

## Coaching Tip: Why “Trying to be Valuable” May Be Hurting You and Your Clients

Welcome to my Coaching tip on why “trying to be valuable” may be hurting you and your clients.

My hunch is that one of the primary reasons you decided to become a coach is because you want to be of service, and make a meaningful contribution to the world. At least that’s why I decided to become a coach. So with that in mind, when we enter into a coaching relationship, naturally we want to be of service and offer value to our clients – in exchange for money, we agree to help our clients achieve the results they say they want to achieve. In essence we, help to remove the real or perceived obstacles that are getting in the way of what they want to be, do and have. Many of you are doing this – offering real value to your clients – helping them find the answers within themselves so that they live in alignment with their Essential Self. That’s all good, right? Except when our limiting beliefs hide behind the veil of our seemingly noble and selfless goals.

Let me give you an example. About a year ago I was mentoring a coach and critiquing one of her coaching sessions. What I noticed when I listened to her coach was that she had a tendency to “teach” vs. “show”. In other words, rather than coaching her client’s dirty pain she was explaining and actually teaching her client coaching concepts. That’s not always a bad thing but in this case she was doing too much of it. I also noticed that the tone of her coaching was rather aggressive. She was hammering the client for answers and peppering her with multi-layers questions – thoughts were popping up everywhere but were often glossed over or deserted. As a result, the session became very circular, the client shut down and very little progress was made.

When I asked her about what her coaching objective was, she said “to provide value to my client.” A seemingly altruistic goal, but was it? The results speak for themselves. After some digging around, what was lurking underneath was a true and genuine lack of confidence in her coaching ability. She simply didn’t believe in herself and her value. She was so wrapped in the idea that she needed to provide value that she was, in essence, performing for her client, tap dancing as fast as she could in an effort to prove her value and using her client’s experience to do so. She believed that if her client had an “aha” moment, or had a significant insight, then she was of value and got to feel good. But if the client didn’t have that experience, you guessed it, she felt like crap. You never want to hold your client hostage and thus responsible for your feelings.

But coaching does that. It triggers our self-limiting beliefs – so if we don’t think we’re good enough, smart enough, or talented enough, for example, those thoughts will surface when we coach and will inform us how we coach. When you don’t believe in your ability to coach someone, if you don’t trust yourself, several things will happen – like my coaching client, you may get too aggressive, or conversely too sympathetic, or you might try and get your client to like you by being their cheerleader or worse, you may find yourself symptom coaching, giving them advice, or making suggestions about how they can change their behavior or you may hold back the truth. How do you know if this is happening? There are two ways. The first is how and what you feel. If you experience any degree of frustration, impatience, annoyance or irritation or tension with your client, that’s a tip off. The second way is by how you coach, or your behavior. If you are coaching aggressively, sympathetically, offering advice, talking too much, teaching vs. showing, that’s also a tip off.

So, if I’m speaking to you right now, and you are filled with self doubt, I invite you to take a piece of paper and start a list of why you good enough right now? What characteristics are you proud of? What can you trust about yourself? Don’t undermine, dismiss or shrug off anything. For example, do you trust your ability to listen? Do you have faith in your ability to hold space for your client, without judgment or opinion? Also, I urge you to consider other attributes that are not necessarily innate. For example, are you open to trying different

strategies if something isn't working? Do you learn from your mistakes and refrain from beating yourself up? Are you willing to take risks and do things that are uncomfortable? Do you stand up for what you believe in? Are you willing to forgive yourself for past mistakes? Do you have the grit to see things through? The bottom line is that your value as a coach is not contingent on your innate gifts and talents but rather your ability to stick with yourself so that you can improve and get better.

And, just so you know, when I go into a session, my only thought is "I am irrelevant" ... and when I think that "value" flows through me. I don't have to prove it, it just is.

Cheers,

Jackie