

TIPS FOR CREATING POWERFUL BREAKTHROUGHS IN COACHING A GUIDE TO APPLYING BEST PRACTICES IN REFLECTIVE INQUIRY

COACH THE PERSON

Start coaching sessions by discovering what clients want as a desired outcome of the session. What do they want to happen instead of what is happening now? If they are looking to develop their skills or advance their career, what would an ideal scenario look like? You will then use this outcome to stay on track during the conversation, or to recognize when the outcome is changing. Once you know where you are going, work with your clients to discover what is stopping them from solving the problem and finding a way forward without you. While they talk, listen for the beliefs behind their opinions and actions, and for the fears and conflicting values causing dissonance and confusion. When you share what you hear and then ask for confirmation, client's are prompted to use their Observer Mind to examine their thinking. Stepping out of their story leads them to making shifts in who they are in relation to the issue (identity) and in the perspective of the situation and context (reality). These shifts ensure long-term change both in perception and behavior. With active support over time, the new ways of thinking and behaving become the typical way of doing things.

REVEALING FEARS AND CONFLICTS OF VALUES

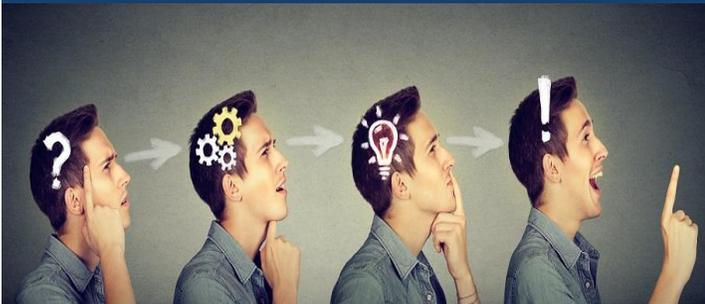
While telling their stories, listen for the words *really*, *but*, and *should*. Reflect the phrases that follow these words, then ask questions such as, "Is this what you want to create (after *really*), is this the doubt holding you back (*but*), or is this the fear behind other people's judgments of your choices (*should*). Help them see behind their words.

REFLECT SO THEY SAY *THAT IS RIGHT VS. YOU ARE RIGHT*

Use summarizing and paraphrasing so clients examine their thoughts, not your interpretation of their meaning. Instead of starting sentences with "I", start with "So you are saying (or you showed)" They can agree with or correct you, but they need to objectively observe their stories to assess what's inside.

BE CURIOUS AND DETACHED WHEN REFLECTING SHIFTS

When you notice slight shifts in their body, eyes, and voice, you help them explore the edges of their stories. You may feel their emotions with them. Share what you pick up with compassion, then let the feelings go so you can maintain a safe space for them to explore the meaning. Using non-reactive empathy is empowering.



PAIR YOUR QUESTIONS WITH A REFLECTION

Start with sharing what you heard, saw, or sensed. Then ask questions about the reflection such as, "Is this right?" "What does this mean to you?" or "Is there another belief that would serve you better?" Let your questions come from your curiosity, not memory. Clients are prompted to pause, look at, and learn more about how their thoughts and fears affect their choices. This is especially helpful when clarifying what clients want to create or change.

LET THE DESIRED OUTCOME UNFOLD AND EVOLVE

There must be a destination - a clear desired outcome - to keep the session from just being a conversation about a problem. What do they want instead of what they have? What will a decision or action plan give them? What is most admirable about others they would like to develop in themselves? Then seek to discover what is stopping them from achieving their desires. This exploration might be uncomfortable but it's powerful. Fears and doubts will subside and conflicting values will emerge. This could change the destination. As they pare off layers of old beliefs and chip away at their protective armor, they may see a personal goal they want to achieve now. Notice the shift in direction. Let clients choose to refine their focus or change the outcome. Clear and inspirational outcomes are conduits between uncertainty and progress.



CAPTURE INSIGHTS AND COMMITMENTS

An insight must be articulated for clients to build on it with actions. Ask them to state what they are learning. Then ask if they are ready to move forward or try something new. Have them state what they will do—even if it is only one small step—by when, and how they will handle distractions.



Coach the Person, Not the Problem

A Guide to Using Reflective Inquiry

Masterful coaching is simpler than you think. When you apply the five essential practices along with the three mental habits, those you coach will break through the frames that limit their perceptions and choices. As a result, you will experience great value as a coach as your clients discover how to achieve their desired outcomes, make critical life choices, and improve the bottom line in their businesses.

PRACTICE EXERCISE:

Record a coaching session.

Have it transcribed with time stamps.

Highlight where you used reflective statements paired with questions, using the client's language so you prompted them to think about their thinking and possibly evoked a new awareness.

Red line where you gave the person advice, including when your advice was disguised as a question. Also make note of when the client didn't understand what you were saying or asking because your words were based more on your interpretation than on reflecting their key words, emotions, and concepts.