Base Metal...

June 2023

Alchemy of Coaching

Introduction

This month Ray explores inspiration, intention and action - for coach and client. What service does coaching provide? What motivates me to be a coach? How do I contract for coaching? For whose benefit is the coaching? How does the client place value on the coaching? How do I learn and develop as a coach?

Paul and Ray **The Alchemy team**

Making a difference

A sense of personal purpose

Last week I attended celebrations in London of the 70th Anniversary of the first successful ascent of Everest. I was motivated to be there by a life-long love of mountains which had begun when I went with my class from school to the local cinema to watch the Pathé News of the Coronation and of the climb. I can still remember the excitement I felt whilst walking in anticipation to the cinema and watching the drama unfold on the screen.

The afternoon presentations were designed to inspire schoolchildren - as I had been in 1953. Whilst emphasis was placed on conservation of the natural world, on physical challenges, and on the vital contribution of teamwork, Everest was a metaphor for whatever great purpose or personal dream each person cared about and wanted to achieve. The evening presentations featured remarkable feats of mountaineering and of service to, and with, local communities. Speakers included Peter Hillary, son of Sir Edmund, and Jamling Tenzing Norgay, son of Tenzing Norgay. In both sessions of the event, contributors shared their sense of the joy of being alive and engaging with opportunity: we are born and we die - what matters is what we do in between.

Q. What motivates me to be a coach?

The course of my life has not followed the path I had in mind when young. I have learned that plans are necessary and not sufficient, and that rather than attempting to manage change I will be better off with a sense of navigating through change. Over the years I have retained my love of mountains and experienced some highs and lows along the way both in the hills and in my day-to-day life. I did not expect to become a coach, yet have been involved with coaching for many years. Coaching others, and being coached, remind me of how I benefit from partnership with and support from others - and how I can play a constructive part.

Q. What service does coaching provide?

Coaching offers ethical witness, listening, support and challenge in service of the purpose of the client. The coach is the provider of the process, the client is the provider of the content - and the coaching works in so far as the relationship allows the client to be resourceful, to develop agency and to effect their desired actions.

Q. How do I contract for coaching?

Contracting, for me, is about managing the expectations of the stakeholders throughout - so that roles, responsibilities, duration, practical arrangements and evaluation of the coaching are clearly understood and revisited whenever required. The quality of the coaching depends upon the care and clarity invested in contracting, including agreeing what coaching is and is not.

Q. For whose benefit is the coaching?

Yes, WIIFM - what's in it for me? - does apply: I coach to meet some need I have; and the primary purpose of the coaching is to add value for the client. The coaching is directed to serve the needs of the coachee. The

coaching will be most effective when both coach and coachee are invested in a purposeful collaboration.

Q. How does the client place value on the coaching?
The coachee will recognise value from the coaching to the extent that they are able to make progress with realising an intention by utilising personal resources and appropriate external support more effectively. The coachee may not, at least at first and especially if new to coaching, have any specific goal or expectation of outcomes. They may discover that by meeting with their coach and being heard, they experience some benefit. Often they choose to focus on one or more purposes for which the coaching will be a support, and be able to discern some gain or improvement. Where the client is the employer, sponsor or funder of the coaching the respective expectations of client, coachee and coach will all be important for the success of the coaching, including decisions about confidentiality and reporting of progress by whom and to whom. Client and or coachee may have a view on the effect of the coaching at some point after the coaching is completed, so prior agreement on the nature of any follow-up evaluation is necessary.

Q. How do I learn and develop as a coach?
Reflective practice helps me to review my coaching to identify what I notice, what I may have missed, what went well, and what I might do differently. Working in a learning partnership with a coaching supervisor helps me to consider all aspects of my coaching in context, including contracting, presence, pace and tone, language, listening, questioning, difficulties encountered, ethical best practice, and developing my knowledge and competencies. Bu keeping a learning log and making and following a personal development plan I can grow as a coach. By participating in a coaching community of practice I can learn from client and observer feedback and from observing other coaches as they work.

I can offer a form of words to my coachee, *and use it myself*, to assist me to make the difference I seek:
I will…(a specific committed action) so that I can…(an enhanced capability) in order to…(my greater purpose).

Book review

“Inspire: Life Lessons from the Wilderness”, by Ben Fogle, William Collins, 2020

This is a personal account, drawn from experiences in nature, of how to tap into reflective states in our daily lives - overcoming obstacles, surpassing our expectations and inspiring our journey of adventure.

“101 Coaching Supervision Techniques, Approaches, Enquiries and Experiments” edited by Michelle Lucas, Routledge, 2020.

This book is a rich resource of techniques, set in their theoretical contexts, contributed by forty leading supervisors. “Accessible and practical … for experienced and novice supervisors *as well as their supervisees*.”

Thoughts, ideas and quotations

“Success is the art of stumbling from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.” Sir Winston Churchill.

“There is no failure - only feedback.” NLP presupposition.

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