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# Tool Box



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*“The client always knows best what to do next.”*

Knowing what is best to do is not the same as doing it. This is especially true for well trained and experienced people. They will often fall back on protecting what feels safe or what worked in the past than try something new that feel uncomfortable. They rationalize their action or inaction, and then believe their rationalizations are truths.

Unless your client has no experiences or knowledge to draw from, you will help them grow and change by coaching them to discern what is getting in the way of their acknowledging what needs to happen next. When you reflect their thought patterns, uncover their fears and doubts, and reveal their inherited, obstructive beliefs, you clear the fog for them to clearly see the problem and the most desirable resolutions.

## **Coaching activates instead of pacifies the brain**

When you begin to dissolve the glue holding their stories together, their perception changes forever. The conversations may feel uncomfortable, but the outcomes are remarkable. The changes in their beliefs and behaviors that occur when you focus on their thinking instead of possible solutions and consequences are enduring yet adaptable. These changes are then accessible to adjust again in the future as circumstances shift around them.

## **Awareness-based coaching facilitates change**

Coaching the person instead of the problem can be called *awareness-based coaching*. The focus is on identifying beliefs behind opinions and actions, and on fears and conflicting values causing dissonance and confusion. You want the shifts to be made at the identity level instead of just trying to alter activity. This insures long-term change both in perception and action. Once the views of a situation and the personal connection to the dilemma change, so does behavior. With active support over time, the new ways of thinking and behaving become the typical way of doing things.

Be present. Stand for your client to move forward because you care about them, not because you judge them as wrong. Coaching is often reassuring; it can also be uncomfortably disruptive. They must feel safe with you so you can challenge interpretations, test assumptions, and explore emotions so your clients expand their perspective instead of just reordering the thoughts they already had.

**People grow when they expand how they see themselves and the world around them.**

## **THREE TIPS FOR FOCUSING ON THE PERSON, NOT THE PROBLEM**

1

Agree on what coaching looks like before you start. Show them how you will be their thinking partner to explore situations together. Although you might give them assessments and resources, you will not tell them what to do with what they learn or solve their problems for them.

2

Never give up on their ability to discover what to do next. Stay curious to discover what they *really* want and what is getting in the way of moving forward. Recognize your urge to give advice as a judgement of their resourcefulness. Give them facts but not answers.

3

Listen to their story. Use reflections to help them articulate the beliefs behind what they feel is right, wrong, and what they *should* be doing. Is there a fear or sense of obligation? What is real and what is imagined? With coaching, they can find a way forward while letting go of ideas that held them back.

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*“When our reality is dangled in front of us, we often laugh at what we see before we bring it up to date.”*

Playing back your clients' words and expressions provokes self-reflection. Your reflective statements provide an active replay not just of their words, but noticing their emotional expressions helps reveal the beliefs, fears, disappointments, betrayals, conflicts of values, and desires prompting your client's actions and inactions. The practice of summarizing includes recapping, paraphrasing, and encapsulating.

## Recapping

One of my favorite phrases in coaching is, “So, you are telling me . . .” Then I restate the issue, problem, or outcome expressed and the key factors making it difficult to act. The client will either agree or correct my perception without my asking a question. Recapping can pull out what they want to work on first. Listen and replay the word *should* so you can look at who is really making the decisions and how the shoulds are blocking what they desire.

Although you are highlighting, don't leave out a jarring detail. Often a side comment expressed with a shift in emotion reveals the big belief that is creating the client's block.

Use the words clients give you; don't analyze the meaning. You miss key points when you think about what they are saying. *Thinking is the enemy of the coach.*

## Paraphrasing

Without judgment, share what clients say in a slightly different way to help them articulate and explore their beliefs.

Paraphrasing is an offer; clients can accept your words or not. If they don't agree, it's likely they will offer an alternative clarifier. Make sure your paraphrase is an honest substitute of what was said, not your opinion about what the client shared.

You can also use a metaphor to paint a picture of what the client shares in a different context connected by meaning, like *swimming with sharks, shackled by shoulds, or anxious for the race to start but worried you have the wrong shoes.*

## Encapsulating

Sometimes you can capture the major elements of a client story in a few words. Use a phrase or even one word to name the client's experience. These are often the last spoken words in a thought they share so let them finish their sentences.

## Pairing summarizing with questioning

After summarizing, ask what you are most curious about. Even closed questions such as “Is this correct?” or “Is this what bothers you most?”—can be powerful clarifiers.

**Good questions emerge from the reflections you share.**

## THREE TIPS FOR SUMMARIZING TO PROVIDE CLARITY AND PERSPECTIVE

1

Listen for key words—ones that are emphasized, used to describe a situation, and indicate what a person really wants to change. Ask them to explain what the key words mean and how they relate to the desired outcome of the coaching session. Use silence to allow clients time for reflection.

2

Don't just parrot in entirety what your client says. Listen for the core message and emotion-packed details. Then offer back what you heard and noticed for confirmation or explanation. Don't try to analyze or interpret what was shared; let your client reflect and respond.

3

We recall memories in pictures so using metaphors that relate to the dilemma the client states can help clarify perspective and feelings. Start with, “It seems like you are...” Then ask what the picture means to them and how it relates to their beliefs, fears and frustrations. Then ask how they want to change the picture or how they want the story to end.

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*“Sharing the gem hidden in the story gives focus in the fog.”*

Naming the major element at the heart of the client’s story can create the moment of, “Yes, that’s it!” Use as few words as possible to capture the essence of their dilemma.

## **Labeling**

Offer a title for their story. Grab a few words they used, such as “It’s a huge unknown” or “No trust.” Start your reflection with, “Sounds like...” and then give a few words that sum up their block or belief such as “loyalty,” “not enough,” or “I’m done.” You can also use a short metaphor, such as “Sounds like you are drowning” or “Sounds like you’ve lost sight of the finish line.” If clients simply agree with no explanation, follow up by asking, “What does (label or metaphor) mean to your achieving what you said you wanted from this session?”

## **Bottom-Lining**

Clients often agree on what they want but then declare all the reasons why they can’t move forward. Listen for the word *but*, then bring the conversation back to the statement made before the *but* to see if, bottom line, the desire they stated before saying *but* is what they really want to do. You can then assess if the risk they fear is real or exaggerated.

If there are real risks involved, bottom lining can be used to discern likely from not-so-likely consequences, and whether they could happen soon or in the distant future. Summarize the bad things they say could happen with, “Bottom line, you want (outcome), but three things could complicate this for you now or in the future.” This will help them more clearly examine what’s keeping them from acting now.

## **Drawing Distinctions**

To clarify meaning, offer clients two options to choose from, such as, “Are you physically tired with your workload or mentally tired of working so hard with little reward?” You might offer a choice, “Do you want to find more joy in your work now or take a different path?” You can summarize what they say is bothering them and ask, “Which frustration is most important for you to work on reducing now?”

When you hear a conflict of values, frame the choices by asking, “Are your two options in conflict with each other, or could you achieve a little more of both?” Examples include conflict of work and family values or a conflict of dreams and meeting other’s expectations. Often conflicts are speculation, paralyzing the decision-making process. Having them see what parts of their fear is true can help clarify the way forward.

**Encapsulating the dilemma the client is facing helps them examine their fears and old, limiting beliefs.**

## THREE TIPS FOR ENCAPSULATING TO FOCUS THE CONVERSATION

1

Labeling helps clients drill down to the essence of their dilemma; What action words are they emphasizing? What emotion or need have they repeatedly stated? Ask about words they say more than once, especially when they say what they are feeling, to clarify meaning and importance.

2

Cut through excuses and back-story by bottom lining what they said they wanted and the #1 block to achieving it. For example, “You said you want to change jobs, but you fear what others will think. Are you willing to look at the impact of what you fear to find a way to suitable way to move forward?”

3

Use distinctions to further clarify what needs to be resolved, such as asking, “Do you want to work on this situation . . . or this . . . ?” or “Are you more afraid of losing something you care about or of the amount of work you will have to do if you go for your dreams?”

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*“People often distort or hide the truth.”*

When clients have trouble articulating what they feel and why, they might be avoiding a truth they don't want to face. Yet emotions, hesitations, and exaggerations indicate there is something critical they haven't revealed that they need to consider before deciding what to do next. You can help bring this information to the surface by offering your observation of emotional expressions and shifts.

### **Compassionate Curiosity**

Accept what your clients feel without judgment; emotions are not bad or sad, they are energy moving through the body. Don't ask about their reactions with the intention to change how they feel. Question the source of their reactions to understand the relationship of an emotion to their desired outcome. Empathize but don't attempt to fix or soothe their experience. Use silence to let them think about their feelings. If they look at you without speaking for a long time, ask if they wouldn't mind sharing their thoughts.

Typical shifts include:

- Looking down or away as they change their tone of voice
- Hesitating or becoming silent
- Getting louder or more animated
- Stressing the words *always* or *never* when describing how they interpret other people's intentions or behavior
- Using the word *really* accompanied by a heightened tone that accentuates a declaration, such as “What I *really* want” or “What I *really* can't stand”

### **Don't Judge or Try to Ease Their Emotional Expression**

You stunt your clients' growth when you attempt to alleviate their pain. Trying to make them feel better, even running to get a tissue for a crier, will negatively affect the coaching no matter the value of your intention. They might feel less understood or enfeebled when you interrupt to save them. The response you believe is “being supportive” could damage their willingness to fully express themselves to you. Clients don't need you to cheer them up. They want you to acknowledge they are okay no matter what they feel. This total acceptance encourages them to talk about their feelings so they can better understand them. They will use what they learn from their emotional reactions to more confidently make decisions.

### **Be Curious About Their Interpretations**

Help them understand what is triggering their emotions. Does their excitement represent something of value to them? Do they know where their doubt is coming from? If you have an inkling about what caused the shift, offer your idea as a question or distinction to choose from, such as, “Is your frustration based on your current work or the lack of a path forward in the future?” or “Are you angry about a decision that was made without you, or are you angry you haven't spoken up?” Accept their response. Your options might help them think about their reactions, but you need to let them determine their own interpretation of their emotional reactions.

**When we come to understand our emotional reactions, we better understand ourselves.**

## THREE TIPS FOR REFLECTING EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIONS AND SHIFTS TO ENCOURAGE DEEPER REFLECTION

1

Notice shifts in clients' posture, tone of voice, facial expressions, and breathing. Start your sentences with “When you said...” or “When I asked you...” then share what you noticed. Pause to let them think. If they stay silent, ask what their reaction meant. Don't push if they aren't ready to talk about it. The meaning may take time to emerge.

2

Accept how they state they feel about a situation even when their reasoning doesn't make sense to you. They need to feel safe from judgment. Be curious how they define a situation to understand what triggers the feelings, not to make them feel better.

3

Notice your physical reactions to their words. Do you think you are mirroring their feeling and want to share what you are sensing, or are you reacting because you are uncomfortable with their emotions? Don't project your feelings on them. Better to breathe out and return to feeling curious.

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# Active Replay: *Sympathy vs. Empathy* By Marcia Reynolds, PsyD, MCC

“Can too much empathy be bad for me?”

If you embody the emotions you pick up from someone, you can have too much empathy. If instead, you notice and release the emotions in your body so you can hold the safe space for people to express themselves, then empathy is an asset.

If you want clients to feel comfortable, trust, and be open with you—the purpose of empathy—you need to let your reactions fade away. You create a safe space for the conversation to unfold by caring and feeling curious. You *identify and understand what they feel*; don't feel it with them.

## **Empathy as Social Sensitivity**

Most people long to feel seen, heard, and valued no matter what they express. They want to feel safe enough to be themselves without judgment. They don't need you to feel sad, stressed, angry or anxious with them. If you take on their emotions, they might feel *they have to take care of you*. They might feel guilty or sorry for upsetting you.

## **Empathetic Reactivity – When empathy distracts**

Empathy starts with feeling the emotional energy vibrating between you. You might physically feel their pain. If you let these emotions sit in your body, your body and thoughts will be emotionally hijacked.

Unbridled empathy can lead to high levels of stress, making it difficult to release the emotions. Leaning into their experience limits your ability to help them process their emerging thoughts. Your interruption, including running to get a tissue, can break the bond of trust.

Also, when you embody other people's emotions, you might feel responsible for relieving their pain. You quit coaching as you jump in to fix their problems and make them feel better.

Unless people want your help, your desire to make them feel better could push them away no matter the value of your intention. They might feel less understood. They might feel disrespected or weak when you interrupt to render aid. The response you believe is supportive could damage their sense of safety and trust. They no longer feel they can fully express themselves with you.

## **How to foster non-reactive empathy**

Giving clients a safe space to work through their emotions requires you breathe and stay centered with patience, courage and care for your client. Give them plenty of comfortable quiet time to process their experience and then, explore the awareness that is emerging for them.

**We can accept, appreciate, and encourage expression in others when we observe our reactions and let them go.**

## THREE TIPS FOR REFLECTING EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIONS WITHOUT GETTING SUCKED INTO THE DRAMA

1

Notice when emotions arise in your body. Offer what you feel to your client—with no attachment to being right in your assessment—to help them better articulate their own experience. Then relax and let the emotion subside.

2

Listen with compassion. Silently hold a safe space for them to process what they feel. If they are quiet, they will signal when they are ready to move on. Or, when you feel a gap, you can ask, “What is showing up for you now?”

3

Make sure you are calmly breathing as they express emotions. Breathe in the words, “Courage, Care” to center yourself so you can comfortably hold this important moment for them with grace and respect.

More coaching strategies and approaches at <https://covisioning.com>

Constructed from [Coach the Person, Not the Problem](#), by Marcia Reynolds, PsyD, MCC

Check out her other books, [The Discomfort Zone](#) and [Outsmart Your Brain](#).

*“Your brain is a toy box full of stories.”*

We navigate our days based on the stories we hold in our head. The frame around our stories is woven from strands of our significant life experiences and learnings, forming the meaning we attach to each moment (reality) and how we define ourselves (identity). This is our operating system, running continuously throughout the day.

When coaching, you obstruct this thinking process with reflective inquiry. The obstruction causes clients to pause, step back, and see their stories. Your clients can expand or change their stories when exploring beliefs, emotional expressions, unmet needs, and values conflicts.

## **Beliefs and Assumptions**

Start coaching by listening for the beliefs, biases, and assumptions holding their stories together. Some are true, others are illogical or stale. Bringing beliefs, biases, and assumptions to light might lead to a breakthrough, giving clients a chance to consider holding on or letting go.

## **Social Needs**

On the positive side, the drive to get social needs met lead a person to meaningful success. On the shadow side, the rejection or violation of a social need may trigger a range of emotions. Help clients examine what they need from a situation such as recognition, respect, control, freedom, or safety. Then you can discover what they hoped would happen but didn't, and what opportunities exist for them to get their needs met. Sometimes they need to let their needs go if their expectations were unreasonable.

## **Life Values**

What we feel is most important—our values—define what standards we hold others to and what behaviors we feel are right or wrong. Values shape our stories and influence our identity. People make decisions on their values regardless of the facts that are presented. The desired outcomes of a coaching session should reflect a personal value, such as having more love, peace, adventure, freedom, achievement, balance, or success. To feel satisfied and happy, clients must be in alignment with their life values now or in a defined future.

Be careful of judging values that differ from your own. You will end up trying to lead them to your point of view. Coach them to see the values they are using for decisions. They must decide how their values are impacting their current situation and what they must do next.

**When clients separate their stories from who they are, changes become easier to make.**

## THREE TIPS FOR COACHING WHAT HOLDS TOGETHER YOUR CLIENTS' STORIES

1

While they tell their story, listen for key phrases that follow the words *really*, *but*, and *should*. Reflect the major elements, saying, “So you think the reason this is happening is . . .” or “You got very angry (excited, quiet, defensive, etc.) when you described . . .” Don't judge their version. Let them find the gaps when they hear it for themselves.

2

Notice the emotions they attach to their story. Encourage them to discuss what they hoped would happen but didn't. Once the unmet need is identified, clients can then choose to work on getting their needs met, letting them go, or determine how to live with an unmet need while they work on a better future.

3

Once the desired outcome is clear, recognize how the outcome relates to what they most value. Why is the outcome important to achieve now? If they have tried to solve the problem and what is left to try makes them uncomfortable, ask, “If you have done your best with what you know, what is in your control to do now?” This helps them confidently make the hard choices on their own.

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*“There must be a destination to keep the session from just being a conversation about a problem.”*

The difficult part of keeping the conversation on track is that what clients state they want to achieve at the start of the session will expand, shift, or completely change as you explore their beliefs, needs, values, and doubts. The new destination for the coaching must then be agreed on to ensure movement toward it by the end of the session.

## **The Bookends of Coaching**

With no desired outcome, client stories ramble and run in circles. They might feel more resolute after talking with you, but the confidence clients feel after talking things out is short-lived. Their story will continue to be a frustrating dilemma.

Three important practices for coaches to create strong bookends are (1) unwrapping what clients want instead of what they have now (“What do you want?”), (2) tracking their progress toward the stated outcome and recognizing changes in the outcome (“What do you really want?”), and (3) coaching clients to crystalize their insights and commit to actions to ensure progress (“What will you do now?”)

## **The Outcome is Not a Decision, Plan, or Topic**

Clients can make decisions and plans on their own. You want to discover what the decision or plan will give them that they desire and why it is important to them. Then find out what is making it difficult for them to decide or plan now. Coaching is most effective when clients discover what is keeping them stuck and getting in the way of moving forward. If they didn’t have fears and barriers, what would their daily life look like?

People are often unsure what they want, or they are afraid to speak it out loud. Your job is to help them name what they want. Once their real desires are articulated, the actions they must take are easier to declare and commit to.

## **Track progress and changes toward the goal**

A shift in outcome may appear as you pare off layers of old beliefs and chip away at the armor protecting vulnerabilities. Then, the visual of the outcome changes or it expands. Always keep in mind, “Where are we going?” Share if you notice a shift in direction. Let the client choose to refine the focus or alter the outcome if they want to.

Digging and refocusing can feel uncomfortable. Remember, you aren’t coaching to make clients feel better. You are there to help them see better—with clarity and confidence.

**Clear and desired outcomes are the conduit between uncertainty and progress.**

## THREE TIPS FOR KEEPING THE COACHING CONVERSATION ON TRACK

1

When clients list several problems, summarize what you hear and invite them to choose what they want to work on first. Paring down options gives clients both a clear destination and an affirmation of their greatest desire. If clients hesitate to claim an outcome, invite them to paint a picture that is more appealing to them than the one they have today.

2

Repeated words such as *control*, *not listening*, and *it’s too much* are clues to defining what clients really want instead of what they are experiencing. You might hear what they fear they will not get if they change. Flip their complaints and fears to visualize what they would love to have happen if they could find a way to get there. Whether they can get it now or in the future, they have a destination to aim for.

3

Because client stories have many layers, what they want often morphs and changes during the session. Share what you notice about the shift in focus and ask how this relates to the original outcome. If they confirm a change in what they want to create, make sure they paint the new picture to ensure you agree on what it looks like and means to them.

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*“A new awareness must be made tangible for clients to build on it with actions.”*

Coaches often miss the opportunity to confirm clients will define and commit to an action at the best time – when a slight smile, gasp, or look of shock indicates they have landed on a truth or solution they had not seen before. A door has opened to a new way of seeing. The coach still needs to inquire how they will walk through the door.

### **Insights Must Be Spoken To Make Them Real**

Insights can trigger guilt, embarrassment, or anger. Don't sympathize with or diminish the experience. They will breathe again. If they try to change the subject, share the emotion you noticed and asked what it meant to them. They may have trouble finding the words. Give them space with silence. Compassionately paraphrase and encapsulate what you hear. They may need time to adjust to this new way of seeing themselves and the world around them.

Once they indicate they are ready to move forward, ask if they want to look at what actions to take now or if they want to redefine what they want to achieve based on the insight they shared. The coaching may take on a new direction.

### **Placing the Final Bookend**

Without formally wrapping up the coaching session with a verbalized commitment to action, clients may forget what they thought they knew to do after the session ends. They might even lose the insight they had. They need to state the steps they will take and explore what could get in the way of implementing their plan to ensure progress.

Turn insights into action with these questions: **1)** What will you do now? **2)** By when? **3)** What could get in the way of your commitment (which may lead to Plan B or a more realistic plan)? **4)** What other support or resources will help? **5)** Do you feel good about your decisions and plans?

End by acknowledging the work the client did no matter their level of sharing. If they showed up and were willing to talk, they are still showing some willingness to find a way forward. You might ask them to recap what they experienced in your time together. Don't do the recapping for them. Let them recognize what occurred.

If this is an ongoing relationship, acknowledge the progress they have made. Appreciate them for sticking with coaching even when they are busy. Ask if they feel complete to end the session but notice hesitation if it appears.

**The best coaching often happens between sessions.**

## THREE TIPS FOR ARTICULATING INSIGHTS AND COMMITMENTS

1

Epiphanies trigger emotional shifts. Ask, “What just happened?” or “What are you seeing now?” Use silence to allow them to fully experience the moment. Follow up by asking, “What are you seeing that prompted the shift?” and “What does this insight mean to you?” Give them all the space they need to grasp what has emerged.

2

Insights could lead to defining a new outcome to achieve. Insights can also lead straight to actions. Ask clients to state what they are learning and how this impacts their desired outcome. Then invite them to choose what they want to do next. If they say they now know what they need to do, be sure they state the action even if it is to take some time to reflect on the insight.

3

Don't summarize action plans for your client. Ask them to state everything they said they wanted to do. You can fill in what they missed, asking if the step is still relevant. Always ask, “By when will you do this?” Wrapping up the session with a commitment to do at least one thing strengthens their conviction to act when doubts or busyness creep in.

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“Coaching may be the only place people can fully show up as themselves.”

The effectiveness of coaching depends more on the quality of your presence than your perfection of skills. The energy you create with your emotions has substance. The relational field is palpable and powerful.

## **The Power of Psychological Safety**

Our brains are attuned to threats. We sense danger even if we don't see it. The coach must create the conditions for clients to feel safe enough to say what is on their minds. Clients must feel they won't be judged for what they share, and they won't be pushed to change until they are ready.

When you foster a caring and judgment-free presence with clients, the need to protect and defend oneself is regulated down in both client and coach, creating optimal conditions for exploration and change. Your presence can create a neuro-physiological state of trust and safety. People feel seen, heard, and valued no matter how they show up.

You will have judgements and think you know what is best for your clients. Maintain your mindset by quickly noticing and detaching from your opinions and urges so the discovery process can unfold. You need to manage your inner space to ensure the space around you is engaging and comfortable.

## **Mindfulness enhances coaching**

The practice of coaching presence has been compared to mindfulness where you are aware of what is going on inside and outside your mind and body. To be fully present while coaching requires you develop the habit of being physically and mentally aware in the moment. So developing mindfulness will help you notice when thoughts and physical sensations occur so you can allow them to pass through.

When coaching, you notice your thoughts and reactions, breathe, and come back to being present to the person you are with. You choose to be curious instead of knowing what the person needs, patient instead of being eager to find solutions, and quiet instead of leaping to help.

## **Transforming Organizational and Community Cultures**

In our disconnected and chaotic world, coaching can bring people together. When people are overwhelmed, stressed, and angry, coaching reminds them of their purpose, visions, and power to move forward. Coaching can expand who they think they are and what they can do. This one of the greatest gifts we can give to each other.

**They want you to be present, not perfect.**

## **THREE TIPS FOR ESTABLISHING SAFETY AND UPLIFTING THE HUMAN SPIRIT AS A COACH AND LEADER.**

1

There is a difference between doing coaching and being a coach. Coaching is not just about using skills in specific situations. It's a way of being with others that improves relationships and transforms organizational cultures. Coaching uplifts the stories we tell and enhances the work we create.

2

You don't need to monitor your posture, expressions, and voice. Instead, open your mind, heart, and gut—the major organs of the nervous system—with curiosity, care, and courage. Your emotions establish safety more than the placement of your arms. And the time you spend thinking about your arms, legs, and posture, you are in your head and not present.

3

Being a coach in an organization means you put the spirit of people first. If coaching is widespread, you will have a connected culture with a high level of service, improved morale, and the courage to be creative. When you help build cultures that foster the safety to fully express oneself in conversations, you bring out the best in people and the best in yourself.

More coaching strategies and approaches at <https://covisioning.com>

*“A caring coaching presence creates the bond with your clients where they want to accept and appreciate coaching.”*

Establish your presence by aligning your brain before you engage in a coaching conversation. Your presence creates a safe and open atmosphere even more than your words. Then you must maintain your alignment, readjusting your brain when necessary during your conversation. When you get distracted by your own thoughts, quickly shift back to being present.

The following three steps will help you align your brain:

1. Choose how you want to feel 2. Recall your intention of partnership 3. Believe in your client’s potential

## **Choose Your Emotional State**

Before every meeting, stop and ask yourself what you are feeling. Then consciously choose how you want to feel. Deliberately shift your physical state by first releasing all tension your body. Then drop your awareness to the spot just below your navel. Breathe in the emotions you choose, flooding your body with the sensations you want to feel.

Choose only one or two emotions. To enter a state of flow, choose compassion, calm, love, contentment, gratitude, appreciation, courage or curiosity. Breathe in the words to the center of your body so you are out of your head. During your session, notice if fear, impatience, or resistance creep in. Return to presence by breathing in your chosen emotions.

## **Partner with your smart, resourceful client**

You are their thinking partner, not their adviser. You can invite them to decide on specific actions and outcomes, but they choose the direction, clarify the options, and make the decisions. Never lose sight that the journey is theirs to take. The moment clients feel you are leading them, they will resist you, passively comply, or mentally check out.

Remember, your intention isn’t to fix their problem or make them into someone else. Your purpose is to broaden their perspective to find the answers they probably knew all along.

## **Always Believe in Their Potential**

When you lose your belief in your clients’ ability to discover their own way forward, they are no longer a fully respected partner in the conversation. Not believing in your clients’ potential to solve their own problems shifts the power dynamics, disempowering your clients. You both lose when you give in to your urge to fix your clients’ problems.

**Personal power comes from within, when people feel seen, cared about, and respected.**

## **THREE TIPS FOR ALIGNING YOUR BRAIN TO BE PRESENT EMOTIONALLY AND PHYSICALLY**

1

While coaching, stay detached from your judgment and emotional reactions. Practice aligning your brain daily until you are naturally able to regulate your thoughts and emotions. Align your brain before you start your day, before you sit down to answer emails, and as you prepare for a good night’s sleep.

2

Choose to stay open and curious to what will unfold. Listen for thinking patterns to examine, not answers that match your beliefs. Notice contradictions in their reasoning but give them time to process what you share. Trust they will see things differently with your coaching. They will trust you in return.

3

Coaching conversations require you feel respect for the human in front of you to inspire their willingness to learn and grow. See them, value their existence, and believe in their potential. They are doing their best to survive and succeed with what they know. You can help them realize what else they can know by coaching them see through the fog of their fears and conflicts.

More coaching strategies and approaches at <https://coveisioning.com>

*"Receiving what clients offer goes beyond listening."*

When you receive what clients offer in their words and expressions without judgment and then appreciate how they view their situation, you maintain coaching presence.

To fully receive, you need to be aware of your sensory reactions as well as your mental activity. With sensory awareness, you can receive and discern what is going on with others beyond the words they speak.

## **Sensory Awareness**

Sensory awareness includes an inward awareness of your reactions in a conversation. When coaching, your reactions might be in response to what you energetically receive from your clients. Out of survival, all humans have an inner "receiver" that can pick up the electromagnetic waves we put out with emotions. It is important you tune into these sensations when coaching. This requires you access all three processing centers of the nervous system—your brain, heart, and gut. Then you can receive emotional vibrations that may or may not match what you hear and see. Ask permission to share what you sense then accept their response as true for them. When you allow yourself to be sensitive—to sense what they are feeling—your reflective statements have more impact.

## **Compassionate Detaching**

You might feel their stress, anxiety, and anger in your body. If you let these emotions sit in your body, you won't be able to effectively coach. Empathy is where you receive what another is feeling using sensory awareness, and then let these sensations pass through you. You then experience *nonreactive empathy*. You share what you saw, heard, and felt with your clients. You feel their emotions and then relax your body to let the emotion subside as you return to being fully present with them.

Receive and then offer your clients what you see, hear, and feel to help them better understand the experience. Release their emotions so you can hold a safe space for them to process your offering.

Practice aligning your brain to stay present with curiosity, care, and the belief in clients' potential. Receive what they offer without analysis or judgment. Share what you receive. Release the emotions you sensed they felt. Your presence encourages connection, safety, and the openness to discover a new way forward together.

**Being sensitive is a gift if you don't get lost in their story and drama.**

## THREE TIPS FOR INCREASING SENSORY AWARENESS TO FULLY RECEIVE WHAT YOUR CLIENTS OFFER

1

Receiving means you take in what clients offer you. Hear their words, catch the subtle shifts in posture and expressions, and sense when there is something they haven't said without judgment or interpretation. When you honor who they are and what they are experiencing, they will be more open to explore deeply with you.

2

Quiet your mind. Inner stillness clears your sensory channels. Then open your heart and gut with love and courage. While coaching, when you feel a sensation in your heart or gut, share what you think your clients might be feeling. Accept if they agree or not. Your guess could help them name the emotions they are feeling.

3

Let go of knowing. Instead of thinking you know how your clients will react, try believing anything can happen. Be curious and ask questions to understand your clients' perspective. When you share an observation or sensation, let go of the need to be right. They may need time and space to think about what they feel.

More coaching strategies and approaches at <https://covisioning.com>

*“We are all judgmental people by human nature.”*

The most common lie coaches tell themselves is “I am not judgmental.” Judgment is wired into our brains to help us be safe. What you believe is important, what you value as right, and how you believe others should act lead to judgment. Although you may be trained to use emotional intelligence, you can’t help being biased. One of the most detrimental yet overlooked emotions you experience is judgment.

## **Judgments Are Protective Mechanisms**

Judgment occurs when the brain determines what was said or done conflicts with who you think you are (identity) and how the world should work (reality). Out of survival, your brain is always on the look out for attacks on what you think is right, wrong, good, and bad, real or not.

You also have a natural negativity bias that causes you to register even innocent expressions as negative instead of neutral or positive. You will exaggerate how your beliefs differ from others out of self-protection. The words you then speak, including the questions you ask, are slanted by your negative interpretations.

## **Accept You Are Judgmental to Free Your Mind**

Left unchecked, even slight judgmental reactions affect the power dynamic in a relationship, impairing the trust and safety vital to effectively coach the person in front of you. When your judgment seeps through, partnership is lost.

Because unconscious biases are difficult to uncover, allowing someone else to reveal them to you is helpful. You might ask a friend you trust or hire a coach to point out when one of your biases appears.

It is also common to negatively react to your clients’ emotional reactions. Even your small show of displeasure with their emotional state will affect the progress of the session.

In addition to reacting to clients’ emotions or beliefs, you are judging your clients as inadequate when you give them unsolicited advice. Can you give up being the expert in order to be the coach?

To help you discern where you feel judgement, intentionally trigger yourself to recognize where the tension shows up in your body. Watch or read the news, read Facebook posts, or try to navigate crowded environments like airports to willfully activate your judgment. Notice the sensation in your body and then release the tension to clear your mind.

**Judgment is an emotion you can shift before it reaches your lips.**

## THREE TIPS FOR CATCHING AND RELEASING YOUR JUDGEMENTS

1

Notice when judgment shows up in your body so you can catch it before it infects your thoughts. Don’t criticize yourself for judging; you have instinctual reactions due to their looks, views, behavior, and criticism of you. What you choose to do once you notice your judgment is more important than trying to be judgment free.

2

Question your assumptions and opinions. What beliefs are driving your reactions? Don’t rationalize your reactions; wonder where they came from. If you think a client choice will be more destructive than helpful, ask them to restate what they want to achieve and if their choice will help or hinder getting what they want in the end.

3

Strive to be more curious about people every day. Enjoy looking beyond what you think so you can discover something new. Remember, people are acting out of their frames. You don’t have to agree with their points of view, but you can openly listen to understand their perspective. You will gain peace of mind and improve your interactions.

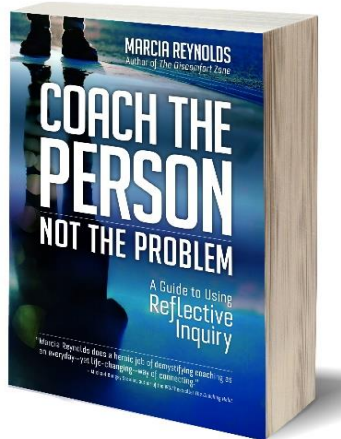
More coaching strategies and approaches at <https://coveisioning.com>



I hope these tools helped you elevate your knowledge and skills in using reflective inquiry to create breakthroughs in thoughts and actions when coaching.

Would you mind leaving a review of *Coach the Person, Not the Problem* where you purchased your book?

It means a lot to me if you help me spread the word about the power of coaching. Your support is important as I work to provide insights and tools for coaches around the world.



Thank you!

*Marcia Reynolds*

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