

READING #08: THE CONTEXTS OF CURIOSITY AND INTUITION

A Co-Active® Coach is endlessly curious and fascinated with people in general and with their clients in particular. For example: What makes them tick? Where do they, particularly and uniquely, get stuck or hung up? What are the “life lessons” that they need and/or want to learn? Each client is special and unique and sees the world very differently than you do. It is critical that you remain curious about these differences and fascinated by the unfolding of their particular perspective. So often, coaches get caught up in the “problem” or “issue.” While clients will bring specific problems or issues to the coaching session, the real juice, the real “meat” of coaching lies in the bigger picture, in the metaview. What does this issue tell you about your client? What is there for them to learn here, about who they are and how they have this tenuous thing called “reality” wired up? Co-Active® Coaches point their curiosity through the language and concepts of the principles toward resonant meaning, possibilities and choice.

In the coaching relationship, everything that occurs is an opportunity to coach, if the coach can remain curious and unattached. If your client is often late to coaching calls, or gets resistant or is not paying you or wants to quit coaching; rather than getting upset and judgmental and attached, get curious. What is going on? What is this about, really? Are there other places in the client’s life where these issues surface? From your very first enrollment conversation through completion with your client, it is important that you be a coach, always, standing firmly in a place of commitment to the richness of their lives and more committed to their greatness than to your own fears and insecurities.

Non-attachment means that you know that it is not about you. Of course, if you have made a mess somehow, it is important to clean it up and not “step over it” or ignore it. Even then, however, your attention is focused on your client and on healing any rip or tear in the coaching relationship as quickly as possible. It is not about being right or wrong or defending or justifying. The question to hold in your mind is: “What will serve this client?” Not necessarily what will help them get the “things” they think they want, but what will help them grow and learn and become more fulfilled.

Non-attachment means that you give your clients permission to be themselves and to tell the truth about what they value and care about. This kind of permission is so rare in the lives of most of our clients.

Non-attachment also means that you offer your intuition without concern about being right.

That you offer your intuition to serve your client’s learning or forward action.

As a coach, you hold a special place for your client which is more about who you “be” than what you say or do. You are the place where their true self lives brightly, always. They need to know that you hold them as capable, creative and resourceful — that you have room for their Saboteur, their fears and limitations, and yet you are committed to interacting with their magnificence. They need to know that you will be compassionate with them, but will not be a place where they can play small. They need to know that you will ask them to be responsible for how powerful they are, rather than buying into or colluding with their limiting self-talk.

As a coach, you need to be willing to lose your client at any time; otherwise you will inevitably play it safe and hold back in your coaching. You must be willing to be straightforward with your clients, and at the same time, authentically champion and acknowledge them so that they know that you are on their side. Most of your clients are starving for this kind of straightforward interaction. It lets them know that you really care about them and that you are committed to their lives being great.

Coaching is not something that you just do, it is something that you are all the time. It is an orientation to life that celebrates and embraces the uniqueness in each individual and that is endlessly fascinated with the creative “messiness” of life. Being a coach is an opportunity to let go of our own personal smallness and limitation and stand in a place of spaciousness, creativity and possibility. It is an orientation that has us committed to excellence and possibility rather than limitation and fear. Co-Active® Coaching, above all else, holds that all individuals are hungry to learn and grow and become ever more effective human beings.

Do you believe or trust your intuition? Intuition is one of the most challenging coaching Contexts to develop. First of all, it is hard to really see, explain, or understand. Secondly, we do not live in a culture that offers much support or training in intuition. From an early age we are taught to “know” rather than to “intuit.” We are taught to HAVE sense rather than TO sense. The catch is that the only way to really develop our intuition is to begin using it, to bypass our brain, open our mouths and begin talking BEFORE we know what we are going to say.

Intuition is never wrong. However, our interpretation of it can be incorrect. Was that intuition or indigestion? Intuition or nerves? Intuition or the Saboteur? It can be difficult to distinguish the difference. The good news is that it is not critical that our intuition be correct. We need to be willing to just throw our intuition out there without attachment. Often a client will benefit greatly from an intuitive blurt that is completely inaccurate. “No!” they will say. “That’s not it at all. It’s this!” They will become clearer on what “it” is for them.

What is Intuition? We believe that there is a place, a “well” of knowing which holds an inherent intelligence. Not smarts or education, but knowing. Intuition is the ability to access or tap that well of knowing. Intuition is not the information itself; it is the ability to ACCESS that information. That access-ability is what we are developing when we develop our intuition. Just like our triceps muscle, our intuition is there within us, often atrophied from lack of use. We all have intuition, just like we all have a triceps muscle. It is just that some of us have had more opportunity to exercise that muscle and therefore our ability to use our intuition, our access-ability, is more fully developed. Fortunately, coaching is a real “intuition gym.”

How do we establish trusting or believing intuition? How do we develop our access-ability? Unlike our triceps muscle, which is found in about the same place in all of us, the intuition access point lies in different places for different people. When you first begin working out with a physical trainer, s/he will often put his/her hand on the muscle that you are working so that you can “find” it. The same thing is true for intuition. First, you need to discover where to look for your intuition. Then you need to remember to look for intuition (because when our intuition is underdeveloped, we may not even think to look). Lastly, we develop our intuition muscle by using it, by blurting or speaking it, by letting go of our attachment to being right and not caring where “the truth” comes from.

As we work with these three steps over time, we develop our access-ability. It may not seem particularly easy because it is unfamiliar and goes against most of our education. It may not be easy, but it is simple.

A tip to ease the learning process is to name when you are speaking from your intuition. Phrases like, “My intuition tells me...” or “I have a sense that...” or “My hunch is...” are some ways to articulate what is going on from your intuitive knowing. Naming that you are speaking from your intuition will invite the client look more deeply and, quite often, will help them become clearer about their experience or open up new possibilities for movement – whether or not your interpretation is accurate!