



COACHING SKILLS

A BEGINNERS GUIDE

BOAZ ADHENGU

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PREFACE

Is Coaching Biblical? Can we find examples of it in the Bible? Were there any Life Coaches in the Bible? Can we find the coaching model being used in Jesus's ministry? This book not only try's to answer the essentials of what could be defined as 'good coaching' but to introduce a firm understanding of its endorsement as a Christian method. The focus here is on life and personal development coaching, not athletic coaching. Simply stated, coaching is empowering people to change without telling them what to do. It involves deep listening and provocative questions in a goal-oriented relationship with a person who is internally motivated to make changes that are important to them. Typically the person is in some sort of transition or on the verge of making a major change in their life, and often they are facing some sort of obstacle that is hindering them from moving forward. At the core of the coaching model are these: asking, listening, guiding, providing support, encouraging and accountability for actions taken to move forward in the face of obstacles.

Christian coaching is an approach to the practice of professional coaching - whether focused on personal or professional growth - that integrates the biblical worldview when working with clients to recognize their potential and effect personal change. Whereas the biblical worldview is given priority over existing theories of human nature, motivation, personal change, growth and development as well as frame the perspectives by which coaching is offered.

The coach approach evolves out of asking open-ended questions to probe, expand, and focus the thinking of the person you are coaching. Already in Genesis 3 we find God asking Adam and Eve three probing questions: *"Where are you? Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"*

God already knew the answers, but He also knew that in order for Adam and Eve to grow in their understanding of their relationship with Him, they needed to think about and take responsibility for their choices. God was challenging them to follow Him from the heart, and heart transformation requires an internal motivation to change, not just external commands. God asked, listened to their responses, guided them toward a

solution and helped them overcome the obstacles they were facing. He made atonement for their sin by killing an animal and provided clothing to cover their nakedness.

Coaching is the process of coming alongside a person or team to help them discover God's agenda for their life and ministry, and then cooperating with the Holy Spirit to see that agenda become a reality. Coaches come alongside to help, just as Barnabas came alongside Paul, and then Paul came alongside Timothy and others. By encouraging and challenging others, coaches empower them for ministry.

The goal of coaching is helping someone succeed. And what is success? It's finding out what God wants you to do and doing it. Ephesians 2:10 says, "*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*" A person's success is directly tied to finding out what works God has prepared for them to do and then doing that.

Given that definition, success will certainly look different on different people, but following the will of God - in all its varied and colourful forms - is the core calling of a life of faith. Coaching empowers each individual believer to listen to the Spirit and act in accordance with the mission they sense God calling them toward. Coaching is essentially listening to the Spirit and taking action accordingly.

The coach approach includes using open-ended questions to get people to stop in their tracks and think about what they are doing and where they are headed. As you journey through the Old Testament, you often find God using questions for this "stop and think" purpose. Here are a few examples:

- **Moses** – when he was refusing God's job offer for him to lead Israel out of Egyptian bondage. "*Then the LORD's anger burned against Moses and he said, "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well."*" Exodus 4:14.

- **Joshua** - when he thought the Israelites would be conquered by the Amorites. *“The LORD said to Joshua, “Stand up! What are you doing down on your face?”* Joshua 7:10.
- **Samuel** - when he continued to mourn over Saul. *“The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel?”* 1 Samuel 16:1
- **Isaiah** - when he was deciding whether to answer God’s call to prophesy to his own people. *“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”* Isaiah 6:8
- **Jeremiah** - when he was deciding whether to answer God’s call to prophesy to the nations. *“The word of the LORD came to me: “What do you see, Jeremiah?” “I see the branch of an almond tree,” I replied.”* Jeremiah 1:11

This pattern is repeated throughout the Old Testament, but it’s not until we encounter the life of Jesus that we truly begin to see the power of the coaching model being used to motivate and develop others, including leaders.

We refer to the coaching process as a coaching conversation. It didn’t seem to matter with whom Jesus was conversing; He always had a question for them. Matthew records 65 questions; Mark, 45; Luke, 73; John, 45. Jesus wasn’t seeking a correct intellectual answer. Each of the questions He asked challenged the person to stop and think about something that had life-changing implications. It wasn’t the verbal response given, but the change in life direction that mattered.

Luke 24 serves as a powerful example of how Jesus helps people to change without telling them what to do.

After the crucifixion and resurrection, two disciples were walking from Jerusalem to their home in Emmaus. Notice how Jesus coaches these two followers back into joy and their mission. He joins them on the road and asks a simple question: What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking? We read that “*they stood still, looking sad.*” With that simple probing question, Jesus was asking, “*Do you hear what you’re saying? Do you know how your perception of reality has affected your speech?*” It’s a great coaching question because when our perspective is skewed or based on something that isn’t true, it affects everything. Those disciples thought that the “*Hope of Israel*” was dead, and their hopes had died with Him.

Jesus listened to them long enough to discover that the recent events in Jerusalem had severely shaken their beliefs. Then he asked another question, was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? They knew about the suffering Messiah prophesied by Isaiah, but they hadn’t connected the dots yet. Jesus helped them to realign their beliefs with reality so they could get back to their original mission: You are witnesses of these things.

Imagine all of the other responses Jesus could have made in this situation. He could have used shame, guilt, duty, obligation, command, brow-beating, etc. But he knew two things: their hearts were fragile, and they had to be persuaded from the inside out in order to re-engage in their mission. They needed to be transformed, and Jesus knew that true change comes from within.

We see Jesus using the power of questions, deep listening, support, encouragement and the skill of guiding these disciples back on to their critical path. We could say more about Jesus’ ability to listen, but the fact is self-evident. No one listened more intently to people than Jesus. Listening values a person. It honours their existence like nothing else.

Asking and listening demonstrate that we believe in the other person. Notice, He didn't tell them to do anything. There are no commands in this story. There are no “*should-have's*,” “*you-better-or-else*,” “*shame on you*,” or any number of other tactics we often use to get people to do what we want them to do.

Jesus motivated these disciples to do what they had already committed to do. And then He asked them if they had anything to eat. In fact, it was in their common meal that their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus had been talking to them. But first, He used open-ended questions and listening to help them get un-stuck and gain a fresh perspective based on the truth. Then he offered them encouragement to re-engage with their heart's true desire: “*to be witnesses of these things*.” That's good coaching!

This book is amongst the many others written to help steer courage in our daily dilemmas of nature vs. nurture; receiving information and advice does not cause transformation. It requires renewal from within as the Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 12:2 ...

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

1

What is Coaching

Coaching may suggest a teacher earning extra money by helping your reluctant children through a loathed Mathematics or Kiswahili exam. Or it may suggest the pushy parent figure in basketball who also acts as coach and manager to a prodigiously talented child. More attractive images may be from other kinds of sports coaching, especially perhaps in its more modern manifestations. Here a coach may be a clever, sophisticated and highly paid guru figure whose tantalizing and competitively sought coaching secrets are eventually revealed in books and newspaper articles.

While these are recurrent concerns and confusions, it is probably much more common to be troubled by an underlying comparison with psychotherapy and counselling. Many potential and actual clients ask worriedly about this. When coaching is described to them, they may say, with visible suspicion, *'This sounds like counselling!'* implying that if coaching is just counselling in disguise, then it's not for them.

The themes that unite all of these concerns are basic to understanding what coaching is. Take it as axiomatic that all clients, whoever they are and however grand, successful and important they are, fear two things: vulnerability and loss of control. They are right in these fears because coaching is about change and to change you do make yourself vulnerable and you may indeed not appear to have the degree of control you want over your life while the changes are happening. Interest in coaching as an alternative to command and control is growing. This is because in a non-authoritarian society, people reject command and control, i.e. the 'telling' mode, is very limited in its effectiveness.

Coaching is a career and an ethical profession and the life coach will use the power of commitment to enable their clients achieve beneficial and measurable results in all areas of their lives. Life coaching is a holistic process that has the power to balance and harmonise life.

A coach who spends initial time with clients on anything other than results will diminish the impact of the coaching process by converting it from a client-and-coach relationship to a client-and therapist situation. This is not on the life coaching agenda. When the coach focuses on results or outcomes and enables their clients to define and achieve these with ease, then the clients can eventually be guided to examine their beliefs and values. It is not a primary function of the coach to change the client's beliefs and values. Although changes in negative or undesirable values and beliefs can accelerate the achievement of outcomes, such changes should be addressed only with care and after a solid working relationship has been developed.

The main role of a coach is to enable and empower the client. This is achieved using the "*power of commitment*" as leverage. Once clients agree to an activity they are committed to do it. This commitment is powerfully linked with the client's identity. The life coach taps into this power.

A coaching conversation is unlike most other discussions. It involves an unusually high level of trust and candour on both sides. Creating and sustaining this unusual environment is what gives coaching its power. To do it as a coach involves abandoning many of the normal conventions of conversation in our society and replacing them with high-level, alternative skills, all of them about communicating acceptance and respect.

The word coaching is blessedly free from the supposed taint of mental difficulties associated with psychotherapy. However, it is also thoroughly saturated in assumptions made because of its presumed likeness to sports coaching. Both novice coaches and novice clients may still believe, perhaps at an unconscious level, which somehow the coaching process is

about being told what to do, either because the coach actually knows best or because the coach thinks he or she knows best. To be a successful coach involves an unusual combination of attitudes and attributes. You have to have both a high degree of self-respect and a high degree of respect for others.

The power of commitment relies on the social reinforcement of people conforming to who they say they are. It uses the power of honesty. Clients become dishonest if they do not fulfil their commitment to the coach. Humans are conditioned to believe that people who do not fulfil their commitments are not to be trusted. They are seen as shifty, unreliable and devious, as liars and cheats. Clients do not want their life coach to think they are any of these so they will move heaven and earth to achieve the actions, goals and targets that they have agreed.

As a coach what you say and what you do have to be consistent. At the simplest level, you must deliver on your promises. If you say you will email an interesting article, you must do it. If you declare enthusiasm for coaching, you must be enthusiastic. You will give the client 100 per cent of your attention in every session, just as you expect 100 per cent attention back. It will be immediately obvious if you are drifting off or coaching on autopilot. Where you say you believe in not giving advice, you will adhere to that principle in practice and on the occasions where you do offer advice you will draw attention to it through labelling what you say. It may also help in early sessions to draw attention to other coaching behaviour – for instance, when asking for feedback, pointing explicitly to approaches you have taken, or to the types of question you have asked. Life coaching helps clients in every aspect of their lives. Unlike sports coaching or business consultancy, it is holistic and considers every dimension of a client's life. This includes business, career, health, social relationships, wealth and worth in contribution. If

life coaching concentrates on just one area in isolation, and develops only that area, then the client's life can become unbalanced. When clients overachieve at work but underachieve in personal relationships, the negative effects of their personal relationships can adversely affect their performance at work.

Bringing balance and achievement into the lives of their clients produces rewards for the coach, too. Helping clients to define goals in each life area and then working to help them to achieve results also brings an awareness of the importance of balance and harmony into the coach's life.

Life coaching is a relationship of interdependency between coach and client. It is a relationship based on honesty, respect and the life coach's unwavering beliefs in the client's unlimited potential. You will refer to clients respectfully outside the sessions, never belittling them with other coaches. Where you feel you cannot work respectfully, then the coaching must end. As you expect from your client, you will never cancel or arrive late for a session on spurious or trivial grounds. Your unbounded curiosity about people will mean that you will not take refuge in the bogus concept of chemistry. Clients will often ask for a look-see meeting, explaining that they need to 'check the chemistry'. In a crowded market place this is the client's right, but it is the coach's right too, even though most coaches have yet to get to the stage where, like the most famous and in-demand music teachers, they subject their clients to an audition to see if they are at the required standard. As a coach you will need to remember how easily 'checking the chemistry' is really code for 'Do I like him/her?' This can often in its turn be code for 'Are they just like me?' You do not need clients to be just like you to be able to work with them successfully. My own assumption is that I will be able to work with more or less any client until circumstances prove otherwise.

You will strictly adhere to your promise of confidentiality. Any betrayal here will wing its way back to your client in very short order. A colleague of mine describes the most common approach to confidentiality as ‘only telling one other person’. As coaches we need to do better than that. If there are limits to confidentiality, tell the client what they are. Clients need to trust that we will not gossip or betray any of the many secrets we hear in the coaching room. This may range from early knowledge of a company takeover, with its potential to buy shares cheap and sell them dear later, to other kinds of insider knowledge about adulteries or people’s sexuality.

The lure of being on the inside track can be bait to blabbing. Promises of confidentiality slip easily off the tongue. One sign that you are observing such promises is that you may talk to a client about other clients and their issues but never disrespectfully or in a way that could identify that other client. In this way your current client will feel safe to trust his or her secrets with you. The openness you expect from a client needs to be matched by openness on your side. This might mean very occasionally trusting the client with your own vulnerability, but this will always risk the possibility of you and your client changing places.

Finally, as a coach you will demonstrate willingness to learn from your clients. This is something that is taken for granted by the best coaches in other fields – for instance singing and sport. An outstanding opera singer will usually have a singing coach. The best theatre companies employ voice coaches, even for distinguished actors. These coaches will tell you how much they learn from their *coachees*. Similarly, as life or executive coaches, when we stay open to influence from our clients in the same way that we expect them to be open to influence from us, the coaching relationship will be infinitely the richer.

2

Dancing in The Moment

A coach in the midst of a coaching session is constantly choosing. Every response from a client provides information about where to go next with the coaching. This awareness of the shifting currents and themes becomes second nature to experienced coaches; they are constantly sensing what is most important and choosing a question or skill based on what just showed up. This is the art of dancing in the moment. This is listening at a very deep level - underneath the words and story, underneath the content or logic of the issue being presented. This is listening with intuition tuned to a high level. Sensing and adjusting in this way require great flexibility, the willingness to fly instantly in a new direction, the willingness to accept paradox or apparent contradiction and keep going. We call this coaching agility “dancing in the moment.”

In practical terms, dancing in the moment is also about responding to the client’s agenda. At the beginning of a coaching session, the coach needs to be ready to respond to whatever the client has determined is most important that day. The issue a client brings is rarely a complete surprise; after all, this is an ongoing relationship, and there is typically a major issue coach and client are working on, with some form of accountability. Even so, coaches need to be ready to change course, to dance in the moment as clients do their discovery work in the moment.

The decisions we make are interconnected and this is obvious to the coach; that clients don’t live their lives in discrete compartments; there are links between all of the pieces. A career choice can affect health, family, and friends. Choices about finances affect plans for vacation, education, and retirement, and vice versa. Nearly every choice exists in a system of possible choices stretching into other areas of life. Even when a coaching session focuses on one particular facet of a client’s life, there is an awareness of the ripples that are set in motion. Flexibility is one of the strengths of the co-active model. The underlying principles and contexts

make it possible for coactive coaches to work with clients in every aspect and virtually every corner of their lives.

The ongoing relationship between coach and client exists only to address the client's agenda - and so the client's agenda is at the centre of the diagram. There are two ways to think about this agenda. The first is at the level of the big picture for the client's life. Every day, people make dozens, even hundreds, of decisions to do or not do certain things. The choices we make during the day, no matter how trivial they may seem, contribute to creating a life that is more (*or less*) fulfilling. The decisions we make move us toward or away from better balance in our lives. The choices contribute to a more effective life process or to a process that is less effective. And so at one level, the client's agenda is wrapped in these three core principles of fulfilment, balance, and process. They are principles because they are fundamental to the liveliness of life. In the same way that oxygen, fuel, and heat are necessary for fire, these three principles combine to create an ignited life. In our model, we often refer to this big-picture agenda as the Big "A" agenda.



The second way we look at the client's agenda is through specific issues that the client brings to his or her coaching sessions. Clients bring all sorts of agenda items to their coaching, and yet, whatever the specific issue, there is a way to link it to a more fulfilling life, life-giving balance, or better process. This specific issue is often referred to as the little "a" agenda.

Fulfilment

The client's definition of fulfilment is always intensely personal. It may include, especially at first, outward measures of success: a great job, enough money, a certain lifestyle. Eventually, the coaching will progress to a deeper definition of fulfilment. It's not about having more. It's not about what fills the client's pockets or closets - it's about what fills the client's heart and soul. A fulfilling life is a valued life, and clients will have their own definitions of what they truly value. If they value risk taking, is there enough adventure in their lives? If they value family, are they short-changing themselves by caving in to the demands of work? What are the personal values they want present in their work? Sorting out values is a way of sorting out life choices, because when the choices reflect the client's values, life is more satisfying and often feels effortless. Achieving a certain goal can be very fulfilling - especially as a benchmark - but most clients find that fulfilment is not the finish line. At its deepest level, fulfilment is about finding and experiencing a life of purpose. It is about reaching one's full potential.

Balance

Today, with so many responsibilities, attractive options, demands, and distractions, balance may feel like an impossible dream. It's especially elusive for most of the people who come to coaching. They tend to be

dissatisfied with functioning at some minimum standard of being alive: they want more from life and want to give more back. They can be passionate about the things that matter to them, focused in their commitment, and so intense that sometimes one corner of their lives is a model of excellence while the rest is in ruins. They understand the value of balance and have probably made attempts to achieve it – with good intentions to exercise more, take time off, or reconnect with friends - and found that weeks or months passed without any change. Life is out of balance.

People often seem resigned to being out of balance, as if that's just the way life is. That's the real world, given the circumstances. There's only one way of looking at it, and it looks bad. Coaching for balance, however, focuses on widening the range of perspectives and, therefore, adding more choices. Ultimately, balance is about making choices: saying yes to some things and no to others. This can be challenging. Clients often want to say yes to more in their lives without making room for it by saying no to something else. This impulse leads to an overwhelmed feeling - and lives that are out of balance.

Balance is a fluid state because life itself is dynamic. Therefore, it makes more sense to look at whether clients are moving toward balance or away from balance rather than to offer them “*balance*” as a goal to be achieved. Like the seasons of the year, balance is best viewed over the long haul. It is also a perennial issue, one that coaches will see, in some form or another, many times over in the course of a coaching relationship.

Process

We are always in process. Sometimes it looks frantic; sometimes it looks graceful. Because coaching is effective at achieving results, both clients

and coaches can get drawn into the “*results*” trap - focusing entirely on the destination and losing sight of the flow of the journey. In fact, process is often compared to a river. As life flows, there will be fast periods of onrushing, white-water progress as well as days of calm, steady currents. But there will also be times of drifting, being stuck in job eddies and relationship whirlpools, and backsliding into treacherous swamps. There will be flooding and drought. The coach’s job is to notice, point out, and be with clients wherever they are in their process. The coach is there to encourage and support, provide companionship around the rocks, and escort clients through the dark waters as well as to celebrate their skill and success at navigating the difficult passages. Coaching allows clients to live more fully in a deeper relationship with all aspects of their lives.

These are the core principles at the heart of the coaching model. Together they create the heat and light of a life that is fully alive.

3

The Designed Alliance

With the client in the centre of the coaching model (see diagram on page 10), we encircle the client and the client's agenda; we name this protective circle the designed alliance. In coaching, power is granted to the coaching relationship, not to the coach. Client and coach work together to design an alliance that meets the client's needs. In fact, clients play an important role in declaring how they want to be coached. They are involved in creating a powerful relationship that fits their working and learning styles. The relationship is tailored to the communication approach that works best for them. The process of designing the alliance is a model of the mutual responsibility of client and coach. Clients learn that they are in control of the relationship and, ultimately, of the changes they make in their lives.

Visually, the coaching model illustrated in the diagram represents a five-pointed star. Each point of the star is a context that the coach brings to the coaching. Each is a point of contact with the client. The coach consistently draws from these contexts in the practice of coaching. In time, and through training, the coach develops these the way a musician develops musical technique. The five contexts are always in play. We present them in one order here in the book, but they are a constellation, not a sequence - essential elements of a complete coaching approach - like a spotlight that is always shining, illuminating the client's life.

Listening

Of course, the coach listens to the words that come from the client, tracking the content of the coaching conversation. But the most important listening of coaching takes place on a deeper level. It is the listening for the meaning behind the story, for the underlying process, for the theme that will deepen the learning. The coach is listening for the appearance of the client's vision, values, purpose. The coach is also listening for

resistance, fear, backtracking, and the voice of the Saboteur, who is there to object to change, point out the client's shortcomings, and bring up all the reasons why this idea, whatever it is, won't work.

The coach listens at many levels simultaneously to hear where clients are in their process, to hear where they are out of balance, to hear their progress on the journey of fulfilment. The coach is listening for the nuance of hesitation, too, for the sour ring of something not quite true.

Intuition

By listening below the surface, the coach finds the place where the hard data and soft data merge. Intuition is a kind of knowing that resides in the background and is often unspoken. It remains in the background because, for many people, it's not easy to trust. Our culture doesn't validate intuition as a reliable means of drawing conclusions or making decisions, so we hesitate to say what our intuition tells us. We hold back because we don't want to appear foolish. And yet it is one of the most powerful gifts a coach brings to coaching.

As coaches, we receive a great deal of information from the client and then, in the moment of coaching, combine it with previous information as well as experience, not only of coaching, but of operating in the world. Add to this one more factor: information that comes from our intuition. We may not call it "*intuition.*" We may consider it a thought, or a hunch, or a gut feeling. Regardless of how we define it, the impulse emerges from our intuition. For most coaches, intuition is a skill that needs practice and development. It is enormously valuable because, time and again, it synthesizes more impressions and information than we could ever analyse consciously.

Curiosity

One of the fundamental tenets of co-active coaching is that clients are capable and resourceful and have the answers. The coach's job is to ask the questions, to lead the discovery process. The context of curiosity gives a certain frame to the process of uncovering answers and drawing out insight. Curiosity is open, inviting, spacious, almost playful. And yet it is also enormously powerful. Like scientific curiosity, which explores the deepest questions of matter, life, and the universe, curiosity in coaching allows coach and client to enter the deepest areas of the client's life, side by side, simply looking, curious about what they will find.

Because the coach is not an inquisitor but is really on the client's side in this exploration, the coach can ask powerful questions that break through old defences. When clients learn to be curious about their lives, it reduces some of the pressure and lowers the risk. They become more willing to look in the dark places and try the hard things because they are curious, too.

Forward and Deepen

The products of the work the client and coach do together are action and learning. These two forces of action and learning will combine to create a change. Because the notion of action that moves the client forward is so central to the purpose of coaching, we often make "*forward*" a verb and say that one of the purposes of coaching is to "*forward the action*" of the client.

The other force at work in the human change process is learning. Learning is not simply a by-product of action; it is an equal and

complementary force. Learning generates new resourcefulness, expanded possibilities, and stronger muscles for change.

One of the common misunderstandings about coaching is that it is simply about getting things done - performing at a higher level. Because of this misunderstanding, coaching has been compared to hiring a nagging parent who will make sure your bed is made and your homework is done. In some organizations, it's the image of a schoolteacher with a ruler, poised to measure your failure and provide the punishment. But coaching is not just about getting things done; it is just as importantly about continuing to learn, especially to learn how the action is or is not contributing to the core principles. This connection between action and learning and the core principles is important.

Self-Management

In order to truly hold the client's agenda, the coach must get out of the way - not always an easy thing to do. Self-management is the coach's ability to set aside personal opinions, preferences, pride, defensiveness, ego. The coach needs to be "over there" with the client, immersed in the client's situation and struggle, not "*over here*," dealing with his or her judgments and thoughts. Self-management means giving up on the need to look good and be right. In this way, the coach also models an ability to manage the judgment and opinions of self and others.

The coach is a kind of change agent, entering the equation for change without knowing what the outcome will be. Goals and plans, new practices, new benchmarks, achievements of every kind are all part of the client's ongoing work, facilitated by the coaching interaction. The coach is a catalyst, an important element in the process of accelerating change.

4

Language of Coaching

Asking the right questions, phrasing your comments in just the right way ... this is a prime coaching skill. When done well, it looks effortlessly easy. When not done well, it clouds the potential of both coach and client. If you can learn how to do it well, you will have cracked one of the most challenging barriers to effectiveness as a coach.

As with so many other domains in coaching, this skill falls into the category of simple but not easy. This is because it is not just a matter of learning some coaching-by-numbers techniques. The techniques are important, but when they work they are underpinned by deeply held values and reinforced by hours of confidence-building practice. This is the area where as a beginner coach you are most likely to struggle.

Successful coaching involves an intense awareness of the language you use and this does not come naturally to everyone. When coaching well, your language will have a purity and probably also a brevity that your everyday conversation does not normally have or need. Each word will count. There are some paradoxes here. Beginner coaches virtually always try too hard and in trying too hard they make coaching far more difficult than it needs to be. Less is more in coaching, but to get to that point you have to understand which words and interventions count and which simply get in the way.

One of the secrets of good coaching is to know how to ask questions that do the opposite: liberate the client by broadening the search for answers, take the client into new pathways and challenge the client's thinking.

As a coach, you are in a remarkably free situation. You have the luxury of remaining detached from whatever outcome the client achieves. It really doesn't matter. You want the client to get an outcome which will

make a positive difference in their life, whether it is greater clarity or a workable solution, but you are not attached to any one path.

The coach asks open questions aimed at raising the player's consciousness of their physical and mental states with the aim of the player taking the responsibility and doing the feedback on him- or herself:

- What worked then?
- What didn't work?
- What was in your mind at the start?
- What do you need to do now?
- Where was the ball when you connected with it?

The most effective questions in coaching have a number of characteristics in common.

1. They raise the client's self-awareness by provoking thinking and challenge.
2. They demand truthful answers by cutting through obfuscation and waffle.
3. They are short.
4. They go beyond asking for information by asking for discovery.
5. They encourage the client to take responsibility for themselves.
6. They stick closely to the client's agenda.
7. They lead to learning for the client.
8. They are more than likely to begin with the words 'what' or 'how'

As a coach, it is not a good use of the coaching session to let the client rove about in all the detail of a story. Getting to the crux is about pinning

down what the real issue is - for you and the client. An example might be a client who has spent a long time describing her anger at what she feels was manipulative behaviour on the part of a team member. The team member has ended up making her feel stupid in front of others. This is not the first time this team member has done this. The conversation between you and the client has begun to take on a circular flavour. As the coach you intervene to say: ‘So *Wairimu*, the crux of it is that you’re angry and fed up with this behaviour and want to do something about it?’ Naming the real issue allows clients to address the nub and decide what to do about it. Here are a sample of the questions:

1. What’s the issue?

This asks the client to state the problem. It can often usefully cut through a client’s lengthy account by asking them to summarize what the problem actually is.

2. What makes it an issue now?

Issues that clients bring to coaching have typically been around in the client’s life for a long time. But often there is some immediate provocation or development, even if this is in the form of anger or worry. This emotion will provide energy for change and resolution. That is why it is worth naming and surfacing it.

3. Who owns this issue/problem?

If the client does not own it, there is no point in discussing it. You can only coach the problem owner. Some clients come to coaching in order to find out how to change someone else whereas the basic assumption of coaching is that you can only

change yourself. This question puts the onus back onto clients to own whichever bit of the issue is theirs.

4. How important is it on a 1–10 scale?

If the problem is not important then why are you and the client wasting time discussing it? Importance captures the idea of issues with potential for major impact on a client's life. Anything the client scores at less than 5 should be set aside.

5. How much energy do you have for a solution on a 1–10 scale?

This question often draws an interesting response. The client may have told you the problem has an importance of 9, but then tells you that their energy for a solution is only 3 or 4. If so, you will want to ask a follow-up question such as 'What would need to happen to increase the energy to 8 or 9?'

6. Implications: what are the implications of doing nothing (or of letting things carry on as they are)?

This question builds the pain created by contemplating staying stuck. When we are in the client role many of us like to imagine that the default scenario can continue for ever, whereas inside we know perfectly well that it cannot and that we are ignoring the discomfort the problem is creating. Naming out loud the likely consequences of inactivity paradoxically builds energy for change. You might want to follow this question with a further probe: . . . and what would be the implications if that happened?

7. What have you already tried?

This question stops you offering pointless advice which the client has already tried or considered and it also lets you in early on the client's thinking. Most coaching problems have already been the focus of a great deal of energy and thought on the client's part. You need to know what this energy and thought has produced. If the client has not tried anything yet, that will also provoke an interesting discussion.

8. Imagine this problem's been solved. What would you see, hear and feel?

Up until now, the client has been deep in the problem. You will typically see this reflected in the way the client has been sitting and talking – often slumped or despairing. By asking this question you tap into their resourcefulness. Clients will sit up straighter, stop frowning and will look generally lighter. Note that the answer to this question reveals the real goal. Asking the question at this stage prevents you coaching on the symptoms rather than on the underlying causes.

9. What's standing in the way of that ideal outcome?

This question broadens out the client's thinking. Expect new insights to occur from this point on.

10. What's your own responsibility for what's been happening?

An essential question. The client is always part of the problem as well as part of the solution. This question makes that assumption explicit and encourages clients to see how they have, maybe at an unconscious level, been sustaining the problem through their own behaviour.

11. What early signs are there that things might be getting better/going all right?

However dreadful the situation, there is always something that is working. Identifying and building on it is part of the process of change and improvement.

12. Imagine you're at your most resourceful. What do you say to yourself about this issue?

This question assumes that underneath all our typical confusion, at some level we do know what we should do. Another version of this question: 'If I could give you a pill which contained all the courage and insight you needed, what would you do?' I have yet to find a client who could not find an instant reply to this one.

13. What are the options for action here?

Now that the question has been looked at from several angles, the client can begin to consider the options for change.

14. What criteria will you use to judge the options?

Options are even more useful when you have criteria against which to judge them. Typical criteria might be: practicality, cost, fit with the client's values, time – and so on.

15. Which option seems the best one against those criteria?

At this point you are narrowing down again towards action – including, of course, just pondering.

16. So what's the next/first step?

The answer may be to do some more research, to have a conversation, or to make a big life decision.

17. When will you take it?

Asking for a commitment to when makes it more likely that the client will actually do something different as a result of the coaching.

The most powerful coaching questions are often extremely short because they cut to the heart of the issue. The ideal question is between seven and twelve words long. I believe the most powerful question of all is this one: 'What do you want?' Although another strong candidate is: 'What needs to happen to . . . ?' Sometimes the most effective question is a single word: 'So . . . ?'; 'And . . . ?'; 'Because . . . ?' Or even a questioning silence.

You could even say that any coaching conversation reduces itself essentially to three ultra-short questions: ‘What?’ (*identifying the issue*); ‘So what?’ (*implications*); ‘What next?’ (*action*).

The process of coaching begins with an assessment of where the client is now. Our prime task as coaches is to facilitate learning for the client and that is impossible unless you and the client have a shared understanding of where the client currently stands.

Whatever the issues a client brings to the coach, there will be a sequence of necessary stages through which coach and client must pass:

1. Where, who and what am I now – in my life, my work, my relationships, my skills?
2. Where, who and what would I like to be ideally?
3. Given those answers, what goals do I need to set for myself?
4. How can I achieve and sustain those goals?

The process is iterative and dynamic. When one set of goals is achieved there will be new challenges and tasks ahead.

In coaching we are working with two different kinds of goals, often simultaneously. Transactional or performance goals are specific tasks that a client wants to achieve. These are often externally imposed and have an emphasis on short-term performance. Sometimes they have the flavour of dodging failure or of avoiding looking incompetent. Examples would be:

- Enrol for the gym and go twice a week.
- Run my departmental meeting to time.
- Get through a job interview.
- Recruit a new marketing manager.

- Deliver an effective presentation to the Board next week.
- Carry out appraisals with all of my staff by the end of May.

However, transformational - or learning - goals have much more power. These are the goals that are about intrinsic satisfaction. They are internally focused and are about increasing capacity to deal with similar situations and dilemmas whenever they arise, rather than with achieving a short-term task. The irony about the transactional goals is that they can actually interfere with performance: anxiety distorts the view. Energy becomes concentrated on the goal without seeing the wider picture.

Remember that coaching is about learning and the learning ideally is about long-term sustainable improvement. So, as a coach, I consciously work with clients to turn their perfectly reasonable transactional goals into transformational goals that are about learning.

The real changes happen outside the coaching room through practice and the more practice there is, the more likely it is that the learning will stick. I will sometimes point out to clients that a pianist, dancer, actor, athlete or singer will spend far more time practising, training or rehearsing than they will spend performing, but the exact opposite is true of most managers.

The more specific a goal is, the more likely it is that it will be achieved. When you get towards the end of a piece of coaching around a particular goal there will probably be some action plan agreed. The client will want to try and then to practise something different and will report back on it at the next session. It is useful to apply the **SMART** acronym. Most executive coaching clients will have met this before from their brushes with training on performance management:

<i>Specific</i>	Is it clear?
<i>Measurable</i>	How will you know you're making progress? If things are going to be 'better', how much better? If you're going to do something faster, how much faster is faster?
<i>Achievable</i>	Is it realistic? Can you genuinely fit it in with everything else you've got to do? What might you have to give up in order to achieve this goal?
<i>Resourced</i>	What will it cost in time or money? Who else will be helping you?
<i>Timed</i>	What's the timescale? By when do you intend to have achieved it?

To these well-known checks of robustness, you might like to add a few more:

Values: where does this sit with your core values? A goal that sits uneasily with core values will rarely be achieved because of the discomfort that it will cause. A goal that lies fair and square with what a client really cares about at a fundamental level is highly likely to be achieved.

'Secondary losses' or *disbenefits*: what might the unexpected negatives be?

Ultimately, we are held back from change by fear. The fear is about loss of control and of being unable to cope with the unknown. Fear is the real opponent in coaching. Fear ruthlessly targets the most fragile spot,

starting as faint doubt and, in the right conditions, growing quickly to terrifying proportions. Logic will not help because fear crowds it out, reducing it to a parody of rationality, becoming in quick order anxiety and panic.

In coaching what we are doing, with the client's full assent, is peeling back the surface of apparent logic to expose the vulnerable core protected, as it so often is, by irrational defences. Naming the fear, looking its underpinning assumptions in the eye, challenging and supporting, offering alternatives, building new skills, working in small steps, being alert to the psychology of human change, showing that you believe the client's life could be what they want it to be: this is what will make the difference. To be successful as a coach you need to be curious, honest and unafraid. These qualities are never more necessary than when working with clients on change.

Making a realistic appraisal of gaps between present and desired future, thereby setting goals leaves client and coach with the task of working on reaching those goals. A typical session will have a simple framework:

5 minutes	What has happened between the time we last met and now?
10–15 minutes	How did you get on with the action points we agreed last time? What have you tried? What have you learnt?
5 minutes	What items do you have for our agenda this time?

- What priority do those items have in terms of their potential for impact on your life?
- How much time would you like to devote to each during this session?
- How does each of these items link to the overall goals we set for the coaching?

90 minutes

Coaching on the agenda items

5 minutes

What '*homework*' will you be doing between this session and our next?

5 minutes

What feedback do you have for me on this session?

5

Coaching Skills

The following coaching skills are generally associated with the context of listening. Of course, effective listening is a prerequisite for the use of all the coaching skills. For this section, I have selected the skills that seem particularly appropriate responses to a listening situation.

Articulating

This skill is also known by a longer name: “Articulating what’s going on.” With your listening skills fully engaged, you have a heightened sense of awareness. You have a picture of what is going on with the client at this moment. When you combine that sense of what is happening right now with what you know about this client, you have a tremendous amount of information. Articulation is the ability to succinctly describe what is going on. Clients often can’t see for themselves what they are doing or saying. Or perhaps they can see the details but not the bigger picture. With this skill, you share your observations as clearly as possible, but without judgment. You tell clients what you see them doing. Sometimes, articulation takes the form of the hard truth, and it can confront: *“I see you’re continuing to schedule evening and weekend time away from your family. You’ve said in the past that your family is a high priority, and this overtime work seems inconsistent with that commitment. What’s up?”* Not sidestepping the mess in the road is part of the coaching alliance. And articulating- as in pointing out the mess - is part of the coach’s job. Cleaning up the mess is the client’s job.

Articulating is a skill that helps clients connect the dots so they can see the picture they are creating by their action or, sometimes, lack of action. As the coach, you have a responsibility to articulate what you see but at the same time, as with all of the coaching skills, not feel attached to being right about it. This ability to boldly say what you see without needing to be right, allowing plenty of room for counteroffers and different interpretations, is important to the participative nature of the skill. As long as coaches can let go of the pressure or the need to be right, there is

tremendous freedom to speak what appears to be true - and it is a great gift to clients to hear this expressed.

Clarifying

Many of us have a tendency to operate from vague or incomplete thoughts and unresolved feelings. We may leap to conclusions or draw conclusions based on sketchy information. Clients may ramble or get caught up in their own stories. They may be drifting in a fog, trying to paddle their way out. They get stuck in fuzzy thinking and outdated ways of looking at their world. They may be reading old maps. Coaches serve as a resource to help clients create greater clarity.

The skill of clarifying is a combination of listening, asking, and reframing. Sometimes it's simply testing different perspectives: "*Here's what I'm hearing . . .*" "Is that right?" "*It sounds like you're looking for . . .*" Clarifying brings the image into sharp focus, adds detail, holds it up for inspection, so the client can say, "*Yes! That's it!*" It's a way to move past the fog and get back on course.

Meta-View

Get in the imaginary helicopter with the client, take it up to about 5,000 feet, and look down on the client's life. This is the coaching skill of meta-view. It is especially useful when the client is in a rut and can only see six inches of dirt on each side. Meta-view presents the big picture and opens up room for perspective. The coach might ask: "*What do you see from up here? What's the truth you can see from this vantage point that you couldn't see down there?*" The meta-view reconnects clients to their vision of themselves and a fulfilling life. When they're struggling at the foot of the mountain, looking up at the daunting work to be done, *metaview* allows them to float above it and get a fresh perspective.

Another way to look at the *metaview* is to see it as an elevated platform - a high place where coaches can stand to survey the client's life with all its circumstances and issues. The coach can see more than the client can

from this vantage point. In fact, that is the coach's job: to maintain clarity of perspective and hold the big picture. This platform allows the coach to speak from outside the details of the immediate conversation. If the client is struggling with a co-worker, for example, the coach might say: *"This story reminds me of the conversation you had with your ex-boss and the situation with your sister. Is there a pattern here?"* Another example might be the client who appears to be making a great effort but never gets anywhere. In this case, the coach might say: *"There seems to be a lot of struggle. What are you getting out of your suffering?"* In this last example, the *meta-view* is from a higher level that captures the underlying theme. Meta-view presents a panoramic view of the journey.

Meta-view is a useful way to provide context, especially when the situation makes it easy to be drawn into the details of a problem. For example, a client comes to the coaching session worried about the reaction she expects over the upcoming firing of a staff member. The coach asks her to look at the situation from the *metaview* - from the point of view of building a work culture - rather than focusing on hurt feelings or upsets. What are the costs to the organization of not firing that person? How will the firing affect communication and trust among co-workers in the long run?

Metaphor

The skill of metaphor enables you to draw on imagery and experience to help the client comprehend faster and more easily. The question *"Are you drifting in a fog?"* creates a picture, an experience that engages the client at a very different level than *"Are you confused?"* which addresses the client's intellect. Clients can step into a picture of drifting in a fog. They know what it looks like and feels like. It's a whole experience. Metaphor provides rich imagery for exploration, and if the metaphor doesn't land in a way that bursts into insight, coaches can always try something else.

Acknowledging

The coaching skill of acknowledgment strengthens the client's foundation. The client can stand straighter after a true acknowledgment. This skill addresses who the client is. Praise and compliments, in contrast, highlight what people do: "Good job on that report, Janet." Or they highlight the opinion of the person giving the praise or the impact on the person giving the compliment: "*Your presentation was thoughtful and inspiring to me.*" Acknowledgment recognizes the inner character of the person to whom it is addressed. More than what that person did, or what it means to the sender, acknowledgment highlights who the sender sees: "*Mutua, you really showed your commitment to learning.*" "*You took a big risk.*" "*I can see your love of beauty in it.*" Acknowledgment often highlights a value that clients honoured in taking the action. The client values fun: "*You made it really fun for yourself. Congratulations. I know you had to take a risk to do that.*" Or the client values honesty: "*Great job. You took a stand for honesty and authenticity. It wasn't easy.*"

Acknowledgment is almost a context of coaching. At some level, coaches are always supporting who clients must be in order to make the changes they want. The client had to be courageous, or had to be a person willing to stand up to the fear, or had to be tenacious for the sake of a relationship.

The skill of acknowledgment helps the coach celebrate the client's internal strengths. Acknowledgment helps clients see what they sometimes dismiss in themselves out of a distorted sense of humility or simply don't see at all. By acknowledging that strength, you, as the coach, give clients more access to it. Clients will know when the acknowledgment is honest and true. They will be more resourceful in the future because they recognize the truth you illuminated. Acknowledgment might take this form: "*Look at what you were able to tell your boss. Think about how far you've come in the past four months. Your ability to be clear and ask for what you want is so much stronger today. You've really shown you can stand up to the fear and speak your own truth.*" Acknowledgment goes right to the heart of where the client is

growing and getting stronger (*and, often, feeling the need for validation*). When you acknowledge this, you empower clients to keep growing.

There are actually two parts to every acknowledgment in coaching. The first part we've already covered: delivering the acknowledgment. The second part is noticing the impact on the client. This is a way for the coach to make sure that the acknowledgment was truly on target. Notice the client's reaction. By listening you will know if you found the right description of who the client had to be in that situation. The acknowledgment will definitely land in a way you can hear, sense, and see. It is enormously moving - and rare - for clients to be seen and known in this way. That's the power of acknowledgment.

6

Distinctions for Coaching

As you can see, there is potential for confusion among these different roles, and that confusion is growing as the term “*coaching*” spreads around the world, especially in organizations. A growing number of consultants working with organizations have added coaching to their list of services without making the distinctions between coaching and consulting. Am are not saying that one is right and the other is wrong, only that the lack of distinction is likely to create more confusion for people who hire coaches and consultants.

Coaching and consulting can work together very effectively. There is an obvious role for consultants who bring specific skills, experience, and analytical processes to a situation. They are paid to understand the problem and present workable solutions. Coaching helps embed the necessary changes and supports the organization as it applies the solutions and makes the transition. Coaching is an ideal means of implementing changes and making sure they take root in organizations.

In addition to being clear about your role, it is just as important to be clear about the boundaries of coaching. If you are giving clients advice, you need to be clear that you have the authority and permission to give that advice. If you are providing professional services that require a license or certification, you need to be authorized. This is true of medical, legal, and financial advice and any other areas in which practice is restricted by law. If you have any doubt as to the propriety of offering advice, it is always best to ask the client to find a qualified source of information. Some coaches maintain a file of referral sources for situations like this.

Drawing the boundary between psychotherapy and coaching may sometimes be confusing for coaches. It is especially confusing when coaches assume that emotion is the realm of therapy and that they need to steer away whenever emotion appears in coaching. Actually, as we explained in Chapter 10, emotions are part of the human condition. They are as natural in coaching conversations as in any other human conversation, especially any meaningful human conversation. When clients talk openly about their goals and dreams, their hard-won victories

or self-sabotaging defeats, there is always the possibility that they will tap into the underlying emotion.

Unfortunately, the boundary between counselling and coaching is not defined by a set of absolute rules and terms. Counselling and coaching often overlap, especially with some contemporary therapy modalities. What does seem clear is that, in general, therapists are trained to diagnose emotional problems and work with clients to heal the emotional wounds, while coaches are not trained to diagnose and do not focus on healing emotional wounds. Regardless of that distinction, it is also true that when clients in coaching make courageous choices in their lives, they often experience a sense of healing, of breaking old patterns and old bonds, of stepping out of a confining box and into a new strength. Coaching, however, does not focus on the emotional problem. Emotion may be present in the conversation, but it is not the work of the coaching. As long as coaches focus on the three principles and the contexts and skills of coaching, they are very likely to stay within bounds.

Coaching is more than a profession. It is also a communication medium with ground rules and expectations for conversation. This form of communication is also finding its way into business meetings, leadership courses, dialogue between teachers and children and within families. Coaching emphasizes open listening, mutual respect, clarity, and willingness to engage with even difficult and emotional conversations. Imagine a world where the fundamental skills and approach of coaching were widely used - not just by coaches, but by everyone. What if the culture co-opted the principles of fulfilment, balance, and process and made them a basic expectation for everyone? What if the axioms we take for granted in coaching relationships found their way into everyday life? Imagine what that would be like.

In this world where fundamental coaching principles abound, people would be committed to fulfilling lives and work. They would be less likely to tolerate second-rate lives and more likely to decide they wouldn't settle for anything less than a full way of living that used their talents and skills completely. Children would learn that fulfilment is not

something that will happen for some people someday when they are rich or famous, but is available in this moment, and every moment that follows, for those who are on a path of fulfilment.

Imagine a world where the axioms of coaching operated everywhere: in interpersonal relationships, work dynamics, international relations. Imagine the difference it would make if people designed the alliance before embarking on a business project or a relationship. What would it be like if people routinely told the truth to one another – even the hard truth - and insisted on nothing less than that without feeling the need to erect defences? Imagine how our political system would change. Imagine a world where people were willing to truly listen, not only to the words, but to everything behind the words. What if we held out the biggest picture possible of what we and our children could be instead of pointing out everybody's limitations? What if we expected greatness instead of expecting failure or inadequacy but treated failure, when it happened, not as a disgrace but as a form of fast learning? What if we acknowledged people's strengths instead of picking at their flaws?

This would be a world of curiosity and wonder and listening in extraordinary new ways. It would be a world in which we gave our intuition permission to be expressed. We would hold one another to account for who we were and what we said we would do. In this world, we would be as committed to the truth about ourselves as we were to the truth we told others.

In this world, learning and growth would be valued over comfort and appearance. Imagine a world of compelling visions set loose to create and prosper, totally supported, totally encouraged, and totally celebrated. Imagine.



Developing As A Coach

As a budding or even as an established coach, there may be periods in your coaching career where you do little or no coaching. Perhaps your business has been taking you in a different direction and you're spending your time on other activities; maybe you are beginning to build a client base; or the opportunities to coach have been sporadic. You too may need to sharpen your saw; and to refresh your best authentic coaching self, here are activities you can pursue.

Reflecting

1. Browse through previous coaching session reflection notes and pick out one or two that were particularly significant to you. Note down in your learning journal how you have incorporated those experiences and learning subsequently.
2. Read through your learning journal from an earlier period, for example a year ago or where you remember a significant learning experience. Write down how you might tackle this type of coaching situation differently today. If you would tackle it in the same way, also note down the reasons why you would do so. This can really help you build your confidence in how far you have come and your ability to keep learning.

Doing

1. By agreement with a colleague (preferably another coach), take a conversation you were going to have anyway and explicitly use it as a mini-practice session. Ask for the other person's feedback afterwards and make reflection notes as you would for a normal coaching session.
2. Find an opportunity to observe fellow coaches or coaches in-training, perhaps as a facilitator on a course. If possible, arrange to provide them with feedback on their coaching practice, which will sharpen your observation and feedback skills.
3. Speak to your supervisor, or if you don't have one, given that you are feeling rusty, find a colleague or fellow coach who knows

your style or has seen you coach and ask for feedback on what they really appreciate about your coaching style and/or approach.

Reading

1. Pick a coaching book you have enjoyed and/or one that has been recommended, which gives plenty of examples of excerpts of coaching interventions. These practical tips and examples will help refresh your knowledge and raise your awareness of tools and techniques you may have forgotten. Make a note of the key ones.
2. Go through this book and pick out two or three strategies you would like to try out. Find a willing volunteer, or try them out on yourself.

Process

1. Either during the ‘down’ time between coaching assignments or directly in advance of your next coaching session, select at least one activity from each section in this book, list them and plan when you will do them.
2. Record your results in your learning journal or diary. Committing your activities to paper is a key part of the process.

COORDINATED MANAGEMENT OF MEANING

This strategy enables a person’s resilient and independent choice making about what to do next when their feeling response is strong enough to cloud their judgement. Bringing to conscious awareness the pattern of feeling, thought and action creates the potential to reshape that pattern. It can be used at any moment in the coaching when the coach notices a repetition of expression of strong feeling emanating from the *coachee* and the coach hypothesizes that some exploration would assist both to be released from the grip of this emotion. Once released it will show in the *coachee* coming across to others in more appropriate ways. Looking

through a magnifying glass in this way at a replay of an emotionally significant interaction which the *coachee* has been in can help to create a transformational shift into a new and more useful pattern of feeling, thought and action. This brings an immediate fine tuning of the impact s/he has on others and a commitment to try and mentally step back and reflect, before reacting, when an overwhelming feeling response happens in future.

Description

Many people can respond to strong emotion by reacting in an extreme way. When this happens, careful thought is overwhelmed by the internal feeling experience and by injunctions we have created, in the form of scripts and stories. These scripts and stories are belief systems that guide our actions and in coordinated management of meaning (CMM) theory these are referred to as contexts.

In any human interaction we create practised patterns of feeling, thought and action that become habitual; mostly we are not fully conscious of them. CMM – a theory of communication – helps us understand that these patterns are coordinated around the meanings we give to them and these meanings are embedded within our belief systems. So in order to change these patterns, which, having become habitual, are rather ingrained, it is our belief systems that require shifting. This can happen when we bring to consciousness the patterns and the beliefs that shape them. We become able to exercise choice, rather than simply react, about how the pattern is connected together. For example, once a belief system has shifted, with the same emotion a different thought may be generated, or with the same emotion and thought a different action may be generated.

Within coordinated management of meaning, the contexts containing belief systems are named as follows:

- socio-economic stories
- family scripts

- personal identity stories
- organizational culture stories
- professional scripts
- managerial scripts
- relational stories.

Process

Become attuned to the feelings expressed by the *coachee* in their talk, in the way they come across and in the feelings and images you have yourself that could be an expression of their emotion. Invite the *coachee* to explore the emotional content that is coming in to the coaching space by naming it and explaining, tentatively, how you see it may be impacting other things the *coachee* wants to achieve. Once your invitation to explore is accepted, begin to facilitate a collaborative exploration of an episode of the *coachee* in interaction in the following way:

1. ***Utterance*** – identify a word or phrase with accompanying emotional content that has made you curious, usually by the force or tone with which this is expressed, or by repetition.
2. ***Critical incident*** – let unfold a detailed description of the episode of interaction, and ask:
 - Who said what?
 - Who responded and how?
 - What happened next?
3. ***Feeling and bodily response*** – name the emotion expressed by the *coachee* and ask:
 - What would you call this feeling?
 - What did you notice in yourself at a non-verbal level? How did your body react?
 - What did you notice about the other person's/people's body language?

4. **Thought** (i.e. meaning) – discover together the meaning that the *coachee* attributes to his/her feeling and bodily response by asking:
 - How did you interpret what you felt?
 - Is there another time where you remember the same feeling and what did it mean then?
 - Are there other possible interpretations for what it means now?

5. **Choice of action** – explore what happened next by asking:
 - What did you do?
 - How did your feeling and your interpretation affect the way you acted?

As you go through this process, you will hear the *coachee* express the stories and scripts that guided his/her action. This will help you develop a hypothesis about the beliefs within the contexts that are guiding the pattern of feeling, thought and action. Share this developing hypothesis with the *coachee*, offering it in a tentative way to encourage a dialogue so that the *coachee* begins to voice ideas about how the pattern could be different, in a process of self-discovery.



This book is made available for free download due to the generous donations of many who appreciate reading from Boaz Adhengo. You too can make a donation using the M-PESA method.



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