

Celebration and reward

Mags McGeever

Purpose

This exercise is about the celebration of and reward for achieving a goal or a step along the way to it, which plays a significant role in the coaching process. A client may not be in the habit of celebrating their achievements or feeling proud of themselves and may even find this quite difficult. In today's busy world it is very easy for someone to get used to achieving a goal and moving straight onto the next thing on their list without pausing for reflection or perhaps even noticing what they have done, never mind praising themselves for it.

Description

For a good coaching experience, the emphasis will not only be on achieving a goal but also on ensuring that the journey is a joy. Hopefully the client, together with the coach, will have come up with some ideas for making the route to their goal an enjoyable process in itself but, to enhance this enjoyment, celebrations of varying size at various stages along the route are very important.

Rewards are also relevant here and can be used in conjunction with celebration to further strengthen the process. The promise of a special treat is not only a good way of motivating a client towards their goals but also a method of providing evidence for their success in achieving that goal.

Process

- Assist the client in coming up with a SMART goal (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound).
- Then work with the client through the rest of the GROW or other coaching model being used until they have come up with the actions they will take towards their goal.
- Through effective questioning and listening, ascertain how keen the client is to take those actions. Actions that they are not so excited about (yet are still suitable for achieving the goal they truly want) may require greater or more frequent rewards in order to incentivize and motivate the client.
- Do check with the client whether including a reward appeals to them (perhaps doing the action is reward enough).
- Ask the client what they will do to celebrate once they achieve their goal. And who will they celebrate with – alone, with friends or family, with you as their coach? Do remember that the coaching relationship may be the only place where the client feels they can acknowledge their successes in this way without judgement by others.
- Use creative questioning to come up with fabulous juicy rewards that really mean something to the client. This will be ever so personal to each individual – something very basic for one person may be an indulgent luxury for another. This might involve taking the client back to a time when they were more carefree or had more time for themselves or running them through a visualization of their perfect day and then using some of the elements they describe. Get creative!
- Make sure it is clear when the reward is due so that the client has something specific to work towards.

In a later session:

- Ask the client how they got on with their proposed actions.
- For those they have already achieved, congratulate them. Ask them how they felt when they achieved them. Ask them how they feel now they are telling you about it. If the client becomes more aware of the positive feelings that are

engendered they will automatically be more likely to complete future actions as they will have a more positive experience in their mind.

- If any actions have not been taken, in addition to other coaching methods (such as assessing obstacles, and whether the actions or indeed the goal are appropriate) remind the client of the reward they will engage in once they have reached a certain point. Working to their predominant preference (depending on whether the person is predominantly visual, auditory or kinaesthetic), ask the client what they are looking forward to about that reward, how they will feel when they get/do it, what they will see, what they will hear, what they will taste, etc.

Pitfalls

Some clients may feel truly uncomfortable in acknowledging or rewarding themselves in this way. Try to ascertain whether this is just a behaviour they are not used to but are willing to learn. If that is not the case, it may be a good idea to use sensitive questioning and exercises to help them build their self-esteem until they become more comfortable with treating themselves really well. You can then use the concept of celebration and reward to great effect!

Bibliography

- Ready, R. (2004) *Neuro-Linguistic Programming for Dummies*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Whitmore, J. (1998) *Coaching for Performance* (2nd edition), London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.