



## Coaching Foundations Handout – A handout to support the CLD Coaching Approaches Development Programme. Delivered in conjunction with staff from the Tayside CLD Partnership and Education Scotland January –March 2013

**This material was developed for the Tayside CLD Partnership by Acorn Principle Plus – a coaching training and provision company. It is for use by CLD practitioners in Scotland who are seeking to build a coaching approach into their day to day work.**

### The ACORN Principle - Philosophy

The concept of The ACORN Principle originated in December 2001 and continues to thrive through a variety of initiatives that offer fresh and innovative solutions to life's many challenges. In the main we develop and deliver personal and social development programmes to professionals and client groups as well as offering 1:1 coaching to individuals who want to bring about significant and lasting change in their lives. The ACORN Principle is based in the premise that, just as a tiny ACORN has the potential within it to grow into a great oak, a human being has inbuilt potential to find success in any area of their life – given the right conditions. The ACORN Coaching Process will raise awareness of those conditions, provide opportunities for increasing knowledge and skills and support individuals in taking the steps they need to unlock their own potential.



### The Tap Root Principle

In his book, "Coaching for Performance", Sir John Whitmore promotes the principle that we are like an ACORN, *"...which contains within it all the potential to be a magnificent oak tree. We need nourishment, encouragement and the light to reach toward, but the oaktreeness is already within."*

Whitmore extends the ACORN analogy a step further:

*"You may not be aware that oak saplings, growing from acorns in the wild, quickly develop a single, hair thin tap root to seek out water. This may extend downwards as far as a metre while the sapling is still only 30cm tall. When growing commercially in a nursery, the taproot tends to coil in the bottom of the pot and is broken off when the sapling is transplanted; setting back its development severely while replacement grows. Insufficient time is taken to preserve the taproot and most growers do not even know of its existence or purpose."*

*The wise gardener, when transplanting a sapling, will uncoil the tender taproot, weight its tip and carefully thread it down a long, vertical hole driven deep into the earth with a metal rod. The small amount of time invested in this process so early in the tree's life ensures its survival and will allow it to develop faster and become stronger than its commercially grown siblings."*

A good coach is like a wise gardener, ensuring the conditions for growth are carefully nurtured"



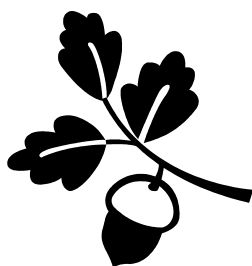


## The ACORN Core Principles

### Core Principles of ACORN Coaching

The principles that underpin our practice and are promoted in every aspect of our work are also important to each of the individuals that deliver the services of the ACORN Principle. These include:

- **Learning Partnership** – we believe that learning is the key to growth. **Self determined learning** comes from the belief that the client holds the key to unlock their potential. **Action learning** acknowledges that we need to take action in order to affect change. **Reflection /N** action is how we learn to recognise what impact our actions are having – this leads to the development of sensory acuity (the ability to discern between what is working for you and what is not). **Reflection ON** action is the added value that the coaching partnership brings to the relationship.
  - **Individuality** – we value the uniqueness of every individual.
  - **Connectivity** – we believe that in order for us to thrive, we need (as individuals) to develop connections with others, with the wider environment – both spiritual and physical – and with ourselves. When people learn to reconnect with their inner values they can begin to enjoy a full and authentic life.
  - **Focused Attention** – we actively promote the belief that, "if we change the way we look at things, the things we look at will change". (Dr Wayne Dyer, 2004)
  - **Human potential** – we promote and support the realisation of the amazing potential within every individual. Sir John Whitmore stated that, "to get the best out of people, we have to believe that the best is in there".
  - **Self-Knowledge** – we accept as true that increased emotional intelligence enables people to 'become' the fully functioning person that they were intended to be.
  - **Power of Intention** – we believe that a key factor in enabling a client to create the life that really excites and fulfils them is to nurture their connection with the Power of Intention because nothing that has ever been created has been created without it!



### Introduction to Coaching

***“Just as every tiny acorn has within it the potential to grow into a great oak tree...the APP approach to coaching is based on the belief that every human being is a unique individual with under developed potential. Coaching is designed to assist the individual discover their potential and to support them as they develop the skills and confidence that will enable them to make full use of it.”***

#### **Definition of Coaching:**

Coaching is a facilitated learning process that empowers the learner to unlock their potential and create the life they want to live.

#### **Origins of Coaching in the UK - From Sport to the Business World**

Almost twenty years ago Tim Gallwey, a Harvard educationalist and tennis expert, first bridged the gap between sports coaching and the business world by introducing the concept that success and achievement are reliant on our state of mind. His books, ***The Inner Game of Tennis*** and, ***The Inner Game of Golf*** captured the essence of coaching as,

*“...unlocking a person’s potential to maximise their own performance.  
It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them”* Gallwey (1986)

The simplicity of Gallwey’s model of coaching was very readily applied to the business context and was developed further by John Whitmore who set up the first specialist Coaching Company for executives and professional teams. In his book, ***Coaching for Performance***, Whitmore stated, “To get the best out of people, we have to believe the best is in there”. His claims were supported by a number of experiments from the field of education that highlighted that; “...our beliefs about the capability of others have a direct impact on their performance” (Whitmore, 1992)

#### **Life Skills Coaching**

Interestingly, ***The Complete Guide to Coaching at Work*** (Perry Zeus & Suzanne Skiffington, 2000), asserts that, “the concept of life skills coaching preceded that of business and executive coaching”, as it was initially introduced as a model for anti-poverty group programmes in New York in the 1960’s by Dr Winthrop Adkins and Dr Sidney Rosenburg. They adopted a coaching approach to working with ‘disadvantaged’ adults because their research showed that traditional educational methods was both ineffective and inappropriate as it, “did not address the cognitive and emotional barriers to coping with life and with change”. The model was then adopted as part of a ‘New Start’ initiative in Canada to introduce this new, effective style of problem solving to interpersonal skills work. By the 1980’s variations on this basic model had reached Australia and the USA and is now a universal concept that has a multitude of applications. These include: Life, Executive & Business Coaching; Team Coaching, Performance Coaching, Career Coaching, Fitness (or Wellness) Coaching, Transition Coaching and quality of life coaching which focuses on specific aspects such as life/work balance.



**Some benefits of Coaching** (as outlined by Zeus & Skiffington)

- Clarifying what you want from life – your purpose & vision
- Setting more effective goals
- Having someone 'on your side' to support & encourage you through change
- Having someone to keep you focused, to challenge you, keep you accountable and confront you if you fall behind on commitments.
- Having a sounding board for your ideas, plans strategies

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## 3 Ps of Best Coaching Practice

Whatever the setting in which you are delivering coaching, the key to delivering an effective and valuable session is in giving due care and attention to the 3 Ps....

### Preparation

- ☐ Be yourself
- ☐ Be ready
- ☐ Be fully present

### Placement

Ensure the coach and coachee are both at the same place.

### Permission

Opening doors for the coach to go with the client into new areas; discovering fresh insights.

### Preparation (Checklist)

- ☐ Prior to each coaching session – or meeting/event/conversation where you will be adopting a coaching approach - take time to create your own peaceful and resourceful state.
- ☐ Take time to clear away any issues/distractions that may prevent you from being focussed on the session and fully present with the coachee.
- ☐ Have all your materials ready and be clear about the process ahead of you.
- ☐ Set a clear intention for yourself in regards to how you want the interaction to go.
- ☐ Make sure you have prepared practically for the situation (i.e. client's notes, materials for the meeting/event, pen and paper, glass of water, mobile switched off...)

**Note:** In this material, primarily designed for coaches delivering coaching programmes, we refer to the coaching session as the main mode of contact between coach and coachee. However, coaching approaches and techniques can be applied to a wide variety of engagements; interactions, meetings, events etc and the guidance offered here can be successfully adapted and applied to any type of coaching conversation.

### Placement

Throughout each coaching session or coaching conversation it is the coach's responsibility to manage the process – to ensure you stay with the coachee along each step of the journey and ensure you are progressing along the path **together**. Placement is about ensuring you have a shared understanding of where you are at this moment and where you intend to go next. This is equally true when working with private clients or in an organisational context.

### Permission

Throughout each of the coaching sessions it is particularly important to seek permission to enter into any new and/or sensitive areas before discussion takes place. As you progress and trust is established you will be able to discern the level to which you can go with the coachee without the need for additional permission.

Continued application of the 3 Ps in all your coaching interactions is crucial to ensuring best coaching practice.





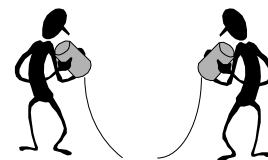
### Developing 'people' skills in a coaching context

In order to improve your competence as a coach a number of core skills can be developed and training and practice in this area is very important. However, it is essential not to focus purely on acquiring a specific skills-set: it is in learning to use these skills in a coaching context that they become especially effective in realising people potential. Skills such as listening and questioning are the keys to good communication in a variety of settings and are crucial in the context of a coaching relationship.

Coaching is not the same as cross-examination, advice giving, guidance or interviewing, and coaching questions are generally future focused and not about the past. A common pitfall to avoid as a coach is not to spend too much time questioning the other person about the past. You do not need to have or understand all the background information in order to move forwards – remember that you are working from their agenda not your own.

There are exercises that you can undertake to improve certain coaching skills but, as with all skills, it takes practice to become a master. The skills highlighted in this training course will enhance your ability to coach effectively and will serve you best if used in harmony with your own personal coaching style. If you nurture a good rapport with your coachee you will be excused the occasional clumsiness.

### Being a Coach

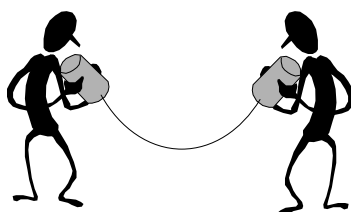


Listening and asking questions in coaching mode means that the other person does most of the talking. Newcomers to coaching often comment on their discomfort with this process, fearing that they have not given enough input. The coachee may thank you profusely for all the help that you have given them and although you may be thinking, 'but I haven't done anything yet', they will already have gained a lot from your undivided attention. One dependable indication of effective coaching is the response from the other person, so accept their feedback with gratitude.

Coaching may not be your natural way of operating, particularly if you are used to telling people what to do, and it is important to be yourself when you have your coaching hat on. This may be particularly relevant in a work context when you are using coaching as a way of working with a member of staff or in a team setting. You do not have to adopt hushed conciliatory tones or a penetrating gaze - coaching is not a 'tell me all your problems and now feel better' session. It is an adult conversation during which you 'get alongside' the other person (or group of people in a team setting) and use your time, energy and expertise to work from and with their agenda. You are focusing your whole attention on them and it is important to keep a clear mind and put intruding thoughts to one side for the duration of the session.



Putting your own ego to one side is also important; you are not there for you, but for them. This has been described as the difference between being “interesting to” and “interested in” the other person.



Some of the skills of a coach are similar to those of a counsellor, adviser or interviewer. Again, remember it is the context in which these skills are used that is different and that it is important for the coach to feel confident and be clear about these distinctions. Those new to coaching can initially be anxious that they have to understand psychology or have had counselling training in order to be an effective coach. Rest assured – you do not *need* that kind of knowledge to be a skilled coach and although in some instances it may add depth to your practice in others it may prove to be a hindrance!

Coaching is a non-threatening, non-invasive process; we do not engage in soul searching, probing questions. It is a safe course of action, and you will not harm the other person if you follow the basic principles of coaching, namely that you are working from their agenda and that they know what is best for them and have all the internal resources to achieve what **they** want. Coaching is an interdependent relationship: the other person is not solely dependent upon you.







*David Rock, Results Coaching Systems is a very powerful communicator. He developed the following toolkit to train some of the world's most effective coaches.*

**There are three main skills to communicating powerfully as a Coach:**

### 1. Being Succinct

Today's culture is so fast paced, flashing images at us at a rate of knots, that we have developed a common trait within our interpersonal skills – a short attention span. We tend to drift off into our own thoughts when someone else is speaking – particularly if we are not that interested in the subject. Sometimes it's just that they are giving us too much information and we can't seem to take it all in.

In communicating ideas, we usually use more words than we need to – we try to give people the 'background' to our stories rather than just giving them the key points because we think they won't understand unless we do that. It is much more beneficial if we can get quickly to the heart of the matter and be succinct.

Being succinct is a learned skill, a habit. It will require you to think carefully before you talk, decide quickly about the essence of what you want to say and then say it with as few words as possible.

#### **Action Point:**

You can develop this skill through practice. During the course (and in everyday life) practice saying things in one sentence wherever you can. Try this out in all sorts of situations and take note of how easy it is to get your message across using fewer words.

### 2. Being Specific

As well as being succinct, you need to be specific about what you want to say so that the recipient knows exactly what you are trying to say.

This makes sure you give people all the relevant information to clearly illustrate the point you are making. The key is to understand which elements of your conversation are relevant and which are not.

#### **Example:**

Imagine that you are completing a coaching session. You might say, "That was a great session". This doesn't have the same power as, "That was a great session – the way we bounced off each other in setting the goals shows we could really work well together".

Watch out for being a lazy communicator – think carefully about what details people need to know and then be specific about them.





### 3. Being Generous

Being generous is about being real, being human and showing care and consideration for the other person.

Being generous helps the client to feel more comfortable with you. It is a key skill in building trust and intimacy.

Being generous makes the space for the client to be “real” with you.

Being generous in coaching includes things like:

- Sharing things about yourself
- Being open about personal things
- Acknowledging things the client did that were important to them

#### **An example of using all three skills together at the end of a session:**

“That was a great session – the way we bounced off each other in setting the goals shows me we would probably work really well together. Thanks for being willing to be so open with me about your whole life – I appreciated being allowed into your world. Thank you.”





## Improving your Self Knowledge

An awareness of self – or a ‘working knowledge’ of self – is crucial in developing personal effectiveness. Burnard (1992) defines self-awareness as:

**The process of getting to know your feelings, attitudes and values.  
It is also learning about the effect you have on others.**

Burnard (1992)

Learning about our own attitudes leads not only to increased knowledge of self but also to enhanced realisation of the impact of your own style and approach on other people. Increasing self-awareness can therefore be seen to have a major part to play in developing people’s abilities in a wide range of life, work and business contexts impacting positively upon stress management, team building, assertiveness and communication skills.

**The way we communicate with self and others  
determines the extent to which we will succeed**

Tony Robbins

### Lessons from Neuroscience

David Rock compares the executive functioning in our brain to a ‘Director’ in order that we can separate ourselves from what’s going on in our thinking processes and take an objective look at ourselves and the way we think. This technique offers us a great opportunity to become ‘mindful’ of who we are and of the choices we make on a day to day basis. Kevin Ochsner, head of the Social Cognitive Neuroscience Laboratory at Columbia University, NY tells us, “Becoming self aware, having a meta-perspective on ourselves, is really like interacting with another person. This is a fundamental thing that social neuroscience is trying to understand”.

By becoming more self aware can have a positive impact on your life in many ways. David Rock puts it this way: “Noticing more real-time information makes you more flexible in how you respond to the world. You also become less imprisoned by the past, your habits, expectations or assumptions, and more able to respond to events as they unfold”.

By coaching another person, you take on a similar role for them; observing, noticing patterns, giving powerful feedback and supporting them in becoming more self aware too.





### Types of Questions

#### Open and Closed Questions

Open questions challenge the client to give an answer that comes from thinking about something further or deeper. It is by asking open questions that the coach and the client can uncover insights and move the conversation towards setting the most effective actions.

E.g. how do you feel about getting started?

Closed questions can be answered by yes or no. As coaches we will mostly ask open questions: however, sometimes it is more appropriate to ask closed questions in order to complete an issue and move on. Closed questions can also bring definition to a conversation by asking the client to make a decision.

#### Who, What, Where, How versus Why?

Asking 'why' tells the client you want reasons or excuses. If you ask 'why' you tend to send the conversation into issues founded in the past, which is entering the realm of counselling or therapy. As a coach, it is our job to move people forward and for this reason we try to focus on 'where', 'what', 'when', 'how' and 'who'. This approach has a lot more potential and power.

For example, instead of, 'why didn't you get your actions done this week?' ask 'how do you feel about the fact that you didn't get your actions completed?'

#### Your Agenda versus Listening

What kind of agendas do we have when we ask questions? As coaches, we have to be extremely aware of personal agendas such as 'being liked' or 'hearing the gossip', 'not wanting to ask people personal things', 'looking good as a coach', 'seeming to have all the answers'. These types of agendas do not enable powerful questions or allow you to sit alongside the coachee. It is important to be aware of when you might be falling into the trap of operating these agendas and quickly replace them with a more empowering starting point such as 'being of service' or 'providing value' or 'allowing the client to learn'.



### Reasons for the questions

Coaching is about forwarding the process of human learning. For true learning to occur, the client has to find their solutions within their own experience. The coach's primary tool for making this happen is asking questions.

### As a coach we ask questions to:

- Create awareness of something
- Generate responsibility
- Encourage enquiry and discovery
- Generate commitment
- Change perspective
- Move the client to take action

### Examples of Powerful Questions:

#### Create awareness

- What impact do you think this is having on you?
- How is this affecting you?
- How do you feel about your situation now that you know this?

#### Generate responsibility

- Are you willing to look at what is going on here?

#### Encourage enquiry and discovery

- Are you willing to look deeper into this?
- Where else is this happening?

#### To gain clarity

- Is that like...?
- What is at the core of this?
- How is this really for you?

#### To generate commitment

- Are you willing to do something about this?
- What would it be like if you really got committed to changing this?



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### Coaching Tools - Powerful Questions

*Wisdom on how to ask questions that have an impact on the coachee from “Living your best life” by Laura Berman Fortgang and “Quiet leadership” by David Rock.*

Questions are one of the most useful tools a coach has at their disposal – asking the most powerful questions will help the coachee look inside and draw on their inner wisdom to find solutions that will help move them on.

**Laura Berman-Fortgang** starts off her book, “*Living Your Best Life*”, with chapter 1 headed: ‘ask what, not why’ and promotes the use of the ‘what’ question to enable people to access their own wisdom – hence the term, Wisdom Access Questions (WAQ).

Where a ‘why’ question will often lead you down a blind alley and the coachee may react with a flight or fight response, who, when and where questions elicit information which often lead to more and more information questions and a huge amount of detail that can often confuse the issue and take us round in circles. A ‘what’ question can be incisive and lead quickly to an outcome. Laura has devised a list of WAQs by ensuring that the focus of the question is not on details or information but on outcomes – here are some examples from her list.

What do you want?  
What are you afraid of?  
What is this costing you?  
What are you attached to?  
What is beyond this problem?  
What is ahead?  
What’s stopping you?  
What would make the biggest difference here?  
What are you going to do?

What do you hope to accomplish by having that conversation?  
What do you hope to accomplish by doing that?  
What’s the first step?  
What’s important about that?  
What’s the ideal outcome?  
What are you going to do?  
What’s working for you?  
What decision would you make from a place of abundance?  
What other choices do you have?  
What do you really, really want?  
What if there were no limits?  
What is left to do to have this be complete?

**For more info visit:-**<http://www.laurabermanfortgang.com>



**David Rock**, founder of Results Coaching Systems, describes in his book, “Quiet Leadership” (2006), a way to take questioning to a higher level and enable a client to bring about a change where it really matters – in their thinking!

David asserts that **Thinking Questions** are the best response to a dilemma as they stimulate some thinking from the coachee that is outwit the realms of our inside knowledge about the dilemma. How better to help people make new connections in their brains than to identify their own thinking patterns. A Thinking Question generally focuses the coachee on their own thoughts by having the word, ‘thinking’ or ‘thoughts’ in the question...e.g.

“How long have you been thinking like this?”

“How much time do you spend thinking about this?”

Followed by, “How important do you think this thought is?” followed by, “How satisfied are you with the amount of time you have given this issue so far?”

As coaches, we don’t tell people how to think differently – even if it is a great idea (like, ‘focus on your vision’ or ‘find new ways to relax’ or ‘try to be more optimistic’) – instead we ask the questions that enable them to choose their own path.

Asking **Thinking Questions** focuses the coachee on their own thinking. This will help to improve the quality of their thinking.

You may have noticed that **any question** we ask serves to redirect the coachee’s focus ...we can only ever focus on one thing at a time so if we want to distract the coachee’s attention away from a negative pathway, we need to be careful what questions we ask.

### Useful Thinking Questions...

- How long have you been thinking like this / or about this?
- How often / regularly do you have these kinds of thoughts?
- What priority does this issue have in your thinking time?
- What priority should it have?
- How committed are you to finding a solution to this issue?
- How motivated are you in finding solutions this week?
- What effect does thinking about this have on you?
- How do you feel when you think like this?
- What are you noticing about the impact your thinking is having?
- What insights, if any, have you had in relation to this topic / issue?
- Would it be worth turning this insight into a habit?
- Do you know what to do to embed this as a habit?
- Are you clear about what to do next?
- How would you like me to help you with this?







Being a good listener is essential to being a good coach. Here are five crucial points about being a good listener:

### 1. Be present

Work hard at listening – give people your total attention; listen with all your five senses. When you feel yourself drifting off into other thoughts, purposefully bring yourself back to the client.

Empathise with where the client is coming from; put yourself in their shoes.

Make sure you receive the client's complete message in totality without reacting. As you become more experienced you will see patterns, you will often know the answer for the client, or what they are about to say. You need to let them come to their own insight, not just give them the answer. Coaching is about forwarding the process of active learning. Hold yourself back, listen intently and give the client your complete focus.

### 2. Listen to more than just their words

There are three levels of listening: words, tone of voice and body language. Listen to all three at once.

1. **The words** a client uses can give you insight into where they are. Once you have worked with the client for a few sessions you will know their speech pattern and will notice when it changes. For example, a client may be using pronouns 'they' and 'we' and place of 'I', indicating blame or feeling like a victim or avoiding responsibility. If a client is swearing or using humour inappropriately they may be masking other feelings. Clients also may be uncomfortable talking about themselves as much as they do in coaching sessions. In Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) terms, listening to a client's words will give you an insight into their preferred mode of learning/ representational system. This information provides you with a positive forum for establishing rapport with the client.
2. A client's **tone of voice** gives away everything they are feeling. As a trained coach, you will get to the point of knowing exactly how a client feels by the tone of their first few words in a session (particularly if you are coaching over the phone). Practice listening to people's tones of voice to develop this skill.
3. **Body language** can give away what people are thinking. Be conscious of the way people sit, hold themselves, touch themselves (often for comfort) and look at you. Obviously you can't do this over the phone, but you can listen carefully for shifting around, body movements etc. – this gives some indication of the level of comfort/discomfort a person is feeling.

### 3. Make sure you have heard correctly

So often what we think people have said is not what they meant. As a coach you have to be really clear that you have heard exactly what the client is meaning, not just what they are saying. Consider this deeply.



It is often valuable to say things back to the client to ensure you have captured their 'meaning'.

Clarifying skills you can use to do this are:

- **Mirroring** – saying back exactly what they said – this builds up trust by letting the client know you are listening carefully
- **Paraphrasing** – reflecting back using your own words – if you summarise and feedback what they have said more succinctly, it helps bring focus and clarity to the conversation.

If you do paraphrase and change the words they use, you may change the meaning, so remember to check that you have grasped the meaning of their words. Once you have fed back to the client, listen for their reaction to really be sure you heard them correctly and if you are not certain, ask them to express what they are saying again.

#### 4. Listen from the context of being a coach

We all have an agenda when we listen to others. When we coach, it might be to 'appear smart' or to 'be liked by the client' or 'to get the contract'. In order to be a powerful listener you need to be able to notice your agenda and put it aside, making the client's agenda your own. This is one of the real challenges of coaching.

Some keys to this are:

1. **Resist the distraction of trigger words** – e.g. 'I didn't do my actions' or 'I can't pay you this week'. Watch out for getting charged up about a conversation – you are no longer listening to the client when you are reacting to something they say.
2. **Listen without judgement** – e.g. if a client says they hate something that you value, how do you listen to them for that? How does this influence the way you listen? If a client makes statements that conflict with your values, you need to be aware of judgements that you may be making and put them to one side.
3. **Above all, listen as someone totally committed to the client realising their potential** – this is the agenda you have promised as a coach, it is what the client expects and it may be what they are paying you for.

#### 5. Clarify the conversation as you go

Clarifying is getting to the core of the conversation. It is saying something back to someone in a way that makes the essence of the conversation clearer. It is not paraphrasing, which is saying the same thing back in different words; it is saying something back in a way that is of real value to the client and to the process.

To clarify effectively you are answering questions within your own experience, like:

- What is the person trying to say?
- What are they not saying?
- What is the emotional context for what they are saying
- What is 'behind' their words?

What gets in the way of clarifying? To clarify effectively you need to be totally focused on the client. Thinking *too* much about what they are saying gets in the way, as does worrying about 'getting it right'. Effective clarifying requires you to be relaxed and at ease, in tune with the client and open to your intuition.





## Giving Feedback

Feedback is expressing your experience of something in a way that is of real value to the other person. Giving feedback is not simply stating your opinion, although it is subjective. Before delivering feedback you need to be sure that what you are going to say is going to be 'up-building' and add value to the other person's experience.

A good coach delivers powerful, insightful feedback that will make a positive difference to the others. Results Life Coaching offers the following guidelines for effective feedback (with APP Associate's additional comments in italics):

- Be succinct – best feedback is given in one sentence.
- Be specific – *an individual benefits more from knowing exactly what you are referring to.*
- Be generous – *be yourself – be congruent and feel free to share personal information if it will add value to the client's experience.*
- Listen carefully to what people are saying. Be completely with the person – give them your full attention (*and be very aware of your own agenda in the process*).
- Don't interfere with people's conversation or interrupt them – unless it is to provide gentle guidance if they are struggling to find the right words. Be patient with the different speeds of conversation and get comfortable with silences and pauses.
- Jot down brief notes – it helps in giving specific feedback later (*and it will inform overall summary of the coaching process at its conclusion*).
- Be generous with your acknowledgements, focussing on and validating people's strengths. Practice looking for what people are doing right.
- Always ask permission to move into sensitive areas. (E.g. I want to give you feedback that you might find a bit personal – is that ok with you? Be respectful if people say no).
- When pointing out issues that may seem negative, use 'I' rather than 'we', 'they' or 'you'. Owning a statement adds emotional power and is less likely to be confrontational.
- If in doubt about feedback, ask yourself this question – 'Is what I am saying going to sink in and be considered seriously enough by the other person?'

In his book, 'Coaching for Performance', Sir John Whitmore develops the idea of 'feedback' one-step further. First of all he refers to there being five levels of feedback that we can give to a person:

- Personalised criticism – (e.g. You are useless)
- Judgemental comment – (e.g. This report is useless)
- Information without ownership – (e.g. The content of your report was clear and concise, but the layout and presentation were too downmarket)
- Non-specific question to encourage ownership – (e.g. How do you feel about the report?) The individual is likely to make a non-response with 'fine' or make a value judgement on his or her own work such as 'lousy' or 'great'.
- Specific, powerful questioning – (e.g. what is the essential purpose of your report? To what extent do you think this draft achieves that? What are the other points you feel need to be emphasised etc.) In response to a series of questions such as these, the individual gives a detailed, non- judgemental description of the report and the thinking behind it.



Sir John Whitmore suggests that in order to answer incisive questions such as those at point five, an individual has to engage his brain to get involved in the process and in doing so, and this becomes a valuable learning experience. What is happening here is;

- **Raising awareness**
- **Encouraging personal responsibility for learning**

Feedback needs to cover the results of action and the action process itself if it is to be truly effective. For example, a golf ball provides perfect feedback as it lands exactly where the golfer hits it. This is the result. How the golfer hit the ball is the process. When we give feedback, we are getting the individual to look at what happened – and to look at the outcome

Sir John Whitmore introduces the concept of FEEDFORWARD!

For example, extending the golfing analogy we may say to a golfer, “When you hit your ball the next time, tell me how that feels in your body”. Here the coach would be **generating anticipation** that **creates awareness** immediately, as it is happening. In the same way, if we ask client to pay close attention to specific aspects of the process the next time they are in a certain situation, they will be physically and mentally alert to the situation, thus more open to learning from the experience.

A good way to learn this is to **notice what you notice the next time somebody is giving you feedback!**

