Coaching Essentials

Paul Smith

BITE-SIZED
COACHING

Published by Bite-Sized Coaching

Edited by Coaching Minds

Printed by Amazon KDP

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

Dedication

This book is dedicated to all those looking to ignite opportunity by changing the world through coaching. To those brave enough to step outside of the norm, possessing the courage to create their own coaching business. To those who are ready to improve and enhance their professional coaching practice and those ready to hone a range of coaching skills to improve the culture of their workplace.

May this book become a spark to developing a coaching mind within you.

‘Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.’

Winston Churchill

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

As a proud graduate of Coaching Minds, I'm excited to introduce the second edition of *Coaching Essentials* by my Coaching Supervisor and Mentor, Paul Smith. Having recently read this resource as part of my coaching studies, I can honestly say it's a must-have for any coach, whether you're a total newbie or looking to sharpen your skills.

What's really great about Coaching Essentials is how Paul breaks down what coaching is all about, and clears up some misconceptions about coaching too. The book provides you with practical examples and has spaces at the end of each chapter for you to reflect and connect the ideas to your own coaching practice.

Coaching Essentials isn't just any guide; it's a heartfelt invitation to see how coaching can make a difference for you and those around you.

As you dive into this book, I encourage you to really soak in the content. Think about your experiences, challenge what you believe, and apply the tips to your life and coaching practice.
Welcome to a place where coaching ignites opportunities, helping you tap into your potential and make real changes with your clients. Enjoy the journey!

Jane Njogu
Mindset Coach and Author

Contents

Chapter 1

The History of Coaching

'True knowledge exists in knowing that you know nothing.'

Socrates

Where did it all begin? When did coaching become so popular? What is the difference between coaching and therapy or counselling? These are a few of the questions that may cross your mind on your journey of Transformational Coaching.

You will find many different perspectives, thoughts and theories on the origin and history of coaching, a quick Google search will pull up a few. However, as you start to understand what coaching is, you will begin to develop your own perspective of where you believe it all began. After all, one of the fundamental coaching essentials is to guide clients to their own answers. The aim of this book is to guide you to yours.

We can trace the origin of the word 'coach' to a small village in Hungary in the 1500s, when it denoted a large kind of four-wheeled, covered carriage used to transport goods from destination A to destination B, usually by horse. This method of transport spread across Europe, and over time evolved into the motorised forms we know today, including by land, sea and air. So, we can see how the concept of the physical coach was adopted as an appropriate symbol for a person who guides – or transports – others from one mental or spiritual state to another. If you were to look in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, you would find a definition along these lines, and if you searched a little harder you would see a reference to sports coaching. We are all aware of the basic role of a coach in some sport or other, they organise, manage and aim to help athletes reach their full potential.

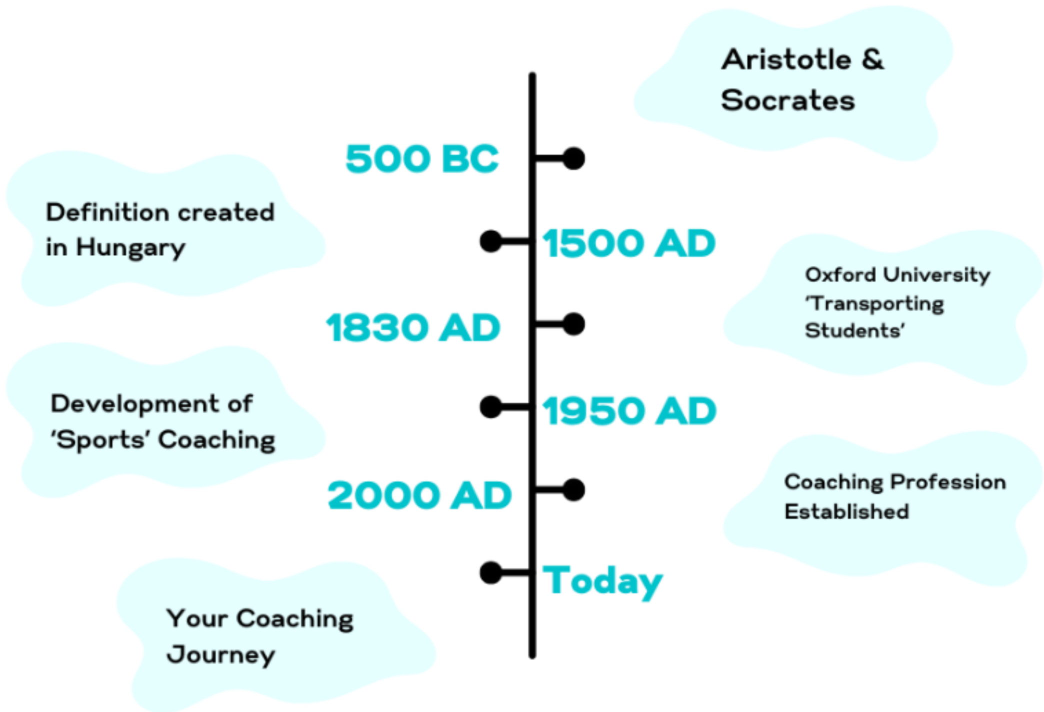
Moving away from its literal meaning, we can begin to see that the *concept* of coaching stretches much further back than even the 1500s. Whilst there is a distinction between philosopher and coach, philosophers hold similar traits to a coach through their deep questions, observations and how they guide others to self-awareness. With this in mind, we can make a case for coaching stretching as far back as the time of Plato and his mentor Socrates during the 5th century BCE, and even further back in Chinese philosophy through the works of Lao Tzu.

The term ‘coach’ for someone who guides others seems to have been used first in the 1830s at Oxford University to refer to tutors guiding or, in a sense, transporting their students successfully through their exams. Then the term became familiar in connection with sports training, until in the 1950s the term 'Life Coaching' first appeared in the United States and a 'profession' began to develop with the aim of helping and supporting people in all areas of their life, guiding them from where they currently were, to where they wanted to be, from one goal to the next, moving them through milestones. In a nutshell, this is coaching and the profession you have found yourself in.

Over the past few decades, different forms of coaching have developed, from Neuro-Linguistic Programming to high-performance and leadership coaching and specific areas of coaching within our personal lives, such as relationships, finances or careers. We can pretty much find a coach for any problem these days. Finding an impactful coach, however, is not such an easy task.

In this book we will focus on what is known as Transformational Coaching also known as ‘Life Coaching’. These two terms are essentially interchangeable, and both focus on transforming the lives of others through coaching. We will explore the whole host of skills, techniques and tools we must develop to help transform not only ourselves but the lives of others. In short, we will learn how to make a lasting impact with our coaching.

Figure 1: The 'Coaching' Timeline



Chapter 2

What is Coaching?

‘I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.’

Confucius

What does a coach do? Are they a mentor or a coach, and what is the difference? Have I been coached before? These are all natural questions to be asking ourselves. The term ‘coaching’ encompasses many definitions (often misinterpreted) and covers a wide spectrum of tools and techniques that assist with transformation. As we have explored above, coaching helps clients move from point A (whatever that may be) to point B (their desired goal or objective). To elaborate on this definition and to understand the key elements of what is known as a ‘coaching conversation’ as opposed to a day-to-day conversation, we can define coaching as:

‘The process of helping others get from point A to point B, C, D or wherever it is they want to go, through a series of meaningful conversations that help influence their understanding, awareness and behaviour.’

2.1 The 3 Elements of Coaching

In analysing the above definition, there are three important elements that we need to understand for us to learn how we can make an impact on others. These elements are:

1. ‘Point A’ - the place in which the client currently finds themselves and where a desire to change is sparked. It is important to note that coaching is only powerful and effective for those who wish to make a change. We must fully understand and clarify our client’s current position.

2. ‘Point B, C, D or wherever it is the client wants to go’. Here, there must be a goal or a vision or an obstacle the client wants to overcome. We must understand our clients’ goals, establish that they are realistic and explore ways in which our clients can achieve them.

3. A ‘series of conversations that help influence a client’s understanding, awareness and behaviour’. Not just general chit-chats we have with friends, colleagues and family, but a conversation that provides value. We must develop a safe space for our client to open up and we need to guide them to insights and realisations.

So, what makes a coaching conversation different from a typical day-to-day conversation? For a coaching conversation to happen, the conversation must:

- Focus on the client’s agenda and their problem or situation rather than the coach’s agenda.

- Benefit the client’s thoughts, actions and learning. Is there value in the conversation?

- Help the client’s progress, allowing them to move forward, whether this is action towards a goal or a new way of looking at a situation. Both can be defined as progress.

One big eye-opener to all new coaches, is the important point that coaches do not give advice. As a coach we guide a client to their own answers and personal discoveries through questioning, listening, observation and tools. We will find that, more often than not, people tend to come to us for approval rather than advice. Giving advice will shut the conversation down, if it is not what they want to hear. However, questions that lead to a new perspective, are worth their weight in gold. Many people are looking for the right answers but are not asking the right questions. A coach is there to ask the right questions and unfold a new path for clients to explore.

A Transformational Coach will be able to guide their clients to clarity, a new perspective and results. They will build and develop a set of tools which they can introduce into their sessions that will act as keys to open the doors to opportunities for clients. An impactful coach will not promise results, they will provide the space for clients to deliver their own.

Advice is just one of the ‘do nots’ we must follow as a Transformational Coach. We can explore figure 2 below to see a clear representation of the high-level boundaries of a coach. It is paramount for an impactful coach to move away from ‘fixing problems’ for clients or seeing clients as ‘broken’, to playing the role of a guiding light that shines and inspires new ways of thinking, and sees the client as whole, just the way they are.

As we develop more experience with coaching, we begin to understand how we become an enabler who makes a bigger impact. If we help transform the lives of our clients, this will have a ripple effect on their relationships with friends, colleagues and family members. Coaching is a truly wonderful method of support when mastered and used correctly.

Figure 2: The ‘Dos and ‘Do Nots’ of a Coach

Dos	Do Nots
✓ Guide clients to their own answer.	✗ Give advice or tell our clients what to do.
✓ View clients as whole just the way they are.	✗ View clients as being broken.
✓ Encourage, inspire, and support our clients.	✗ Try to fix or provide solutions.
✓ Accurately represent our role as a coach.	✗ Misrepresent our role as a coach.

2.2 The Alternatives to Coaching

Often coaching can be confused with therapy, counselling, consulting, teaching or mentoring. As a Transformational Coach, it is important to be able to fully understand the difference between these services and can explain this to our clients. This allows us to set clear boundaries with our clients and manage their expectations.

To understand the difference between these services, we must look at each of them and their functions in turn. We may find that a combination of these approaches may best serve a client. However, the number one rule is: we can bring coaching into an alternative space, but we can never bring alternatives into a coaching space. What we mean by this is that we can use our coaching skills in a consultancy or mentoring space to help influence a client’s thinking and behaviour, but we cannot use consultancy, mentoring or counselling in a coaching space where this would mean providing clients with advice or suggestions, or performing work on their behalf. Remember, coaching is non-advisory, and the client is the one who does all the work in the progress towards their goals. Our role is simply to guide them and help them to do things no one else can do for them.

There are, however, some crossover in the skills needed for each of these services. For example, deep listening is a fundamental skill in counselling, therapy and coaching. Also, as we explore in ***Coaching Psychology*** (another useful book to add to your collection), we use many models adapted from psychology in our coaching practice to guide clients through – for example, what is known as 'Cognitive Behavioural Coaching', as opposed to how these models are used in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, or CBT.

Now let’s look at the alternatives to coaching:

Counselling and Therapy

Counsellors/Therapists are qualified professionals who look for a diagnosis in their 'Patients' and work to offer a solution. Their work is primarily focused on exploring a client’s past. Whilst some psychological models are brought into Coaching, they are introduced in a very different manner. Coaching focuses more on the present and future, and the past is only used for validation.

Counselling and therapy are regulated professions and qualified practitioners must be educated to at least degree level.

- Counselling and therapy tend to deal with severe mental health issues. such as severe depression and anxiety, substance abuse, anger management, eating disorders, and so on.

- Counselling and therapy focus more on diagnoses and their management than on self-motivation and personal development.

Mentoring and Advising

Mentors/Advisors use their experience and knowledge in a specific area of work to provide advice to their 'Mentees'. Their work is primarily focused on supporting mentees along a similar path to their own, whereas coaching focuses on guiding and assisting clients along their own path by assisting them to unlock their potential.

- Mentors guide mentees along a similar path to their own using their relevant experience.

- Mentors have trusted advisors in professions to boost mentees in their career.

- Mentors have less stringent obligations, and the relationship is often more casual or informal.

Teaching and Training

Teachers/Trainers are subject matter experts who share their knowledge through a particular curriculum. Their work is primarily focused on enhancing the knowledge of their 'Students'. In coaching, coaches are not subject experts but are there to shine a light on specific areas of a client’s life to help them bring about the desired changes.

- Teachers educate and assess the level of competency of students through examination and assignments.

- Teachers provide information, give advice and share theories.

- Teachers provide feedback on performance and identify areas for improvement.

Consultancy

Consultants/specialists are experts in a particular field and provide consultees with a service. The consultancy aims to provide specific solutions for their consultee client. A coach does not provide any services on behalf of their client or identify solutions to their client's problems.

- Consultants and Specialists are subject matter/industry experts who resolve problems or provide solutions.

- Consultants and Specialists free up time and energy to allow their consultees to focus on other priorities.

- Consultants and Specialists manage activities on behalf of their consultees.

Coaching

Coaches unblock their client's potential and support them to take the necessary action required. They help clients find clarity, become more self-aware and set meaningful and challenging goals. For coaching to be effective, the client must be ready for change.

- Coaches deal with both the positive and the negative.
- Coaches are non-advisory and are focused on the client's agenda.
- Coaches focus on the future but visit the past for learning.

One easy way to see the difference between these types of services is the designation of the receivers 'service clientele'.

Figure 3: The service clientele of support services

Therapists → Patients

Mentors → Mentees

Consultants → Consultees

Teachers → Students

Coaches → Clients

Whilst there is no 'licence to coach', there are various codes of conduct that have been set by professional bodies for coaches to follow. We cover this in detail in our ***Coaching Ethics*** book. However, it is important to note at this stage that as part of the Coaching Minds' Professional Code of Conduct, we have an obligation as Transformational Coaches to accurately inform our clients of our role as a coach. We must be able to explain what our roles and responsibilities are and what the client can expect from us and remain within our professional boundaries.

2.3 Why Coaches Don't Give Advice

One fundamental difference between coaching and all other alternative methods of support is that coaches do not give advice. This is important for us to understand. There are many reasons why we should not give advice as a coach, but to help you begin to understand, here are seven keys:

1. **Giving Advice is Egotistical** – We often believe that we give advice for the benefit of the other person. However, when we take a moment to reflect, we realise that in practice, we mostly give others advice for our own benefit. When we interact with others, our ego is constantly looking for ways in which we can 'add value' to a conversation. We automatically jump to conclusions, believing we hold the answers, yet we have never lived the experience of the other. As much as we learn to empathise, we can never fully put ourselves in the shoes of others.

2. **Assuming a Duty of Care** – If we give advice as a coach, we assume a duty of care and ultimately become responsible for the impact that advice may have on an individual. If things go wrong, who is to blame? Imagine you advise a client to quit their full-time employment and pursue their dream business. The client quits their job, invests all their money in a new business without the relevant skills and resources and eventually becomes bankrupt. What liability do you hold as a coach?

3. **Advice Disempowers Individuals -** Instead of providing direct solutions, coaching encourages clients to find their

own answers. By asking thought-provoking questions and allowing self-reflection, we empower our clients to tap into their own wisdom and capabilities, leading to greater self-reliance and confidence. By giving advice, we take-away personal power and at times may dishearten the client.

4. **Limited Perspective -** We do not always have a complete understanding of the client's unique circumstances, values and goals. As a result, our advice is based on incomplete information or biased assumptions, leading to recommendations that are not truly beneficial or relevant to the client's situation.

5. **Dependence -** When we offer direct advice, clients may become dependent on external guidance rather than developing their own problem-solving skills. This can lead to a lack of self-confidence and self-reliance, limiting the client's ability to navigate challenges independently. Some unethical coaches may attempt to provide advice on the basis of creating a dependence to secure a long-term contract. This then runs the risk of establishing an element of control over the client with an associated long-term psychological impact. We see the same behaviour from gurus and cults. Avoid this.

6. **Resistance and Defensiveness -** Clients may resist or become defensive in response to unsolicited advice, especially if they feel that their perspective or choices are being invalidated. This can create tension in the coaching relationship and hinder open communication and trust between ourselves and the client. You can probably think of an occasion when you were given advice you didn’t ask for. Remember, at times people don’t come to us for advice, they come to us for approval.

7. **Missed Opportunities for Growth -** Offering advice prematurely can prevent clients from fully exploring and

understanding their own thoughts, feelings and motivations. By bypassing the process of self-discovery and reflection, clients may miss valuable opportunities for growth and success. When clients are taken down a specific path by means of advice, they miss the exploration of other lanes to success.

One simple way to illustrate this is by reflecting on how we perceive something as simple as a pig. When you think about a pig, what are the first things that pop into your mind? A farm? Bacon sandwiches? Peppa? It may be something completely random. Now consider the following six roles in society:

- A Farmer
- A Butcher
- A Vet
- A Businesswoman
- A Child
- A Muslim

How might each of these individuals perceive a pig? I’m sure we can all conclude that each role will view a pig in an extremely different manner. A farmer will prioritise breeding, a butcher will be looking at sales, a vet at health and wellbeing, a businesswoman at lunch, a child will most likely think about a cartoon, and we all know that pigs are forbidden in Islam. Imagine a butcher giving advice to a vet or a Muslim giving advice to a farmer. We can immediately observe a clash and breakdown in the relationship. Here we are only discussing the simple concept of a pig, in the world of coaching we deal with much more complex issues. It is important for us to manage our ego and refrain from giving advice.

2.4 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored what coaching is and what coaching is not. We have touched upon the ways in which we guide clients to their own answers with some dos and don'ts. As a Transformational Coach we must be able to explain coaching to potential clients and describe what it is we do.

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

- **When asked at networking events, how would you define coaching to others?**

Chapter 3

Attributes of an Impactful Coach

‘Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go of who we think we're supposed to be and embracing who we are.’

Brene Brown

Is coaching something we can learn? Does it come naturally? How can I acquire the attributes needed? The truth is coaching isn’t for everybody. It is quite an emotionally demanding role and requires hard work and dedication. Many of us think we will become great coaches because ‘everyone always comes to us for advice’ but remember, as a coach we don’t give advice and this transition itself can be very difficult for people.

It is also worth noting that ‘life experience’ is not a requirement of a coach even though people often assume it is. Having life experience can actually serve as a hindrance and make you more prone to giving advice.

On our journey to becoming a Transformational Coach, it is fundamental that we understand the key skills we need and how we can develop or build on these in our practice. It is the development of these skills that shapes a successful coach, not the life experience that we hold. We do not need experience in life to be able to coach, we must put our focus on developing and mastering the essential skills to guide our clients to results.

The 8 key skills below will be discussed in detail in the following chapters, but for now keep them in mind as we explore the attributes that make an impactful and authentic coach, which go hand in hand with these key skills. When observing the diagram below, think about which of these skills you already possess, which ones are new to you and which ones you may need to work on. As a coach, it is important for us to be on a continuous journey of personal development and being able to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement is a great starting point.

Figure 4: The 8 Key Skills of a Coach

3.1 What makes an Authentic Coach?

One of the ways that we can identify the attributes of an authentic coach is by observing the principles and beliefs that a coach operates from. Generally, a coach will be motivated by one of the following three high-level drivers:

1. Money
2. Fame
3. Making a Difference

These three drivers are also core values and, as we learn in our ***Coaching Psychology*** book, there is no such thing as a good or bad value. What truly matters when it comes to authenticity is that a coach understands their driver and honestly represents themselves, staying true to their core values. For example, if our driver to become a coach is to make money, then we must not tell ourselves or others that our main aim is to make a difference to other people’s lives. Be open, be honest and attract the clientele that is best suited to your values. Those looking to make six-figure salaries, will attract those looking for six-figure salaries. Those looking to support others in need, will attract those in need. Like attracts like in the same way that the values we portray operate as our magnet.

We can also identify the attributes of an authentic coach by observing their skills, knowledge and behaviour. Here we are not looking at the level of their skills and knowledge but at how they present themselves. An authentic coach will openly and honestly represent their level of competency and will always follow up their words with action. They will remain humble when mistakes are made and true to themselves. Those who promise the world and show up empty handed will find themselves in some difficult situations. We must stay within our skills and expertise, accurately promote our qualifications and follow up on the actions to which we commit.

As we work towards becoming an authentic coach, it is important for us to:

- Identify our main driver for becoming a Transformational Coach and staying true to ourselves.
- Accurately promote our skills, knowledge and expertise and stay within our boundaries.
- Always follow up on our commitments and behave in a professional manner.

Authenticity often appears as a ‘buzz’ word within the coaching profession, but it is a vital element of us creating a successful business. Authenticity is a key ingredient to our likeability and the more liked we are, the more we will attract. It is not enough just to build our competency.

A *Harvard Business Review* article ‘Lovable Fools and Competent Jerks’ (see Additional Reading section at the end of this book), discusses the challenges of working with colleagues who may have either likeable personalities but lack skills (lovable fools), or possess the necessary skills but are difficult to work with (competent jerks). The article emphasises the importance of finding a balance between likability and competence in the workplace. Ultimately, the article concludes that teams perform best when they consist of individuals who are both competent and collaborative (lovable stars).

In applying this concept to our coaching practice, an authentic coach is one who works on their likability by staying true to their nature whilst at the same time building on their competencies (becoming an impactful coach) to reach the status of lovable star.

Let’s explore the attribute that will contribute towards us becoming an impactful coach who is successful in creating transformation.

3.2 Attributes of an Impactful Coach

An impactful coach will strive towards mastery and will learn to adopt the following attributes:

1. Ability to Encourage and Challenge
2. Ability to remain Impartial and Objective
3. Ability to Clarify
4. Resourceful Accountability

5. Provide Value and Support

Encourage and Challenge

An impactful coach will be able to both encourage their clients and provide them with constructive challenge to help them progress towards their desired goal or result. More often than not, opportunities to challenge a client pop up in our sessions, whether because of lack of commitment or action from the client, the same conversation being had every session, or it becomes evident that there is a block in their way that they are unable to see. When this occurs, it is important for us to be able to:

- Pluck up the courage to challenge a client’s lack of commitment.
- Take a step back and discover why the coaching seems to be going around in circles.
- Point out the obvious.

The way in which we challenge the client is very important. Pulling someone up for lack of commitment can cause clients to get defensive, telling them the sessions are going around in circles could lead them to feeling they are wasting their time, and pointing out the obvious could make a client feel a little silly.

Here are three tips we can implement when challenging clients:

1. Ask for permission to challenge the client. It may look something like this: 'Would you mind if I challenge you on that?', 'Could I ask a challenging question on the information you have shared?'

2. Ask the client how challenging they would like you to be on a scale of 1-10. This can be done in your discovery session

(see chapter 12) so you can set expectations of how you will challenge your client.

3. Put the client in a hypothetical position to challenge themselves. For example: 'If this was a friend, how might you challenge the information being shared?'

Adopting these three strategies will help us begin to challenge with impact. Below is an example of how an impactful coach and a non-impactful coach may challenge a client:

Client: “I will research these topics next week to work out which one I would like to write about.”

Non-Impactful Coach: “Ok. That will great. I will take that down as an action.”

Impactful Coach: “Researching these topics would be great. I’m just wondering, you mentioned earlier that your deadline to submit the assignment was next Friday. What is stopping you from researching these topics this week?”

As we can see in this brief example, the impactful coach is softly challenging the client’s deadline rather than just noting the action.

Ability to Remain Impartial and Objective

An impactful coach will be able remain impartial and objective at all times during their coaching sessions, never bringing in their judgement, opinions or bias. By being impartial, we can see situations clearly and ask balanced questions. This helps clients make better decisions and work through challenges effectively, rather than being led down a line of questioning that stems from a coach's assumption. An objective and impartial coach creates a safe and trusting environment for their clients to explore, learn and develop, which in effect makes an impact. Below is an example of how an impactful coach and a non-impactful coach may remain impartial and objective with their clients:

Client: "My manager took me off an important project all because I made one silly mistake last week, it is so unfair, I will never get that promotion now!"

Non-Impactful Coach: "Well it seems to me like your manager is teaching you a lesson. That can't be the only reason they removed you from the project?"

Impactful Coach: "I can see why you might think that. That project was important to you. However, I'm interested in exploring if there might be other reasons why your manager removed you from the project?"

Here the impactful coach remains impartial and asks a curious question about other possible reasoning. There is no collusion with the client or assumptions being given.

Ability to Clarify

An impactful coach will be able to clarify their client's intentions, drivers and goals and will not leave their objectives or desires vague. A skilled coach doesn't just passively listen to their clients, they actively work to understand the deeper motivations and aspirations driving their actions. By clarifying intentions, drivers and goals, the coach ensures that there is a clear direction for the coaching. Vague objectives or desires can lead to confusion and lack of progress. Therefore, an impactful coach helps clients articulate their goals with precision, which in turn allows for more focused and effective coaching sessions. This clarity enables both the coach and the client to work together more efficiently towards achieving meaningful outcomes, strengthening the relationship and the success. Below is an example of how an impactful coach and a non-impactful coach may clarify their client's objective:

Client: "I want to progress in my company, and I want to get a raise in my salary."

Non-Impactful Coach: "Fantastic. Let's look at what you need to do to get that promotion and raise!"

Impactful Coach: "That is great. When you say you want to progress and get a raise in your salary, what would that look like for you?"

Immediately the impactful coach seeks clarity on what the goal will look like for the client, keeping the end goal in mind and opening an avenue of questioning that could allow the client to unfold their intentions and drivers behind the goal. The ability to clarify is a strong skill to develop.

Resourceful Accountability

An impactful coach will be able to hold their clients accountable for their actions and goals and will not be side-tracked when commitments have not been met. Resourceful accountability is a crucial aspect of coaching, where the coach helps clients take responsibility for their actions and commitments. A skilled coach sets clear expectations and agreements with clients regarding their goals and the actions needed to achieve them. They provide support, encouragement and resources to help clients stay on track. It is not just a case of checking in, but how they check in with a client that makes the accountability resourceful. By holding clients accountable, the coach ensures that progress is made and that clients take ownership of their development. Below is an example of how an impactful coach and a non-impactful coach may hold their clients accountable:

Client: “I know I promised to have a difficult conversation with my husband last week. But it doesn't matter.”

Non-Impactful Coach: “That is ok. Have the conversation when you feel ready or if it doesn’t matter, then maybe forget about it.”

Impactful Coach: “Okay, so you agreed by the time we would next meet, you would have had that conversation with your husband. Let’s look at what is stopping you...”

Here, the impactful coach is challenging the client on their failure to follow up and begins an avenue of questioning that will explore obstacles. This will open up an opportunity for the coach to hold accountability and an option to introduce some new resources.

Provides Value and Support

An impactful coach will have the ability to make their clients feel valued and supported with whatever it is they are going through or whatever goal they are striving to achieve. They will never make their clients feel uncomfortable or isolated. Impactful coaching goes beyond just addressing goals and actions; it involves creating a supportive and nurturing environment in which clients feel heard, understood and valued. A skilled coach demonstrates empathy by acknowledging and validating their clients' experiences, challenges and aspirations. They show genuine interest in their clients' wellbeing and success, building trust and rapport in the coaching relationship. Below is an example of how an impactful coach and a non-impactful coach may make their clients feel valued and supported.

Client: “My mum has been giving me a really hard time about it. My dad isn't speaking to me, my sisters are so unsupportive, and my friends don't care. I have no one.”

Non-Impactful Coach: “Sounds like you are playing the role of victim to me. I find it a little strange that everyone is reacting to you in this way. Is there a possibility you could be contributing to the problem?”

Impactful Coach: “So we can look at this a little more constructively, would you mind telling me a little more about your relationship with each of these people? I’m wondering if you are being hard on yourself. I would also like to remind you that I’m here to support you.”

Above, the impactful coach is letting the client know she is valued by stating they are wondering if the client is being hard on themselves, and letting the client know they are there to support. There is a question that also explores the relationship with each of the parties to challenge the generalisation that the client has ‘no one’.

When developing and building on these attributes of an impactful coach, it is important to keep these three points in mind:

- Our role is not to be too goal-driven and push our clients to get results but instead, constructively challenge and hold our clients accountable.
- We aim to help our clients get long-lasting results rather than fast results for our own gain.
- We prepare for our sessions, turn up on time and stick to the commitments we make with our clients.

3.3 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have reviewed the key attributes for an authentic and impactful coach, with some examples of what this could look like. We briefly discussed the concept of the ‘lovable star’ and the importance of building our likability as well as our competence.

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

- ✎ **What are your main drivers to becoming a successful coach?**

Chapter 4

The Coach-Client Relationship

‘Rapport is the ability to enter someone else’s world, to make them feel that you understand them, that you have a strong common bond.’

Anthony Robbins

How important is the relationship with the client? Is it easy to create a connection? How do I build rapport? The relationships that we hold with our clients are the backbone of our coaching practice. Poor relationships, poor service and lack of trust with clients will lead to the destruction of our coaching practice. Coaching is a people profession. We must be a people person to succeed. Our clients provide the feedback, the income and the reviews that will make or break our business. We must therefore master relationship building and our coach-client relationship.

Two of the eight key skills for coaching (mentioned in the previous chapter) are ‘building rapport’ and ‘empathy’, both of which are essential ingredients in a strong coach-client relationship. We must be able to empathise with our clients, our clients must be able to trust us, and we must ensure our actions build rapport and not break it. It is important for us as a Transformational Coach to build a space of psychological safety in our coaching sessions that allows us to connect with our clients. Let’s explore how we do this.

4.1 The 4Cs of Trust

The first essential ingredient we will explore is trust. How do we ensure that our clients trust our service, trust that we will deliver and place their overall trust in who we are? One of the most important, effective and frequent models we can use to build and measure relationships is that of the **4Cs of Trust**. To build trust in any relationship we must ensure we provide the following four elements:

1. Care
2. Competence
3. Credibility
4. Consistency

Care

To build trust, our clients must feel that we care about their success and that we want to see them achieve their goals. We must show curiosity and interest in everything that our clients share with us, remembering to acknowledge and congratulate their wins and progress. Showing a deep level of care towards our clients and their journey is essential for a great coach-client relationship. If we don't care for our client, then our coaching sessions will become difficult, we will find ourselves bored and our clients will lose trust in us. Caring is key.

Competence

Showing a high level of competence is also fundamental to building trust and a great coach-client relationship. Our clients need to feel confident that we have the right experience and skills to be acting as their coach and to support them in achieving their goals. It is therefore important that we accurately represent our qualifications and levels of competence and always perform to the best of our ability. Nobody wants a coach who can talk the talk but not walk the walk. Clients want a coach who knows what they are doing. Showing competence builds trust.

<u>Credibility</u>

Ensuring that our clients have confidence in us as a coach is also an essential element of the coach-client relationship. Our clients need to feel that we are going to deliver what we promise. It is therefore important that we set clear expectations with our clients and never fail to deliver them. We must turn up on time, follow up with those emails we promise and constantly seek to provide value to our clients. By doing this, we increase our credibility. By building credibility, we build trust.

<u>Consistency</u>

Consistency is the most important C of trust. Whilst we may feel like we have mastered care, competence and credibility, the coach-client relationship will not last long if we are not consistent. Our clients need to know that we will show up for them, that we care about their goals, that we will not drop our level of competence in certain sessions and that we will never fail to follow up on commitments we have made. We must be consistent to build and maintain trust.

To help develop our coaching practice and the relationships we hold with our clients, we can use the four Cs of trust to identify where we may be falling short. If we feel like trust is not there with a particular client, then we can ask ourselves the following questions:

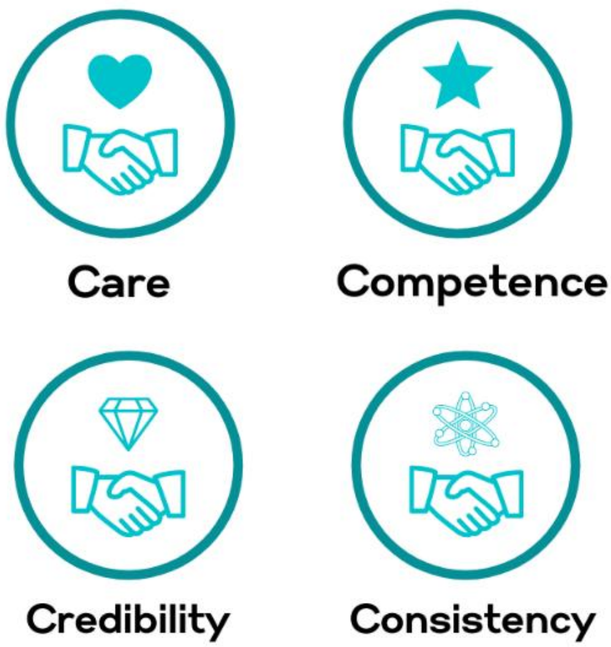
1. Have I shown an appropriate degree of care with my client?

2. Have I built a good level of credibility by setting and meeting client expectations?
3. Have I shown a level of competence in what I am delivering?
4. Have I been consistent with my client?

We can then use our reflections from these questions to help restore or improve the relationship.

We must see our level of trust with our clients as an ‘account’, with each action we take either depositing or withdrawing from the ‘trust account’. Every time we perform an act that builds trust, we deposit into the trust account with the client, every time we perform an action that breaches trust the balance in the account is reduced. The more impactful the action, the bigger the deposit or withdrawal. We must always stay in credit with the trust accounts of our clients and never find ourselves in debt. Sometimes debt cannot be repaid.

Figure 5: The 4Cs of Trust



4.2 Building Rapport

A coach-client relationship must be built on both trust and rapport. It is therefore essential for us to understand what rapport is and how we can build it. This may come naturally to some, or it may require time, energy and work. If you are one of those people who can connect with others instantly, allowing them to feel comfortable and safe in your presence, then you are most likely a natural rapport builder. If, on the other hand, you find it difficult to connect with people and it takes time for others to open up to you, then this skill may come as a challenge. Either way, it is important to explore rapport in detail and understand the impact it has on the coach-client relationship.

So, what is rapport? Put simply, rapport indicates a harmonious relationship. We can measure rapport by the degree of warmth present, how in tune we feel or how close our relationship is. As a coach, the more warmth, present or in tune we feel with our clients, the stronger the coach-client relationship. It is very important to note that we can spend sessions building rapport and only seconds destroying it. We must therefore understand both what helps build rapport and what can break it. Take the example below, for instance:

Coach: "It is great to see you again Claire. How has everything been since our last session?"

Client: "It is nice to see you again. It has been a bit difficult over the past few weeks. My husband is at risk of redundancy and my mum has been a bit ill."

Coach: "I'm sorry to hear that everything is falling apart for you."

Client: "Nothing is falling apart; it is just those two things and we are managing them. It is just not easy."

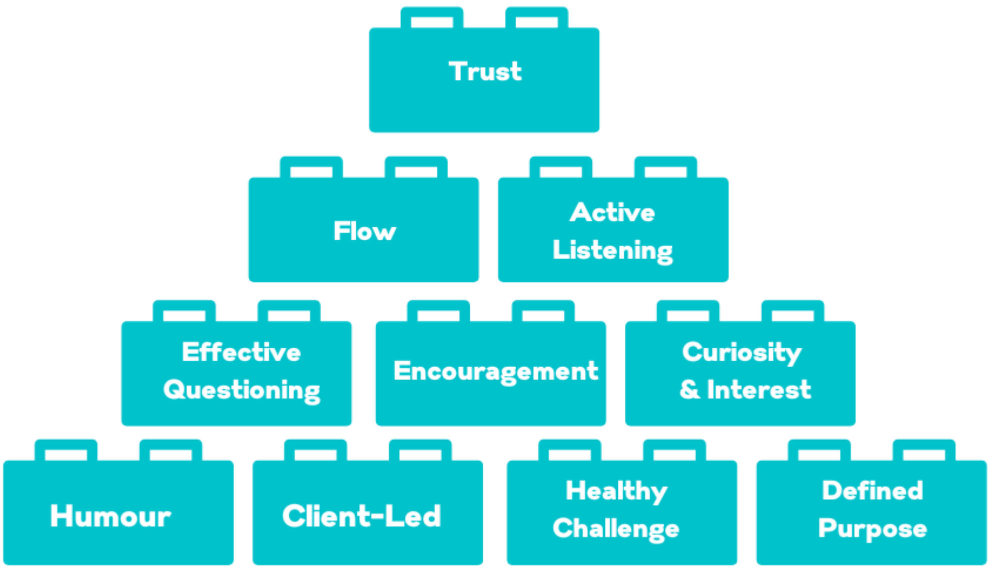
Whilst there are many ways in which we can save a scenario like the above, we can see how the assumption/generalisation made by the coach could reduce or damage the level of rapport with a client. We should always avoid making assumptions so as not to break rapport with our clients. Remember when we ASSUME, we make an ASS out of U and ME.

For those of us who like to visualise, we can picture our relationship with our clients as a dance. Are we in rhythm with our clients or do we keep stepping on their feet? How do we find a way to dance in sync and develop something wonderful?
Rapport = the level of warmth present in a relationship or how in tune we feel with our client.

4.3 The 10 Rapport-Building Blocks

There are many ways in which we can build rapport with a client, including trust, the words we use and our body language. To get us started on building a relationship as a Transformational Coach, we have highlighted 10 important rapport builders essential for building the coach-client relationship.

Figure 6: The 10 Building Blocks of Rapport



Client-Led Session

Allowing the client to lead the session and sticking to their agenda is an important rapport builder. The moment we step into leading the session or taking control is the moment we risk damaging rapport. We must always ask the client at the beginning of the session what they would like to talk about, even if the topic is not related to the goal you agreed to work on. Sometimes clients just need the space to talk about an issue that has arisen that day.

Trust

Building trust with the client using the 4Cs of trust discussed above is the most crucial rapport builder. The more competency, care, credibility and consistency we show, the more rapport we build. Trust is the foundation of the coach-client relationship and if trust is lost, then the relationship will fall apart. We must keep showing up for our clients.

Active Listening

Being attentive and actively listening to our client helps us build rapport. We will explore this in detail further on in the book, but for now note that, in order to fully understand our client, we must at the minimum, actively listen with an aim to enter a state of deep/empathetic listening. The more the client feels listened to, the better the rapport.

Flow in Session

Allowing the sessions to flow naturally with simplicity, clarity and ease will naturally allow rapport to unfold with our clients. If we find ourselves constantly stuck on what question to ask, or unsure where to take the conversation, this can have an impact on the rapport with the client. Finding how to flow in a session is something that comes with practice and we explore more on how we can gather our thoughts and use ourselves as instruments in our ***Coaching Presence*** book (another book to add to your collection). But note for now, that allowing the session to flow is a key rapport builder.

Curiosity and Interest

Showing curiosity and interest in what the client is saying helps demonstrate that we care about them and their progress. If we look bored or uninterested in the conversation, then the client is going to pick that up. The more energy we bring, the more curiosity we show and the more interest we give, then the happier the client is going to feel about the coaching. We can do this by simply adding in phrases like; ‘That sounds really interesting…’, ‘Wow, I’m curious…’, or ‘That is fascinating…’, before we ask a question.

Encouragement

Acknowledging the client's progress and encouraging them on their journey helps build rapport. It is important to note that we must do this without colluding with them. We want to encourage our clients, not have them become dependent on our praise. Encouraging clients would look something like, ‘That is really amazing, well done! Would you like to take a moment to acknowledge what you have achieved?' Whereas collusion would look something a little like, 'I agree that is really fantastic. You should do it', or 'I think what you have achieved is absolutely brilliant. I have no idea why you don't see it.' Here we are providing our thoughts on the idea. Take a moment to reflect on the difference between encouragement and collusion as it is very important for successful coaches to understand.

Effective Questioning

Asking powerful and open-ended questions that help clients open up and see a different perspective is a key rapport builder. We explore this in detail below; however, for now we must note that questions that help the client think differently are what truly add value to the coaching session. If we find ourselves asking lots of closed questions or we don't have confidence in the questions we are asking, this will make it difficult to build rapport.

Defined Purpose

Ensure that the sessions with the client are purposeful and are moving them forward. It is always important to ask at the beginning of the session what the client would like to achieve from the time spent together. This not only builds rapport but helps us measure the value of the coaching session. When we first begin coaching, we can often find ourselves holding sessions that appear to go around in circles or allowing the coaching space to be used for the client to rant. In order to move forward, it is important for us to identify when this occurs and take action to revisit or rediscover the purpose of the coaching.

Healthy Challenge

This is having the ability to openly challenge the client healthily to help them remove limiting beliefs. We went into detail on how an impactful coach will challenge a client in chapter 3, with tips on how to approach challenge. We must overcome our own fears when it comes to asking difficult questions and we must also avoid coming across as self-righteous when challenging the client. This again comes with practice.

Humour

When we are at a deep level of rapport with a client, we will be able to introduce humour into the sessions. However, we must tread carefully with this builder: humour used incorrectly can be one of the biggest rapport breakers. Getting on the same level of humour as our clients is difficult, but if achieved can really cement a strong coach-client relationship.

Working on all 10 rapport-building blocks will help us develop sound and meaningful relationships with our clients. It may be a useful exercise to take a moment to reflect on them and identify which need a little work to improve and which we believe we have mastered. If we are just beginning our transformational coaching journey, then we can note these down for when we begin holding our first sessions.

4.4 Rapport Breakers

Understanding how to build rapport is one important aspect, the other is understanding what breaks rapport and how to avoid this. Unfortunately, it takes a lot longer to build rapport than it does to break it. Below we have provided ten rapport breakers we should always beware of as a Transformational Coach, to avoid damaging the coach-client relationship.

Figure 7: The 10 Rapport Breakers

<u>Judgement</u>

Bringing judgement into the coaching space in any shape or form is a serious rapport breaker. The moment our client feels judged is the moment they are going to start seeking another coach. Judgement can take many different shapes, from comments on the client's progress, to telling the client what they must do and even in the body language that we use. Our coaching sessions need to be a judgement-free zone.

Assumptions

Making assumptions or inaccurate conclusions about what a client is sharing with us will break rapport. We can often fall into the trap of disguising our assumptions when reflecting information back to the client. We must remember to always remain objective and when we reflect to clients, avoid paraphrasing or changing what we heard into 'what we think we heard'.

Opinions

Introducing our own opinions about what the client is going through or trying to achieve will break rapport. We must avoid using words like 'I think' and 'I feel', as these automatically introduce our opinion. As a coach, we are not there to sell our opinions or tell the client what they should do. We are there to guide them to their own answers. Even in our day-to-day lives, when people offer their unwanted opinion it can annoy us, whether it is a parent telling us we need to lose weight or a friend suggesting how we could improve our life. The same applies when it comes to a coach offering their opinion. We must remember to remain objective.

Imposing Values

Pushing or sharing our values or morals on the client is a big 'no' in coaching and can also seriously damage rapport. We explore values in coaching in detail in our ***Coaching Psychology*** book; however, for now, it is important to note that we must keep our values out of our coaching sessions. Whatever our background, values or beliefs are, our coaching practices is not the space for them.

Being Distracted

Our clients will be aware when we are failing to listen, are asking them often to repeat themselves or when our focus is elsewhere, and it will break rapport. We explore how to manage distractions and plan for interruptions in coaching in detail in our ***Coaching Presence*** book. For now, we must take note that any distractions or disinterest in a coaching session will damage rapport.

Fear

If we are afraid to ask questions, are unable to challenge a client or don't believe in ourselves and our capability, this fear or lack of confidence will be picked up and will damage rapport. We must build confidence in our coaching through practice and believe in the value we have to offer as a coach.

Misrepresentation

Misrepresenting our qualifications, competency and expertise and failing to meet the expectations set with the client will negatively impact on the relationship with our clients. Promising miracles to clients and then failing to deliver will be a huge rapport breaker. We must avoid setting unrealistic expectations, and only promise to do our best in supporting our clients. We should let others demonstrate our results through reviews and testimonials and not praise or pride ourselves too much publicly on what we believe we can deliver for others.

A Need to be Right

Giving advice or pointing out problems with a need to be correct and to resolve is another rapport breaker. Being humble and showing humility in our coaching space will help maintain a strong coach-client relationship. It is also important to note that pushing models, tools or exercises onto clients will break rapport. If we feel that a coaching tool would be of benefit to a client, it is important for us to ask their permission to work through it with them. If the client refuses, then we must let it go. Forcing or demanding to use a tool, will cause the client to find a new coach.

Interruptions

Verbal interruptions, mobile phones and physical interruptions by others will all damage rapport. We must ensure we do our best to mitigate and manage interruptions so as to maintain a strong coach-client relationship. Aiding the client to help mitigate interruptions from their end is also important. We must create and set some ground rules for our coaching sessions.

Humour

A maker and breaker as discussed above. Making inappropriate jokes or not meeting the client at their level of humour can destroy rapport. Remember to always tread carefully when using humour within your sessions.

All the above rapport breakers should be avoided at all costs with our clients. They can severely damage rapport, sometimes to a point where the relationship may become irreparable. We must therefore take note of the rapport builders and breakers, temperature checking the coach-client relationship after each session and ensuring we build rapport as a true Transformational Coach.

4.5 Empathy in Coaching

Another very important skill to hold as a Transformational Coach is being able to empathise with our clients. This can come naturally, but we can and must learn to cultivate this skill and understand how to use it appropriately in a coaching space. We must understand how empathy differs from sympathy and how to appropriately use both within our coaching sessions. There is a time for empathy and a time for sympathy and in understanding when either one is appropriate, we come from a place of compassion.

<u>Empathy versus Sympathy</u>

Empathy is the ability to put ourselves in another's shoes, imagining and understanding what they are feeling. Sympathy, on the other hand, is a sense of feeling sorry or pity for the client and what they are going through. In coaching, to build a deep coach-client relationship, we must learn when to empathise and when to sympathise. In the majority of situations, Transformational Coaches should empathise but in certain scenarios, it may be better to sympathise to show a personal connection.

Empathy can sometimes be felt as coldness in circumstances where we have become strong in a similar situation to that which the client has been through. Alternatively, their experience can have an adverse effect and trigger us, especially if we have been through similar struggles and haven't fully dealt with them or healed. On those occasions it may be difficult for us to hold that space to help guide the client. We must be mindful and pay attention when this happens so that we can manage and grow from it through reflection.

Empathy can also lead us more into 'advice mode' at times. If we have been through something similar to our clients, it becomes easier to empathise. However, it also becomes easier to want to share with the client our solutions and how we overcame the struggle. But remember, as a coach, we don't provide advice or solutions.

Sympathy on the other hand can appear to be patronising where it comes across as pity. As we can't fully understand the client's situation because we haven't experienced their exact struggle, we find it difficult to put ourselves in their shoes, causing us to keep ourselves at an emotional distance with the use of sympathy. However, bear in mind that sympathy can be beneficial at times in preventing us from becoming emotionally involved in the client's issue.

Below are key points to help us identify the differences between the two, to allow us to understand the pros and cons of using both.

Figure 8: The Differences between Empathy and Sympathy

Empathy	Sympathy
Understanding and feeling.	Understanding and sharing.
Involves imagination or visualisation.	Involves clarity and acknowledgment.
Places us on the same level as the client.	It can place us above the client.
Based on similar past experiences.	Based on resonating with the client.
Creates a risk of coming across cold.	Creates a risk of becoming personally involved.
Preserves energy.	Drains energy.

We must take into account all the above factors when choosing whether to empathise or sympathise with our clients, bearing in mind the potential impact on the coach-client relationship and our past experience. It is also useful to note that both empathy and sympathy take up energy but at times sympathy can become more energy draining as we try to understand the client's issue. If we can empathise, we get to a level of understanding more quickly and can start to ask the appropriate questions to find a solution. To build a deeper relationship with our clients, we must begin to master the appropriate response, which in time will become intuitive.

4.6 Client Needs

When understanding the coach-client relationship, it is important to consider the client's needs and why our clients are seeking coaching. Whilst every goal and client are different, people who come for coaching share some generic needs, as shown in the diagram below.

Figure 9: Generic Client Needs

We explore further how to understand how our role as a coach differs depending on the client's needs in our ***Coaching Ethics*** book, where we discuss the concept of 'Psychological Contracting'. At this point, we must begin to consider and reflect on what our client is seeking behind their stated goal. Are they coming for coaching because they need you to hold them accountable? Are they seeking a space to be heard? Do they need your coaching sessions for deeper self-awareness and discovery? Reflect on your clients and think about their more generic needs that sit behind their goal. Consider what is <u>not</u> being said in the coaching space.

4.7 What about Fun?

Coaching can become fixated on goals, ambitions, work, career, confidence, success, problems, challenges... the list of words centred around moving clients forward is endless. But what about fun? In developing a professional practice, where do we slot fun into coaching and why do we need to?

In an article by Sadie Dingfelder for *National Geographic* Magazine (Jan 2024), titled 'We Need to Play, Seriously', Sadie outlined the importance of playing and having fun for the benefit of both our mental and physical health, drawing the conclusion that fun is as essential as the need for sleep.

Often, we get so caught up in taking life seriously that we forget the importance of play. We lose touch with our inner child, and we fall into the trap of everything needing to be ‘professional’. Reflecting on this, how much fun do you have in your life? More specifically, how much fun do you have at work? In the article, Sadie says:

‘Play allows us to deal with uncertainty and surprise in safe environment.’

Everything becomes more attractive when we are in a safe environment. Change and uncertainty only become fearful when we believe we are in an environment that lacks psychological safety. Coaching provides us with the opportunity to provide a safe space where we can introduce change and progress in a fun yet meaningful way. Making our coaching sessions fun can strengthen our coach-client relationship.

However, firstly we must start with ourselves and introduce more fun into our lives. Here are some tips on how we can begin to play more:

- Give yourself permission to be weird and different.
- Let yourself get bored and welcome crazy ideas.
- Try to make something impermanent so you focus on the process and not the end product.
- Invent new games and make your own characters and rules.
- Play games you used to play as a child.
- Revisit some nostalgic events or activities from your childhood.

Elements of Fun in Coaching

So, how can we as coaches, implement fun into our practice? Whether it is through creative ways to deliver a session or how we directly ask the client how they like to have fun, there is a space for creativity in our practice.

How can we innovate to bring a professional but fun environment into our coaching space? Here are a few ideas to get you started:

1. **Use interactive features in video meetings.** Share your screen, use a whiteboard or other software and facilitate engaging exercises.

2. **Begin sessions with wins and celebrations.** Open up your sessions asking the client what their achievements since the last session have been. Interactively take some time to celebrate and congratulate the client.

3. **Mindfulness exercises.** Introduce fun mindfulness exercises into your coaching sessions.

4. **Art and creativity.** Provide a space to tap into the creativity of your client. Instead of asking questions around how they feel about a scenario, ask them to draw it.

5. **Turn hypothetical questions into a game**. A great way to add some fun when coaching narrative. When guiding clients to rewrite stories, bring some fantasy, creativity and gamification into the exercises and process. Introduce story boards, jigsaws and games.

One of our biggest jobs as a coach is to guide our clients towards a new perspective, and we can do this with a little fun. However, we must keep in mind two key points. Firstly, we must not lead the session and we should ensure that we first offer any creative exercise we introduce rather than impose it. The exercise should not dominate the session and should not guide the client to a pre-conceived solution based on our own experience. Secondly, the creativity and fun we introduce should be used to build rapport with the client and we must be mindful not to break rapport by the way in which we introduce the fun. Get creative and find what works for you and your clients.

4.8 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored how to build and maintain a strong coach-client relationship. We have discussed the importance of building trust, ten ways to build rapport and ten ways to break it. Putting this information into practice, think about how strong your relationship is with your client/s and reflect on the question below.

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

✎ **Reflect on the relationship you hold with your clients. Which rapport builder could you improve to build a stronger relationship?**

Chapter 5

Becoming a Deep Listener

‘Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.’

Stephen R. Covey

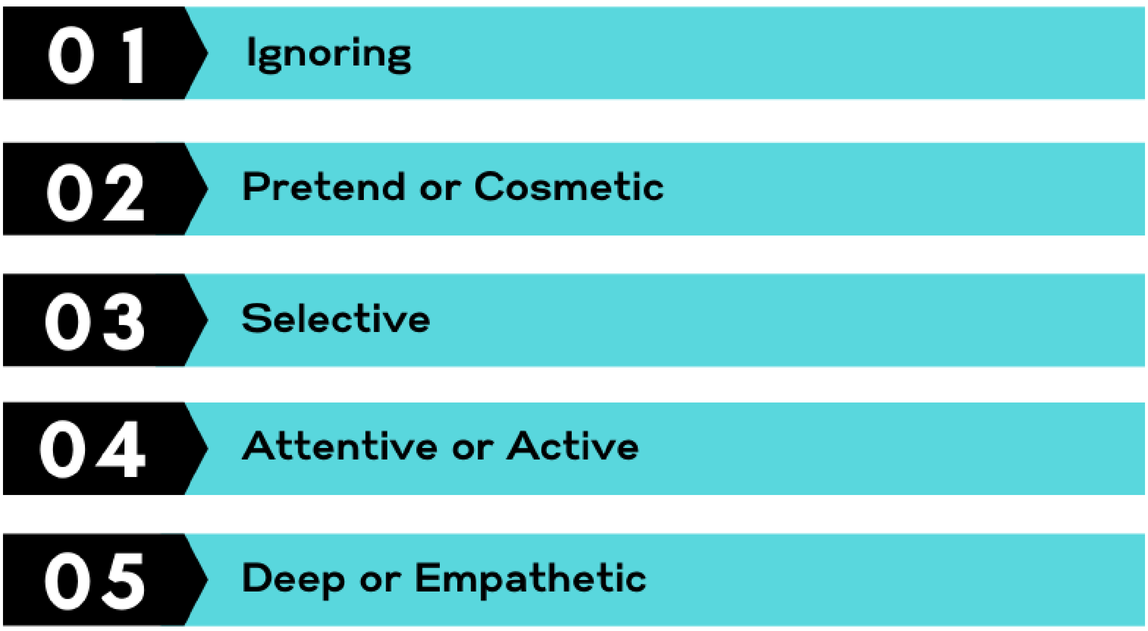
What does it mean to listen to our clients? How do I show the client I am listening? What happens if I struggle to listen? A few of the questions that might be running through your mind. This leads us into our next essential coaching skill, which is the ability to listen deeply. In our day-to-day lives when we communicate with others, we tend to listen to respond instead of listening to understand. When we are in conversation, someone may say something that sparks a memory and we may respond by introducing our own agenda, turning the conversation into one about ourselves. This is known as 'self or surface' listening, where the conversation is just as much about us as it is the other person.

On the other hand, a coaching conversation requires deep listening, or at the very least 'active listening', which keeps the full conversation focused on the agenda of the client. In this chapter we will explore the different levels of listening and why it is important as a Transformational Coach to become a deep listener.

5.1 The 5 Levels of Listening

As a Transformational Coach, we have a duty to learn the different levels of listening and strive towards becoming a deep listener where we are more focused on the client than on ourselves. Setting this intention will help us understand our clients on a much deeper level and enable us to accurately guide our clients to the success they desire. In his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey illustrates 5 levels of listening that are beneficial for us to understand as practicing coaches.

Figure 10: The 5 Levels of Listening



<u>Ignoring</u>

Ignoring is the lowest level of listening or in fact, can be defined as not listening at all. Here, we are aware that someone is trying to communicate with us, but we are giving their words no time, attention or energy. We are focused on something else, and we have no interest in hearing what the other has to say. Sometimes we can even go to the extent of completely interjecting and changing the topic.

As we can imagine, if we were to adopt this type of listening with our clients, we wouldn’t make a very successful Transformational Coach. This is a big ‘no’ in coaching.

Pretend or ‘Cosmetic’ Listening

This is the type of listening where we are picking up a few words, maybe we know the topic of conversation and a few key points, but we are somewhere else in our mind or we are focused on something else. We are not engaging and are pretending to listen. Here we can react with a simple 'OK' or 'yes' or use a casual nod of the head and a 'yep', but it is easy to see that our focus is elsewhere, and we are distracted.

Again, approaching clients with this form of listening will not assist the relationship with your client or help them reach their goals, and should therefore be avoided in coaching.

Selective Listening

This level of listening is similar to ‘Pretend’ listening, but we engage slightly more with the points that are of interest to us. When we hear something, we like or agree with, we give it our attention but as soon as the speaker moves on to something that doesn’t interest us, we fall back to the level of ‘Pretend’ or even ‘Ignore’.

As with the two levels of listening above, this is another ‘no’ in coaching. We would not get far with our clients if we paid attention only to those of their goals or challenges that were of interest to us.

Attentive or Active Listening

This is the level where most coaches might be at when they begin their coaching journey. To be a Transformational Coach, we need to already hold an interest in others and a desire to guide and support them in achieving their goals and unlocking their potential. Active or attentive listening is where we are focused on what the other person is saying, we are paying attention, and we are recording facts within our minds or down on paper.

This type of listening shows engagement with others and attention to detail, but it still holds an element of judgement. Generally, at this stage, although we are active, we are still listening in order to formulate an opinion on what the other person is telling us. It is therefore important that in coaching we make the shift from active listening to deep or empathetic listening.

Empathetic or ‘Deep’ Listening

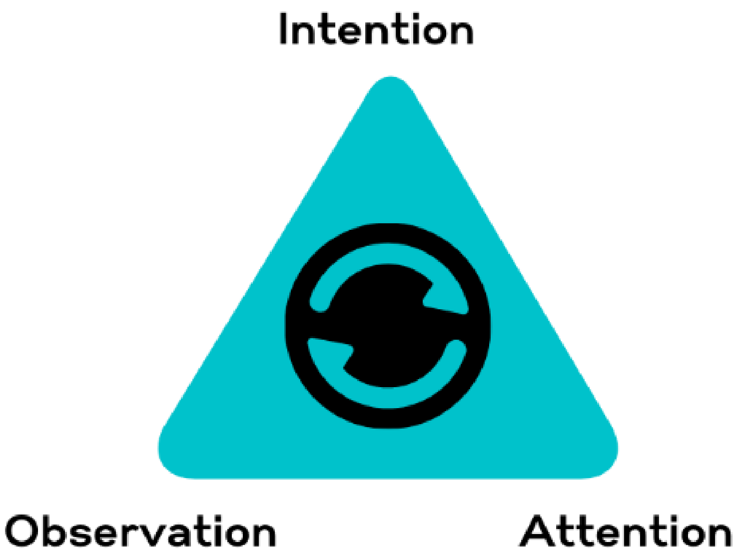
This is the highest level of listening where we are completely focused on the client. Here we are just taking in the information being provided, gaining a deep understanding of that person and what they are communicating to us. This is where we discipline ourselves to see the issue or goal brought to us through the eyes of our client. It is the level we should be at when holding a coaching space for our clients.

5.2 Becoming a Deep Listener

Stephen Covey defines empathetic listening as getting inside another person's frame of reference, looking through it, seeing the world the way they see the world, understanding their paradigm and understanding how they feel. Here we are focused on receiving the deep communication of another human soul. This is the level we should be striving for as a Transformational Coach. This level of listening takes time, practice and energy and the more we practice, the deeper the understanding we gain.

Below is a three-element triangle I personally created to help you begin to develop towards a deeper level of listening.

Figure 11: The Deep Listening Triangle



Intention

The first element to becoming a deeper listener is intention. If we do not set ourselves the correct intention before going into our coaching sessions, then we are going to struggle to see things the way our clients see them. We must therefore develop the intention to listen, to understand, to make a difference and to serve our clients. By setting these right intentions, we are creating that space and the mindset for deep listening. Approach your sessions with the mindset of ‘I am here, I am present, and I intend to listen to you deeply’.

Observation

It is said that 55% of all communication is transmitted through body language: eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, body motion, and so on. As a Transformational Coach, we must learn to observe the body language of our clients in addition to hearing the words they are expressing. If we fail to observe how clients react to certain questions, how they pose themselves when sharing certain information or notice their change of energy on certain topics, then we will struggle to reach and maintain a level of deep or empathetic listening. Whenever we are in our coaching sessions, we must understand that part of deep listening comes through observation. Consciously try to spot how clients change their body language when discussing certain topics, and don’t be afraid to shine a spotlight on those observations.

Attention

The final element in our triangle is attention. We have set our intention, we are observing the client and at the same time, we must also be attentive to the story that is being relayed to us. By paying attention to the words of our clients we can begin to develop a deeper understanding. We can begin to spot things that may not make sense, pick up on key pieces of information that may be missing and get a clear view of the client’s perspective. It is therefore important that we bring our full attention into our coaching sessions. Stay focused with curiosity and begin to spot what is not being said by the client.

Tip: Start to become aware of your level of listening in your day-to-day conversations. Are you more selective, or do you listen empathetically?

5.3 Remaining at a Deep Listening Level

One of the traps we can easily fall into at the start of our coaching journey is when listening becomes attached to our need to ask a question, and while we wait for a client to finish, we slip back into selective or pretend listening. In this instance we might miss important information that the client is sharing with us which could have opened an avenue of discovery. We must consistently practice our listening and remain at a deep level of listening for as long as possible. We explore this in more detail in our ***Coaching Presence*** book, but here are a few tips for how to stay focused:

1. Take notes as the client is speaking or make a mental note of questions you may want to ask - but do not lose focus on what the client is saying.
2. Don't just listen with your ears, pay attention to the client's body language.
3. Try to understand what is going on for your client.
4. Develop your sensory activity.
5. Put aside any assumptions that enter your mind.
6. Catch yourself drifting and bring your attention back to your client.
7. Don’t be afraid to ask for a short break.

If we implement the seven points above, we can improve our listening and the value we add in our coaching sessions. The ability to listen is the most essential skill of a Transformational Coach.

5.4 Creating a Space of Psychological Safety

When thinking about listening, it is also important to give thought to the space that we are creating for the client within our coaching sessions. Are we providing a space where the client is being heard and where they feel safe enough to open up? When exercising our role as a coach we must understand it is significantly different from the support or guidance they receive from a friend or family member. Often friends and family want to provide advice and pull people out of a dark hole. They create a position of rescuer where their priority is not to fully understand but to help. Sometimes this works, but more often than not it is a struggle.

As a Transformational Coach who listens deeply, our role is to sit in the dark hole with our client and to explore with them what that feels like.

Sitting ourselves down on the same level as our clients is the first step to creating a place in which they will feel heard. We can then build on this environment with trust, empathy and non-judgmental listening (all of which we have discussed above). Firstly, building trust through confidentiality and integrity ensures that clients feel secure in sharing their thoughts, feelings and challenges openly.

Secondly, demonstrating empathy by deeply listening to clients' concerns, validating their experiences and showing genuine understanding helps to create a supportive atmosphere where clients feel heard and understood. Additionally, practicing non-judgmental acceptance of clients' perspectives, choices and emotions encourages them to explore their thoughts and feelings without fear of criticism or shame. By consistently embodying these qualities and creating a safe space for vulnerability and exploration, we can empower our clients to engage more deeply in the coaching process.

It is important to note that we never know who is going to walk into our coaching sessions and what problems or challenges they are going to be struggling with. We might be contracting for career coaching and then suddenly, a client opens up about their depression. We may have a client tell us they are thinking about committing suicide. This further highlights the need for a space of psychological safety. We explore coaching and mental health in more detail in our ***Coaching Mental Health*** book, but for now, here are five tips to prepare for such a situation:

1. Complete a Mental Health First Aid course or at a minimum, research and educate yourself about mental health.
2. Remember that people will find their own answers, in their own time, when they are supposed to. Don’t slip into advice mode.
3. Partner with a therapist who you can refer clients to if it is outside your area of competence.
4. Keep a list of support services for mental health and wellbeing which you can signpost for the client. (We have a list of support services from around the world in the Coaching Minds Library.)
5. Show that you care and allow the client to talk through their feelings. This in itself is invaluable.

Conversations around mental health can be difficult or daunting at first but they get easier with time. It is best to prepare and educate ourselves as far as possible so that we can act appropriately if an issue arises, starting with creating a space of psychological safety.

5.5 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored the five levels of listening, how to remain at a deep level of listening and the importance of psychological safety.

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

- ✏ **Reflecting on your level of listening daily, how could you improve your listening skills?**

Chapter 6

Effective Questioning

‘We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.’

Albert Einstein

What sort of questions do coaches ask? How do I know which question to choose? What if I can’t think of a question? All of these are very relevant and important questions to consider. Our role as a Transformational Coach is not only to listen but also to possess the ability to effectively question the information that is being shared with us. Effective questioning is one of the key essential skills needed by any coach. However, it is not only about the questions we ask but also the timing of the question and the manner of its delivery. Below we will explore the different types of questioning, which to adopt and which to avoid, and look at some tips on how to develop our questioning techniques.

6.1 Types of Questioning

There are several different types of questions that we ask others in our day-to-day conversations. As a Transformational Coach, it is essential that we understand these different types of question and look at how we can apply or avoid them in coaching. We can categorise questions into one of the 10 types below:

1. Closed Questions
2. Open Questions
3. Compound Questions
4. Leading Questions

5. Hypothetical Questions
6. Rhetorical Questions
7. Clarity Questions
8. Reflective Questions
9. Scaling Questions
10. Action-Oriented Questions

We will explore each of these in turn, discussing which to adopt and which to avoid.

Figure 12: Questions to Avoid or Adopt

Questions to Avoid	Questions to Adopt
✗ Closed	✓ Open
✗ Compound	✓ Hypothetical
✗ Leading	✓ Clarity
✗ Rhetorical	✓ Reflective
	✓ Scaling
	✓ Action-Oriented

6.2 Questions to Avoid in Coaching

<u>Closed Questioning</u>

Closed questions limit a client's answer to ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and don’t give the client the opportunity to provide further information. For example:

‘Are you wanting coaching in order to build confidence?’
‘Do you hope to achieve your goals within 3 months?’

We can see from the above that a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer will not give us any detail and in practice, too many closed questions can lead us to a place of feeling stuck or failing to move the coaching and client's progress forward. The questions could be rephrased along these lines:

‘What are you hoping to achieve from coaching?’

‘What would be a useful and realistic timescale for you to reach your goals?’

The above questions are open-ended, allowing for the client to provide more information that will be useful for us as a coach. It also allows the client to think about what it is they truly desire from coaching.

Having the ability to ask open-ended rather than closed questions is an effective questioning technique that we must develop as a coach. Sometimes our automatic response can be to ask a closed question or some of us may do this as a habitual response. A useful exercise is to observe the types of questions we tend to ask in our day-to-day conversations and practice asking more open-ended questions. This will help us develop the skill and bring it naturally into our coaching space.

Note that, whilst closed questions should generally be avoided in coaching, there are times when a line of closed questioning can be extremely useful if used appropriately. To avoid confusion and to help with learning, we have called these useful closed questions ‘Clarity Questions’ and explore them further below. As a rule of thumb, avoid closed questions.

<u>Compound Questions</u>

Compound questioning (sometimes referred to as double-barrelled questioning) is asking a series of running questions that runs the risk of confusing a client. They can crop up in our coaching space in two ways. The first is when we ask several questions eagerly in one go in order to gather information. The second is when we rephrase our first question due to lack of confidence. Compound questions must always be avoided in coaching. Here is an example of a compound question arising from an eagerness to gather information:

‘What do you think caused him to react that way? Does he always react that way? How could you approach the situation differently?’

We can see how this type of questioning may come across as an interrogation which could startle or confuse a client. A client might be thinking, ‘which question do I answer first? Why am I being asked so many questions? Where do I start?’ This kind of compound questioning approach can be overwhelming and intrusive.

It can also be common in coaching that a compound question occurs due to a lack of confidence in a question that we are asking. An example of this may be:

‘What is it that is stopping you from achieving this goal? I mean, what blocks or obstacles are currently in your way?’

Or:

‘What other approaches have you taken to manage similar situations? In other words, have you tried anything else to manage these types of situations?’

Although these types of questions do not come across as intrusive, they can show a lack of confidence or incompetence in what is being asked and can affect our rapport with clients. It is therefore important that compound questions of all kinds are avoided in coaching. When reflecting on your sessions, see if you can pick up on any compound questions you found yourself asking.

Leading Questions

Leading questions are another type of questioning that must be avoided in coaching. Coaching is all about the client and guiding the client to their own answers, ensuring that we always stick to the client's agenda. Leading questions take the conversation away from the client's agenda and tend to lead the client down a path a coach wishes to take a client. Here are a few examples:

‘Ok, so you have explored running to lose weight, but you find it boring. The gym is a great way to lose weight, how would you feel about trying this for a few weeks and see how you feel after it?’

Or:

'This feeling you have of lack of self-confidence, are you sure it is a lack of self-confidence, or could it instead be a lack of self-esteem?'

Reviewing the two questions above, you can see that they introduce new information in a way that is leading the client to a particular action or line of thinking. How we could explore this more effectively is to ask:

'Ok, so running doesn't seem to be working for you. Have you considered any other ways to lose weight?'

'Could you tell me a little more about why you believe this feeling is due to a lack of self-confidence?'

The above questions do not contain any new information but allow the client the opportunity to themselves provide new information that can be further explored. Leading questions should always be avoided in coaching. If you have signed up to our Coach Library our 'Leading Question Test' will enable you to explore further what constitutes leading questions.

Rhetorical Questions

I suppose you are wondering what these types of questions are about? What better way is there to explain a topic than using an example or two? Both of these sentences are rhetorical questions, another device that should always be avoided in coaching.

Rhetorical questions are questions that are asked to give effect or to make a point, with no expectation of an answer. They are generally used to give emphasis and hold an underlying assumption of some description. Some examples of rhetorical questions are:

‘I bet that was painful, right?’

‘There is no hope, is there?’

‘Why bother?’

‘Are you serious?’

As we can see, the use of rhetorical questions provides no value, runs the risk of appearing patronising and is just a way for us to react to information being shared. We should never ask rhetorical questions in coaching.

6.3 Questions to Adopt in Coaching

Open Questions

As discussed above, we should practice asking open questions rather than closed ones. Open questions pretty much do what they say on the tin and open clients up to providing more information. We can simply ask open-ended questions by starting the question with ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘why’, ‘when’ or ‘how’. Examples of open-ended questions may include:
‘What areas of life are you hoping to improve through coaching?’

‘How do you plan to achieve your goal?’

‘What have you already explored?’

‘When do you plan to take this action?’

‘Why is this goal important to you?’

Whilst a ‘why’ question can be very powerful, it is important to note that we must be careful not to come across as invasive. ‘Why’ questions can be a great way to challenge a client’s perspective, but they must be delivered effectively and in an appropriate manner. For example:

‘But why do you want to do that?’

‘Why did you take that approach?’

‘Why are you thinking like that?’

The above are all invasive questions which may cause a client to act defensively or to close down completely. A more appropriate or softer approach could take the form of:

‘I’m curious to know why you are interested in doing that?’

‘I would love to know, what made you take that approach?’
‘I’m intrigued, why are you thinking in that way?’

To effectively develop our 'why' questions, we need to shape our tone and soften our delivery in conversations. Again, we can use our day-to-day conversations to practice this.

Adopting all types of open questions is key to developing effective questioning techniques and essential for a Transformational Coach. Remember, turn your closed question into an open question by adding a ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘why’, ‘when’ or how’.

Hypothetical Questions

Hypothetical questions can be very powerful in coaching as a way to achieve a different perspective. They can also put clients in a different context or in scenarios that hold no obstacles or blocks. As a coach, mastering hypothetical questions can help shape a successful coaching practice.

Hypothetical questions are questions asked out of interest or curiosity that potentially do not reflect reality. For example:

‘Let’s say you had all the money in the world, what would you do with it?’

‘Close your eyes and imagine you have now achieved your goal, what do you see?’

‘If you were to paint that in a picture for me, what would it look like?’
‘Let’s say you have that dream job right now; what does it provide for you?

All the above are hypothetical questions that take clients out of reality and context to enable them to develop a new perspective in a certain situation. Adopting this type of questioning can open up clients to great discoveries and perspectives that can lead to huge change. We must therefore practice adopting this type of question in our practice. As you read further into this book you will see how hypothetical questions help build various tools in coaching and how we can use them in Cognitive Coaching.

Clarity Questions

As mentioned above, clarity questions are closed questions. They are used in coaching to gain clarity and understanding about the information being shared with us. They are an effective way of checking that we are on the same wavelength as our client and that the client is relaying information to us in a way that we can understand. Examples of clarity questions:

‘So, what I’m hearing is… your parents don’t appear to support the decisions that you are making in your life, and this seems to be putting pressure on your relationship?’

‘I just want to check that I understand correctly, your manager was previously a colleague who was promoted and since their new role, you no longer get along because of a change in their behaviour. Is that correct?’

Whilst clarity questions are of the closed type, they show attentiveness and a deep level of listening to our clients (provided the information we reflect is accurate) and are an effective way of clarifying the context and direction of the conversation. It is important that as a coach we adopt clarity questioning as part of our effective questioning techniques. Use them appropriately and to temperature check the information being provided.

6.4 Distortions, Deletions and Generalisations

As part of effective questioning and adopting clarity questions into our coaching practice it is essential that we understand the concept of 'Distortions, Deletions and Generalisations' with the ability to identify and challenge these when they pop up in our coaching sessions.

We all see the world through our own perspective or model and as human beings when relaying stories or experiences we tend to either distort information, delete information or form a generalisation. In a nutshell:

A **Deletion** is where we overlook or omit information. Here we delete parts of our story, either by discounting them as unimportant or failing to register them. Example:

'I got the promotion today. Finally, manager status. It's been quite the journey; I'll tell you that much. But hey, it's all about hard work, right? I've always been good at what I do, so it was bound to happen sooner or later. Sure, there were a few bumps along the way, but nothing worth dwelling on. Just the usual stuff you encounter in any job, you know? Nothing I couldn't handle. Just minor setbacks, really.'

In this example it is evident that parts of the story have been omitted. Reflect and consider what further questions you would ask to obtain further information.

A **Distortion** is where we display a personal prejudice that alters our perception. Here we amplify or diminish our experience, seeing it differently from what occurred. Example:

'I can't believe Amy's reaction in the meeting today! I suggested a small adjustment to the project timeline, and she completely blew up, accusing me of not pulling my weight. It's like she's always looking for ways to make me look bad. She probably thinks she's better than everyone else and just wants to show off. But I know what she's really like, she's just trying to undermine me every chance she gets.'

Here a distortion is present by the perception of the situation. The client is amplifying Amy's reaction and attributing negative intentions to her actions. The client diminishes her own contribution to the conflict and portrays Amy as hostile and manipulative, reflecting her personal prejudice against her colleague. Consider how you might challenge this distortion as a coach or what questions you would ask to gain more information.

A **Generalisation** is where we reach a general conclusion based on a few experiences, taking them as representative of the whole. Example:

‘I've had it with online dating. Every time I try, it's just a disaster. It's like all women are the same, superficial and only interested in looks. I've matched with dozens of them, and they all end up ghosting me or only caring about how I look in my profile pictures. I'm starting to think it's just not worth it.’

Here the client is making a generalisation that all women are the same. How might you challenge this or what questions would you ask to explore the problem further?

As a coach, we must be able to pick up or feel where a client may be applying a deletion, distortion or generalisation in relaying their experiences and stories to us. We can then use clarity questions to challenge the client’s information. Here is an example of how this could play out in a coaching space:

Client: “When I was going through this tough time there was no one there to support me or offer me guidance. Everything was a complete mess.”

Coach: “There was no one there at all?”

Client: “Well my husband supported me in his way. But I needed more support.”

Coach: "Was there anyone else there for you that you can think of?"

Client: "Well my parents provided me with a bit of financial support and my brother told me to call if I needed anything… So, I guess I did have some support."

Coach: "And when you said, "everything was a complete mess" … can you tell me what you mean by everything?"

Client: "Well I guess it wasn't everything. I was just struggling with a lot."

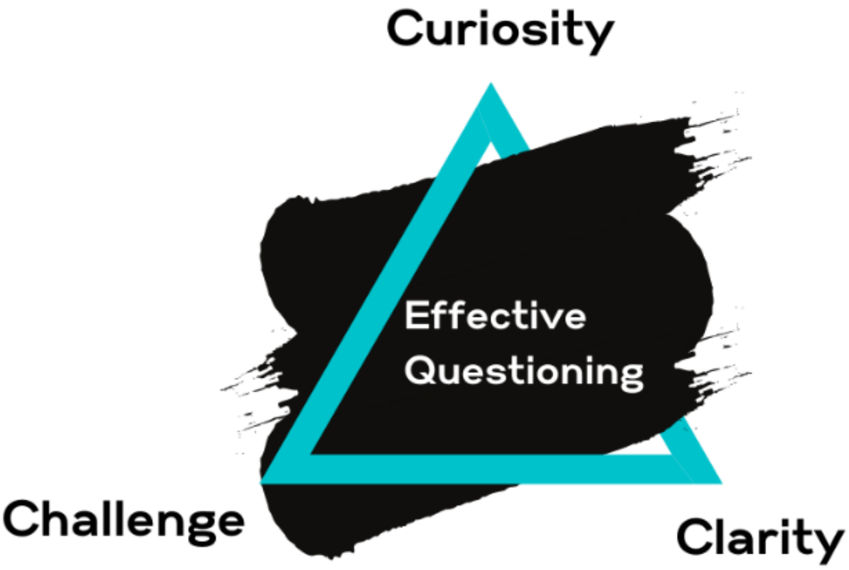
As we can see from the above, the client deleted information with regards to who had given them support, and made a distortion by amplifying what they were going through to become 'everything'. By appropriately challenging these scenarios we can extract deleted information and gently break down their distortion or generalisation.

Identifying deletions, distortions and generalisations takes time, practice and the ability to tune into our intuition. By combining deep listening and effective questioning, we increase our awareness and build a positive habit of spotting these. Often deletions, distortions and generalisations are subconscious and by observing and challenging alone, we can guide clients to a deeper self-discovery. Never underestimate the power of this skill.

6.5 The Three Cs of Effective Questioning

Above is another triad I have designed to illustrate the 'Three Cs of Effective Questioning'. By keeping these at the heart of our questioning skills, we can develop powerful questions that help move our clients forward and change their perspective. Without these three essential ingredients we will struggle to build on the skill of effective questioning.

Figure 13: The 3 Cs to Effective Questioning



Curiosity

We must remain curious in our coaching space, gather as much information from our clients as possible and get a better understanding of them and their challenges or goals. Imagine our sessions are like jigsaw puzzles, how do we collect all the pieces and put them together into a clear picture?

Challenge

We must hold the ability to challenge our client's perspective and thinking, allowing them to navigate past limiting beliefs and blocks. We must gain the courage to challenge and not be afraid.

However, it is important to never be intrusive or invasive in our approach. We can challenge appropriately and with confidence.

Clarity

When we seek clarity, we stay in tune with our client and ensure that everything that is being shared is being understood. If we don’t understand the client’s problems in depth, then we run the risk of breaking rapport. Seeking clarity is not a sign that we aren’t listening; when used with good reflection, it is a powerful way to demonstrate to the client just how deeply we are actually listening.

Be curious, challenge appropriately and always seek clarity.

6.6 Powerful Questioning

We may often hear the term 'Powerful Question' as an approach to adopt when coaching our clients. Essentially, what this means is having the ability to ask clients questions that help them:

- Spot opportunities where they were previously seeing only problems
- Gain a different perspective
- Create options or find new doors they could open
- Spark creativity
- Have an ‘Aha’ moment

The important point to note about Powerful Questions is that they are contextual. A powerful question may spark something for one client but can be completely pointless to another. There is no golden list of Powerful Questions. As a Transformational Coach, we must step away from the concept of ‘Powerful Questions’ and build the skill of ‘powerful questioning’. Powerful questioning can be viewed as the highest level of effective questioning, which we can reach and develop through practicing, adopting and avoiding the specific question types mentioned earlier in this chapter. In other words, there is no such thing as a powerful question, only powerful questioning.

To help illustrate this a little further, think of a powerful question you have asked a client in the past. Now take that question and consider the impact it would have on another client? Better still, ask yourself that question. Is it still as powerful out of context?

6.7 Tips on how to Develop Effective Questioning

Understanding the different types of questions, we should and should not ask is just one aspect of developing the skill of effective questioning. It is also important to understand the tone, timing and delivery of our questions. A good question that is badly timed or that holds the incorrect tone may have an adverse effect. Delivery and timing are also essential. Here are 10 tips to help you develop the skill of effective questioning:

1. Have confidence in your questions.
2. Never interrupt a client to ask your question, hold onto it for the right moment.
3. Use silence to allow the client to reflect before asking your questions.
4. Listen deeply to what is being said and allow the right questions to flow.
5. Deliver all questions in a friendly and polite manner, even when challenging.
6. Tune into your intuition.
7. Pay attention to the client’s body language. It will allow you to observe changes when different topics are discussed.

8. Be open and honest with your questions. Sometimes we can stop ourselves from asking the obvious.
9. Don’t force yourself to ask a question. Let the conversation flow.
10. Keep your questions simple and clear.

Figure 14: The Effective Questioning Mindset

Behind our effective questioning techniques is an effective questioning mindset that creates the right questions, appropriately timed and delivered in a supportive and uplifting manner. If we need to start anywhere, let’s begin with this mindset.

6.8 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored tips and techniques to build on our effective questioning, discussing types of questions to adopt and to avoid.

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

✎ **Reflect on your questioning technique, what questions could you introduce to improve your practice?**

Chapter 7

Strengthening Our Intuition

'Intuition does not come to an unprepared mind.'

Albert Einstein

What do I do when I feel something isn't being shared in a session? What role does intuition play in coaching? How can I act on my intuition without leading the session? Being in tune with our intuition is another key skill to adopt on our journey to becoming a Transformational Coach. To be impactful in our coaching it is important not only to listen and ask the right questions but to be able to feel and hear what is *not* being said by our clients.

In Chapter 6, we looked at distortions, deletions and generalisations to help develop an understanding of how we as humans are programmed to edit the stories that we tell. In addition to using clarity questions and picking up on distortions, deletions and generalisations, it is also important to be able to pick up on a client's body language, a change in their tone of voice or a feeling that there is something a client may be withholding. We can often find that clients seek to be coached on one area of life but as we work through sessions, we find that another area is the root cause of the issue. For example, a client may come to us for relationship coaching because they are not happy with their partner. After two or three sessions it is revealed that the client is having significant problems with their career, which is adding pressure to the relationship. Then by working through these problems it also improves their relationship. In these types of scenarios, it is vital to be able to follow our gut and intuition to ask the right questions and work out what is going on for the client.

In this chapter, we will look at what intuition is, the importance of body language and how we can strengthen our intuition.

7.1 What is Intuition?

Before we dive into using our intuition in coaching, let's first explore what intuition is. Intuition or 'gut feeling' is our ability to spot, identify and understand something instinctively without conscious or logical reasoning. Tuning into our intuition is about feeling or seeing what is not being said, or tuning into a feeling about what might be going on for our clients.

Imagine a scenario where a client is discussing their career aspirations with you. The client has been contemplating a job offer from a prestigious company but seems hesitant to accept it. As the conversation unfolds, you notice subtle shifts in their body language and tone of voice whenever they discuss certain aspects of the job offer.

Instead of solely relying on logical analysis, you decide to tap into your intuition. You sense that there might be more to the client's hesitation than meets the eye. By tuning into your intuition, you start asking probing questions that go beyond the surface-level discussion. You inquire about the client's values, their long-term goals and any underlying concerns they might have about the company culture or the role itself. By asking these questions you unlock a whole host of information and find out that there is a huge conflict between the client's values and the company's values.

Through this intuitive approach you help the client uncover their true feelings and reservations about the job offer. The client reveals that while the job seems appealing on paper, they are worried about sacrificing work-life balance and potentially compromising their values. In this example, your intuition guided the conversation towards a deeper exploration of the client's motivations and deeper concerns, ultimately empowering them to have clearer insight and information to make a big career decision. This illustrates how our intuition can be powerful.

By strengthening our intuition and practising being in tune with it, we will swiftly learn how to take coaching conversations in the best direction and how to gain the information or insight we need to help move our clients forward. In coaching, we use our intuition to:

1. Identify what is missing from conversations.
2. Spot signs by observing a client's body language.
3. Identify the most suitable questions to ask.

The most skilful coaches will be able to help their clients overcome blocks or obstacles and move closer to their goals quicker by strengthening their intuition and asking the right questions to move the conversation forward. As we practice our coaching, we will begin to become more instinctive about the most effective question to ask to unlock some discovery for our clients.

7.2 Risks Associated with Intuition

Whilst our intuition is one of the most powerful tools we possess for coaching, there are certain risks we must be mindful of. These risks arise when we are tuning into what we believe is our intuition, but which is essentially is an egotistical thought. The risks are:

1. We can sometimes make assumptions.
2. We can come across as too hasty or too goal oriented.

3. We can lead clients down a rabbit hole.
4. We can become attached to finding something that isn't there.

Let us explore each of these further and introduce the concept of how our egotistical 'spider sense' – the instinct that detects danger or suggests that something isn't right - works against our intuition.

<u>Making Assumptions</u>

As discussed earlier, as a coach we must never make assumptions. It is therefore vital that when we use our intuition to identify or spot what is missing from a conversation, we do not turn it into an assumption. Here is an example of where our perceived 'intuition' may lead to an assumption:

Client: "My dad is always telling me I should be grateful for my job and where I am today. He tells me I would be stupid to quit and start my own business. It makes it difficult."

Spider sense tingling [*Coach thinks*] - 'The client values the words and advice of their father.'

Coach: "It sounds like your relationship with your dad is what is holding you back from leaping into your own business."

In the above scenario, the coach is making an assumption based on the information that is being shared by the client. Now, whilst our intuition may lead us in such a scenario to getting a feeling that the client's relationship with their father is what is blocking them, we can never openly express this intuition or make the statement to the client. If this is the feeling we get, then a skilful coach would say something along the following lines and convert the intuitive feeling into a question:

Client: “My dad is always telling me I should be grateful for my job and where I am today. He tells me I would be stupid to quit and start my own business. It makes it difficult.”

Coach: “I can see how that could be difficult. I’m curious to know, how is your relationship with your dad?”

In this approach, we are exercising our intuitive feeling that the client's relationship with their father may be a blocker, however, instead of assuming, we are directing the conversation towards the relationship and exploring more information.

Always remember never to make assumptions.

<u>Becoming too Hasty or Goal-oriented</u>

When tuning in to what we believe is our intuition, we can sometimes let ego take over and fall into the trap of trying to help the client progress solely for our own success rather than theirs. We put pressure on ourselves to see value from the coaching sessions we deliver. Take the following example:

Client: “So I would say my goal from coaching is to build confidence in all areas of my life but to start with my career.”

Spider sense tingling - [*Coach thinks*] ‘Career is important, I need to help them progress their career for this coaching to be successful.’

Coach: “OK great, so you want to build confidence in your career. That is fantastic. How do you want to do that?”

Client: “I'm not too sure. I guess I could start by offering to lead more presentations and picking up more work that encourages me to step outside of my comfort zone.”

Coach: “Excellent idea. So, when do you want to pick up a new presentation?”

Client: “Erm, I guess I can do one next week.”

Coach: ‘Fantastic. So, you are committing to taking up a presentation next week to build confidence, I will act as your accountability partner.’

So, we may read the above and think that it is an example of ‘great coaching', the coach has identified what the client wants, explored options and the client has committed to action.

However, what do you think is not so great with this approach? Well, there are a few things we can analyse:

Firstly, the client is acting on the statement made by the client that they want to start by building confidence in their career. Now, whilst the spider senses may be tingling here in that the coach feels the focus needs to be on the client’s career, jumping to this conclusion to provide value is hasty. A better intuitive approach would be to consider what are the ‘other areas of life’ that have not been explored. Why have they specifically chosen ‘career’? An illustration of this may look like this:

Client: “So I would say my goal from coaching is to build confidence in all areas of my life but to start with my career.”

Coach: “That is interesting. Why did you choose a career as your area to start with and not one of the other areas of life?”

Client: “I’m not too sure actually. It is just the area that I see as more important to me right now.”

Coach: "Are there any other areas of life that are important to you?"

Client: "Well my relationship with my wife is important and I would like coaching on that too, but first I would like to explore my career."

Coach: "That makes sense. What is it about your career that makes it more important to you right now?"

Client: "I suppose I want to get a promotion by the end of the year and to do that I need to pick up more presentations at work, which requires me to have more confidence."

Coach: "How many presentations do you currently pick up?"
Client: "Well, to be honest, I haven't picked up any presentations in over three months. I made a mistake in my last one and I came out looking stupid."

Coach: "I'm sorry to hear that your last presentation did not go so well. Can you tell me what happened?"

In the above scenario, the coach has gathered so much more information that can benefit and help the client overcome what is affecting their confidence. They also uncovered another need for coaching that they can come back to at a later date.

We must be careful that what we follow is indeed our intuition and not what we think is our 'intuition'. We must never become so hasty or goal-oriented that we want the client to progress for our own benefit and therefore leap to what could be wrong conclusions.

Leading Clients down a Rabbit Hole

Following the example above, when we act on what we might wrongly think is our intuition, we also run the risk of taking the coaching session off on a complete tangent and leading our clients down rabbit holes. Here is an example of how this might happen:

Client: “I am not too sure what to do. My wife is just never happy. She is constantly complaining about how I behave, my habits and my career.”

Spider sense tingling - [*Coach thinks*] ‘Career could be the problem here.’

Coach: “What is it about your career?”

Client: “She just does not like the job I currently do.”

Coach: “Are you happy in your career?”

Client: “It has its challenges, but yes I am happy.”

Coach: “Would you like to explore those challenges?”

Client: “I guess if you think it would be helpful for me.”

Coach: “Great, tell me a little more about these challenges.”

In the example above, the coach may have believed that they were following their intuition and that a problem was stemming from the client's career.

However, by exploring this direction of the conversation, the coach pulled the client away from their original challenge, which was their relationship with their wife. Here the coach could spend a whole session on some minor challenges at work, when the real crux of the issue is regarding the relationship with their wife. A more open-ended approach to this scenario could simply look like:

Client: “I am not too sure what to do. My wife is just never happy. She is constantly complaining about how I behave, my habits and my career.”

Coach: “Could you tell me more about the relationship with your wife?”

We must be careful not to pull clients away and lead them down rabbit holes because we think we are following our intuition. By strengthening our actual intuition, we avoid these egotistical ‘spider senses’ and work towards finding the root cause of the client’s challenges.

<u>Attached to Finding Something that is not there</u>

The fourth and final risk associated with intuition is becoming attached to something that is not there. Being in tune with our intuition allows us to spot things that aren't being said in conversation. However, we must not search for what we believe to be missing. If we feel our intuition is telling us that something is missing, we must allow whatever it is to uncover itself naturally. Take a look at the following example:

Client: “It always tends to happen to me. Every time I feel happy in a relationship they leave me.”

Spider Sense - [Coach thinks] ‘Client is acting in a way to make people leave them.’

Coach: “Why do you think that they leave you?”

Client: “I am not sure. I mean I always treat them right and put in all my effort. One guy even ghosted me once.”

Coach: “Is there anything you may be doing for them to leave?”

Client: “Not that I can think of.”

Coach: “No behaviour that they may dislike?”

Client: “No. Like I said, I always give my best to them.”

Coach: “Could you be doing something that is scaring them away?”

Client: “No.”

In the example above, the coach may have an intuitive feeling that the client has a part to play in why their partners keep leaving. However, as you can see, they become so attached to this idea that all their questions are focused on finding the behaviour of the client that has led to these situations. What they first thought of as intuition becomes an assumption and they are potentially looking for something that is not there, through constant interrogation, when, for example, the client could possibly just be attracting the wrong partners. We could take a slightly different approach to gather more information:

Client: “It always tends to happen to me. Every time I feel happy in a relationship they leave me.”

Coach: “Why do you think that they leave you?”

Client: “I am not sure. I mean I always treat them right and put in all my effort. One guy even ghosted me once.”

Coach: "Could you tell me more about the type of men that you meet?"

By asking about the type of men the client meets at this stage, we don't jump straight into 'the client being the problem'. We gain more understanding of the bigger picture, which will lead to us being able to ask more targeted questions from the information being shared.

To summarise this section, it is important as Transformational Coaches to understand what intuition is and to learn how to use it without becoming attached to the idea of it. Learn the difference between egotistical 'spider senses' and our actual intuition. Let your intuition flow in a state of curiosity.

7.3 Body Language and Intuition

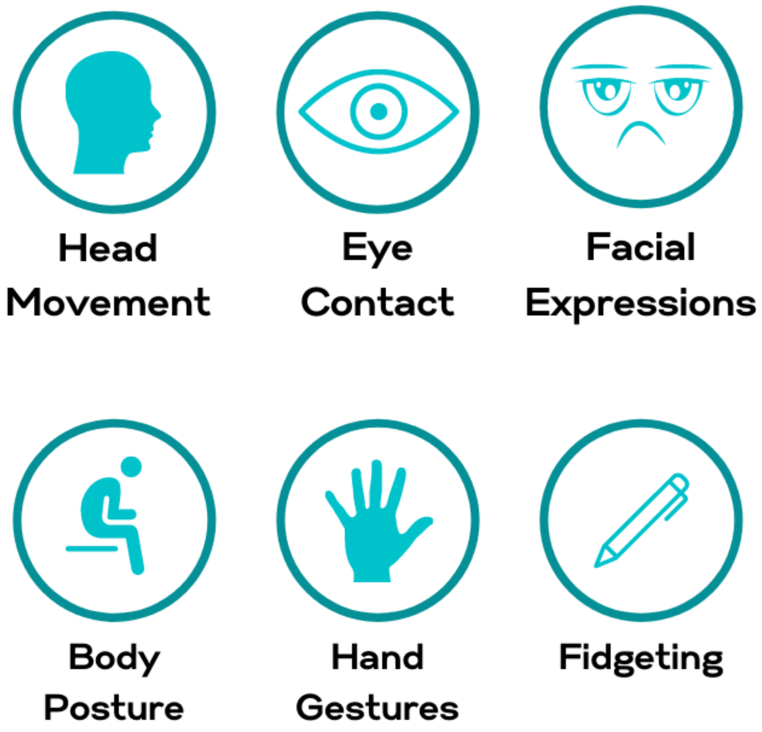
To exercise our intuition, we need to understand the importance of body language in coaching. We briefly looked at this earlier with regards to empathetic listening, but we will now explore body language in a little more detail in connection with our intuition. The most important point to understand from this section is that our role as a coach is to spot signs from body language and raise awareness through questions, and not to try to work out what the changes in body language mean. Remember, it is a coaching session. Our role is to guide the client. It is not an interrogation. We are not playing the role of detective.

Tip: Set an intention to raise awareness with the client, not an intention to figure out what is going on for them.

<u>Types of Body Language</u>

There are six types of body language that we should be aware of as a Transformational Coach to help us identify a shift in thinking. It is useful to note that a shift on the outside is caused by a shift on the inside. When a client makes a change in body language, we know this is triggered by an internal change in thinking. With this point in mind, we can begin to spot observations.

Figure 15: Types of Body Language



Movement of the Head: This refers to any movement involving the head, such as nodding (moving the head up and down), shaking (moving the head from side to side) or even a hair flick (a quick movement of the head to move hair away from the face). These movements can convey agreement, disagreement or simply attention.

Eye Contact: Eye contact plays a crucial role in communication. It can vary in intensity and duration. Clients may look away, which could indicate discomfort, lack of interest or even dishonesty. Alternatively, they may hold steady eye contact, which can signal confidence, honesty and engagement. Rapid blinking, avoiding eye contact or frequent glancing around may suggest nervousness or distraction.

Facial Expressions: Facial expressions involve movements of the various muscles in the face, including the eyebrows, jaw, nose and lips. Smiling, grinning or frowning are examples of facial expressions that can convey emotions or attitudes. Raised eyebrows can indicate surprise or interest, while a furrowed brow might signify confusion or concern. Observing changes in facial expressions can provide insights into a client's emotional state and reactions.

Body Posture: Body posture refers to the position and alignment of the body, including the shoulders, torso and limbs. Slouched shoulders, turning away from someone and crossing arms or legs can all convey different messages. An open and upright posture typically suggests confidence, receptiveness and engagement, while closed or hunched postures may indicate defensiveness, discomfort or lack of interest.

Hand Gestures: Hand gestures involve movements or positions of the hands and fingers during communication. Clenched fists might indicate tension, frustration or anger, while open palms can convey openness and sincerity. The way a client uses their hands, such as gesturing broadly or keeping them close to their body, can also provide insights into their comfort level and engagement in the conversation.

Fidgeting: Fidgeting refers to repetitive, small movements that a person makes, often unconsciously, when feeling nervous, bored or restless. This can include tapping hands or feet, playing with objects like pens or hair, or twiddling thumbs. Increased fidgeting may suggest discomfort or anxiety, while decreased fidgeting could indicate relaxation or focus. Monitoring fidgeting behaviour can help assess a client's level of comfort and engagement in the interaction. Bear in mind, though, that some people might fiddle or use a displacement activity to help them focus, especially some neuro-divergent clients, such as those with ADHD or autism, for example. So, what you are looking for is a departure from each individual client's 'norm', when they suddenly start shifting or tapping uncomfortably in a way that isn't usual for them.

Observing a client's body language allows us to begin to see how certain topics, subject areas or questions create a shift in the client's behaviour and emotions. By spotting these signs, they can act as cues to ask some very important and intuitive questions in the coaching space. Here are some examples:

'I notice that every time you talk about your manager, you tend to fold your arms and appear quite reserved… do you think this means something?'

'It is interesting when you talk about your relationship with your father you look away. Is there any particular reason why?'

'Whenever you bring up this difficult time, I have observed that you pick up your pen and play with it. Do you think there is a reason for this?'

When we ask these types of questions, we must feel the change in body language through our intuition and not just observe it. By strengthening our intuition, we can make these questions powerful and uncover some deep information that clients are holding back, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Tip: Also be aware of a change in the tone of voice by a client and an increase or a decrease in their level of energy.

7.4 Tips for how to Strengthen our Intuition

Strengthening our intuition is not the easiest of tasks but it can be the most impactful and effective skill as a Transformational Coach. The more in tune we are with our intuition, the more we can understand and feel what is going on for our client, which will then allow us to move conversations forward constructively and efficiently, creating huge progress and success for our clients.

Here are our 5 tips for strengthening your intuition:

1. **Practice being patient: intuition comes from a place of patience:** Patience is essential for developing and accessing our intuition. Intuition often arises when we allow ourselves to quiet the mind and patiently listen to our inner voice or gut feeling. By practicing patience every day, we create space for intuition to emerge naturally.

2. **Observe the body language of others in your day-to-day conversations:** Paying attention to the body language of others can provide valuable insights into their thoughts, feelings and intentions. Notice cues such as facial expressions, gestures, posture and eye contact during conversations. This observation can help you better understand people's emotions, which ability you can then bring into your coaching sessions.

3. **Meditate or perform a breathing exercise before each coaching session:** Meditation and breathing exercises are powerful tools for calming our mind, reducing stress and enhancing our focus. Engaging in these practices before coaching sessions can help us centre ourselves, increase presence and create an environment for effective coaching.

4. **Reflect after each coaching session - reflection can sometimes open up our intuition:** Reflection is key to personal and professional growth. After each coaching session take time to reflect on what went well, what could be improved and what insights were gained. This reflective practice not only enhances self-awareness and learning, but also opens space for intuitive insights to surface. By quieting the mind and reflecting on past experiences, we may discover new perspectives and intuitive understandings.

5. **Learn, learn, learn:** The more knowledge we obtain, the more wisdom we acquire, and the more growth we achieve, the more tuned into our intuition we will become.

Tip: Our intuition works best when we are calm and relaxed. Find techniques or exercises that will relax you before your coaching sessions.

Exercise your intuition daily, let go of distractions and work on becoming the best version of you. This will then filter into you becoming the best coach you can possibly be.

7.5 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored intuition and the importance of strengthening this for the benefit of our coaching.

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

- **Reflecting on your intuition, where have you been successfully intuitive and where have you mistakenly followed an egotistical sense?**

Chapter 8

Reflecting Back to Our Clients

‘Life is like a mirror, and it will reflect back to the thinker what he thinks into it.’

Ernest Holmes

How do I reflect information back to my clients? Are there any tips and techniques? What if I struggle to feed back the right information? Another key role as a Transformational Coach is to act as a mirror for our clients and present back the information that is being shared to us in a way that allows the client to see things externally. In this chapter, we will explore what 'feedback' is, the importance of reflecting to our clients and how we should provide feedback and reflection.

8.1 What is ‘Feedback’ or ‘Reflecting’ in Coaching?

In coaching the term 'providing feedback' is not about giving an opinion, assumption or our thoughts on the information. Rather, it is about relaying information or reflecting information to a client in order to seek clarity, to challenge or to further explore a situation. When we reflect to our clients, we must ensure that we meet the following five principles:

1. We reflect with a positive intention.
2. We reflect only what we have heard or the picture we have painted from the information shared.
3. It is an observation of information and not an opinion.
4. It is constructive or beneficial for the client.

5. It ends with a question for the client to consider.

Reflecting with a positive intention

When reflecting, it's important to approach the process with a positive intention. This means focusing on the client's growth, wellbeing and success. Reflecting with a positive intention involves offering supportive and encouraging feedback that uplifts and empowers the client. Our aim is to create a constructive and nurturing coach-client relationship built on trust, respect and collaboration.

Reflecting only what we have heard

Reflective listening involves mirroring back to the client what they have expressed, either verbally or non-verbally. It involves capturing the essence of their message without adding interpretation or judgement. Reflecting accurately on what has been shared helps validate the client's experiences, feelings and perspectives.

It is an observation of information and not an opinion

Reflections should be based on observations of the information presented by the client, rather than personal opinions or interpretations. This distinction is crucial in remaining objective as a coach. By focusing on factual observations and refraining from inserting personal biases or judgements, we create a safe and non-judgmental space for clients to explore their thoughts, feelings and experiences openly. We can temperature check our understanding by using words like ‘What I am hearing is…’, ‘How

I am understanding this…', or 'Just so I have a clear picture…'. This way we are clarifying rather than providing an opinion.

<u>It is constructive or beneficial for the client</u>

Effective reflections serve the client's best interests by offering insights, clarity and support. Constructive reflections highlight strengths, progress and opportunities for growth, empowering the client to take positive action towards their goals. By providing feedback that is beneficial and relevant to the client's journey, we contribute to their development and success. This could look something like 'That is really impressive, how did it feel achieving that?', 'I would just like to bring up something you mentioned earlier, you overcame something similar in the past. Could you tell me how you did that?' or 'That is fantastic. How do you plan to celebrate?'. With these examples, we are actively highlighting positive behaviour that the client has shared with us.

<u>It ends with a question for the client to consider</u>

Ending reflections with a question encourages the client to engage further. Thought-provoking questions help clients to delve further into their thoughts, feelings and motivations, leading to greater awareness. We should always finish our reflections with a question. If we don't, then it is a sign we are offering an opinion or making a statement.

If we apply these five principles when reflecting back to clients, we will see a powerful shift in the effectiveness of our coaching sessions.

8.2 Why Should we Provide Feedback in Coaching?

Providing feedback or reflecting the client's words or perspective to them can be powerful in coaching. Here is a list of some of the benefits:

1. It allows us to seek clarity and understanding.
2. It shows that we are listening to what the client is sharing.
3. It helps us measure the level of rapport with the client.
4. It makes the client feel valued.
5. It can accelerate the client's understanding, learning and progress.
6. It can inspire or motivate clients.
7. It can spring a client into action.

Reflective feedback enables us to clarify and understand the client's thoughts, feelings and intentions. By reflecting back what the client has expressed, we can confirm our understanding and ensure we are in alignment. Reflecting the client's words or emotions also demonstrates active or empathetic listening, creating genuine engagement in the conversation. It reassures the client that their voice is being heard and valued and that their experiences and perspectives are acknowledged and understood.

Additionally, the client's response to our reflections provides valuable feedback on the quality of the coach-client relationship. Negative responses may signal areas for improvement, while positive reactions indicate strong rapport and trust. This creates a sense of worth and significance, which ultimately boosts positivity. Effective reflections can thus facilitate insight and awareness, empowering clients to take action towards their goals.

As an impactful Transformational Coach, it is important for us to acknowledge these benefits and strive to deliver sound, constructive and objective feedback to our clients.

8.3 How to Provide Effective Feedback

We must always ensure we follow the five principles above when reflecting for our clients. There are several effective methods we can use to provide feedback in coaching. Let us explore them.

Provide Feedback in Small Doses

One method of providing feedback in coaching sessions is to give it in small doses throughout the session before asking certain questions. Taking this approach allows us to show the client we are following the conversation and enables a quick temperature check to ensure we are on the same wavelength as our clients. Here are a few examples:

‘What I’m hearing here is, you have been having issues with your brother for the last three months and it has started to get worse these past two weeks. Could you tell me what your relationship was like with your brother before these past three months?’

‘What I am gathering is, your relationship is currently on the rocks, and you have been feeling quite upset recently. Is there anything else causing you to feel upset?’

‘Just to check I am understanding clearly, your manager has been refusing to assist you at work, but they have been extremely helpful to your other colleagues. This has led to you feeling isolated. Is there anyone else at work that provides you with assistance?’

In line with the principles above, each of these examples summarises a few key points and ends with a question. If we analyse them, we can also see that the feedback is succinct and specific, it is not relaying a list of notes or points we have captured. When we recap notes, we have taken, it can make the coaching session feel more like an interview than a conversation, so try to avoid adopting this behaviour.

Provide Feedback to Highlight a Block or Behavioural Change

Earlier, we noted that it can be helpful to make our clients aware of a change in body language when it occurs. This is one way of highlighting a behavioural change. Another effective way to provide feedback with positive intention is to highlight a limiting belief or block that the client is facing, or to make them aware of a particular behavioural change. Here are some examples:

'I've noticed through our conversations that the opinion of your father crops up quite a lot. Do you think there is a reason for this?'

'What I'm hearing here is that you are struggling to make progress because you don't have time. However, you mentioned earlier that it was due to you not having what you needed. I was just wondering what your main blocker is?

'I've noticed that every time we begin to talk about the relationship with your brother you tend to quickly change the topic. Is there any particular reason for this?'

All of the above highlight an observation and end with a question. Providing feedback that highlights a potential block can help a client begin to tackle their problem. Often you will find that the client is unaware of the block or obstacle that lies in front of them. Whilst it may be obvious to us from our perspective, we will find that often problems lie in our blind spots. By reflecting information back, we can provide a helicopter view of the situation that allows the client to see the problem or obstacle.

Provide Feedback when a Client Seeks It

This method of providing feedback is one that we must approach with considerable care. We may find that a client is asking for feedback for clarity, or it could be because they are seeking our opinion or help. It can be common practice for clients if they are new to coaching to ask you for advice or your personal experience.

However, we must remember that as a Transformational Coach it is not our role to provide advice. So, when a client asks us for feedback, we must do this in a way that relays what they have shared back to them with a question that might help them look at it from a different perspective. Let's take a look at some examples:

Client: “I’m not sure. What would you advise me on this?”

Coach: “Ok. So, you mentioned you have two options, you can apply for the current job in another team, or you can wait for a potential promotion in your current one. Shall we explore what you see as the strengths and weaknesses for both and see if that helps?”

Client: “I need your advice on this one.”

Coach: “Ok. So, what I am hearing is that this scenario keeps cropping up over and over for you and it never gives you your desired result. Would you be open to exploring an exercise that might assist you with this?”

Client: “My mum has always been the one to give me advice but now she has passed away, I need your help and advice on this one.”

Coach: “I understand how it must be difficult. What do you think your mum would advise you if she were here today?”

Whilst the client is asking for advice in all three of these scenarios, note that the coach feeds back what the client has already said and then proposes an exercise or a new perspective that may guide the client to their answers, they do not provide advice. We may find these scenarios difficult to approach at first, but we must remember it is not our role to provide advice. At certain times, it may be useful to remind the client of this, if it is something they often seek. We can address this as part of contracting at the start of the session.

Reviewing the three methods above, we can gather some useful tips and techniques on how and when to provide feedback. Put these into practice in your coaching sessions and begin to understand how beneficial feedback can be to move the conversation forward and build on the coach-client relationship.

8.4 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored how to reflect or feedback information to our clients, along with the benefits of doing so.

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

- ✎ **Reviewing how you reflect back to your clients, what method could you introduce to improve your feedback?**

Chapter 9

The Three Stages of Coaching

'A whole is that which has a Beginning, Middle and End.'

Aristotle

How do I start my coaching practice? What happens between sessions? How do I bring contracts to an end? Coaching is a journey for our clients that consists of a beginning, middle and end and there are certain requirements for us as Transformational Coaches at each stage of the journey. In this chapter, we will provide you with a checklist of items for each stage in the coaching journey to allow you to work effectively with your client. We begin the coaching journey in this chapter with the assumption that the 'Discovery Session' has already taken place. (These introductory sessions provide an opportunity to check that the fit between coach and client is a good one and that the client understands, among other things, what coaching is and is not. We explore Discovery Sessions in detail in chapter 12 below.) For now, let's take a look at the three stages of coaching through what I like to call the 777 Model. I'm sure you will work out why, once you have finished this chapter.

9.1 The Beginning of the Coaching Journey

Let's imagine we have signed a contract with our client, and they are now coming to us for their very first session. At this beginning stage of coaching, we are essentially establishing the coaching relationship by creating comfort and building rapport. Here there are some important elements we must cover:

1. Greeting the client in an appropriate manner
2. Icebreaker Question
3. Housekeeping
4. A brief reminder of what Coaching is
5. Covering important Coaching Ethics points
6. Establishing a topic of conversation/goal
7. Using any appropriate Models

Greeting Clients in an Appropriate Manner

Whether online or offline, we must welcome our client to the coaching space in a friendly manner and spark rapport from the get-go. It is important for us to make our client feel safe, secure and comfortable in our presence. Building trust from the beginning, sets the stage for meaningful progress and impactful transformations.

Icebreaker Question

We can open up with a simple ice-breaker question such as; 'How was your day?’, 'How was your journey?', 'What is the weather like where you are?' etc. This eases the client into the space and allows both ourselves and them to instantly feel more comfortable. Jumping straight into a coaching session and formalities may make the client feel uncomfortable.

General Housekeeping

Run through some quick housekeeping rules, such as the duration of the session, our approach as a coach, how we will take notes (if we do), that the agenda of the session is set by the client and mention any potential interruptions that you may be expecting during the session. If you are coaching in person, it is also useful to let the client know where the nearest bathroom is and inform them that they can ask for a break any time they need one. Remind them that the time you are spending with them is their time, for their benefit.

Reminder of what Coaching Is

We will have already covered this in detail in our Discovery Session with the client, but it is important in the first official coaching session to remind our client what coaching is and is not. We can remind them that we will not be providing any advice but guiding and supporting them to find their answers through exploration, tools and techniques. This clears any expectations that the client might have with regards to you providing life advice.

Important Coaching Ethics Points

We explore Coaching Ethics in detail in our ***Coaching Ethics*** book. However, at the start of the coaching journey it is important for us to mention the following ethical points:

1. **Qualifications** - Remind the client we are a Trainee/Certified/Accredited Coach and accurately represent our level of competence and expertise.

2. **Professional Code of Conduct** – Remind the client that we abide by the Coaching Minds Professional Code of Conduct and EMCC Global Code of Ethics.

3. **Confidentiality** – Remind the client that everything discussed in the session is strictly confidential unless there is a threat of harm to themselves or others or, for the purposes of our coach training, to allow our supervisors to listen to the session for assessment (with written consent from the client). You will find more information on this in our *Coaching Ethics* book, another important book to add to your collection.

Establish a Topic of Conversation or Goal

We can open the client up to the session by asking them how we can help them and what it is they are seeking from coaching. We will have received some basic information from them in our Discovery Session, so we can open up by feeding this back to the client and then asking them what they wish to discuss today.

Gather as much information from the client with regards to their problem/goal, remembering to stay curious, challenge and seek clarity. By understanding the topic of conversation or the client's desired outcome, we create direction and something to measure against when we look to bring the session to a close.

Use Appropriate Models

It may be useful in the first session to use a coaching tool to help gain a full understanding of what the client hopes to achieve or a clear picture of their goal. Two useful tools we could use in the first session are:

1. The **GROW** Model
2. The **7 Streams of Life**

These provide us with techniques to understand what is important to the client and how to move the conversation forward. We explore these models in detail in Chapters 10 and 11.

By following the above steps in our first coaching sessions, we will set some great foundations for rapport, trust and a direction. Essentially, we are professionally ‘contracting’ with the client at this stage, which will help us make some real changes to their life as the coaching progresses.

9.2 The Middle of the Coaching Journey

After the first coaching session, we enter the middle stage of coaching where we guide and support the client to their goal or help them overcome whatever challenges they are currently facing. In these sessions we must be aware of and apply the following:

1. Each session agenda is set by the Client
2. Review of Progress
3. Identification of Blocks
4. Acknowledgement of Success
5. Motivate and Inspire
6. Challenge
7. Follow up with Commitments

<u>Session Agenda Set by Client</u>

We must always allow the client to set the agenda for each session. Despite the client having a main goal for coaching, it is common that they may wish to bring something new that has happened between your coaching sessions. For example, they may have had an argument with their partner, lost a contract at work or received some personal news about their family. It is not our role as a coach to force the client to stick to the main reason they are coming to coaching. We must allow the client to discuss what they want in each session and never set the agenda.

Review of Progress

In the middle stage of coaching, we must always review the client's progress. Identifying what they have achieved and what they haven't. By always looking at their progress and challenges, we can create personalised interventions to guide the client towards their goals successfully. This reflective method encourages development and ultimately results in the long-term positive transformations we are there to provide.

Identifying Blocks

In addition to reviewing progress, we must also help a client understand and identify their blocks or limitations. What is it that is truly stopping the client from achieving their goal? Once we have helped identify these, we can begin to challenge the client in a constructive manner and find a path to their vision or goal.

Acknowledgement of Success

Another part of our role as an impactful Transformational Coach is to help our clients acknowledge and celebrate their success. At times we will find that some clients dismiss their wins or achievements and fail to truly acknowledge the progress they have made. Helping clients understand their success keeps them motivated. Never shy away from pausing for a moment in your session and sharing the success you have observed with the client. It can truly boost or shift the energy in a session.

Motivate and Inspire

Acknowledging success is one way to motivate our clients. However, we must find a way to *keep* them inspired. The more inspired our clients feel, the more likely they are to obtain their goals. Here are ways we might we inspire our clients:

- Highlight their strengths and achievements. 'What I'm hearing here is that you are really great at…'
- Celebrate with the client. 'You've finally published your book, should we take a moment to celebrate this?'
- If they are struggling, keep bringing the client back to why they pursued their goal in the first place. 'So, the past week has been quite challenging for you, you have told me you feel like quitting… could you remind me why it was you set this goal?'
- Keep a positive attitude. Become conscious of how you present yourself before, during and after the session. Stay confident.
- Suggest resources such as books, courses or workshops that align with the client's goals. Don't lead or tell the client to read a specific book or take a specific course but suggest resources where appropriate. 'A few good books that helped me with something similar were x,y,z… you might want to take a look.'

The above are just some ideas on how you can keep your clients inspired and focused on reaching their goals.

Challenge

There are going to be times when clients give excuses, are stuck in patterns of negative thinking or don't stick to their commitment. To help them truly progress we must not be afraid to challenge. Healthy challenge is essential to enable clients to think differently, see things from a different perspective and get past their own limiting beliefs. It may be useful to revisit page 24 where we talk about how to challenge a client in depth.

Follow up with Commitments

As we go through the coaching journey with our clients, we will make certain commitments such as checking in on them twice a week, playing the role of accountability, emailing them certain tools or information or any other agreement made within a session. It is important that throughout the coaching we stick to our commitments as coaches. Whatever we promise, we should deliver.

Again, by following the above steps throughout the middle of our coaching journey with our clients, we will continue to build a deep rapport, gain a clear understanding of what they want and how to guide them there and also become best equipped to help them navigate through blocks on the way.

9.3 The End of the Coaching Journey

All journeys come to an end and coaching is no different. In coaching we are often faced with one of two endings:

1. **We wrap up the coaching with our clients because they have achieved their goal.**
2. **We have grounds to terminate the coaching contract.**

To bring our coaching to a professional end when the client has achieved their goal, we must keep the following in mind:

1. Never use more coaching sessions than needed
2. Let the coaching come to a natural end
3. The end is usually established by the client
4. Celebrate achievements and seek a testimonial
5. Steps to take forward
6. Let the client know your door is open
7. Provide follow-up resources and support

Never Use more Coaching Sessions than Needed

As an authentic Transformational Coach abiding by the EMCC Global Code of Ethics, we must never hold more coaching sessions than are necessary. In other words, we must not drag out coaching to make additional income or because we have already contracted with the client for a set number of sessions. If we agreed 10 sessions and the client achieves their goal after 6, then look to bring the session to an end and offer an appropriate refund if they have pre-paid. Equally, never suggest or propose something else the client could work on through coaching. By all means ask if they have another goal, they would like support with, but never set a goal for them. It is unethical to exploit or extort clients for our own financial gain.

Natural Ending

Let the coaching journey come to a natural end. This applies both to the individual sessions and the coaching as a whole. Never try to stretch a session or coaching for longer than needed. Keep the coaching in a flow and allow it to end naturally. If all the client needs is 30 minutes, give them 30 minutes. If the client is comfortable that they have received as much benefit as they can from your coaching, let them go.

End Established by Client

Where the client has achieved their goal (this does not apply where we as a coach have grounds to terminate the coaching contract), allow the client to establish their own ending to coaching. If we feel like the client has achieved their goal, we can inform them and ask if they wish to bring the coaching to an end. We must always allow the client to determine the end of the coaching journey.

Celebrate Achievements and Seek a Testimonial

When bringing the coaching contract to an end, don’t forget to celebrate the progress the client has made. Help them reflect on where they started and where they are right now. Remind them of the milestones reached on their journey and ask them what it truly means for them. Encourage them to go out and celebrate and add your own personal touch to your celebration with them.

Additionally, ask the client to provide you with a testimonial if they have been happy with your coaching. This will help you build up your reputation and credibility. I would advise asking for a video testimonial as these days, written testimonials aren’t always so powerful. However, it is whatever the client feels comfortable with sharing.

Steps to take Forward

When the coaching journey is coming to an end, it is important that our clients have steps to take away from coaching. What happens next? We can ensure this by asking the client what they have learned from their coaching experience and what they will take forward into their lives. How can they keep making positive progress after the coaching?

Keeping an Open Door

When wrapping up the coaching, we can remind the client that we are always there for them if they ever need any help or support in the future. Leave your coaching door open to them for future coaching and ensure they know where to find you.

Provide Follow-up Resources and Support

Finally, offer resources such as reading materials, online courses or workshops that align with the client's ongoing goals and interests. Keep the client's details to let them know about future events you might be holding (taking note of your responsibilities under data protection law and your privacy policy – more on this in our ***Coaching Ethics*** book)

Additionally, we could suggest an optional follow-up chat or check-in within a few weeks or months to offer continued support and accountability if needed.

When we keep the above points in mind, we can close down the coaching smoothly and professionally, leaving the client satisfied with what they have learned and an open door if they ever want to return. The aim: a happy coach and a happy client.

9.4 Grounds for Terminating a Coaching Contract

At times, an end to our coaching contract may not be as pleasant as when it comes after a client has achieved their goal. There are certain grounds where it may be appropriate for us as a coach to terminate the coaching contract. The following is not an exhaustive list and there may be other reasons for a termination, such as a conflict of interest. However, it is for you as a coach to determine if you should continue your coaching. Here are three important grounds for termination to note:

1. Inappropriate behaviour by the client
2. Alternative Method of Support required
3. Lack of Expertise

Inappropriate Behaviour by the Client

Where a client is aggressive, rude or inappropriate towards us, then we hold grounds to terminate the coaching contract. Inappropriate behaviour covers such behaviour as repeated failure to show up to coaching sessions, failure to pay, sexual proposals and any inappropriate behaviour or acts towards other members of the profession. Or the client may be operating in violation of your own moral code or are planning to do something illegal. All of these would constitute a reason to terminate the contract.

Maintaining a professional and respectful environment during coaching sessions is crucial for both the coach and the client. By upholding clear boundaries and standards of behaviour of what you will and will not accept, the coach-client relationship will succeed. Where a client falls short of these standards, it is our responsibility to speak up.

Effective communication is essential in addressing any issues that arise during the coaching process. Open dialogue can help resolve conflicts, clarify expectations and ensure that the coaching experience remains positive and productive. It's important to address any concerns promptly and transparently to maintain trust and integrity in the coaching relationship, even when bringing the relationship to an end.

Alternative Method of Support Required

Where a client is seriously struggling mentally and there are signs of a possible mental illness that would be better supported outside of coaching, maybe through therapy or counselling, then we advise that you terminate the coaching contract and refer the client to a therapist or counsellor. It is always good practice to enter into a partnership or to have a contact for a therapist or counsellor.

Lack of Expertise

Additionally, in instances where you may feel like you are coaching outside your area of competence, it is advised that you look to refer the client to a more experienced coach or a coach that specialises in a particular area of coaching. It is also good practice to build up a network of coaches to assist with this.

We cover all three of these circumstances in more detail in our ***Coaching Ethics*** book; however, at this stage take note how a coaching contract may come to an end through termination by a coach.

9.5 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored the three stages of coaching and 7 important points to consider during each stage.

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

- **How can you structure your coaching to ensure a smooth and professional journey for your clients?**

Chapter 10

The GROW Model

'If you are going to fall… fall forward.'

Denzel Washington

What tools can I use in my coaching practice? What tool would you recommend starting with? How do I introduce a tool into my coaching session? One of the most common and effective models in coaching is the GROW Model. There are many variations of the model which all use the same acronym. For the purposes of our Transformational Coaching journey, we are going to explore the simplified version.

Figure 16: The GROW Model

In this chapter, we will take a closer look at each of the stages of the GROW model, how we can use it in our coaching sessions and the limitations it holds. As a coach beginning to practice, this is a great first tool to master.

10.1 What is the GROW Model?

The GROW Model is one of the most commonly used models in coaching and is great for helping explore what is going on for a client, what it is they want or need, what is stopping them from overcoming a challenge or reaching a goal and also possible ways to help them progress or move forward.

It can be useful to use this tool in our first sessions with clients to get a clear understanding of their challenge, vision or goal and begin to see things from their perspective.

<u>Goal – What Does the Client Want to Achieve?</u>

In the first stage of the GROW model, we explore what the client wants to achieve. What goal are they currently setting themselves? What challenges are they currently facing? What would achieving that goal look like for them? Here we are using the model to paint a picture of exactly what the client wants from our coaching.

<u>Reality – What has the Client Done to Date and Where do they Want to Go?</u>

In the second stage of the GROW model, we begin to look at the client's reality. Where are they currently with their progress? What have they attempted to date? What skills or expertise do they have or need to reach their goal? What timeline has the client set? What progress do they want to make? Here our role is to gather the journey of the client, where they have been, where they are and where they are trying to get to.

Options and Obstacles – What Options and Obstacles are there?

In the third stage of the GROW model, we start to explore the potential options for the client to achieve their goal and what obstacles they are currently facing. What is it that is stopping them from achieving their goal? What alternative options or methods could they take or use? Here we are assisting the client to think outside of the box and look at all the possible options they have, whilst also identifying any obstacles.

Way Forward – What Action is the Client Going to Take?

In the final stage of the GROW Model, we establish what actions, movements and changes are going to help the client move forward. What path are they going to take? What change is required? What actions are they going to commit to? What timelines will they work to? Our role here using the model is to work with our clients to form a mini-action plan that will help them progress towards their goal.

10.2 How do we use the GROW Model in Coaching?

There are two approaches we can take when using or introducing the GROW Model into our Coaching Practice. We can either:

1. The subjective approach - Knowingly follow the structure of GROW by asking our clients the relevant questions related to the stages in GROW.
2. The objective approach - Ask the client if you can introduce them to the GROW model to help you get a clearer picture of what is going on for them and then present them with the template below, working through the model together.

Both approaches are effective, and it depends on our preferred coaching technique and style as to which approach is more suitable for us. It may also be useful to tailor our approach based on the client and what the client will find more beneficial.

The Subjective Approach

When deciding to take the subjective approach to applying the GROW Model in our coaching, we can adopt three key strategies:

Personalisation: Adapt the questions and conversation based on the client's unique context and background, bearing in mind, for example, if the client is particularly anxious about something; acknowledge this and adjust your questions to be sensitive to their emotional state.

Empathy: Show empathy and understanding throughout the process. Acknowledge the client's feelings and do your best to relate to what they are sharing.

Flexibility: Be willing to deviate slightly from the structured questions if the client's responses lead in a different, but relevant direction. Follow their lead while gently steering the conversation back to the GROW stages as needed. We talk more about this when we look at the limitations of the model, below.

An example of taking a subjective approach to the GROW Model in coaching may look something like this:

Client: “I had a really bad experience giving a presentation at work last year and now I’m terrified of speaking in front of people.”

Coach: “I’m sorry to hear that happened. Can you share more about what made that experience particularly challenging for you? How does it affect your current feelings about public speaking?”

In the example above, the coach is exploring the reality stage with questions to address the client’s specific feelings around their anxiety towards public speaking. There is no specific mention of the model, but the stage is being explored. By using the GROW model with a subjective approach, we ensure the coaching session is structured, yet flexible and empathetic, addressing the client’s specific needs.

The Objective Approach

When applying the objective approach, it is useful for us to have a template to guide the client through. This could be in the form of a printed piece of paper if we are coaching in person or slides or pdf document if we are coaching online. Our coaches can access a tool for this in the Coaching Minds Hub.

Once we have identified that we would like to use the GROW Model, we could introduce the tool into the session like so:

‘To help us get a clearer picture of what’s going on and to structure our conversation effectively, I'd like to introduce you to the GROW model. GROW stands for Goal, Reality,

Options and Way Forward. This framework will help us explore your situation systematically and identify steps you can take towards achieving your goals. Would this be okay with you?'

Once we have permission from the client, we can then navigate through each of the four stages using our template, capturing the information that the client shares with us at each stage. By using the GROW model with this structured, objective approach, we can guide our client through a clear and systematic process. This helps in breaking down their goal into manageable steps and ensures that the coaching conversation is focused and productive.

10.3 Limitations of the GROW Model

Whilst the GROW Model is a great tool to keep in our toolbox and a tool we can pull out in any session, it is useful to note its limitations:

1. It is goal-oriented
2. It can be simplistic
3. It can lead us to feel lost
4. It is action-focused
5. It tends to be used too rigidly

<u>It is Goal-oriented</u>

One of the limitations of the GROW Model is that it is goal-oriented and may not be suitable for clients who are just looking for a space to be heard or a sounding board. It is also not very useful for a client who may be currently feeling lost or unsure of what they want to achieve. Be mindful of when you decide to use the tool and maybe put it back into your toolbox if you start to see the client just needs to talk.

It is Simplistic

The GROW model's simplistic approach is also another limitation. Use of the model can sometimes fail to scratch below the surface and uncover what might be going on for the client. It fails to ask the important ‘why’ questions that can be very impactful in coaching. Why is this goal important to you? Why do you want to achieve it within this timeframe? When using the model be mindful that what the client *thinks* they want may not always be what they *actually* want. You can temperature-check the effectiveness of the tool as you use it throughout your sessions.

It can Lead us to Feel Lost

Using the GROW model can sometimes lead us as a coach to feeling lost or stuck in a session. The limited questions and approach can, at times, close the direction of the coaching session quite quickly, leaving us unsure of what to ask next, or it may lead to a short session. We may find at times that use of the model can result in a planned hour session, finishing in just 20 minutes simply because we haven’t gathered enough information. If you ever feel lost using the model, remember to either dig a little deeper by asking questions around the client’s thoughts or feelings, or scrap the use of the model and explore an alternative route of questioning.

It is Action-focused

Another limitation of the GROW model is that it is action-focused and not all coaching sessions require actions from the client. Sometimes clients use coaching for clarity, a deeper understanding of what is going on for them or to find a different perspective. All of these can be obtained during a session if and when the right questions are asked. We should be mindful not to push a client to action where action may not be appropriate.

It Tends to be Used too Rigidly

The final limitation to the GROW model is that, although it was designed to be flexible (and is to some extent), the model tends to be used very rigidly by coaches. We can find that coaches stick to the structure of the model and fail to adapt it to the client's needs, emotions and the direction of the coaching session. We should be mindful that it is important to be flexible when using the GROW Model and if we get to a point in our questioning that uncovers something new for our client, it may be best to let the GROW Model go and explore this new piece of information further with the client.

10.4 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have introduced the popular and effective coaching tool known as the GROW Model, exploring how to introduce the tool into our coaching practice.

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

- ✎ **Reflecting on how to apply the GROW Model, which approach will you adopt and why?**

Chapter 11

The Streams of Life

'Those who flow as life flows know they need no other force.'

Lao Tzu

What other tool would you recommend for a new coach? How do I help a client prioritise if they need assistance with multiple areas of life? Is there a tool with which we can assess the client's performance in life? The Streams of Life Model is another model that I have adapted from the popular coaching Wheel of Life tool. Essentially, I view life as more of a stream than a wheel, and I believe there are seven important streams to our life rather than five cogs on a wheel. All the areas of our lives are tributaries that flow into our main 'stream' and at times certain streams require more of our attention than others. Maybe they have started to dry or up or maybe they have diverted course. In this chapter, we will take a look at the Streams of Life Model, how we can use it in our coaching practice and, as with the GROW Model, its limitations.

11.1 The 7 Streams of Life

The Streams of Life model is a great tool to help clients identify which area of their life requires attention and focus. It may be used for clients who are feeling lost, confused or stuck in life, or with those who have many things they wish to work on and are unsure of what they should prioritise. In the Streams of Life model, seven tributaries flow to the main stream of our life. The seven streams are:

1. Career/Business
2. Finance
3. Family and Friendships
4. Relationship/Partner
5. Health
6. Personal Growth
7. Spirituality

These are the areas that form our lives. You may have come across or find slight variations to these streams and if you wish you can adjust the model accordingly. When we analyse our streams of life, we will find that we spend more time in some streams than in others. Maybe we sacrificed our health for our career, or we neglected our personal growth because we spent too much time on our relationship, and so on. The Streams of Life Model helps paint a picture of our perceived current performance in all streams of our lives. Using this tool with clients can help raise their self-awareness and provide them with a sense of what they want to prioritise.

Career/Business

Whether we are employed, self-employed or currently seeking a job, this stream of life is focused on our view of our performance in our working life.

Finance

This stream focuses on our perspective of our personal finance. Are we receiving an income? Are we spending our money wisely? Are we paying our bills? Are we in debt? How do we currently feel about ourselves with regards to our finance?

Family and Friendships

How much time and energy do we give to our friends and family? Are we always present when we are with them? This stream of life looks at our relationships with those closest to us.

Relationship/Partner

Whether we are single or in a relationship, this stream of life focuses on love. Some of us may be happily single, others may feel a lack of energy and effort in what we give to and receive from our partner, while others may feel contented in their relationship.

Health

This stream of life refers to our physical health. Are we fit and healthy? Are we taking care of our body and mind? Are we eating and sleeping right? How do we currently feel about our health?

Personal Growth

Are we investing in ourselves and our growth? Are we putting time and energy into becoming the best versions of ourselves? This stream of life is focused on the time and energy we put into developing ourselves.

Spirituality

This stream of life looks at the connection we have to our beliefs. How at peace are we? How in tune are we with God, the universe, nature, or whatever we believe in?

Figure 17: The 7 Streams of Life

11.2 Introducing the 7 Streams of Life in Coaching?

There are two methods of applying this coaching tool in our coaching practice. We can apply it objectively or subjectively. We must decide on how best to approach the use of this model depending on the client and their needs. It is important to note that we must always offer a model in coaching and never impose it on our clients. If they refuse the offer, we must change the direction of the coaching session and not push the model on our client. Let us look at the two ways we can use the 7 Streams in our coaching.

Applying the Streams of Life Model Objectively

Using the Streams of Life model objectively is best for those clients who require coaching but are not quite sure about what it is they want to achieve or where they should start. By applying the objective exercise of the Streams of Life model we provide clients with a starting point that we can begin to explore.

The Objective Exercise

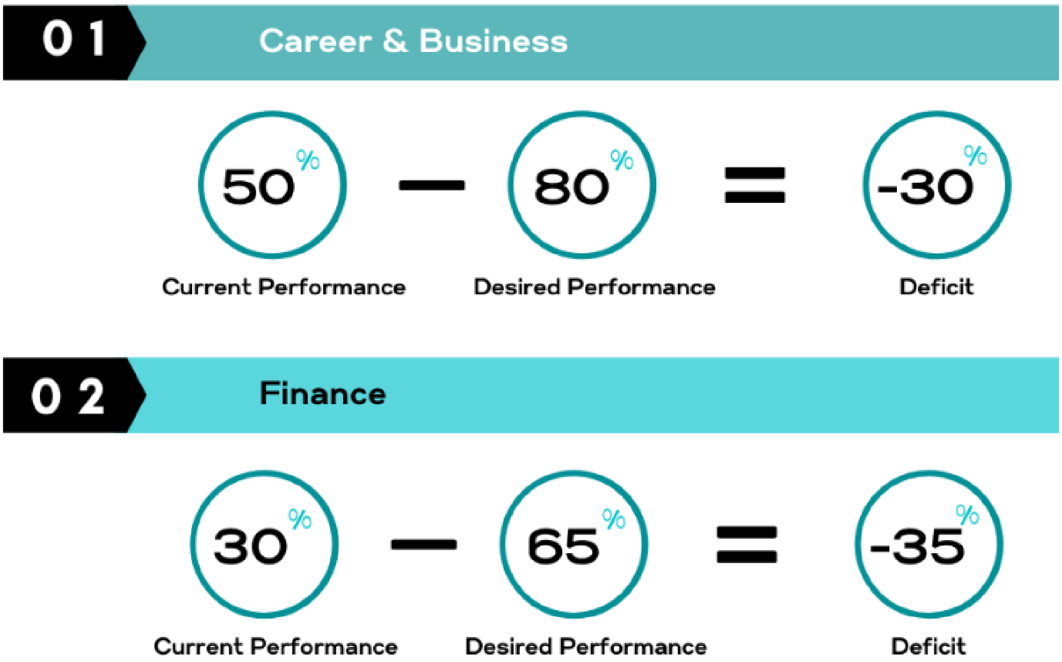
Working through the objective exercise, we go through the list of streams asking the client how they believe they are performing in each on a percentage of 1-100%. We note down these percentages in the ‘Current Performance’ box.

Once we have worked through each stream asking the client about their current perceived performance, we then go back through them asking the client what percentage they would like to be performing at for each stream. We then capture this in the ‘Desired Performance’ box.

Once we have captured both the ‘Current Performance’ and ‘Desired Performance’ of the client, we then complete a third box which looks at the ‘Deficit of Performance’. To calculate the deficit, we subtract the ‘Current Performance’ from the ‘Desired Performance’ to see the difference of where the client is at, to where they want to be. For example, a client has scored the following in the health stream:

Current Performance: 50% - Desired Performance: 80%. By subtracting the current from the desired, we can see that the client has a 30% deficit.

Figure 18: The Objective Approach



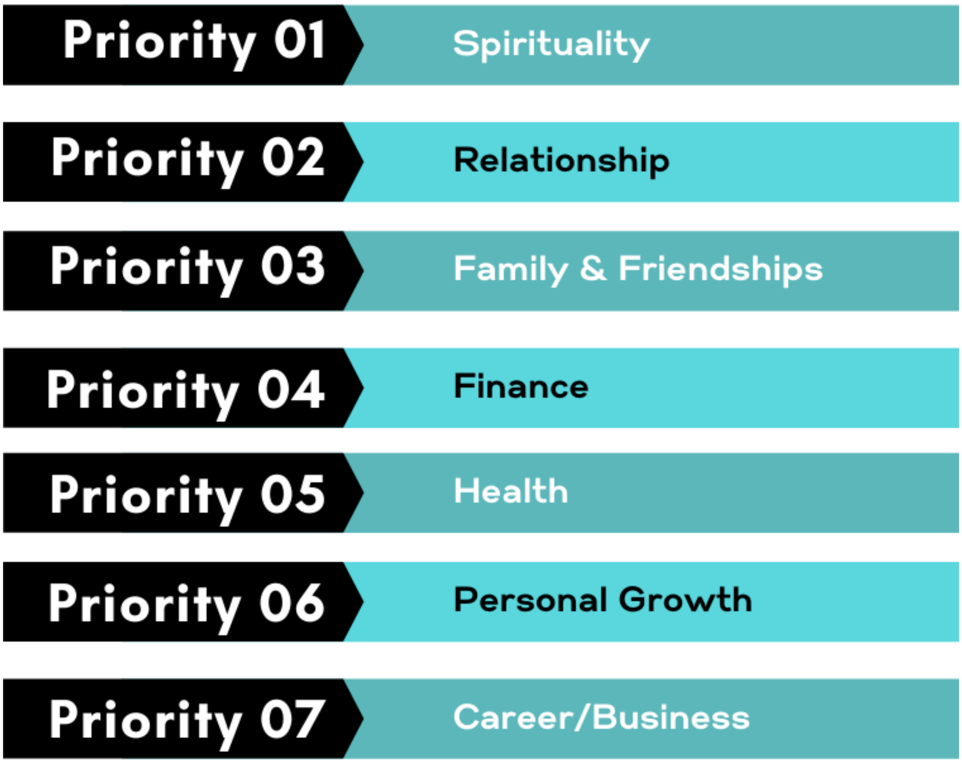
Once we have calculated the deficit for each area, we then have a picture of the areas that require more work (those with the largest deficit). We can then explore these areas and find out what goals the client could set or what actions they could take to reach the desired percentage.

<u>Applying the Streams of Life Model Subjectively</u>

An alternative approach is to apply the Streams of Life Model subjectively. Here we present the client with the 7 Streams of Life and we simply ask them 'Which areas of life do you think you need to focus on most'? The client will then select the areas subjectively. This approach may be more suitable for clients who have a lot they wish to work on and are struggling with prioritising.

Once the client has highlighted the areas, they believe need the most focus, we can then ask them to put them in a priority list. From here we can then work through the list starting with the client's top priority and explore goals and action plans with them.

Figure 19: The Subjective Approach



Whether we choose to use the Streams of Life Model objectively or subjectively depends on our style of coaching and the client. It might be useful for us to experiment with both and see what works best for us and our clients.

11.3 Limitations of the Streams of Life Model

As with all coaching models, the Streams of Life Model does not come without its limitations. Here are some things to be mindful of when using this tool:

1. It is only for clients who are unsure of where to start
2. It is perspective-based
3. It is measurable
4. It is high-level

<u>Only for Clients who are Unsure of Where to Start</u>

If a client is already aware of what they want from coaching and they have a clearly defined goal, then working through the Streams of Life Model will not be of any benefit to them. It is only useful to help a client find clarity about what they desire, and to help them define some goals and actions in a specific area of life.

<u>Perspective-based</u>

Another limitation of the model is that it is perspective-based. The client is measuring their performance themselves, which may be influenced by the opinions of others. We must be mindful that the client may be hard on themselves in particular areas due to limiting beliefs or blocks. They may not be painting an accurate picture of what is going on for them, which could then lead to a struggle throughout the coaching.

It is Measurable

Whilst the ability to measure the client's success can be beneficial, it can sometimes limit progress to an objective view and fail to factor in a subjective perspective. In other words, don't keep the focus of the coaching on raising the client's percentage, stay focused on what the client needs and wants. What they subjectively want may be considerably different to the percentage increase from the model.

It is High-Level

The Streams of Life model is great for helping a client find direction; however, its focus is at a high level. It is important to explore the client's streams of life at a deeper level to get a clear understanding of what is going on for them. This may involve the use of other tools or powerful questioning techniques.

Despite the limitations of the model, it is a great starting point for clients who may have a lot to work on and need a starting point. However, we must remember to go deeper than the exercises explained above to allow for real progress.

11.4 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have introduced another tool to add to our coaching toolkit, the 7 Streams of Life.

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

- ✎ **Applying the tool to your own life, what area do you need to develop?**

Chapter 12

How to Structure a Discovery Session

‘The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.’

Marcel Proust

What do I do in the very first session? Do I jump straight into coaching? Should I hold an introductory session? Before the coaching journey begins it is common practice to hold what is known as a ‘Discovery’ or ‘Chemistry’ session with potential clients. This is an introductory session or consultation. In this chapter, we will look at what a Discovery Session contains, how to hold one and the 10 steps to signing a client.

12.1 What is a Discovery Session?

A Discovery Session is a free session offered by coaches to explain their services and find out a little bit about what the potential client is looking for guidance on. They operate in a similar way to a consultation and generally take around 20 minutes. Essentially you can treat this as a ‘sales’ call.

Whether you call it a Discovery Session or create your own name for it, it is beneficial to offer a free 20–30-minute session to explain to potential clients what you do and to explore briefly how you may be able to help and support them. Some coaches choose to offer free coaching as part of an ‘extended’ discovery session, but I would personally not recommend taking that approach. You are offering your time for free, and you want to focus your first point of contact on building rapport and making a sale. When offering Discovery Sessions, it is important to have considered:

- How clients can book a session with you.
- When you will make yourself available for Discovery Sessions.
- The difference between Discovery Sessions and Coaching Sessions.
- How you manage the time.
- 10 Steps to Signing Clients.

How Clients can Book a Session with you

The first and foremost point to consider is how clients can book a Discovery Session with you. Are you planning on building a website? Will you use a pre-built software such as Calendly? How will you ensure that potential clients know where to find you? We will explore this in detail with some tips and techniques in our ***Coaching Ethics*** book, but for now it is worth being aware of it now.

When Will you Make Yourself Available for Discovery Sessions?

Here we need to think about what our calendars look like. How do we manage time for Discovery Sessions around other tasks and responsibilities? Do we want to select a specific day of the week that we are available to take calls or are we opening our calendar and prioritising potential clients? This is a personal choice but an important point to consider.

Discovery Sessions are not Coaching Sessions

Discovery Sessions should be designed to last no longer than 30 minutes. We want to explore what the client wants, take the opportunity to tell them exactly what we have to offer and how we can support them, and sign them up to a contract. It is easy to fall into the trap of coaching in a ‘Discovery Session’, especially if we are faced with a potential client who likes to talk and is taking the opportunity to get support from the get-go. Keep your Discovery Session structured and focused.

How you Manage the Time

Managing to stick to 20-30 minutes can be difficult at first but it gets easier with practice. It is useful for us to find techniques to signpost the time and bring the session to a close within the allotted time. We must remember not to give too much of our time away for free.

12.2 10 Steps to Signing Clients

In addition to the points above, the following 10 steps will help us keep a structured Discovery Session with the aim of securing a coaching contract:

Step 1: Explaining the Structure

Explain the structure of this call, what coaching is, your duty of confidentiality and your qualifications. Also include the aim of the session so as to manage client expectations and commit to the allotted time.

Step 2: What Support is the Client already Receiving or has Previously Received?

Ask questions to find out what the potential client knows about coaching and if they have had coaching before. Equally, ask if they are receiving any other methods of support. A client could inform you they are in therapy or receiving support by other means. If this is the case, it is important to ask the client to inform the therapist that they will be receiving coaching, what they are being coached for and to keep transparency between the two relationships.

Step 3: Explore the Reasons for Coaching

Explore why the potential client is seeking coaching, their problem, challenge or vision. Ask effective and concise questions to gather information without turning the session into a coaching session.

Step 4: Explore the Outcome

Explore what the potential client hopes to achieve from coaching and what a successful outcome would look like. It is important to begin to try and paint the picture of what the client's journey could look like and how you can support them along the way.

Step 5: Build Value

Build value in having the problem solved or the goal achieved by exploring what success would mean to the potential client emotionally, financially and practically if they were to overcome their challenge or achieve their goal. Helping them visualise or picture achieving the goal will evoke positive emotions.

Step 6: Test the Client’s Commitment

Confirm that the potential client is committed to solving their problem and ask them how important it is to them. The more important the goal is, the more likely the client will be to commit and stick to coaching.

Step 7: Explain your Coaching

Explain how you can help them overcome their problem or achieve the goal. Check if it sounds good with the potential client. However, remember to stay within your area of competence and do not over-promise.

Step 8: Discuss Costs and Service

Explain costs or donations, the service, methods of contact going forward and the practicalities of your coaching. It is important to remain confident in your offering here. The more confident you are with your pricing and the value you have to offer the client; the greater chance they will sign a contract with you.

Step 9: Invite Questions

Invite the potential client to any questions or raise concerns. If there are any, handle them confidently but don't try to brush them under the carpet if you don't have the answer.

Step 10: Reach an Agreement

With confidence, reach an agreement to work together by setting a date for the first session and put a process in place to collect payment. Explain how they can sign a contract and the next steps.

Figure 20: The 10 Steps to Signing Potential Clients

We can note these 10 steps, tailor them to suit our coaching style and apply them in every discovery session we hold.

12.3 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored how to construct an effective Discovery Session.

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

- ✏ **What action can you take today to improve your Discovery Calls and obtain more clients?**

Chapter 13

Imposter Syndrome

‘I have written eleven books, but each time I think, “Uh oh, they're going to find out now. I've run a game on everybody, and they're going to find me out.”’

Maya Angelou

How do I approach a coaching session where the client may have Imposter Syndrome? Is there a specific tool to assist with this? What if I have Imposter Syndrome myself? Scientific research suggests that about 70% of people will experience Imposter Syndrome at some point during their lives. This is when people believe that they do not deserve their achievements, success or the high esteem in which they are held by others, and that in time, people will discover the truth about them. Instead of acknowledging their success and capabilities, they often attribute their accomplishments to luck, good timing or some other external factor. A person with Imposter Syndrome can struggle with pressure and personal expectations. In this chapter we will explore the different types of Imposter Syndrome and how to address these in a coaching session.

13.1 What is Imposter Syndrome?

Imposter Syndrome has become a buzz word and a bit of a cliche, almost to the point where it has lost its true meaning. As an impactful Transformational coach, we should gain a deeper understanding of what Imposter Syndrome actually is and know how to help those struggling with it. Note that imposter syndrome is not:

- A lack of self-esteem or confidence
- A lack of self-belief or self-doubt

Whilst these could be indicators someone may be experiencing Imposter Syndrome; it is highly possible to lack confidence or self-esteem without experiencing Imposter Syndrome. In order to experience Imposter Syndrome, three key elements must exist.

13.2 The Key Elements of Imposter Syndrome

People who are experiencing Impostor Syndrome will possess the following elements:

Persistent Self-Doubt: Ongoing doubts about their skills, talents or accomplishments, regardless of how much external evidence supports their competence.

Attributing Success to Luck: Attributing achievements to external factors, such as luck or being in the right place at the right time, rather than acknowledging their own hard work, capabilities and efforts.

Fear of Exposure: The key element. There is a constant fear of being exposed as a fraud or incompetent, despite external validation of their skills and achievements.

These elements can also be mixed with some or all of the following:

- Downplaying their achievements
- Comparing themselves to others

- Setting unreasonably high standards
- Fear of failure
- Difficulty internalising success
- Reluctance to seek help

In her book *Why do I feel like an Imposter?* Chartered Psychologist, Dr Sandi Mann suggests that about 70% of people will experience Imposter Syndrome at some point during their lives. This is a staggering figure which means we encounter individuals suffering with Impostor Syndrome on a daily basis and that the chance of a client experiencing it is therefore high. So how can we help tackle this as a coach?

First, we must understand the different types of Impostor Syndrome, then learn how to apply an exercise/model as a coach at an individual and group level.

13.3 Types of Imposter Syndrome

There are five different types of Imposter Syndrome and helping clients to identify their type and committing to an action plan could lead to what is known as an 'Imposter Cure'. For those interested in exploring more, we recommend reading *The Imposter Cure* by Dr Jessamy Hibberd (see Additional Reading at the end of this book).

Let us take a look at the Five types of Imposter Syndrome:

<u>The Natural Genius</u>

Natural Geniuses feel like they have to get things perfect on the first attempt – if they don't, they feel shame and embarrassment.

They display their Imposter Syndrome through frustration when learning something new that they find difficult to understand.

Natural Geniuses set excessively high goals and then go through deep feelings of disappointment when they don't succeed on a first attempt.

Signs of this type of Imposter Syndrome may include:

- High Expectations
- Perfectionism
- Avoiding Challenges
- Comparing Themselves to Others
- Struggling with Feedback
- Feeling Inadequate Despite Success
- Quick Frustration
- Solo Performance
- Discounting their Effort
- Fear of Failure

The Superhero

Superheroes tend to feel inadequate and so feel compelled to push themselves to work as hard as possible. They feel they always need to put in more work than others. Most superheroes are workaholics who are addicted to the validation that comes from working. They display their Imposter Syndrome by working long hours and putting in more effort than others.

Signs of this type of Imposter Syndrome may include:

- Overworking
- Constant Need for Validation
- Difficulty Delegating

- Neglecting Personal Needs
- High Stress Levels
- Difficulty Relaxing
- Fear of Failure
- Perfectionism
- Measuring Themselves against Others
- Disregarding Achievements

The Perfectionist

Perfectionists are never satisfied with their work. Rather than focus on strengths, they tend to fixate on their self-perceived flaws or mistakes. This can often lead to self-pressure and anxiety. Perfectionists may be labelled 'control freaks' because they want things to always be done correctly. They display their Imposter Syndrome by putting themselves under a lot of pressure in their work and doing everything themselves in order to avoid imperfections.

Signs of this type of Imposter Syndrome may include:

- Unrealistic Standards
- Fear of Failure
- Over-Criticism
- Procrastination
- Difficulty Celebrating Success
- Intense Pressure
- All-or-Nothing Thinking
- Difficulty Delegating
- Excessive Preparation
- Avoidance of New Challenges

The Soloist

Soloists tend to be lone wolves who prefer to work alone. They determine their self-worth by their productivity, which is why they often reject offers of assistance.

Soloists see asking for support or help as a sign of weakness or incompetence. They display their Imposter Syndrome by showing and valuing independence, turning down help in order to prove their worth.

Signs of this type of Imposter Syndrome may include:

- Reluctance to Ask for Help
- Preference for Working Alone
- Difficulty Delegating Tasks
- Fear of Appearing Incompetent
- Overworking
- High Self-Reliance
- Self-Criticism
- Avoidance of Feedback
- Feeling Overwhelmed
- Isolation

The Expert

Experts are knowledge junkies, always trying to learn more and never satisfied with their level of understanding. Even though they are often highly skilled, they have a tendency to underrate their own expertise. Experts take pride in being a know-it-all and constantly seek new information. They display their Imposter Syndrome by always trying to be right or by showing feelings of embarrassment if they do not possess the answer.

Signs of this type of Imposter Syndrome may include:

- Constantly Seeking More Knowledge
- Fear of Inadequacy
- Reluctance to Start Tasks
- Difficulty Delegating
- Undervaluing their Experience
- Avoiding Roles or Responsibilities
- Excessive Preparation
- Feeling Like a Fraud
- Needing to Prove Themselves
- Discounting their Success

In reviewing the different types of Imposter Syndrome we can begin to get a better understanding of what it is and what signs may pop up in our coaching sessions. Once we become aware of the signs, we can then introduce the concept into our coaching and offer an exercise to begin tackling it.

13.4 Applying the Imposter Syndrome Tool in Coaching

As with all coaching tools or exercises, we must first offer it to the client. With Imposter Syndrome we must take care how we introduce the concept and avoid saying something along the lines of 'It appears you have Impostor Syndrome…' or 'It sounds like you have Imposter Syndrome'. This is an assumption and will impact on the rapport you have with the client. Instead, we must introduce the exercise in a way that is welcoming and highlights the concept. For example, we could say something like:

'Have you heard of the concept of Imposter Syndrome?'

After hearing the client's response…

'It is something that 70% of people experience in their life, there are different types, and I wondered if you would be interesting to take a look at these to see if it is something that resonates with you? If it does, then this will provide us with an opportunity to explore it further and could potentially help solve what it is you are going through right now.'

Here we are not making any assumption, we are highlighting an observation and introducing a tool that could possibly help. It is important for us to understand the difference.

<u>The Exercise</u>

Once we have introduced the tool and the client has given permission for us to explore, we can then walk through each of the five types of Imposter Syndrome with the client. As we explain each type, we can ask the client if anything in that specific type resonates with them. We can capture the points down in our notes.

Once we have finished guiding the client through the types, we can ask them the following questions:

1. Which of the five types of Imposter Syndrome do you feel more accurately represents you?
2. What does this type of Imposter Syndrome tell you about yourself and your current situation?
3. In what ways does this type of Imposter Syndrome impact on your life?
4. What could you do to begin to tackle this Imposter Syndrome?

5. Are there any specific points or indicators from this type of Imposter Syndrome you would like to work on or explore further?
6. What benefits would it bring to you if you were to cure yourself of Imposter Syndrome?
7. Having reviewed the concept, what actions would you like to take?

Whilst we work our way through each of the above questions, we will find more questions surface as the client discusses them with us. Here is where all the skills we have learned above come into play as we listen, connect, effectively question and reflect back to the client to help them start to unpick and remove their Imposter Syndrome.

Remember, if the client responds that none of the types resonate with them, let this go and get back into general coaching. Don't lead the client into thinking they are experiencing Imposter Syndrome just because you believe they are experiencing it.

13.5 Imposter Syndrome and Group Coaching

As a Transformational Coach it may be beneficial at times to host group coaching sessions as a gateway into your coaching practice and services. This could be in the form of a workshop, seminar or other engagement session. The purpose of facilitating such a session is to show the value you can offer as a coach with the aim of selling your coaching services. It is a great way to build up your reputation as a coach and is a more efficient use of time than holding many individual Discovery Calls.

Imposter Syndrome is a great topic for an event. The objective of a group coaching session the subject could be to help participants acknowledge, understand and rewards themselves for their achievements and to challenge the feelings of inadequacy arising from Imposter Syndrome.

In order to host such a session, you will need to market it, advertise it, have a registration form and if charging, a form of collecting payment. You will also need a place to host this, whether it be online or offline. In addition, if hosting the session in person, it will be good to have available:

- Paper/sticky notes
- Pens and Board Markers
- Whiteboards or flipcharts

We can then work through six tasks with the group to help them gain a deeper level of understanding of themselves.

Task 1

Start by briefly explaining the purpose of the session, which is to explore and challenge Imposter Syndrome by reflecting on personal achievements and receiving affirmations from the group. Then share a brief overview of Imposter Syndrome for those who may not be familiar with it. Consider the information above and the different types.

Task 2

Ask each participant to take a few minutes to privately jot down some of their achievements, skills and positive qualities on sticky notes or pieces of paper using the materials provided.
Encourage them to be specific and detailed in their reflections.

Task 3

Create a circle or use a seating arrangement that allows everyone to see and hear each other. Invite the participants to share one of their achievements from their list. Encourage them to speak confidently and proudly about their accomplishments.

After each person shares, invite other group members to offer positive comments, highlighting specific strengths and qualities they admire in the speaker.

Task 4

Ask each participant to pass their list of achievements to the person on their right.

In a round-robin fashion, each participant reads aloud the achievements listed on the card they received, providing positive affirmations and encouragement to the owner of the card. Continue until everyone in the group has received affirmations.

Task 5

Facilitate a group discussion about the experience. Ask participants to share any insights gained, emotions felt during the exercise or strategies they found helpful in countering imposter feelings.

Task 6

Wrap up the session by emphasising the importance of recognising and celebrating our achievements. Provide resources or tips for further self-reflection and overcoming Imposter Syndrome and bring the session to a close.

The purpose of the session is to create a positive and supportive atmosphere within a group, allowing individuals to recognise their accomplishments and receive encouragement from strangers or peers. Remember to adapt the exercise based on the specific needs and dynamics of your group and add a little creativity to it.

13.6 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored the concept of Imposter Syndrome and how different types can surface in coaching.

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

- ✎ **Reflecting on your own positions throughout life, where might Imposter Syndrome have appeared for you?**

Chapter 14

Our Johari Window

‘Sometimes all it takes is a change in perspective to see the light.’

Dan Brown

Are there any coaching models that help clients understand themselves more deeply? How can we help clients identify blind spots? How can we better understand our relationship with ourselves? In this chapter we explore a powerful psychological model we can use in our coaching called ‘The Johari Window’. We will take a brief look at its history, delve into the concept and explore different ways we can apply it in coaching.

14.1 A Brief History of the Model

The Johari Window was created by psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in the 1950s. They developed the model as a psychological tool to help people understand their relationships with themselves and others by exploring aspects of self-awareness and interpersonal communication. The name ‘Johari’ is a combination of their first names, Jo (Joseph) and Hari (Harry).

14.2 An Introduction to the Johari Window

The Johari Window is a mental map that helps us understand ourselves and how we relate to others. This metaphorical window consists of four panes, each representing a different aspect (or perspective) of our life. The panes are Open, Hidden, Blind and Unknown.

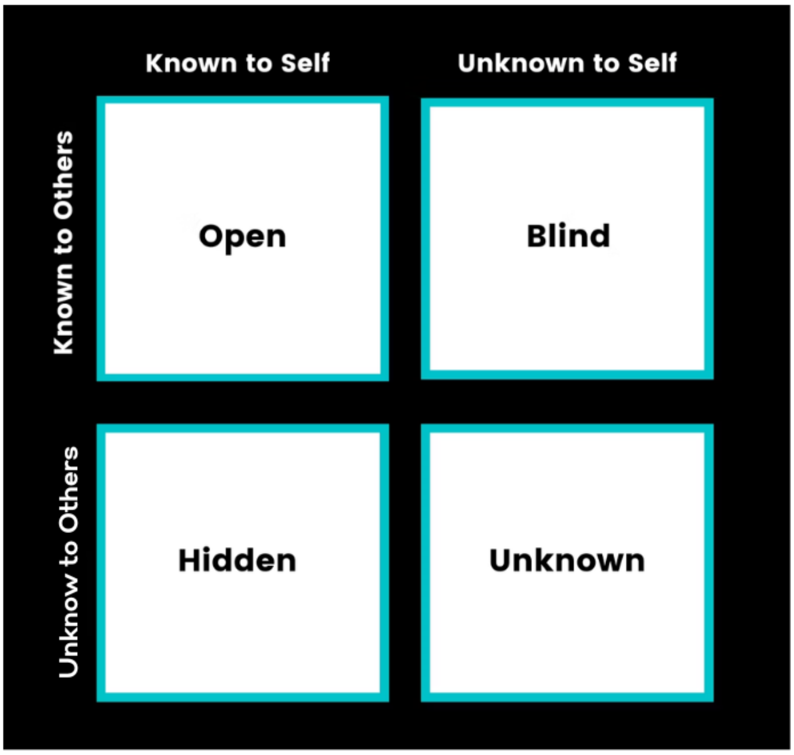
Open: This is what we openly show to others — our feelings, thoughts and experiences that everyone knows about us.

Hidden: These are things we keep to ourselves, such as secrets, fears and private thoughts. They affect us but aren't known to others.

Blind: These are things about us that others see but we don't realise about ourselves, such as habits or behaviours we're not aware of.

Unknown: These are the aspects of us that nobody, not even ourselves, know. This is unexplored territory waiting to be discovered through new experiences or self-reflection.

Figure 21: The Johari Window



The goal of the Johari Window is to expand our open area by finding ways to share more about ourselves; and additionally, to understand our blind spots and unknown areas, so that we can grow and develop. By doing this, we can improve how we communicate, understand others and grow as individuals.

We can use the Johari Window by talking openly with others, getting feedback and trying to learn more about ourselves through self-reflection. It's a tool that helps us become more aware of who we are and how we interact with people, both personally and in groups such as school or work.

14.3 Using the Johari Window in Coaching

Before diving into using the Johari Window with clients it is useful for us to experiment with the model ourselves. What are we sharing with the world? What are our blind spots? How do we explore our potential further? Here is a step-by-step guide to exploring our own Johari Window:

Step 1: Create your own Johari Window on a piece of paper. Divide the paper into four quadrants (as per figure 21 above). Label them Open, Hidden, Blind and Unknown.

Step 2: Jot down aspects of yourself that you willingly share with others in the ‘Open’ quadrant. These could be personality traits, skills, interests, and so on. What do you showcase to the world?

Step 3: In the ‘Hidden’ quadrant, note down things about yourself that you prefer to keep private. These could be fears, insecurities, past experiences or personal beliefs you are not comfortable sharing openly. What do you keep hidden behind the mask?

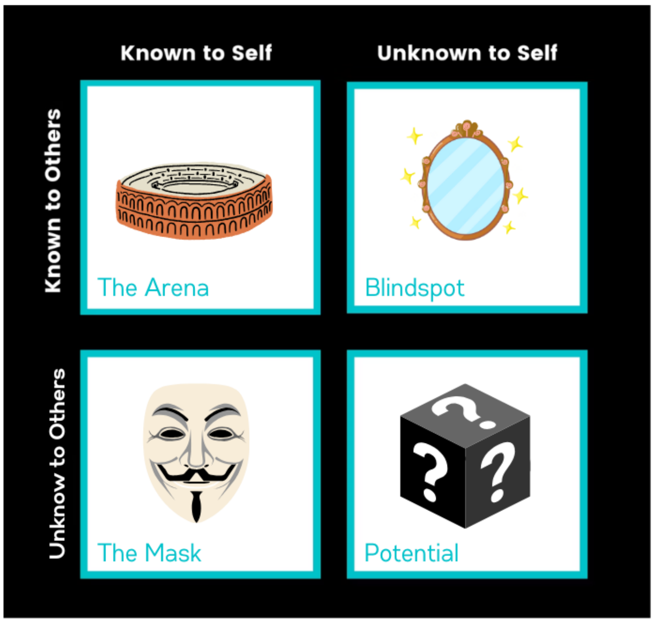
Step 4: Reflect on traits or behaviours that others might see in you, but you are unaware of yourself and capture these in the 'Blind' quadrant. Think back to feedback you've received from others, or better yet, seek feedback from people to help you complete this quadrant. What can you do to identify your blind spots?

Step 5: Consider actions you could take to help you understand and explore your unknown area. What projects could you undertake? What support could you gain to explore this 'Unknown' quadrant. How can you tap into your unknown potential?

Once the 'panes' are all filled-in, you should have a self-awareness tool to reflect on. Exploring your window, note down all that you have learned about yourself. What has surprised you? Are there any actions you can take to improve yourself?

To make the exercise a bit more engaging, we can give the panes different labels:

Figure 22: A Creative Way to Explore the Johari Window



We can simply walk the client through the same questions as captured above to give them an overview of their Johari Window.

Using the Johari Window in Situational Coaching

We can use the Johari Window in a variety of situations in coaching and/or tailored to our niche. Here are some of the areas in which the Johari Window could provide benefit.

- **Teamwork and Professional Growth:** In a work environment, a team can undergo a Johari Window exercise to enhance collaboration. As team members share their strengths (Open Area), colleagues acknowledge each other's skills and competencies. By receiving feedback on blind spots (Blind Area), such as communication style or work habits, teams can become more aware and can improve their interactions, leading to more effective teamwork and personal growth. If you coach within organisations or plan to do so, then finding a creative way to engage participants with the Johari Window can be very beneficial. This is something we provide guidance on in our coaching programme with additional tools available in our Coach Library.

- **Relationship Building:** In a friendship or romantic relationship, partners can engage in discussions using the Johari Window. By openly sharing personal preferences, dreams and values (Open Area), the Johari Window can help build trust and understanding in the relationship. As couples share hidden fears or insecurities (Hidden Area), they can deepen their bond by offering support and empathy. Additionally, acknowledging blind spots (Blind Area), such as communication misunderstandings or differing perspectives, helps in resolving conflicts and improving the relationship's dynamics. The Johari Window is a particularly useful tool for Relationship Coaches.

- **Leadership Development:** Executive Coaches, High Performance Coaches and those looking to work with leaders can explore the Johari Window to enhance leadership skills. By receiving feedback from team members (Blind Area), the leader becomes aware of leadership styles or behaviours that might have been unintentionally impacting the team. As the leader shares vulnerabilities or uncertainties (Hidden Area) with a mentor or coach, they can work on personal development, adapt their leadership style and create a more supportive and productive work environment.

This is a non-exhaustive list of situational coaching. The Johari window is open for creativity and can be shaped and used in many different coaching scenarios. Explore the tool and find a way to tie it to your niche.

14.4 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored how we can use the Johari Window tool in our coaching.

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

✎ **Reflecting on the model, how might you apply the Johari Window in your Coaching Practice?**

Chapter 15

Four Stages of Psychological Competence

'In learning you will teach and in teaching you will learn.'

Phil Collins

Are there any further tools we should learn at the beginning of our coaching journey? Is there a tool focused on levels of competency? What more can we add to our toolkit at this stage? As we build our coaching practice, the more tools we can add to our toolkit the better equipped we become to serve our clients. In this final chapter, we are going to explore the Four Stages of Psychological competence and how we can use this tool in our coaching business.

15.1 An Overview of the Four Stages

Psychological competence is a journey of growth and self-awareness that we all encounter when learning something new. As we progress through life, picking up new habits and learning new skills, we often find ourselves working through different stages of competence. Understanding these stages can help us become more effective learners and communicators. The four stages are: Unconscious Incompetence, Conscious Incompetence, Conscious Competence and Unconscious Competence. Let's explore each stage in more detail.

15.2 The Four Stages of Psychological Competence

The four stages of psychological competence essentially form a cycle of our journey when learning something new. We will find ourselves moving through this cycle as we become more competent. It is important to note that we can easily move back and forth through this cycle rather than making only a straight-line progression through it.

Unconscious Incompetence

In this initial stage we are unaware of our lack of knowledge or skill in a particular area. This ignorance can lead to over-confidence, as we do not recognise the gap in our understanding or abilities. Recognising that we are at this stage is the first step towards learning. Here we have a desire to master something but no idea what is required to do so.

Conscious Incompetence

As we begin to understand what it is we do not know, we move into conscious incompetence. This stage can be uncomfortable as we become aware of our limitations. However, this awareness is crucial because it motivates us to learn and improve. We start seeking out information, training and experiences to fill the gaps in our knowledge and gather all that we need to begin to learn. This stage tests our commitment.

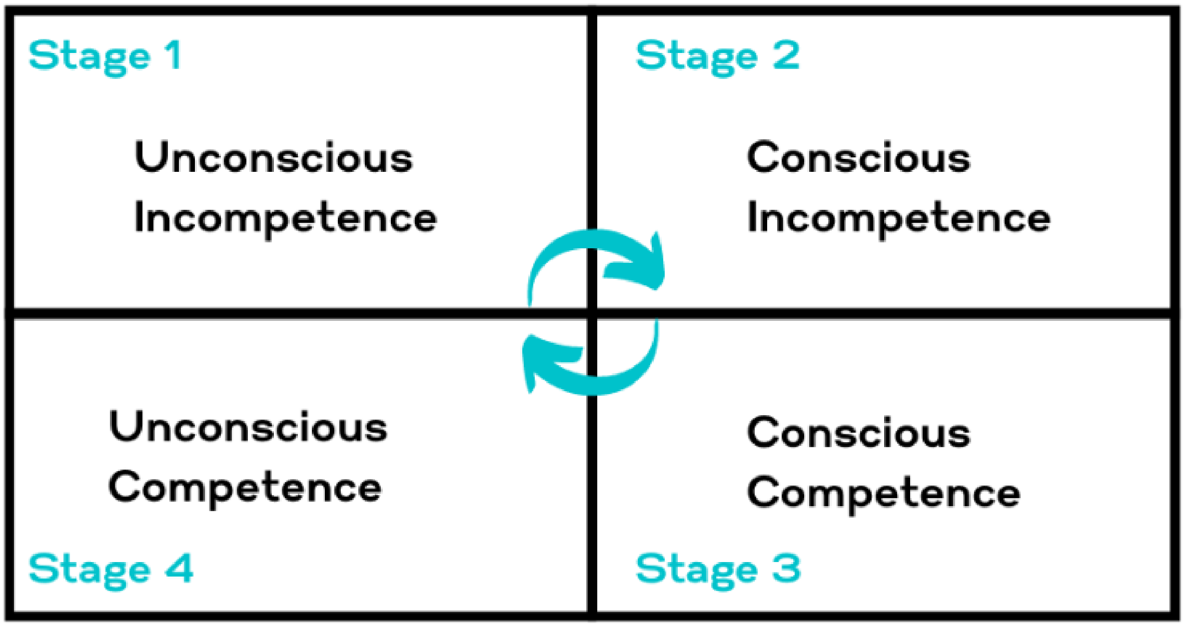
Conscious Competence

With effort and practice, we transition into conscious competence. At this stage, we have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge but we need to think and apply ourselves deliberately. Tasks that once seemed difficult are now manageable, but they still require our conscious attention and effort. This stage tests our discipline.

Unconscious Competence

Finally, we reach unconscious competence. Here, our skills and knowledge become second nature. We can perform tasks effortlessly and without conscious thought. This stage represents mastery, where our competence is fully integrated into our behaviour.

Figure 23: The Four Stages of Psychological Competence



15.3 A Practical Example

Let's consider learning to drive a car as an example of these four stages. If you don't drive, think of a sport you practice or a musical instrument you have learned to play. The four stages would look something like this:

1. **Unconscious Incompetence:** Initially, we might think driving is easy because we don't yet understand the complexities involved. We are unaware of the skills required to drive safely. Therefore, we are unconsciously incompetent at driving.

2. **Conscious Incompetence**: Once we first start learning to drive, we quickly realise how much we don't know. We become aware of our lack of skill and the challenges we need to overcome. We become consciously incompetent at driving.

3. **Conscious Competence:** With practice, we learn to drive competently. We can navigate the car, follow traffic rules and handle various driving situations, but we still need to focus and think about our actions. We become consciously competent at driving.

4. **Unconscious Competence:** After extensive practice, driving becomes second nature. We can drive without consciously thinking about each action. This is the stage where we drive for hours, arrive at our destination and haven't given a conscious thought our driving. We become unconsciously competent at driving.

The same cycle take place with whatever we decide to learn. Our mission becomes to navigate our way through the cycle to achieve mastery.

15.4 Applying the Four Stages of Competence

In coaching, understanding these stages can help us guide others more effectively. By recognising where our clients are in their competence journey, we can tailor our approach to meet their needs. It also allows us to shape the role we will play as a coach.

When working through the tool with clients, we can explain the details of each of the stages and then ask the client what stage they believe they are currently at with their specific goal or learning. Depending on the answer given, we can then explore the following:

<u>Identifying Unconscious Incompetence</u>

When we help clients become aware of their knowledge gaps without discouraging them, we help them understand how realistic the goal might be and can gently test their commitment. Encouragement and gentle guidance are key when working at this stage. Our role here is one of discovery.

Some useful questions to ask:

1. What do you need to reach this goal?
2. What resources or tools might you need?
3. What would be relevant milestones on the journey to achieving this goal?
4. Where can you begin?
5. How do you plan to achieve this goal?

If a client identifies themselves as being unconsciously incompetent, our aim is to guide them to understand what they need to achieve the goal.

Supporting Conscious Incompetence

By providing additional resources, tools and support for clients, they can become more aware of their limitations and areas they need to approve on. Empathy and patience are important as they work through this challenging stage. Our role as a coach here becomes exploratory.

Some useful questions to ask:

1. What is stopping you from achieving the goal?
2. Where could you find additional support with the goal?
3. When can you take the time to work on this goal?
4. What additional resources could assist you?
5. How important is this goal to you?

If a client identifies as being consciously incompetent, our aim is to understand their obstacles and empower them to take action.

Guiding Through Conscious Competence

By encouraging deliberate practice and providing constructive feedback, we can help clients begin to master their goal. We must help them build confidence in their new skills through repeated application and refinement. Our role as a coach here becomes more of an accountability function.

Some useful questions to ask:

1. How much time are you spending on your goal?
2. Where are the gaps in your learning for this goal?
3. What is your biggest obstacle right now?
4. Is there anything else you need to support you?
5. How can I hold you accountable for achieving this?

If a client identifies as being consciously competent, our aim is to motivate them to continuously take action and to hold them accountable.

Maintaining Unconscious Competence

By celebrating mastery and encouraging continuous growth we can help clients maintain unconscious competence. We can help clients recognise their progress and motivate them to apply their skills in different situations. Our role here becomes one of acknowledging and inspiring.

Some useful questions:

1. Shall we review your progress and achievements?
2. Where else could you apply this skill?
3. What doors have mastering this goal/skill opened up for you?
4. What do you need in order to maintain this level of skill?
5. What are the next steps for you?

If a client identifies as being unconsciously competent, our aim is to celebrate and inspire, curiously exploring what is next for them.

By understanding and applying these four stages of psychological competence, we can create a more supportive and effective learning environment for our clients.

15.5 Theory into Practice

In this chapter we have explored the four stages of psychological competence and how we can apply this in coaching.

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

- ✏ **Reflecting on your coaching journey, which stage would you place yourself in right now and why?**

Additional Reading

For those who are interested in learning more. Here is an additional recommended reading list:

1. **Coaching Ethics** by Paul Smith
2. **Coaching Psychology** by Paul Smith
3. **Coaching Presence** by Paul Smith
4. **Coaching Development** by Paul Smith
5. **Coaching Mental Health** by Paul Smith
6. **The Coaching Manual** by Julie Starr
7. **Super Coach** by Michael Neill
8. **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People** by Stephen Covey
9. **Coaching Skills** by Jenny Rogers
10. **Coaching For Performance** by John Whitmore
11. **Neuroscience for Coaches** by Amy Brann
12. **Coaching Questions** by Tony Stoltzfus
13. **The Start-Up Coach** by Carl Reader

14. **The Coach's Casebook** by Joan Swart & Christine Gurguis

15. **Mastering Coaching** by Max Landsberg

16. **Mental Training for Peak Performance** by Steven Ungerleider

17. **The Imposter Cure** by Dr Jessamy Hibberd

18. **How to Listen** by Katie Colombus

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