

READING #06: THE CONTEXTS OF FORWARD THE ACTION/ DEEPEN THE LEARNING

If the coach has any outcome or agenda for a client in addition to transformation in the client's personal Fulfillment, Balance and Process, it is to forward the action and to deepen the client's learning (which is another way of forwarding the action). This is what coaching is about.

Deepening the learning focuses on the “being” coaching skills:

- powerful questions
- inquiry
- witness/be with the client
- acknowledgment
- championing

Forwarding the action focuses on the “doing” coaching skills:

- requesting
- challenging
- “do it now”

Co-Active® Coaching is about transformation, and clients change both by coming to a fuller awareness of themselves and how they operate, and by taking actions that create different experiences of themselves. Forwarding the action and deepening the learning are always interwoven. Taking an action that leads to a new experience of themselves also creates deeper learning for the client. Having a deeper understanding or awareness of themselves and their behavior opens the way for a client to move forward.

Deepening the learning has clients look more deeply and understand themselves and their processes more fully. Forwarding the action bursts wide open the box of what the client thought was possible, and creates new realities for the client to step into. For example, a client believes that she is not good at sales. In response to a challenge from her coach, she calls 20 people in one day and sells her product to three new customers. So much for the belief that she is not good at sales, she just established three new customers!

Powerful Questions

When you ask a question, it sends the client someplace to look for an answer. “What did you have for breakfast?” and “What is the truth about this situation?” will send the client to two very different places. Powerful questions send clients to someplace rich and juicy where there are lots of interesting things for them to look at and learn from.

Inquiry

An inquiry is a type of powerful question that is deep and wide – it is intended to deepen the client's learning and provoke further reflection. An inquiry has multiple answers, no one or two of which are “right.” An inquiry invokes investigation, reflection and connection to the client's way of living. It is not action oriented.

Acknowledgment

With acknowledgment, it is not enough to just say what is true about the client. It may be true that your client is a little “rough around the edges.” Acknowledging that they are “rough around the edges,” does not create a space for them to expand into. Acknowledge the diamond that sparkles within your client. That will have them feel known. A great way to create a bigger space for your clients is to know and acknowledge how they are living into their values. This will almost always have them feel known and create a bigger place for them to stand.

Championing

In championing clients, the coach holds that part of them that is creative, resourceful and whole. You can't know whether or not clients WILL move forward, rise to the challenge, or accomplish their dreams though you must believe that they can. In the depth of breakdown, you must hold your client both in the breakdown and in the place outside the breakdown, the success or breakthrough, and ease or freedom that lies ahead. Your ability to be with them where they are without losing sight of the big picture, creates safety for them to go fully into breakdown because they know they won't be lost forever in there. They know that you, their coach, are holding their magnificence and potential. Sometimes in the world we interact with people backwards. We have room for the magnificence in them, hoping that it will peek out, but we interact with their junk. In coaching we have space for the junk. What we interact with, however, is the magnificence.

We call forth the magnificence of the client with acknowledgment and championing. These skills are not about the client feeling good. They are about the client being known and grown. Using these skills effectively creates a bigger space for the client to expand into.

Requesting

Requesting is NOT about getting your clients to do some particular thing. It is about getting them into action or moving the energy. If your clients are not occasionally re-negotiating your requests, then you are probably not using the skill as often as it is warranted.

Remember there are three responses to any request:

1. Yes. I will do that.
2. No. I won't do that.
3. Counter-offer. No. I won't do that, but I will do this.

It is important for all of these responses to be equally acceptable. If “no” is not an acceptable response to a request, then it is not a request. It is a demand. Requesting is a general all around great skill to have. Asking for what we want is no guarantee that we will get it, but it does improve our chances significantly. Train your clients in requesting both as a skill that you will be using with them in coaching and as a tool for them to use in their own lives.

Remember, too, that a complaint is an uncommunicated request. If your client is complaining on and on about something, ask them what request they need to make and of whom. And then ask them if they will do that!



Challenging

A challenge is a mega request. A challenge is outrageous and outlandish and should evoke a response from the client somewhere in the neighborhood of “WHAAAAT?!@#!!!!!?” The purpose of a challenge is to break up the client’s reality about what is possible. If your clients are happily accepting all of your challenges, they really are not challenges. There often is hesitancy, resistance, and YIKES in response to a challenge. And, there are the same three responses to challenges as there are to requests.