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**Book Review:  
The Advice Trap: Be Humble, Stay Curious &  
Change the Way You Lead Forever**

by M. Bungay Stanier (2020).

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**Abstract**

**The Advice Trap** is a short book accessible to anyone who wants to improve their leadership and to those interested in coaching and business management. The central theme of the book is that giving advice about a problem, in general, does not actually solve the problem, much less benefit the person asking for it. Bungay Stanier explains why rushing to give advice during a conversation is a trap. Very interesting tools, applicable in several professional fields are developed throughout the book's 248 pages to help you control your desire to always want to give advice and to help be a good leader. This is a very practical book, very useful on several levels, and a good companion to help us tame our advice monster. We are led to evolve, surpass ourselves, and improve the quality of our relationships with others. And the advice trap has the necessary tools to help us do it.

Bungay Stanier, M. (2020). *The advice trap: Be humble, stay curious and change the way you lead forever*. Box of Crayons Press.

**Keywords:** leadership, coaching, humility

**The Advice Trap** is a short book accessible to anyone who wants to improve their leadership and to those interested in coaching and business management. It helps us understand that we all have an inner advice monster that surfaces in our interactions with others and prevents us from getting better results from the people we lead, mentor, or coach. We don't take the time to listen to identify the real challenges; we rush to speak. Bungay Stanier explains why rushing to give advice during a conversation is a trap. The central theme of the book is that giving advice about a problem, in general, does not actually solve the problem, much less benefit the person asking for it. Very interesting tools, applicable in several professional fields are developed throughout the book's 248 pages to help you control your desire to always want to give advice and to help be a good leader.

The book is structured in three chapters and contains exercises to help us use the tools offered by Bungay Stanier. The first part explains how difficult it is to deal with our urge to give advice and how we can change our behaviors. Change can be easy or difficult, but it is necessary to tame our advice monster. And for this process of change, Bungay Stanier presents us with four steps, which are: first, know what triggers our advice monster; then, understand our behavior after the trigger; then, analyze the benefits and punishments; and finally, visualize our future selves and how this process of change will benefit us. The second part details methods you can use to stay curious a little longer. In this chapter, he presents several techniques for practicing curiosity for longer. We also explored the importance of giving and receiving feedback. The last part explains how to apply and develop our coaching habits. Bungay Stanier shows us that being generous is important as a coach, and that it consists above all in the ability to see the good in every person and in any situation. Then we saw that to be a good coach, you also must be someone who can be

coached. The author then gives us the secret to mastering coaching, which is to continue learning, and finally, he explains how and when we can give advice.

In his previous book, **The Coaching Habit**, Bungay Stanier (2016) explains that by saying less and asking more, you can work less hard and have more impact. Having a good coaching habit means staying curious a little longer and rushing to give advice a little slower. Unfortunately, we are always inclined to speak and give advice automatically when someone starts talking to us; this is what Bungay Stanier calls the advice trap. So, he decided to share with us some tools to fight our advice monster and to be a better leader and coach.

As a recent medical graduate and master's student in health education, I find that the tools proposed in this book could help improve the quality of health services and medical training. A medical consultation is a conversation in which a health problem is investigated. Bungay Stanier presents six ways people fail to discover the real challenge (Chapter 2), which he describes as “foggy-fier”. He emphasizes that “your job is to stop seeking for solutions and start finding challenges” (p. 84). Once we get a real medical problem, whether physical or psychological, it will be easier to help people. I really appreciated how Bungay Stanier linked the 7 essential coaching questions to the process of giving feedback. He showed us that “coaching and feedback are often collapsed into the same category” (p. 154). Although “coaching is the act of staying curious, feedback is when you need to share your point of view” (p. 155). Using some of the seven essential coaching questions for medical students on internship or for healthcare staff in a hospital can really contribute to the development of practical skills.

One of the interesting points of **The Advice Trap** is that it gives practical advice on how to stay curious longer and how to manage a conversation well, which is an essential skill in many professional fields and even in our personal lives. Controlling our advice monster can improve our leadership and our interactions with others. This is a very practical book, very useful on several levels, and a good companion to help us tame our advice monster. We are led to evolve, surpass ourselves, and improve the quality of our relationships with others. And the advice trap has the necessary tools to help us do it.

## **References**

Bungay Stanier, M. (2016). *The coaching habit: Say less, ask more and change the way you lead forever*. Box of Crayons Press.

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