

Using words to connect with thoughts and feelings

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Purpose

Sometimes the words we use can give insights to thoughts and feelings that we have about an issue. Often we can be using certain word(s) consistently and not be aware of doing so. Playing these back to the coachee can help them to reflect on and connect to the thoughts and feelings that go with what they have said.

Description

This exercise focuses on the specific words a client uses. When a word occurs often, you invite the client to explore what that might mean.

Process

When you notice your coachee using words consistently, point this out to them: 'I've noticed that you have mentioned [word] several times, are you aware of this? Tell me more about what this word means for you'. This enables the coachee to reflect on and consider the thoughts or feelings associated with the word.

Example

Mike wanted to build his profile within his organization but was struggling to talk about his strengths and achievements.

I asked him to talk about some of the work projects he had been responsible for. As he talked about different ones, I noticed that the word ‘inefficiency’ kept coming up. I pointed this out to him and asked him to tell me more about his thoughts on inefficiencies. This led to a discussion on how he really enjoyed being able to seek out change and improvements within his areas of responsibility and also that he saw this as a vital component of a manager’s role. He hadn’t made this connection previously and realized that this was something he felt strongly about.

Pitfalls

Sometimes people are not consciously aware that they are using a specific word, or why they use that word, it may take them some time to be able to recognize the reasons (cognitive or emotional). This will require the coach to remain patient and curious, helping the person explore the reasons.