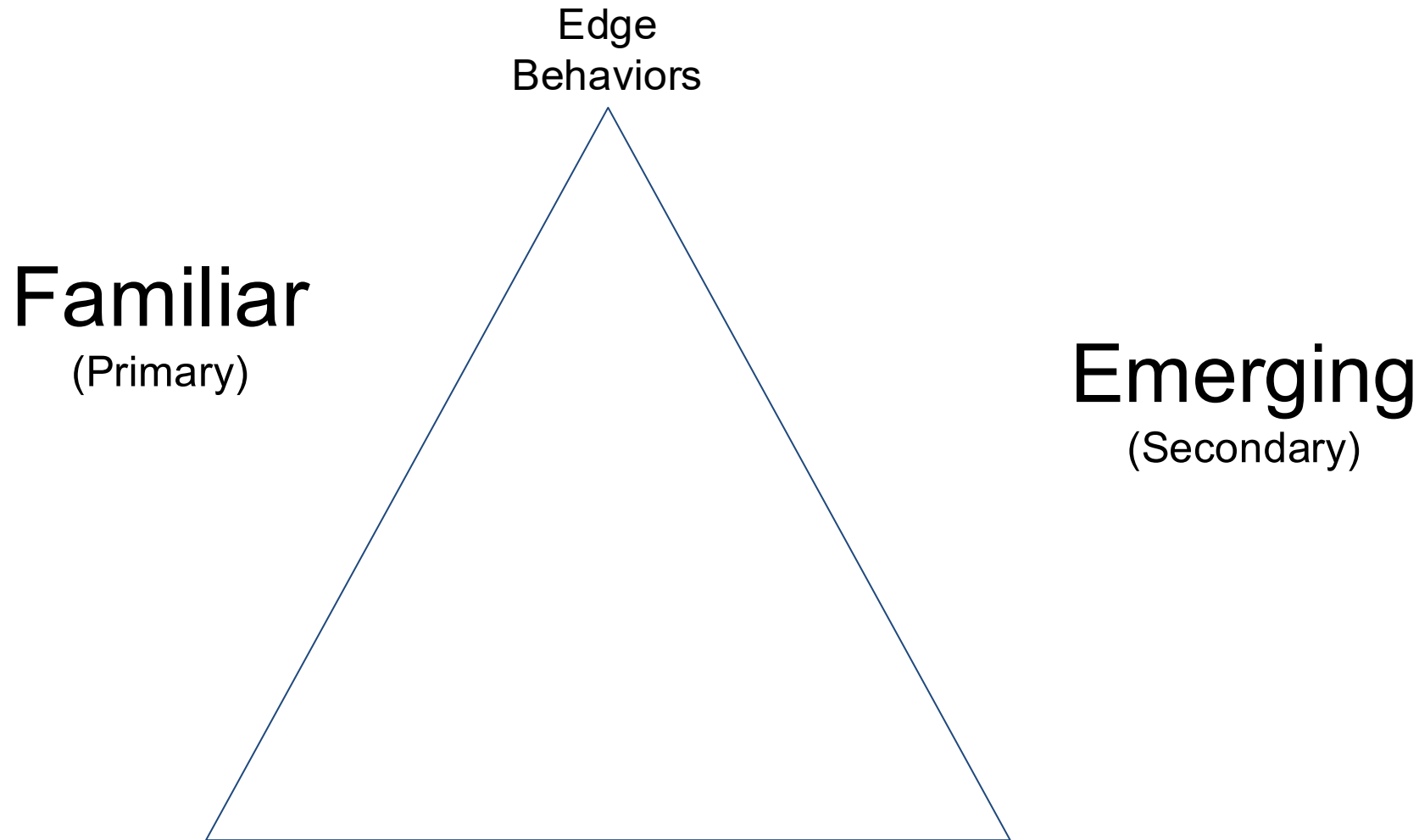
# What Great Mentoring Looks Like

- Shadowing
- Pairing
- Storytelling
- Growing confidence



# Dealing with Edge Behavior

# Individual Change Process

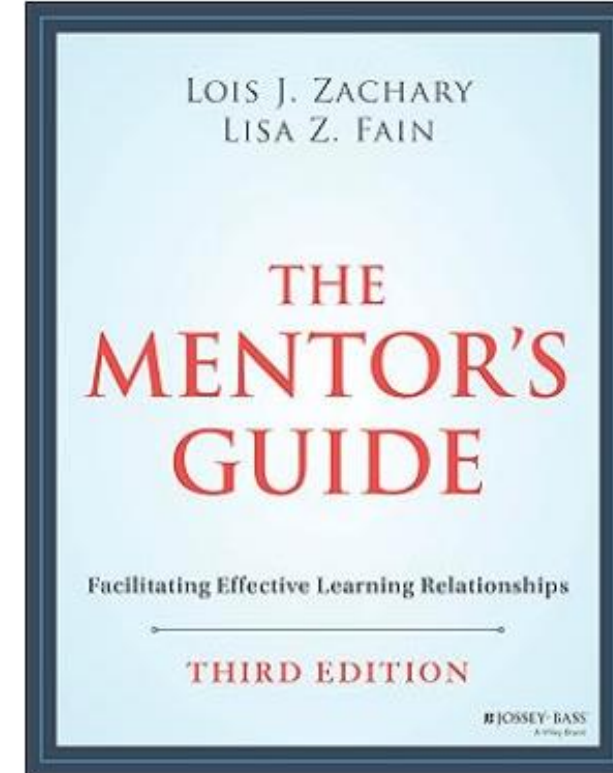
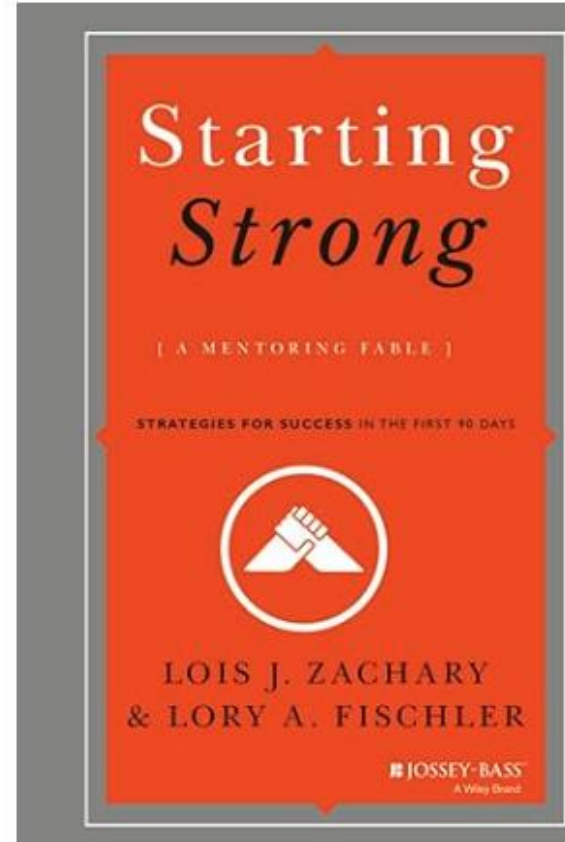
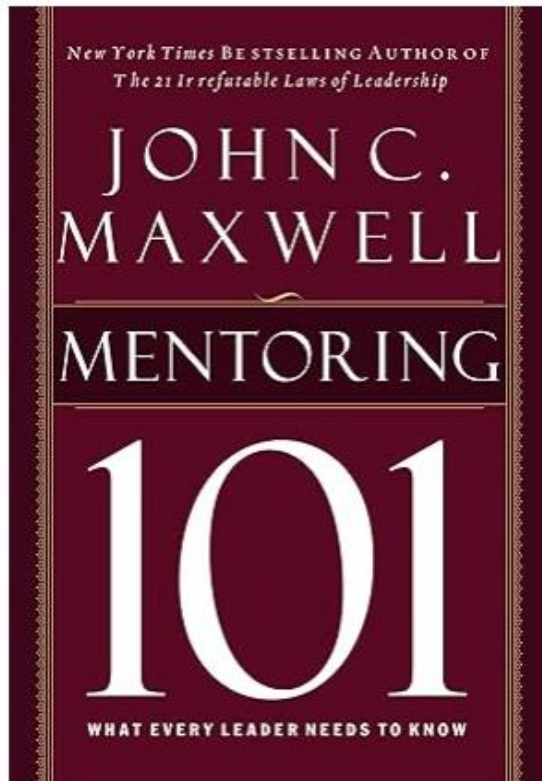


# Seriously, what does this look like?

- Can you give me a hypothetical mentoring scenario?



# Where to go from here





**THANK YOU!**

[David.McKenna@Broadcom.com](mailto:David.McKenna@Broadcom.com)  
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