The Reason That Makes Listening So Basic To Coaching

Reflective Essay: Listening

Listening is the foundation of coaching. Throughout the work on the PCD, I was able to experience how basic this skill is to being a good coach. That's why I chose it to be the topic of the third reflective essay in which I will discuss the merits of being non-judgemental. I will also explain why being judgemental can sabotage a coach/client relationship. In the module about listening it is suggested that when coaching, we are supposed to make a sign that says:" No opinions/ no experiences/no moods/no thoughts" and keep it in front of us during the session. This is to remind the coach to be non-judgemental because when we judge people, we form an opinion based on our own interpretations not on facts, and this is not at all what coaching is about.

Let's start by understanding why listening is so basic to coaching as it will help highlight the importance of being non-judgemental. The coach works with the coachee in order to empower him/her. The coach's role to raise the awareness of the coachee to be able to find the answers within him/her self. This cannot be done without listening. There is always an emphasis on mastering this skill. A coach aiming at serving the clients well has to put effort in order to excel in this field. An important question arises here. What kind of listening are we talking about? The quality of listening plays a basic role. Coaches are required to listen at levels two and three. The reason is that at level two the focus is on the speaker. This will enable the clients to feel that they have the attention as well as the interest of the coach and in turn will help them open up. When the coach listens at level three he/she reaches a higher level and is able to use his/ her intuition.

Before discussing the merits of being non-judgemental, I would like to point out the fact that seeing people for who they are making all the difference, not only in coaching, but also in our everyday life. "If we want to feel united with our fellow human beings again, we need to break our habit of judging them, so that we can start seeing them for who they are, without misconceptions."(1) This is exactly what a coach needs to do to be able to serve his clients well. However, I believe that there is a fact that cannot be ignored; judgmental thinking will take place. Our goal as coaches is to be aware of it going on and to work on dealing with it in the right way. That's why there are certain practices that coaching courses provide in order to avoid such a kind of thinking.

Being non –judgemental is one of the pillars of coaching. A non-judgemental coach is able to establish a main support for his/her practice. He/she will be in control of all the thoughts, emotions, moods and opinions while listening to the client. By doing so, the coach succeeds in managing his /her thoughts and will also have a better understanding of the process to do so. Then in turn, he/she will be able to guide the client into doing the same. This will sure reflect positively on coaching. In addition it is clear that for the coach to be non-judgemental there is an effort that has to be put. We could infer that a coach who is ready to work towards achieving this goal definitely cares about the standard of his/her work which is a very positive aspect too.

The non-judgemental coach, as I mentioned earlier, will be able to reach the required level of

listening which not only will add a lot of value to the coaching session but will make it a successful one. How will this happen? Instead of working on creating a judgement when in a coaching session, the focus will be on listening to the coachee and asking the right questions. The coach will not let his/her mind roam and come out with ideas about the coachee. On the contrary, the coach will be focused and will work to get more information. By doing so, he/she will be able to help the client by guiding him/her to find the answers.

In addition the more we practice non-judgemental thinking the more it becomes sort of “built in” or a second nature .Here comes another merit: improving the quality of our thinking. This is something I personally experienced while training as a coach. Coaching has definitely helped me take my thinking to a higher level, one that is free of judgment. I also realized how this practice is important during my work in education too. Taking an objective and non-judgemental approach is crucial in dealing with the students as well as people. There are situations that arise and require a good level of communication. The students as an example must feel they are able to speak without being judged just like we all do. “Where speakers feel they are being listened to and understood, it helps them to feel that they can share more information.” (2) This applies to the coachees too.

The non-judgemental coach will have the main qualities of a good listener: respect, empath, clarity and awareness. By being non- judgemental, a coach is able to show respect to the client. This happens because the coach is not considering his/her viewpoint. The coach will be only bearing in mind the coachee’s perspective making the client feel that his words are important. In addition this coach is able to feel with and for the client. When the client feels the empathy of the coach he/ she will open up easily and will be able to talk about important issues in deep levels of conversation. The coach will also be able to demonstrate clarity in thinking because he is not busy with his own thoughts. On the contrary, the focus is on the coachee’s thinking. Only then the coach will be able to help the clients to find out what they really want. The last quality will be the non-judgemental coach having a sense awareness of what is going on in the conversation. This is very basic to any coaching session. It will allow the coach to be fully present and thus ready to serve the client in the best way possible.

It is easy now to conclude what could being judgemental do to the coach/ client relationship. We, as coaches, have to keep in mind that the coach is supposed to respond in a non-judgmental way to the client. In order to help the client achieve his/her goals. We, as humans, are different and thus we all interpret the experiences that we go through in different ways. This is a fact that cannot be ignored. The coach who does not do so fails to act as a mirror. Such a coach won’t succeed in establishing a good relationship with his/her clients.

In addition being judgemental is a barrier to listening. When the coach allows for his interpretations to be present, then the listening process will not for sure be successful. The quality of the service provided by the coach is affected. This will definitely sabotage the relationship between the coach and the client.

Another point to be mentioned is that if the client puts in mind the feedback of the coach he/she might be turned away .In other words, the client might refrain from saying things that he/she feel that the coach might disapprove of. In such a case the client is not connected with his/her real thoughts .In some cases the client might even look for the approval of the coach and would even change the truth. In such a situation, the client will not be able to open up and will not be definitely looking for answers. On the contrary he/ she will shift his concentration to the coach

which is just the opposite of what is required in a successful relationship.

As for the coach, allowing room for one's own thoughts or experiences might also affect his/her judgment. When judging, the coach is no longer an observer. When, as a coach, you relate to your own experience when listening to a client's story, your focus will shift away from the client. This means that you will not be able to serve the client well. You will be misled by your judgement. Here again the relationship is affected negatively and the coach is disconnected from the coachee. It is as if "You are trapped in a cage, racing inside that little exercise wheel, going nowhere. You need to find your way back to your client and reconnect" (3)

Finally, all the above implies that a judgemental coach is not the coach that a client aiming to move forward will look for. After all who would be looking for a coach that doesn't put his/her client first? Deepak Chopra has an interesting quote about being judgemental: "Understand that when you are judging someone or something, you are assuming that you know everything there is to know to pass judgment, and that is impossible."(4) It is a simple fact, but it says a lot. Nobody knows everything. It will be good to keep this truth in mind and maybe use it as a reminder to help us refrain from judging, not only in coaching.

Bibliography:

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