

Coaching Tip: Striving to be a “good coach”

Anyone can be a coach. It’s the easiest thing in the world. All it requires is saying the following:

I’m a life coach.

Easy, peasy, right?

But being a life coach and a good or even a great one requires a lot more than claiming you’re a coach (since you don’t have to be licensed or even certified.) Because every Coach I’ve mentored strives to be a “good coach” one of the first things I ask them is:

How do you define a good life coach?

Here are some of the responses I’ve received from the various coaches I’ve mentored over the last 8 years:

A good coach means:

1. My clients have an “aha” moment or make some significant self-discovery
2. I can make my clients feel better
3. I inspire and motivate my clients
4. My clients rehire me
5. My clients make progress or a certain degree of progress
6. I know all the tools backwards and forwards
7. I know the right tools for every situation, issue or experience in that very moment
8. I know exactly where to go next in a coaching session
9. I should know and peg everything my client is going through
10. I can figure things out on my own

11. Has a plethora of information and resources on their website
12. Has no fear, doubt or hesitation

If you share any of these definitions, I have great news – you are not alone! But here’s the thing, and maybe you noticed this, these definitions (the first five to be exact) are entirely dependent on the clients experience, feelings or results. In other words, they’re based on external measures, which can put you, as the coach, in a very vulnerable position. When you hold your clients hostage to prove your belief system – that you’re either a good or a bad coach – you and your client will pay the price. If, for example you are attached to your client having an “aha” moment, there’s a very good chance you will ask leading vs. open-ended questions, over plan sessions vs. living in creative perpetual response to whatever arises, teach rather than show (letting them know that you’re smart and know what you’re doing) and focus on your performance rather than being present for your client. And if they don’t have an “aha” moment, there’s an excellent chance that you’ll feel like crap.

You might also notice that these definitions promote perfectionism. Julia Cameron says that *“perfectionism is not a quest for the best. It is a pursuit of the worst in ourselves; the part that tells us that nothing we do will ever be good enough – that we should not try again.”*

When you hold yourself up to that nebulous yardstick of perfection, you will either not act or when you do act and screw up, you give up. In short, you never achieve your definition of a good coach because you focus on being good rather than embracing “not being good”. When you don’t give yourself permission to make errors, it not only smothers your authenticity, your magic and your magnificence, but also robs you of the opportunity to build true and sustainable self-confidence. And guess what? It also deprives you of fun because you’re constantly grading yourself and beating yourself up for not being or doing better. In short, when you are focused on getting everything right, you fail to take risks. And when you don’t take risks, you don’t improve.

The problem is not that you’re not good, because you are. The problem is that you are not comfortable with not being good. We’re all told and conditioned to be good daughters, good sisters, good wives, good

students and good employees and that extends to our drive to be good coaches. But ironically when you stop focusing on being good, you give yourself the freedom to embrace all the parts of who you are – the parts that are beautiful, creative, innovative, and unique, along with the parts that are messy, and imperfectly crafted. You begin to embrace your entire recipe, both the sweet and the salt, you give encouragement for others to do the same. And that's the cake people will pay for.

So, I invite you to take the time and ask yourself what a good coach is in your mind, write it down and post it somewhere where you can see it. Make sure that your definition is achievable, allows for your humanity and isn't dependent on things you can't control, like your clients.

Here's my definition:

A good coach is:

- Not afraid to be wrong
- Gives themselves permission to make mistakes and be human
- Compassionate with themselves when they screw up
- Tells the truth with love and compassion
- Knows how to connect to their essential self and get their ego of the way
- Doesn't coach to impress
- Offers perspective not advice
- Doesn't make the client's progress a reflection of their coaching
- Is okay with pauses and moments of silence
- Allows the client to be right
- Prepares for each coaching session with a plan and doesn't put that burden on the client
- Lives in perpetual creative response to whatever arises and throws out the plan if appropriate
- Establishes and implements boundaries
- Isn't seeking love or approval – that's not your client's job, it's yours
- Doesn't get baited by their client's victim story, criticism, or cynicism.

- Isn't afraid to lead the session by interrupting the client, bringing them back to the central issue or gently redirects if they go off on a tangent
- Is willing to ask for coaching, help and/or use their resources if they are stuck or don't know how to do something

The beauty of this list is that if or when I hit a bump in the road, I can pull it out and ask myself "did I tell my client the truth with love? Did I offer a non-biased perspective or was I giving advice? Was I coaching with a motive? Seeking love or approval or coaching from my Essential Self? If there's any discrepancy, I self-coach or get coached because the truth is that there are no mistakes. Everything is meant to happen the way it does because that's when you discover who you really are.

And speaking of good coaching, this week I received emails from two of my Square One Deep Dive participants:

I want to share that I am learning SO much in Square One Deep Dive! I am definitely using what I've learned with my clients, and it feels good. I really like the style of the class and your style of teaching. You should know I'm telling everyone they should take the course. Hell, I may even take it again! :) Tina

Your Deep Dive class has been extremely helpful to me as a new coach--and last night's class totally blew me away! Your guidance was exceptional. I was so revved up I couldn't sleep! Kelley

If you're interested in developing your coaching skills, building your confidence and learning how to turn mistakes into learning opportunities, I have 2 spots left for my next Square One Deep Dive in January. Click here for all the deets:

<http://jackiegartman.com/programs/square-one-deep-dive>

Cheers,

Jackie