

## The Action of Coaching

Coaching is a powerful medium for change; that's absolutely true. What can get in the coach's way is getting too caught up in their own Level 1 experience of being a coach, so the coach starts to think they are responsible for the client's action. In that scenario, the coaching session is where the action and work of coaching happens and the measure of the effectiveness or impact of coaching is the measure of what happens in the coaching session itself, especially how the coach performed. Actually that is not true and will only get the coach in trouble. Clients are 100% responsible for their lives, and they are 100% responsible for the action of their lives. The real action of coaching happens in between the coaching sessions, in the client's life. The measure of the effectiveness or value of coaching is what clients do the other six days and 23 plus hours. This can be a great relief for some coaches who think it's their job to pull the wagon up the hill with the client in it. What makes this especially counterproductive is that when coaches take too much responsibility, clients often defer, are actually disempowered, and coaches end up working harder. If you are overly responsible or overly attached to being a powerful influence on the client's life, you are actually sending the message that the client is small, weak, and dependent on you, rather than creative, resourceful, whole, and magnificent, and completely capable of creating the life that works for him or her every day of the week.

Where you do have an important role is making sure that there is an accountability loop of some kind. One of the inherent strengths of coaching is this accountability structure for clients. What works is being clear with clients, exactly what it is that they are going to be accountable for — so that you both understand the measure of what will happen. You can give clients wide latitude for determining how they will know they have completed the accountability, but the accountability itself should be clear and specific. For example, you might make this request to a client: "My request is that you take a stand for yourself at least once each day." Or "My request is that you notice when you are intense 10 times every day. How will you know that?"

If you give clients an inquiry, make sure there is a way to really keep it alive during the week. Will they write in a journal? Talk to a friend? Post the inquiry on the refrigerator? Take the inquiry for a walk with the dogs? And then follow up the following week on the accountability that you and your client agreed to. Otherwise, you run the risk of sending the message that accountability isn't that important, in fact, that the task itself wasn't important enough to follow up.