

**Brief Summary
of
Coach the Person, Not the Problem
A guide to Reflective Inquiry**

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- Coaches and leaders spend more time trying to remember the questions they are supposed to ask than paying attention to the person they are coaching
- “Checklist coaching” is more frustrating for the client than being helpful
- Being present and using reflective statements such as summarizing, paraphrasing and drawing distinctions can be more powerful and easier than seeking the magical question
- Coaching should be a process of inquiry and not a series of questions – the intent of inquiry to provoke critical thinking
- Statements that prompt us to look inside our brains are reflective – and these include recapping, labeling, using metaphors and recognizing emotional shifts
- Questions seek answers, inquiry provokes insight
- Adding reflective statements to questions makes coaching feel more natural and effortless
- Coaches act as thinking partners for people who are stuck inside their stories and perceptions
- The goal of coaching is to get clients go stop and question the thoughts and behaviors that limit their perspective so they can see a new way forward to achieve their desires
- Reflective practices provide an instant replay for clients to observe themselves telling their stories
- Using reflective inquiry with a caring and appreciative presence creates a connection where clients feel safe to critically explore how they think

Part 1 – What is a Coaching Conversation

- Coaches are essentially thinking partners focused on helping clients use their creativity and resources to see beyond their blocks and solve their own problems
- People need to feel seen, heard and valued to have the desire to grow.
- Reflective inquiry includes statements that hold up a mirror to our thoughts and beliefs to provoke evaluation
- The practice of mirroring or active replay is when the coach summarizes, paraphrases, acknowledges key phrases and shares the emotions and gestures the clients express
- We use reflective statements plus questions to trigger people to reflect on how they think
- Coaching behaviors include noticing energy shifts, tone of voice, pace of speech, inflection and behaviors. They summarize complex outcomes and possibilities, offer observations and reflect progress in the course of a coaching conversation

Chapter 1 – What makes coaching the person so powerful?

- Coaching is valuable because none of us transform our thinking on our own.
- Reflections followed by questions prompt us to stop and question our thinking and behaviors – this disruption initiates a shift in how we see ourselves and the world or how we are framing a dilemma

- For the same reason you can't tickle yourself, your brain resists self-imposed testing of thoughts and reactions.
- To think differently, we need to invite someone to help us examine our thinking. Only then do we dare our brain from quickly reacting. Disruption must be welcomed to interrupt our automatic thought processing
- *Coaching vs Telling* – when you tell people what to do, you tap into their cognitive brain where they can analyze your words using what they already know. If what you suggest relates to or affirms their current way of thinking, they are likely to agree with you
- Offering ideas might sound like an efficient way to guide people actions – the problem is they are dependent on you for answers / approvals. Also, even if they hear you, they forget it in a very short time
- When we tell people what to do, we access their short-term memory in their cognitive brain where, the learning is least effective
- Learning based in fear fortifies behavior – the brain resists change. Survival based learning limits risk taking and agility.
- Coaching is often confused with giving feedback – unless someone asks for advice, feedback only creates resistance or compliance
- You influence a change in behavior only when you activate people's creative minds instead of their survival or analytical mechanisms
- The middle brain houses long term memory – so tapping into this, to strategize a way forward arouses a positive sense of responsibility and courage
- A reflective inquiry-based conversation focused on how people think facilitates insight-based learning. Creative thoughts emerge as people pull out and connect bits of stored information in a new way to answer a productive question
- Using reflective statements and questions in a way that prompts people to examine what they are thinking incites creative breakthroughs
- When someone you trust, challenges your reasoning and asks you a question that breaks through the protective frame, your brain is forced to reorder data in your long-term memory
- Coaching that uses a reflective inquiry approach improves both outcomes and satisfaction – through summarizing, noticing emotional shifts and acknowledging courageous action
- No matter how masterful a coaching you are, some one must demonstrate a willingness to engage in coaching for you to be effective
- Coaching is best used when clients have some knowledge and skills to draw on, but they are not sure of the options what is best to do first, or the reasons for their own certainty
- The key word that differentiates what coaches do is partnering – coaches are thinking partners
- Do not coach if you CANNOT
 - Let go of how you want the conversation to go
 - Believe in the client's ability to figure out what to do
 - Feel hopeful, curious and care
- Ideal coaching scenarios include
 - Exploring ways to improve communications
 - Facing fears of conflict and emotional reactions in oneself and others
 - Finding solutions for dealing with difficult people and situations
 - Strengthening relationships at work and home
 - Articulating desires and visions both personally and professionally
 - Managing stress and well being

- Sorting through difficult decisions
- Experiencing greater fulfillment and success
- Dealing with work and life changes
- Leading through changes in organizations
- Inspiring greater team performance
- Shifting corporate culture
- Aligning leadership teams
- Increasing employee engagement
- Identifying development paths – preparing for and succeeding in new roles
- A good way to engaging people is to be curious about what they want for their futures or ask what they need right now to overcome challenges and then listen to their responses
- They want conversations to expand their minds as well as their skills
- Clients should be told that they will experience the best outcomes if they do the following
 - Respond to reflective statements and questions even if it feels uncomfortable – this is the best opportunity for breakthrough
 - Be an active participant, not a curious bystander
 - Be open, honest and willing to explore what isn't clearly or fully known about themselves, others and the situation
 - Meet commitments for action between sessions and show up for scheduled session unless an unexpected emergency emerges
 - Carve out time to think about the coaching conversation after a session and immediately before the next session

Chapter 2 – Crazy coaching beliefs

- There isn't one right way to coach – if your practice encourages your clients to self-reflect and generate insight – that is all that is needed
- At least five crazy coaching beliefs have thrown the value of coaching off track
 1. ***It takes a long time to be really good at coaching*** – new coaches love seeing demonstrations by experienced coaches – the demonstration shows off the coach's skills than providing a learning experience. Being comfortable with just being curious requires the willingness to feel uncomfortable with not knowing the answers.
 2. ***Questions are needed to create a breakthrough or new awareness*** – When a coach demonstrates coaching, the best questions asked are highlighted and discussed – often the reflective statements that prompted self-reflection are ignored. Coaching is a process of inquiry and not a series of questions – the intent of inquiry to provoke critical thinking, evaluate the value of beliefs, clarify doubts and fears affecting outlook and behaviour. Use of reflective statements such as summarizing, encapsulating, and sharing observed emotional shifts are more powerful than the magical question.
 3. ***The Coach must ask only open not closed questions*** – Closed questions tend to generate one word – yes/no answers. Many coaches declare closed questions are the antithesis of good coaching and negatively judge an experienced coach who uses them. The purpose of questions is to disrupt a pattern or flow of thinking and prompt deeper exploration. Closed questions are effective to test the validity of a reflective statement – they are good clarifiers and can provoke examination
 4. ***Reflective statements are too confrontational*** – There is a belief that reflective statements like closed questions are wrong to use as it would lead the client to a specific answer.

Reflective Statements may challenge the substance of your client's beliefs, perplexing the brain in a way that feels uncomfortable, embarrassing or confusing. As a coach, it is important to remain calm, holding a quiet, safe space for clients to work through the emotions

5. ***Coaching must always have a clear outcome or a vision of a desired future*** – There is a belief that when you have an end in mind, instead of focusing on the problem to be solved, the coaching moves to a picture of what is possible. Focusing on a desired future keeps the conversation appreciative, making it inspiring, strength based and self-directed. However, at the beginning of a session, clients might only be able to state a desire for clarity around what is making them feel stuck or unsure. As the session progresses, a new outcome might come to light. Sometimes the best learning happens in the time between the coaching sessions

Part 2 – The Five Essential Practices

- Coaching models provide value if three goals are met – and these provide focus and movement in a coaching conversation
 - *An outcome for the coaching session is identified, even if it evolves*
 - *Blocks, or what needs to be resolved by the client, are discovered*
 - *An achievable next step is articulated*
- Identifying an outcome, sorting through options and consequences and then making a plan is good for basic problem solving – this is coaching at a surface level or transactional coaching
- What is more useful is to look at what is making the situation a problem they cannot sort out on their own – and more importantly how is their thinking contributing to the dilemmas they are facing
- *Transactional vs Transformational coaching*
- Transactional coaching occurs when you assist clients to explore their thoughts about a situation so they can decide what to do, or not do, next – there is a logical sequence to the conversation. Transactional coaching is linear and externally focused on the problem
- When people live with beliefs and behaviors for a long time, a transactional change is not going to be effective.
- Transformational coaching works from the inside out.
- Reflecting inquiry is a powerful way to create disruptions in thinking that lead to breakthrough transformation and change. Using reflective inquiry, clients see their beliefs as if they were laid out on a table to examine – from that vantage point, they can see holes in their logic or an outdated point of view
- Coaching the person not the problem by using reflective inquiry is the cornerstone of transformational coaching.
- The reflective inquiry toolbox includes
 - Focus – Coaching the person not the problem
 - Active Replay – Playing back the pivotal pieces for review
 - Brain Hacking – Finding the treasures in the box
 - Goaltending – Staying the course
 - New and Next – Coaxing insights and commitments

Chapter 3 Focus – Coaching the person not the problem

- Most problem-solving formulas, and some coaching models, focus on finding a solution to a problem.

- Using habitual coaching techniques that challenge and disturb habitual thought patterns is *developmental* (expanding client's perspectives) instead of *operational* (exploring what didn't work and how to fix it). The conversations may feel uncomfortable, but the outcomes are remarkable.
- The changes in their beliefs and behaviors that occur when you focus on their thinking instead of just options and consequences are enduring yet adaptable
- Many coaches struggle with shifting focus from the problem to the human.
- To be open to learning, clients must experience a moment of uncertainty. Clients may get defensive, angry – but if you calmly maintain your poise and maintain the balance between caring and staying in the enquiry, they might let go and new perspective emerges.
- When you coach people to see their blocks and biases instead of sorting through problems and options, discomfort is likely to occur before the breakthrough awareness comes to light
- Coaching the person instead of the problem can be called *awareness-based coaching* – to differentiate it from *solutions-based coaching*.
- Coaching is often supportive and encouraging, it can also be uncomfortably disruptive. You must be willing to challenge interpretations, test assumptions, and notice emotional shifts so your clients learn something new instead of just reordering the thoughts they already had
- Three tips for focusing on the person, not the problem
 - Set the expectation for coaching - It is important to let them know that you are their partner not their advisor
 - Maintain your belief in the client's capabilities – you are there to help people see a way forward they couldn't see on their own. When clients know that you believe in their capabilities, they will be willing to accept the discomfort of vulnerability when admitting to their gaps, biases, fears
 - Know the right time to shift from clarifying the problem to coaching the person in front of you – Typically coaching talks about various options possible and what have they tried, or considered doing – exploring what they didn't do will reveal what is at the source of their hesitation. If they are willing to explore what they personally need to resolve, you can shift the focus from the problem to the person.

Chapter 4 – Active Replay – Playing back the pivotal pieces for review

- When we use reflective statements, we act as a dynamic mirror where clients can more objectively view their behavioral motivations and limiting beliefs
- Playing back your clients' words and expressions and then asking a question that arises from your curiosity effectively provokes self-reflection.
- Your reflective statements and questions provide an active replay of not just their behaviors but also their beliefs, fears, disappointments, betrayals, conflicts of value and desires prompting their action
- Two skills important in active replay are - summarizing the key points the client said and noticing emotional shifts without interpreting the meaning
- Although summarizing may seem simplistic, when people hear their own words spoken, their ideas and beliefs are laid out in front of them to examine. They then go inwards to reflect – and from that point see a blind spot or inaccuracies in their belief
- The intent of summarizing is not to memorize and then parrot back what clients say – the aim is to help them objectively observe their stories and how they are telling them
- The practice of summarizing includes three skills – Recapping, Paraphrasing and Encapsulating

- A good use of reflective inquiry is to summarize so clients hear their thoughts and then provoke examination with a question.

Recapping

- One way to recap is start off by saying “So you are telling me” – then go on to restate the issue, problem or outcome expressed and the key factors the client says is making it difficult to take action. The client will either agree or correct the perception without asking a question
- Using the words the clients use and including the emotions they used to stress their desires and irritations is a great way of recapping
- When the clients make statements starting with “I want” or “I need” – explore the importance of their wants and needs and the cost of not realizing them
- When there is a conflict of values, people feel stuck in the middle. Summarizing conflicts in coaching gives clients both the clarity and confidence to choose what to do next

Paraphrasing

- Paraphrasing helps clients assess the meaning of their words and emotions. We restate what we hear in a slightly different form to help them surface and explore their beliefs
- Paraphrasing is an offer – clients can accept your words or not. If they don’t agree, it is likely that they will offer an alternative clarifier. It is important the paraphrase is an alternative statement of what was said, not your opinion about what the client shared
- Another form of paraphrasing is to use a metaphor, if it lands well, – to paint a picture of what the client is telling you in a different context connected by meaning

Encapsulating

- Sometimes one can capture the essence of a client story in a few words – one word or phrase can be used to name the experience. This practice includes labeling, bottom lining and drawing distinctions
- *Labeling* – When labeling a client’s experience, you are offering a title for their story – using some of the words they used or using a metaphor – e.g. “it is a huge unknown”, “sounds like you are drowning”, “sounds like you are pushing a rock up a hill” etc.
- *Bottom lining* – Bottom lining helps clients isolate what needs to be resolved to achieve their desired outcomes. Look out for the word “but” – this signals that their brain is conjuring up excuses for not acting. Bottom lining statements help clients see through the fog of fear. Bottom lining can be used to summarize beliefs and insights. A good bottom lining question could be “what would you do if you had nothing to worry about, if no *but*s existed?”
- *Drawing distinctions* – Drawing distinctions help clarify what a person wants and what needs to be resolved and where they are stuck in their thinking. When you hear a conflict of desires or values, you can better frame the options by asking “are your two options in conflict with each other, or could you achieve a little more of both”. Distinctions clarify what clients think and feel
- Once you summarize by recapping, paraphrasing and encapsulating what clients offer in the conversation, you can follow up your statement with a question like “Is this correct” or “Is this what bothers you the most”

Three tips for summarizing

- Use your clients’ words when recapping or encapsulating the outcome they want and the factors they feel are delaying the movement- then ask them what their key words mean – e.g., what I really want”
- Use metaphors to paraphrase how clients are reacting to a situation e.g., “seems like you are carrying your world on your shoulders” or “you seem to be rowing upstream” and then follow up with questions to surface their underlying beliefs, assumptions and fears

- Cut through excuse and unnecessary backstory details by bottom lining what you hear is the outcome they want and the biggest block to achieving it
- **Noticing emotional shifts**
- Exploring emotions can be more powerful than exploring thoughts when seeing to identify beliefs, conflicts or fears that are deterring forward movement.
- Look out for signals such as when they look down or away, a change in tone or voice, hesitate or become silent – then question the source of their reactions to understand the relationship of an emotion to their desired outcome
- After you share the shift you notice, you might ask what expression means to them to see if the reflection triggers and insight
- Trust your ability to feel emotional shifts in your clients, then use your curiosity to explore what triggered the reaction
- Humans desire to be seen beyond words – recognizing shifts with compassion and curiosity demonstrates you care
- Three tips for noticing emotional shifts
 - Notice shifts in client’s posture, tone of voice, facial expressions and breathing – use “I notice” or “I sense”
 - Be receptive to their experience, no matter what they say and express
 - Practice curiosity – discover what the emotion of curiosity feels like in your brain and body

Chapter 5 Brain hacking

- All of us have stories – the frame around our stories is woven from strands of our significant life experiences and learnings forming the meaning we attached to each moment(reality) and how we define ourselves (identity)
- Our beliefs, biases and assumptions come from our experiences, but are formed through the filter of our life values and social needs – our values and needs shape our beliefs and biases which mix our experiences to create stories
- The frame (identity and reality), the contextual field inside the frame(values and needs) and our stories (shaped by beliefs, biases and assumptions) dictate our thinking and action. This is our operating system running continuously throughout the day
- Coaching can be effective at all these levels – story, context and frame – depending on what the client wants are and ready to see
- **Coaching the story**
 - We rarely evaluate or change stories on our own – however when someone else summarizes, paraphrases or repeats back to us, we are able to see our stories as if they were laid out in front of us outside our heads
 - Coaching the story can surface unsubstantiated fears and outspoken desires – and often leads to more options for action than what clients thought they could choose from
- **Beliefs and assumptions**
 - Offering what you hear as a belief or assumption and asking clients how they know it is true can reveal another possibility of what is true – some may not have been verified, some may be seen as irrational
 - Coaching helps clients question their beliefs about current and future circumstances. A new awareness can broaden what they believe is possible to create and what is required to achieve what they want

- **Biases**
 - Bias is a tendency to stereotype and judge people or things – and can be both conscious (implicit) or unconscious (explicit)
 - Sometimes we are conscious of our biases – we staunchly defend them believing we are right, with or without evidence
 - With coaching, we hope to bring client biases to light if they are hindering our clients from achieving their goals
- Unconscious bias is often referred to as a blind spot – these typically relate to attitudes regarding age, race, gender, religion, nationality and lifestyle choices
- Bringing an unconscious bias to light might be enough, giving clients a chance to consider holding or letting go
- Coaching can override the fear of confronting values and needs. Using reflective inquiry, we question beliefs
- You may think you use logic to make decisions, when you unconscious and overriding driver is the desire to get a social need met. Recognizing needs frees us to choose our reactions
- The first step in helping clients articulate their needs is to notice their emotional reactions and shifts, especially if their tone turns negative
- It is important not to judge client needs – they may seem trivial but are very important for them
- **Life values**
 - Values are your strongly held beliefs – what is most important for you. This directs your choices of work, friends, relationships and a desired future.
 - Values can change priorities over time.
- Bringing values to light in a coaching conversation can help clients realize what values are growing in strength and what are receding.
- The desired outcomes of a coaching session should reflect something your client's value – love, peace, adventure, freedom, achievement, balance etc.
- Three tips for brain hacking by coaching
 - *Resist judging the beliefs shaping clients' stories* – be open to interpretations, listen for the words they emphasize and key words such as really, but and should
 - *Notice their emotional reaction and shifts* – look out for phrases like “they promised me”, “it's happening again”, “that's it”, “I am done”
 - *Affirm clients' efforts and intentions*, especially if these relate to their life values – if they have exhausted all options, try to ask “if you have done your best with what you know, what is in your control to do now?” When clients confidently make choices on their own, they do not feel stuck

Chapter 6 – Goaltending

- In any coaching conversation, without a clear, desired outcome for the conversation, clients can have revelations when talking through a dilemma, but they may not apply their insights to achieving what they really want – they often ramble and run round in circles
- Establishing the bookends of coaching – the desired outcome and the commitment to the next step – is vital to ensure clients see through their frames and then do something new
- Clarifying the desired outcome gives the coach guardrails to keep the story from failing off the edge of a forward moving path
- Three important practices for coaches to create strong book ends are
 - Unwrapping what clients want instead of what they have now (“**What do you want?**”)

- Tracking their progress towards the stated outcome and tracking changes in the outcome for clients to confirm or restate (“**What do you really want**”)
- Coaching clients to crystallize their insights and commit to actions they will take to ensure progress towards their desired outcome (“**What will you do now**”)
- It is okay to start a session by asking “What would you like to talk about today?” - when they start talking, clarify what could get better or achieved as a result of the interaction
- Listen for key words and emotional shifts – share what you are noticing and ask how they would like this story to end
- The outcome often takes time to emerge – once they envision an outcome they truly want, they willing to make that one step to move forward
- Clients often come to the conversation with a goal to make a decision – but the real problem is that they have already made a decision they are afraid to step into
- People are often unsure what they want or they are afraid to speak out loud. Your job is to help them name what they want. Once their real desires are articulated, the actions they must take are easier to declare and commit to
- Once you listen to a client’s story and how he defines the problem, listen for the following
 - What does the person want to happen, even if he is uncomfortable saying it – summarize, paraphrase and encapsulate what the person perceives
 - What does the person feel is most important? Listen for a shift in emotion that indicates unmet needs
 - What is causing the person’s frustration, fear or embarrassment? When the client uses the word “but”, explore the reality of the consequences he names after the but
- If clients are reluctant to come out with an outcome, let them describe where they feel they are today in relation to their topic – and the invite them to describe what better or more might look like
- Asking clients to visualize the best case scenario is also one of the options – “What does a strong leadership presence look like for you” or “if you had great relationships at work, what would they look like”

Tracking progress and alterations in the outcome

- The process of drilling down to discover what a person really wants to resolve or achieve is often referred to as “peeling the onion”
- A shift in the picture or a new outcome is revealed as your pare off layers of old beliefs and chip away at the shield of protecting vulnerabilities
- Horizontal coaching occurs when you use the client outcome as the destination for the session. The objective of a horizontal coaching is to formulate plans to move forward. Clients could probably create these plans without a coach if they took time to think about what they wanted to create
- Vertical coaching expands awareness. Outcomes tend to evolve as the coaching reveals desires for more personal goals or courageous commitments. Shifts are made a the identity level – so you coach the person not the problem
- Though vertical coaching starts off with what clients say want from the coaching, it quickly moves to reflecting the beliefs you clear clients state when describing the dilemma that is hindering achieving the outcome. Exploring beliefs might lead to identifying fears and result in possible emotional shifts
- Horizontal coaching you might have questions like
 - *What do you want? What will this give you?*

- *What do you need to resolve to move forward?*
- *What will you commit to do now?*
- Vertical coaching might be more nuanced
 - *What do you want? What will this give you?*
 - *Why is this important for you now? What is missing for you or stopping you from moving forward?*
 - *How real are the consequences you fear? Is the gain worth the risk? Who will judge your actions? What will you regret not doing a year from now?*
- Exploring what is getting in the way of smart creative people you are coaching means you are curious about their beliefs, social needs and values that hold their story together. Start with reflecting the beliefs you hear that define their story and notice the emotional shifts.
- A coaching session needs to have a destination to keep it from being just a conversation about a problem.
- Three tips to keeping the conversation on track
 - When clients list a number of problems, encapsulate what you hear, and invite them to choose what outcome they would want to work toward first
 - Recognize when the outcome shifts and reflect this to the client using the client's words
 - Listen for repeated words and emotional trigger points that spark anger, excuses or blame
- Imagining, refining and redefining outcomes helps keep conversations moving forward instead of going round in circles

Chapter 7 – New and Next

- A common regret of coaches occurs when they realize they missed the opportunity to confirm clients will define and commit to an action even if the action is to take time to reflect
- When clients experience a new insight, they feel as if a new door has opened to a new way of seeing. They have yet to walk through the door
- Without formally wrapping up the coaching session with a verbalized commitment to action, clients may forget what they thought they knew to do after the session ends
- Before clients move into action, it is important to anchor the new perspective by asking them to articulate what why are now seeing or learning. Then you can get their commitment to apply what they have learnt before the conversation is over
- Much of coaching is shepherding clients to see what they have resisted or overlooked. When your coaching brings what was overlooked or avoided to the surface, the sudden clarity can be surprising and often humbling
- Once you notice the emotional shift, give them the space to process their reactions – don't let this powerful moment slip by. Be sure to ask them "Would you share with me what just happened?" "What are you seeing now?". Verbally processing the details can help the new belief take shape
- Breakthroughs occur when the result of insight strengthens or expands their perception of self in relation to a dilemma (identity) or they discover an entirely new view of what they now believe is true (reality)
- Invite clients to choose the direction of coaching – are they ready to look at what actions to take now or do they want to redefine what they want to achieve based on the insight they shared
- Once the insight or breakthrough is articulated, it is important to immediately explore if they are ready to commit to actions based on the new awareness

- Turn the insight into commitment by asking questions such as
 - What will you do now?
 - By when?
 - What could get in the way of commitment?
 - What other support or resources will help?
 - How do you feel about your insights and plans?
- When clients share their plans, they feel more obliged to follow through. And they are more likely to hold themselves accountable to their words
- Giving a voice to the insight may feel to you like it is the right time to move into wrapping up the conversation
- Before the session ends, ask clients to summarize their coaching journey – let them describe their experience. Complete the session on the highest note possible from recognizing they took time out of their busy day for coaching and the courageous steps they took to achieve the breakthrough.
- As part of creating closure, choose one or more ways to acknowledge your client's behaviors and progress
 - Describe a moment they were willing to be open or vulnerable leading to a significant shift in coaching
 - Recognize their growth since previous sessions
 - Recall moments when they were willing to be vulnerable that helped them remove a barrier to success
 - Notice milestones reached and commitments accomplished
- Both the client and the coach should feel the uplift of energy when the session ends.
- The impact of coaching happens after the session is over. The shift in perception embeds when clients apply what they learned about themselves in their daily lives
- Three tips for articulating insights and commitments
 - Epiphanies trigger emotional shifts – Even when the shift is ever so slight, ask “what happened”, “what are you seeing now?”
 - Invite clients to choose the direction of coaching after an important revelation – this is in terms of asking them if they are ready to look at what actions to take now and if they would like to redefine what they want to achieve
 - Turn their intention to change into a commitment for action – when clients share their plans to act with completion dates, they are more likely to hold themselves accountable to their worlds

Part 3 – The Three Mental Habits

- Developing coaching skills will help you engage clients to sort out their thoughts and think more clearly for themselves. Uncovering what clients really want and what is stopping them from achieving their desires requires that clients feel safe with you
- Doug Silsbee says “Our ability to facilitate lasting sustainable development in others absolutely rests on the presence we offer to the relationship”
- During a coaching conversation, it is important that clients need to be psychologically safe with you to open up, feel vulnerable and achieve breakthroughs
- Trust and psychological safety are not the same. Clients may trust what you say or keep the conversation confidential. They trust you but would they be safe if they express themselves without fear of ridicule.

- Presence is a neurophysiological state of trust and safety in both the client and the therapist. The need to protect and defend oneself is regulated down, creating optimal conditions for growth and change. Presence requires you to open your mind, heart and gut – with curiosity, care and courage
- To coach with mastery, you need to do the following
 - Align your brain
 - Receive (don't just listen)
 - Catch and release judgement

Chapter 8 – Align your brain

- To achieve mastery, practice is key in every field, so it is for coaching. Being fully present requires you to develop the habit of physically and mentally aware in the moment to **only** what is happening in the coaching interaction. Nothing else matters – thoughts may float, but they don't stay. This is coaching presence
- The practice of coaching presence has been compared to mindfulness where you are aware of what is going on inside and outside your mind and body. When you use mindfulness in coaching, you notice your thoughts and reactions, breathe and come back to being present of the person you are with. One should be curious, patient and be quiet instead of jumping to help.
- Coaching presence helps you to be able to receive what clients express in words and expressions and more importantly creates the psychological safety to have honest exploratory conversation
- Aligning your brain can be done in these three steps
 - Choose how you want to feel
 - Recall your intention of partnership
 - Believe in your client's potential
- *Choose how you want to feel*
 - Since emotions have more impact than words, you must consciously choose how you want to feel before you meet your client.
 - Ideally one should be in "flow" – the optimal state of consciousness where we perform at our best while enjoying the moment
 - To get in to the flow of coaching, you don't just clear your mind – you choose one or two emotions you want to feel throughout the conversation – curious and calm or calm and courageous or grateful and optimistic – choosing the best which will help you stay present
 - Being present while coaching builds rapport
- *Recall your intention of partnership*
 - Clients must know you are helping them work through their dilemmas, not to persuade them to do what is right
 - This requires you to be curious and not judgmental whether they are right or wrong
 - With reflective statements, questions and moments of silence, trust they will adequately question their own thinking
 - A coach is a client's thinking partner – the purpose to broaden the client's perspective to find the answers they probably knew all along
- *Believe in your client's potential*
 - When you lose your belief in your client's ability to discover their own way forward, they are no longer a fully respected partner in the conversation

- Not believing in people's potential to solve their own problems creates "parodies of connection" where the humanity in people is invisible when we interact.
- People must feel valued to fully engage and be open to growing
- Your belief in client's potential that they are creative, resourceful and whole is critical to the outcome of the conversation
- Key points to remember in aligning your brain to create the bond needed to successfully coach the person and not the problem are
 - Presence gives you the awareness of what is occurring in yourself, in the person you are with, and in the space between you
 - You need to take three steps to groom your brain before a coaching conversation to establish a sense of psychological safety – choose how you want to feel, recall your intention of partnership and believe in the client's potential
 - The emotions you choose to feel before and during a coaching conversation have more impact on the outcome than your words
 - If you are truly there to help clients think, you must let their thoughts have a mind of their own. Remain open and curious to what unfolds
 - Coaching conversations require you to feel respect for the human in front of you to inspire willingness to learn and grow. See them, value their existence and believe in their potential
- The steps in Presencing – to align your brain before a coaching conversation
 - Relax your body
 - Detach from the thoughts in your head
 - Center your awareness
 - Focus on the emotion you want to feel

Chapter 9 – Receive (don't just listen)

- Julian Treasure's in his TED talk, "5 ways to listen better" talks of a formula for listening – RASA – Receive, Appreciate, Summarize and Ask
- Staying present requires you to receive without judgement and appreciate the other person's experience
- Receiving the person fully, not just listening to them, is critical for using reflective inquiry to coach the person not the problem
- The act of receiving means you take what the clients offer you – hear their words, notice their shifts in expression and posture, catch the subtle shifts in emotion and sense when there is something they haven't said
- You listen to people generally to collect data, to give an answer or solve a problem, to obey a protocol
- Listening to people requires you to use cognitive awareness – you seek to understand what people are saying, interpreting what you hear
- When you choose to be present and connect with someone, you listen beyond your analytical brain – you open your nervous system to receive with your heart and gut and with an open mind. The person would feel heard, valued and possibly transformed as a result
- Receiving requires you to suspend analysis – you acknowledge their story as valid from their current point of view without judging them
- You receive what people offer for these purposes

- To connect with other people – you listen to establish a connection, resist the urge to know what is coming next
- To let people know you value them – you listen so clients feel heard, understood and valued
- To strengthen your relationship – you listen with the purpose of being with others
- To explore learn and growth together – listen with curiosity to learn from the person in front of you – and letting go of what you know
- Receiving is an active not a passive act. To fully receive, you need to be aware of sensory reactions as well as mental activity
- Sensory awareness includes an inward awareness of your reactions in a conversation. Being sensitive means you are aware of what is going on around you on a sensory level – you sense when people are conflicted, distressed or stimulated. It is said that pets have an uncanny ability to sense their emotional needs
- When you allow yourself to be sensitive – to experience others enough to sense what they are feeling, your reflective statements have more impact.
- Receive and then offer your clients what you see, hear and feel to help them better understand the experience. Release their emotions so you can hold a safe space for them to process your offering
- Your presence encourages connection, safety, and the openness to discover a new way forward together
- Five steps to build sensory awareness in a conversation are
 - Be quiet inside out - when you quiet your thinking and chattering brain, you clear your sensory channels
 - Let go of knowing – go with an open mind when you ask your clients a question
 - Release the need to be right – be curious and ask questions to understand your client’s perspective
 - Listen with your heart and gut, as well as your head – open your heart with feelings of compassion or gratitude, your gut by feeling your courage
 - Test your instinct – when you feel a sensation in your heart or gut, share what you think your clients may be feeling – and accept their response

Chapter 10 – Catch and Release Judgement

- The most common lie accomplished coaches tell themselves is “I am not judgmental”. Judgement is a reaction that occurs when the brain determines that what was said or done conflicts with our frames – who we think we are (identity) and how the world should work (reality)
- What you believe is important, what you value as right, and how you believe others should act lead to judgement
- Mastery in coaching requires that you accept you are a judgy, biased person. To judge is human – you must recognize and release your judgmental reactions before they sabotage your coaching
- Some judgements are easy to catch. Others are unconscious – you are not aware you reacted negatively to what you heard – these judgements are unconscious bias / blind spots
- Because unconscious biases are difficult to uncover, allowing someone else to help reveal them to you is helpful

- The most common judgmental reactions happen in response to your client’s emotional reactions. The practice of catching and releasing your judgement about their emotions will help you understand the significance of their expressions
- Reactions that are commonly misunderstood include
 - Nervous laughter
 - Change in eye contact
 - Easy, quick agreement,
 - Tears
 - Defensiveness
 - Hesitation
- Key points to practice to help you develop the mental habit of suspending judgement include
 - Stop and notice if you are feeling judgement
 - Don’t criticize yourself for judging
 - Question your assumptions and opinions
 - Release your need to be right or have the last word
 - Strive to be more curious about people every day
- The more adept you are at discerning the emotions that are shaping your moods and affecting your thoughts, the great your ability to shift to feeling something else more conducive to the moment
- Emotional awareness as a skill can be improved by
 - Stopping and noticing your emotional state
 - Name what you are feeling
- Even if you cannot name your sensations, the practice of discerning differences in your physical and mental states is a good start

Wrap up – Beyond the conversation

- There is a difference between *doing* coaching and *being* a coach. Coaching is not just using skills in specific situations – it is a way of being with others
- The mental habits of being present, receiving instead of listening, and releasing judgement change the dynamics of relationships.
- Using reflective statements followed by affirming questions decreases assumptions, keeping the conversations on the same page
- When you are “being” a coach, people feel seen, heard and valued. Acknowledge your impact so it becomes part of its identity
- One of the significant benefits when organizations invest in building a coaching culture is increased employee engagement – leading to decreased absenteeism, lower turn over and quicker adaptation to change
- Building a coach in an organization calls forth courage and the willing to act. If coaching is widespread, you will have a connected, courageous culture
- When you create cultures that foster the safety to fully express oneself in conversations, you not only bring out the best in people, but bring out the best in yourself
- In our divided, disconnected world, coaching brings people together

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