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My Approach to Coaching

My approach to coaching has evolved over the years, and is a product of a number of influences. First and foremost, it's a direct outgrowth of the coaching sessions I delivered to clients on four continents. Their willingness to be open with me about their struggles and challenges has allowed me to see behind the veil of social propriety, with all its ego and defense, and I am very grateful to them for trusting me with their intimate revelations.

I am also indebted to the training I received through the Coaches Training Institute and CRR Global, as well as the literature on performativity, positive psychology, Zen Buddhism, mindfulness, existential psychotherapy and leadership, that I explored as part of my PhD in Education and since. I have also learned a lot in my role as Editor-in-Chief of the academic journal *Philosophy of Coaching*.

Below are the nine key elements in my approach to coaching.

1. Focus

The coaching I do focuses on three essential relationships:

- Intrapersonal – how the client relates to him or herself
- Interpersonal – how the client relates to others
- Existential – how the client relates to the world

Each one of these relationships is addressed in every coaching engagement I take on, but to a different degree, depending on what the client is looking to accomplish.

2. Trust

At the heart of any coaching engagement is the relationship between coach and client. This serves as the container within which the other relationships – Intrapersonal, Interpersonal and Existential – are positively transformed.

This container relationship must be broad and deep to be effective, yet time is of the essence.

Consequently, I build trust as quickly as possible through formal mechanisms, such as a Code of Ethics, a Confidentiality Agreement and a Coaching Contract, as well as informal mechanisms, including open-ended conversation, eye contact, and self-disclosure.

3. Data

At the beginning of a coaching engagement, I bring data into the coaching relationship through 360 surveys, psychometric assessments, stakeholder interviews and the client's own narratives. This data is essential for focusing the coaching on change initiatives that are meaningful to the client and thereby motivational. These are not always the same initiatives that the client came in with.

As the coaching engagement continues, the coaching relationship itself provides information that may be helpful to the client. Dynamics that show up outside of the coaching relationship begin to show up within the coaching relationship, providing the coach with more immediate insight into how the client operates. The coaching relationship thus becomes a microcosm for how the client relates in general, inside and outside of the coaching relationship.

4. Outcomes

I hold outcomes lightly - not because I don't care about outcomes, but because holding too tightly to outcomes actually diminishes the likelihood of achieving meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

5. Technique

I believe that meaningful and sustainable outcomes are always wanting to happen, but are prevented from happening by various blocks of which the client is unaware. These blocks may be intrapersonal (limiting beliefs, blind spots), interpersonal (low emotional intelligence) or existential (situational 'fit').

By building awareness around all three essential forms of relating, I help clients clearly identify their desired outcomes and then work systematically to remove blocks to achieving those outcomes.

Because the technique is one of identification and removal, rather than forceful implementation, it is experienced by clients as effortless.

6. Overcoming Resistance

Overcoming resistance is necessary because the blocks to meaningful and sustainable change are there for a reason - most often to protect the client from perceived shame or vulnerability. For these defensive structures to be dismantled requires a strong coaching relationship, with the coach providing the right balance of challenge and support for the client to feel safe *and* motivated to reveal who they really are. Only by overcoming resistance and experimenting with new ways of being and doing are clients able to assess for themselves the real risks of bringing more of who they are and what they have to offer to the world.

7. The Role of the Coach

For the coach to deliver meaningful and sustainable change, the coach must have had their own experience of meaningful and sustainable change, and in addition possess the following qualities:

- Exquisite sensitivity
- Strength of character
- Open and accepting attitude

The coach must also have expertise in the following areas:

- Human motivation
- Change processes
- Communication

Nice-to-haves include:

- Experience in a daily discipline or practice i.e. meditation, writing, art, music

- A post-graduate education

If the coach additionally has expertise in the client's areas of expertise (i.e. leadership, entrepreneurship, management etc.), all the better, but in general these aspects of 'fit' are wildly overrated.

8. Acceptance

The most consistent and, in my view, valuable outcome of coaching is acceptance. Clients who have gone through a six-month coaching program are more able to accept who they are, the good and the bad, while recognizing that they are always changing, always a work in progress.

9. Seeing and Remaking the World

The ability to accept yourself means you are dealing with less internal 'noise,' and hence are better able to see the world as it really is. This in turn increases your ability to remake the world as you would like it to be, a key driver of leadership excellence.

For more information or to arrange a free sample session please visit my website or call the number below.