

On 'Being' Coach

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As someone who earns a significant part of her livelihood from a professional coaching practice, it took me a while to discover the profound difference between “doing” coaching and “being coach”. And whether I am involved in coaching coaches or conversing with coaching colleagues who practice the art of coaching with different methodologies than I use, I am continually struck by how many of us continue to engage this ‘artform’ as a series of activities to be undertaken with breadth of knowledge, mastery of skills and techniques, and advice based in acquired wisdom.

Without a doubt, each of these is an important element of achieving success in the coaching process. And yet, for so many coaches, they are simply not enough. Both coach and client frequently experience the need for more, and yet they know intuitively that applying new tools, increasing the frequency of coaching sessions, defining larger and larger goals are inadequate to provide what is missing. They know that something is missing but can't identify what will take them to the next level in terms of both results and satisfaction with the process.

If you are one of those coaches who have discovered that doing coaching is great, but are seeking something more, you might want to begin to explore the ‘being coach’ conversation.

Doing Coaching involves helping another person engage more powerfully based on tools, techniques, models, advice, feedback, suggestions and modeled behaviors. The coach's focus is on the client's needs and growth requirements. Who the coach is as a human being, their needs and intentions is secondary. **Being Coach**, paradoxically, is just the opposite: it is all about you, the coach.

I have discovered that my capacity for coaching effectiveness with my clients is directly related to the degree of clarity I carry about myself, my values and my intentions. I cannot give to another person what I do not have for myself. The conversations that are too scary for me to have with myself become areas that I will not explore with a client. The judgements that I carry about what is good or bad, right or wrong about the world limit the degree to which I can be effective with my clients. Behaviors, attitudes and emotional states that scare me are ones that I will avoid raising in a coaching experience and there's a good chance that I'll re-direct the conversation if I think a client is about to go there, thereby limiting the results that are possible for that client.

Given the importance that my on-going Self knowledge is so important to the coaching experience I share some thoughts with you about what I have found it takes to live in a perpetual state of ‘being coach’.

“Being” Coach - Its All in the Attitude

For me, “being coach” requires that I remain awake to what is moving through me; mindful to the sense I am making of the world unfolding around me; alert to the possibilities inherent in every moment; aware that who I am in this moment is not who I will have become in the next. The following are a series of questions that I ask myself frequently as I move through each day, knowing that it is my willingness to be present to my journey that is more important than focusing on my destination.

1. *Intrapersonal clarity :*

Who am I?

What drives me?

Who am I capable of becoming as a result of working with this client?

What topics/emotional states hook me and cause me to back off, look away or over-engage?

Where do I go for coaching?

2. *Clarity of intention:*

What am I seeking to create in my life?

What am I seeking to create with this client?

How will I know that I am successful?

What does failure mean to me?

3. *Clarity of process:*

Am I at ease with not knowing, being confused, not being clear on next steps in front of a client?

How curious am I about what I’m seeing and hearing from a client?

How well do I notice my client’s language, gestures, metaphors and physiology to obtain cues for engaging my curiosity?

To what extent do I ‘mind read’ what’s happening for my client?

What do I do when I’m with a client to maintain safety for myself?

What is it about myself that I see reflected in this client?

4. *Clarity of accountability:*

If the client does not achieve the results they desired, is it my fault?

What are my criteria for accepting a client?

When do I know its time to terminate a client relationship?

Am I up to this client relationship and this specific client meeting?

All of the “doing coaching” elements which are very much part of my coaches toolbox only come into play to the extent that they are in support of my “being coach”. In other words, my capacity to **‘do coaching’** is directly proportional to my capacity to **‘be coach’!**

About Gwen McCauley: Coach, educator, writer and veteran of the 'employee to entrepreneur' transformation process. With wit, wisdom and worldly experience, Gwen invites her clients on a journey of self-discovery, gaining clarity of purpose and increasing self-awareness and resourcefulness. Gwen brings a strong background as a corporate executive with extensive management experience to her work. She founded Odysseys Unlimited Inc. (OUI) in 1997 and is a co-founder of the WEL-Systems® Institute. Gwen has an MA in Human Systems Intervention from Concordia University and a successful track record as a coach, program leader and businesswoman. In addition to being a WEL-Systems Educator™, CODE Model™ Coach and Quantum TLC™ Facilitator, Gwen has studied Open Space Technology, Myers Briggs, Appreciative Inquiry, Generative Leadership and Total Quality Management. Gwen published her first book “The Alchemy of Energy: Exploring The CODE Model” in 2004 and co-authored “Sekhmet Rising: the restlessness of women’s genius” with 17 other women in 2006. She is currently working on her third book.

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