Alchemy
of Coaching

Collated Summaries – Guides 1-20



The Alchemy coach development series

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Foreword

Coach Training Programmes offer participants an understanding and appreciation of the necessary coaching skills, approaches and tools to provide an excellent service to their clients. Training is only the beginning of a Coach's journey, with continuous professional development firmly placed at the very heart of coaching. There is little material on the subject of Coach development, so I am delighted that Alchemy of Coaching has designed and developed a series of excellent guides to address this lack. Each guide focuses on a specific topic for development, with questions posed to encourage thinking and reflection and suggested exercises to develop skills, knowledge and understanding.

Ongoing and continuous professional development (CPD) is imperative for a Coach. The skill is in knowing where to source high-quality CPD that will enhance and positively impact a Coach's professional practice. Without a doubt, the Alchemy Coach Development Series fills this gap in the market. Any Coach that implements the tools and techniques explored will not fail to enhance the positive impact they have when working with clients. The format and style of the guides are engaging, informative and logical, encouraging the reader to move towards the practical application of the content within their coaching practice. A variety of models and strategies are included and explained throughout the series, encouraging Coaches to reflect on their practice and incorporate different ways of working with their clients.

Each guide gives an overview of the topic, explains the theories underpinning the content, clearly signposting the next steps for the Coach to take to develop their coaching practice. Consistent use of graphics attracts the reader to delve more deeply into the content, bringing an appeal that is often missing from other textbooks (in my opinion!) Additional references and booklists mean that Coaches can dip in and out of the material or undertake an in-depth review of the subject. The guides manage to provide both a handy 'how to' if immediate assistance is required and empower the Coach to develop expertise over time.

The Alchemy of Coaching Team brings a wealth of experience and wisdom shared within these guides. These will prove vital components to support Coaches on their journey to coaching mastery, irrespective of their current level of skills, experience, and knowledge. The coaching industry owes a huge debt of gratitude to the Alchemy of Coaching Team for their generosity of spirit in sharing their combined knowledge and expertise within these guides.

Einstein said: ' The more I learn, the more I realise I don't know'. What I do know is that my coaching practice is richer and more impactful for having had the opportunity to implement all that I have learned through the Alchemy Coach Development Series. These guides will not be left to gather dust on a shelf. They will be referred to and revisited as a Coach continues on their journey to coaching mastery, thus proving a real return on investment.

Jeannette Marshall
Director of Accreditation, Association for Coaching
Accredited Master Executive Coach

Introduction to the Alchemy coach development series

The Alchemy team has learned a lot about many aspects of coaching and one of our values has been to share our knowledge and experience for the benefit of others. Over the years we have created a large number of handouts, occasional papers, tools for change and substantial manuals to support webinars and programmes. These guides are intended to provide ideas and suggestions for coaches to develop their skills and knowledge. Everything in the guides is based on our experience.

These short guides complement our other offerings and have been written with a specific purpose in mind: to provide some development ideas and suggestions for particular aspects of coaching. They are 'bite size chunks' that a coach can explore rather than having to search through lots of material to find what they want. All of these guides have a summary, some clear content with ideas about the topic and in some cases ideas for development together with exercises to facilitate and enable personal development. They vary in length between 5 and 30 pages and focus on one topic.

The series falls into two sets each of ten development guides. The first ten cover all of the essential elements of coaching. They explore coaching from what is at the heart of coaching and who am I when I coach, through the coaching process, the coaching relationship and the skills of listen, question, support and challenge through to reflective practice and individual learning. The second set of ten development guides explores specific topics about coaching in greater depth.

In each section, whether relating to specific areas or pieces of content, we pose some questions to encourage reflection and insight together with practical exercises to develop the understanding, capability or individual skill that underpins each idea.

Alchemy have a clear view that there is no 'one way' to coach. We take an eclectic view of approaches, models and capabilities. And as these guides are based on our experience they do highlight our ideas, beliefs and values about coaching. There are many more ideas out there for coaches to explore. These are ideas that we have found valuable and want to pass on to other coaches. We welcome feedback and expect to add to the series over time and to regularly refresh each guide as our ideas develop.

The Alchemy team 2021





The complete Coach development series

Nos	Title	Published	Due
	Overview of the complete series of Alchemy Coach development guides	Aug '21	
	The 10 guides that encompass all aspects of coaching		
1	What is at the heart of coaching?	Sept '21	
2	Who am I when I coach and developing my coaching approach	Sept '21	
3	Five essential components for successful coaching	Sept '21	
4	The Coaching process	Sept '21	
5	The Coaching relationship – the **SOCK-I** diagram and building trust	Sept '21	
6	The journey towards mastery – the need for a sense of purpose and good guidance	Sept '21	
7	Listen and question, support and challenge – using The Coaching Triangle	Sept '21	
8	The Alchemy Coaching Capabilities	Sept '21	
9	Reflective Practice and its importance for coaches	Sept '21	
10	Individual learning – The conscious competence model and Practice, Rehearsal and Performance	Sept '21	
	10 guides that delve more deeply into certain ideas		
11	Individual difference and its impact on coaching		Spring '22
12	Perception and bias		Spring '22
13	Directive v non-directive approaches to coaching		Spring '22
14	Personal strengths		Spring '22
15	The importance of language in coaching		Spring '22
16	Observation and feedback		Spring '22
17	Noticing, understanding and working effectively with resistance		Spring '22
18	Developing my resilience as a coach		Spring '22
19	Tackling the difficult conversations effectively		Spring '22
20	Continuing Professional Development – an essential activity for any coach		Spring '22

This series of guides is designed to offer ideas and suggestions for developing as a coach. All the guides are written with development in mind and throughout each guide we have posed questions to encourage your thinking about your own development and suggested some exercises to develop your skills, knowledge and understanding. These questions, exercises and suggestions are highlighted in green boxes.

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Guide No. 1 – What is at the heart of coaching?

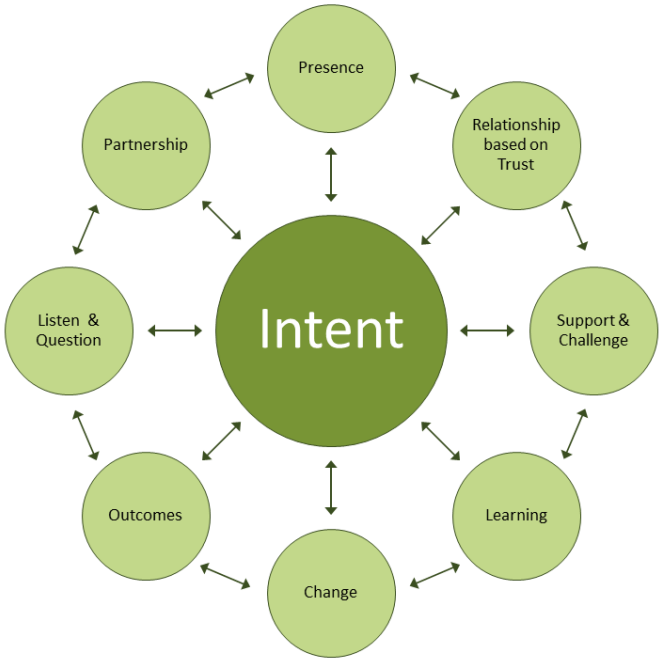
Summary

Intent is at the heart of coaching. A coach needs to have a clear intent to act in service of their client. Intent embodies having an effective way of integrating everything the coach knows and has experienced, into their coaching. This begins with listening to and understanding where the client is right now and re-contracting if the situation or circumstances change as the coaching relationship evolves. Intent also requires a positive frame of mind to bring out the best in the client - by using positive language, having a view that encourages moving forward, embracing learning and change to reach good outcomes.

Intent is supported by a series of other factors and a coach needs to develop skills, values, attitudes and behaviours in each of the following topics:

- Presence
- Building relationship based on trust
- Recognising coaching is a partnership
- Support and challenge
- Listens and questions
- Learning
- Outcomes
- Change

We have combined these factors into a diagram called The Alchemy coaching foundations



The Alchemy coaching foundations

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Guide No. 2 – Who am I when I coach and developing my coaching approach

Summary

The Alchemy team believe it is crucial that I take my whole self into a coaching session. To do this effectively means understanding a range of factors that relate to who I am when I coach.

Our starting point is getting a clear idea of **how I show up**. This comes from having clarity about my values, the connection between head, heart and gut (my three brains), how I remain present, alive, awake and attentive in a coaching session, recognising that I always have choices about what to do and seeing the client for who they are. We outline some ideas about each of these points together with suggestions for improving how I show up.

Our second section explores who am I being when I coach. What roles do I play or seek to play? How can I be most appropriately authentic and what might get in the way of my being my best self at any moment?

The third section looks at factors that help me to understand myself, as I believe I will coach based on 'who I am'. We describe some well-known inventories and ideas for better understanding my personality and strengths.

This leads on to a section about 'how I can bring all of my experience into a coaching session'. As we say in the opening paragraph to this summary, we believe it is important to take our whole selves into a coaching session. We make best use of all of our experiences, from all sources. I am not an empty vessel who leaves much of myself at the door when I coach.

Then there is a short section about objectivity and bias. This topic is explored and covered in greater detail in Coach development guide No. 12. Perception and bias.

Next is a section on managing my state. Finally there is a section on Developing my Personal Coaching Approach. It is a vital part of my coaching practice that I have a clear idea of my approach, so that I can explain this to potential clients. My approach will develop over time and with increasing experience and so it needs to be regularly reviewed and updated.

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Guide No. 3 – Five essential components for successful coaching

Summary

The Alchemy team have identified five components that we believe are critical to a coach's success. They are:

Awareness. Most coaches continually develop their understanding of **self** in various ways, through psychometric tests, via feedback from colleagues and clients, by individual reflection and journaling. Our understanding of **others** follows a similar path. Addressing issues and challenges in supervision helps, as does conversation and discussion with fellow coaches. We can use Johari's Window to explore patterns and habits. Being aware of the **context** of the coaching is important: for example there may be third parties involved. We may come from an organisational background - do we really understand this specific setting? When can our **knowledge** about, and relationship with, the organisation be a problem in gaining and maintaining trust and achieving successful outcomes?

Creating and holding the Coaching Space. This is a vital aspect of productive coaching. This involves presence, awareness, attention, listening and self-control and is vital to enabling both challenge and support. By integrating new ideas and techniques it is possible to make a real difference to doing this effectively. Doing it poorly may result in damage to trust and rapport.

What do I do when I don't know what to do? As we become more experienced and confident we usually become more comfortable, perhaps even enjoying not knowing. Progress will be enhanced when we deliberately take time to reflect on our experiences and learnings, and positively integrate them into our practice. To improve, working with carefully chosen coachees or practice co-coaching partners, we can identify and agree opportunities to experiment; perhaps with silence or with self-disclosure. Finding practice clients where we can contract to try out something new, to go deliberately to a new edge of **not knowing**, is important in our development journey.

Integrating everything emphasises the importance of connecting everything we know and can do. The sum of all our parts as coaches is definitely greater than any of the individual skills, our knowledge or the tools that we can bring out. Integration is challenging and requires careful navigation. Through these challenges we approach mastery, in a mindful and never-ending journey of discovery.

Coaching from who I am and my personality. To coach from any other place than from 'who I am' leads the coach to becoming a 'performer'. It will lead, almost inevitably, to a loss of authenticity and trust, and risks damaging the coach/coachee relationship so that effective progress becomes limited or impossible.

If a coach feels confident about their understanding of and ability to make best use of these five components they will be able to successfully deal with almost any situation that they face, with care, sensitivity, thoughtfulness and skill.

These five components are underpinned by coaching capabilities and individual skills which are addressed in separate development guides.

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Guide No. 4 - The Coaching process

Summary

The Coaching process is both simple and surprising complex at one and the same time, and is best viewed at two separate levels

1. The overall coaching assignment
2. Within individual coaching sessions

These two contexts have many similar threads and can both be seen as comprising four comparable stages.

1. A beginning – getting to know and understand each other
2. Contracting – outlining the boundaries and activities to be covered
3. Doing the work – completing the coaching sessions successfully
4. Evaluating and deciding on any next steps

What takes place in each of the four stages is somewhat different between the two contexts.

What this guide stresses throughout is that coaching is a partnership between coach and client, and that whatever happens in the process, understanding and recognition of that partnership nature is crucial for success.

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Guide No. 5 - The Coaching relationship – the SOCK-I diagram and building trust

Summary

The coaching relationship is precious and forms the basis of successful coaching. Without an effective relationship between coach and coachee it is difficult to create, build or maintain a robust and supportive relationship. With a good relationship, a real partnership between coach and client can be built.

Trust is at the heart of any effective coaching relationship. It takes time to build and is easily and quickly damaged or destroyed by an inappropriate remark or ill-judged comment. Once trust is diminished or lost it is difficult to re-construct.

The coaching relationship in six sections:

- First meeting and beginning to build trust
- Contracting, with reference to continuing to build trust
- Creating the environment for a robust relationship based on high levels of trust
- Maintaining and continuing to build an effective relationship with trust at its heart
- Managing any other stakeholders
- The **SOCK-I** diagram as a model to connect these sections together

The implication of our ideas and suggestions for coaches is that we may need to resist the urge to impart knowledge or theories in favour of developing and promoting a good relationship. Frequently the coaching client, eager to advance, will be very keen to learn new models or formulae. However, if as a coach I acquiesce at the expense of creating and maintaining a partnership based on trust, I am likely to hinder progress rather than help it.



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Guide No. 6 - The journey towards mastery – the need for a sense of purpose and good guidance

Summary

The journey towards mastery is never ending. It is a journey of aspiration rather than one that has a well-defined destination.

This point is well made by George Metcalf, and by George Leonard in his book “Mastery”. Pertinent quotes from both men appear in the Introduction.

This idea of a journey of development exists in various forms and places, but most particularly in the artisan craft guilds which flourished in the middle ages. The titles of master craftsperson still exist today and Master Masons and Master Saddle Makers are to be found in English cathedrals like Gloucester, and horse racing villages like Lambourn.

The concept of mastery in coaching relates in part to the professional bodies, most of which have introduced varying levels of accreditation, with highest levels called Master Coach or Master Executive Coach.

The Alchemy team have identified seven key requirements for a successful journey towards coaching mastery.

1. **Purpose and intent.** Having a sense of purpose and direction for making the journey
2. **Context and route.** Identifying a route and understanding the terrain this might cover
3. **Great support for learning.** Ensuring good instruction, mentoring, supervision and guidance
4. **Letting go to learn** . “Letting go”- being open to new and unexpected ideas and experiences to enable learning
5. **Practice & rehearsal.** Continual practice and rehearsal to enable successful performance
6. **Step change and consolidate.** Achieving step change followed by periods of consolidation on a plateau
7. **Going beyond current capability**

In this guide each of these requirements is explored and series of questions and exercises offered to help coaches to develop in each requirement.

Finally the four Alchemy stages of coach development are outlined. These begin with Apprentice or Novice, and progress through Practitioner and Professional to Master.

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Guide No. 7 - Listen and question, support and challenge – using The Coaching Triangle

Summary

Listen, Question, Support and Challenge are vital skills and capabilities that all coaches need to develop, and continue to develop as they gain more experience.

In this guide we explore each of these four skills, outlining ideas for improvement in each of them.

In **Listen** our primary focus is on a list we call 'The 10 Commandments of Active Listening' and some thoughts on the question 'what am I listening for?' Each chunk is followed by questions to aid your thinking and reflection, and exercises for you to try.

In **Question** we delve into types of questions, what am I trying to achieve with my questions, a model called the Questioning Triangle and some pages of suggested questions for specific situations. Again each chunk is followed by questions for reflection and exercises.

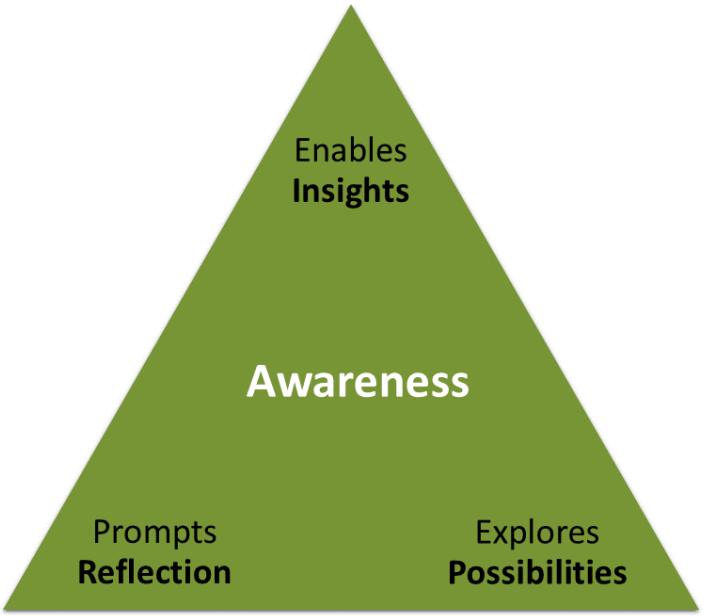
In **Support** we explore how important it is to ensure any support is framed in ways to suit the client, and explore creating a supportive environment built on trust, being a great listener, explicit support and encouragement, being available and use of language.

Finally we look at **Challenge** through a series of headings based on types of challenge.

We then cover **The Coaching Triangle:** a framework that helps in structuring coaching sessions.

Lastly we say a few words about **The importance of Language.**

All the sections are important and many overlap or interlock. The four skills are very connected and often used together.



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Guide No. 8 - The Alchemy Coaching Capabilities

Summary

The Alchemy team have developed a set of coaching capabilities that outline all of the areas and activities that a coach needs to understand and deliver effectively if they want to be a successful coach. The eight Alchemy Coaching Capabilities are:

1. **Ethics** - Works to professional standards, legal requirements and coaching ethics

2. **Coaching Approach** - Understands, develops and can clearly explain own coaching approach

3. **Contracting** - Contracts and agrees outcomes

4. **The Coaching Space** - Creates the 'right' relationship with the coachee and holds the coaching space effectively

5. **Communicating** - Communicates effectively during coaching sessions

6. **Raising Awareness -** Raises awareness and enables insights

7. **Maintains Momentum -** Designs strategies, plans and process to get the best from coaching sessions that ensure momentum is maintained

8. **CPD, Supervision and Evaluation -** CPD, Supervision and Evaluation

The makeup of all of the capabilities clearly reflects the values, experiences and views about coaching of the Alchemy team. We believe there is no 'right way' to coach and so these capabilities reflect our views for you to take as you find them, to develop them to suit your personal coaching approach, your values and intentions when coaching.

Each capability has a number of separate characteristics with individual skills, attitudes and knowledge underpinning it. The inclusion of these individual skills is designed to make it easier for a coach to make their personal development more focussed.

A coach needs to be able to address and deliver effectively, on each of these capabilities. The individual characteristics, together with their more detailed skills provide insights into what is necessary for successful coaching.

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Guide No. 9 - Reflective Practice and its importance for coaches

Summary

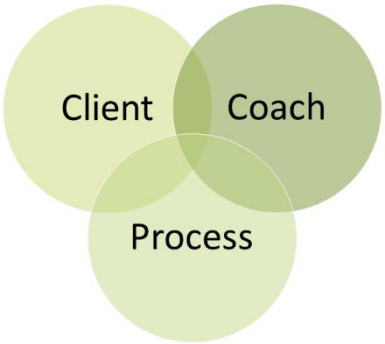
Reflective practice is about looking back and reflecting upon an experience that has occurred. It encourages reflection and thoughts about what happened, decisions that were made, actions that were taken and the consequences of those decisions and actions. Reflective Practice aims to explore what happened, what might have been done differently and why certain actions, strategies or routes were adopted. From this reflection new choices can be envisioned and skills and practice developed. Reflective Practice matters because it is the foundation for good professional development.

A number of benefits come from engaging in effective Reflective Practice. e.g.

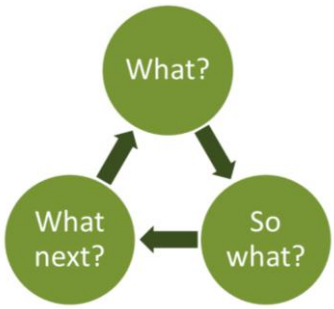
- Improved awareness of *how* I coach
- Greater appreciation of the *effects* of my coaching
- Increased ability to *assess* and *critique* my coaching
- More *choice* about how I coach

These two models are useful in showing when Reflective Practice can be done and the key elements to consider.





The 'After Coaching' reflection is where most learning and development actually takes place. It is a way of exploring what happened and what learning you might take away, and can be summed up in the following diagram. The questions on the right of the diagram are good ones to ask yourself as you reflect.



- What was happening?
- What could I have done differently?
- What did I miss or choose not to respond to?
- What was the basis of some of my choices?
- What other possibilities did I have?
- How might I apply what I have learned?

Reflective Practice has challenges and barriers. e.g. An Activist/Pragmatist learning style will mean reflection is not a preference. Some will doubt its value and will benefit from talking with others who do find it really valuable. And if I don't know how or lack confidence to do it then discussing this challenge with others will help.

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Guide No. 10 - Individual learning – The conscious competence model and Practice, Rehearsal and Performance

Summary

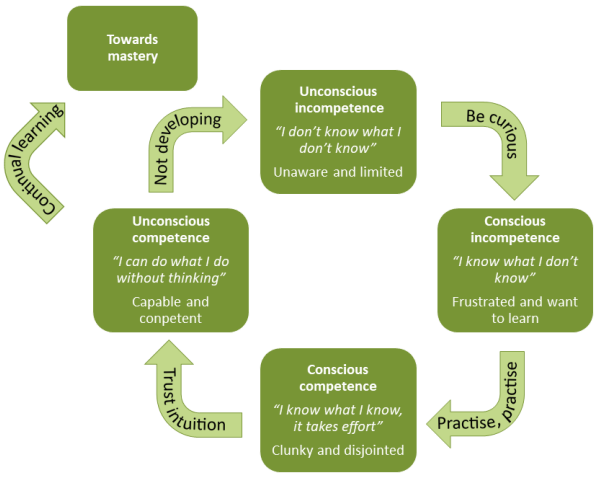
My learning arises from my life experiences, shaping who I am as a coach. The breadth, depth and quality of my individual learning all influence my performance.

As a coach, I support the development and achievement of my clients. Learning, whether conscious and deliberate or intuitive and emergent, is an essential ingredient of my own development. The better to serve my clients, I engage in personal learning and continual professional development.

My journey towards coaching mastery involves the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the development of rational, emotional and intuitive capability, increasing somatic awareness, the demonstration of competence, an openness to never-ending inquiry, application and discovery, and some element of reflective practice.

This coaching guide explores several perspectives on adult learning, informed by theory and models, aiming to assist me directly as a coach and to provide potential resources for my clients.

In addition, drawing on knowledge and processes in the performing arts, this guide describes distinctions between practice, rehearsal and performance and shows how these different mindsets and ways of acting can contribute to excellence in coaching.





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Guide No. 11 - Individual difference and its impact on coaching

Summary

There are many kinds of difference, some of which are typically present in any coaching session. Some common differences are:

Race	Physical attributes	Education
Language	Age	Work
Nationality	Generation	Health
Culture	Attitude	Wealth
Gender	Intelligence	Role
Orientation	Motivation	Power
Religion	Assumptions	Interests
Philosophy	Personality	Values
Politics	Style	Behaviour

Working effectively with difference is important because such differences can provide opportunities for greater creativity and choice.

Differences can also be the cause of discord or unhelpful tension.

The Alchemy view is that as a coach, I need to focus on and value difference rather than only looking for similarity. Differences are more likely to provide opportunities for benefit, whilst similarities may cause a narrowing of discussion or choices.

We outline, with brief descriptions, some of the issues and challenges presented by particular differences and pose a series of questions intended to be a means to explore values, capabilities and experiences in dealing with and working with difference.

We finish this guide by offering some ideas and pointers to ways of working effectively with difference and some of the pitfalls to be avoided.

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Guide No. 12 – Perception and bias

Summary

This guide explores the nature of perception and bias, how these phenomena influence coach and coachee, and what this means for the development of the coach.

As human beings we take in the world through our senses, moment by moment. From these physical stimuli - sensations - we encode neural signals in our brains. We make sense of those signals through processes of selection, organisation and interpretation - translating the meaningless signals of what we hear, see, feel, taste and smell into meaningful interpretations: our perceptions.

A bias is a perceptual filter. Bias can be positive or negative. Everyone is subject to bias - we all have biases. They are problematic when they are based on unsound beliefs or prejudices and we are unaware of them, refuse to recognise them, or know we have them and will not let them go.

In this guide we offer definitions of perception and kinds of bias, examine their implications for the coach and the client, explore pitfalls caused by perception and bias, and make suggestions for staying alert and for continual professional development.

Several models are provided and there are book references ranging across the topics covered.

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Guide No. 13 - Directive vs Non-directive approaches to coaching

Summary

This guide considers directive and non-directive approaches to coaching and suggests a more effective alternative called The Alchemy Integrated approach.

Directive and non-directive approaches are outlined together with some benefits and problems.

The Alchemy Integrated approach (searching for wisdom and mastery) is based on eight key factors:

- **Intent** - a clear appreciation of my intent when coaching and especially when offering input or information and a good sense of what the impact is likely to be
- **Awareness** - effective antennae so that I am aware of what is happening within and between coach and client at all times
- **Robust relationship** - the creation of a genuine partnership relationship between coach and client based on trust
- **Creating and holding an effective coaching space** - one where it is possible to both encourage and challenge
- **Use of language** - an ability to use appropriate language for the coachee
- **Coaching is situational** - to understand when a situation will benefit from some direction or input, such as a model or framework or when being non-directive is most effective
- **Using my experiences** - a good sense of when to use examples and my experiences to help learning
- **Inputs** - a range of models and ideas that can easily be used in a coaching session

We are not proposing that this order is critical as we believe all these factors are important.

Some of these key factors are covered in greater detail in other guides in this series.

In conclusion we propose that with guidance and support I can develop my experience and choices. Through a comprehensive range of reflective practice, CPD, Supervision and hours of practice I can develop greater confidence, have a deeper presence and expand my potential ways of being with coaching clients, leaving me with far more choices that enable me to deliver purposeful conversations.

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Guide No. 14 – Working with strengths

Summary

Using Strengths for coaching and self-development has become popular over the past few years. It focuses on gaining an understanding, usually via an assessment questionnaire, and then working to use the strengths identified more widely and for greater effectiveness.

The origin of Strengths comes from the work of Martin Seligman and his colleagues. We cover this in some detail as it provides the underpinning for the work and materials on strengths. Seligman sought to develop a more upbeat view, in contrast to the more common prevailing focus on weaknesses with its associated negative perspective. Seligman believed that too many people got into a state called 'learned helplessness' and he aimed to create a field of psychology to look at strengths and how developing them could result in greater happiness, wellbeing and effectiveness.

There has been considerable research in the field of positive psychology and this has been used to underpin the approach that is now being used by coaches and others to help their clients. Seligman notes that we all have strengths and he sees those at the bottom of an individual's list as their weaknesses, i.e. they are strengths that are weak or largely ineffective. To this extent he likes to avoid using the word weakness. There has also been a lot of research about 'strengths in overdrive' or overplayed strengths, which is when a strength is overdone and results in unhelpful or hindering behaviour. It is in this particular context that avoiding the word weakness has greatest impact. This is because by metaphorically 'easing back on the accelerator' and recognising when a strength is perceived as overplayed it becomes easier to get back to using the particular strength effectively.

We outline the commonly acknowledged benefits of working with strengths and the complementary benefits of knowing and understanding our own strengths.

In this guide we explore a few of the readily available alternatives for getting information about my strengths and how this list can be used to consider areas of focus, and where 'work arounds' may be needed (or indeed the choice to work with others who have those weaker areas as natural strengths).

In the final three sections we briefly outline whether Strengths is an approach or a set of ideas, the importance of knowing, understanding and recognising my own strengths, and how to use them when working with clients.

In the Appendix we share a model that we developed that helps us to understand the types of behaviours that occur when we overplay our style and strengths.

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Guide No. 15 - The importance of language in coaching

Summary

In this guide we explore the importance of language in coaching, highlight some of the aspects of language which help and hinder the coaching relationship, and suggest opportunities.

Through language people create and share personal and societal stories. Stories provide meaning. Our stories underpin and maintain our identity. Coaching clients seeking to make changes in their lives can be supported by a coach to hear and acknowledge the language patterns which give shape and expression to their thoughts, feelings and stories, and to recognise how by changing the language of their internal thinking and external conversations they can reframe these stories to create possibilities for different self-talk and sense of identity, new behaviours, and desired outcomes.

An introduction to the topic is followed by seven sections, a conclusion, and booklist.

- Listening and noticing
- Why is the language I use as a coach important?
- Language patterns
- Congruence
- The benefits of using the client's language
- The value of using positive language
- Continual professional development

The first section sets out the importance of listening and noticing, covering native language, coaching in another language, personal preferences, use of metaphor, risk of misinterpretation, and non-verbal communication (including body language).

Further sections address the nature of language patterns, what congruence means, examples of coaching approaches using language, how using the client's language helps with understanding and ownership, the value to be gained by both coach and coachee using positive language - related to Positive Psychology and to the client's current and possible future narrative, recognition - by me as coach - of my own default language patterns and preferences and the choices I can make, and my continual professional development.

Throughout the guide we provide development questions and exercises - found in the green boxes - to help the reader to engage with the topic and build their knowledge and skills.

The booklist contains references related to all of the guides and those specific to the importance of language in coaching. The latter cover a wide range: the origins of language, how language evolves and changes, language patterns, working with metaphor, clean language, and somatic expression.

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Guide No. 16 - Observation and feedback for coaches

Summary

Observation and feedback are vital aspects of coaching.

This guide addresses these topics under four headings:

- Observation as a coach
- 'Me to you' - coach to client - feedback within a coaching session
- Informal feedback from the client to the coach in a coaching session
- Formal processes of feedback and evaluation - at the end of a session or assignment.

Observation provides the basis on which most coaching takes place as it is the means for building rapport and trust, questioning, listening, encouraging and challenging. Without good observation a coach will be operating by instinct rather than based on good information.

'Me to you/here and now' feedback is a vital part of a coach letting a client know how they are seen in the moment, for real. It can be the means to enable great insight and motivation to learn and change. It takes courage and care by the coach to do it skilfully and appropriately.

Informal feedback, during a session, is the key mechanism to check on progress.

Formal feedback and evaluation at the end of a session and in particular at the end of an assignment is vital. It typically has two parts:

1. to evaluate and possibly to measure the effectiveness of the coaching
2. to provide a way for the client to give the coach some feedback

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Guide No. 17 - Noticing, understanding and working effectively with resistance

Summary

Resistance or defensive and stubborn behaviour is something quite commonly encountered when coaching. Clients are not always open with their coach about what's on their mind - their real concerns. The key to understanding resistant behaviour is to appreciate that resistance is a reaction to a natural process that takes place in the client (or the coach). It is not necessarily a reflection of the conversation taking place at the time - which may be perfectly rational, logical and objective. Resistance can be a natural emotional reaction against the process of being helped, being expected to be open and trusting, or a reaction to having to face up to a difficult or challenging situation.

Resistance is usually a reaction so that the client - or the coach - can stay in control and avoid becoming vulnerable.

Resistance can show up in a variety of ways:

- issues relating to detail - too much or too little
- issues relating to time - insufficient or endless
- "that's not possible - It's not practical"
- strong emotions - e.g. anger or anxiety
- agreeing to everything without debate - simply being compliant
- discomfort with methods, coaching approaches or style

Dealing effectively with resistance can be narrowed down to three steps:

Step 1. Notice and observe a pattern of behaviour that feels like resistance and allow myself time to work out what might be going on.

Step 2. Find a way to tell the client what I am observing, in as neutral and calm a manner as possible.

Step 3. Allow the client plenty of time to respond and then deal with the outcomes.

Quite often significant insight or learning comes from a conversation about resistance and it will sometimes be necessary to re-contract after this has happened.

Not all unexpected patterns of behaviour are resistance. Disagreement or differing opinions are completely reasonable and I need to be able to establish when I am dealing with reasonable disagreement rather than resistance.

Dealing with resistance can be tiring, sometimes exhausting, and takes effort. As I become more experienced as a coach, it does become easier to deal with.

As I coach I need to develop my skills and capabilities at noticing, understanding and dealing effectively with all forms or resistance. It is important to remember that I, the coach, can also be resistant.

Guide No. 18 - Developing resilience as a coach

Summary

Resilience is an important characteristic for a coach to develop. Being resilient enables me to be more effective at dealing with difficulties, challenges and adversity. It also allows me to better help my clients.

We explore resilience in this guide in four sections:

- What is resilience?
- Why is resilience important for a coach?
- Who is resilient?
- How to build resilience - for me and my clients

In each one we explain the detail behind the section heading and relate this to being a coach.

In the section on **who is resilient?** we outline eighteen characteristics that are commonly found in resilient people:

Believe their life has meaning and purpose	Are self-aware	Keep calm in stressful situations
Are empathetic	Handle emotions successfully	Are realistic and optimistic
Are adaptable and flexible	Have competent problem solving skills	Take care of themselves
Trust themselves and their personal values	Recognise their own strengths	Use good questioning and listening skills
Stay in control of themselves	Build perseverance	Have an open minded and non-judgemental mindset
Have a good support network	Take action	See change as an opportunity not a barrier

In the section **on how to build resilience** we explore nine characteristics with ideas specific to developing or improving my resilience:

Reframe my thoughts with positive thoughts	Build a good support network	Develop problem solving skills
Adapt to adversity	Manage stress	Give myself time and attention
Focus on what I can control	Take action	Keep working on my skills to build resilience

All these skills and characteristics can be developed - all of us can become more resilient.

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Guide No. 19 - Tackling difficult conversations effectively as a coach

Summary

Coaching conversations can often become difficult! Difficult can come in many guises and it is important that coaches learn to recognise difficult conversations and become skilled at dealing with them. This is important because a client will often gain considerable insight and learning as a result of a difficult conversation. When a difficult situation or conversation is dealt with effectively it can often unblock things and enable to client to move forward quickly to a successful conclusion or outcome.

In this guide we explore the topic in three sections,

1. What are some common causes of difficult conversations when coaching?
2. How can I recognise when I am in a 'difficult' conversation?
3. What can I do when I am in a 'difficult' conversation?

In Sections 1 and 2 we consider five different scenarios or contexts that may hamper or be part of difficult conversations:

- The coach is uncomfortable
- The situation suggests going deeper would be helpful
- The client is resisting in some way or other
- The difficult conversation is unexpected
- The coach is resistant

In Section 3 we explore what I can do within eleven sub-sections:

1. Imagine I am the client
2. Ensure the coaching space feels safe
3. Be prepared to go deep – to explore any underlying issues
4. Be prepared to voice my feelings or to give feedback
5. Create a common purpose
6. Learn to notice
7. Listen, listen and then listen some more
8. Use clear and positive language
9. Learn to handle the unexpected
10. Learn to use my awareness to recognise I have reached a successful outcome for now
11. Remember….

We cover related topics in many of the other guides in this series and we encourage you to explore these for further useful information and ideas.

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Guide No. 20 - Continuing Professional Development

Summary

Continuing professional development is essential for any coach.

In this guide we explore the topic under five headings:

- Reflective practice
- Supervision
- Local coaching groups
    - Inputs and discussion sessions
    - Co-coaching practice
- Courses, workshops, seminars and webinars
- Developing my coaching practice

All of these offer opportunities for learning, sharing and development. No one is intrinsically better than the others; they all have benefits and some will suit particular situations, circumstances or intentions better than others.

References and booklist

The Alchemy tools – please visit the Alchemy website for more information

The other **guides** in this series - please visit the Alchemy website for more information

The Alchemy Occasional papers – These are all available for free from the Alchemy website

The Alchemy of Coaching website www.alchemyofcoaching.com

Some recommended books common to all the coach development guides

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