Base Metal...

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Introduction

This month Ray considers how we know what we know and how this can inform our coaching. Spoiler alert - developing this theme, a future article will address how we and our clients may not have the choice and agency which we assume we have - and what the implications might be.

Paul and Ray **The Alchemy team**

Determination - and intuition

I've recently been dealing with my third dose of Covid. Self-isolating, hunkered down, good for very little, all appointments cancelled. This enforced inactivity has allowed me in fits and starts to read "Into the Silence", a remarkable book of over six hundred pages which had been awaiting my attention since I bought it a year ago. This is a brilliantly researched account by Wade Davis of the lure of Mount Everest after the First World War. Everest has been a fascination for me ever since with my school class I went to the local cinema to watch the Pathe News films of the Coronation and the first successful ascent to the highest point on Earth. The early explorers and mountaineers in Tibet and Nepal showed extraordinary perseverance and determination in seeking to achieve their goals.

Q. What part have determination and perseverance played in your experience as a coach?

As I emerged from the lassitude of Covid I engaged with an on-line challenge: Susan Peyton's "The Business of Stories". Over five days she provided a writing task each day with step by step guidance to result in one short compelling story to "captivate dream clients". There were two daily videos - a pre-recorded briefing for the task and a live review and Q & A. Participants posted their work each day and received coaching comments and suggestions for improvement. We were encouraged to publish our story on our preferred platform, and to use the structure for the story to create as many more stories as we wished. Susan shared her own examples and offered positive encouragement and further study opportunities. She kept the process simple and delivered it with infectious enthusiasm.

Q. Do you/how might you use personal stories to attract clients to work with you?

Here is the story I wrote - that this came to mind is no surprise given what I had been reading!

More than twenty climbers and trekkers are crowded into the mess tent.
"Rest day tomorrow. I don't suppose anyone wants to go to Base Camp,"
In the dim light I discern that mine is the only hand raised.
"Why you? You took half an hour to make the last few yards today!"
I hear myself respond "Because I've already sent the postcards to say I'm going there."
Laughter. Everyone's attention is focussed on me.
Who do I think I am? How will I survive eight hours of extreme terrain tomorrow? Then what - will I be able to continue over the glacier without that vital rest day?

Others have already dropped out - that's the last thing I want to happen to me.
I'm here because this is my year 2000 personal challenge.
Now I'm really committed.
I feel alone, afraid - and vitally excited.
I don't know it yet - and tomorrow will turn out to be one of the greatest days of my life.

You may be wondering why I've told you this story. Here's the reason:
Despite my fears, in that moment that my hand went up I was fully alive to who I am and what I wanted.
As a master coach I can support you to find your own inspiration and resources to be whoever you want to be.

Q. When have you noticed that you are, or your client is, fully alive and congruent?

Having recovered from Covid I was delighted to attend an excellent Midlands Coaching Central meeting where Rachael McNidder and June Hogan presented and facilitated a fascinating inquiry entitled "The Power and Pitfalls of Using Intuition in Coaching". We were guided by questions and exercises to explore our understandings of the nature of intuition and how it occurs for coach and client. A view emerged that as we gain more experience we become better able to share intuition.

Q. What part does intuition play in your coaching practice?

I celebrate my motivation and determination to continue my learning, in coaching and in life. The more I know the more I realise how little I know or understand. I'm aware that I sometimes doubt my intuition. Nonetheless I find when coaching that I share my intuition spontaneously - rather as I noticed my hand go up in that 'moment of truth' in the mess tent. There, I've said it: what now?

Book review

"Hare Brain Tortoise Mind - Why Intelligence Increases When You Think Less", Guy Claxton, Fourth Estate, 1997.

This is a richly rewarding exploration of the nature of knowing - both explicit, as in information and practised expertise, and tacit, as in implicit and subliminal knowledge. Examples throughout the book reveal how often we may be mistaken and how important time is - in the value of 'thinking slow'.

Thoughts, ideas and quotations

"The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure; and he that hath little business shall become wise." Ecclesiasticus 38-34.

"Attention means attention." Zen Master Ikkyu.

"Not reasoning. Not calculating. Not busy behaviour of any kind. Not reading. Not talking. Not making an effort. Not thinking. Simply bearing in mind what it is one needs to know." George Spencer Brown.

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