

Coaching Tip: How to Help Clients Who Are in a Funk

Welcome to my coaching tip of the day on how to help clients who are in a funk.

When I have a client who feels dull, flat or just plain ole' blah, I will often assign them the exercise below to help bring awareness to what's working and identify what brings energy to their life (people, places, things) rather than resorting to thought work. This exercise can also be used it with clients who are in the early stages of exploring a new career path. I'm sure you'll see other applications too so adapt away because the truth is that most coaching tools are just 2.0 versions of age-old concepts and ideas. This one in particular is an adaptation of a process that was developed by Marcus Buckingham to help people identify their strengths and their weaknesses. My friend and colleague Susan Hyatt calls her version the *Happy Basket*.

By encouraging your clients to explore and identify what invigorates them and, conversely, what depletes them, they can begin to make incremental changes (turtle steps) that will ultimately bring more meaning, joy and deeper sense of satisfaction to their life.

The Observation Deck:

Ask your client to buy a pack of index cards in two different colors. I like using green and yellow. The green index cards are used for describing activities (people, places or things) that feel warm and energizing. It could be things you love (flowers or Buddha heads) people (Martha Beck tribe), places (museums, book stores) where you

lose track of time, or activities (reading memoirs, making homemade granola). The more specific, the better. The yellow cards are earmarked to describe anything that drains your energy or leaves you feeling cold. It could be things you loathe, paying bills, for example, or something less extreme like baking brownies for your kid's school party.

For one week, ask your clients to carry these cards wherever they go. Sprinkle them everywhere – in their purse, car glove compartment, at work and key locations in their home. Any interaction, activity, or task, along with people or places they encounter, that feels warm or cold, gets documented on the appropriate colored index card. Scrubbing floors, for instance, might belong on the yellow card. Singing in their car would go on a green card. At the end of the day, they will drop the cards into a large box or basket in a high traffic area – in the entry hall of their home for example.

After a week, ask them to dump the cards onto the floor and sort by color. Green in one pile, yellow in the other. Keeping the colors separate, have them spread each card out so they can read them at a glance. Once this is complete they will group them together according to themes or patterns, making sure not to mix up the colors.

For example, writing, car singing and re-arranging furniture are all expressions of their creativity so I would group those together. Household chores that consume their energy (taking out the trash, scrubbing floors and cooking) would also be chunked together.

When you meet with your client next, you can ask them some of the following questions:

1. What self-discoveries did you make as a result of doing this exercise?
2. What stood out for you?
3. Did you notice any patterns or themes? Please describe.
4. What insights did you have when you read these cards?
5. What would need to happen in order for you to include more of the zestier, or “warmer” activities/events/people in your life?

6. What would need to happen in order for you to reduce and/or eliminate the empty “colder” items (people, places, things, tasks, etc.)?

Depending on the responses, you will either coach them around:

- The obstacles/limiting beliefs that are impeding them from taking action toward what they want more of/less of.
- Apply the Three B's (Bag It, Barter It or Better It) to the ones that consume their energy.
- Create turtle steps for some of these warmer activities

I hope you enjoyed my coaching tip of the week... and just a reminder that I have some openings for The Coaching Den. This is an ideal place to connect with fellow coaches, receive a treasure trove of business advice and get coaching from me! It's a trifecta and it's what I craved when I was a newbie coach. Check out the details [here](#) or if you're listening, go to www.jackiegartman.com and click on “For Coaches”. You'll see the link to The Coaching Den.

Cheers,

Jackie