



BECOMING A COACH: 5 ESSENTIAL LEARNING EDGES



INTRODUCTION

"THE BEST WAY TO FIND YOURSELF IS TO LOSE YOURSELF IN THE
SERVICE OF OTHERS."

MAHATMA GANDHI

If you are reading this guide because you are interested in training as a coach, I would argue that you enjoy supporting others and helping them grow.

In your past, as a manager or leader, you may have found yourself enjoying nurturing your team members or colleagues and solving their problems; and this has now sparked an interest in coaching and the potential of a new career. These past experiences and helping behaviours are likely to have become hard-wired in your brain. Yet this natural desire to 'help' can be a dual edged sword when you are training as a coach.

Helping anyone is a purposeful and rewarding endeavour and can provide another with useful guidance and information which supports their thinking.

"IF YOU WANT HAPPINESS FOR AN HOUR, TAKE A NAP. IF YOU WANT
HAPPINESS FOR A DAY, GO FISHING. IF YOU WANT HAPPINESS FOR A
YEAR, INHERIT A FORTUNE. IF YOU WANT HAPPINESS FOR A LIFETIME,
HELP SOMEBODY."

CHINESE PROVERB

However, when we start to practise the art of coaching, we soon learn that even when offered with good intent, helping can also make another person 'helpless' and can potentially reinforce self-doubt, limiting beliefs or a level of dependency on the coach.

As per the famous quote from Maimonides, "give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."

Moving into a more formal role as a coach, there are a number of development tensions we may experience during our training. These tensions are 'learning edges', places of being uncomfortable and uncertain.

And yet, if with guidance and support we are able to push through these – often as a result of a comprehensive training programme, supervision and hours of practice – we will move into a place where we are more confident and have a deeper presence and way of being with our coaching clients.

This guide has been written as a result of our experiences as coaches, coach trainers and supervisors. It aims to shine a light on some of these potential challenges in order to help you normalise your development experience and help you integrate supportive beliefs, paradigms and a coaching mindset to gain confidence and underpin your practice as you develop further.

Most coach training guides focus on what we *do* as a coach, whereas the intention of this guide is to help you reflect upon how you *are being*. We have also included quotes from practising coaches (many who have trained with us) as a way of bringing these edges to life. Below you will find the first

five learning edges, and over the coming months we will build on these by sending you additional coach training resources.

Each learning edge (we might call these principles for practice) is not independent – as you read through this guide, you will notice the interdependency of each one and how by developing one you will also be creating growth in another.

We hope these guide you on your development journey and that you realise the impact these will have if they are fully lived by you, the coach, within the coaching relationship.

LEARNING EDGE 1: 'THE COACH OWNS THE PROCESS NOT THE CONTENT, SOLUTION AND OUTCOMES.'



"TRUST THE PROCESS. WE ALWAYS END UP RIGHT WHERE WE ARE MEANT TO BE RIGHT WHEN WE ARE MEANT TO BE THERE."

ANONYMOUS

Experiencing the need to solve someone else's problem can be a natural 'default' position for a coach, because it is often what we believe (and sometimes experience) is expected or required of us in our role as a coach. A coachee will often come to the coaching relationship with an expectation of being helped or even 'fixed' by the coach. This expectation may not just come from the coachee; often it may come from a line manager or organisational sponsor (who may, for example, be asking you to help with the development of a 'difficult leader').

Also, there is often a dynamic of 'learned helplessness' present in organisational life where people are told so often what to do that they stop taking responsibility for their own decisions; so it is not unusual for coachees to expect to be *told* what to do in a coaching session.

It is easy therefore to 'interpret' a coachee talking about an 'issue' or a current 'challenge' as a request of you to 'fix it'. We might even experience this as a coach energetically as we are drawn into focusing more and more on the coachee's context and problem, and we may feel impacted by the sense of stuckness.

"Like many coaches that I know, I came to coaching with a background of leadership and management and had a strong 'carer/rescuer' strand to my character. Providing solutions was my job and part of my DNA. It was expected of me and, if honest, it also felt good. No wonder then the alluring temptation to 'own' the content and the outcome during a coaching session. The reality is not only did that undermine the potential of the coachee, but it actually also interfered with my coaching.

The more focus I had on the content, the more I was distracted from the information that could enhance my coaching. Information such as the subtleties of body language, facial expressions and key words spoken, all of which I could use to really empower the coachee. And there's the word – empowerment. Empowering coachees not only in the coaching session to access their own resources to find solutions that they owned, but beyond the coaching session, being able to continue to apply

what they had learnt about their goal and indeed themselves. When I learnt to leave my solution finder ego at the door, I truly served my coachees well."

Chrissie Elam, Senior Leader, Local Government

While the coachee may be coming to coaching to help them resolve an 'issue,' coaches soon start to learn that solving it for them by providing 'our answers' to 'their questions' seldom creates change, awareness, builds confidence or creates ownership and responsibility for action outside of the session.

A colleague of mine who works in elite sport says that if the coach continues to do this "the coachee will only ever be as good as the coach!" Meaning they will never be more than the coach's experience and knowledge, and will not access their own potential to become more than the coach.

Through practising more non-directive approaches, we learn that the coachee's answers will always be more powerful than those provided by us because of what it requires of the coachee to get to that answer *by themselves* – a shift in perception, engagement and awareness.

The coachee's own answers are far more likely to be owned with a greater sense of responsibility for making them happen.

If you now think of being told to do something versus identifying a potential solution yourself, which are you more likely to action? Which one is more likely to work for you?

Providing solutions, however, can be seductive – as this creates a means of personal validation and way of feeling good about ourselves within the coaching process. The solutions or ideas we may be tempted to offer can also feel more *tangible*, real and measurable than the often *intangible* and immeasurable shifts in perception and objectivity, engagement and responsibility that the coaching process is working to generate.

Providing solutions or asking questions from our own view of ‘what is right’ or ‘what will work’ can be equally limiting, because the coachee’s situation and ‘map of the world’ is very different from our own. What has worked for us may not work for the coachee.

“With a natural bent toward being a rescuer, exacerbated by deep corporate experience of being expected to be solution-oriented, I needed to re-program those innate and learned behaviours to become a more effective coach. Shifting out of that modus operandi and into a place of coaching the person and not their problem, I began to palpably experience the responsibility weight of outcome or solution shift from me to them.

The focus of the coaching sessions became about the coachee discovering the solutions themselves, with them often experiencing several epiphanies in one session through my growing repertoire of open and incisive questioning.

This has freed me up as a coach to be more embodied in the space with real clarity brought to the observation of coachee tone and body language, with focused active listening now more finely attuned. It has allowed me to really get

comfortable about letting go of the outcome and focus my energy and thoughts on excellent best practice around the process instead.”

Martin Turner, Executive Coach

Learning a robust and effective framework and developing core listening and questioning skills to hold the coaching conversation is one antidote to support our development whilst we are experiencing this tension of wanting to add value and help the coachee's thinking.

Learning that we bring more value by facilitating their thinking about their topic through the coaching conversation – rather than doing the thinking for them – is a key insight we start to experience through practice. It is important to understand that as coaches we own the *process* (and can be as directive as we want to be around this) and the coachee owns the content, solution and outcomes.

This mindset allows space and permission for the coachee to own the topic and find the best solution that will work in their context and commit to action. Our professional helping can therefore move to become more transforming – helping the coachee create the required internal change and move into a different relationship with the situation they are exploring.

Finally, by owning the process, in moments of uncertainty in the coaching session we have an anchor point and focus to come back to in order to create a shift and movement in the coachee's thinking. Through practice we learn to trust this, see the value we bring and let go of the need to have the answer.

LEARNING EDGE 2: 'THE COACHEE HAS INNATE POTENTIAL.'



"THE 'ACORN THEORY' HOLDS THAT EACH PERSON BEARS A UNIQUENESS THAT ASKS TO BE LIVED AND THAT IS ALREADY PRESENT BEFORE IT CAN BE LIVED."

JAMES HILLMAN, THE SOULS CODE

The next learning edge is our ability to believe in the innate potential of the coachee rather than seeing them as someone who we need to fix. The person in front of you, your coachee, is hugely resourceful and has immense potential even if they are not able to currently express this or even see it themselves.

Do you believe in the potential of your coachee? What would happen if you did – both for you and your coaching client? As the Hawthorne, Pygmalion and Placebo effects show, the impact of predetermined expectations can be very powerful.

Let's consider the impact this way of seeing our coachee – as being resourceful and full of potential – may have on the coaching relationship and outcomes.

Often the coachee is in a difficult space, and may be experiencing a state of unresourcefulness.

By holding the belief about the innate potential of the person sitting in front of you, it enables you, as a coach, to move into a facilitating role rather than a fixing role.

"I have noticed that where clients appear to be particularly unresourceful – e.g. they don't know what they want, don't believe they can change their situation or share deep-seated limiting beliefs about themselves – I have doubted my ability to support their development.

This has led to me wondering if other interventions are more appropriate; and me seeing them as someone who needs to be 'fixed'.

When I remember their innate potential, I not only trust their ability to change but also that my presence and belief in them will support them in this. Supervision helped me to reflect on this and see where my belief in their potential had slipped."

Debbie Fisher, Executive Coach

An experienced executive coach once observed to me that during supervision, when they notice they are getting hooked into 'rescuing' the coachee, they sit back in their chair, take a breath and say to themselves (in their own mind) "you have all the resources you need."

This small inner movement enables them to shift their thinking away from the coachee's problem and towards the coachee's thinking and the way they are relating to their problem.

"IF YOU TREAT AN INDIVIDUAL AS HE IS, HE WILL STAY AS HE IS, BUT IF YOU TREAT HIM AS IF HE WERE WHAT HE OUGHT TO BE AND WHAT HE COULD BE, HE WILL BECOME WHAT HE OUGHT TO BE AND COULD BE."

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

Please pause here and reflect upon your personal experience of being with someone that believed in your potential even when you were not seeing this yourself. What was the impact? Next time you are in a coaching conversation, see if you can try looking at your coachee through this lens – what happens?

"Allowing myself to really believe in the coachee's innate potential created a significant shift in my coaching.

When I realised that it was easier for me to see the coachee as someone with a problem and occasionally as the problem itself, I also realised

that I was restricting my coachee's ability to generate solutions that were meaningful and impactful for them.

At first, I didn't find this easy and it took discipline and a little courage for me to let go of being the expert and the bringer of solutions. As a lawyer, I delivered value by finding gaps, identifying weaknesses and advising people how best to arrive at the solution they wanted.

As a coach my value proposition is different and the magic happens when I truly believe that the coachee has innate potential. Sometimes I have to remind myself and when I do something shifts even when I don't articulate that belief."

Claire Lea, Executive Leadership Coach

When we see our coachee as having innate potential, it creates an inner movement for us to trust and let go into the magic of the coaching relationship.

Coaches training with us describe this movement in the relational space from 'you and me' to 'we and us'; something that creates a deep way of mutual relating.

We have seen from extensive research projects into coaching that the critical ingredient to make an effective intervention is the coach's ability to create a human-to-human relationship and we would argue that this 'lens' supports this.

"LEARN YOUR THEORIES AS WELL AS YOU CAN, BUT PUT THEM ASIDE
WHEN YOU TOUCH THE MIRACLE OF THE LIVING SOUL."

CARL JUNG

For the coachee, they too will experience a deeper relationship with their coach when this lens is applied. They will know that their answers are valued and that there is a deep trust that they can search inside to find the right outcomes.

In time, they will let go more fully into their development process, experience of being coached and will be comfortable stepping outside of their comfort zone into a space of vulnerability.

Their coach will experience the conversation moving from a transactional one into a more transformational process with deepened openness, disclosure and honesty.

LEARNING EDGE 3: 'UNLEARNING AND RELEARNING BEING DIRECTIVE.'



"THE MEASURE OF INTELLIGENCE IS THE ABILITY TO CHANGE."

ALBERT EINSTEIN

To develop more insight in the coachee, we need to learn to let go of the content and outcome (as per learning edge #1); this move is to a more non-directive and inquiry-based coaching style.

We often use the analogy of a light switch when training coaches about the use of directive and non-directive styles of coaching. If the coachee is lost in the dark and feeling around for a solution, is your intervention switching the light (their thinking) on or off? Most people come to coach training with a great deal of experience in helping others and giving guidance and advice

– and this is hardwired in their brain. So, the first real shift is learning to be comfortable with utilising a more non-directive style. When this is used well, we experience the coachee's thinking 'lighting up' and becoming more active.

Often if we are owning the content too tightly, we will see the coachee become more passive in terms of the levels of awareness they are experiencing regarding their topic – and therefore the responsibility that is being generated for the solution.

Unless you have experienced coaching, and received another's full attention when reflecting and thinking, it is likely you will not understand the power of this space. We often hear trainee coaches saying "*all I did was listen,*" and yet to truly listen is a gift. By listening, we are not only giving the person our full attention, which creates rapport and a sense of connection, we are also *demonstrating* our listening – playing back what we are hearing, which in turn helps the coachee's thinking. It continues to raise their awareness and generate responsibility for action. Finally, it continues to demonstrate our belief in the coachee's potential to solve their problem, as our questions will follow their interest and deepen their insight. As Nancy Kline says, "the quality of your attention determines the quality of my thinking."

"I can totally relate to this learning edge in my own coaching journey. As a senior litigation lawyer I was used to being the 'expert' giving advice and direction. For me, therefore, adopting a non-directive style in my early coaching practice was challenging and a little uncomfortable. However, I soon appreciated how this approach expanded my

coachee's awareness and allowed them to find their own solutions. Having changed my own way of thinking, my approach has continued to evolve so that, although I prefer to be non-directive in my coaching, I feel comfortable offering a resource or sharing a personal experience, when it is in service of my coachee's thinking."

Toni Smerdon, Executive Coach, Toni Smerdon Associates

After a lengthy period of time practising, coaches often report that they are noticing that they are frequently holding back personal resources and experiences in a coaching session that may support the coachee's thinking. They begin to question the fact that they are not bringing themselves and their experience fully to bear upon the coaching session.

We always train coaches that there are in fact two sets of experience, knowledge, competence, skills and wisdom in the coaching relationship: our own and the coachee's. The key learning edge we need to cross here is how to intentionally access both in a way that best serves our coachee's thinking and insight.

"Coming from a consulting background I found it hard not to share my ideas and experiences with my coachees. Simply listening felt passive and ineffectual and I was certain that giving advice or sharing data was bound to help my client get to a solution as quickly as possible.

I learned the hard way that in order to have permission to be directive and for this to genuinely

help the client, we first need to truly listen. Being non-directive is a hard lesson to learn when it goes against all of your career experience to date, but the power of coaching is in being present and allowing the client the space to think for themselves. This is what makes our work "coaching" instead of an everyday business conversation.

When being non-directive is mastered, it is wonderfully freeing to play along the scale of directive v non-directive. These days I am increasingly daring to be directive, but before I do I am very consciously checking in with myself to understand where my desire to be directive comes from and to what extent it will help the client, and not simply make me feel like I have added value."

Helen Cowan, Founder, The Tall Wall

Once we have developed the capacity to use a more inquiry-based style (through training and hours of practice), we can then become more aware of our intention of offering more of our own resources, experiences and knowledge within the coaching relationship.

It is through this process of 'unlearning' to give solutions and then re-learning a more intentional way of offering our experiences that we can ensure our own resources, when offered, are more impactful.

The key here is that as a coach we help our coachee think how they might apply this input to their situation, as by doing this we are helping to raise their awareness and generate their responsibility for action.

"My role is to help my coachees achieve their goals as quickly and sustainably as I can. To do this, I need to be highly attuned to what they need from me as a coach and to intuitively grasp where to use their resources or my own resources for their benefit.

How I show up is fundamental, and I am responsible for creating the experience that makes the client feel comfortable searching deeply for powerful insights.

Some clients want it to feel like a casual chat, so for these clients I need to make the experience simple and intuitive, like using an iPhone. What's going on behind the glass is irrelevant to them and they don't want to feel like they are speaking with a professional coach. My value to them as a coach also then comes from how I use the totality of my experience to help them reach into the unknown and unlock personal insights. Sometimes you don't know what you don't know and the coach's resources can help shine a light on things hidden away. "

Neel Arya, Executive Coach

Lots of people believe that coaching is purely non-directive, but whilst more transformation and change happens when the coachee is taking the responsibility for the content and thinking, it is a relationship created between the coachee AND coach – it would be unauthentic if the coach did not bring all of themselves to the coaching process.

Many coaches struggle with giving themselves permission to offer within the coaching dialogue, due to their training being purely non-directive.

The key check-in questions for the coach are:

- What is my intention in offering?
- What is likely to be the impact of doing this?

If it is to raise more awareness and insight in the coachee, then this intervention has positive intent.

When offering our own resources as a coach, our role is to help the coachee make sense of how they will use this knowledge, model or experience in *their* context.

To do this it is necessary to ask the coachee questions to help them translate this information into their own situation and build solutions that will work in the coachee's way.

It is this period of synthesis and integration into the coachee's experience that is often missed in other forms of conversations. Simple questions such as "How might you use that in your situation?" need to be integrated within our coaching practice.

LEARNING EDGE 4: 'BEING COMFORTABLE WITH BEING UNCOMFORTABLE.'



"DISCOMFORT BRINGS ENGAGEMENT AND CHANGE. DISCOMFORT MEANS YOU'RE DOING SOMETHING THAT OTHERS WERE UNLIKELY TO DO, BECAUSE THEY'RE HIDING OUT IN THE COMFORTABLE ZONE."

SETH GODIN

When you start coaching, it is not unusual to spend a great deal of time planning the coaching session, going over the models and techniques you have learnt and therefore what interventions you are likely to use in the session...and then the coachee turns up and takes the conversation in a completely different direction!

When this happens, we can start to experience a roller coaster ride in terms of movement between the expected and the unexpected; the known and the unknown within the coaching programme.

Coaching is a process of making the unconscious conscious so that we intentionally support the coachee to step into a place of not knowing and take them beyond their current thinking – often not knowing what will emerge next in the conversation, their awareness and where the session is taking them.

To be able to work with this emergence, can you as a coach be comfortable with *not* knowing? If not, it is likely you may try and control the direction, offer solutions to add value or try to help the coachee be more comfortable. And yet, this edge of ‘not knowing’ is often where a coachee’s most creative insights will emerge.

As relationships are symbiotic, the coachee is too likely to experience our lack of ease with where the session has gone – causing interference in their thinking and trust within the coaching process.

“In my early days of coaching with my need to ‘get it right’ I remember a very distinct moment when I paraphrased the coachee’s conversation. I felt quite confident sharing what I felt I had heard, only to be told ‘no, that is not what I meant’. Those words fell heavy on my ears, a sudden sense of failure ‘I got it wrong’. This impacted my concentration, I felt anxious, and my ability to listen in that moment was compromised.”

Within moments the coachee then responded with their thoughts, clarifying what they meant and in hindsight I believe enabled the coachee to be clearer with their thinking. My learning and reflection from this initial interaction and sense of failure was that it is ok to paraphrase – and not be right.

My intention is to feed back what I'm hearing; if this lands a little heavy or incorrectly for the coachee then I believe my role is to be brave and be comfortable with not knowing. My key learning is to be present, manage my internal reactions and give the coachee the chance to clarify more clearly their thoughts and even open up an opportunity for the coachee to think differently."

Brodie, Executive and Team Coach, Almach Leadership

Just pause for a moment and consider some impactful learning you have experienced within your life. When you were experiencing this change or situation, how did you feel? Was it comfortable or uncomfortable?

Often, to truly learn, we need to step outside of our comfort zone; to move from our current knowledge and competence into a place of not knowing.

In coaching this often results from the coach introducing a different perspective or way of seeing for the coachee. When this happens, the coachee has to work harder mentally because of this novel experience. For the coachee to feel safe and comfortable, it is vital the coach has developed the capacity to hold this space for the coachee. In the moment they are

experiencing an 'okay-ness', this is just where the coachee needs need to be.

As coaches, we sometimes forget how coaching often can be anxiety-provoking for the coachee – so the level of discomfort we are experiencing is likely to also come from emotional contagion too. To enable us to recognise this in the moment and then manage our emotional response so it does not contaminate our ability to be 'present', we need to build our capacity to hold emotions such as anxiety and discomfort.

"At the start of my coaching journey I wanted to learn more and more models that I could use in any given situation, in a scientific way, to support the client move towards their goals.

What I learnt from experience is that coaching is as much of an art as a science. I'm inviting my clients to embrace the unknowns and bring curiosity to any discomfort that emerges. It seems appropriate that I allow myself to do the same and trust the coaching process."

Boaz Safier, Internal Coach (Professional Services)

Experiencing a coachee's emotional energy can cause a retraction in our field of awareness, so coaches need to start to develop presence and grounding techniques to utilise in the moment. It is through applying these techniques that we can attune to our coaching clients – so that they experience feeling 'felt' without being impacted by our own anxiety.

If trust is flowing between the coach and coachee, the coachee's threat response in their brain quietens down and their thinking will start to open up to new options and possibilities.

"PRESENCE IS CONNECTING TO THE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS OF OTHERS."

RUDOLF LABAN

"At first I was relieved to learn about models and tools because this gave me the feeling that I knew what I was doing and had a sort of 'expertise' that the coachee didn't have, so I must be able to add value in a session. I would go into sessions, confident in my knowledge of tools that I could use 'on' coachees and, nine times out of ten, I would find a way to use my current favourite at some point in a coaching session. As I learnt more and more tools and techniques, I put them in a sack that I carried on my back into coaching sessions. Most of the time, the coachees seemed to enjoy the sessions and find them helpful.

However, the sack got bigger and heavier. Eventually, there was so much in it that during coaching sessions, my attention was often on its contents rather than on my coachee. I was listening for clues in what my coachee was saying, waiting for the moment to open the sack and pull out a shiny tool. I started to notice that, whilst my coachees might, indeed, enjoy our sessions, they weren't really having many break-throughs and there was a sense that there was something missing.

One of my coachees at the time was a man with a senior role and a lot of presence, whom I knew was regarded as the CEO in waiting. I found it daunting and uncomfortable working with him, I was worried that he would feel I wasn't adding enough value and that he was wasting his time – though he had never said this. With him, my dependence on my sack of tools was particularly high; I would introduce something whenever he seemed a bit stuck or appeared at all uncomfortable.

One day, he became quite emotional when talking about how he felt about public speaking – this was unusual for him, he was not a man who wore his heart on his sleeve. I could feel my heart beating very hard and I became quite hot. I was desperately trying to think of something we could 'do' but my mind was blank, I couldn't think of anything. I remember quite clearly saying to myself 'get a grip', feeling my feet on the floor, looking very directly at him and asking, 'so what do you need now?'. He said something like, 'I just need to sit with this a bit. I hadn't realised quite what a big deal this is for me.'

The rest of the session was one of the first coaching conversations I had where I felt that I really had added value simply by listening, not filling the silence and allowing stuckness and difficult emotions to be in the room. It was a turning point for me, letting the tool sack sit in the corner and relying much more on being present and being ok with both the coachee's discomfort and my own."

Sally Bogle, Transcape Leading & Learning

LEARNING EDGE 5: 'FROM DOING COACHING TO BEING A COACH.'



"YOU HAVE TO PUT YOUR OWN OXYGEN MASK ON BEFORE HELPING OTHERS WITH THEIRS."

DANIEL SIEGEL

To be receptive, wide open and in presence with coaching clients takes focus, energy and for us to be fully available cognitively, emotionally and spiritually.

If our training results in us focusing too much in a conversation on the techniques we are using, then we will be too busy to notice what is really happening for the coachee and how they are relating to their topic.

"YOU KNOW YOU ARE IN SECOND CIRCLE (PRESENCE) IF YOU;

FEEL CENTERED AND ALERT

FEEL YOUR BODY BELONGS TO YOU

FEEL THE EARTH THROUGH YOUR FEET

FEEL YOUR BREATH IS EASY AND COMPLETE

KNOW YOU REACH PEOPLE AND THEY HEAR YOU WHEN YOU SPEAK

NOTICE DETAILS IN OTHERS - THEIR EYES, THEIR MOODS, THEIR
ANXIETIES

ARE CURIOUS ABOUT A NEW IDEA, NOT JUDGMENTAL

HEAR CLEARLY

ACKNOWLEDGE THE FEELINGS OF OTHERS

SEE, HEAR, SMELL, TOUCH SOMETHING NEW WHICH FOCUSES THIS ENERGY
INSIDE THE WHOLE OF YOU."

PATSY RODENBURG

This shift from doing to being as a coach occurs when we learn the importance of taking care of ourselves so that we can be fully resourced, present and in a place of relaxed concentration.

In this state of being as a coach, we have a deep understanding of what is happening in any moment and the ability to act on that understanding with courage and creativity.

"This 'edge' was the most profound learning point for me in training as a coach – something that I feel is a development journey in itself.

In the initial stages of training, it felt appropriate to be trying hard to memorise models and focus on what I could 'do' to support the coachee, perhaps to impress them (and myself) by delivering the best technique! As the programme continued, I realised that this was flawed – the wrong intention and a recipe for a lack of attention to what was really going on during a session.

Instead, I have learnt through this training to intentionally (and repeatedly) drop the scanning of appropriate models in one's mind to attending much more fully and being present. By this I mean being present for what is really arising in the moment – to the wider view of the coachee, including their energy, body language and tone of voice. To tune in. My intention shifts from one of impressing, solving or fixing to 'being with' their experience. For me, this is characterised by feeling still internally and a slower pace of conversation.

From this place, invariably something arises that is quite skilful to work with. It doesn't feel like I have thought about it; it just happens. I can only describe moments like this as profoundly deep.

The potential appears so far beyond what I could 'do' or think to implement. It's more about how

present I am and the space I can hold for the coachee”.-

Ruth Farenga, Mindfulness Teacher &
Coach, Mindful Pathway

The time to resource ourselves will never miraculously appear in our professional and personal lives; we need to make the time.

This means not underestimating the importance of taking time to prepare for a coaching session and then taking the time for reflection and to transition out of coaching into the next part of day. It also means developing a daily ritual of self-care that works for us (as well as having regular supervision) so that, just like a musician, we are fine-tuning our instrument.

“As we develop our practice as coaches naturally we learn new about tools, frameworks and theories to underpin our coaching and like learning to drive a car for the first time, it can feel overwhelming. As you try to remember to press the clutch down, move the gear stick and check your mirror whilst releasing the handbrake seamlessly, only to lurch forwards it’s at this point you realise you’re driving, but are not yet a driver!

Whether you are learning to drive or focusing on a new coaching tool, the chances are that the self-talk or “interference” as referred to by Timothy Gallwey in his book ‘The Inner Game’ will be getting in your way of being the coach you want to be. Now you may well say, this is just part of the learning process and as your confidence grows, the interference reduces. However, the new tools

or models that you have come to favour can easily seduce you. You may lose sight of who you are there to serve, and that the tools and models are merely there to assist a conversation, to assist in creating awareness for the coachee. A similar trap is overly focussing on creating the 'shift' or 'aha' moment for the coachee. This may also become a distraction or further interference for the coach. These are just a couple of examples where you may be 'doing coaching' rather than 'being a coach.'

In a frantic and complex world, it has never been more important to take care of yourself to best serve your coachees as a coach. Treat yourself with the kindness, compassion and respect that you have for your clients. "

**Paul Vissian, Learning & Development Manager |
Executive & Team Coach**

As our practice continues, we will also start to learn through supervision the emotional impact that our work has on us, as to relate deeply to clients will result in us being affected. Research by Carsten Schermuly (2014) highlighted negative effects experienced by coaches over the course of their career:

- "I felt insecure" - 80%
- "Personally affected by topics discussed" - 78%
- "Frustrated that the problems of coachee could not be resolved" - 70%
- "I felt emotionally exhausted" - 74%

Too many coaches are on the edge of burnout themselves; so it's important to be the change we want to see in our coaching clients.

We need to be role models, take time to fully resource ourselves in our wider lives so we have the physical, emotional and spiritual energy to facilitate deep change in others. If we are in a constant state of busyness and doing, we will not be able to create a reflective learning space for our coachees to slow down or learn about their experience so they can take action.

"In order to bring my best self to coaching, have true connectedness with the client and create an impactful container, I recognise the importance of being fully resourced.

In the past I neglected areas of my life which nourish me. This left me feeling over-whelmed, over-burdened and over-loaded. I now appreciate from my own coaching journey the value and the positive impact of truly slowing down, looking at the big picture and devoting time to the things which energise, motivate and inspire me.

I also realise the importance of being still – I had normalised the busyness of life! This means I enter all my coaching engagements in the right head space, I am fully present and I connect to the client in a way I didn't even know was possible. Being in a resourced state also means I enter my sessions from a place of ease; and through practice I have learnt to just 'be', not to get too fixated on models or techniques – if I truly trust myself then I already have all the tools I need. The transformations I have seen in clients have been so tangible and

rewarding, and it is so incredible to feel I have played a part in their journey.”

Georgie Dickens, Director, Cajetan.

Unless as coaches we learn the internal moves to enable us to commence a coaching session in a neutral state, and manage ourselves over the session, how can we notice the subtle emotional shifts we experience when attuning to our clients?

This question lies behind the reason that our coach training programmes have a high degree of focus on developing a coach's capacity to be embodied and present when coaching; with this heightened 'beingness' they are more able to access a 'flow' state (a state of relaxed concentration, full engagement in the act of coaching, working with an expanded awareness of what is emerging internally and externally within a session).

To conclude, if we are supported as we train as a coach to develop against each of these 5 Learning Edges, we will become a catalyst for transformational change; we will develop the capacity to evoke deep and lasting change in another.

To learn more about the coach training courses that Catalyst 14 delivers and to find the depth of training right for you, [please click here](#).