

Coaching Development

Paul Smith

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This book is based on a previously released digital version, now revised and expanded.

Dedication

To coaches everywhere, building their practices and changing lives. May this book be your guide to building a larger toolkit and creating a legacy of impact.

“If you want to make a masterpiece, you have to be willing to create a little garbage along the way.”

James Clear

Purpose of this Book

This book was originally created as part of an Accredited Coach Training Programme with the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC), aimed at supporting coaches in enhancing their business and professional skills.

The programme offers a comprehensive curriculum designed to equip coaches with the knowledge and tools necessary to succeed in the dynamic field of coaching. Participants will benefit from interactive workshops, online study and peer-to-peer learning opportunities. Join a community of experienced professionals dedicated to advancing the coaching profession.

Upon completion of the programme, coaches receive five years' accreditation from the EMCC, a globally recognised accreditation body. This credential demonstrates to potential clients a commitment to excellence in coaching practice and signals a high standard of professionalism. To enrol in the programme, scan the QR code below. Access our online learning hub for coach development and collaboration projects.

All tools discussed in this book are available in the 'Coach Library' within our hub.



The CM Hub

Foreword

This book has been a powerful companion in my coaching journey. It's helped me uncover my strengths, reflect on areas for growth, and deepen my understanding of the value I bring to the clients I work with.

Paul is one of the more distinctive voices I have encountered in the coaching profession. His passion for coaching is unmistakable, and his belief in its transformative power is clear. Paul sees coaching as a vital enabler and he's on a mission to make it accessible to all.

He's also deeply collaborative. Paul opens doors, supports emerging coaches, and generously shares his time and insight. I've personally benefited from his support as I continue to grow my own coaching practice.

This book invites you to define your niche, clarify your vision and mission, and set meaningful goals and objectives. I encourage you to pause and explore these areas as you build your coaching identity. For me, the chapter on vision and mission was a pivotal moment, it helped me to step back and take stock of my coaching skills and the coaching practice I am building. I think that is great self-discovery for any emerging coach. These same tools can also be used with clients to help them articulate their own aspirations and direction.

What makes this book especially valuable is its shift in focus, from the skills and behaviours we use to serve others, to the inner work we must do ourselves. It's a reminder that how we show up for our clients is shaped by how well we understand and develop ourselves.

I hope this book supports your journey as richly as it has supported mine.

Paul Kendall

Global Leader in Learning and Development and Emerging Leadership and Organisational coach

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Chapter 1

An Introduction to Coaching Development

‘Be patient with yourself. Self-growth is tender; it’s holy ground.
There’s no greater investment.’

Stephen Covey

Coaching is a vast and vibrant field, touching nearly every aspect of human life. At its heart, it’s a partnership dedicated to helping clients overcome challenges and unlock their potential. While the core skills of a great coach (like listening deeply and asking powerful questions) remain the same, the tools we use can be tailored to specific niches.

Think of it this way: every craftsperson has an essential toolkit, but a carpenter's tools will differ from a mechanic's. Similarly, as a Business Coach, we might apply exercises to reshape company culture, while a Relationship Coach might use different techniques to help couples manage struggles. Our niche defines our specialty, and our tools empower our practice.

The path to coaching mastery is a continuous journey of learning. The more we read in our chosen area, the more tools we gather, and the more we practice, the more effective and impactful we become.

This book is designed to be a guide on that journey. We will explore a wide range of coaching areas and exercises with a single goal: to help us build a richer toolkit and perhaps even discover the niche where our passion and purpose align.

However, before we dive into the tools, let's begin with some strategic reflection. The questions below are designed to spark clarity about our uniqueness. There are no right or wrong answers, only your answers.

Take a moment to consider:

- Should I establish a specific niche for my coaching business, or begin as a generalist?
- Is there a particular type of client I am most excited to work with?
- What personal experiences and challenges have I overcome that could inform my coaching?
- Which areas of life and human potential naturally fascinate me?
- What problems do people already bring to me, seeking my advice or support?
- Could group coaching be a rewarding part of my business model?
- What areas of personal development have I committed to in my own life?
- Which personal development books am I consistently drawn to?
- Do I have a strong interest in specific methodologies, such as manifestation, goal-setting, confidence-building, or relationship dynamics?

At the end of this book, you will find an extensive list of essential reading to deepen your exploration. These starter books will open doors to further studies, experts, and coaches in your areas

of interest. Who knows, the insights you gain may one day inspire you to contribute your own book to the field!

I hope these questions have ignited your curiosity. Now, let's begin the work of building your unique coaching practice, one powerful tool at a time.

Chapter 2

Establishing A Niche

‘When you speak to everyone, you speak to no one.’

Eckhart Tolle

To niche or not to niche? If I pick a niche, won't I be turning away all the other clients I could have? How can I possibly choose just one area when I'm interested in so many different things? Figuring out our coaching niche can be challenging. It can feel confusing, especially when we hear different opinions about whether we should even specialise at all.

In this chapter, we'll break it down together. We'll explore what a niche really is, weigh the pros and cons of having one, and most importantly, discover practical steps we can take to start establishing our own.

2.1 What is a Coaching Niche?

In short, a niche is our specialised area of focus, the specific group of people or problems we work with. It can be broad, like a ‘Career Coach,’ or very narrow, like a coach who ‘works with women rebuilding their lives after domestic abuse.’

However we define it, there is one critical rule we should always follow:

Only announce our niche publicly when we are 100% sure it's the right fit and we can define it clearly.

Here's why. Our marketing builds our credibility. If we keep changing our niche, we damage that credibility. At Coaching Minds, we've seen coaches shift focus every few months, from Manifestation Coach, to Relationship Coach, to Anxiety Coach. This sends a confusing message to our audience. The message they receive is that we are unsure of what we do. That is not the foundation of a trusted practice. By defining our niche firmly before we market it, we save not just our credibility, but also our valuable time, money, and effort.

2.2 Advantages of Defining a Niche

So, is a niche absolutely essential for us as coaches? Not strictly. But it is one of the most powerful tools we have to build a successful and sustainable business. The key for us is to find a balance. It's easy for us to overthink our niche, which can lead to what we call 'analysis paralysis', creating unnecessary uncertainty and confusion for ourselves. Some of us even wonder: is choosing to have no niche still a niche in its own way?

Let's walk through the advantages, so we can make an informed decision for our own practice.

Advantage 1: It Opens Up Our Market

Many of us fear that choosing a niche will limit our potential client pool (or piece of the marketing pie). In reality, we find it does the opposite. Why is that?

When we position ourselves as coaches for ‘anyone with a problem,’ we don't offer a defined service. This creates confusion for our potential clients. As clients ourselves, we want to know exactly what we're buying and the specific benefits we'll receive. Imagine a client asks us:

"How can you help me?"

If we're a generalist, we might say:

"I can help you with any challenge you are facing."

The client thinks:

"That's vague. What are you actually an expert in?"

With a clear niche, we can say something like:

"I have a passion for helping people build confidence. I guide them to step into their power and achieve the goals they truly desire. If that's what you need, I am the coach for you."

Can we see the difference? By defining our niche (for example, in confidence-building) we suddenly become the obvious choice for the entire portion of the market seeking that specific result. A clear niche makes us more discoverable and desirable, not less.

Advantage 2: It Helps Us Scale Our Business

‘Scaling’ is a word we often hear, but what does it really mean for us? Simply put, it's about growing our business in a sustainable way, perhaps from a handful of clients to a consistent, full practice.

Trying to scale without a niche is like trying to boil the ocean. It's inefficient and exhausting for us. A niche gives us a clear starting point. We can learn to dominate a small, specific market first and then expand from that solid foundation.

Let's consider Facebook which started exclusively for Harvard students. By delivering to that one campus, it proved its model and then scaled to become a global social media platform.

A question for us to ponder when establishing our niche:

What small, specific community or group can I target first as I build my successful practice?

Advantage 3: It Helps Us Stand Out

It's common for us to hear that coaching is a 'saturated' market. But we've found this often isn't a problem of too many coaches, but of too many coaches who look and sound the same. Without a niche, we risk blending into the crowd.

A clear niche is our spotlight. It tells our potential clients:

"We specialise in this. We work with people like you to solve this specific problem, and we get results."

This immediately sets us apart from coaches who are still trying to be everything to everyone. While others struggle to be heard, we are speaking directly to the people who need us most.

2.3 Challenges of Defining a Niche

Whilst defining a niche has its advantages, it does not come without its challenges. Let's explore the common obstacles we can face as a coach when defining our niche.

Challenge 1: Defining a Niche is Difficult

Let's be honest with each other: finding the right niche is difficult. It takes us time, practice, and dedicated effort. This isn't a simple task; it requires us to consider our strengths and passions, then mix them with smart strategy and hard work.

Because it demands so much of us, it can be tempting to give up and revert to coaching anyone who will become a client. But we must remember: while finding the right niche is a challenge, the payoff for our business and impact is worth the struggle. The challenge here is to choose long-term sustainable success over short-term wins.

Challenge 2: The Risk of Damaging Our Brand

If we get our niche wrong, we risk damaging the brand and reputation we've worked so hard to build. Imagine we invest our time, money, and effort into branding ourselves as a 'Confidence Coach,' only to realise our true passion lies in relationship coaching.

A shift like this requires a full rebrand, which means spending more of our time, effort, and money. That's why it's so important for us to define the right niche before we deeply embed it into our brand identity. We must be mindful of our long-term personal brand from the very start.

There is a famous saying that encourages us to ‘fail fast and fail often’, sometimes the perfect niche is shaped by our mistakes, the challenge is to minimise the risk and damage of those mistakes publicly.

Challenge 3: The Trap of a Misaligned Niche

As new coaches, we can sometimes become so obsessed with finding any niche, that we steer away from what we are naturally good at. We might chase a market that seems trendy or untapped, even if it doesn't truly resonate with us.

This can lead us into the trap of coaching clients solely for income, rather than clients we want to coach from a place of alignment. While this might provide cash flow in the short term, being misaligned with our core values will likely cause us burnout and dissatisfaction down the line. When we define our niche, we must always anchor it in our authenticity. This is how we provide the most value and build a practice that fulfils us. The challenge here is to avoid the industry ‘buzzwords’ and find our own natural alignment with the service we offer.

2.4 How to Establish a Niche

As we've discussed, defining the right niche for us can be a complex process. It's a decision that shapes our business, our brand, and our daily work life. Therefore, before we dive into the specific methods for establishing our niche, there is one important principle we can follow:

Allow our niche to naturally unfold by practicing, practicing, and practicing.

Think of this as our discovery phase. Instead of putting immense pressure on ourselves to have it all figured out immediately, we grant ourselves permission to explore. This means we should actively seek to coach many different types of clients with a wide array of challenges. We should experiment with different coaching tools, exercises, and conversational styles. We must pay close attention to what energises us during a session and what leaves us feeling drained. Asking two key questions:

- What topics make us lean in with genuine curiosity?
- Which client breakthroughs feel the most rewarding?

It is through this repeated practice; we begin to feel our way into the coaching style and client focus that feels right for us. Our niche must not be forced, it must reveal itself through action. Once we have that felt sense of alignment, then we can put our focus on formally defining the niche and building a strategic marketing plan around it.

When we're ready to get more intentional, we can use two approaches to help us define our niche. Finding the sweet spot where these two approaches overlap is often the moment we know we've found a niche that is both sustainable and fulfilling.

2.5 Who Do I Enjoy Coaching?

The first path to our niche is through the people we serve. This is about identifying the types of clients we genuinely connect with and enjoy spending our energy on. Some reflective questions for us to consider:

- Do we feel energised and effective working with couples to help them rebuild trust and communication?

- Does the challenge of coaching a corporate leader to enhance their team's performance light us up?
- Do we feel a deep sense of purpose when serving individuals who struggle with self-esteem and limiting beliefs?

By asking these questions, we are starting to paint a picture of our ideal client and the core problem we are most equipped and passionate about helping them resolve. This 'who' is the foundation of our market.

2.6 What Coaching Style Best Suits Me?

The second path focuses inward on our strengths and personality. This is about defining the way we coach and our unique style. Are we naturally goal-oriented, strong accountability partner who loves creating action plans and celebrating milestones? Is the emergent, fluid style of coaching (where we follow the client's energy in the present moment, see our ***Coaching Presence*** book) more aligned with who we are?

Alternatively, do we want to integrate specific psychological tools, like CBT or Positive Psychology, into our practice, making our approach more structured and methodology-driven?

Ultimately, with this approach, we are defining the type of coach we want to become. It's about aligning our work with our natural talents and inclinations.

If we are struggling to find the 'who' and the 'how', we can work through this useful reflective self-assessment:

- What are my top three strengths as a coach?
- What topics or clients energise me?
- What problems can I help people solve?

- What personal experiences have shaped my coaching style?
- What world problems would I like to tackle?
- Why did I choose to become a coach?

The magic happens when we explore the intersection of these two approaches. We must understand which coaching styles are most effective for which types of clients.

For example, if our natural style is very goal-oriented and directive, we might not be the best fit for a client healing from trauma, who likely needs a coach skilled in holding space and deep, non-judgmental listening.

Similarly, a purely emergent, non-directive approach might feel frustrating for a corporate manager who has come to us with a specific, urgent business goal and needs a structured plan.

When we find a client profile that we love serving and a coaching style that we love using to serve them, we know we are closing in on an authentic niche.

2.7 Defining Our Niche Statement

Once we have a clear understanding of our niche, it's important we translate it into a simple, powerful statement. This statement becomes the headline of all our marketing. A common and effective approach is to sit down and reflect on the following four questions, with the aim of publishing a clear description of what we do.

1. **The Action:** What is the core action we take? Do we empower, guide, support, challenge, or inspire our clients?

2. **The Audience:** Who is it we actually help? Be specific. Is it anxious professionals, new managers, women over 40, struggling couples?
3. **The Problem:** What is the primary problem or challenge we help them overcome? (e.g. self-doubt, communication breakdown, lack of direction, chronic stress).
4. **The Transformation:** What does solving this problem enable them to do or become? (e.g. land their dream job, rebuild intimacy, lead with confidence, live a peaceful life).

We can then weave the answers into a structured statement using this format:

"I [Action] [Audience] to [Solve Problem], enabling them to [Achieve Transformation]."

Let's look at an example:

- **Action:** Empower
- **Audience:** those suffering with anxiety
- **Solve Problem:** to reframe the way they think
- **Achieve Transformation:** overcome their day-to-day fears and live the life they choose to live.

Niche Statement:

"I empower those suffering with anxiety to reframe the way they think, enabling them to overcome their day-to-day fears and live the life they choose to live."

We should take reflective time with this exercise. It's common to rewrite our statement several times, playing with the wording until it feels powerful and true. Once we have it, we must memorise it.

This statement is a powerful conversation starter at networking events, with family, and on social media. Displaying this clear, confident statement on our professional profiles is a simple yet highly effective marketing strategy that immediately tells the world who we are here to serve.

2.8 Theory into Practice

Throughout this chapter, we have explored the importance of a coaching niche and how we can begin to find our own.

To integrate these concepts into your own practice, take a moment to consider the question below:

✍ Reflecting on the two approaches to a niche, which one feels more natural for you to define right now, and what is one small step you could take this week to explore it further?

Chapter 3

Goal Setting: SMARTER & HIKE

‘Not every goal we set is meant to be achieved.’

Bruce Lee

How can I help my clients break big dreams down into steps that don't feel overwhelming? What does a 'well-defined' goal even look like? Is there a simple checklist or structure I can use to make sure a goal is solid? As Transformational Coaches, a central part of our role is to guide our clients toward achieving their most meaningful goals. We help them bridge the gap between where they are and where they want to be.

However, a goal without a clear structure is just a wish. For a goal to move from an idea to a tangible result, it needs to be built on a solid foundation. This is where the power of a well-defined framework comes in. Without it, our clients can sometimes stretch their targets so far that they become unattainable, leading to frustration and a loss of momentum. They might aim for something beyond their current resources or competency, setting themselves up for disappointment.

Our job is to help them set goals that are not only inspiring but also realistic and achievable, goals that empower rather than discourage. In this chapter, we will explore two practical models that will equip us to do just that and how these frameworks will provide us with a structure to help our clients define their ambitions clearly.

3.1 Coaching with Goals

Goals are the powerful milestones that mark our path toward achieving a larger vision. They give us direction, motivation, and a way to track our progress. However, as Transformational Coaches, one of our most important principles is this: we never advise, introduce, or offer new goals to our clients.

Our role is not to change their destination but to help them map the journey. We do this by expertly helping them break their goal down into achievable actions and by challenging them to check how realistic and achievable the goal truly is for them.

Let's bring this to life with an example. Imagine a client whose primary goal is to run a marathon. The challenge is, they've done very little training in the past six months. They have now set a goal to run the next available marathon, which is in just two weeks. Their plan is to run for two hours every single day until the event.

Many of us will immediately recognise this as a potentially unrealistic and even risky goal. Our instinct might be to jump into advice mode and tell them, "This isn't achievable," or "You should try a different approach." But as coaches, we must resist that instinct. Our power lies not in giving advice, but in asking powerful questions that guide the client to their own realisation.

In this scenario, we could use questions like:

- **"On a scale of 1 to 10, how prepared do you feel with this plan, and what makes you say that?"**
- **"What was your thought process behind choosing this specific marathon with its two-week timeframe?"**

- **"When you look at your plan to run two hours every day, what potential challenges or risks do you foresee?"**
- **"How does your body feel when you consider this intense training schedule after a long break?"**
- **"What other options or alternative paths could also get you to your ultimate goal of running a marathon?"**

By using questions like these, we do not impose our own judgment. Instead, we create a space for the client to critically evaluate their own plan. We help them pull out the information they already have, allowing them to see the gaps between their goal, their current reality, and their plan.

If, through this conversation, the client themselves realise a change is needed, then we can partner with them to amend their goal or draft a new, more sustainable plan of action. The ultimate aim here is to guide our clients toward setting goals that are not just inspiring, but are also SMARTER, goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound, Exciting and Rewarding, setting them up for success rather than frustration.

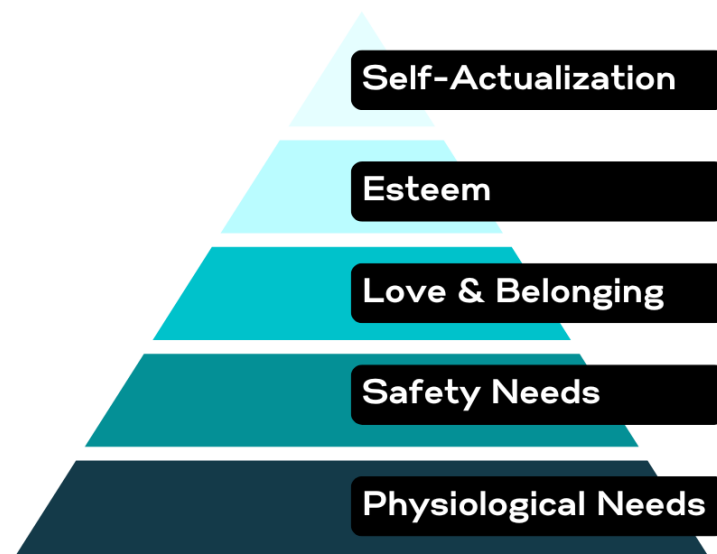
3.2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is one of the most well-known theories of human motivation. In essence, Maslow proposed that we are driven by a series of needs, ranging from basic survival to complex psychological growth. His core idea is that we are generally motivated to fulfil our basic needs before we can fully focus on the more advanced ones.

According to Maslow, our ultimate motivation is a state he called self-actualisation, the desire to become the most complete and fulfilled version of ourselves. However, to reach for that potential, we must first have our foundational needs met, such as those for food, safety, love, and esteem. Our behaviour, therefore, is aligned with which of these needs we are striving to satisfy at any given time.

Maslow organised these needs into a five-level pyramid, which you can see in Figure 1. Let's walk through each level together, from the foundation to the peak.

Figure 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



1. Physiological Needs

This is our base level, the biological requirements we need for simple survival. These include air, water, food, shelter, sleep, and clothing. Maslow also included sex in this category, viewing it as

a fundamental, instinctual drive for procreation. Until these needs are reasonably satisfied, it's difficult for us to focus our energy anywhere else.

2. Security and Safety Needs

As we move to the second level, our motivation shifts toward creating stability and control in our lives. This includes a desire for personal safety, financial security, good health, and a safe living environment. Together, the Physiological and Safety levels form what are known as our 'Basic Needs.'

3. Love and Belonging (Social Needs)

Once our basic needs are met, we are motivated by a deep desire for human connection and a sense of belonging. This level is about relationships, romantic partnerships, deep friendships, family ties, and feeling part of a community or social group. Here, we need to feel valued, loved, and accepted by others.

4. Esteem Needs

The fourth level introduces more complex psychological desires. We develop a need for appreciation, respect, and recognition. This includes both the esteem we get from others (status, recognition) and the self-esteem we build through our own accomplishments, competence, and sense of value. Levels 3 and 4 together are often referred to as our 'Psychological Needs.'

5. Self-Actualisation Needs

At the very peak of the pyramid is self-actualisation. This is the drive to realise our full potential, pursue personal growth, and become everything we are capable of being. At this stage, we are often motivated by creativity, spirituality, and a desire to contribute to the world, moving beyond the opinions of others to follow our own inner compass.

3.3 How to Prepare for Our Coaching Sessions

Maslow's theory gave us a powerful new lens for understanding human potential, shifting the focus from pathology to health. We can use this same lens in our coaching practice to gain a deeper understanding of our clients.

As coaches, this model helps us guide our clients to an awareness of their current unmet needs. We can help them see how their goals are often directly tied to satisfying a specific level of the hierarchy. For instance, a goal to 'earn a promotion' might link to Esteem needs, while a goal to 'make new friends' connects to Love and Belonging. By understanding this, we can help them create more meaningful and motivating goals, essentially guiding them up the hierarchy toward self-actualisation.

It is important for us to note, however, that the theory is not a strict rulebook. Modern criticism points out that these needs are not always linear. Many people are motivated by self-actualisation and personal growth even while their basic needs are unstable. We see artists creating in poverty, or spiritual seekers prioritising enlightenment over material comfort.

Therefore, we should use Maslow's hierarchy not as a rigid model, but as a flexible awareness tool. It provides a framework for starting conversations about what truly motivates our clients and where their energy might be blocked, before we start setting goals.

3.4 Setting SMARTER Goals

For our clients to successfully achieve their goals, those goals need to be clear and well-structured. This is where the SMARTER model becomes a useful tool for our coaching toolkit. Widely used in business and personal development, the original SMART model, gives us a structured framework to help our clients transform vague ideas into actionable, attainable targets. At Coaching Minds, we extended the model to include two important ingredients; excitement and reward. What motivates us to achieve are the emotions behind the goal itself. We are more likely to achieve goals when they are both exciting and rewarding.

SMARTER is an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound, Exciting and Rewarding. Let's explore what each of these means for us in practice.

S is for SPECIFIC

A goal that is vague is hard to pursue. When we make a goal specific, we give it a clear shape and direction. We help our clients define the who, what, where, why, and when of their goal. Questions we can ask to find the specifics:

- Who needs to be involved for you to achieve this?
- What exactly do you want to accomplish?

- Where will this happen? (Is there a specific location or context?)
- Why is this goal important to you? (What is the deeper value?)
- When do you want to do this? (What is your ideal timeline?)

Example:

Vague Goal:

"I want to get fit."

Specific Goal:

"I will work out four days a week at my local gym, doing two days of cardio and two days of strength training, to improve my energy and feel healthier."

This goal is much more detailed containing both acting and direction.

A SMARTER goal is Specific.

M is for MEASURABLE

If a goal can't be measured, it's impossible to know when it's been achieved. A measurable goal provides clear criteria for tracking progress and recognising success.

Questions we can ask to find the measure:

- How much or how many?
- What is a key indicator that you're making progress?
- How will you track your progress? (e.g. a journal, an app?)
- How will you know when you have reached your goal?

Example (building on the previous goal):

"I will work out four days a week... and I will aim to lose five pounds in a month."

This goal has clear measures; frequency and weight loss. A SMARTER goal is Measurable.

A is for ACHIEVABLE

An achievable goal is one that is challenging yet possible. This is where we explore the path to the goal with our client, helping them identify if they have the necessary resources, skills, and a clear plan.

Questions we can ask to check achievability:

- Do you have the skills and resources you need to achieve this?
- If not, how can you get them?
- What does a realistic path to this goal look like?
- Has anyone with a similar starting point achieved this before?

Example (building on the previous goal):

Unachievable Goal:

"I will work out for two hours every single day to lose 16 pounds."

For someone new to exercise, this intense routine is unsustainable and dramatically increases the risk of injury or burnout. It doesn't create a gradual, adaptable plan that fits into

a busy life, making failure highly likely. A more achievable goal could look something like:

"I will work out four days a week, starting with 30-minute sessions and gradually increasing to 45 minutes over the first month."

This plan starts at a manageable level, allows the body to adapt, and builds the exercise habit sustainably. It's a challenging yet realistic starting point that sets the client up for long-term success. By exploring this, we can help our client build confidence in their plan or adjust the goal to make it more within reach.

A SMARTER goal is Achievable.

R is for REALISTIC (or Relevant)

While 'Achievable' asks "Can it be done?", 'Realistic' asks "Is this the right goal for you, right now?" A realistic goal must align with the client's current life, priorities, and level of commitment.

Questions we can ask to check realism:

- Does this goal truly feel realistic to you?
- Is this the right time for this goal?
- How does this fit with your other priorities and responsibilities?
- On a scale of 1-10, how committed are you to doing what it takes?

This helps us ensure the goal is motivating and aligned, not a source of future frustration.

Example (building on the previous goal):

Unrealistic Goal:

"I want to lose 30 pounds in the next two months to get ready for a wedding."

We know that timeframe and target weight often require extreme, unsustainable measures like severe calorie restriction and excessive exercise. This goal doesn't account for healthy weight loss guidelines, the client's busy work schedule, or their history of not enjoying intense workouts. The goal is driven by an external event (the wedding) and sets them up for potential failure and negative self-image. A more realistic goal might look something like:

"I want to lose 16 pounds over the next four months by building sustainable habits. I will do this by cooking healthy meals at home four nights a week and going for a 30-minute walk during my lunch break three days a week."

This goal is gradual and focuses on building sustainable habits rather than a quick fix. It considers the client's schedule (lunch breaks, evenings) and incorporates activities they are more likely to stick with. The goal is about personal health and long-term change, making it a more manageable part of their life.

A SMARTER goal is Realistic.

T is for TIME-BOUND

Every goal needs a deadline. A time-bound goal creates a healthy sense of urgency and helps our clients prioritise their actions. It turns 'someday' into 'by this date.'

Questions we can ask to set the time frame:

- What is your deadline for this goal?
- When will you start?
- Are there any key milestones along the way?

Example:

"By the 31st of December, I will work out four days a week at my local gym to feel healthier. I will track my weight loss with a goal of losing one pound per week, aiming to have lost at least 16 pounds by my final deadline."

Making a goal time-bound creates the necessary pressure needed for us to push forward.

A SMARTER goal is Time-bound.

E is for EXCITING

A goal must be exciting to fuel motivation over the long term. If a goal feels like a chore, it's hard to maintain the energy needed to achieve it. An exciting goal taps into our client's positive emotions and vision for a better future.

Questions we can ask to uncover the excitement:

- On a scale of 1 to 10, how excited are you about this goal?
- What is the most exciting thing about achieving this?
- How will you feel when you cross the finish line?
- If this goal were a gift to yourself, what would the unwrapping feel like?

Example (building on the previous goal):

"I will work out four days a week... to lose 16 pounds by the 31st of December. I am genuinely excited to wake up with more energy, to feel strong and proud when I look in the mirror, and to feel confident and vibrant at my best friend's wedding this summer."

This example builds energy and emotion into the goal to fuel motivation.

A SMARTER goal is Exciting.

R is for REWARDING

A rewarding goal ensures that the outcome delivers meaningful value to the client's life. It moves beyond the superficial target to connect with a deeper sense of fulfilment. The journey itself should also include small rewards to maintain momentum.

Questions we can ask to connect to the reward:

- What is the deeper value this goal brings to your life?
- How will achieving this reward you beyond the obvious result?
- What are the smaller milestones, and how will you celebrate them?
- How does this goal honour what is truly important to you?

Example (final, comprehensive goal):

"By December 31st, I will work out four days a week at my local gym, aiming to lose 16 pounds to feel healthier. I am so excited to wake up with more energy and feel strong and confident. The ultimate reward will be a profound sense of self-care and the vitality to keep up with my kids. To celebrate my journey, I will treat myself to a massage after

every 4 pounds I lose, and when I hit my goal, I will buy a new outfit that makes me feel fantastic.”

This goal brings reward into the frame if achieved which helps create more positive emotions that will help built momentum and develop consistency.

By guiding our clients through each letter of the SMARTER acronym, we empower them to build goals that are not just inspiring, but truly built for success.

3.5 Using the SMARTER Model

We can use the SMARTER model as a foundational tool whenever a client shares a goal with us. It provides a structured conversation that brings clarity to what they truly want to achieve and how they can get there.

However, this process is about more than just goal-setting, it's central to building a successful and trusted coaching relationship. Our client's progress is a direct reflection of the partnership we build together. When they succeed, we succeed. Therefore, working through the SMARTER model is not just a technique; it's a key part of how we ensure mutual success and deliver tangible value.

Let's consider a scenario. A client is contracted with us for a three-month period. Their stated goal is ambitious but, upon exploration, turns out to be unrealistic within their timeframe and resources. If we, as their coach, fail to spot this and don't guide them to define a SMARTER goal, we are both set up for a difficult journey. When the client ultimately does not achieve their overly ambitious target, it's natural for them to feel their investment was wasted, and they may apportion blame to our coaching. They

came to us for results, and from their perspective, they have failed.

This is why the SMARTER model is a key tool for our toolkit. It is our professional responsibility to help clients set goals that are challenging yet within the realm of reality. By using this model consistently, we do more than just clarify a target, we co-create a realistic and motivating way forward. This builds client confidence in the process and in our guidance, protecting the coaching relationship and establishing us as a credible, results-oriented partner. It transforms a vague desire into a shared plan for victory, ensuring that when our client crosses the finish line, it is a success we celebrate together.

3.6 Taking Our Clients for a HIKE

At Coaching Minds, we have also developed the HIKE tool to help us explore our clients' goals in further detail, with the ultimate aim of co-creating an actionable plan. Often, goals are set without deep reflection on the why, the how, or the what we already have. The HIKE model ensures we build a solid foundation before our client ever takes the first step on their journey.

As coaches, we guide our clients through each of these four areas, helping them understand their goal from every angle and turning a distant vision into a clear, manageable way forward.

Figure 2: The HIKE Model



H is for HOW: How is the client going to achieve the goal?

In this first stage, we map the terrain. We explore all the possible routes our client could take to reach their destination, helping them identify the best path and anticipate any challenges.

Questions we can ask to map the path:

- What are all the different ways you could reach this goal?
- What obstacles do you foresee, and how might you navigate them?
- Which route feels most aligned with your strengths and values?
- What does the first step on this path look like?

This first step is about studying the map with our client before they set off on their HIKE. Are they clear on the route to get to where they are going?

I is for INCENTIVES: What is driving the client to achieve the goal?

Here, we uncover the fuel for the journey. We dig deep into the client's 'why', the motivations, values, and emotional rewards that will keep them moving forward when the path gets steep.

Questions we can ask to uncover the drive:

- Why is this goal important to you now?
- What will achieving this goal allow you to do, be, or feel?
- How will your life be different once you've reached the summit?
- What values are you honouring by pursuing this?

This second step is temperature checking our client's 'fitness' to take the HIKE. Do they possess the energy to push to the top?

K is for KNOWLEDGE: What does the client already have?

This stage is an inventory of our client's current backpack. We identify the existing knowledge, skills, resources, and support network they already possess that will assist them on their hike.

Questions we can ask to take inventory:

- What skills and knowledge do you already have that will help?
- Who is in your support network that you can rely on?
- What tools or resources are already at your disposal?
- What past successes can you draw confidence from?

This third stage is all about preparing our client to take the HIKE. What do they currently have that they can take on their journey?

E is for ESSENTIALS: What does the client need to complete the goal?

Finally, we identify any essential gear that's missing. This is where we determine the crucial resources, actions, or support the client must acquire to ensure a successful and safe journey to their goal.

Questions we can ask to identify the essentials:

- What is the most critical thing you need to obtain or do?
- What additional knowledge or skills are non-negotiable?
- Who must be involved for you to succeed?
- What are the absolute priority tasks?

At this final stage we are helping our client pack and getting ready for them to set off on their HIKE. If anything is missing, we guide them to an understanding of where they might be able to find what they need.

3.7 Applying HIKE in Our Sessions

After walking through all four stages, we review the map we've created together with our client. We look for gaps, any area that feels underdeveloped, and ask follow-up questions to ensure the plan is complete.

If the 'How' is empty, we explore:

"If the usual path is blocked, what's a creative alternative?"

If the 'Incentives' are weak, we challenge:

"What would make this goal feel unmissable for you?"

If the 'Knowledge' is lacking, we set a strategy:

"Where's the best place for you to gain that skill or information?"

If the 'Essentials' are unclear, we clarify:

"If you could only do one thing this week, what would have the biggest impact?"

Once our client is confident with the plan, we translate it into a clear action plan. This can be as simple as a bulleted list or a more formal template. At Coaching Minds, we use a specific framework for this called the PACK tool, which we will explore next.

3.8 The PACK Tool

Once we've used the HIKE model to map out our client's goal, the next step is to help them get ready for the journey. This is where the PACK tool can come in. It's a simple tool we use to help our clients literally 'pack' everything they need to achieve their goal, turning our exploratory conversation into an action plan.

PACK is an acronym that stands for Priorities, Actions, Checklist, and Knowledge Bank. Let's explore how we use each of these components to build a plan that our client can confidently execute.

Figure 3: The PACK Tool

The diagram illustrates the PACK Tool layout. It consists of four main sections:

- PRIORITIES:** A vertical list of five numbered boxes (1-5) for entering priority items.
- ACTIONS:** Three large, empty rectangular boxes stacked vertically for detailing specific actions.
- CHECK LIST:** Five horizontal lines, each followed by a small square checkbox, for tracking progress.
- KNOWLEDGE BANK:** A single large, rounded rectangular box for recording relevant information or resources.

P is for PRIORITIES

This is where we help our client identify their priorities. What are their most important milestones or tasks for the goal? We capture these in the ‘Priorities’ box. For example:

- Priority 1: Install healthy habits.
- Priority 2: Build confidence and self-esteem.
- Priority 3: Increase my energy.

A is for ACTIONS

Here, we break the journey down into manageable steps. We translate the broader goal into specific, concrete actions the

client will take. These are the tangible tasks that will move them from where they are now to where they want to be.

We capture a list of specific, actionable tasks. For example:

- Research local gyms.
- Schedule a session with a nutritionist.
- Buy healthy foods for the week.

C is for CHECKLIST

This component brings accountability and a sense of progress. We work with the client to create a visual tracker for their actions. This allows them to check off completed tasks, providing a psychological boost and a clear view of how far they've come. We capture a simple, visual way to track progress. For example:

- Complete 4 workouts this week.
- Drink 8 glasses of water each day.
- Prepare healthy lunches 4/5 times this week.

K is for KNOWLEDGE BANK

The journey toward a goal is a learning process. The Knowledge Bank is a dedicated space to capture key insights, resources, "aha!" moments, and newly acquired skills. This becomes a valuable personal space that the client can refer back to, reinforcing their growth and building long-term confidence. Here, we capture links to helpful articles, notes from books, quotes, personal reflections, goals achieved, and new skills learned.

The main purpose of using a tool like PACK is to give our clients a clear and structured system to track their progress. It transforms a daunting goal into a series of manageable tasks


and provides a living document of their journey and growth that they can review regularly.

While the PACK tool remains, a tool designed by Coaching Minds, the principle is universal. There are many other excellent tools available, from digital productivity apps like Trello or Notion to physical project planners. The key for us as coaches is to find a simple, effective system that resonates with our client and helps them stay organised, motivated, and accountable on their path to success.

3.9 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored useful frameworks like SMARTER, HIKE, and PACK to transform our clients' goals from ideas into actionable, achievable plans.

To integrate these concepts into your own coaching practice, take a moment to consider the question below:

 Reflecting on the HIKE and PACK models, which part of the process do you feel will most powerfully unlock a client's commitment to their goal, and why?

Chapter 4

Visions & Missions

'If you are working on something exciting that you really care about, you don't have to be pushed. The vision pulls you.'

Steve Jobs

What's the real, practical difference between a goal and a vision? How do I guide a client who's never thought about their vision before? How do we break it down into a mission or a plan without losing the inspiration and magic? As Transformational Coaches, one of our most powerful roles is to guide our clients in not just setting goals, but in defining and living a vision for their lives. We all have dreams and a desire to live our best lives, yet so many of us struggle with a lack of clear direction or the feeling that our huge ideas are out of reach.

This is where our work as a coach becomes transformative. A goal tells us what to do, but a vision shows us why we are doing it. In this chapter, we will move beyond goal-setting and explore how to work with the concepts of vision and mission. We will discover practical tools to help our clients articulate a vision that excites them and define a personal mission that grounds their actions in purpose. Together, we will learn how to use these frameworks to help transform dreams into a lived reality.

4.1 Vision v Mission

Before we can guide our clients, it's crucial for us to have a clear understanding of the difference between a vision and a mission. While often used interchangeably, they serve two distinct purposes. Confusing them can create a lack of direction for us and confusion for the clients we aim to serve.

A Vision is Our Compass

A vision is our internal compass. It provides our true north, the ultimate direction and destination for our journey. A well-defined vision creates a powerful internal pull, a source of inspiration that makes us want to move forward. We are no longer relying on external motivation; we are drawn by the magnetic force of a future we deeply desire to create.

Think of a vision as the art of visualisation. It is the process of designing a future reality in our minds, with such clarity and emotion that we can almost hold it in our hands. When we work towards a vision, we are actively building a new reality for ourselves.

A Mission is Our Map

The vision is the compass pointing to the destination, the mission is the map that outlines the key routes and landmarks to get there. A mission is built from passion with a specific aim to solve a problem or make a tangible impact. It defines the core work we do and the primary results we are committed to achieving.

Missions are the ambitious, impactful goals we set for ourselves. When we are on a mission, our work has a direct and positive effect on the lives of others. It's the tangible expression of our vision in the world.

Let's make this practical with our own example from Coaching Minds.

Our Vision (The Compass):

“We ignite opportunity by changing the world through coaching.”

This is our directional north star. It's aspirational and open to interpretation. We visualise a more positive world where we provide continuous opportunities that improve lives. We see the success of our coaches and the global impact we make.

Our Mission (The Map):

“To make coaching affordable and accessible across the globe.”

This is the actionable path we walk. It defines the specific impact we want to make. We identified a problem (expensive, and manipulative coaching) and built our mission to solve it. This is the work we do every day to move toward our vision.

As Transformational Coaches, it is essential that we first do this work for ourselves. By defining our own personal vision and mission, we gain the clarity, conviction, and practical experience needed to genuinely and effectively help our clients define theirs.

4.2 Starting with Why

When we begin the work of defining our vision and mission, the most powerful starting point is always our 'Why'. This foundational question cuts to the core of our purpose:

- Why do I have this deep desire?
- Why do I feel compelled to make it a reality?

Once we have clarity on our own 'Why,' the next important question becomes:

- How do I make this 'Why' clear and compelling to the people I want to serve?

This principle of 'Starting with Why' was powerfully popularised by author and thought leader Simon Sinek. In his seminal book, *Start with Why*, he introduces a concept called The Golden Circle. At the very centre of this circle lies our 'Why', our purpose, cause, or belief. The 'How' and the 'What' radiate outward from this core.

Sinek's research shows that the most inspiring and successful leaders and organisations (from Apple to Martin Luther King Jr.) all think, act, and communicate from the inside out, starting with Why. The underlying principle:

"People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it."

Simon Sinek

For us as coaches, this is important. A vision with a strong, authentic 'Why' at its core acts as a magnet. It ensures we attract the right clients, those who connect with our purpose and believe what we believe. It's also a useful 'temperature check' for our

own business, ensuring we are still aligned with and serving our deepest purpose.

To dive deeper, Simon Sinek and his team have provided a practical guide in the book *Find Your Why*. We can use both *Start with Why* and *Find Your Why* as essential tools in our coaching business. The exercises within are designed to be facilitated with individuals and groups, providing us with a ready-made framework to guide our clients toward discovering their own powerful purpose.

4.3 Developing 'Big-Picture' Thinking

Defining a powerful vision is not an easy task. It requires us to step back from the day-to-day details and develop the ability to visualise future possibilities, spot underlying problems, and design meaningful solutions. This skill is known as 'Big Picture Thinking', the ability to see the entire forest, not just the trees.

As coaches, adopting this perspective is important. It allows us to guide the strategic growth of our own business and, more importantly, to help our clients see the larger context and deeper purpose behind their goals. A compelling vision is, by its very nature, a 'big picture.'

Here are five core elements we can focus on to develop and strengthen this essential skill:

1. Cultivate Curiosity

Curiosity is the engine of big picture thinking. It drives us to look beyond the obvious and question the status quo. As impactful coaches, we must continually ask "what if?" and "why?". We

should actively seek new knowledge, explore different perspectives, and remain genuinely open to ideas and experiences that challenge our current worldview.

2. Practice Reflective Thinking

Big picture insights rarely come in the heat of the moment. We must carve out dedicated time to reflect on our past experiences and decisions. By analysing outcomes and identifying patterns, we gain invaluable insights into the long-term consequences of our actions. We must regularly ask ourselves:

How do today's choices align with our vision for the future?

3. Seek Diverse Perspectives

We cannot see the whole picture from a single point of view. It is essential for us to surround ourselves with people from diverse backgrounds, industries, and mindsets. Intentionally seeking out differing opinions helps us challenge our own assumptions, break out of echo chambers, and dramatically broaden our understanding of complex situations.

4. Develop a Long-Term Vision

This element is the anchor of big picture thinking. We must actively create and nurture a clear, long-term vision for our lives and our coaching practice. This vision acts as our compass, providing a consistent reference point for all our decisions and actions. A vision is not static; we must revisit and refine it regularly to ensure it remains aligned with our growth.

5. Embrace Ambiguity and Complexity

The big picture is often messy and multi-layered. To think this way, we must become comfortable with uncertainty and resist the urge to force simple, black-and-white solutions onto complex, grey-area problems. This means holding multiple perspectives at once and accepting that there is rarely one single 'right' answer, only the most aligned path forward.

Ultimately, developing big picture thinking is a continuous practice of learning, unlearning, and expanding our mindset. It is a journey of shifting our focus from the immediate task to the ultimate purpose, empowering us to build a future that is both meaningful and impactful.

4.4 Helping Clients EVOLVE a Vision

Clients often come to us with a specific goal or a vague desire, but they lack a clear vision of what achieving it will truly mean for their lives. We've already explored how to work with goals; now, we will explore how to help our clients EVOLVE those goals into a motivating vision.

The EVOLVE Model is a Coaching Minds tool designed specifically for this transformation. It guides us through a process that reveals the deeper purpose and picture behind a client's initial goal, turning a target into a big picture to begin to build.

Let's walk through each element of the EVOLVE model together.

E is for EXPECTATIONS

The first step is to explore what the client expects to gain from their goal. We move beyond the surface-level outcome to understand the broader impact and the ripple effects of their success.

Questions we can ask:

- Who else will be impacted when you achieve this, and how?
- What is the most important reward you hope to gain?
- How will achieving this goal change how you see yourself?
- What door does this goal open? What will you do next?

Here we are helping the client reflect on the wider impact they want their goals to have.

V is for VALUES

A goal without a values-alignment is just a task. A vision, however, is rooted in what matters most to the client. We must assess how the goal connects to their core values, as misalignment is a primary reason for giving-up.

Questions we can ask:

- Which of your core values does this goal honour?
- If you achieve this, what value are you bringing to life?
- How can we reframe this goal to better reflect your values?

Our role here is to create meaningful alignment between the clients' goals and their core values.

O is for OPTIONS

A vision focuses on the what and why; the how can remain flexible. At this stage, we brainstorm all possible routes and strategies to make the vision a reality. This builds confidence and creativity, showing the client there are many paths to their destination.

Questions we can ask:

- What are all the different ways you could make this happen?
- If your usual path was blocked, what's a creative alternative?
- Which option feels most aligned and exciting to you?

Here we are helping the client find the most suitable path to begin exploring for their vision. It is not about setting a defined route, it is about setting a direction to head in.

L is for LEARNING

A true vision involves growth. Here, we uncover what the client hopes to learn, what skills they want to develop, and what resources they aim to acquire on their journey. The goal becomes a catalyst for personal transformation.

Questions we can ask:

- What do you need to learn to make this vision a reality?
- What skills will you build along the way?
- How will you be different as a person after this journey?

The purpose here is to guide clients to reflect on their personal growth and who they need to become to live their vision.

V is for VISUALISATIONS

The power of a vision lies in its clarity. At this stage, we help the client create a sensory mental picture of their success. What do they see, hear, and feel when their vision is realised? This makes the future feel tangible and real.

Questions we can ask:

- If you could fast-forward to the moment of achievement, what would you see?
- Describe a day in your life once this vision is your reality.
- How are you thinking and feeling in that visualised future?

Our role here is to facilitate and assist the client in practically applying 'big-picture' thinking and visualisation.

E is for EMOTIONS

Emotions are the fuel for a vision. At this final stage, we explore the client's current emotional connection to the goal and the powerful positive emotions they will experience upon achievement. A powerful vision should create a 'pull' of excitement and passion.

Questions we can ask:

- What is the primary emotion you feel when you think about this vision?
- On a scale of 1-10, how much passion do you feel for this?

- When you visualise your success, what is the strongest feeling that comes up?

By guiding our clients through the EVOLVE model, we help them transform a simple goal into an inspiring vision, one that is aligned with their values, fuelled by emotion, and clear enough to pull them confidently toward their future.

4.5 Pulling it All Together: 5 Steps

After guiding our client through the EVOLVE framework, we are faced with the crucial task of stitching everything together. How do we pull all this information together into a single, powerful vision statement?

While many methods exist, we will focus on a simple, five-step structure that transforms the client's insights into an authentic declaration. It is important to remind our clients (and ourselves) that this is a drafting process. A vision statement will evolve through several versions, and it should, as our own growth will naturally refine what we see for our future.

Here are five simple steps for drafting a vision from the EVOLVE framework:

Step 1: Reflect and Brainstorm

First, we create a space for creativity. We ask the client to reflect on everything that emerged from the EVOLVE conversation, their values, emotions, visualisations, and learnings. The goal is to capture key words, phrases, and ideas without any judgment or concern for structure. We encourage them to jot down whatever feels significant or we jot these down on their behalf.

Step 2: Identify Key Themes

Next, we help the client look for patterns. Together, we review their brainstormed notes and highlight recurring words or concepts. Are they consistently mentioning 'freedom,' 'community,' or 'innovation'? Their key themes provide us with some building blocks of their vision and ensure it is rooted in what matters most to them.

Step 3: Craft the Initial Draft

Now, we move from pieces to a whole. Using the key themes as a guide, we ask the client to write a first draft of their vision statement. We remind them to use active, powerful language and to aim for a statement that is both concise and inspiring. It should capture the essence of their desired future. We encourage them to write two or three different versions to explore various ways of expressing the same core idea.

Step 4: Seek External Feedback

A vision often resonates beyond ourselves. In this step, we encourage the client to share their draft with a small group of trusted individuals such as mentors, colleagues, or friends who know them well. The question for their feedback circle is not "Do you like it?" but rather: "Does this sound like me? Does it feel inspiring and authentic?" This provides invaluable perspective on how the vision is perceived.

Step 5: Refine and Finalise

Finally, we help the client integrate the feedback and refine their statement. We work with them to polish the wording, ensuring it is clear, impactful, and perfectly aligned with their purpose. The final test is a simple but important question we must ask them:

"When you read this statement aloud, does it stir something in you? Do you feel a pull towards this future?"

If the answer is a confident "yes," the vision is ready to guide them. If not, we continue to edit until it resonates with that level of authenticity.

It is our role to remind clients that a vision is a living document. It should be reviewed regularly (perhaps annually) to ensure it remains relevant. While it can evolve, it should also provide stable direction, so we guide them to make revisions thoughtfully, not frequently.

4.6 Drafting Mission Statements

While a vision statement describes the distant future, a mission statement defines the path we walk today. It captures what we are passionately committed to achieving the impactful, tangible work we do to make our vision real. Drafting a mission statement requires a more focused and action-oriented approach.

To help our clients articulate this powerful statement, we can guide them through the following 7-step process:

Step 1: Define the Core Purpose

We begin by helping the client articulate the fundamental ‘why’ behind their mission. What specific problem are they solving or working to solve with their vision? What critical need are they addressing? We work with them to move beyond a general desire and define the core purpose that fuels their daily efforts. Revisiting the work around ‘why’ discussed earlier in this chapter.

Step 2: Identify the Target Audience

A mission is meaningless without a clear beneficiary. At step 2, we guide our clients to identify exactly who they serve. Is it ‘anxious professionals,’ ‘aspiring female leaders,’ or ‘couples in conflict’? Understanding their audience's specific needs, aspirations, and challenges ensures the mission is relevant to them and it resonates.

Step 3: Outline Key Activities

Here, we translate purpose into action. We help the client identify the primary activities, services, or initiatives they will undertake to fulfil their purpose. What do they actually do? This moves the mission from an idea to a set of tangible, core functions.

Step 4: Define the Unique Value

This is where we help the client discover their distinctive edge. What makes their approach different and valuable? How do they solve the problem in a way that others do not? We work to clarify

their unique value proposition and the specific benefit they deliver to their audience.

Step 5: Craft a Concise Statement

Now, we bring together the previous steps into a single, powerful sentence. We guide the client to combine their purpose, audience, key activities, and unique value into a clear, straightforward statement. The goal is focus and impact, avoiding jargon and complexity. This step may take time, it is important both ourselves and our clients hold patience when defining the mission statement.

Step 6: Review and Refine

A great mission statement is tested. We encourage the client to share their draft with trusted colleagues, mentors, or even ideal clients. The feedback we seek is on its clarity, how it resonates, and authenticity. Does it clearly communicate what they do and for whom? We then work with them to integrate this feedback and refine the wording.

Step 7: Communicate and Integrate

A mission statement only has power when it is lived. Once finalised, we challenge the client to communicate it widely, on their website, in their bio, and in conversations. Most importantly, we encourage them to use it as a filter for decision-making, ensuring their daily actions and strategic choices are aligned with their declared mission.

It is vital to remember that a mission statement should be a compass, not an anchor. While it provides essential direction, we must remind our clients to review it periodically to ensure it continues to reflect the evolving nature of their work and the needs of those they serve.

4.7 Theory into Practice

In this chapter, we have explored the transformative power of vision and mission, and learned practical models like EVOLVE to help our clients articulate a compelling future and their purposeful path to it.

To integrate these concepts into your own coaching practice, take a moment to consider the question below:

✍ Reflecting on the distinction between a vision and a mission, which of the two do you feel your clients typically struggle with the most, and what is one step you can take to better guide them through that specific challenge?

Chapter 5

Passion & Purpose

‘There is no passion to be found playing small in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.’

Nelson Mandela

What's the first sign that a client has lost touch with their passion? When a client feels disconnected from their passion, how do we help them look for it? What if a client discovers their true passion, but it feels completely unrealistic or risky to pursue? Another role we hold as Transformational Coaches is to guide our clients back to a life filled with passion and purpose. Setbacks, routines, and responsibilities can cloud our vision, making it difficult to feel connected to what truly sets our soul on fire. We can end up feeling distant, living a life that feels functional but not fulfilling.

In this chapter we will explore practical tools we can use to help our clients manage these periods of disconnect. Together, we will learn how to help them ignite sparks of their passion, and clearly rediscover the unique purpose that makes their life meaningful.

5.1 Discovering Purpose

Purpose is the foundation of a valued life. It is the compass that guides our days and the anchor that gives our efforts meaning. Without it, we can feel adrift, walking through life without a true destination.

We believe that every one of us is born with a unique purpose. Yet, over time, this inner knowing can become obscured. The opinions of family, the expectations of society, and the pressures of our culture create layers of paint, covering the authenticity of who we are meant to be. These external influences can lead us down paths of achievement that feel hollow, distracting us from our true calling and leaving us feeling disconnected.

Therefore, rediscovering our purpose is not about adding something new, but about a process of internal discovery. It requires introspection and self-reflection to strip back our layers. This journey demands that we let go of the need for external validation and break free from the scripts written for us by others. Becoming conscious of our authentic selves.

Reconnecting with our purpose is a transformative process, both for us and for our clients. It involves delving within, quietening the noise, and uncovering the authentic calling that has always been there. By guiding our clients through this process, we empower them to reclaim their personal path and live a more fulfilling life, one that is driven by their innate purpose and guided by their truest selves.

5.2 The 4 Purpose Toolset

To help our clients peel back the layers and reconnect with their innate purpose, we have developed the 4 Purpose Toolset. This collection of four distinct tools provides varied pathways to self-discovery. They do not need to be used in a specific order; our intuition as coaches will guide us on which tool is most appropriate for a client's unique situation. Let's explore each one.

Tool 1: The Love & Despise Analysis

The love and despise analysis model is a valuable tool used to help individuals rediscover their purpose. This analysis involves reflecting on the things in life that ignite a deep sense of love and passion for our client, as well as the aspects that elicit strong feelings of despise or frustration. By exploring these contrasting emotions, clients can gain clarity about their core values, interests and aspirations.

To put the tool into practice, we can work with our client to review their past experiences. We start by drawing a line down a blank page or use a prepared version of the tool. On one side, we write the word 'Love' and on the other the word 'Despise'. We then explore the client's life, by asking questions around what they have really loved or enjoyed and what they have despised or really disliked. We explore questions around their childhood, teenage years, college/university, past work, relationships and hobbies. Once we have captured the answers for both questions, we then ask the client if they can spot any trends and follow up with any of the following questions to help them reach a deeper level of self-discovery towards their purpose:

1. What activities or experiences consistently bring you joy and fulfilment?
2. When do you feel most energised and engaged in what you are doing?
3. What are the common themes or patterns you observe in your successes or moments of accomplishment?
4. What recurring challenges or frustrations have you encountered in various areas of your life?

5. Are there any specific topics or areas of interest that you find yourself naturally gravitating towards?
6. What tasks or responsibilities do you find yourself effortlessly and enthusiastically taking on?
7. Are there any activities or environments where time seems to flyby because you are so absorbed in what you are doing?
8. What skills or talents do others often recognise or appreciate in you?
9. When do you feel the most authentic and aligned with your values?

These questions are designed to help the client reflect on their experiences, preferences and patterns in order to identify trends that can provide insights into their purpose. As an impactful coach, we must encourage open and honest exploration, allowing the client to delve deeper into their thoughts and emotions to uncover these meaningful trends.

Once the client has established trends, we further ask them, what they need to do more of, in order to live a life of purpose? We capture their answers and then finally ask:

What commitments are you willing to make, to ensure you live a life filled with purpose?

Caption the client's commitments in an action log and establish how you will hold them accountable.

Tool 2: Peer Feedback

The Peer Feedback tool is a coaching technique that helps growth and development through constructive feedback from peers. By engaging in peer feedback, clients can gain insights, identify blind spots and enhance self-awareness. The Peer Feedback tool is great to encourage the client to learn from others perspectives.

Through the process of collecting the feedback, clients can deepen their understanding of themselves, refine their skills and achieve their goals. At Coaching Minds, we have designed a *Peer Feedback Form* available in our Coach Library for our coaches.

We can introduce this tool to our client and ask them to think of five people they are close to. Ideally a mix of work colleagues, friends and family would be best but the important point is for the client to select five people.

Once they have chosen these five people, we set the client the task to seek feedback with regards to themselves by providing them with a copy of a Peer Feedback form and asking them to send it to the selected people.

In the following coaching session, review the feedback with the client holding an aim to find out their thoughts, feelings and reflection on the feedback. Ask the client, reflective questions like:

1. What does the feedback tell them about themselves?
2. What useful information can they take away?
3. What learning lies within the feedback?
4. Are there any surprises and if so, what are they?
5. What changes need to be made?

Once we have explored the above with the client, we ask them this final important question:

What does the feedback tell them about their purpose in life?

The aim here is to help the client rediscover their purpose through the eyes and perspectives of their peers.

Tool 3: Repainting Problems

Tool 3 of our 4 Purpose Toolset is what is known as Repainting Problems. This tool offers a new perspective and approach to tackling client's challenges. This technique involves guiding the client's focus from the problem itself to envisioning alternative solutions and possible opportunities.

By encouraging clients to reframe their perception of the problem, they are empowered to explore creative and innovative ways to address it. Repainting problems in coaching helps with growth and transformation which empowers clients to overcome obstacles with a new perspective and confidence.

Often, we tend to focus on problems and negatives rather than solutions and positives. With the Repainting tool, we work with clients to re-paint their problems to something more uplifting. As always, we must begin by introducing the concept.

We start by explaining the tool of Repainting Problems to our client, describing how it involves shifting their perspective from focusing solely on the problem to exploring alternative solutions and opportunities, asking the client if they wish to proceed with the exercise.

The second step to guiding a client to repainting their problems is to capture the current problem in detail. We note down the narrative, pay attention to the causes and impact it is having on the client and ask the relevant questions to get into the necessary detail.

Once we have captured the problem, we must then explore the existing perspective. We then ask the client to share their current thoughts, feelings and beliefs about the problem. Helping them identify any limiting or negative assumptions they may be having.

From here we can then challenge the client's perspective by asking questions that encourage alternative viewpoints. Encourage them to consider different angles, possibilities or perspectives that could help them see the problem in a new light.

Once we have challenged the perspective, we can begin to help the client envision alternative solutions that are more purposeful. Here we can facilitate a brainstorming session with the client to generate alternative solutions or approaches to the problem. Encourage them to think creatively and explore as many ideas as possible.

After we have brainstormed the session, we can then explore opportunities for growth. At this stage we help the client identify potential opportunities for personal growth, learning or development that the problem is providing. We encourage the client through questions to see the problem as an opportunity to acquire new skills, strengthen resilience or enhance their learning. The aim here is to help the client see how these opportunities link to their purpose.

Once the client has identified these opportunities, we can then work with them to set goals and action steps. Guide the client in setting specific goals and action steps based on the alternative solutions and opportunities identified. Ensure the goals are

SMARTER as we have discussed in chapter 3, and explore how they would like us to play a role in accountability.

Finally, we hold the client accountable to these goals and action steps and remembering to celebrate progress, milestones and learning. Acknowledging and celebrating the client's achievements along the way. Helping them recognise the valuable lessons and growth they have experienced throughout the process.

Tool 4: Repainting Problems

Our final tool within the 4 Purpose Toolset is Stories through Positive Emotions. This tool taps into the power of storytelling to facilitate growth, self-reflection and positive change. By inviting clients to share stories that evoke positive emotions, this technique unlocks insights, strengths and resources within them to change their narrative and rediscover their purpose.

The process of storytelling with a focus on positive emotions allows clients to gain a deeper understanding of their own capabilities through reminders of past achievements and good times. This tool offers a method that empowers clients to rewrite their narratives with optimism, resilience and a new perspective of possibility. As always, we begin by introducing and explaining the tool to our client.

Once explained, we have two options, we can set the client this task to complete between sessions or we can guide them through it within the session. It may also be useful to walk the client through a short meditation or mindfulness exercise before proceeding with the next steps. This can help ground the client and bring focus to the exercise.

When the client is ready to proceed, we begin by asking the client to reflect back on their lives to the moments that have been filled with positive emotions. Here are some thought-provoking questions we could ask:

1. When have you been extremely happy? Excited? At peace relaxed?
2. What moments in your life have brought the most joy?
3. When have you felt like you have accomplished something great?
4. What memories bring a smile to your face?
5. When have you felt inspired, empowered and motivated?

As the client answers and explains these stories, we capture the headlines associated with these then ask the client to choose two or three of these stories and we begin to explore these in more detail. Once we have captured these stories, we ask the client if they can spot any trends:

- What was your purpose in these stories?
- What was it that was driving these positive emotions?

Finally, we work with the answers to widen this story by attaching it to the client's life purpose. We can simply ask:

- What can you take from these positive stories and bring into today's challenges?
- How can they extend their purpose from these stories into their long-term goals or vision?

We then work with the client to caption any actions and establish a method of accountability.

All of the above tools can be powerful ways to help clients rediscover their purpose. As a Transformational Coach we must identify when these tools will be useful and use our intuition to find the best time to introduce them.

5.3 Feeling Our Passion

We've all been told, "You need to find your passion." It sounds like great advice, right? But for many of us, it starts to feel like a frustrating game of 'Where's Wally/Waldo?' We look everywhere, at other people's careers, at hobbies, at success stories, trying to spot that one perfect thing that's meant for us. And just like in the book, we often end up feeling lost in a crowded page, wondering where our red-striped sweater is hiding.

Here's the truth, this common advice is misleading. It sends us on a wild goose chase that often leads to more confusion. Passion isn't something we find out in the world; it's something we feel inside ourselves. It's not a job title or a hobby we pick up. It's an internal spark. Sometimes that spark might be a small glow, and other times it's a roaring fire. But if we're feeling a lack of passion, the answer isn't to search harder externally. The answer is to explore within.

Think of it this way: passion isn't a place we arrive at. It's the deep excitement and energy we feel when we're doing something that truly matters to us. It's that sense of "This is what I'm meant to be doing!" that comes from aligning our actions with what we genuinely care about.

When we stop searching for passion like it's a lost object and start paying attention to what makes us feel most alive and engaged, everything changes. We tap into motivation and creativity that guides us naturally toward a life that feels fulfilling and purposeful on our own terms.

5.4 The 5 Sparks of Passion

We know that passion isn't found, it's felt and the feeling is sparked when we actively engage with things that are deeply aligned with who we are. Ultimately, working hard at what we dislike creates stress, but working hard at what we love develops passion. Our role as coaches is to help our clients identify those 'love to do' activities and integrate more of them into their lives.

To make this process practical and thorough, we can use the framework of the 5 Sparks of Passion. Each 'Spark' represents a window to uncovering what truly lights a client up. For each one, we will explore five key questions designed to tease out detailed, actionable insights. Our aim is to create comprehensive picture from which passion can confidently emerge.

Spark 1: Excitement - What Lights You Up?

This first spark is all about pure joy and anticipation. It's the feeling we get when we're looking forward to something. We want to help our clients identify the people, places, and activities that generate this buzz of positive energy in their lives. This isn't about grand achievements, but about the everyday and not-so-everyday things that bring a genuine smile to their face.

The 5 questions to explore excitement:

1. What destinations or locations, whether near or far, fill you with a sense of excitement and wonder?
2. What specific tasks at work, even small ones, make you feel engaged and truly alive?

3. What hobbies or activities do you get so absorbed in that you lose all track of time?
4. Who are the people in your life who consistently brighten your day and leave you feeling energised after you speak with them?
5. What specific experiences, like trying a new food, seeing a great film, or learning something new, consistently bring you a deep sense of joy?

The answers here reveal the client's immediate sources of joy. As we listen, we should pay less attention to the specific activity and more to the common trends running through them. Is it Freedom? Connection? Creativity? This underlying value is a core component of their passion. We should also note the emotions of the client when answering these questions.

Spark 2: Ease - What Comes Naturally to You?

Passion often resides in our innate talents, the things we do so effortlessly that we might even underestimate their value. This spark focuses on identifying those natural strengths and abilities. When we operate in our zone of ease, we build confidence and experience less friction, which allows passion to flourish rather than feel forced.

The 5 questions to explore ease:

1. What tasks or responsibilities can you perform almost effortlessly, without needing to overthink the process?
2. What skills do you possess that feel so natural you sometimes forget other people find them difficult?

3. What are your core strengths that require very little mental or emotional effort to use effectively?
4. In what areas do you consistently find yourself working quicker or more efficiently than those around you?
5. What can you achieve almost on autopilot, with a sense of natural flow and minimal conscious effort?

Clients often dismiss what comes easily to them, believing that if it's easy, it can't be valuable or passionate work. Our role is to reframe these talents with the value they deserve. Passion is sustainable when it is expressed through our natural strengths, making work feel less like a struggle and more like a fulfilling expression of who we are.

Spark 3: Presence - What Absorbs You Completely?

This spark is identified by the state of 'flow', those moments when we are so fully immersed in an activity that the outside world seems to fade away. This deep absorption is a powerful indicator of passion, as it shows where a client's attention is naturally and willingly captivated without any sense of struggle.

The 5 questions to explore presence:

1. When you are engaged in an activity, what makes time seem to fly by so quickly that you're surprised when you finish?
2. What tasks or projects do you find you can concentrate on for extended periods without getting distracted?
3. What kind of work or hobbies naturally pull your full and undivided attention?

4. What activities give you a sustained, positive energy, even when they are challenging?
5. When do you most often find yourself in that 'zone' where your actions and awareness seem to merge seamlessly?

Flow state is a direct neural signature of engagement. Where a client finds flow, they find a key to their passion. Encourage them to think about the conditions of these activities as well. Are they solving problems? Creating? Organizing? The context of the flow state is as revealing as the activity itself.

Spark 4: Impact - What Difference Do You Want to Make?

Passion is frequently fuelled by a sense of purpose and a desire to contribute to something larger than ourselves. This spark explores the legacy a client wishes to build and the impact they want to have on their community, their field, or the world. Connecting personal passion to a broader purpose provides a powerful and enduring source of motivation.

The 5 questions to explore impact:

1. If you had the power, resources and influence, what one major challenge in the world would you feel compelled to solve?
2. What kind of legacy would you like to leave behind for your family, your community, or your profession?
3. In what specific ways do you feel a deep desire to serve and help others?

4. What lasting impact would you like your work and your life to have on the society around you?
5. For what contributions or qualities do you most want to be recognised and remembered by others?

This spark moves passion from a self-focused concept to a contribution-focused one. For many clients, this is the most motivating factor. The answers here often point toward the client's core values in action. When their daily work can be linked to this desired impact, even in a small way, their passion finds a deeper and more resilient source of fuel.

Spark 5: Dream - What Does Your Heart Truly Desire?

The final spark gives clients permission to dream without constraints. It's about temporarily silencing the inner critic and the practical limitations to access their deepest desires and aspirations. Often, our purest passions are hidden within the dreams we've set aside as 'unrealistic,' and bringing them back into the light can be incredibly revealing and energising.

The 5 questions to explore dreams:

1. If financial constraints were not an issue, what amazing destinations would you travel to and experiences would you seek out?
2. Visualising your perfect professional life, what would your dream job truly look and feel like?
3. If you could wave a magic wand and make three wishes for your life come true, what would they be?

4. In your quiet moments of reflection, what positive visions for your future self and your life most frequently appear?
5. If you knew you could not fail, what is the one grand achievement you would pursue with all your heart?

The purpose of this spark is not to create a rigid, unrealistic plan, but to explore suppressed desires. The 'how' is irrelevant at this stage. The goal is to identify the core yearning within the dream. Does the dream of travel reveal a passion for adventure? Does the dream job reveal a need for autonomy? Find the underlying value, as that is the true source of passion that can be integrated into their current life in new ways.

Once we have worked through all five sparks, our job is to help the client bring this information together. We guide them through a reflective discussion, asking:

Looking across all these lists, what patterns, themes, or particularly strong feelings do you notice? Where do you feel the strongest pull?

The final, crucial step is to translate this awareness into committed action. We work with the client to create a simple but powerful action plan. We ask:

Based on what we've uncovered, what is one specific, manageable commitment you can make this week to invest time in one of these sparks?

By systematically exploring these five areas, we move our clients from a vague sense of longing to a clearer understanding of where their passion lies. This structured approach ensures we don't just skim the surface, but instead provide a comprehensive and deeply effective reflection to reigniting their inner fire.

5.5 Theory into Practice

In this chapter, we have explored the nature of passion as an internal flame, not a treasure to be found. We've equipped ourselves with practical toolsets and the 5 Sparks framework to guide our clients from a place of disconnect to a rediscovery of their energy and purpose.

To integrate these concepts into your own coaching practice, take a moment to consider the question below:

✍ Reflecting on the 5 Sparks of Passion, which spark do you believe is most often overlooked by clients, and how will you proactively guide them to explore it to uncover a more complete picture of their passion?

Chapter 6

Time & Energy Management

‘You can't manage time, but you can manage your energy, your focus, and your attention.’

Robin S. Sharma

What's the real difference between managing time and managing energy? If energy is so important, why do we always focus on the clock? How can someone actually 'manage' their energy? As Transformational Coaches, we frequently work with clients who want to improve their productivity and efficiency. They often feel busy yet unfulfilled, their calendars full but their progress slow. The traditional solution has been to focus solely on time management, juggling schedules and to-do lists within a 24-hour day. But this approach often leads to burnout, as it ignores a more fundamental resource: human energy.

True, sustainable productivity isn't about doing more things in less time; it's about doing the right things with more focus and energy. This requires a paradigm shift from managing the clock to managing our energy.

In this chapter, we will explore this important distinction between time and energy and work through some models and tools to our clients maximise both.

6.1 Time v Energy

To truly maximise productivity and safeguard well-being, we must understand and master two essential resources: time and energy.

While often put together, they require distinctly different approaches:

Time Management is the skill of logistics. It focuses on allocating and prioritising tasks within the fixed 24 hours we all have each day. It involves planning, organising, and scheduling to ensure the most important tasks have a slot on the calendar. It answers the question: "When will I do this?"



Energy Management on the other hand is the science of sustainability. It focuses on the efficient use of our physical, mental, and emotional capacity, which fluctuates throughout the day. It recognises that an hour spent on a task when we are tired and distracted is far less productive than the same hour spent when we are focused and energised. It answers the question: "What is the best task for my current energy level?"

The critical insight for us and our clients is this: Time is a finite resource, but energy can be renewed and expanded. We cannot create a 25th hour, but we can consistently replenish our energy through intentional practices like strategic breaks, proper nutrition, movement, and mindfulness.

By understanding this distinction, we can help our clients develop strategies to work smarter, not just longer. They learn to align demanding cognitive tasks with their peak energy windows and schedule lower-energy activities for their natural dips. This leads to enhanced focus, sustained performance, and a greater sense of balance.

The tools and models we will explore in this chapter are designed for dual use. We can integrate them into our own coaching practice to prevent burnout and maintain our effectiveness. More importantly, we can offer them as powerful frameworks within our coaching conversations, guiding clients to experiment and discover which practices best renew their own unique energy, leading to lasting change.

Figure 4: Time v Energy

Time Management 	Energy Management 
Managing tasks around our time.	Managing tasks around our energy.
Estimating how long things will take.	How long a task takes depends on energy.
Changing our energy to fit around our schedule.	Changing our schedule to fit around our energy.
Managing an exhaustible resource.	Managing a non-exhaustible energy.

6.2 Time Management

Time management is the conscious practice of organising and allocating our most finite resource (time) to accomplish what truly matters. It's the foundation upon which productivity is built, involving deliberate decision-making and prioritisation to ensure our hours are used efficiently and productively.

Effective time management isn't about being busy; it's about being strategic. It involves techniques like goal-setting, scheduling, and minimising distractions to enhance focus. By

mastering these skills, we can reduce stress, meet deadlines with confidence, and create a more harmonious work-life balance. Ultimately, it's the skill that empowers us to achieve our objectives and fuel our personal and professional growth.

Practical Time Management Tips

Effective time management requires practice. Here is a list of actionable time management tips. We can adopt these ourselves and offer them as tools for our clients to experiment with.

1. **Plan the Week and Day Ahead:** Dedicate time each week for a high-level overview, and each evening to plan the next day. This provides clarity on priorities and creates flexibility to handle unexpected tasks without derailing your entire schedule.
2. **Batch Your Email Checking:** Every time we switch tasks, our brain can take over 20 minutes to regain deep focus. By checking emails in dedicated batches (say, once in the morning and once after lunch) we protect our cognitive energy and focus for more important work.
3. **Block 'White Space' in Your Calendar:** Intentionally schedule open blocks of time for reflection, strategic thinking, or simply to catch a breath. This prevents back-to-back meetings and ensures we have time to process and plan, not just do.
4. **Prioritise Your To-Do List:** Use a proven system like the Eisenhower Matrix (which we will explore in the next chapter) to distinguish between what is truly important and what is merely urgent. This moves us from being reactive to being strategic.

5. **Create a "To-Not-Do" List:** Identify your common distractions and time-wasters (e.g. mindlessly scrolling social media, taking on low-value requests) and consciously commit to avoiding them. This is as important as a to-do list.
6. **Find a Planning Tool That Works:** Whether it's a digital app or a paper planner, a reliable system is essential for keeping tasks, appointments, and goals organised and top-of-mind.
7. **Schedule Your Priorities:** If a task is important, it deserves a time slot in your calendar. This includes not only work tasks but also personal appointments, lunch breaks, and time to recharge. If it's not scheduled, it's often forgotten.
8. **Insist on Meeting Agendas:** Before accepting a meeting, request an agenda. This ensures the time has a clear purpose and allows you to decide if your presence is truly necessary, saving hours each week.
9. **Use Time Boxing:** Assign a specific, realistic time limit for each task. This creates healthy pressure to maintain focus, minimises perfectionism, and helps us understand how long tasks truly take.

How to Weave Time Management into Our Coaching

We must remember our golden rule as a coach, that we don't give advice; we guide discovery. Keeping this in mind, here's how we can introduce time management tips into our coaching:

We can start with exploration. Begin by understanding their current system. Ask:

- How do you currently organise your week?
- What has worked for you in the past?
- What are the biggest obstacles you face when trying to get things done?

We can then introduce tools based on their needs. We can listen for openings. If a client mentions their calendar is chaotic, we might ask:

- What would it be like to experiment with blocking 'white space' for yourself?

If they feel overwhelmed by their to-do list, we could ask:

- Would it be useful to explore a different way to prioritise those tasks?

This area of time-management can also be a valuable part of our service offerings, we can therefore:

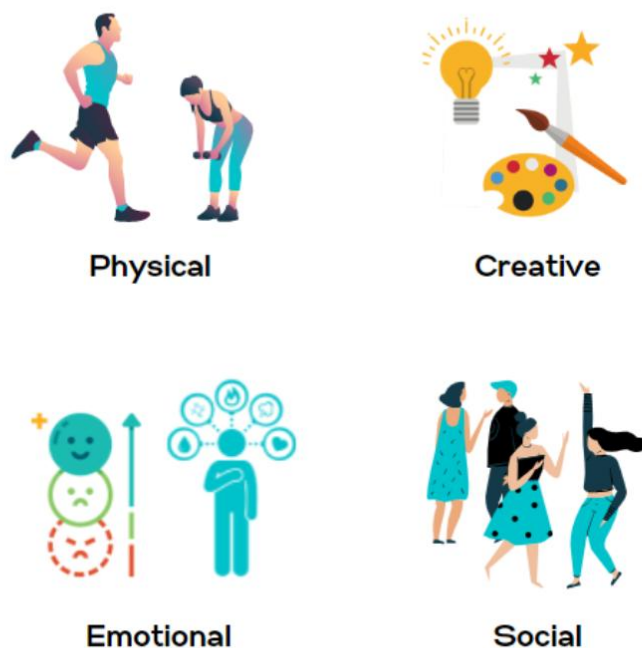
- **Gift a Planner:** Include a high-quality planner as part of a premium coaching package. It's a tangible tool that clients appreciate and that reinforces the habits we're building together with our clients.
- **Create Content:** Develop the tips above into a fact sheet, a short eBook, or a workshop. This provides immense value and establishes our expertise.
- **Design a Short Course:** A time management course is a fantastic lead generator that can attract new clients to your broader transformational coaching services.

While essential, focusing solely on time management is a trap. If we don't consider our energy, we risk procrastination, burnout, and 'time compression syndrome', the chronic feeling that there's never enough time. This is why our next step is to explore the other, more dynamic element of productivity: Energy Management.

6.3 Energy Management

Whilst time management organises our hours, energy management fuels our capacity to use those hours well. It refers to the conscious and intentional allocation, renewal, and management of our physical, creative, social, and emotional resources. It involves recognising and optimising the various sources of energy within ourselves to enhance not just productivity, but our overall well-being and performance.

Figure 5: Types of Energy



Energy management moves beyond the rigid structure of a timetable. It focuses on the fact that our energy levels are not constant; they ebb and flow throughout the day in natural rhythms and patterns. It involves developing a deep understanding of these personal rhythms, identifying the specific activities and interactions that recharge us or drain us, and then making deliberate, informed choices to sustain and optimise our energy reserves. This is where practices like prioritising self-care without guilt, taking regular, meaningful breaks, engaging in physical exercise, practising mindfulness, and proactively managing stress become crucial components of a successful life.

By effectively managing our energy, we can achieve what time management alone cannot: sustained focus, deeper engagement, and consistent productivity, all while proactively preventing burnout.

Energy Management Tips

Here is a non-exhaustive list of actionable energy management tips. We can integrate these into our own routines and offer them as experiments for our clients to discover what works best for their unique constitution.

1. **Single-Task Instead of Multi-Task:** Direct your focus to one thing at a time. Whilst we may pride ourselves on our ability to juggle, multi-tasking is often counter-intuitive, forcing the brain to expend valuable energy constantly switching gears. It is only when we have mastered skills to a subconscious, automatic level that we can perform them in tandem without a significant energy cost.
2. **Take Regular, Intentional Breaks:** Make it a daily habit to step away from your work. Whether it's stepping out for a

fresh coffee, taking a 10-minute walk around the block, or simply stretching your legs, these pauses are crucial. It has been scientifically proven that a 20-minute walk, particularly in nature, can significantly boost mental clarity and focus.

3. **Institute a 'Phone Fast':** Our mobile phones are among the biggest energy drainers of our mental energy. They are often the first thing we look at upon waking and the last thing we check before sleep, which has a negative impact on sleep quality and, consequently, our energy for the day. A powerful technique is to establish phone-free hours, for instance, turning the phone off completely and locking it away between 9 pm and 9 am.
4. **Reward Ourselves Generously:** Rewards create positive momentum and reinforce productive behaviour. We often fall into the trap of moving directly from one accomplishment to the next project without pausing to acknowledge our success. It is vital to take a step back, celebrate what we have achieved, and allow ourselves to enjoy the feeling of completion before undertaking the next challenge.
5. **Cultivate Mindfulness Practices:** Creating daily habits of mindfulness is a profound way to boost and recharge our mental and emotional batteries. Whether it is a morning yoga session, an evening meditation, or just taking two minutes for deep breathing exercises during a busy day, these practices centre us and clear away accumulated mental clutter, restoring our energy.
6. **Become Aware of Your Mental Diet:** What we consume on a daily basis plays a huge part in our energy levels. If we are constantly receiving negativity (be it from news cycles, social media content, or interactions with negative people) our energy will be low and our outlook dimmed. Consciously developing a diet of positive, inspiring, and educational

content is essential for sustaining the energy levels required for high productivity.

7. **Schedule Recovery Time:** Expanding on the time management tip, if recovery isn't in the calendar, it is unlikely to happen. We must proactively schedule our downtime (whether for a hobby, a nap, or simply doing nothing) and treat these appointments with the same respect as a business meeting. This blocked-out time is dedicated to recharging our energy, not as leftover time when everything else is done.
8. **Eat for Sustained Energy:** Food is fuel. There are certain foods that provide slow-release, stable energy, and others that lead to a sharp spike and subsequent crash, leaving us feeling lethargic. By paying attention to how our body responds to what we consume, we can learn which foods keep our energy levels consistently high throughout the day.
9. **Learn Your Chronotype:** We will explore this in more detail below, but understanding your unique chronotype (your body's natural internal clock). It empowers you to schedule demanding cognitive tasks when your energy is naturally high and less demanding tasks for your natural dips, thus working with your body rather than against it.

How to Weave Energy Management into Our Coaching

As with time management, the goal is to guide clients to their own insights about their energy. Here's a practical way we can begin:

We can start by conducting an 'Energy Audit'. This is an exploration of the client's current energy. We introduce the concept of an audit and ask the following questions:

- At what points in the day do you feel most alert and energetic?
- When do you typically experience a slump in your energy?
- What specific tasks in your week leave you feeling energised and fulfilled?
- Conversely, which tasks consistently drain you?
- Which people in your life tend to give you energy, and which ones tend to take it?

From this data, we can then help them identify patterns and co-create personalised strategies for protecting and renewing their energy reserves.

We can then explore further on how we can integrate this into our coaching:

- **Perform an Energy Audit in Discovery:** Asking a prospective client to complete a simple energy audit before your first session provides immediate value and gives us insight into their world before we even begin, setting the stage for transformative work.
- **Create Energy Management Content:** Package these tips into a valuable fact sheet, a short eBook, or a dedicated group workshop. This establishes your expertise in productivity and provides a resource you can continually refer clients to.

- **Build a 'Spark' Course on Chronotypes:** Create a short, accessible course focused solely on discovering one's chronotype. This is a highly engaging topic that provides immediate, practical value and serves as an excellent entry point for clients who may later engage with us for broader transformational coaching.

However we choose to integrate energy management into our practice, we must remember that energy management is not a luxury; it is the crucial counterpart to time management that enables us to optimise our performance, well-being, and overall quality of life. By consciously managing and renewing our physical, creative, social, and emotional energy, we build a sustainable foundation for productivity. This approach enhances focus, prevents the slow drain of burnout, and builds resilience. By recognising the natural ebb and flow of our personal energy and implementing thoughtful strategies to maintain it, we significantly increase our capacity to handle challenges and, ultimately, lead a more balanced, fulfilling, and impactful life.

6.4 Understanding Our Chronotypes

Each of us possesses a powerful, internal biological clock known as our circadian rhythm. This timing system regulates our sleep patterns, appetite, social tendencies, and perhaps most importantly for our clients, our windows of optimal productivity. This function can be understood and strategically used by identifying our unique chronotype.

As supported by Dr. Michael Breus's work in chronobiology, working in constant opposition to our chronotype can result in chronic lethargy and frustration. However, syncing our daily routines with our biological design can lead to dramatically

improved sleep, heightened natural energy, and a significant increase in productive output.

It is also valuable to note that other models, such as Daniel Pink's concepts of early birds and night owls, offer complementary perspectives for those wishing to specialise in this area of development. We have provided additional resources in the *Coaches Bookshelf* at the end of this book.

Exploring the Four Chronotypes

Dr. Michael Breus categorises individuals into four main chronotypes based on their natural sleep-wake patterns and energy fluctuations. Understanding which one resonates most with a client provides a powerful lens through which to view their entire day.

Figure 6: Chronotypes



The Bear

The most common chronotype, the Bear, follows the solar rhythm quite closely, naturally waking with the sun and winding down as it sets. Their energy peaks in the late morning and they often experience a post-lunch dip between 2 pm and 4 pm. Bears are at their most productive when tackling challenging tasks from mid-morning to early afternoon.

Proposed Bear Productivity Schedule:

- **6:30–7:30 am:** Wake-up
- **8:00–10:00 am:** Start with simpler tasks to build momentum
- **10:00 am–12:00 pm:** Complete most difficult/energy-demanding tasks (Peak Performance Window)
- **12:00–4:00 pm:** Move onto easier, administrative tasks
- **4:00–10:00 pm:** Begin to wind down with social or relaxing activities
- **10:00–11:30 pm:** Get ready for bed
- **12:00–6:30 am:** Sleep

The Bear's strategy is to capitalise on the steady rhythm of the day. Their key to productivity is aligning demanding work with their reliable late-morning peak and accepting the post-lunch dip as a signal to switch to simpler, administrative tasks, ensuring consistent output without burnout.

The Lion

Lions are the early birds. They wake up early, full of energy, and are most productive when they can dive straight into complex tasks first thing. Their focus and energy are at a peak in the early morning but tend to decline sharply by noon, requiring adequate recovery time. They typically retire early to replenish their energy for the next day's early start.

Proposed Lion Productivity Schedule:

- **6:00–7:00 am:** Wake-up
- **8:00 am–12:00 pm:** Complete difficult/energy-demanding tasks (Peak Performance Window)
- **12:00–4:00 pm:** Complete easier, collaborative, or routine tasks
- **4:00–9:00 pm:** Relaxation and personal time
- **9:00–10:00 pm:** Bedtime routine
- **10:00 pm–6:00 am:** Sleep

The Lion's strategy is to strike with the dawn. Their power lies in a front-loaded day where all critical, demanding work is tackled head-on during their unmatched morning focus and energy, protecting their afternoons for collaboration and lighter duties as their energy naturally declines.

The Wolf

Individuals who repeatedly press the snooze button may well be Wolves. This chronotype struggles with early mornings and truly hits their stride in the afternoon and evening. They are classic night owls, experiencing peak creativity and focus from midday to 4 pm and then again after 6 pm. To maximise their day, Wolves should start with low-stakes tasks to build momentum for their later, more productive periods.

Proposed Wolf Productivity Schedule:

- **7:30–9:00 am:** Wake-up (often with difficulty)
- **10:00 am–12:00 pm:** Start with simpler, administrative tasks
- **12:00–2:00 pm:** Indulge in hard, demanding, or highly creative work
- **2:00–5:00 pm:** Move onto easier tasks
- **5:00–9:00 pm:** Use this second wind for creative or deep work (Second Peak)
- **9:00–10:00 pm:** Relaxation time
- **10:00 pm–12:00 am:** Get ready for bed

- **12:00–7:30 am:** Sleep

The Wolf's strategy is to embrace a delayed start for a powerful finish. They should avoid forcing focus in the early morning and instead use that time for light admin, saving their considerable creative and analytical energy for their true peak periods in the afternoon and evening.

The Dolphin

Dolphins are light, sensitive sleepers who often do not adhere to a strict sleep routine and may struggle with insomnia. They are highly intelligent and often perfectionistic, which can contribute to a restless mind at night. They are slow to start in the early morning but experience a clear window of heightened productivity and mental clarity between 10 am and 2 pm.

Proposed Dolphin Productivity Schedule:

- **6:30–7:30 am:** Wake-up
- **8:00–10:00 am:** Start off with simpler tasks to ease into the day
- **10:00 am–12:00 pm:** Work on more difficult/energy-demanding tasks (Peak Performance Window)
- **12:00–4:00 pm:** Work on easier, procedural tasks
- **4:00–10:00 pm:** Relaxation time; important to begin winding down early
- **10:00–11:30 pm:** Get ready for bed with a strict, calming routine
- **12:00–6:30 am:** Sleep

The Dolphin's strategy is to seize the midday window. For this often sleep-sensitive type, success depends on gently easing into the day, prioritising high-concentration work during their clear 10 am - 2 pm productivity window, and diligently winding down early to protect a restless sleep system.

6.5 Applying Chronotypes in Coaching

We can guide our clients through the self-discovery of establishing their chronotypes in five clear steps:

1. **Establish the Chronotype:** We can first direct the client to take the online quiz (a QR to which is available in **Appendix A: Discovery Quizzes** of this book) to identify their dominant chronotype.
2. **Deepen Understanding:** We can then encourage them to watch Dr. Breus's explanatory video about their specific chronotype to grasp the underlying biology and common traits which is available on completion of the quiz.
3. **Note Key Facts:** Ask them to jot down the most relevant and surprising insights that emerge from their findings.
4. **Review the Schedule:** Study the proposed productivity schedule for their chronotype (like the ones above) and consider how it aligns or clashes with their current routine.
5. **Define an Action Plan:** This is the most crucial step. Work with the client to translate this knowledge into a concrete, personalised plan, using the chronotype productivity schedule as a guide.

Once a client knows their chronotype, we can use powerful, reflective questions to help them build their action plan:

- Looking at your current schedule, where are you most out of sync with your natural circadian rhythm?
- Based on your energy peaks, when is the ideal time to schedule your most important and demanding tasks?

- What one change could you make to your morning or evening routine to better support your chronotype's sleep needs?
- What do you need to do more of to harness your high-energy windows?
- What do you need to do less of to prevent energy drain during your natural lows?


The ultimate purpose of this exploration is practical application. By linking the science of chronotypes with the practices of time and energy management, we empower our clients to increase their productivity in a way that honours their biology, protects their well-being, and sustains their mental health for the long term.

As Transformational Coaches, it is important that we first explore our own chronotype before guiding our clients. This personal experience makes us far more empathetic and effective guides, helping us understand the subject a lot deeper.

6.4 Theory into Practice

In this chapter, we have moved beyond simple to-do lists to explore the difference between time management and energy management. We've equipped ourselves with practical tips and the transformative framework of chronotypes to help clients work with their natural biology, not against it.

To integrate these concepts into your own coaching practice, take a moment to consider the question below:

 **Reflecting on the four chronotypes, which one do you most identify with, and what is one immediate change you can make to your own schedule to increase productivity?**

Chapter 7

Prioritisation & Decision Making

‘Effective decision-making requires balancing intuition and analysis, harnessing the power of both heart and mind, to navigate the path towards personal growth and fulfilment.’

Deepak Chopra

How do I help a client who's stuck and can't make a decision? What's the easiest way to help someone figure out what's most important? How can I tell if a client is overwhelmed or just avoiding a choice? Prioritisation and decision-making are important aspects of transformation. They are the crucial skills that move our clients from contemplation to action, from a state of uncertainty to one of confident momentum. In this chapter, we will explore how these competencies form part of our work and introduce some practical tools we can use to help guide our clients toward clearer, more aligned choices.

As Transformational Coaches, we do more than just facilitate decisions; we help clients build the skills to make them wisely and consistently. This process demands our own judgement and the ability to remain fully attuned to our clients' deeper needs. It requires us to empathically connect with their dilemmas, creating a safe and supportive space where we can guide them through the process of choosing a path forward. The tools we will explore are designed to bring structure to this process, transforming overwhelming choices into manageable steps and empowering our clients to take ownership of their direction.

7.1 Why is Prioritisation Important?

It is often said that there is a time and place for everything, it is whether or not 'it' is a priority. How often do we hear (or even say):

"I just don't have the time"?

Let's reframe this common statement. When we say we don't have time for something, what we are often truly saying is:

"This is not a priority for me right now."

This shift in perspective is powerful. It moves us from being passive victims of a busy schedule to being active managers of our own time.

It is also said that if we have more than three priorities, we don't have any priorities at all. This isn't to limit our ambitions, but to sharpen our focus. Our role is to help our clients explore what is genuinely important in the context of their lives, their goals, and their larger vision. From this place of clarity, we can then explore how to prioritise what truly matters, creating a plan that doesn't just meet expectations, but allows them to exceed their own.

Prioritising is essential because it's the practice of aligning our actions with our intentions. It allows us to focus our finite time, energy, and resources on the tasks and goals that deliver the most significant impact. By consciously identifying and ranking what matters most, we make intentional choices about where to direct our efforts. This doesn't just make us more efficient; it makes us better, more confident decision-makers in all areas of our lives.

Furthermore, prioritising is our primary defence against feeling overwhelmed. A never-ending to-do list can be paralysing, but a shortlist of clear priorities can be empowering. It provides the

clarity needed to move forward, increases our productivity by reducing wasted effort, and significantly lowers our stress levels. Most importantly, it creates a powerful sense of accomplishment and fulfilment because we are consistently making meaningful progress on what truly matters to us, and letting go of what doesn't. Let's explore a useful tool we can use with our clients to help with this.

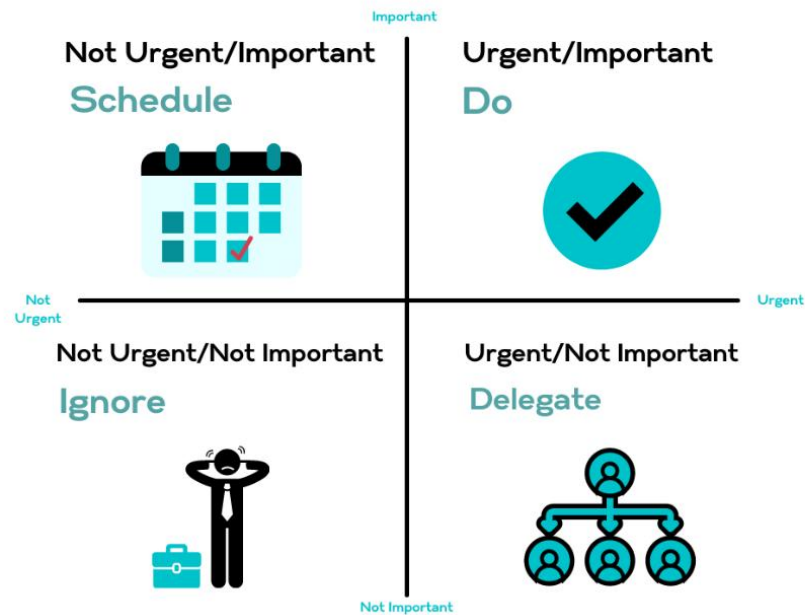
7.2 The Eisenhower Matrix

The Eisenhower Matrix, often called the Urgent-Important Matrix, is a straightforward tool that helps us and our clients cut through the noise of a busy to-do list. It works by sorting tasks into one of four simple boxes, making it clear what deserves our energy right now and what can wait.

The matrix classifies every task based on two simple questions:

- Is this Urgent? (Does it require immediate attention?)
- Is this Important? (Does it contribute to my long-term goals and values?).

Figure 7: The Eisenhower Matrix



Let's break down the four quadrants:

Quadrant 1: Do First (Urgent & Important)

These are the crises and critical deadlines. They demand immediate attention because the consequences of not doing them are significant. While we can't avoid these entirely, living constantly in this quadrant leads to stress and burnout.

Quadrant 2: Schedule (Important, But Not Urgent)

This is the quadrant for transformation. Here we'll find strategic planning, skill development, relationship building, and working toward big goals. These tasks are not screaming for attention, but doing them consistently is what leads to real progress and

prevents future crises. This is where we should aim to spend most of our time.

Quadrant 3: Delegate (Urgent, But Not Important)

These tasks are often interruptions that feel pressing but don't contribute to our own important outcomes. They might include some emails, meetings, or minor requests from others. The goal here is to recognise them and, where possible, delegate them or find efficient ways to minimise the time they take.

Quadrant 4: Don't Do (Not Urgent & Not Important)

These are the trivial time-waster, mindless scrolling, excessive TV, or busywork. The most effective action for these tasks is to eliminate them. They drain our energy without providing any real return.

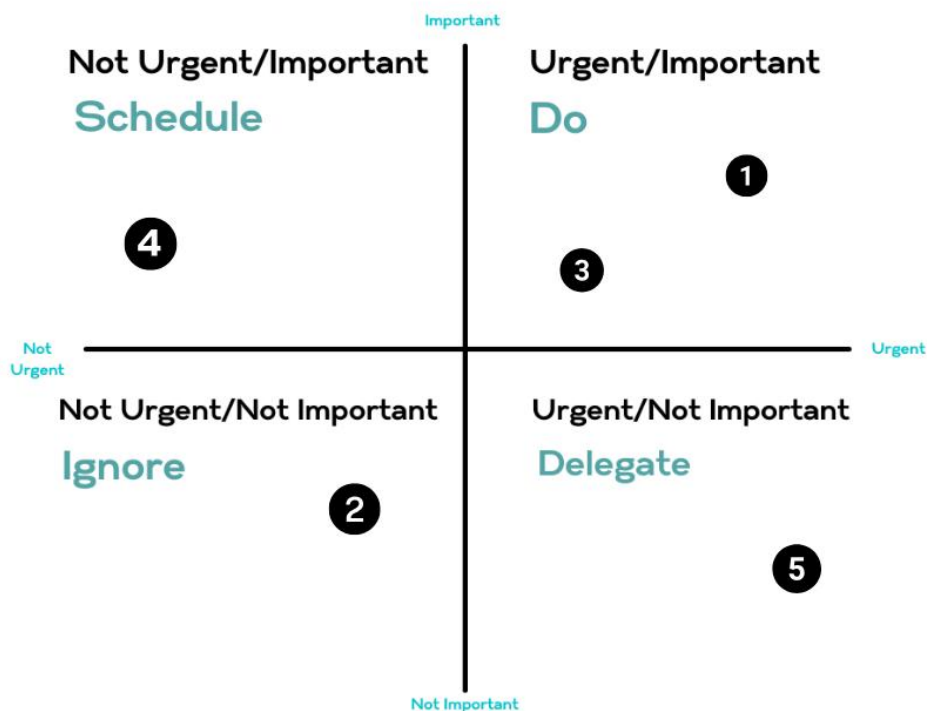
As we can see, the Eisenhower Matrix provides a visual framework. It empowers us to move from being reactive (driven by urgency) to being proactive (driven by importance), resulting in less stress and a far greater focus on what truly moves the needle in our lives and businesses.

7.3 A Step-by-Step Guide to Using the Matrix

We can use this matrix as a practical coaching session to bring clarity to a client's workload. Here is a simple process we can follow:

1. **List the Tasks:** We can start by working with the client to get all their current tasks out of their head and onto a single list, whether on paper or a digital document. Numbering each task as we capture them.
2. **Ask the Two Key Questions:** We then go through the list item by item. For each task, ask:
 - On a scale of 1-10 how important is this for you?
 - On a scale of 1-10 how urgent is this for you?
3. **Categorise and Assign an Action:** Based on their answers, we plot each task into its quadrant with its number (as illustrated below) and also write the corresponding action next to it: Do, Schedule, Delegate, or Don't Do.

Figure 8: A Plotted Eisenhower Matrix



4. **Review the Results Together:** Once sorted, walk the client through the completed matrix. Highlight where their focus truly needs to be (Quadrant 1 & 2) and what they can let go of (Quadrant 3 & 4). Exploring ideas on how.
5. **Check-In:** We then ask powerful reflective questions to check how the client is feeling. Here we can ask something like:
 - Looking at this now, how do you feel about your workload?
 - What surprises you?
6. **Create a Commitment:** Finally, we help the client create a concrete plan. This means blocking out time in their calendar for the 'Schedule' tasks and identifying who they can delegate to.
7. **Hold Them Accountable:** As their coach, we can then play an important role in following up on their commitment to this new way of working, holding them accountable.

As with all the tools we share, we strongly advise you to walk through this exercise for your own to-do list first. Experiencing the clarity it brings firsthand is the best way to authentically and effectively introduce it to your clients.

7.4 Creating Space to Decide

When we begin exploring decision-making with our clients, it's crucial to introduce the idea that there is no such thing as a universally 'good' or 'bad' decision in the moment. The true

quality of a decision is revealed by the actions we take after we've made it.

Let's bring this to life with an example:

Imagine a client is deciding whether to accept a new job or stay in their current role. They can spend hours listing the pros and cons for each. But the outcome isn't determined by this analysis; it's determined by what they do next.

If they decide to take the new job, for it to become a 'good' decision, they must fully commit, investing their energy, building relationships with their new team, and proactively seeking the opportunities the role offers. If, instead, they disengage, resist the challenges, and focus only on the negatives, they will inevitably create a 'bad' outcome from the same initial choice. The exact same principle applies if they decide to stay; they must then take action to improve their current situation and find new growth where they are.

The takeaway for ourselves and our clients is this: The commitment and action we bring after the choice is far more important than the agonising we do before it. This mindset frees us from the paralysis of perfection and empowers us to take ownership of our choices.

Becoming a Better Decision Maker

With this new perspective, we can now focus on how to create the right conditions for clear, constructive decision-making. It's estimated we make around 35,000 conscious decisions each day. The more intentionally we create space for the important ones, the better we become at managing all of them. Becoming a better decision-maker helps us:

- Save time and mental resources.
- Develop the respect and trust of others.
- Improve our overall productivity and progress.
- Prevent costly mistakes and mitigate risks.
- Move from overwhelm to confident action.

The first step is learning when not to decide. We must guide our clients to avoid making significant choices when they are in a state of:

- **Fear:** Decisions made from panic are often about retreat, not growth.
- **Anger:** Reactive decisions are rarely wise and often require repair later.
- **Frustration:** Choosing the 'easy' path out of irritation can lead to long-term dissatisfaction.

Making decisions from these emotional states often leads to outcomes that set us back. Recognising this is an important decision-making skill.

Creating the Space for Clear Decisions

Better decision-makers are creators of their own clarity. They intentionally create four types of space before making an important choice:

- **Temporal Space (The 'When'):** This is about deliberately scheduling time to think. We must encourage clients to block out time in their calendar to reflect, review their options, and consider consequences properly, rather than making rushed decisions between other tasks.

- **Physical Space (The 'Where')**: The environment matters. Big decisions are best made in a calm, peaceful setting that creates clear thinking, perhaps a quiet park, a calm room, or anywhere that feels separate from the pressure of the problem.
- **Relational Space (The 'Who')**: This involves identifying the right support. Who can offer a balanced, knowledgeable perspective? Who genuinely has their best interests at heart? Guiding clients to seek out the right people is a key part of our role.
- **Psychological Space (The 'How')**: This is the internal work of clearing mental clutter. It's about helping clients recognise and temporarily set aside their biases, fears, and the 'noise' of other people's opinions to look at the options as objectively as possible.

Guiding Clients to Create Their Space

We can explore creating space with our clients through simple, powerful questions:

- When do you need to make this decision by, and when can you schedule quiet time to think it through?
- What environment would help you feel calm and focused to consider this?
- Who would be a supportive and unbiased person to discuss this with?

- What fears or pressures might be influencing you right now, and how can you create some distance from them?

Here, we are applying all our core coaching skills, deep listening, powerful questioning, and creating a supportive partnership, to help our clients build the clarity they need. At times we will find that our coaching session, is a great space for our clients decide. Provided we create a space of psychological safety and we check all the boxes of the four types of spaces above. We discuss this in detail in our *Coaching Presence* book.

In the next sections, we will explore specific cognitive biases and practical tools to structure these decision-making conversations.

7.5 Becoming Aware of our Biases

Often, invisible psychological biases can cloud our judgement, leading us to make decisions that don't truly serve our best interests. These biases are mental shortcuts, often shaped by the power we give to external opinions, our desire to belong to certain groups, or past experiences that have subconsciously limited our thinking.

As coaches, our role is to help bring these hidden influences into the light. By making ourselves aware of these common biases, we can spot them in our coaching conversations and guide our clients toward greater self-awareness and clearer, more objective thinking.

Here are 9 key biases to understand and work to remove from both our own thinking and that of our clients:

1. Confirmation Bias

This is our natural tendency to seek out, interpret, and favour information that confirms what we already believe, while ignoring or dismissing anything that contradicts it. It's driven by our desire for mental consistency.

We can help clients with confirmation bias by asking questions that encourage clients to actively seek diverse perspectives. For example:

- What would someone who disagrees with you say about this?
- Let's list three reasons why your initial assumption might be wrong.

2. Illusion of Control Bias

This is when we believe we have more control over events than we actually do. It stems from our deep need to feel in charge of our environment, but it can lead to excessive risk-taking and a failure to see the role of luck or external factors.

We can help clients with illusion of control bias by guiding them to realistically assess what is within their control and what isn't. Useful questions could look like:

- Within this situation, what can you directly influence?
- What do you need to accept and prepare for?

3. Optimism Bias

This bias gives us an overly rosy outlook, causing us to underestimate the likelihood of negative events. While a positive attitude is beneficial, this bias can lead to poor planning and a failure to prepare for potential obstacles.

We can steer clients away from optimism bias by grounding their positive attitude. We don't want to crush optimism, but offer an alternative perspective that explores risk. We can ask questions like:

- Let's imagine your plan doesn't work out. What are the potential challenges, and how could you navigate them?
- What could go wrong or what are risks might you face with this plan?

4. Source Credibility Bias

This refers to how we judge information based on its source. We naturally trust people we find likeable, attractive, or who are in positions of authority. The danger is that we can be swayed by a person's status rather than the actual quality of their ideas.

We can help clients here by encouraging critical thinking and asking questions similar to:

- If this exact same advice came from someone you didn't like, would you still be so quick to accept it?

5. Sunk Cost Fallacy

This is the trap of continuing down a failing path simply because we've already invested significant time, money, or effort into it. We feel that walking away would mean our past investment was

wasted, so we throw good energy after bad. It is also known as a 'bad gamblers' mindset.

We can help clients with sunk cost fallacy by reframing the decision to be about the future, not the past. A key question we can ask here is:

- If you were starting from scratch today, with no prior investment, would you still choose this path?

6. Groupthink

This occurs in groups where the desire for harmony and consensus overrides realistic and critical thinking. People silence their doubts to fit in, leading to poor decisions because dissenting opinions are never heard.

We can support clients influenced by a group, by asking questions similar to:

- If you knew you wouldn't be judged, what is your true opinion on this?
- What is one potential risk that no one in the group is talking about?"

7. The Halo Effect

This bias happens when our positive impression of a person in one area (e.g. their charisma or success in business) unfairly influences our perception of their abilities in other, unrelated areas (e.g. assuming they must also give great life advice).

Here, we can help clients separate the person from the proposition by asking questions like:

- Let's look at this specific idea on its own merits, separate from the person suggesting it. What are its actual pros and cons?
- Would you trust this advice as much if it came from someone else?

8. Anchoring Bias

This is our tendency to rely too heavily on the very first piece of information we receive (the 'anchor') when making decisions. For example, the first price we see for a product sets a mental benchmark that influences how we view all subsequent prices.

Here we can disrupt this by encouraging clients to establish their own independent benchmarks. For example, we could ask:

- Before we look at the options, what would you independently consider a fair and reasonable outcome?
- If you hadn't seen that first option, what would you think is a fair price/outcome?

9. Authority Bias

This involves placing undue trust in the opinions of authority figures (like a boss, a doctor, or a celebrity) without critically evaluating their claims. We can give their words more weight than they deserve simply because of their title or status.

Here we can empower clients to think for themselves by asking questions like:

- What is the evidence behind this authority's statement?
- Does it align with your own experience and knowledge?

- If your best friend said this to you, would you be so quick to agree?

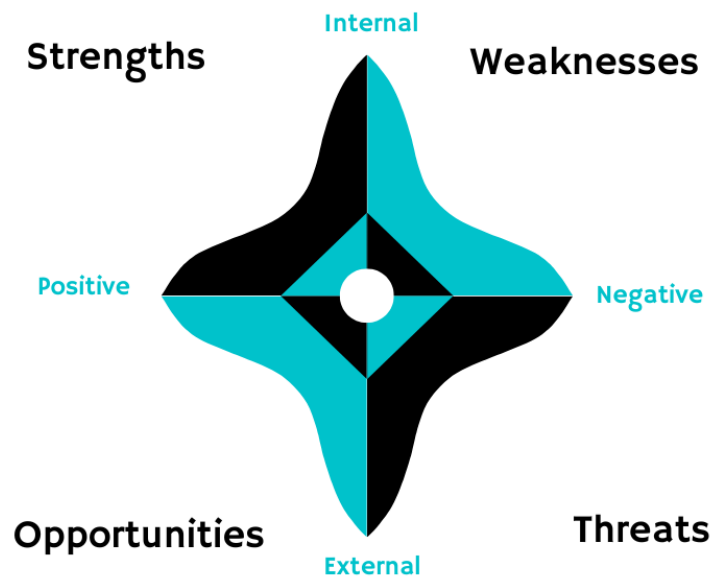
By understanding these biases ourselves, we can better listen for them in our clients' stories. Our role isn't to accuse a client of being biased, but to use thoughtful, curious questions to help them see their own blind spots, enabling them to make decisions that are truly their own.

7.6 The SWOT Analysis

One of the most practical tools we can add to our coaching toolkit is the SWOT Analysis. This classic method provides a simple structure for identifying a client's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats in relation to a specific decision or goal.

What makes SWOT so valuable in transformational coaching is its broad perspective. It encourages clients to analyse their past experiences (what strengths and weaknesses have they demonstrated?), their present reality (what resources and limitations do they have now?), and their future potential (what opportunities or threats lie ahead?). This perspective helps clients visualise their potential positions clearly and decide on a confident course of action.

Figure 9: The SWOT Analysis



SWOT is an excellent tool to use when a client is facing an 'Either/Or' decision. For example, whether to start a business or to stay in their current job. We can work with them to complete a separate SWOT for each option, creating a direct, visual comparison that brings incredible clarity.

7.7 A Step-by-Step to Using the Analysis

The SWOT Analysis is quite straightforward to facilitate, yet it consistently provides deep insights. Here is a simple process we can follow:

- 1. Define the Two Options:** We first start by clearly noting down the two choices the client is weighing. Being curious, ask clarifying questions, and capturing the essence of each option in detail.

2. **Choose a Starting Point:** We then ask the client to select one option to begin with. We decide whether ourselves, as the coach, will act as the scribe, or if the client wants to capture the thoughts themselves.
3. **Explore the Four Quadrants:** Using a notebook, a whiteboard, or a prepared tool, in person or digitally, we then work through the four areas:

Strengths: What are the client's internal advantages for this option? What skills, resources, or experiences do they have that will help?

Weaknesses: What are the internal disadvantages? What gaps in knowledge, skill, or resource might hold them back?

Opportunities: What external possibilities could this option create? Are there market trends, connections, or life improvements it could unlock?

Threats: What external obstacles or risks might they face? Could there be competition, financial instability, or personal sacrifices?

4. **Ask Powerful Questions for Each Area:** Our role is to effectively probe each quadrant with thoughtful questions to draw out deeper insights. (A list of example questions is provided in the next section).
5. **Reflect and Check-In:** Once the SWOT is complete, we reflect back what has been captured. Then, ask the client a key question:
 - Looking at this completed grid, how do you feel about this option now?
6. **Gauge Clarity:** Follow up by asking:

- Has this made your decision any clearer?

7. **Explore Further if Needed:** If the answer is 'no,' don't worry. This is valuable data. We can further explore:

- What are you still unsure about?
- What feels like it's still missing from this picture?

8. **Define Actions:** Finally, we translate the insights into a concrete plan. Based on what they've learned, what are the logical next steps?

As Transformational Coaches, our aim is not to fill in the boxes for the client, but to use our core skills (deep listening, powerful questioning, and creating a supportive space) to guide them as they complete the analysis themselves. This process empowers them to reach a more informed and constructive decision that they fully own.

Useful Questions for a SWOT Analysis

As Transformational Coaches, our role during a SWOT is to ask the questions that deepen a client's self-awareness. We can use the questions below to guide the conversation for each quadrant.

For STRENGTHS (Internal, Positive Factors)

- What personal skills or talents do you have that are perfect for this?

- What unique resources do you have access to? (e.g. knowledge, network, finances)
- What achievements are you most proud of that relate to this?
- What do you do better than most people in this area?
- What would those closest to you say is your greatest strength here?

For WEAKNESSES (Internal, Negative Factors)

- What tasks or responsibilities do you typically avoid or delay?
- Where do you have skill or knowledge gaps that could be a problem?
- What negative work or personal habits could hold you back?
- What are your limiting beliefs about yourself in this situation?
- Where do you lack resources (time, money, support) to make this easy?

For OPPORTUNITIES (External, Positive Factors)

- What current trends or changes in the market/life could you benefit from?
- What needs do you see that are not currently being met?
- Are there upcoming events, technologies, or shifts you could leverage?
- Who in your network could open doors or provide crucial support?
- How could you use your strengths to create new possibilities?

For THREATS (External, Negative Factors)

- What obstacles are you currently facing or do you see on the horizon?
- Is competition for your goal increasing? What are others doing?
- Could changing technologies, laws, or economies work against you?
- Could any of your weaknesses make you vulnerable to external problems?
- What is the worst-case scenario, and how likely is it?

By moving systematically through these questions, we help our client build a complete and honest picture, turning a vague dilemma into a clear set of factors they can use to make an informed decision.

7.8 The Decision Matrix

Another great decision-making tool we can add to our toolkit is the Decision Matrix (also known as a Decision-Making Grid). This is a useful tool for those moments when a client feels paralysed by multiple good options. It provides a structured, systematic way to evaluate and compare alternatives based on what truly matters to them, cutting through emotional confusion with clear, objective data.

The Decision Matrix works by organising all the relevant information into a simple table. The different options are listed in rows, and the key criteria for making the choice are listed in columns. The real power comes from two steps: first, we decide how important each criterion is by assigning it a weight, and second, we score how well each option performs against that criterion.

How the Decision Matrix Works in Practice

Let's break down the process step-by-step on how we can apply this in our coaching, using a scenario where a coach is deciding how they want to niche:

1. **List the Options:** We begin by listing the options available to the client. These are the different paths our client is

considering (e.g. 'Become a Confidence Coach,' 'Become a Career Coach,' 'Become a Relationship Coach').

2. **Define the Criteria:** We then work with the client to set the important criteria. These are the factors that matter for this decision. They could include things like: personal passion, income potential, market demand, required training time, or alignment with personal values.
3. **Assign Weights:** Not all criteria are equally important. Here we guide the client to assign a weight to each one (e.g. on a scale of 1-5, where 5 is most important). This helps reflect their true priorities.
4. **Score the Options:** We then ask the client to score each option (e.g. out of 10) for how well it meets each criterion. For example, a 'Career Coach' scores a 10 for 'personal passion', 9 for 'income potential' but a 2 for 'required training time'.
5. **Calculate the Weighted Score:** We then assist the client in calculating the weighted score for each criterion and option. We do this by multiplying the score by the weight for each cell in the table. For example, if 'income potential' was weighted a 5, we would multiple the score of 9, by 5 to get a score of 45 for income potential with regards to becoming a career coach. We do this for each option and each criterion.
6. **Find the Total:** Finally, we add up the weighted scores for each option. The option with the highest total score emerges as the most favourable choice based on the client's own stated priorities.

Figure 10: The Decision Matrix

1
2
3
4
5
 Weight for Criteria

	Money 3	Skills 4	Client Base 1	Satisfaction 5	Experience 2	Totals
Relationship	9 = 27	9 = 9	6 = 24	7 = 35	9 = 18	113
Business	7 = 21	9 = 9	9 = 36	7 = 35	6 = 12	113
Confidence	8 = 24	9 = 9	7 = 28	8 = 40	7 = 14	115

- 1 List the options.
- 2 Define the important decision criteria.
- 3 Assign weight to each criteria.
- 4 Score each criterion out of 10.
- 5 Multiply the criterion by the weight.
- 6 Calculate the totals.

The matrix, as shown in Figure 10 above, provides a visual representation of the decision. It demonstrates a clear, side-by-side comparison, which brings clarity and facilitates an objective evaluation. In the example provided, where all criteria were not equally weighted, the 'Confidence' niche scored highest. What we can observe is the weight highlighted by the blue circles in the criteria headers. We have the score from 1-10 on the left of each cell and then the total on the right of each cell once multiplied by the weight. This has aided in the total in the final column on the right.

What is interesting to note is the importance of the 'weight' of each criterion. If all of the above were equally weighted the result would have been different and 'relationship' would have totalled

the highest. Establishing the weight is an important step to applying the tool and should not be skipped.


By using a Decision Matrix, we help our clients make more rational and consistent decisions. It ensures they consider multiple factors systematically, moving from a feeling of, "I don't know what to choose", to the confident statement, "Based on what's important to me, the data shows this is the strongest path forward."

Becoming a better decision-maker is a skill built over time, through the consistent application of tools like this. The more we can guide our clients to approach their choices objectively, the more constructive and successful their outcomes can be.

7.9 Theory into Practice

In this chapter, we have moved from understanding the psychology of decision-making to equipping ourselves with practical, structured tools like the Eisenhower Matrix, SWOT Analysis, and Decision Matrix.

To integrate these concepts into your own coaching practice, take a moment to consider the question below:

-  Reflecting on the decision-making tools, which one do you feel most drawn to, and what is one specific way you could introduce it in your next coaching session to help a client gain clarity?**

Chapter 8

The Pareto Analysis

‘Concentrate your energies on the few things that really count.
Forget the things that don't.’

Richard Koch

What is the 80/20 rule in simple terms? How does this help someone who feels busy all the time? Is this about working harder, or working differently? As Transformational Coaches, our goal is to help clients achieve maximum impact with their efforts. This often means cutting through the noise of a busy life to identify the few critical actions that will deliver the majority of their desired results. This is where the Pareto Analysis becomes an important part of our toolkit.

Also known as the 80/20 Rule, this principle is more than a productivity tip; it's a tool for understanding cause and effect. It helps us and our clients move from a vague sense of being ‘busy but not productive’ to objectively identifying the precise 20% of activities that generate 80% of their success, fulfilment, or (conversely) the 20% of problems that cause 80% of their stress.

In this chapter, we will explore what the Pareto Analysis is, providing a clear, practical guide on how to apply it within a coaching session. We will also cover the important points for us to consider when using this tool to ensure we guide our clients toward focused action and meaningful change.

8.1 The 80/20 Rule

The Pareto Analysis, more commonly known as the 80/20 Rule or the Pareto Principle, is a decision-making tool that helps us identify and prioritise the most significant factors in any situation. Developed by the Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto, it is based on a universal observation: a large majority of the effects (roughly 80%) typically come from a small number of causes (roughly 20%).

In a nutshell, this principle reveals that life is not a 50/50 affair. Outcomes are almost always unevenly distributed. By learning to spot this pattern, we can stop spreading our energy thinly and start focusing it with precision.

The 80/20 Rule in Everyday Life

This isn't just a business theory; it's a perspective which we can view almost any aspect of our work and life. For example:

- In Business: 80% of a company's revenue often comes from just 20% of its clients or products.
- In Service: 80% of customer complaints can frequently be traced back to 20% of the service issues.
- In Personal Productivity: 80% of our meaningful results likely come from 20% of our most focused efforts and energy.
- In Problem-Solving: 80% of the stress or obstacles we face are often caused by a critical 20% of the root causes.

The key insight for us and our clients is that the Pareto Principle is already at work in our lives every single day, whether we are aware of it or not. By becoming conscious of this pattern, we can move from being passive to being proactive. We can deliberately identify which 20% of our actions are creating the most positive results and which 20% of problems are causing the most significant headaches. This awareness is the first and most important step toward making smarter decisions, correcting mistakes, and investing our time in what matters.

8.2 The Pareto Analysis

At Coaching Minds we provide an Excel sheet in our *Coach Library* to automate the Pareto chart creation and a demonstration of use, making the application of this tool simple for our clients. (If you are not part of our mission, you can join using the QR code at the back of this book to access our full library.)

The true value for us as coaches lies in guiding our clients through the thinking process. For the purposes of this book, here is a clear overview of the steps we can follow in a coaching session.

1. **Define the Problem or Goal:** First, we work with the client to clearly define the issue they want to solve or the outcome they wish to improve. We must be specific. For example, instead of "I'm not productive," we would focus on "I want to identify which tasks deliver the most value to my business" and explore from here.
2. **Gather the Data:** Next, we help the client collect all the relevant information. This involves brainstorming and listing all the possible causes, tasks, or activities related to the problem or goal. If the goal is to increase sales, the list

might include all sales activities, from cold calling to social media marketing.

3. **Categorise and Assign Values:** We then group similar items together into clear categories. For each category, we ask the client to assign a numerical value based on its impact or frequency. In our model, we use a simple impact score out of 10. This step transforms vague feelings into tangible data.
4. **Create the Visual Chart:** This is where the insight becomes clear. A Pareto chart is a bar graph that displays the categories from highest to lowest impact. The chart often includes a line graph (the Pareto Curve) that shows the cumulative percentage. Our pre-built Excel tool automatically generates this powerful visual once the data is entered.
5. **Analyse and Identify the 'Vital Few':** Together with the client, we analyse the chart. The key is to identify the point where a small number of categories (typically the top 20%) account for a large portion (around 80%) of the total impact or problem. These are the 'vital few' factors that deserve all the attention.
- 6.
7. **Develop a Focused Action Plan:** The final, crucial step is to channel resources and effort into addressing only those top-tier categories. We help the client create a commitment to ignore the 'trivial many' less impactful areas and concentrate their energy where it will make the biggest difference.

Working through a Pareto Analysis brings powerful clarity to decision-making. It moves clients away from trying to fix everything at once and instead provides a data-driven reason to

focus. This leads to more efficient problem-solving, smarter allocation of energy, and significantly greater results from a more focused effort.

8.3 A Pareto Analysis Scenario

Let's imagine a client named Sarah, a small business owner who runs a handmade candle company. She comes to us feeling completely overwhelmed. She's working 60-hour weeks, but her profits aren't growing, and she feels constantly busy without seeing the results she wants.

Coach: “Sarah, what I am understanding here, is you feel like you are putting in a huge amount of effort but not getting the return you deserve. Shall we try an exercise to see if we can explore what is happening here?”

Sarah: “That Would be great.”

Coach: “Excellent. So, the tool is called the 80/20 rule, which basically suggests that 80% of our results probably come from just 20% of our work. Our goal is to find that 20%, so we can spend more time on what really matters. Are you ready to walk through it together?”

Sarah: “Yep, let’s do it.”

Step 1: Define the Problem

Coach: “To start, let's get specific. What's the one main outcome you want to improve right now?”

Sarah: “I need to increase my profits without working more hours. I'm exhausted.”

Step 2: Gather the Data (The 'What')

Coach: “Perfect. Let's list all the different ways you currently make money. What are all your products and sales channels?”

Sarah lists them:

- Large Scented Jar Candles (sold on her website and at a local market)
- Small Tea-Light Candles
- Scented Wax Melts
- Custom Wedding Candles
- A monthly Candle Subscription Box

Step 3: Assign Values (The 'Impact')

Coach: “Great list. Now, let's score each of these based on how much profit they brought in last month. Let's use a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is 'huge profit' and 1 is 'barely made anything'. Don't overthink it, just give me your gut feeling.”

Sarah's Scores:

- Large Scented Jar Candles: **9/10**
- Small Tea-Light Candles: **3/10**
- Scented Wax Melts: **4/10**
- Custom Wedding Candles: **8/10**

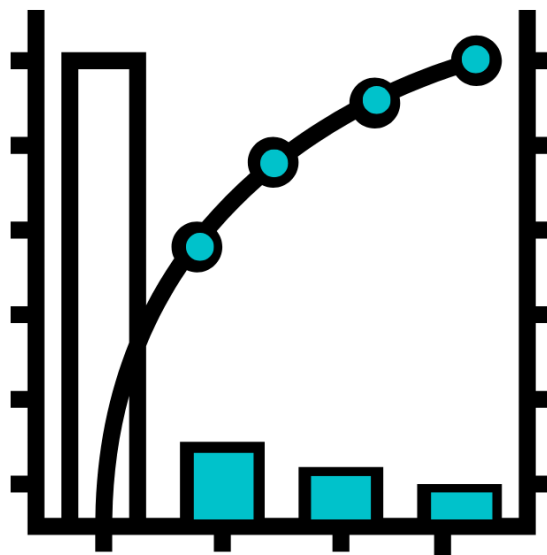
- Candle Subscription Box: **2/10**

Step 4: Create the Visual (The 'Aha!' Moment)

The coach (or the Excel tool) creates a simple bar chart, ranking the products from highest score to lowest.

Product Category	Impact Score
Large Jars	9
Custom Weddings	8
Wax Melts	4
Tea-Lights	3
Subscription Box	2

Figure 11: The Pareto Chart



The chart will look something similar to the above. Anything that falls outside of the curve, sits within the 20% vital few.

Step 5: Analyse and Identify the 'Vital Few'

Coach: “Look at this, Sarah. Just two things, your Large Jar Candles and Custom Wedding Candles, are responsible for almost all of your high profit. Together, they are your 20%. The other three products, while they do bring in some money, require your time but don't deliver the same financial return according to the Pareto Chart. They are the 80% of your effort that's only giving you 20% of your results.”

Step 6: Develop a Focused Action Plan

Coach: “So, based on this, what could you do differently?”

Sarah's Insights and Actions:

Insight: “I spend so much time packing the subscription boxes and making small tea-lights, but they're not paying off.”

Action 1: “I will stop the subscription box service and discontinue the tea-lights to free up 10 hours a week.”

Action 2: “I will use that freed-up time to create a new marketing campaign focused specifically on the Large Jar Candles and to network with wedding planners for more custom orders.”

The Outcome:

By applying the Pareto Principle, Sarah moved from feeling scattered and overwhelmed to having a clear, data-backed

strategy. She learned she could work less but smarter, by focusing only on the activities that generated the most significant results for her business. This is the power of using the 80/20 rule in coaching, it provides clarity for transformative action.

8.4 The Pareto Chart

When we use a Pareto chart with a client, it's not enough to just show them the graph. Our role is to teach them how to interpret it, turning data into actionable insight. Here's a simple, step-by-step overview we can use to explain the process, ensuring they understand exactly what they're seeing and what to do next.

1. Start with the 'Why'

First, we explain the chart's purpose in simple terms:

“This chart is a visual shortcut. Its main job is to show us which few things are causing most of our problems (or which few actions are creating most of our success) so we know exactly where to focus.”

2. Look at the Categories (The 'What')

We point to the bottom of the chart (the x-axis).

“Each of these bars represents a different category we're analysing, like a specific product, a task, or a type of problem. Notice how they are arranged? The biggest issue is always on the far left, and they get smaller as we move to the right. This descending order is what lets us see the story at a glance.”

3. Assess the Height of the Bars (The 'How Much')

Next, we direct their attention to the height of the bars and the scale on the left side (the y-axis):

“The taller the bar, the bigger its impact. This could be how often it happens, how much money it involves, or how much it affects your goal. The tallest bars on the left are your biggest impacts.”

4. Identify the 'Vital Few' (The 20%)

This is the most critical step. We explain the core principle:

“Remember the 80/20 rule? We're looking for the small group of bars on the left that are responsible for the bulk of the effect. In our chart, the line that curves across the top helps us see this. The point where that line hits 80% on the right-hand scale usually cuts off the top 20% of the causes. These are your 'vital few', the areas where your attention will have the biggest payoff.”

5. Prioritise Your Actions

Now we bridge insight to action:

"Our strategy is simple: we focus here, (pointing to the 'vital few' bars.) By channelling our energy, time, and resources into improving or focusing on just these top categories, we will get the most significant return on our effort. Let's brainstorm what specific actions we can take to address these top two or three items."

6. Understand the Cumulative Line (The 'Running Total')

We explain the curved line:

“This isn't just a random squiggle. It's a running total. It shows us how the impact adds up as we move from left to right. A steep climb at the beginning tells us that the first few categories are doing most of the work. It's a visual confirmation of the 80/20 effect.”

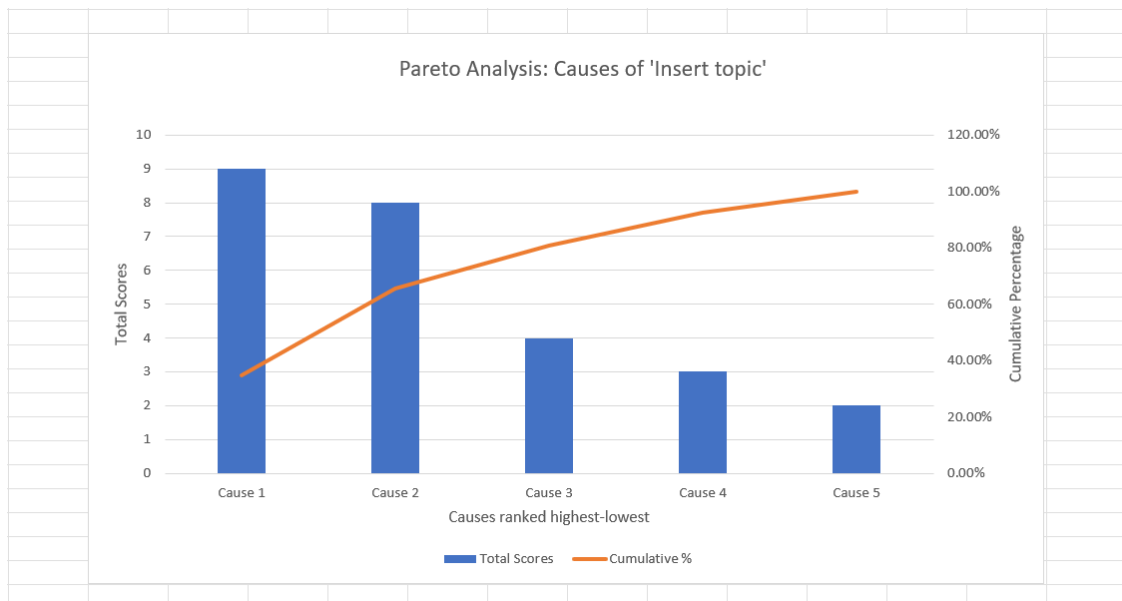
7. Use it as a Communication Tool

Finally, we empower them to use this tool themselves:

“This chart isn't just for our session. It's a powerful communication tool. You can share this with a team or a partner to quickly show them, 'Here is the data that proves where we need to focus.' It aligns everyone and makes decision-making objective and clear.”

By guiding our clients through these steps, we empower them to not only understand their current situation but also to make informed, strategic decisions that will yield the greatest possible impact from their efforts.

Figure 12: An Example of a Pareto Chart in Excel



We would insert our topic for the Pareto analysis at the top of the chart. The bars labelled 'causes' here will be populated by the categories we group the tasks into and the cumulative percentage line will be automatically calculated if using the correct formula when inserting the impact numbers into a table.

We can see the two bars in the left form the 'vital few'. This means focus should be on 'Cause 1' and 'Cause 2'. We would therefore explore actions around these causes with the client.

8.4 Important Points to Note

Adopting the Pareto Analysis is a powerful way to add structure and clarity to our coaching conversations. To ensure we use it effectively and ethically, it's important to keep the following key points in mind:

1. **Always Offer, Never Impose:** As with every tool in coaching, the Pareto Analysis should be presented as an option. We might say:

“I have a simple tool that can help bring some clarity to this. It's called the 80/20 rule. Would you be open to trying it together?”

This maintains a client led session and ensures they are an active participant in the process.

2. **Lead with Curiosity, Not Assumptions:** The tool provides the structure, but our questions provide the insight. We must be genuinely curious throughout each stage. When a client assigns a score, we can ask:

- What makes you give that a 9?
- Tell me more about why this category has such a low impact.

This challenges them to think deeper and ensures the data is accurate and meaningful.

3. **Manage the Technical Side:** The Excel template, while helpful, can be a distraction. It is often best for us, as the coach, to act as the scribe and manage the data entry. This allows the client to stay in a reflective, creative space without getting bogged down by the mechanics of the tool, leading to a more focused conversation.

4. **Frame it as a Guide, Not a Gospel:** It is crucial to explain that the Pareto Principle is a rule of thumb, not an exact scientific law. The 80/20 split is a powerful guideline that points us toward the area of greatest impact. It won't identify the exact root cause with 100% precision, but it will narrow down the field, telling us where to start digging. This

manages client expectations and keeps the process exploratory.

By keeping these points in mind, we can confidently explore this useful tool with both individuals and teams. Adding the Pareto Analysis to our toolkit provides a proven method to cut through complexity, helping clients focus their energy for transformational development.

8.5 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored how the Pareto Principle transforms overwhelming complexity into actionable clarity and how we can introduce this into our coaching practice.

To integrate this concept into your coaching practice, take a moment to consider the question below:

✍ Reflecting on your own coaching practice or daily life, where have you been spending 80% of your effort for only 20% of the return, and what one activity in your vital 20% could you immediately give more attention to?

Chapter 9

Profiling & Quizzes

‘Personality quizzes... can guide us on a journey of self-discovery, helping us uncover hidden facets of our personality and gaining deeper insights into who we truly are.’

Carl Jung

How do I know which personality assessment is the right one to use with a client? What if my client gets a result they don't like or disagree with? Can these tests really tell someone who they are, or do they just put them in a box? As Transformational Coaches, our primary goal is to guide clients toward a deeper, more compassionate understanding of themselves. One of the most powerful and efficient ways to support this journey is by introducing personality or profiling assessments into our practice.

These tools are far more than simple quizzes; they can act as mirrors, offering clients a structured and often surprising reflection of elements like their strengths, communication styles, potential blind spots, and core drivers.

In this chapter, we will explore the value of these assessments, examine some of the most respected models available, and provide a practical guide on how to ethically and effectively integrate them into our coaching practice.

9.1 The Benefits of Profiles & Quizzes

Employing well-chosen personality assessments and quizzes in our coaching practice offers a number of benefits, accelerating the journey of self-discovery for our clients and enhancing the effectiveness of our work together.

First and foremost, these tools act as a tool for deeper self-awareness. They provide a structured mirror for clients to see themselves more clearly, leading to a better understanding of their strengths, potential blind spots, core preferences, and recurring behavioural patterns. This objective insight is a great starting point for any journey of personal and professional development.

Furthermore, these assessments bring clarity and focus to the coaching process itself. By identifying central aspects of a client's personality, we can help them align their efforts strategically. They learn to use their natural strengths, proactively address challenges linked to their tendencies, and set goals that are in harmony with who they truly are.

The benefits also extend directly to our work as coaches. These tools enhance communication and strengthen rapport. By understanding a client's preferred communication style (e.g. direct, diplomatic, detailed, or big-picture), we can tailor our questions, feedback, and pacing to suit them better, creating a deeper sense of trust and understanding.

From a practical business standpoint, personality assessments enable us to create highly personalised coaching strategies. Recognising a client's unique motivational drivers and learning preferences allows us to select the most effective techniques and models from the very beginning, maximising their progress and success. This is equally powerful in team coaching, where assessments reveal the diverse personalities within a group,

allowing us to facilitate better collaboration and manage conflicts by helping members appreciate their differences.

Finally, perhaps the most profound benefit is that these tools promote self-acceptance and self-compassion. By normalising their traits and showing that everyone has a unique design, clients can release judgement about how they 'should' be, developing a more positive mindset and greater personal well-being.

9.2 A Toolkit of Assessments: 9 Examples

Here are 9 examples of powerful assessments we can use. We have provided QR codes to some of these in **Appendix A: Discovery Quizzes** at the back of this book.

1. **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI):** Categorises individuals into 16 personality types based on preferences like Extraversion/Introversion and Thinking/Feeling. (Free access to a course on this is available in the Coaching Minds Hub).
2. **StrengthsFinder (Now CliftonStrengths):** Helps identify a person's top natural talents, enabling them to focus on developing and leveraging these innate strengths.
3. **Emotional Intelligence (EQ) Assessments:** Measure competencies like self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy, providing a roadmap for developing important relational skills.
4. **DISC Assessment:** Profiles individuals into four core behavioural styles: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness. It's excellent for understanding

communication and work preferences (often associated with Red, Yellow, Green, and Blue colours).

5. **Values Assessments:** Help clients identify their core, non-negotiable values, which are the fundamental beliefs that guide their behaviour and decisions. (Our Value Pyramid in our *Coaching Psychology* Book is a great start).
6. **Learning Style Assessments:** Determine a client's preferred way of learning (e.g. visual, auditory, kinesthetic), allowing us to tailor resource recommendations and action steps.
7. **Wheel of Life Assessment:** Evaluates satisfaction across key life areas (career, health, relationships, etc.), providing a holistic snapshot and highlighting areas needing attention. (Our version is the Streams of Life and is explained in detail in our *Coaching Essentials* book).
8. **Motivational Assessments:** Identify what truly drives and inspires an individual, aiding in setting goals that are inherently motivating and sustainable.
9. **Goal-Setting Assessments:** Provide frameworks to help clients clarify their goals, break them into actionable steps, and create a realistic plan for achievement.

In summary, the thoughtful application of personality quizzes and assessments offers insights, creates deep self-awareness, and allows for a customised coaching experience. This combination empowers clients to achieve substantial personal growth in a way that is both efficient and uniquely tailored to them.

9.3 A Coaching Approach to Assessments

Once we understand the value of personality and profiling assessments, the next step is exploring the many ways we can weave them into our coaching practice. These tools are flexible and provide us with room to be creative. Here are key points to consider for their effective and ethical use:

1. **Always Offer, Never Assign:** The foundation of using any tool in coaching is client choice. We offer the quiz or exercise as a potential resource, explaining its benefits and allowing the client to choose whether it aligns with their goals.
2. **Identify the Right Tool for the Need:** Our coaching intuition guides us here. We listen for client challenges, such as communication breakdowns, lack of clarity on strengths, or unclear values, that a specific assessment is designed to address.
3. **Choose the Session Format:** An assessment can be a powerful focus for a coaching session, or it can be assigned as reflective 'homework' to be completed beforehand, allowing the subsequent session to focus entirely on interpretation and action planning. We must remember we do not 'set homework' we offer it.
4. **Guide the Reflection, Don't Just Report Results:** The real transformational work doesn't lie in the assessment report itself, but in the conversation it sparks. We use our core coaching skills (powerful questioning, active listening, and curiosity) to guide clients as they reflect on their results, connect the dots to their own lives, and draw their own conclusions.

5. **Use Them as a Marketing Strategy:** A free, insightful quiz (e.g. 'Discover Your Primary Leadership Style') is a highly effective way to attract our ideal clients, provide immediate value, and generate leads for our coaching services.
6. **Embed Them in Programmes and Courses:** Assessments provide fantastic structure and self-awareness modules within group coaching programmes, online courses, or workshops, creating a shared experience and language for all participants.
7. **Use Them to Strengthen Your Niche:** If we specialise in coaching a specific group (e.g. introverted entrepreneurs, creative leaders), using a targeted assessment consistently makes our approach unique and relevant to your niche audience.
8. **Innovate and Design Your Own:** This final point is where you can truly make your mark. Don't be afraid to innovate! Based on your expertise and your niche's specific needs, you can design your own simple, powerful tools and quizzes. This not only provides immense value but also establishes you as a thought leader in your field.

By thoughtfully integrating these tools, we move beyond theory and provide our clients with tangible, insightful experiences that accelerate their journey of self-discovery and growth as part of their overall coaching experience.

9.4 Reflection and Moving the Client Forward

Completing a personality quiz is just the first step; the true transformation happens in the reflection that follows. Effective quiz-taking is not about passively receiving a label, but about

actively engaging in a process of self-discovery. The results are not a final verdict, but a starting point for a deeper conversation, and this is where our guidance as coaches becomes essential.

A quiz result is a map, but it doesn't tell us what the actual journey feels like. Our role is to be the guide who asks:

- What stands out to you here?
- How does this result resonate with your own experience?

By asking curious questions about the client's opinions, emotions, and reactions to their results, we help them move from having data to gaining an understanding of their own perspective.

This reflective process is what turns insight into action. Guiding our clients to assess their results, allows them to identify specific areas for change. For this change to be meaningful, they must fully grasp its impact and significance.

We can therefore ask questions like:

- If you were to lean into this strength more, what difference would it make?
- What would it cost you to ignore this blind spot?

This understanding is important for a powerful and personalised action plan with clear accountabilities, ensuring the insights don't just remain interesting concepts but become tools for real progress.

Ultimately, the greatest significance of any quiz lies in its ability to create curiosity and hold up a mirror. It is up to us to utilise this tool to its fullest potential. Through thoughtful questioning and deep listening, we can develop powerful insights, and help our clients discover not just what they are, but who they want to become.

9.5 Safeguards and Ethical Considerations

The ability to design our own tools is an exciting part of building a unique coaching practice. However, with this creative freedom comes a significant ethical responsibility to ensure our work remains safe, effective, and operates within the strict boundaries of the coaching profession.

Firstly, it is fundamental to understand the distinction between a coaching tool and a psychological assessment:

Coaching Tool: A coaching tool is designed for self-reflection, awareness, and prompting conversation. It offers insights and possibilities.

Psychological Assessment: A psychological assessment is a diagnostic tool used to identify mental health conditions, clinical disorders, or deep-seated psychological trauma. This is the domain of licensed psychologists, therapists, and psychiatrists.

As Transformational Coaches, we must never attempt to create or use anything that ventures into psychological diagnosis. Our work focuses on future-oriented growth and potential, not on diagnosing or treating the past.

Key Safeguards for Developing Your Own Quizzes

When you feel inspired to create your own quiz or assessment, please keep these essential safeguards in mind:

- **State the Purpose and Limitations Clearly:** Every tool must be introduced with a clear disclaimer. We must state that it is for self-reflection and personal development purposes only, is not a scientific or psychological

instrument, and is not a substitute for professional therapy or advice.

- **Frame Results as Descriptive, Not Prescriptive:** The language of our results should open doors, not close them. We can use phrases like, "This might suggest..." or "You may find that..." rather than definitive statements like "This means you are..." This frames the results as one perspective to consider, not an absolute truth.
- **Focus on Behaviours and Preferences, Not Diagnoses:** We should base our questions on observable behaviours, learnable skills, personal preferences, and values. We must avoid questions that probe into childhood trauma, mental health symptoms, or deeply personal clinical history.
- **Design for Empowerment, Not Labelling:** The goal of our tool should be to empower the client with new awareness and choices. We should avoid creating rigid categories or labels that could make a client feel boxed in or limited. The output should be a starting point for a coaching conversation, not a final judgement.
- **Know When to Refer:** If a client's reaction to a quiz reveals deep-seated pain, trauma, or a condition we suspect may be clinical (such as severe anxiety or depression), we must be prepared to pause the coaching conversation and ethically refer them to a qualified mental health professional. Our competency is in facilitating growth, not in healing.

By adhering to these guidelines, we can innovate confidently and ethically. We create powerful tools that serve our clients' growth while honouring the boundaries of our profession and safeguarding their well-being above all else.

9.6 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored how personality assessments can deepen self-awareness and the potential of creating our own tools. We've also established the important ethical boundaries that keep our work safe and effective, ensuring we operate within our coaching competency.

To integrate these concepts into your own coaching practice, take a moment to consider the question below:

✍ What is one specific step you will take in your own practice (whether using an existing assessment or creating your own) to ensure you consistently empower clients with insight while firmly staying within the ethical boundaries of transformational coaching?

Chapter 10

Building & Tracking Habits

‘You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems.’

James Clear

Where's the best place to start when a client wants to change a habit that's been with them for years? What's the one small change that makes the biggest difference in building a new habit? How can we help a client who's motivated one day but loses steam the next? Often, clients don't reach their goals because of lack of ambition but because of the small, daily habits they have. These routines can either help them move forward or hold them back.

In this chapter, we will look at the ideas from James Clear's book, *Atomic Habits*. This book is a leading guide on how habits work. We will explore how we can use these simple ideas to help our clients build good habits that lead to success.

10.1 Habits in Coaching

As Transformational Coaches, a central part of our work is guiding clients to trade habits that hold them back for ones that move them forward. Think of our habits as the building blocks of our days. These small, repeated actions are what shape our results. This is why being mindful of our daily routines (both the supportive ones and the ones that work against us) is important.

It's the first step in developing the positive mindset needed for lasting change.

In our coaching sessions, we often find that big goals, like eating healthier or getting organised, come down to these small, daily habits. By helping our clients identify and change the patterns that no longer serve them, we guide them toward building a more productive and fulfilling life, one day at a time.

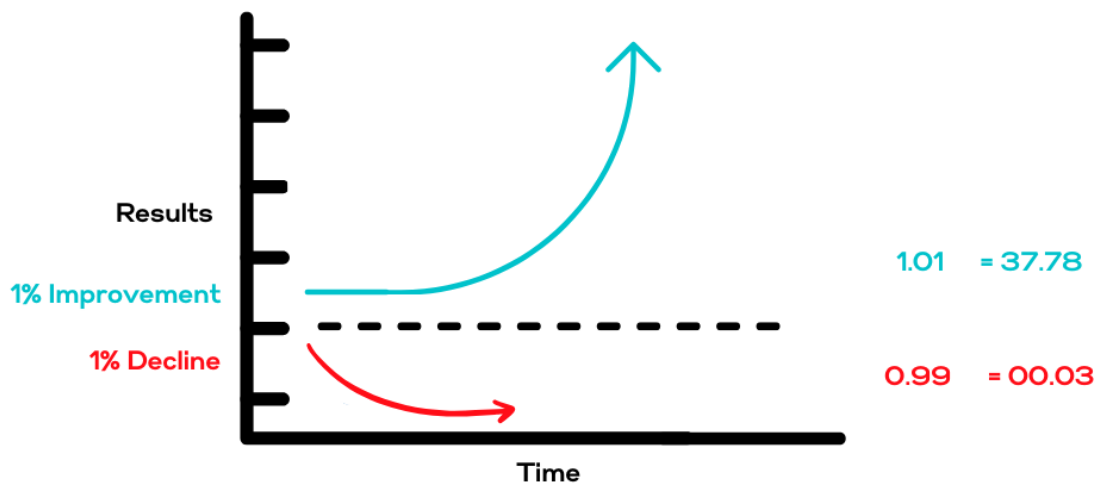
Ultimately, it's our habits that shape our future. They influence the small choices we make all day long. By focusing on building positive, supportive routines, we help our clients position themselves for a brighter and more successful future.

10.2 Habits and Success

The real power of habit isn't about massive, overnight changes. It's found in compounding. Just like saving a little money each month adds up over the years, repeating a small, positive habit consistently builds a foundation for success. It's a simple rule that works both ways, our good habits and our bad ones both gain strength through daily repetition.

Observing the illustration below, which we've designed from the ideas in James Clear's book, Atomic Habits.

Figure 13: Habit Success



We can see, improving by just 1% each day seems tiny. You might not even notice it. But stick with it, and over a year, that tiny daily gain adds up to being nearly 40% better. This perfectly shows us that we don't need to make huge leaps. Small, incremental steps, taken consistently, are what lead to incredible transformations.

It's also important to be kind to ourselves when we miss a day. A single slip-up doesn't ruin everything. The real challenge begins when we let that one missed day turn into a week, and then a month. That's when progress grinds to a halt. Our role as coaches is to help clients spot this slide early, and with self-compassion, make a conscious effort to get back on track. This is how we avoid the trap of complacency and keep that steady, positive momentum going toward their goals.

10.3 The Structure of a Habit

As Transformational Coaches, if we want to help our clients change their habits, we first need to understand how they are built. Habits follow a predictable pattern. When we understand this four-stage cycle, we can work with our clients to make small, smart changes at each step, turning the process to their advantage.

A habit is simply a behaviour we do so often that it becomes almost automatic. The framework for this, popularised by Charles Duhigg and expanded by James Clear, breaks it down into four parts: the Cue, the Craving, the Response, and the Reward.

Figure 14: The Habit Structure



As you can see in Figure 14 above, these four stages form a loop that runs on autopilot. Let's walk through each one:

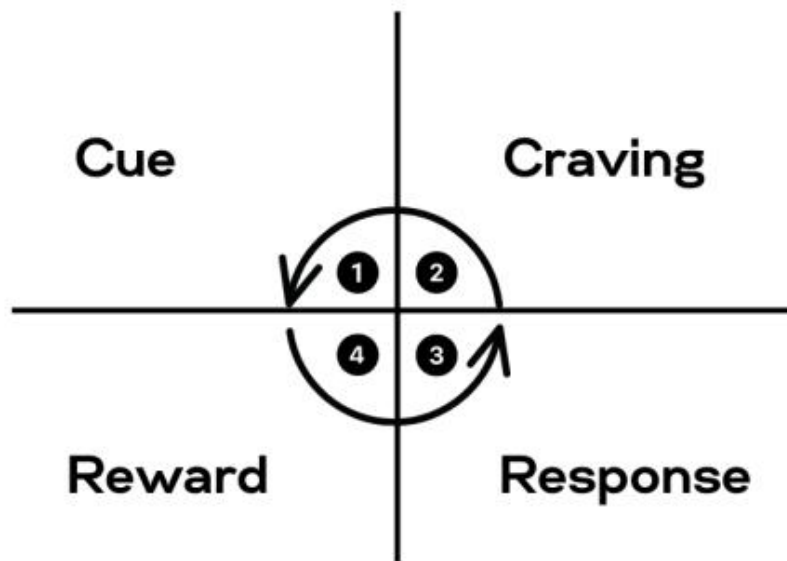
1. **Cue (The Trigger):** This is the starting point of the habit. It's the signal that tells our brain to go into automatic mode. A cue can be something we see (a notification on our phone), a time of day (3 pm slump), a location (sitting on the sofa),

an emotion (feeling bored), or even just the presence of certain people.

2. **Craving (The Motivation):** The cue doesn't create the habit by itself; it sparks a craving. This is the powerful feeling of wanting something, the desire for a feeling, an experience, or a relief from discomfort. For example, we don't crave the cigarette itself, we crave the feeling of relaxation it promises. We don't crave scrolling on our phone, we crave a moment of distraction.
3. **Response (The Habit Itself):** This is the action we take, the actual habit we perform. Whether it's eating a biscuit, going for a run, or biting our nails, the response is what we do to satisfy the craving. Whether this happens, depends on how easy and appealing the action is.
4. **Reward (The Payoff):** The response delivers a reward. This is the end goal of the habit loop. The reward satisfies the craving and teaches our brain, 'Remember this for next time.' The reward for eating a biscuit might be a sugar rush; the reward for a run might be a feeling of accomplishment.

This framework shows us that craving is the centre of the habit. To build a good habit, we must make the cue obvious, the craving attractive, the response easy, and the reward satisfying. To break a bad habit, we do the opposite. Now, let's explore the practical steps for doing just that as defined by James Clear: The 4 Laws of Habit Building.

Figure 15: The Habit Loop



10.4 The 4 Laws of Habit Building

Alongside the structure of the habit loop, James Clear provides four simple but powerful laws we can use to help our clients build positive, lasting habits. Think of these laws as a step-by-step guide for designing a new routine that actually sticks.

Here is an overview of each law and how we can apply it in our coaching:

Law 1: Make It Obvious

This law is all about visibility. We can't do a new habit if we forget about it. To make a habit obvious, we need to create a clear cue or trigger. This could be as simple as leaving running shoes by the front door or scheduling the new habit right after an existing

one (e.g. "After I pour my morning coffee, I will meditate for one minute"). This is known as 'Habit Stacking'.

A coaching question we can ask:

"Where and when can you anchor this new habit to your existing routine to make it impossible to miss?"

Law 2: Make It Attractive

This law focuses on motivation. The more appealing a habit feels, the more likely we are to do it. We can help clients make a habit attractive by linking it to something they enjoy, like listening to a favourite podcast only while at the gym, or by focusing on the positive feeling they'll get after it's done.

A coaching question we can ask:

"How can you pair this new habit with something you genuinely love to make it more enjoyable?"

Law 3: Make It Easy

This is perhaps the most important law: reduce the friction. The key to building a habit is repetition, not perfection. We must help clients make the habit so easy they can't say no. This means starting tiny, "just one push-up" or "reading one page." The goal is to master the art of showing up.

A coaching question we can ask:

"What is the smallest, easiest first step you can take? How can you make it even easier?"

Law 4: Make It Satisfying

We are more likely to repeat a behaviour when it feels good. This law is about creating an immediate reward. This could be ticking a box on a habit tracker for a hit of visual satisfaction, or treating yourself to a small, healthy reward. The feeling of success is a powerful reinforcer.

A coaching question we can ask:

"What immediate reward can you give yourself that will make you feel good about completing your habit?"

By understanding and applying these four laws in our coaching conversations, we give our clients a practical framework for success. We move from just talking about a new habit to strategically designing one that is obvious, attractive, easy, and satisfying, setting them up for long-term growth.

10.5 The Habit Scorecard

Before we can help a client change their habits, they first need to see them clearly. We often move through our daily routines on autopilot, completely unaware of the many small actions that shape our day. The Habit Scorecard is a simple tool designed to break this autopilot and bring conscious awareness to a client's existing routines.

It works by turning an automatic routine into a written list that can be reviewed objectively. This isn't about judgement; it's about observation. It helps clients see the balance of their habits and identify exactly where to make small, impactful changes.

Here is a simple four-step process to guide your client through this exercise:

Step 1: List the Routine

We begin by asking our client to choose one specific routine, like their morning, their workday start, or their evening. We then ask them to write down every single step in that routine, from the moment it begins. The key is to capture everything, no matter how small.

Example List (Morning Routine): Alarm goes off, hit snooze, check phone, get out of bed, use the bathroom, weigh myself, make coffee, scroll through news feed, get dressed, make breakfast.

Step 2: Score Each Habit

Next, ask the client to go through their list and mark each habit with a simple symbol:

+ (Plus) for positive habits that support their goals and well-being.

– (Minus) for negative habits that hold them back or don't serve them.

o (Neutral) for habits that are neither particularly helpful nor harmful.

Step 3: Tally the Score

Now, work with the client to do a simple calculation. Add up all the positive habits and subtract all the negative ones. Ignore the neutral ones. This gives them a simple numerical score for their routine.

For example: 5 positive habits - 3 negative habits = a score of +2.

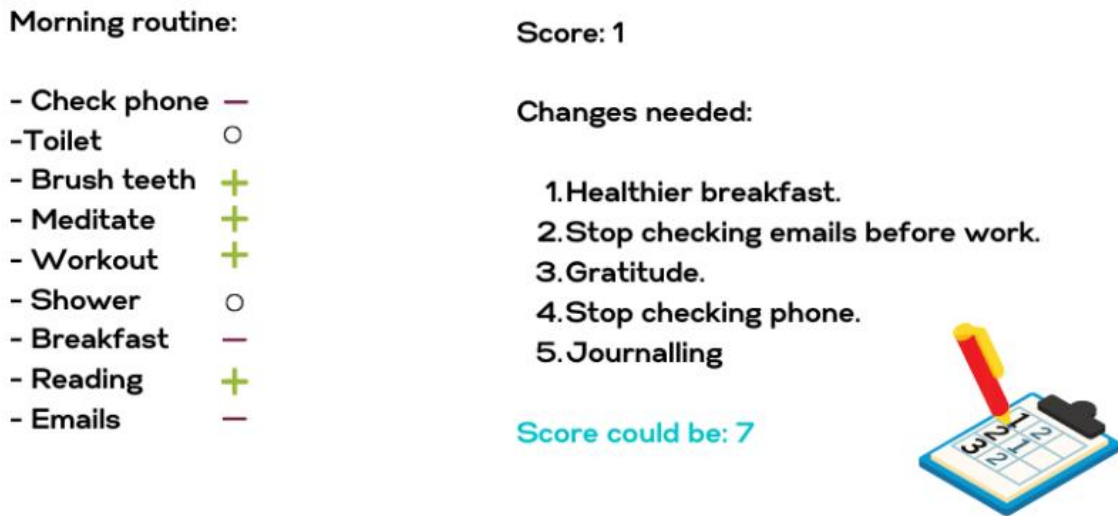
Step 4: Reflect and Plan for Improvement

The final step is the most important. We reflect on the score and the list together with the client. Asking powerful questions like:

- What surprises you about this list?
- Looking at your negative habits, which one would be easiest to start with?
- How could you add one more positive habit or remove one negative habit to improve your score?

From this conversation, we can develop a practical and focused plan. The goal isn't to get a perfect score overnight, but to use this new awareness to make one or two conscious changes that will tilt the balance in a more positive direction for the client.

Figure 16: Habit Scorecard Example



We can see from the example in Figure 16 above, that the morning routine is currently scored at a 1 due to the number of negative habits. By converting these negative habits into positive ones, there would be a significant increase in the morning routine score, jumping from 1 to 7. This illustrates the awareness, reflection, and impact the Habit Scorecard can bring into our coaching.

10.6 Habit Trackers

Habit trackers are simple but powerful tools designed to help us monitor our daily routines. They provide a clear, visual snapshot of our progress, allowing us to record and see how consistently we're sticking with our new habits over time. Whether it's a checklist in a journal, a dedicated app on our phone, or a spreadsheet, a habit tracker makes our efforts visible.

One of the biggest benefits is the increased awareness and accountability they create. The simple act of checking a box each day makes us more conscious of our choices. It's a gentle nudge that holds us accountable to the commitment we made to ourselves, which is a powerful motivator for staying consistent. This is a principle we can use in our own coaching practice and highly recommend to our clients.

Another major advantage is the motivation that comes from visual progress. There's a real sense of satisfaction in seeing a chain of successful days build up. This 'streak' is a powerful reinforcer that makes us not want to break the chain. This visual feedback also helps us spot patterns, like which days are harder than others, so we can adjust our approach and give ourselves more support when needed. This directly supports the habit laws we discussed, especially 'making it satisfying.'

Furthermore, habit trackers help align our daily actions with our big-picture goals. By consistently tracking, we ensure that our small, daily efforts are consciously moving us in the right direction. It provides a daily reminder to prioritise the behaviours that truly matter for our long-term growth and well-being.

Using Habit Trackers in Coaching

Here's how we can practically integrate them into our work with clients:

- **Introduce the Concept:** Simply point clients in the direction of habit trackers as a useful aid for their journey.
- **Use Simple Tools:** Suggest they start with a basic planner or create our own branded template that they can use.

- **Recommend Apps:** For tech-savvy clients, recommend popular habit-tracking apps that can send reminders and make tracking effortless.
- **Define Clear Metrics:** Work with the client to define what 'success' looks like for their habit. Is it a 5-minute walk, or reading one page? A clear metric makes tracking straightforward.

While habit trackers are incredibly useful, it's important to remember they are a tool, not the goal. The real success comes from our consistent effort and commitment. The tracker is simply there to support us, providing valuable insight, accountability, and a boost of motivation along the way. Why not start exploring and experimenting with one today?

10.7 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored the mechanics of habits, from the four-stage loop to the practical laws for building new routines and the tools to track them.

To integrate this into our coaching practice, take a moment to consider the question below:

✍ **Reflecting on the Four Laws of Habit Building, which one do you find is most often overlooked by clients, and what is one powerful question you can ask to bring their attention to it?**

Chapter 11

Fixed & Growth Mindsets

'Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right'

Henry Ford

How can you tell if a client has a fixed mindset? What's a simple way to help someone shift from 'I can't do this' to 'I can't do this yet'? Can someone's mindset really be changed? Mindset is the invisible foundation upon which all success is built. It's the running commentary in our heads that determines whether we see a challenge as an exciting opportunity or a threatening obstacle. As Transformational Coaches, understanding the power of mindset is essential.

At the heart of this work is the distinction between a Fixed Mindset and a Growth Mindset, concepts pioneered by psychologist Carol Dweck. Our clients' ability to grow, persevere, and achieve their goals is deeply influenced by which of these mindsets they operate from.

In this chapter, we will clearly define both fixed and growth mindsets, and explore practical tools and conversational techniques to guide clients away from the limitations of fixed thinking and toward an empowering growth mindset.

11.1 What is a Fixed Mindset?

A Fixed Mindset is a belief system where a person thinks their basic abilities, intelligence, and talents are set in stone, they're

fixed traits we're born with, and we can't really change them. People with this mindset often believe we either 'have it' or we don't.

This belief has a powerful effect on their behaviour and because they see their skills as static, they tend to avoid challenges for fear that failure might reveal a lack of talent. They often see setbacks not as a normal part of learning, but as a direct reflection of their personal limitations. This can make them shy away from effort, as they believe that if you're truly 'good' at something, it shouldn't require hard work.

Spotting the Signs of a Fixed Mindset

As coaches, we can listen for certain patterns in our clients' language and behaviour. Here are some common signs:

- **Resistance to Change:** They stick to what they know and are hesitant to try new approaches or step outside their comfort zone.
- **Self-Limiting Beliefs:** Their thinking is filled with phrases like "I'm just not a math person" or "I could never do that," which boxes them in.
- **Avoiding Challenge:** They may become defensive or disengage when faced with a difficult task or constructive feedback.
- **Belief in Innate Talent:** They attribute others' success to 'natural talent' or 'luck,' downplaying the role of hard work and perseverance.
- **A Pattern of Excuses:** When things don't go well, the blame often lies elsewhere, the circumstances, other

people, or a lack of luck, rather than seeing it as a learning opportunity.

As a Transformational Coach, our crucial role is to spot these fixed mindset patterns when they arise. By bringing them into the light, we can begin to challenge these limiting beliefs and guide the client toward a more empowering alternative: the Growth Mindset.

11.2 What is a Growth Mindset?

A Growth Mindset is the empowering belief that our abilities and intelligence are not fixed, but can be developed like muscles, through dedication, effort, and a commitment to learning. People with this mindset see themselves as a constant work in progress, always capable of improvement and change.

This belief transforms their approach to life. Instead of avoiding difficulty, they embrace challenges as the very thing that makes them stronger. They don't see failure as a final verdict, but as valuable feedback, an opportunity to learn, adjust their strategy, and try again. They understand that effort is not a sign of weakness, but the pathway to mastery.

Signs of a Growth Mindset in Action

We can encourage this mindset by recognising and celebrating these behaviours in our clients:

- **They Thrive in Change:** They see change not as a threat, but as a natural and exciting part of life and growth.

- **They Create Opportunities:** Their thinking is proactive. They ask "How can I?" and "What's possible?" which opens doors instead of closing them.
- **They Welcome Challenges:** A difficult task is seen as a puzzle to be solved, a chance to stretch their abilities and learn something new.
- **They Believe in Hard Work:** They know that talent is just the starting point, and that consistent effort is what truly leads to success.
- **They Create Their Own 'Luck':** They believe that luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity, and they focus on putting themselves in the path of more opportunities.
- **They are Solution-Focused:** When faced with an obstacle, their energy goes into finding a way forward, rather than dwelling on the problem.

As Transformational Coaches, it is important that we embody this Growth Mindset ourselves. Our ability to continuously learn, adapt, and believe in our own potential for growth is the foundation upon which we help our clients build theirs. By modelling this way of thinking, we don't just talk about transformation, we live it.

11.3 Mindsets in Coaching

As coaches, we quickly learn that our clients' mindsets are the lens through which they see every challenge and opportunity. A fixed mindset can keep them stuck, while a growth mindset

opens the door to new possibilities. Our role is to become skilled at identifying the patterns of a fixed mindset and gently guiding our clients toward a more empowering perspective.

How to Spot and Shift a Fixed Mindset

The first step is to listen carefully to our clients' language. Fixed mindset patterns often reveal themselves through words like:

- "I can't do that."
- "I'm just not good at this."
- "That's just how I am."

When we hear this, we have a powerful opportunity to intervene. Instead of focusing on past failures, we can ask questions that reframe the situation and encourage a growth mindset:

- What did that experience teach you that you can use next time?
- If you were to approach this with a 'not yet' attitude, what would your first small step be?
- How can we break this down into a challenge you can learn from?

Ultimately, our goal is to empower clients to see that their abilities are not set in stone. By helping them shift their perspective, we open their potential to achieve new results.

Three Ways to Integrate Mindset Work into Our Practice

This isn't just a tool for one-on-one sessions; it's a flexible concept we can build into our practice. Here are three ways in which we can integrate this into our coaching:

1. **One-on-One Guidance:** We can create a Fixed v Growth Mindset quiz to identify areas where our client might hold a fixed and a growth mindset. We can then use the reflective questions above to challenge limiting beliefs in real-time during our sessions. (more on this below)
2. **Develop a Framework or Course:** We can create a dedicated workshop or short course on developing a growth mindset. This is a highly popular topic that can attract new clients and provide a structured journey for existing ones.
3. **Create Content:** We can engage a wider audience by discussing mindset principles in podcasts, YouTube videos, or social media posts. This establishes our expertise and helps people begin their growth journey before they even become paying clients.

By weaving mindset work into our coaching, we provide clients with a belief system they need to succeed long after our work together is complete.

11.4 Tips to Guide Clients to a Growth Mindset

We've explored the theory; now let's focus on action. Here is a practical, non-exhaustive list of tips to help us guide our clients from a fixed to a growth mindset. We must remember to reflect on these and develop our own unique ways of applying them.

Be Curious, Clarify, and Challenge

When a client makes a fixed statement like "I can't do public speaking" or "I'm not a leader," our most powerful response is to treat it not as a fact, but as an interesting starting point for exploration.

These statements are clues to their underlying beliefs. Instead of accepting them at face value or arguing against them, we can gently challenge them with genuine curiosity.

A simple, powerful question to begin this process could be:

"You say you 'can't' do that. What makes you feel that way?"

This single question does three important things:

1. It validates their feeling without agreeing with the limiting belief.
2. It gently interrupts the automatic thought pattern.
3. It invites them to become a curious observer of their own thinking, opening the door to examining the evidence behind the belief and ultimately, to challenging it.

This shift from debating facts to exploring feelings and origins is the first step in moving a client from a fixed perspective to a growth-oriented one.

Identify the Fixed Mindset 'Hotspots'

A fixed mindset rarely takes over every part of a client's life. Instead, it often sits in specific, sensitive areas. Our job is to

become like a detective, listening carefully to pinpoint exactly where their mindset becomes fixed. We can reflect on the following:

- Is it a story they tell themselves about their fundamental intelligence? ("I'm just not smart enough.")
- Is it around their creative abilities? ("I'm not a creative person.")
- Is it about their capacity to learn new skills, especially later in life? ("I'm too old to change now.")

By identifying these specific 'mindset hotspots,' we can stop using a scattered approach and instead target our coaching with focus. Understanding that the block is about creativity and not intelligence, for example, allows us to ask the right powerful questions and use the most relevant tools to help them rebuild their belief in that specific area. This focused approach makes our coaching far more effective and impactful.

Find the Root Cause

When a client expresses a fixed mindset statement, it's important to look beyond the symptom (the statement itself) and explore the root system that feeds it. A belief like "I'm not a numbers person" didn't appear out of nowhere; it was more than likely planted by a specific experience and watered over time.

Our role is to be a compassionate explorer, carefully uncovering the root of this belief. We can do this by asking exploratory questions that focus on who, what, why, and when.

A powerful starting question is:

"When did you first start believing you weren't a numbers person?"

This question immediately shifts the focus from a present-day 'fact' to a past event or decision. It invites the client to trace the belief back to its source, which is often a specific moment, maybe a critical comment from a teacher, a bad grade on a test, or a comparison to a sibling.

By helping them identify the 'when,' we begin to separate the belief from their core identity. It transforms a 'trait' into a learned perspective, opening the door to challenging, unlearning, and ultimately replacing it with a new, empowering narrative.

Leverage Your Existing Toolkit

Remember, we don't need new tools, we can apply what we already know. If we have access to the full set of books from this series designed by Coaching Minds we can:

1. **Revisit our *Coaching Psychology* book and our *Cognitive Tools (STAR, SPACE, DEEP, Circles of Influence)*:** We can use these to help clients reframe setbacks, create space between their thoughts and their identity, and focus their energy on what they can control.
2. **Revisit our *Core Coaching Skills* from our *Coaching Essentials* book:** Remembering that our empathetic listening, powerful questioning, and ability to reflect back are our greatest assets for creating the psychological safety needed for a client to explore and change their deepest beliefs.
3. **Revisit chapter 9 of this book on *Quizzes and Profiling*:** Remember, these can provide an objective starting point for conversation and self-discovery, giving both ourselves and our client a shared language to discuss mindset.

By using what we know, continuously building our own growth mindset, and applying these strategies, we are equipped to guide our clients in reshaping their inner world and opening their true potential.

11.5 The Fixed v Growth Mindset Quiz

This simple 10-question quiz is designed to help us uncover our current thinking patterns. There are no right or wrong answers, only opportunities for self-awareness. To get the most accurate insight, it is important to work through each of the 10 questions and answer as quickly and honestly as possible so our answers truly reflect our beliefs. Our results will reveal our tendency towards a fixed or growth mindset, providing a starting point for our personal development journey.

1. When I have a project or a goal to achieve, I...

- a) Put in the hard work and never cut corners.
- b) Take the quick and easy route, when possible, to get things done.

2. You notice that everyone around you is succeeding, whilst you, yourself currently feel like you are failing. What emotions go through...

- a) Happy and inspired because you want to learn from the success of others.
- b) Envy and jealousy because you feel threatened by the success of others.

3. You have spent hours doing a piece of work. You feel like it is one of the best pieces of work you have accomplished. A friend of yours provides feedback that it is good but gives you a long list of potential improvements that can be made. Do you...

- a) Seek out further constructive feedback and understand how you can improve the piece of work.
- b) Get defensive at the feedback and take it as a blow to your ability.

4. You find yourself making a large mistake at work which happened because you decided to take the advice of your colleague which was incorrect. Your boss is not happy and raises this with you. Do you...

- a) Apologise and work to fix the mistake by finding a solution.
- b) Put the blame on your colleague and explain it was due to their bad advice the mistake happened.

5. After the mistake has been resolved. Do you...

- a) See the experience as learning and make note for next time.
- b) Put your focus on how the mistake makes you look bad.

6. You have been given responsibilities at work that you do not feel comfortable with because you feel a little out of depth and are unsure of what is required to undertake these responsibilities. Do you...

- a) Ask for help and guidance.
- b) Reassure yourself that you know what to do and go ahead and try and do it.

7. You find yourself in a group discussion on a new topic that is very detailed. You are asked a difficult question in which you are unsure how to answer. Do you...

- a) Show curiosity and explain that this is a new concept that you are unfamiliar with and you would love to learn more.
- b) Pretend that you have the knowledge and attempt to answer.

8. You are asked to take on something very challenging at work. Life also decides to throw other problems your way. Do you...

- a) Persevere through these difficult times.
- b) Give up on the challenge at work easily because it is too much.

9. With challenges as a whole. Do you...

- a) Actively seek out challenges.
- b) Tend to avoid challenges.

10. A colleague or manager at work is pulling you to one side and telling you that you are not performing well enough in your role. Do you...

- a) Listen, attempt to understand and look at how you can improve your performance.
- b) Become defensive and begin to provide a list of things you have completed, arguing why your performance is great.

We now count the total number of times we selected 'A'.

Our Growth Mindset Score is: [Number of 'A' responses] / 10

This number represents our current tendency towards a growth mindset. Each 'B' response highlights an area where a fixed mindset perspective may be present. These are not flaws, but valuable opportunities for reflection and growth. We can consider these specific statements as a starting point for our continued development.

This quiz can serve as a conversation starter in our coaching sessions. We can offer it to clients who feel stuck or who consistently doubt their abilities. Once scored, use the results not as a label, but as a map. Focus on the 'B' responses (the fixed mindset statements) and use them to explore the underlying beliefs and stories with curiosity. Ask questions like:

- What experiences led you to feel this way?
- How might adopting an 'A' perspective in this area change your approach?

This transforms the quiz from a simple assessment into a powerful tool for targeted, transformative dialogue. For those of us who are great with technology, we can develop this into an online quiz with automated answers. It could be a great way of improving our clients experience with it.

11.6 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored the impact of mindset, learning to distinguish the limiting patterns of a fixed mindset from the empowering beliefs of a growth mindset.

To integrate these concepts into your own coaching practice, take a moment to consider the question below:

✍ Reflecting on the fixed and growth mindset patterns, in which area of your own life or coaching practice could you most benefit from applying a stronger growth mindset, and what is one small step you will take to develop it?

Chapter 12

Conscious Communication

'The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.'

George Bernard Shaw

What does 'conscious communication' actually mean in a coaching session? How can I tell if my communication is truly helping a client open up? What's one simple thing I can do to become a more conscious communicator? A Transformational Coach understands that communication is the core of our work. It's not just about what we say, but how we say it, and the impact our words and actions have on our clients. This awareness is the foundation of conscious communication, the practice of bringing full attention and intention to every interaction.

Conscious communication means we lead by example. We become deeply aware of the language we use, the questions we ask, and the energy we bring into a session. It's about moving from automatic, reactive responses to chosen, thoughtful connections that create a safe and empowering space for growth.

In this chapter, we will explore what conscious communication truly means and provide you with practical ways to start developing it.

12.1 The Communication ‘Awareness’ Gap

Conscious communication is the practice of bringing our full attention to how we connect with others. It means mindfully choosing our words to create understanding, empathy, and a genuine sense of partnership. It involves being fully present, listening with our whole being, speaking with clear intention, and always considering the impact of what we say. This approach transforms our interactions, building positive relationships and resolving differences with compassion and respect.

At the core of conscious communication is understanding what we call the ‘Awareness Gap.’ This is the invisible space between what we intend to say and what the other person actually hears and understands.

Figure 17: The Awareness Gap



This gap exists because we all have different backgrounds, experiences, and biases that colour how we interpret messages.

It highlights a simple but powerful truth; what we said may not be what they heard.

As coaches, our responsibility is to consciously bridge this gap. This means we cannot assume we've been understood; we must actively ensure it. While our core coaching skills are a great start, here are five practical ways anyone can bridge the awareness gap:

1. **Practice Active Listening:** This means giving the speaker our full attention. Maintaining eye contact, nodding, and offering small verbal cues like "I see" to show we're engaged. This ensures we accurately receive their message before we respond.
2. **Seek Clarification:** We must never assume we know what someone means. If anything is unclear, we should ask gentle, open questions. A simple "Could you tell me a bit more about that?" or "What did you mean when you said...?" can prevent major misunderstandings.
3. **Develop Empathy:** We must make a conscious effort to step into the other person's shoes. Try to understand the feelings and perspectives behind their words. This doesn't mean we have to agree, but it allows us to acknowledge their experience and connect on a human level.
4. **Use Clear and Simple Language:** We should avoid jargon and be mindful of our body language. We can use clear, concise sentences and check that our nonverbal cues (like our posture and facial expressions) match our words. This helps ensure our message is received as we intended.
5. **Cultivate Cultural Sensitivity:** We must recognise that communication styles vary across different backgrounds. By educating ourselves about these differences, we avoid

unintentional misunderstandings. This creates inclusive and respectful communication with everyone.

By integrating these practices, we move from simply talking to connecting, ensuring our communication builds bridges of understanding rather than walls of assumption.

12.2 Channels of Coaching Communication

To become conscious communicators, we must be aware of all the ways we connect with others in our coaching. The key is to ensure that our message and our unique personality (our brand voice) shines through consistently, no matter the channel.

As coaches, we communicate through a wide variety of methods, including:

- Face-to-Face Meetings
- Video Calls (Zoom, Teams, Google Meets)
- Messages within Client Relationship Management (CRM) systems
- Email
- Phone Calls
- Text/WhatsApp/Direct Messages on social platforms
- Networking Platforms
- Social media: through posts, engagement, and our profile content
- Our website

We may not use all of these channels just yet, and that's perfectly fine. The goal is not to be everywhere, but to be intentional and consistent wherever we are.

Take a moment to honestly assess your current practice:

How many of these communication methods do you actively use, and more importantly, does your message and brand voice feel genuinely consistent across all of them?

This isn't about judgement; it's about awareness. Does the warm, encouraging coach our clients meet on a Zoom call sound like the same person who writes a business-like email or posts on social media? Identifying any gaps is the first step toward creating conscious communication that builds trust at every touchpoint.

Practical Guidance for Key Channels

There are certain tips and tricks we can adopt with specific communication channels. Here are some elements to think about:

- **Communicating by Message:** Use messaging tools like WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger with care. They are best for short, factual updates like confirming a session time or a quick 'Running 5 minutes late.' We should avoid using them for anything emotional or complex. The recipient will read our words through the filter of their own current emotional state, which can easily lead to misunderstandings. Many communication breakdowns start with a misinterpreted text.
- **Communicating by Email:** Our emails carry a distinct tone of voice. Use them for sharing detailed information, resources, and documents. Make a conscious effort to ensure the tone of your emails (whether it's warm and encouraging or direct and professional) aligns perfectly with your personal coaching brand.

- **For Video Calls (Zoom, Teams, etc.):** We should ensure our face is well-lit and the camera is at eye level. A tidy, professional background minimises distractions. Nodding and smiling shows we're engaged. We should maintain eye contact by looking at the camera, not the screen. It is also helpful to close unnecessary tabs and silence notifications to give our client our undivided attention. This conveys respect and presence.
- **For Social Media & Group Platforms:** It is great practice to define our voice. We can decide on 3-5 words that describe our brand's personality (e.g. 'supportive,' 'direct,' 'inspiring') and let them guide our posts and comments. It is also important that we engage, don't just broadcast. Respond to comments and questions thoughtfully. Social media is a conversation, not a megaphone. We should always share valuable tips, insights, and encouragement, not just promotional content. This builds trust and establishes your expertise.
- **Establishing a Consistent Brand Tone:** The golden rule is to write like we speak. Our communication, whether in an email, a social media post, or a CRM message, should sound like us. We should read our messages aloud before sending them. Do they sound like the coach our clients know and trust? Ensuring this consistency builds familiarity and strengthens our professional relationship, making every interaction feel authentically us.

By adopting these small, conscious habits, we can ensure our communication is not only consistent but also highly effective across every platform we use.

12.3 Conscious Language

Conscious language is the intentional and mindful choice of words to create clarity, build understanding, and develop positive connection. For us as coaches, this is a must. The language we use doesn't just convey information; it directly shapes our clients' mindset, their motivation, and their entire experience of the coaching journey.

Using conscious language involves several key practices:

Choosing Empowerment Over Limitation

It means being aware of and avoiding negative or limiting language that can reinforce self-doubt. Instead, we consciously choose positive, empowering words that build confidence, encourage growth, and focus on possibilities and solutions.

It's the difference between focusing on the problem and focusing on the path forward. Here is a practical comparison:

Negative: What's the problem?

Positive: What's the challenge or opportunity?

Negative: What would avoid you quitting?

Positive: What would it take to persist?

Negative: What led to this failure?

Positive: What did you learn from that outcome?

Negative: You should do this.

Positive: What could be your next step?

Negative: That's wrong.

Positive: That's an interesting approach. What if we explored another angle?

This shift in language is subtle but meaningful. By focusing on 'challenges' instead of 'problems,' and 'learning' instead of 'failure,' we reframe our client's entire experience. We are not just listening to their words; we are actively helping them reshape their internal narrative from one of limitation to one of potential. This is the essence of transformational coaching.

Listening and Reflecting with Accuracy

As we've discussed, conscious communication involves deep listening and the powerful technique of accurately reflecting a client's own words and feelings back to them.

This is more than just repeating what they said. It is the process of holding up a mirror so they can hear their own thoughts clearly and feel truly understood. This act demonstrates empathy, builds trust, and is the most direct way to ensure we are seeing the world from their perspective, not our own.

A Practical Example:

Client Says: "I'm just completely overwhelmed with this project at work. I have no idea where to even start, and I'm worried I'm going to let everyone down."

A Simple Reflection: "You're feeling overwhelmed, you don't know where to start, and you're worried about letting people down. What feels most important to address first?"

This response demonstrates conscious communication as it validates the client's feelings, builds trust by showing

understanding and creates clarity by allowing the client to hear their own thoughts framed clearly.

Create Discovery

Conscious language intentionally relies on open-ended questions and non-judgmental statements. This specific approach is what creates the psychologically safe space essential for transformation. We go into detail on this in our *Coaching Essentials* book.

When a client feels they are not being judged or led to a specific answer, they can explore their deepest thoughts freely. This exploration is where powerful self-discovery happens, leading them to their own authentic and sustainable solutions.

The importance of this practice cannot be overstated. The right words can inspire and motivate, while sensitive and empathetic language creates the supportive environment where transformation can thrive. Conscious language minimises misunderstandings and ensures both coach and client are moving forward in alignment.

5 Practical Tips for Using Conscious Language

In addition to the above, here are five short, powerful tips to keep at the forefront of our mind in every session:

1. **Use Inclusive Language:** We should opt for 'we,' 'us,' and 'our' instead of 'you' and 'I' in our conscious communication. This frames the coaching relationship as a collaborative partnership. (e.g. "Where shall we explore next?")

2. **Lead with Supportive Language:** We can consciously weave in words that show empathy and care. A simple "That sounds really challenging" can validate a client's experience and build trust.
3. **Respond, Don't React:** We should pause and choose our words intentionally. This creates a thoughtful response, rather than a quick, emotional reaction, ensuring our communication remains professional and constructive.
4. **Practice Deep Listening with Open Body Language:** Give our full attention. Listen to understand, not just to reply. Pair this with open, engaged body language (nodding, uncrossed arms) to show we are fully present.
5. **Use the Client's Language (Metaphors):** We must pay close attention to the specific words and metaphors our client uses, and reflect them back. If they talk about "feeling stuck in a rut," using that same metaphor ("What would help you get out of that rut?") creates a connection and shows we are truly in their world.

By consciously applying these five tips, we will take a significant step toward the art of conscious communication, ensuring our words consistently build up, empower, and guide our clients toward their goals.

12.4 The Perceptual Conversation Tool

Most of this chapter has focused on how we, as coaches, can become more conscious communicators. This final section provides a useful tool to help our clients reflect on their own communication.

The Perceptual Conversation Tool is designed to guide a client through a structured reflection of a past conversation that did not go well. By examining what was said versus what was left unsaid, the client gains a new perspective, which empowers them to re-approach the conversation more constructively in the future, or simply find peace with what happened. Let's walk through the steps of applying the tool:

Step 1: Capture the Facts

The foundation of using this tool effectively is to begin by gathering all the details of the conversation with a stance of pure, non-judgmental curiosity. Our goal here is not to solve the problem, but to help the client reconstruct the event as accurately and objectively as possible.

This involves asking open-ended questions to explore two key areas:

1. The "What": The Spoken Words

- Walk me through the conversation from the beginning. What were the exact opening words?
- What specific points did you make? And how did they respond?
- What was the final thing that was said before the conversation ended?

2. The Context: The Surrounding Environment

- Where and when did this conversation happen? Was it in person, over the phone, or via text?
- What was the emotional atmosphere like beforehand? Were either of you already stressed, tired, or rushed?"
- Was anyone else present? What was at stake in this discussion?

By patiently filling in this factual painting of the event, we do two things:

1. We help the client move out of their emotional reaction and into a more observational space.
2. We collect the essential 'raw data' that we will later contrast with their unspoken thoughts in Step 2.

This careful groundwork is what makes the subsequent steps powerful.

Step 2: Document the Spoken Dialogue

In this step, we ask the client to create a concrete record of the conversation by focusing solely on the objective, observable facts. On one side of a page (which we'll call the 'Right-Hand Column') the client will write down only the dialogue that was actually spoken aloud, by both themselves and the other person.

The key here is objectivity. We are capturing what an external observer would have heard if they had been recording the conversation. This means sticking to the dialogue. Encouraging the client to recall the specific words used, as closely as they can remember them. For example, instead of "He was dismissive," they would write "He said, 'I don't have time for this right now.'"

The column should also be a back-and-forth script, capturing the exchange between both parties and avoid interpretation. This is not the place for what they thought the other person meant, their own feelings, or any analysis. It is a straightforward transcript.

Example of a Right-Hand Column:

Client: “I need to talk to you about the project deadline. I'm concerned we're falling behind.”

Manager: “The deadline is the deadline. We just have to find a way to meet it.”

Client: “But the team is already working overtime. We need more resources.”

Manager: “There are no more resources. You'll have to figure it out.”

This disciplined exercise of separating the pure ‘what was said’ from the ‘what I felt’ is the important first step in revealing the hidden dynamics of the interaction. It creates a clear baseline from which to explore the more complex ‘Left-Hand Column’ in the next step.

Step 3: Reveal the Unspoken Thoughts

This is where the deeper insights emerge. Directly opposite the spoken dialogue, on the ‘Left-Hand Column,’ the client now captures everything they were truly thinking and feeling in the moment but chose not to say.

This is the heart of the reflection. The left-hand column holds the hidden script, the fears, assumptions, judgments, and unspoken needs that were running the show from behind the scenes. It makes the invisible, visible.

At this step we guide the client by encouraging them to be brutally honest and hold nothing back. This is a private, safe space for their authentic voice. Prompt them with questions like:

- What were you really thinking when they said that?
- What fear stopped you from speaking up?
- What did you assume about their intentions?

- What did you wish you could have said but didn't?

By placing the two columns side-by-side, the client can clearly see the gap between the superficial conversation and the real, unaddressed conversation happening in their mind. This disconnect is often the root cause of their frustration and the conversation's failure. Acknowledging this gap is the first and most powerful step toward more conscious and effective communication in the future.

Step 4: Walk Through the Reflective Questions

With the 'Right-Hand' and 'Left-Hand' columns clearly laid out, we now use a series of structured questions to help the client analyse the impact of what was said versus what was left unsaid. This process moves them from observation to deep understanding.

Here we guide the client through the following three stages of questions, using their completed columns as the basis for reflection.

Stage 1: The Impact of the Actual Conversation

These questions focus on the consequences of the dialogue that did happen, the 'Right-Hand Column.'

On the Issue: Looking at what was actually said, how did this conversation move the issue forward? Did it resolve anything, or did it make the problem worse?

On the Relationship: How did this exchange affect your relationship with the person? Did it build trust, create distance, or cause damage?

On Themselves: How did leaving this conversation make you feel? What was the cost to your own well-being and state of mind?

Stage 2: The Potential of the Unspoken Conversation

These questions explore the hypothetical impact of sharing their 'Left-Hand Column.

On the Issue: If you had voiced your true concerns about team burnout and feeling unsupported, how might that have changed the discussion about the deadline?

On the Relationship: How could sharing your vulnerability and genuine challenge have affected the dynamic? Could it have built a bridge instead of a wall?

On Themselves: Even if the outcome was the same, how would you feel about yourself now if you had spoken your truth?

Stage 3: The Cost of Silence

This final set of questions makes the consequences of staying silent explicit. Here are some contextual examples:

On the Issue: By not stating that you had no idea what to do next, what was the ultimate effect on the project? Did your silence ensure the problem continued?

On the Relationship: How did withholding your anger and defeat impact the level of trust and collaboration with your manager moving forward?

On Themselves: What has it cost you internally to carry these unspoken thoughts and feelings?

The Final, Empathetic Question:

What do you think was in the other person's left-hand column?
What might they have been thinking and feeling but not saying?

By working through these questions, the client will clearly see that the conversation that didn't happen often has a greater impact than the one that did. This awareness is the foundation for choosing more authentic and courageous communication in the future.

Step 5: Facilitate Deep Reflection

After exploring the structured questions, we now facilitate an open discussion about the insights that emerge. Our role here is to be a supportive guide, helping the client make sense of their own discoveries. We do this by asking open, integrative questions that tie the insights together and lead to personal ownership. Some powerful reflective questions to ask:

- What is the most surprising or revealing thing you notice when you look at these two columns side-by-side?
- Does this gap between what you said and what you felt reveal a familiar pattern in how you communicate, especially under pressure?
- In the moment, what did you believe would happen if you had spoken from your 'left-hand column'? Having reflected, do you think that belief was accurate?
- Where in this conversation did you feel you had a choice? Where do you see a clear point where a different choice could have been made?
- Beneath all the unspoken thoughts and feelings, what was the core thing you needed in that moment that you didn't express?

The goal of this reflection is not to induce guilt or regret, but to create empowered awareness. We are helping the client see that their unspoken thoughts and feelings are valid data that, when acknowledged, can inform wiser and more authentic communication choices in the future. This step turns a past 'failed' conversation into a learning experience, building their emotional intelligence and communication.

Step 6: Plan a New Approach

If, after reflection, the client feels ready and willing to re-engage, our role shifts to helping them prepare for a new, more constructive conversation. This is not about rehashing the past, but about applying their insights to create a different future.

We can guide them using these actionable tips, which focus on intention, preparation, and a new communication structure:

Step 1: Prepare with Clarity, Not Blame

We start by identifying the True Goal: We can ask:

"What is the single most important outcome you want from this new conversation? Is it a solution, understanding, or simply to be heard?"

We then encourage them to examine their own bias:

"Are you entering this conversation to prove a point or to solve a shared problem?"

Helping them let go of the need to be 'right'.

Finally, we guide them to choose a neutral time and private place where both parties can speak without interruption to host the conversation.

Step 2: Define Boundaries (Know the BATNA)

Our second step is to explain the concept of a BATNA (Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement). Simply put:

"What is the walk-away scenario you can live with?"

It is a backup plan that holds the most advantageous course of action we can take, if the current conversation fails and no agreement is reached. Knowing our BATNA empowers us; it means we are negotiating from a position of choice, not desperation.

Helping the client define their BATNA provides confidence and prevents them from accepting an outcome that is worse than no agreement at all.

Step 3: Open from a Neutral, Third-Person Perspective

We then coach the client to start the conversation with observable facts, not accusations. We can explore this by asking their proposed approach and asking questions to test how that would be received.

For example, we are aiming to move the client from "You didn't listen to me," to "I'd like to talk about our last conversation regarding the project deadline. My sense is we left it with some unresolved tension, and I'd like us to find a way forward

together." This collaborative approach helps set a neutral perspective.

Step 4: Listen First, with the Goal of Understanding

We can then explain this important factor for approaching the conversation which is to first listen deeply to the other person's perspective without planning a response or interrupting them. We can encourage the client to use phrases like, "Tell me more about that," to draw the other person's thoughts and perspectives out.

Step 5: Clarify and Check for Understanding:

The next step is to explain to the client that before responding, they should summarise what they heard:

"So, if I understand correctly, your main concern is X. Is that right?"

This ensures they are responding to the real issue.

Step 6: Speak from the 'I' of the Left-Hand Column

After clarification, we can explain to the client that they can choose to share a key piece from their previous left-hand column, but framed constructively. Instead of the hidden thought "He doesn't care," they could say:

"I felt concerned that the team's constraints weren't fully on the table, which left me feeling stuck. My need is for us to collaboratively review the real obstacles."

This is about introducing what was not said in the first instance but saying it constructively and with care.

Step 7: Invite Collaboration

The final step is to shifting the conversation to joint problem-solving:

"Given what we've both shared, what ideas do we have for a path forward?"

This frames the issue as a shared challenge.

By following this structured approach, the client moves from a reactive, emotional revisit to a proactive, solution-focused dialogue. This transforms the previous 'difficult conversation' into an opportunity for strengthened understanding and a better outcome for both parties.

In practice, we can explain these steps to the client and question how each step would look like, preparing them the best we can for their next conversation.

12.5 Theory into Practice

In this chapter, we have explored the principles of conscious communication, from bridging the awareness gap and using empowering language to applying powerful tools like the Perceptual Conversation framework.

To integrate these concepts into your own coaching practice, take a moment to consider the question below:

✍ Reflecting on the core elements of conscious communication, which one do you feel is your strongest asset as a coach right now, and which one presents the greatest opportunity for your own development?

Chapter 13

Mindfulness In Coaching

‘Mindfulness means being awake. It means knowing what you are doing.’

Jon Kabat-Zinn

What does 'being mindful' actually look like during a coaching session? How can a short mindfulness exercise help a client who's feeling stuck? Do I need to meditate for hours to be a mindful coach? Mindfulness is more than a buzzword; it's a foundational skill that directly touches the heart of the coaching profession. As Transformational Coaches, integrating simple mindfulness tools and exercises into our practice is a powerful way to add immense value, create a deeper connection with our clients, and enhance our own presence.

But what is mindfulness, exactly, in the context of our work? It's the practice of being fully present and engaged in the current moment, without judgement. For a coach, this means listening with our whole being, noticing our own reactions without being ruled by them, and creating a calm, focused space where clients can explore their thoughts and feelings.

In this chapter, we will explore what mindfulness truly means, provide practical ways to use it in our sessions, and outline the significant benefits, for both ourselves and our clients.

13.1 What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the practice of cultivating active, non-judgmental awareness of the present moment. It involves intentionally bringing our full attention to our current experience, our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and the environment around us, and observing it all with curiosity and acceptance, rather than with criticism or a desire to change it.

At its heart, mindfulness is about being fully engaged in the 'here and now.' Instead of being lost in regrets about the past or anxieties about the future, we learn to meet the present moment as it is. This means developing a sense of openness, allowing experiences to arise and pass without getting swept away by them.

While mindfulness is often practiced through formal meditation (like focusing on the breath), it is also a quality we can bring to any daily activity, from drinking a cup of tea to listening to a client.

13.2 Mindfulness Exercises

The world of mindfulness offers a variety of exercises. The key is not to know them all, but to find a few that we feel genuinely comfortable and confident introducing and guiding. These exercises can be embedded into our sessions or offered as practices for clients to explore on their own.

Here are some foundational examples we could introduce:

- **Mindful Breathing:** The simplest and most portable practice. Here we guide a client to simply notice the natural rhythm of their breath, the cool air entering, the warm air

leaving, without trying to change it. This instantly anchors them in the present and calms the nervous system.

- **Body Scan Meditation:** A guided practice where we help the client slowly bring their attention to different parts of the body, from head to toe (or vice-versa), noticing any sensations without judgement. This is excellent for releasing physical tension and creating a sense of embodiment.
- **Mindful Eating (A Home Practice):** We can encourage clients to practice being fully present with one meal or snack. This involves noticing the colours, smells, textures, and flavours of their food, eating slowly, and paying attention to the act of nourishment. It transforms a routine activity into a practice in awareness.
- **Walking Meditation:** Guide clients to bring mindfulness to a simple walk. The focus is on the physical sensations of each step, the lift, movement, and placement of the foot, the feeling of the ground. This is a powerful way to integrate mindfulness into movement.
- **Loving-Kindness Meditation (Metta):** This involves silently repeating phrases of goodwill, starting with oneself ("May I be safe, may I be happy"), then extending them to others. It generates compassion, reduces self-criticism, and can soften feelings of resentment.
- **Sensory Awareness:** A quick, in-the-moment exercise. Here we invite the client to pause and engage their senses fully: notice five things they can see, four they can touch, three they can hear, two they can smell, and one they can taste. This rapidly brings a scattered mind into the present environment.

- **Gratitude Practice:** We can encourage clients to take a few minutes each day to mentally note or write down three specific things they are grateful for. This simple practice shifts focus from lack to abundance, creating a positive and present mindset.
- **Mindful Journalling:** Here we encourage clients to engage in free-form writing with a focus on present-moment awareness. Instead of analysing the past or planning the future, they write about what they are noticing right now, current thoughts, feelings, and sensory experiences, without editing or judgement. This practice helps process emotions and gain clarity.

Remember, these are just a starting point. There are countless other forms, from guided visualisations to art-based mindfulness and yoga. We can research, experiment, and find the activities that best connect with our coaching niche and our authentic style. Our genuine comfort with the practice will make us a more effective guide.

13.3 The 10 Key Benefits of Mindfulness

By developing our own mindfulness practice and thoughtfully introducing it into our coaching, we bring a set of benefits to both ourselves and our clients. Below is a non-exhaustive list of 10 key benefits of mindfulness:

1. **Stress Reduction:** Mindfulness practice is a powerful antidote to stress. It promotes deep relaxation, calms a busy mind, and builds resilience, helping us and our clients navigate challenges with greater ease.

2. **Improved Emotional Well-being:** Regular practice creates emotional balance. It helps regulate intense feelings, reduces reactivity, and develops a more consistent sense of inner calm and stability.
3. **Increased Self-Awareness:** Mindfulness acts as an inner mirror, allowing us to observe our thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations without judgement. This heightened awareness is the foundation of self-understanding and personal growth.
4. **Enhanced Focus and Concentration:** By training the mind to return to the present moment, mindfulness sharpens our ability to concentrate and resist distraction. This leads to greater mental clarity and sustained attention, both in sessions and in daily tasks.
5. **Better Decision-Making:** Mindfulness creates a mental space between a situation and our reaction. This 'pause' enhances cognitive flexibility, allowing for more considered, less emotionally-driven, and ultimately wiser decisions.
6. **Improved Relationships:** Mindfulness naturally develops the skills of empathy, deep listening, and non-judgmental communication. By being fully present with others, we build stronger, more authentic connections.
7. **Increased Resilience:** A mindful mindset builds psychological strength. It helps us accept what we cannot change, adapt flexibly to challenges, and persevere, bouncing back more quickly from setbacks.
8. **Better Sleep Quality:** Simple mindfulness techniques, like body scans or mindful breathing, are excellent tools for quieting a racing mind at night. They promote the relaxation necessary for deeper, more restorative sleep.


9. **Boosted Creativity:** By quieting the inner critic, mindfulness opens the mind to new possibilities. It encourages a state of open curiosity where creative ideas and fresh perspectives can emerge.
10. **Overall Well-being:** Ultimately, a consistent mindfulness practice creates a deep sense of life satisfaction. It develops a greater connection to the present moment, a deeper appreciation for daily experiences, and a more balanced, compassionate outlook on life.

As Transformational Coaches, it is our responsibility to adopt a personal mindfulness practice. This not only enhances our own well-being but is the first and most important step in authentically and effectively introducing these powerful tools for the lasting benefit of our clients.

13.4 Theory into Practice

In this chapter, we have explored mindfulness not just as a concept, but as a practical set of tools to enhance presence, reduce stress, and deepen self-awareness for both ourselves and our clients.

To integrate these concepts into your own coaching practice, take a moment to consider the question below:

 **Reflecting on the mindfulness exercises explored, which one simple practice could you commit to using for yourself this week to create greater presence?**

Chapter 14

Narrative Coaching

'Your life is your story. Write well. Edit often.'

Susan Stratham

How do I help a client even notice the 'story' they're telling themselves? What if a client's story is based on something that really happened? Can we still change it? Is narrative coaching about giving clients a new story, or helping them find a better one? In our final chapter, we turn to a transformative perspective: Narrative Coaching. This approach invites us to see all that we do through the lens of stories. It is based on a simple but powerful idea: we don't just tell stories; we live inside them. The narratives we hold about ourselves, our capabilities, and our place in the world shape our reality, our choices, and our sense of what is possible.

Narrative Coaching provides us with an alternative and deeply respectful approach to our practice. It moves beyond simply setting goals or changing behaviours, to examining and reshaping the stories that give those goals and behaviours their meaning.

In this chapter, we will explore the core concept of personal narratives. We will learn how to help clients identify the stories that are running their lives, both the empowering ones and the limiting ones, and, most importantly, discover the collaborative process of how we can work with clients as compassionate editors to help them re-write their stories, authoring a new chapter for their lives.

14.1 What is Narrative Coaching?

Narrative coaching is an approach built on a simple truth: we make sense of our lives through stories. The personal narratives we tell ourselves, about who we are, what we're capable of, and why things happen, shape our beliefs, our actions, and even our identity. We all view the world through the lens of our own ongoing story.

In narrative coaching, we don't see the client as a problem to be solved, but as the author of a story that can be edited. We work collaboratively to explore and reframe these narratives. This involves examining the stories a client has constructed about their past, their present struggles, and their future possibilities.

The core aim is to help the client move from being a character in their own story, buffeted by events, to becoming the active author of it. We do this by:

1. **Uncovering the Plot:** Identifying the recurring themes and underlying assumptions in their narrative. For example:

"I'm the kind of person who always gets overlooked."

2. **Challenging Limiting Chapters:** Questioning the truth and helpfulness of stories that hold them back with questions like:

- Does that story always hold true?
- Can you remember a time you were seen and acknowledged?

3. **Co-Authoring a New Draft:** Supporting them to construct alternative, more empowering narratives that align with their values and desired future by asking questions like:

- How would you like this story to unfold from here?
- What's a different story about yourself that feels equally true, or even more true, right now?

This approach does not dismiss a client's real experiences or pain. Instead, it respectfully explores multiple perspectives, expanding the range of stories available to them. It recognises that we are not defined forever by our past chapters; we have the creative capacity to write the next one.

Ultimately, narrative coaching provides a powerful framework for transformation. It gives clients the tools to understand how their stories have shaped them and, more importantly, the space to edit those stories to support greater resilience, self-discovery, and positive change.

14.2 Re-Authoring Stories

If we are not our stories, then we hold the pen to rewrite them. As Transformational Coaches, our role is to guide clients in authoring a more uplifting and empowering narrative for their lives. This is a creative and collaborative process, and there are several techniques we can use to facilitate it:

Externalising Conversations

This involves separating the person from the problem. We give the issue a name (e.g. 'The Procrastination Monster' or 'The Inner Critic'). This allows the client to see the problem as something they have, not something they are, enabling them to challenge it from a new, less personal perspective.

Re-authoring Questions

These are powerful, open-ended questions designed to uncover hidden strengths and alternative storylines. They invite clients to look for 'sparkling moments' or exceptions to their dominant, problematic story. (e.g. Tell me about a time when 'The Anxiety' didn't win. What was different?).

Reframing

This technique helps shift the meaning of an event. We guide the client to view a 'failure; as a 'learning experiment,' or a 'weakness' as an 'unused strength.' Changing the frame can completely change the emotional impact and the lesson of the story. There are two ways in which we can reframe; by content or by context. Reframing by Content changes the label we give to an event (e.g. changing 'I failed' to 'I learned'). Reframing by Context changes the setting or purpose of an event (e.g. reframing 'anxiety' as 'caring in action'). One works to change what it is; the other works to change why it matters.

Chunking

This involves changing perspective by shifting the level of detail. There are three ways in which we can 'chunk':

1. **Chunking Down:** Getting specific. For example:

- You feel overwhelmed at work. What is the very first task that feels overwhelming?
- When you say you feel 'stuck,' what is the very first, smallest action that feels blocked?

- You mention a 'pattern of conflict.' Can you describe the exact moment in the most recent instance when you knew it had become a conflict?

The purpose of our questioning here is to get deeper into the detail.

2. **Chunking Up:** Finding the bigger purpose. For example:

- What is the larger value or goal that this work struggle is connected to?
- This goal of 'getting organised', what larger value or vision for your life does serving this goal support?
- Stepping back from this specific disagreement, what is the core principle or need for you that is truly at stake here?

The purpose of our questioning here is to explore the bigger picture.

3. **Chunking Across:** Finding a metaphor or analogy.

- If this situation were a book or a film, what genre would it be? What genre would you prefer it to be?
- If this challenge were a weather pattern, what would it be? What would indicate the weather is changing?
- If this challenge were a weather pattern, what would it be? What would indicate the weather is changing?

The purpose of our questioning here is to give the client creative and emotional distance from the situation, allowing them to see it from a new perspective without the weight of their immediate personal involvement.

Narrative Mapping

Visually plotting out the story's key events, characters, turning points, and emotions. This creates a 'map' of the narrative terrain, helping both ourselves and the client see patterns, themes, and moments that might be invisible in the telling.

Scaffolding Stories

We help the client build a new, supportive narrative piece by piece. We 'scaffold' it by first identifying their core strengths and past successes, then using these as the foundation for a new story about who they are and what they can achieve.

Co-authoring

The essence of the partnership. We don't write the story for the client; we act as an insightful editor and supportive co-author. We ask questions that explore:

- What if this chapter had a different ending?
- How would your wisest self, write the next paragraph?

Here we bring in all of our coaching skills to guide the client to a new story.

Guiding Questions for Exploration

To understand the current story, we can ask:

- What character do you feel you're playing in this story right now?
- Where does this story begin, and why does it start there?
- Who are the other main characters, and what roles do they play?
- What important parts of you, or what facts, are being left out of this version?
- How does the story end in your mind right now, and why does it end that way?

By combining these narrative techniques with the core tools we've already learned, like deep listening, powerful questioning, and the models from earlier chapters, we can help clients deconstruct the stories that limit them and collaboratively write the next, more hopeful chapter.

14.3 The Perspective Positioning Model

The Perspective Positioning Model is a powerful framework used to help clients explore a situation from multiple angles. It recognises that our view of any event is filtered through our unique experiences and beliefs. This model encourages clients to step outside their own lens, challenge their automatic assumptions, and build a more complete and empathetic understanding.

The model involves guiding the client through four distinct viewpoints:

The Four Key Perspectives

1. **Self-Perspective (My View):** This is the starting point. We explore the client's own interpretation of the situation, their feelings, beliefs, and personal stake in it. This establishes their baseline reality and helps them become aware of their own potential biases.

How do you see and feel about this situation right now?

2. **The Other's Perspective (Their View):** Here, we encourage empathetic curiosity. The client is invited to step into the shoes of another key person involved. We ask them to imagine that person's thoughts, feelings, and motivations, separate from their own.

If you were [the other person], how might you be seeing and experiencing this same situation?

3. **Observer Perspective (The Fly-on-the-Wall View):** This involves a deliberate step back to a neutral, objective stance. The client imagines they are a detached observer (like a fly on the wall or a neutral film director) watching the scene unfold. This perspective helps strip away emotional charge and personal bias.

If a completely neutral stranger watched this interaction, what facts and dynamics would they report seeing?

4. **Meta-Perspective (The Integrated, Big-Picture View):** The client integrates what they learned from the first three perspectives to form a higher-level understanding. This is about finding connections, seeing patterns, and grasping the 'bigger picture' that encompasses all the viewpoints.

Now, pulling all these views together, what's a more complete story? What new understanding or possibility do you see?

Application and a Note of Caution

This model is incredibly versatile, useful for conflict resolution, complex decision-making, and deepening self-awareness. It builds empathy, reduces black-and-white thinking, and leads to more thoughtful actions.

However, this is an advanced tool. It should only be used once we have built strong rapport and confidence in our coaching skills, as it requires managing a client's emotional experience through different, potentially challenging, viewpoints.

Once we have decided to introduce the tool into a session, before beginning, we should explain the process simply and ask for the client's permission:

"I have a structured exercise that involves looking at this from a few different angles. It can bring new insights, but it might feel intense. Are you open to trying it with me now?"

When applying we must always start and spend adequate time in the Self-Perspective. This validates the client's experience as real and important. Rushing to 'the other's view' can feel invalidating if their own feelings haven't been fully acknowledged. There is power in the pace of this model.

When we do move to exploring The Other's Perspective, we must be clear that we are not mind-readers. We should use language like:

"Based on what you know, what's your best guess about their viewpoint?"

This prevents the client from creating definitive, potentially negative stories about others' intentions.

It is also important for us to monitor the client's emotions closely. If moving to another perspective (especially the "Other's" perspective in a conflict) causes significant distress, pause. We can return to the Self-Perspective or use the Observer Perspective to create calming distance. Our role is to guide, not to retraumatise.

As we shift to the Meta-Perspective we must note that the goal is to gain a broader understanding, not necessarily agreement or forgiveness. The client's insight might be, "I see why they acted that way, and I still choose to distance myself." If so, we must honour that.

Finally, After completing the cycle, we should always return to the client's present-moment experience. Ask:

"How do you feel now, having looked at it from all these sides?"

Help them integrate the insights and decide on a grounded next step.

In summary, this model is a map for exploration, not a prescription for a specific outcome. Our presence, pacing, and commitment to the client's emotional safety are what make the journey transformative rather than destabilising. We should only apply this model when we have mastered our core coaching skills.

14.4 Theory into Practice

In this final chapter, we have explored how the stories we tell shape our reality and discovered powerful techniques, like externalising, re-authoring, and perspective positioning, to help clients become the authors of their own lives.

To integrate these concepts into your own coaching practice, take a moment to consider the question below:

✍ Reflecting on the Narrative Coaching techniques, which one do you feel most drawn to using first, and with what type of client or situation would it be most powerful to introduce a story-editing conversation?

The Coaches' Bookshelf

Additional Reading

For those who are interested in learning more, here is an additional recommended reading list:

- 1. The Grid: The Master Model Behind Business Success**
– Matt Watkinson
- 2. Crushing It** – Gary Vaynerchuk
- 3. The Lean Startup** – Eric Ries
- 4. Exponential Organisations** – Salim Ismail
- 5. Blue Ocean Strategy** - Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne
- 6. The Art of Setting Smart Goals** – Anisa Marku
- 7. Transcend** – Scott Barry Kaufman Ph.D.
- 8. Hard Goals** – Mark Murphy
- 9. 9 Things Successful People Do Differently** – Heidi Grant Halvorson

10. **A Theory of Human Motivation** – Abraham H. Maslow
11. **Start With Why** – Simon Sinek
12. **Find Your Why** – Simon Sinek
13. **How Successful People Think** – John C. Maxwell
14. **The Vision Driven Leader** – Michael Hyatt
15. **The Light in the Heart** – Roy T. Bennett
16. **I Will Not Die an Unlived Life** – Dawna Markova PhD
17. **The Power of Positive Thinking** – Norman Vincent Peale
18. **Man's Search for Meaning** – Viktor E. Frankl
19. **The Untethered Soul** – Michael A. Singer
20. **Find Your Passion** – Henri Junttila
21. **The Power of When** – Dr. Michael Breus, PhD

22. **The Urban Monk** – Pedream Shojai, OMD
23. **The Energy Paradox** – Steven R. Gundry, MD
24. **Master Your Time, Master Your Life** – Brian Tracy
25. **Hyper Focus** – Chris Bailey
26. **The 4 Hour Work Week** – Timothy Ferriss
27. **Create Space** – Derek Draper
28. **Thinking, Fast and Slow** – Daniel Kahneman
29. **The 80/20 Principle** – Richard Koch
30. **Atomic Habits** – James Clear
31. **The Power of Habit** – Charles Duhigg
32. **The 5am Club** – Robin Sharma
33. **Inner Engineering** – Sadhguru

- 34. Eliminate Negative Thinking – Derick Howell**
- 35. Difficult Conversations – Douglas Stone**
- 36. How to Win Friends and Influence People – Dale Carnegie**
- 37. Just Listen – Mark Goulston**
- 38. The 5 Love Languages – Gary Chapman**
- 39. Radical Forgiveness – Colin Tipping**
- 40. Narrative Coaching – David B. Drake**

Appendix A
Discovery Quizzes

16 Personalities (MBTI)



Enneagram Profile



Chronotype Quiz



The 5 Love Languages



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