

## READING #05: INTEGRATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF PROCESS

Process coaching is about being with clients wherever they are in their lives.

Imagine that life is like a river. Things are smoothly flowing along and then a rock appears in our path. A big one. One that, at first glance, we can't move around. Or we get stuck in the mud and can't move. Or we flow into an area of intense white water. In any of those moments, we don't get to say, "I think I'll step out of the river now...I don't like this". We don't get to say,

"I'd like to be in the other kind of river please, the smoothly flowing one". We just get to stay present, and be in the river with whatever is present with us.

As Co-Active® Coaches using Process coaching, we "be with" the client in the eddies and the whirlpools, in the mud and the white water and the wide open smooth places, in the dark, forbidding spots and in the sunshine. This "being with" is a kind of witnessing and it is a very powerful part of coaching.

It is also challenging. In our society, we are trained to fix, take care of, and produce results. We may not be very comfortable with emotion or breakdown so we dance away from it in our coaching. However, when we, as coaches, work with a client to be fully in their experience, things naturally begin to shift and move and change. That's the nature of the energy pattern of process coaching. In Process coaching, we forward the action and deepen the learning by being with the client wherever they are rather than trying to move the client out of their experience.

With Process coaching, we actually move our clients into their experience and away from just talking about it. They may be in their experience for a long or short time but we must trust that it is where the client needs to be right now. A challenge for us as coaches is not to fall into changing, fixing, problem solving or "healing" the issue; all of these responses allow the client to continue avoid being with what is.


What is important about being with what is?

When people do not want to be present to what they are experiencing, their energy becomes trapped or stuck. In addition to causing all kinds of physical challenges, stuck energy cannot be used; and when clients are able to be fully present with what they are experiencing, that stuck energy is released and can be leveraged or used to fuel forward action, vision and new possibilities.

As we witness where the client is in the moment and what is going on for them, without dancing away from it, several different things happen. First of all, the client feels known. Another human being sees their experience and, whether or not they understand it, they can be with it.

This is incredibly empowering. Secondly, when clients become connected to themselves, to what is truly going on in the moment, that alone is transformative. The client has more permission to be who and where they are. This enhances their aliveness. They expand into the fullness, the roundness and richness of being human. The amount of life available to them increases because they are no longer trying to avoid parts of their life. As clients experience their own aliveness, their energy shifts, and they move forward, including their experience. Now, they get to relax and open up to the whole range of their lives.

From the coach's perspective, this is the Process Energy Pattern at work: The coach hears "it" and names "it". "It" is something we are noticing that the client is not being present to, something that is creating stuck emotion for the client. As the coach takes the client into their



experience, and the client becomes fully present to their experience, a pool of energy opens up — an incredible resource for the client. The client can use the resources in that pool to move forward. It's a natural process, so there's no timeframe for it — it can be a moment or a month.

As Co-Active® Coaches, we are effective when we are unattached to the results of “doing” or forward motion. We need to remember that the client is always moving forward in their life. The mess and chaos and confusion and “stuck”-ness are part of that forward motion. We must trust the client and trust that things are going absolutely as they should even when our client's rubber raft is stranded on a high rock. The challenge has the client find new resourcefulness and creativity. What an opportunity for learning!