



Chapter Two

WHY WE COACH

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The response to ‘Why do we coach?’ leads to what is missing – the remembrance of the inner source and origin of your potential and power. Here we explore the existence of two iterations of self – both a partial and whole self. This potentiality towards becoming more whole is a measure of your desire to make sustained change and the motivation to become the person you aspire to be.

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In seeking to answer the question ‘What is coaching?’ we have looked at this occupation from different angles. Each angle is like a piece of a puzzle but, no matter how hard we try, these different pieces do not connect together to complete a full picture. The ‘what’ offers only a partial view and reminds us that

coaching is a composite of both fact and mystery. How can we more fully enter into the mystery of coaching to discover what we might be missing and what will help to complete our understanding? I believe that we can explore what is missing by responding to another question: ‘Why do we coach?’

To explore this fundamental question, it is useful here for me to draw directly on my own experience and ask myself this very question.

On the surface, I wish to help others to develop within business and organisational settings, and to feel happier and more fulfilled in their working lives. Beneath this I am also tirelessly curious about human nature, who I am and how we develop, learn and grow. Coaching offers the chance to explore the generative nature of a trusting relationship and, in fact, how we learn to relate.

Part of my wish to become a coach reflects the need to know and understand myself much better. This learning equally harbours the wish to help others to better understand themselves and to grow. Deeper still, I realise that I am somehow drawn to coaching.

This is not an occupation I have chosen at random. Coaching is, in many ways, my most natural occupation. I feel somehow ‘called’ to coaching. What I mean is, while wanting outwardly to develop others, something inside equally longs to be developed. Does our motivation to coach reflect a deeper longing to grow ourselves?

• POWER AND POTENTIAL •

In answering the question ‘Why do I coach?’, I acknowledge the aspect that motivates my development and growth and affirm the existence of a source of new possibility and power to be found within. Is this the source of hidden potential that we each

and all wish to harness and into which our organisations long to tap? Is this our hidden resource that appears to be the origin of our aspirations and longing, our passion and purpose, our performance and productivity, our deeper humanity and authenticity, our creative expression and well-being?

If we are able to stay with the ‘why’, then we can remember the origin of our desire to coach and have access to its hidden potential and power. If we are unable to reflect and question, then we overlook this source and become increasingly blind to its possibility. To become masterful we must discover the vital importance of being inwardly directed and how we can learn to see or sense potentiality.

THE COACHING BLIND SPOT

If we recall our response to the ‘what’ of coaching you will now see how this focuses on the surface facts and overlooks the depth and true source of our power and potential. The ‘what’ is concerned with the facts, process and methods of the coach and how our performance may be quantitatively measured, and yet it overlooks the true source of our desire and motivation to change and develop.

Without knowledge and a working insight to the existence of our deeper authenticity and humanity, the coach and client are blind to the source of power that motivates all sustained change.

It is not the work of the coach to predict or know what the client needs or aspires to achieve, this content is purely personal to the client. What is required of the coach is an awareness of their original source of learning and power so that they can help to guide the client to realise this possibility.

• TWO SELVES •

The ‘why’ of coaching puts us back in touch with the person we often overlook. This is the person we aspire to be or become. How can we best describe this self? It is your most natural and genuine self; who you are when you are content, happy and growing. Becoming this person offers the chance for you to realise your fuller potential and to feel more real, natural and fulfilled. In realising this deeper self we can express the source of our motivation to learn and develop.

In exploring both the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ of coaching we therefore recognise the existence of two different but related selves. The first is your everyday self. It is the self that you present outwardly to the world – your outer face. When you forget to question and ask ‘why’, this concept of self seems to be fixed and to mark the full extent of your identity. However, when you reflect and recognise the person you wish to become, you realise that there is conceivably another iteration of self that you recall and can potentially become. We are drawn to this second self – a ‘self in potential’ – as it represents the person we would ideally like to be and desire to become. Is this our most natural original self? The vision of the masterful coach is sensitive to and guided by this potentiality, seeing that, beneath the need to improve performance, is the wish of the client to realise their second, most natural, self.

**This second self motivates your development.
It is the self that you were born to be.**

Against the second self, the first self appears partial. Awareness of the second self means that the first can no longer be the full extent of identity – it is a deeper sense of identity and source, it is, once more, the person you aspire to be.

COACHING AND THE TWO SELVES

Why are two selves important to coaching? As we have established, the existence of the second self implies that the self we commonly present to the world is partial. The recognition of both selves offers a direction and meaning to our development – that we are not fixed, but, rather, in the process of becoming. The desired goal of the client is also to ‘become’ – to become the person they aspire to be. It is the role of the coach to help the client to recognise, clarify and take conscious steps to fulfil their desire to be or become that person. Each time this second iteration of self is remembered, the client can reorientate, balance, rejuvenate and more clearly move towards the direction they desire to take. This is the impulse that motivates the client to make conscious and sustained changes and develop.

Remembering the ‘self in potential’ offers the client a chance to recall:

- what is truly important and fulfilling
- a clearer sense of direction
- how to reorientate, rebalance and refresh
- the desire and motivation to change and develop.

It is the work of the coach to remain conscious of the importance of these two selves, and to help to guide the client to remember and realise their own source of power, potential and deepening authenticity. In discovering the masterful coach we become aware of the art of helping the client to remember both these iterations of self.

RECOGNISING THE ‘SELF IN POTENTIAL’

Often we think that coaching is entirely focused on helping the client to perform better. This is indeed a part of the outcome,

but this is just the tip of the iceberg. Coaching is about remembering and recognising the ‘self in potential’ that we forget – this is the source of your power to help your clients. The coach learns how to remember and visualise potentiality, recalling the prospects and possibilities that await the clients.

To help to illustrate just how powerful the two selves are in coaching, I would like to share an extract from a conversation I had with a senior executive as our coaching work was drawing to a close. Read carefully how this client speaks about his experience of coaching in terms of different selves:

Coach: What changes have you observed through the coaching?

Client: It’s been an awakening of myself (*pause*) . . . that’s been one of the important results for me. The book is not yet finished. We are at the end of the beginning.

Note how he speaks of an awakened self and uses ‘the end of the beginning’ to describe this enigmatic concept.

Coach: You’re becoming a poet (*smile*).

Client: I connect a lot more than I did. I don’t profess to know myself. I’m also genuinely OK with not knowing the answer. The answer is not it. It’s the journey of getting to the answer that it’s all about. I realise that now.

Coach: How do you experience this awakening of the self?

Client: It’s not all about goals, becoming the next CEO or promotion. It’s more about discovering a greater sense of self and how I interact. Those

are the really valuable things. It's not only about financial gain, it's more how I relate and can empathise with the question: what can I do for mankind? This involves an investment of self. Previously I did not have a strong voice for myself. I also used to be afraid of being on my own. Now I realise that it's important to be alone and to have my own space and to take time to truly get to know myself. Before I was not committed to what I wanted.

Though performance is an important aspect of coaching and, often, how we frame our interventions, what the client acknowledges primarily is the discovery of a greater sense of self and relationship, together with a clearer sense of purpose.

Coach: And now?

Client: Yes, I'm committed and clearer. I have much greater freedom within to remember what I truly want. This frees me to be in relationships more. I do feel happier and also somehow more fulfilled.

Note how happiness and a sense of fulfilment are two coaching products.

THE 'WHAT' AND THE 'WHY' OF COACHING

In exploring the 'why' of coaching we can see and find important clues to the missing aspects of the 'what'. Only when we remember why we coach do we recognise the true meaning of coaching as a journey. When combined, the 'what' and 'why' of coaching give clues to the nature and source of masterful

practice. When we marry the ‘what’ with the ‘why’, we realise fundamentally how coaching can facilitate an identity shift. The client can move from a partial concept of self (first self) to experience a more complete, whole and original self (second self).