

Unblocking resistance or fear

Joan O'Connor

Purpose

Sometimes coachees want to take a specific action but hold themselves back because of a fear or concern about possible negative consequences. When this happens it can be helpful to take them through the process of thinking about what is the worst thing that can happen and what they would do if it did.

Description

This simple strategy gets a client to imagine the worst scenario and focus on what they would do then. The client typically gains an invaluable insight into a resistance or fear.

Process

Ask the coachee to describe the action they want to take and what they think the worst outcome could be. When they have done this, ask them: 'What would you do then?'. Keep asking them the question until they have identified an action/solution that feels achievable.

Example

Jackie had the opportunity to make changes to her life and career, but was worried that she wouldn't find a job in her

preferred choice of work, and that this would leave her financially insecure.

Jackie: What if I don't get another job?

Coach: What would you do then?

Jackie: I'd sell my house and move back to my parents'.

Coach: What would you do then?

Jackie: I'd become an MP.

Jackie was surprised to hear herself say this, and then began to talk about how this had always been something that had interested her, but her working life had got in the way of doing anything about it. Jackie is now working for a different company, in a role that she feels more comfortable with, and with a working schedule that has enabled her to fulfil her duties as a local councillor.

Pitfalls

Some people can become frustrated with or are cynical about being asked the same question repeatedly. It may be necessary to explore their negative response before continuing with this approach.

Bibliography

Neenan, M. and Dryden, W. (2002) *Life Coaching: A Cognitive Behavioural Approach*, Hove: Routledge.