

Managing yourself during the coaching session

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Purpose

Remaining psychologically present throughout the entire coaching session is an advanced skill and requires a state of relaxed concentration. Some coaches refer to this as holding the coaching space, achieved through an integrated focus on the client, yourself and the energy between you both. Being able to manage yourself in the moment will help optimize the coaching outcome.

Description

As a professional coach, you bring vast experience to the coaching meeting. While focusing on your client, also focus on yourself and access what is happening for you as the enquiry develops; what happens in the coaching space is often reflective of what happens in similar situations outside of the session. This parallel process can be a powerful observation to share for which you need to recognize your experiences.

Process

Fritz Pearls, the founder of Gestalt therapy, commented that if you are receptive to how someone is, you will learn by seeing it. Access a state of presence before you make contact with your client. I use a Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) technique to access a time when I felt totally whole,

alert and in flow. A colleague of mine visualizes himself holding the client in cupped hands using a psychosynthesis approach. Other coaches refer to this preparation as finding their centre.

During the session, use your body as a tuning fork and recognize any areas of tension, how you are breathing and moving, for example. Also check in with your thoughts and ask yourself how you are finding the session: is it fast paced, are you bored or finding it hard to stay with the discussion, is your mind racing ahead? Once you have accessed this information, ask yourself, 'What is this telling me and what should I do with it?'. This may result in an implicit or explicit action. Timing is important, as is the manner in which you apply the information, ensuring that it is appropriately tailored to the client and the nature of the session.

After each session, take time to reflect by drawing a time line and recalling what happened for you during the meeting. Note the points of self-management and the choices you made, along with any thoughts on what you may have done differently. This exercise will enhance your ability to blend the self-management techniques into your coaching.

Pitfalls

Be sure to contract with the client that they agree to you using self-management techniques, also remembering that you are there for the client's agenda and self-management choices should be to the benefit of the coachee. Look out for signs of transference and counter-transference – absorbing the client's emotions and energy, which in turn dominate your behaviour. And finally, while managing yourself, you may miss something from your client. This will be less apparent as self-management techniques become part of your coaching approach.