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Coaching Principles: Clarity, Focus, Ease and Grace

by Maria Nemeth, Ph.D., MCC

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Coaching Principles:

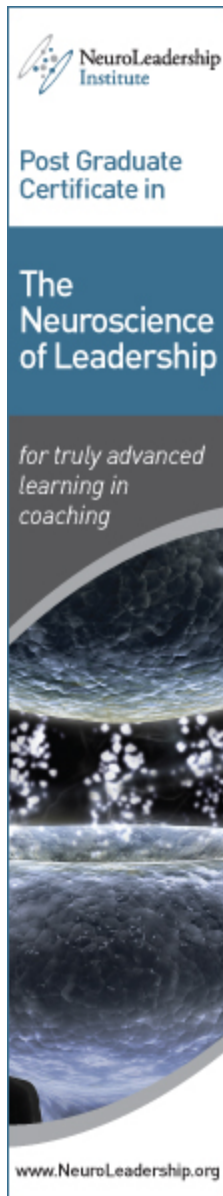
Part 1: Clarity

Why did you choose to become a coach? As a licensed clinical psychologist, coaching was a solution I had been seeking for about twenty years. I had studied a number of psychotherapeutic modalities. Each brought the client to a certain point of self-discovery. However, there was always that question at the end: now that I feel better, what am I going to do with the rest of my life?

In working with thousands of people, I discovered this: it takes just as much, if not more, courage for someone to come for coaching as it does for them to seek out psychotherapy. People are more used to talking about their problems and dilemmas than their possibilities and dreams. As a coach, you hold their ideas and vision in the palm of your hands. People are the most vulnerable when they look at what they long to create. That's why training is so important.

Something else I have learned: there is a difference between a great coach and a masterful coach. If you're a great coach, people leave sessions with you inspired by your brilliance, by the powerful questions you've asked them. When you're a masterful coach, people leave their time with you inspired by their own brilliance, and by the powerful questions they have asked themselves.

There are four principles that have distilled themselves into



a delicious essence that pervades my work as a coach and teacher. The principles are: clarity, focus, ease and grace. This series gives you a taste of them and uses questions to show you how to apply the principles that interest you to your own practice as a coach.

CLARITY:

A synonym for clarity is precision. As coaches we know how important it is to be precise with our clients about the differences between coaching, counseling and consulting. Our ability to serve people appropriately is dependent on this understanding.

Looking from a different angle at the principle of clarity: when all is said and done, are we clear that the person we are talking to is-as Joseph Campbell would say-a hero? Do we see the courage and commitment it takes just to be a human being with a heart full of vision and a mind often full of doubts? Or, do we question our client's commitment, thereby adding to their already existing burden of self-deprecation? No other animal on this planet diminishes itself the way we do. And no other creature is as capable of creative genius.

It may be that the primary reason people come for coaching, whether they are aware of it or not, is to be in the presence of someone who will not give up on them, even when they are tempted to give up on themselves. People flourish when they find someone who will take delight in their goals and dreams. They don't shine when that person goes into collusion with the self-limiting internal conversations that have kept them on the sidelines of their games in life. And part of going into collusion with them is to act as though these internal conversations really mean something about them. They don't. Everyone has them: even the most successful people alive.

Example illustrating clarity: Joe calls you for his regularly scheduled appointment. He sounds hesitant and finally admits: "I didn't write the ten pages on my book I promised I'd write this week. I feel terrible. I guess I'm not really committed."

Being clear about who he is, how might you respond?
Here's one way:

"Welcome to coaching, Joe. People have coaches precisely for this reason. If we always did what we promised, we wouldn't need them! It took a lot of courage to tell the truth. And, if you weren't already committed to this project, you wouldn't feel so bad about not writing on your book."



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Tools:

For the next week, write the following on a 3X5 card and look at it before your coaching sessions:

- Do I see that this person is a hero with goals and dreams and a desire to make a difference?
- Do I see that it takes courage to be a human being, with a heart full of dreams and a mind full of doubts?
- Am I willing to take delight in this person's goals?
- Do I see that this person is already committed, or else he/she wouldn't be in a coaching relationship to begin with?
- Am I willing to demonstrate that I know these things in the way that I interact with this person?

Look for Part 2 of this series: *Focus*, in two weeks.

About our Expert:

Maria Nemeth, Ph.D., MCC, a Licensed Clinical Psychologist and Master Certified Coach, is an internationally recognized speaker, author, and seminar leader. She is the founder and Creative Director of the Academy for Coaching Excellence. For more than 20 years, Dr. Nemeth has trained professional coaches, ministers, clinicians, executives, teachers, and private individuals using the coaching methods and skills that she has designed. Her courses and workshops have been taken by thousands of people who report significant, extraordinary changes in their lives as a result of these principles.

Contact: **Academy for Coaching Excellence**

1900 Point West Way, Ste 122

Sacramento, CA 95815

Email: mnemeth@academyforcoachingexcellence.com

Phone: 916-798-7066

Web: www.academyforcoachingexcellence.com

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