

COURSE GUIDE

COACHING POWER TOOLS

FOR ICA COACHES



Table of Contents

MODULES

Reframing Perspectives	2
Action vs Delay	5
Commitment vs Trying	11
Lightness vs Significance	19
Responsibility vs Blame	27
Respect vs Invalidation	34
Responding vs Reacting	39
Trust vs Doubt	46
Truth vs Fraud	53

Reframing Perspectives

LEARNING OUTCOMES

To understand

- To understand the coaching concept ‘reframing perspectives’
- To experience and understand a ‘reframe’ from a client’s perspective
- To understand how the ICA Power Tools can be used to reframe a perspective
- To understand how the FlipIt Framework can be used in coaching to bring about change

SUMMARY

“We do not see things as they are. We see them as we are.” – Talmud

The concept of “Reframing Perspectives” is an essential coaching skill that helps clients see things differently and, as a result, come to different, more empowering conclusions or feelings about events or experiences. The coach’s ability to reframe a situation for the client can provide a new perspective and, with it, new possibilities. Things that seemed impossible now seem possible.

Perspective is a point of view; a way of looking at or interpreting a set of events. We all have perspectives about our world and the circumstances we find ourselves in. And it’s your perspective that determines your experience in life, not your circumstances. So while we cannot always change our circumstances we can choose to change our perspective at any time. It’s a bit like wearing glasses. If your glasses have a yellow tint, every day when you put them on you will see the world with a yellow tint. Over time you might forget that your glasses are tinted yellow and you start to believe that the world, through your eyes, has a yellow glaze to it.

The glasses analogy offers us a clearer understanding of how easy it is to see something in a particular way – your perspective. By changing the way we see something, reframing our perspective, everything can look very different. Say for example you just started a new job and when you opened your first paycheck it was \$100 less than you thought it should be. How you

interpret and then respond to this event is influenced by your perspective. If for example you see, or already believe, that all workplaces are bad and run by evil people out to exploit you, you might be angry or even outraged. With this perspective you might go in Monday morning demanding an explanation. If however you believe that workplaces are positive places, run by people who are inherently good or trying their best, you will respond differently. With this perspective you might see the paycheck incident as a mistake, made by well meaning people, in which case you would go in on Monday morning and pleasantly let the Finance staff know about the error.

Disempowering Perspectives

Below are some of the common Disempowering Perspectives

Filtering and Over Generalising

This involves fixating on the negative aspects of a situation while disregarding any positive elements, or making broad conclusions based on an isolated incident. Often leading to inaccuracies in judgment.

eg. I performed badly on a recent quiz so therefore my chance of passing the final, or any future, exam is doomed.

Polarized Thinking

This is often called ‘black and white’ thinking, where things are perceived as as entirely good or bad, right or wrong, perfect or a complete failure, leaving no room for middle ground. It’s an all-or-nothing approach without nuances or middle ground.

eg. First day on a new job I make a mistake. I am going to get fired for sure!

Mind Reading

Making unfounded assumptions about what others are feeling, why they are behaving a certain way, or what motivates their actions without concrete evidence to support these assumptions. This can lead to worry or self doubt and create undesired outcomes.

eg. I haven’t heard from my friend Alex in a week. I don’t think they like me anymore.

Personalization

This perspective involves believing that the actions and words of others are directed at oneself, even when that may not be the case.

eg. My coworker made a comment that is critical of a project I am working on. They probably don't like me.

Control Fallacy

The belief that one is responsible for everything and everyone around them, leading to a sense of excessive responsibility and stress.

eg. My child has come home from school upset about not getting into the choir. I have failed them as a parent because it is my duty to fix everything for them and avoid them experiencing disappointment.

Fallacy of Fairness

This entails harboring resentment because of an unrealistic expectation that life should always be fair, which can lead to frustration and disappointment.

eg. Your colleague has received a promotion. There is no way they worked as hard as you. Life is so unfair!

None of these examples feel good, right? That's because they are disempowering. They are a collection of negative or irrational beliefs, distorted thinking, and self-limiting attitudes that hinder personal growth, self-confidence, and the ability to take positive action. By reframing a perspective, the feelings of pessimism with flip to optimism, with a focus on future possibilities rather than past failures.

Empowering Perspectives

Below are some alternative perspectives to the dis-empowering perspectives listed above. Try reading each of the fifteen dis-empowering perspectives followed by an alternative empowering perspective below:

- Every new situation is an opportunity for a fresh start; my past doesn't have to control my present or shape my future.

- Placing living in accordance with my values as my top priority naturally leads to meaningful connections with others.
- Today has the potential to be a great day if I choose to shape it that way.
- I am on my own unique path, just as others are on theirs
- Each day presents a multitude of chances for me to mold my own future.
- I can navigate life's setbacks without feeling overwhelmed by them.
- Our diverse perspectives are what make life intriguing; we all bring our unique viewpoints.
- We all make mistakes, but it's how we learn from them that truly counts.
- Most people have good intentions at heart.

What Reframing is NOT

Reframing is not about pretending that everything is great for the client. Rather, it offers and invites more and varied ways for clients to consider the problems they are facing and to find new ways to meet the challenges.

Re-framing is not about changing your client's mind. Instead, it is about creating a shift in consciousness to help them see things in a whole new way. This shift requires that they be willing to understand that there is more than one way to look at a given situation. It's about opening thought and showing a fuller range of possibilities. It can also be about finding "the silver lining" to a cloud.

Many of our perspectives are helpful and support positive life choices. However, occasionally we feel "stuck" or "unhappy" with a situation in our life and can't see a way forward. At times like this, a dis-empowering perspective, which doesn't allow us to see the full range of possible options or opportunities, may be standing in our way. This is where discerning the perspective that is creating the situation and then re-framing it can be extremely powerful.

THE FLIP IT PROCESS

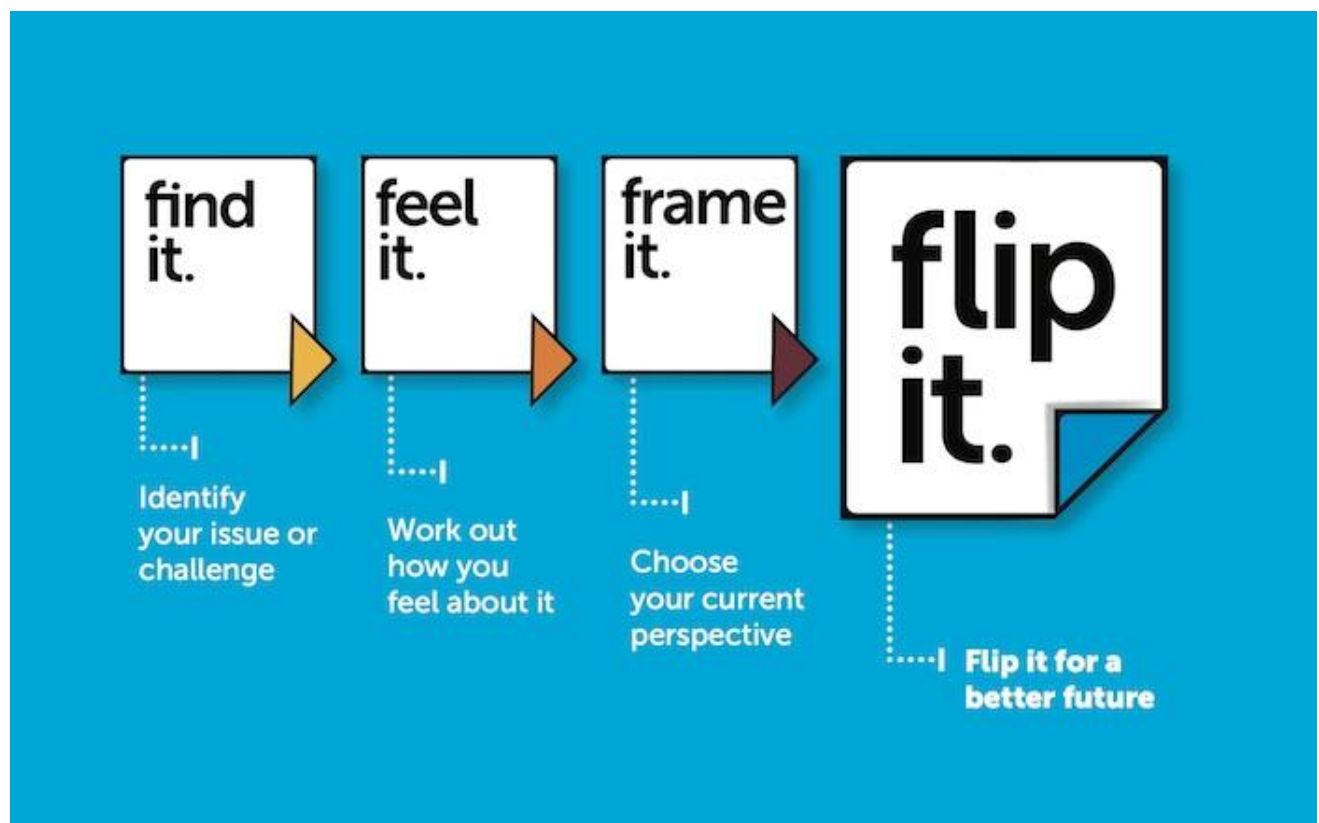
'FlipIt' is a coaching framework for change, developed by International Coach Academy. It is a 4 step process for resetting our lens and adopting a fresh way of 'seeing the world'. It is a way to move from where you / or your client is now to where you / your client wants to be; to transition from a current state to a desired future state.

REFRAME YOUR PERSPECTIVE

You are the Creative Director of your entire life experience!

How that looks is dependent on the frame through which you view experiences in life. And our perceptions can vary. For example, a skydiver might look out of the airplane window and be filled with excitement and anticipation. They are looking through a 'frame' of trust, curiosity, courage, optimism etc. But, someone who doesn't like heights might look out that same window and be filled with dread. Their 'frame' is one of doubt, fear, trepidation, pessimism etc. The event is the same, but each person has their own experience or frame. Consider what “frame” or “perspective” you are using to view your issue or challenge.

Trying on a new perspective is like trying on new shoes; you need to walk around in them for a bit and see how they feel.



Action vs Delay

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the concepts ‘action’ and ‘delay’ in a coaching context
- Learn how to use this distinction to shift or reframe a perspective
- Learn how to partner with the client to transfer new awareness, insight or learning into actionable goals.

SUMMARY

“Could. Would. Should.” Procrastination loves the company of delay.

Finalising accounts for taxation, opening bills or completing an essay - at some point in time, most of us have chosen to put off a task and opted to clean the refrigerator instead. Delay is shaped by numerous factors including fear, boredom, perfectionism and inadequacy. Despite its popularity, a delaying tactic is the least effective solution to a problem. Sure, it may give us short term gratification but, deep down, it compounds our feelings of frustration and slows our progress. At its worst, delay turns us into a freezer where all our most valued outcomes and dreams are put on ice.

Bicycles can carry you from point A to point B. However, it’s the action of your legs that creates the motion.

Indeed, you will never reach your destination without pedalling in a chosen direction. Action is what creates our dreams, hopes and desires. Withdraw action and you are left with a wish list on your pinboard. It’s so important to appreciate that action is a mind and body experience and it comes in all shapes and sizes with degrees of visibility. Being in action doesn’t just mean ‘big-ticket items’ like running marathons, starting a business or finding a partner. It also means all the smaller actions required to achieve the bigger action.

Action or the very act of "getting into motion" is extremely powerful and is the catalyst used in coaching to create change. For many people, even though they KNOW what they want, taking steps towards it can be difficult.

We can spend our entire lives dreaming, thinking, planning and preparing to accomplish our goals but, without action, those goals and dreams will never be attained. By taking action, we create a movement that is necessary to make things happen.

Delay works in opposition to action. If we look at the action as an accelerating force that moves or pulls us forward, we can also look at the delay as a decelerating force that pulls us back, slows us down and keeps us stuck. There are many factors that feed each of these forces.

A Native American elder once described his own inner struggles to a friend:

"Inside of me, there are two dogs.

The Bad dog is mean and angry.

The Good dog is good and kind.

The Bad dog fights the Good dog all day."

When asked by the friend which dog wins, the elder reflected for a moment and replied, "The one I feed the most."

Just as in this story the Bad dog fights the Good dog, delay opposes or "fights" action. The better we can manage the decelerating force of delay, the more acceleration and momentum we will experience in moving forward.

SELF APPLICATION

To some, being in action all the time is just not natural or even possible. Being in action doesn't only mean running marathons, mountain climbing, acquiring businesses, and finding a partner. A small thought can create a huge shift which in turn can change your whole life. Reading, thinking, meditating, reflecting, writing, talking, coaching, walking, mentoring are all actions that create

forward movement. All of these steps require us to desire to be open to moving forward. This is action.

The action is often confused with the achievement of a goal or the outcome of a goal. The momentous achievements listed above (marathons, mountain climbing, etc.) are not one action step, but rather an accumulation of action steps. You don't run a marathon by waking up and going to the race and running. It takes vision, planning and training. When a person is not in action, he/she may focus on the outcome rather than the starting point. The outcome or result could appear to be so overwhelming, that it becomes easiest to delay that first action step.

We live in times of immediacy. We want success now. Action is the process toward a successful outcome, but it is not immediate. It is a process that builds upon itself and by entering the process, you are in action. The process is fundamental to the achievement of the goal. The action is the path to growth, learning, self-esteem, and confidence.

The action is a certainty. Delay is fear, worry, stress and uncertainty.

So what causes a delay? If we know that action creates the results that we desire, why delay things? It's not uncommon to get stuck when fear, limiting beliefs, commitments, judgements, or Underlying Beliefs (UB's) are greater than the motivation to move forward in action.

Fear prevents us from moving forward. Fear may stem from failure, making mistakes, fearing success or change. Fear is paralysing, allowing no flexibility or flowing movement. Fear can make us cold, rigid and static.

Limiting beliefs/judgements can hold us back from being in action. For example, we may believe that we don't deserve to achieve a particular goal; that we are not smart enough; or financial gain from success is bad. These beliefs or judgements keep us from moving forward. To move forward we first need to understand what our beliefs are. How do our beliefs impact the way we think and believe?

Commitment is a key component to moving forward. Simply put, if we are not committed to taking action, then we just won't do it. You know that familiar story of "Tomorrow I am going to join the gym." Yet it never happens. If we are not committed to joining the gym then we won't take the necessary first step. Tomorrow comes and we put off joining the gym for another day.

Underlying beliefs and behavioural patterns hinder us from taking action. These beliefs and behaviours are so automatic and subconscious that we may not be aware of them. For example,

an underlying belief might be to be unsuccessful; to not become responsible or “blamed” for something, or to avoid “failing” at something and therefore delaying that first step is comforting and may even be perceived as the best path to take. Journaling about underlying beliefs or behaviour patterns can move us forward.

Recognizing Delay

Delay can manifest in many forms. We are very creative in the excuses that we make to ourselves to justify delaying action. Delay is a form of procrastination, which means putting things off until we can put them off no longer. When we procrastinate, we are in delay mode and may even become reactive, rather than being proactive which can impact the quality of a completed task or goal.

TAKING ACTION – The First Step

Edward de Bono refers to taking action as “operacy”. He describes operacy as the skills of doing, which are an important aim for moving forward and developing. The practical skills gained in the process of developing a new idea (a strategy for action), developing a plan of how to implement the idea and then implementing that as an action step, are important life skills. Operacy is the learning involved as we move through the process of creative thinking, developing action plans, implementing these plans and reviewing the effects of the actions. This process keeps us on the move.

Daily Renewal Practice

Create a daily renewal practice that energizes you, connects you with your goals and motivates you to take action. For some of us, this may take the form of meditation. Others may choose to go for a walk, swim, run, or other forms of solitary exercise. Some people may choose to write in a journal. This daily renewal practice can take any form, as long as it inspires you to move forward.

COACHING APPLICATION

Techniques for Managing Delay

Action leads to results. But just knowing this isn’t enough. Knowing it and doing it are two very different things. Taking action is not always easy. Most people know what they need to do but not acting on that knowledge prevents them from accomplishing their ambitions.

Address Fears

If we want to make changes in our lives, we have to face fear. The only way around fear is to move through it. Examine the underlying fears and help the client create an Empowering Perspective. Support your client to overcome fear by tackling whatever seems to stay in the way of their progress.

Address Underlying Beliefs

Is there an underlying belief sabotaging the stated goal? Is the client committed to failing? Avoiding failure? Success? Is the client trying to stay “safe” by avoiding something? Underlying beliefs that do support the client need to be discussed.

Create a Shift in Perspective

Support the client to create a new and different way of looking at a situation. You can do this by asking a question, exploring a different point of view, or creating a compelling vision.

Explore the philosophy that discomfort and fear are natural feelings associated with change. Helping our clients to recognize these feelings when they come up and perceive them as proof that change is occurring. This type of exploration will motivate the client to work through potentially uncomfortable feelings because it means that they are making progress!

Here are a few ideas to help support your client to create a shift in perception:

- What would you do if you had your courageous hat on right now?
- What could be the first step you take today to move forward?
- What do you look like when you are in action?

In coaching, sometimes the only thing a client needs is to take action. The action itself has power in it. That power is two-fold. We already know that nothing happens without action. That in and of itself makes action extremely powerful. But action also has the power to create momentum and motivate us to keep going!

Techniques for Creating Action

Here are some techniques to help shift your client from **Delay** to **Action**.

Goal Setting and Specificity

Sometimes all that is missing is an inspiring goal or a pathway forward. Help paint an exciting future for the client and they may be “pulled” forward. If the client can see what major steps need to be taken, and where they need to start, it’s much easier to begin the journey.

Strategic Questioning

Asking questions and promoting thought is another way of supporting a client to move forward. Strategic questions can create movement and foster creativity. They are open-ended and can promote new thinking and lead to strategies for action. Strategic questioning can be an empowering process that guides clients through a logical sequence for turning concerns into action.

Get Granular

Go deep into the proposed action with your client and build robustness around the proposed step. Encourage the client to envision every step, every barrier, every nuance ahead of time so they build success into the plan ahead of time.

Use Tools

A tool creates a system that can support your coaching. Build your tool kit with case studies, articles, and current approaches to motivate your client to take action. Use analogies and metaphors to paint a picture to inspire your clients to take action. If your client is not moving forward, you need to understand what is causing the delay. Tools and resources can help in this regard. Motivating a client to take one small action step will give your client the confidence to take the next step and the next one after that and so on.

Commitment vs Trying

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the concepts 'commitment' and 'trying' in a coaching context
- Learn how to use this distinction to shift or reframe a perspective
- To Learn how to partner with the client to transfer new awareness, insight or learning into actionable goals.

SUMMARY

There is good 'trying' and bad 'trying'.

Good trying is when we don't give up, we try, try and try again – and then most often we succeed. Bad 'trying' is when we repeatedly try to change or achieve something but don't succeed. This sort of 'trying' can be exhausting; it's a bit like running around in a circle and not getting anywhere. The effort required is draining and the stagnation is depressing. You might find that people around you become tired of hearing about your issue. Perhaps you are even tired of hearing yourself talking about it. It is easy to feel disempowered when we are in 'trying' mode, where the very act of trying includes a shadow of doubt or hesitancy.

Try not. Do... or do not. There is no try. – Yoda, Stars Wars

The irony of commitment is that it's deeply liberating -- in work, in play, in love. – Anne Morriss

Following through on commitments vs. trying to make them happen gives us the power to change. It builds confidence and self-trust. Once we explore our underlying beliefs and what we are truly committed to we have choices. We may decide to change it or not. The point is that by identifying our belief and what we are committed to, we have the power to change. The choice is now in our hands and we no longer risk living as a 'victim' of life.

For most of us, commitment is a mighty concept - marriage or a mortgage might come to mind.

But commitments can be small, everyday things too. Have you ever considered that, apart from when you are asleep, you are always committed to something? In fact, everything you have or do in your life right now is there because you are committed to it in some way. You might say, “What about when I’m relaxing, watching Netflix? Or walking the dog? I’m not committed to anything then.” Actually, that is precisely what you are committed to at that very moment: watching Netflix or walking the dog. The question is - are you more committed to that, than something else which you might be ‘trying’ to achieve?

Consider this scenario

It is Saturday afternoon and Jane has a stack of work to complete by Monday. She knows that to finish it on time, she will need to work on it all weekend. Instead, she is lying on the sofa watching television. Jane can’t understand why she has to work on weekends and she resents it. She really does not like the company she works for and believes her manager is uncaring.

What might be her underlying, in fact, her true commitment at that moment?

Just reading this scenario and ‘listening’ to what is being said and not said, there are infinite possible commitments underlying Jane’s actions. These include a commitment she has not consciously chosen, driven by an underlying belief unknown to Jane.

Until such beliefs are uncovered, explored and reframed they will drive our actions. We may find creative reasons or rationalizations for why we lie on the sofa and they seem so “true.” We make sure we have friends around us who agree with our reasons: "Oh, I know, it's terrible the way they make you do all the work. You deserve a break."

There is a lot of power in being honest about why we do things the way we do. This is key to living a happy and fulfilling life. Socrates said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” By examining the behaviours that we engage in and then discerning the beliefs behind them, we can actively decide whether these are the beliefs we really want in our lives, choose to adopt new ones and commit to them.

The opposite of living an examined life could be considered living as a “victim of life”. In short, believing that situations, events and people are the reason we cannot achieve. However, if one is not living a life that they have consciously chosen, but are allowing life to carry them along like a piece of driftwood bobbing on the ocean waves, then they are not choosing the life that they want.

If one does not know what they are truly committed to then, others will often dictate their commitments.

Below the surface of our conscious mind lay a whole range of underlying beliefs. These are the beliefs we have about others and ourselves. They may be beliefs that someone gave us, our parents for example or the culture and community we grew up in. These beliefs sit below the surface of our consciousness in our subconsciousness. The only way we can know what they are, is by observing ourselves and seeing what causes us to do certain things. The more we know about these hidden beliefs, the more we succeed. We will be re-committing to new beliefs and taking new actions.

Case Study: Amy and George were working on creating a new business. They were choosing a name for their business, determining their market, and designing stationery and other administrative tasks. The website was one of the bigger projects. They had to decide on a design, approach, the technology needed and the products to sell. Each week Amy and George would get together to discuss their business projects. Each week every aspect of the project was flying forward except for the website. Amy and George decided that the website would need to take a backseat as they worked on other related aspects of the project.

Over several months the business was getting closer to launching yet still no website. There was some hold up with the designers, the IT company, and their marketing company. As hard as they tried, it seemed as though it would never happen. Amy and George sat down for another meeting about the website. They looked at each other in a very frustrated way. They began to go over the long list of incomplete tasks related to the website. Then Amy stopped the meeting and asked George if he was committed to creating the business. He agreed he was and then asked Amy the same question. She also said she was committed. The next question they asked each other was why they were getting stuck in moving forward with the website. They found that neither of them

was particularly interested in the website. They knew they needed it for the business but they didn't have any particular experience or interest in this area.

Both George and Amy were committed to the business but they weren't committed to doing the tasks involved in getting the website finished. They realised this task was taking a lot of their energy and they had to resolve this quickly. So they decided to ask a business colleague, who builds websites, to be involved in this part of the project. They spoke to their colleague and he came on board straight away, excited by the whole idea. He quickly outlined the time frame they would be working towards.

At the end of the conversation, both Amy and George gave a huge sigh of relief. Now they could work to their strengths and grow their new business and their colleague could build the website.

The above case study gives us some insight into the meaning of commitment. Many times we carry out tasks that we are not committed to and then wonder why we aren't progressing. It may be that we need to reframe our perspective and see the task in a whole new way to align with our commitments as Amy and George did.

Let us look at what happens when we don't understand our underlying beliefs.

As a child and young adult, you were likely in a number of systems or activities that compared you to others. It may have been a sporting or social group, your school, family, church or other groups.

In these groups, people are often compared to one another. So you may have heard messages such as 'the other children are really good at this, why aren't you?' or 'Can't you try harder, you take longer than anyone else.'

All of these adjectives are comparative adjectives. Smarter, harder, better, fitter, cooler – all these words are based around comparing someone with someone else. We may have heard these messages once or a million times. Over time this belief sits in your subconscious, like a conductor, orchestrating your life. Once you began committing to this belief, a long time ago, you created a world around you that confirmed this belief. You may have fought hard not to notice it but this is still actually believing in it, or you may have given into it and carried out your life reinforcing it.

Consider this: Something in your life just keeps on going wrong. No matter what you do, you just can't make it happen. It frustrates you and you start to doubt what you can do. You feel like giving up. You question why you can't be smarter, better, and all the other comparative adjectives. You could decide at this point to give up on yourself and not believe in who you are, you could deny this is happening to you and convince yourself that this was the wrong thing for you or you could explore how and what beliefs, thoughts or ideas are operating that got you to this point in time.

SELF APPLICATION

Often one takes the first two options. The last option can feel insurmountable and fraught with uncertainty about where to begin or where it will take us. Instead, we might decide to try another project as you are sure this time it will be the right one. However, we're likely to use the criteria for this decision that led to unsatisfactory results. If there is little or no exploration of the beliefs that lie below the surface of conscious thought that drive one's actions, then using the same criteria used in the past commits us to reinforce beliefs that do not support our goals or vision.

The process may look like this:

I weigh up all the reasons for taking this step and convince myself that it is for the best. I don't ask myself how I feel about this step. I may even ignore feelings. Slowly I am convinced it is the right way to go forward and I'm sold on the idea or at least my inner critic is. Once again I have convinced myself of all the reasons why it didn't work out. The areas I convince myself most about are those involving something or someone I have little control over. I start to blame the market, the people on the task, anyone or anything that I can use to scapegoat. Then I chose another project. Explaining once again all the reasons why this one is finally the one – I just know it.

Throughout this process, self-esteem begins to erode along with self-respect and self-love, maybe even reaching a point where you don't believe in yourself anymore. Your life is now about committing to a belief that does not serve you.

Choosing Uncertainty or Certainty

It is again at this point that you can either choose uncertainty or certainty. Certainty meaning you are certainly doing the same thing over again will result in the same unfulfilling outcomes and

uncertainty meaning exploration and reflection of what is true and empowered beliefs you want to adopt.

This could lead to a renewed commitment to learning more about yourself and what makes you uniquely you. You commit to being successful. You no longer compare yourself with others. You may realise that committing to this project represents a new way of going forward in your life. You recognise that to achieve this you need support. And when your past beliefs show up, you are ready. You are aware of them and their limitations and take action to address them.

Call a Friend or Your Coach

Take time to think and let the moment pass. Then go back to your plan, look at your vision, see the vision of where you are going. Check in to see if your actions are aligned with your plan. Actions that are in alignment are a good indication your commitment is aligned with where you want to go. Look at what you have achieved so far. Acknowledge yourself. Think about all the areas of your life that you are grateful for since you began working on your plan. Feel your energy shift. Recommit to your plan and check in right at this moment with how you are feeling.

"Trying is Lying!"

Consider the example of former South African President, Nelson Mandela who spent 27 years in prison. He was once asked how he could forgive his captors. He replied: "I realised one day, breaking rocks, that they could take everything away from me, everything, but my mind and heart. Now, those things I would have to give away, and I simply decided I would not give them away." Even in a prison, Mandela found choices to make; choices that showed a commitment to freedom, to love, to independence and to moving forward. It showed a commitment to himself.

If we are only trying to commit to ourselves then we are not living in awareness. Trying is when we keep a small percentage available to us for failure so we feel okay when it happens. However, this means we are committing to failure rather than success. If you feel and know that the path forward is the right one then you can more easily and fully commit to it. Any percentage allocated to failure means you are still uncertain and there is doubt and doubt will become the focus - seeking reasons to doubt along the way leading to further doubt.

Trying + Doubt = Failure

Commitment + Action = Success

It is not uncommon to feel doubtful about success or fearful of failure. However, if you commit to your vision, which is aligned with your values and what you truly want, during times of doubt or even failure, you are more likely to view these as learning opportunities and keep moving forward.

It is not possible to be committed to everything. A list of priorities can help commitments stay on track. And avoid feelings of anxiety, stress, guilt and overwhelm. Such a list helps us to make important choices. Trying to commit to everything is often based on an underlying belief of scarcity or unworthiness - being unable to say no, not wanting to let others down, scared that saying no may mean missing an opportunity. Scarcity says, "This will never come along again so I better grab it."

Commitment leaves no room for doubt, error, or subscribing to other people's values, these are signs of trying. Commitment translates into taking action and action produces a result.

COACHING APPLICATION

As you work with your client you will need to support them in understanding what they want to commit to. This process will take time and is driven by the client. For the coach, this is an opportunity to explain the importance of having a vision, goals to work towards and an awareness of their true beliefs. A coach's role is not to determine what beliefs are best for their client but rather the importance of aligning the client's beliefs with their pathway forward.

Coaching is helping someone develop themselves and a plan that supports this development. When working with a client, be alert to their language. A client's use of language will give you great insight into their beliefs, how committed they are and also how their language supports their success and not their failure.

Structures

One way to support clients is to invite them to investigate whether or not their actions are aligned with their goals or vision. If actions are aligned with goals, then there is commitment. For example, if a client says they are committed to spending time with their children and they end up spending 100 hours a week at work, then there is evidence they are only trying” vs. committing to spending time with their family.

Creating a structure to support a client’s commitment can be a useful part of the coaching conversation. However, notice if or when you are trying to put in place structures for your client. This indicates the coach is owning the path forward, not the client. The coach is committed to the journey of the client but the client may not be. If the coach is holding the baton running forward then the client is left behind or waiting up ahead to catch it. No matter what the outcome of the client’s journey, it will not be successful if the coach is holding the baton.

Lightness vs Significance

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the concepts 'lightness' and 'significance' in a coaching context
- Learn how to use this distinction to shift or reframe a perspective
- Learn how to partner with the client to transfer new awareness, insight or learning into actionable goals.

SUMMARY

Significance is a bit like being 'stuck' in our own beliefs and not being able to see outside of them.

The significance we give to happy events in our life is empowering. We relive the moments so we can hang on to the joyful feelings. However, when we give this same significance to life's hurtful or disappointing events, there is no lightness - it feels heavy, burdensome and draining.

Significance shows up when we are overly attached to one pathway or direction and allow no flexibility within that. We also become significant when we bring our own baggage to a situation; when we come with a predetermined belief about how something should happen, or how someone should behave.

Have you ever walked into a pool of sunlight, closed your eyes and let whatever else is going on fade away?

That soul-nourishing moment is choosing lightness. Even in the grimmest of situations, where so many factors are beyond our control, we can choose how much 'light' to let in; how much to let a problem weigh us down. We can simply say, 'At the present moment in time, I choose to give this lightness.' Lightness is not negation or denial; it doesn't mean you

don't care, or are unable to recognise serious situations, it is more about being free from the past while walking into your present. Lightness creates a space for a different emotional state and with that may come rest, creative thinking or mindful acceptance.

Recognizing how we apply significance to the events in our lives is a great first step to shifting the energy of a particular event from significance to lightness. The significance we give to a wonderful event is empowering. We relive the moment and feel very good about it, therefore drawing on the positive feeling. When we give significance to a negative event, it feels heavy and burdensome, like carrying something heavy for a very long time.

The word significance means “something that has great value or is very important”. Most often significance is given to major events in a person's life. A major event can be something that impacts a person positively or negatively.

What would happen if you were able to let go of the heavy thing you are carrying around and feel a sense of lightness? Detaching from the weight of the negative event naturally creates a sense of weightlessness. What was a burden (significance) is now simply an experience – free of the emotions that created the burden (lightness)?

Imagine carrying around a heavy suitcase. It is weathered, old and dusty. As you open it, you recognize family members, you see past friends, hard times, and many experiences – some that may have hurt you deeply. All of these images bring back memories – some painful and even scary. Your body stiffens and you begin to feel sick and your stomach feels nervous. As you remember these events, you recognize that you have choices. You can shut the suitcase and leave all those old, irrelevant events and images inside the suitcase, you can deny having ever seen them, or you can continue to carry them with you.

We have choices

You have two choices when you attach significance to a negative event or emotion:

1. You can deny that you ever had the experience in the first instance. If you choose this path, you will be deceiving yourself and over time, living in denial leads to bitterness and even more fear and anger. This is significant.
2. You can continue to revisit and review all the painful, fearful events of your past. Each decision you make is made through the significance you attached to these past images. Every thought, feeling or movement you make reinforces these negative events. This is significant.

However, you can choose to shut the suitcase and leave all the events and images inside it. When you do this, you begin to realise that you have closed out the significance you attached to the past events in your life. These events are no longer valid to you and therefore do not deserve the significance they once had. This exercise is powerful. It affects your whole body. You feel great. Your energy is strong. You are happy. This is lightness.

Metaphorically, everyone carries a suitcase. Consciously or unconsciously we have applied significance to our experiences and emotions. Awareness of what you are giving significance to is the catalyst for replacing significance with lightness. You may not realize how heavy your suitcase actually is until you set it down and put it away.

What is the Significance?

Here is a Buddhist tale that illustrates what happens when we become overly significant.

A young monk was travelling with an older monk. Along the way, they came to a stream where a beautiful woman was standing, afraid to cross. Without hesitating, the old monk picked her up, carried her over the water and placed her down safely on the other side. The young monk was shocked but said nothing. They walked on until they reached their destination. Finally, the young monk, who was so disturbed by what he had seen, could hold back no longer.

“Why,” he asked angrily, “ did you carry that young woman across the stream? We monks have rules – it is forbidden for us to touch women!”

The elder monk smiled at him and said, “ I left her on the other side of the stream, but you are still carrying her.”

The young monk was carrying his Significance – a suitcase of fixed ideas about what is right and wrong, true and false. His significance blinded him to the reality of the moment. A woman needed help and the older monk responded to his own humanity. His Lightness at the moment freed him from judgment and allowed him to act spontaneously.

We become significant when we bring our baggage to a situation. We carry it around, weighing ourselves down with beliefs, notions and learned behaviours. That “unobserved mind” and the significance we give it, keeps us from the lightness of living life without judgment or bias.

Significance shows up most often when we are attached to our outcomes. Ask yourself, when engaging in any exchange, “What am I attached to here? What baggage am I bringing to this conversation that is weighing me down?”

Case Study

Dominic was sitting at the board table preparing for the directors meeting. He had spent many days working on his presentation outlining to the board how the company needed to go forward. His presentation was extremely detailed, supported by data and graphically represented his proposal. He was pleased with himself.

Slowly each director entered the boardroom. The board members exchanged greetings and took their seats. Dominic felt the excitement rising within him. He was excited to showcase his capabilities. This presentation could potentially catapult his career. He had worked on this presentation all night making sure it was just right.

The chairperson, Delia, opened the meeting, announcing that all items on the agenda had to be cancelled as something urgent had come up that needed to be addressed immediately. Dominic felt his excitement plummet. From that moment on he didn't hear a word that Delia said. All he could think about was how he could try and get the board to hear his presentation. He was upset that Delia didn't advise him of the situation prior to the start of the meeting. After all, she knew how hard he worked on this presentation.

At that moment Bill, who was sitting beside him nudged Dominic. Dominic had not heard Delia mention his name. He did not hear Delia ask him for a suggestion for a solution to the urgent problem they were facing. In fact, he didn't even know what the urgent problem was

because he wasn't listening. Dominic couldn't answer. Everyone stared at him waiting for his answer, but nothing came. His moment was lost.

Dominic's motivation for doing this project seems to have been driven by a desire to show everyone his capabilities. This is a very good example of a person who is looking outside of himself for recognition. He placed significance in his presentation to the Board. When he realized he was not going to be able to deliver his presentation to the Board, he shut down and became disengaged. Dominic's need for recognition was misplaced by putting significance on his presentation rather than his knowledge of the organization. This misplaced significance resulted in Dominic being unable to offer a solution to the urgent issue. He was ineffective and lost his moment to shine.

What is Lightness?

To be light is to feel – light like a feather, weightless, free, floating. Imagine a feather floating through the air. It turns and spins and moves throughout the air with such ease and grace. It moves in whatever direction the wind blows it. The feather plays with the wind, spinning, rolling and gently floating around.

The feather is not alone. It is moving with the wind.

How does this image relate to our everyday life? We all have to work with someone or something at different stages of our day, just like the feather with the wind. However, there are times when we become so intense about the direction we are going in or need to go in that we lose the ability to be able to float freely around. We begin to try to control the wind, to determine which way we want it to blow.

So how can we bring lightness into our life? The first step is to want to. To do this requires observing where you are significant in your life. You can make a choice to see the world in a positive or negative way. This is a state of mind and a state of being.

Paul Wilson in his book *Calm for Life* believes that being calm is the key to lightness. Wilson describes an activity you can do to achieve calm. He calls this 'The Pleasure of Calm.' Here are some steps he takes to achieve the pleasure of calm:

- Run a warm bath.
- Add some bath salts or add lavender and rose oils. Chamomile is also a wonderful calming oil.
- Light a candle, turn off the electric lights.
- Take a warm face towel and drape it over your face as you sink down into the tub.
- Tell yourself you have all the time in the world. Then listen to the sound of your relaxed breathing as you begin to forget there's another world outside.
- Being still is very important in achieving lightness.

Letting Go

There will be times you recognize significance in the situation. It is more likely to occur when you are tired or feeling a lack of self-love and self-respect. Take a moment before you move too deeply into significance and ask yourself these questions:

- Where in my life do I not feel satisfied right now?
- What do I need more of in my life?
- What do I need less of?
- What do I want right now?
- Why or what is causing me to feel resentful?

COACHING APPLICATION

As coaches, we can empower ourselves and help clients make positive shifts by bringing the perspective of Lightness to what we do. Lightness isn't about thoughtless optimism; it's no good trying to see that "silver lining in every cloud" when your underlying belief is that it's going to rain

anyway. Lightness is much more about a mental attitude that honours the Game of Life in all of its complexities. We are present in the moment, free of judgements that can bind us to old ways of thinking. Treating things with Lightness, even though some things are extremely important to us, can free us up to enjoy more of life and be more effective when facing our everyday challenges.

Mark's Case

Mark was a partner in a small language school that was experiencing a decline in student enrolments. His partner had made a series of decisions that he felt were directly responsible for the drop off in numbers. Attempts at talking with her about this proved difficult as his partner refused to accept any responsibility for the situation. This infuriated Mark, who was now more determined to prove his case. He felt that she was hiding the truth from him. His significance overshadowed his ability to speak as a partner.

Mark was clearly attached to an outcome – to get his partner to accept her responsibility in the company's decline. The result was a complete breakdown in communication and an unresolved issue that would continue to impact negatively on the school.

As coaches, we want to help our clients identify where Significance is closing them off from the present moment and where they have choices. Introducing the option of Lightness to our clients is much like holding the key to open a locked door. If we can help them see the “suitcase” and resultant baggage they are bringing to an encounter, they are better able to move through the situation with ease and lightness. They can decide to leave it at the doorway and experience what comes up at the moment with a free mind.

Creating a Mindful Space

When Significance is present in a client, remember that if they can lighten their perspective, they will be able to step back, take some distance and gain greater clarity on the situation.

In her book, *Mindfulness: Choice and Control in Everyday Life*, Ellen J. Langer wrote:

“When we are behaving mindlessly, that is to say, relying on categories drawn in the past, endpoints to development seem fixed. We are then like projectiles moving along a

predetermined course. When we are mindful, we see all sorts of choices and generate new endpoints.” Consider ways of holding a “mindful” space for your clients. Help them gain some distance from the Significance of the situation by asking questions such as,

“What do you need right now?”

“Stop and take a deep breath. What are you feeling right now?”

“What is the best thing that could happen here?”

Discussing the best case scenario is a wonderful step to shifting a view of significance to lightness. It opens up possibility and opportunity. It helps you go beyond your negative, stuck place into a brighter future.

Lightness vs. Significance as a Coach

At the end of a coaching session, it is paramount to the success of your role as a coach that you leave the session feeling light. If the client has been particularly significant in a session, you may consider replenishing your energy – or clear out any heavy negative energy after the coaching session.

As a coach, you cannot carry your client’s “suitcase”. Design a process to ensure you stay light and present after your coaching sessions. Determine also your pathway forward if you notice you are becoming significant in a coaching session.

Responsibility vs Blame

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the concepts 'responsibility' and 'blame' in a coaching context
- Learn how to use this distinction to shift or reframe a perspective
- Learn how to partner with the client to transfer new awareness, insight or learning into actionable goals.

SUMMARY

May the true villain stand up!

Sometimes there is joyful relief in pointing the finger at others: a poor cousin to the 'to-do' list, the blame list is easy to populate. It could include people like a boss (who failed to promote you), a partner (who rarely supported you) or more nebulous injustices like age (why won't companies hire 50-year olds?) But we forget a lot when we blame others. When we say "it's their fault" what we are really saying is "it's in their control" and when we say that we are giving up all agency or power over our own lives. It is very hard to change something if you perceive you have no control over it.

Responsibility is about taking back control and putting ourselves in the driver's seat of our own life.

Instead of looking outward, it's about looking inward. Imagine you get sacked from your job - you could blame your boss, the economy or even yourself. But the problem with these choices is that you don't move forward. You are stuck playing 'the blame game'. Instead, you could take responsibility, let go of the past, look inwards at what role you might have played in your sacking, and what you can now do to get the job of your dreams. If you decide that every situation involves something you created and that ultimately you are responsible for

your own life, then you become the driver of your destiny. You will learn from your mistakes, take control, and steer your life in the direction you want to go in.

In any given situation you are either taking responsibility or you are blaming. Responsibility is about giving up on the chance of a different past and focussing on choosing the future.

When we are blaming someone or something else, we are actually giving away our power and positioning ourselves as the victim. If every situation is completely the fault of someone or something else, then our hands are tied. We have given ourselves no choices.

If instead, we decide that every situation involves something we created, then we can put ourselves back in control. We can make choices, which will change or at least modify the situation. When we choose to take responsibility, we choose freedom.

Responsibility is not about blaming yourself. Responsibility is not about feeling bad or wrong. Responsibility is about accepting that you have choices ahead of you in the future. Your past choices are gone. They no longer matter. They are never worth blaming yourself for.

When you notice you are blaming, you can immediately choose responsibility and gain new freedom in any area of your life. Whether you are blaming others, or simply fate, you can reframe your perspective from blame to responsibility and experience true freedom.

Responsibility Leads to Freedom

Some people hear the word responsibility and immediately associate it with a burden or having to carry a load. In actuality, it is exactly the opposite. When you take on the perspective that you created a situation, you have the ability to change or modify it. With this realisation comes a feeling of power and freedom. However, if you take on the perspective that someone or something else caused the situation, then you have NO ability to change it and you are left feeling powerless and resentful.

Responsibility = Freedom + Empowerment

Blame = Loss of Freedom + Disempowerment.

Responsibility is not just a way to act; it is a way to view our entire lives. It is a perspective that we can choose to empower ourselves. Often we think that a situation just is. It is either our fault, or someone else's or maybe even just fate. It may not occur to us that this is a perspective we are choosing. Our view of the situation appears to be the "truth". However, by shifting perspective from blame to responsibility, we can alter the "truth" of the situation. We can change the situation from one where we are powerless, to one where we are powerful.

SELF APPLICATION

The Blame Game

There are many reasons why we blame others for the way things are in our lives. Perhaps we are fearful that if we take responsibility it will be our fault or failure if things go wrong. Or we don't fully understand our power and blame seems the easiest way to respond.

Blame is extremely seductive. When you play the Blame Game, you do not have to take responsibility for your life. Decisions are left up to everyone else. Life becomes easier (but only in the short term!) because there are no choices to make - everyone else makes them for you.

Playing the Blame Game can become addictive. If a person persists in maintaining that someone else is to blame for their problems, this perception can radically distort their view of reality. This further limits their choices, making them want to play the Blame Game even more. After a time the Blame Game becomes a habit, with the same disempowering thoughts supporting more disempowering thoughts. People who play the Blame Game may then unknowingly mentor others in the Blame Game. Families, workplaces and even whole societies can become infected and then trapped in a culture of blame.

How to play the Blame Game

- Always look outside of yourself for those responsible for doing "it" to you.
- Believe that you are powerless to change anything.
- Accept that others are stronger, smarter and more resourceful than you.

How to stop playing the Blame Game

- Know that no one can make you feel anything without your permission.
- Understand that responsibility is a privilege and start becoming responsible.
- Accept that you are human and will make mistakes and this is okay.
- Realize that not making a choice is making a choice.

As long as we blame other people or external conditions for what is happening to us, we have no control over our own lives. We become victims of circumstance. Blame keeps us from fully enjoying and engaging in our lives. When we view responsibility as a privilege, instead of as a burden, we awaken many possibilities for change and growth.

Forgiveness

Letting go of blame often involves forgiveness. Forgiving others, and ourselves doesn't mean that we make whatever happened right. It simply means that we let go and embrace the present. Forgiveness has very little to do with the other person, and everything to do with us. When we forgive someone, we release ourselves and free ourselves from the burden of blame. As soon as we stop blaming and decide to forgive, we can let go of that which brings us pain and embrace the possibility of something else.

Forgiving Ourselves

Before you can end the Blame Game you have to learn not to blame yourself. Often we are our own harshest critics. If we make a mistake, instead of accepting that this is a normal part of the human journey, we tell ourselves that we have failed because we are bad or wrong. Others may have trained us in this mode of thinking. Unwittingly, parents, teachers and others in authority can mentor us into the Blame Game. However, we developed this habit, our desire to avoid feeling bad or wrong makes us look for other things or people to blame.

When something goes wrong, the Blame Game offers us three options:

- We are bad and wrong, or
- Someone else is bad or wrong, or
- The situation is out of our control.

The first option can be so uncomfortable or painful that our tendency is to look to the other two. This becomes easy to do because most situations involve other people and when we can't blame other people we can blame circumstances or the situation.

Here's an example:

Stan agreed to meet his adult daughter for dinner. He had not seen her for a long time and their relationship was not strong. Stan rushed out to meet her into a blinding snowstorm and became stuck in the snow.

If Stan were playing the Blame Game, he could either

- **Blame himself:** He could feel bad or wrong for being foolish enough to drive into a snowstorm. He could feel guilty for neglecting his daughter to the point where he didn't feel as though he could cancel their dinner, even as the bad weather closed in. In short, he could feel bad and wrong, even guilty.
- **Blame others:** He could be angry with his daughter for not organising the dinner in a more convenient location or for not cancelling when the weather turned bad. He could sit and think about all the things she has done in the past that strained their relationship. In short, he could blame her for the situation.
- **Blame circumstances:** He could blame the car or the weather. He could blame the strained relationship with his daughter on the bad weather and/or his unreliable car.

The problem with all three of these options is that they leave Stan stuck. Not just stuck in the snow drift but stuck in his poor relationship with his daughter and stuck in his feelings of powerlessness. The problem with the Blame Game is that it is useless in providing Stan with a way forward.

If Stan chose responsibility, however, a range of options would open up. Stan could decide never to drive out in bad weather again, not because he was bad or wrong for doing so, but because taking responsibility gives him the possibility of a different future. Stan could decide to take responsibility for the performance of his car so that it is better able to handle poor conditions. Stan could also choose to take responsibility for his relationship with his daughter to ensure that he never ends up in the heightened state of anxiety again.

Everyone makes mistakes. We are human. When we make a mistake we need to forgive ourselves for it, so that we can move on and take responsibility. Taking responsibility for our own actions can be freeing and energizing because we don't waste time making excuses. By taking responsibility we build character and self-esteem. We build integrity and clarity.

Language

When we choose responsibility we use different language than when we are blaming. This helps us to initiate even the most difficult conversations. When we take responsibility we use "I" messages or language. We let the other person know how we feel and what we are thinking. We avoid blaming them for how we feel or think.

Here are some examples of using the I-message format:

When _____ happens	When _____	When _____
The impact on me is _____	I feel _____	Happens I feel _____
What I would like to happen now is _____	Because _____	And what I need is _____
	Would you be willing to _____	Can we talk about it? _____

Heading Letting Go and Moving On

When choosing responsibility we let go of anger. Anger is created when you have no choices, when your path is blocked, and when another person has power over you. If you choose responsibility, then you DO have choices and YOU have power over your own life. There is no need for anger. There is also no TIME for anger, as you have the power now to act.

COACHING APPLICATION

Accomplice

Often people have trouble taking on the perspective that they are 100 percent responsible. However, people can often see how they contributed to a situation, or at least went along with it. So by asking a client to consider their role in the situation or how they were an “accomplice” in the matter, you are supporting them in taking a big step towards becoming responsible.

Extreme Perspective

This is a great technique that allows a client to feel the power of responsibility. Have the client describe how they are not the tiniest bit responsible for a situation. How it was all someone else’s fault. Then have them describe how they are 100 percent responsible. How they may have - on some level - caused or attracted everything to happen. Have them feel the difference between both extreme points of view. Then ask them which of the viewpoints will allow them to move forward.

Respect vs Invalidation

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the concepts 'respect' and 'invalidation' in a coaching context
- Learn how to use this distinction to shift or reframe a perspective
- Learn how to partner with the client to transfer new awareness, insight or learning into actionable goals

SUMMARY

Invalidation has the destabilising effect of thin, melting ice.

Have you ever been in a situation where you have not been heard or truthfully represented? Whether the intent was ignorance or purposeful malice, the result is the same - it's the ultimate act of disappearance and disempowerment. When we invalidate someone, we do more than just disagree with them. We communicate that they have a lack of authority over their experience; that they or their feelings do not count in any way. The same applies when we invalidate ourselves with negative self-talk or through actions of self-sabotage. It is the ultimate 'not good enough' message.

As humans, we all have an overwhelming desire to be seen and heard.

To be acknowledged and appreciated in our families, our workplaces and our relationships. Most of us learnt about respect delivered to us as a set of rules as we grew up - 'Respect your elders', 'Respect your teacher' etc. Respect is much deeper than that and is more than being well-behaved. Respect is the recognition of a person as an autonomous, unique, and free individual. It means that we value and acknowledge their right and capacity to make their own decisions, even if we disagree with those decisions. Self-respect is similar - it

means allowing ourselves to be who we want to be and live how we want to live, free of self-judgment or the judgment of others. It also means deeming ourselves worthy; worthy of attention, care and support.

Understanding invalidation in its various forms and choosing to embrace respect in our personal and professional interactions is a key component to achieving success.

Respect is being considerate toward somebody, valuing someone, holding someone in high regard or esteem, having admiration for someone or something. Conversely, invalidation deflects attention away from strengths and positive outcomes and focuses on weaknesses and negative outcomes.

Typically, if we respect someone then we honour who he/she is. Common beliefs that transcend culture is a belief that you must respect your parents, respect your elders, respect your manager, and respect people in authority. At times we may struggle with respecting the actions of our parents, elders, managers and people in authority who have not earned our respect, yet we 'pretend' to respect them because we are expected to.

We have all watched movies where the bad guy is the one that the whole community upholds as perfect and deserving of everyone's respect. Over time their actions start to be questioned and finally, someone who is 'brave enough' speaks out. This person is usually ridiculed and isolated from the community. If the movie follows the theme of good vs. bad as most do, then over time the bad guy will be found out and the good person who spoke out will be acknowledged. Unfortunately, in real life, we know sometimes the courageous person who took a stand will not be acknowledged for their good deed.

Most of our understanding of respect is built around how we respect others. We will have developed very specific values around respect, all taught to us at a very young age. As we moved through the education system we were taught about respecting our teachers and the system itself. We were taught to respect our parents and certain people in the community. Sometimes we were even taught who not to respect. All of the beliefs you were taught about

respect were based on the judgment of someone else. If someone respected a particular person or action then they would tell you this is respect.

SELF APPLICATION

So check in with yourself. What does your picture of respect look like?

We learn to gauge respect through our observations and build a list of the actions that demonstrate what respect is and is not. However, this list is built around our judgments of what we have been led to believe. Observation of how you feel or show respect will greatly help you to understand how you judge and measure respect. Respect and judgment are so entwined that you can't separate them. What may be a sign of respect for you may not be for the person closest to you. The judgment we then hold is that our sign of respect is the correct way of measuring it. And so the judgements continue.

Respect is not an outward judgment of someone but rather an inward feeling about yourself. Respect is how you judge yourself and how much you like who you are. However, there is a connection between inward and outward actions. How you respect yourself will be identical to how you respect others. How much self-respect you have will match how much respect you have for others.

Inward respect = outward respect

When we judge others, we judge ourselves. What we find respectful in others, we find respectful in ourselves. What we find disrespectful in others we find disrespectful in ourselves. The way you judge yourself and the harshness of it will reflect directly on how harshly you judge respect in others.

Outer judgment = inner judgment

So what can we do? First, let go of all judgment – it is damaging and harmful to you. Imagine how you would go about creating a world where you spent time each day respecting yourself.

Describe moments in your day where you felt valued, admired and cared for. List as many as you like.

As you go through this process, observe for a moment how you are feeling. You will have shifted away from thinking about how you judge respect in others – a negative energy process, to how to make yourself feel wonderful – a very positive energy process. This is a very important key to going forward. Each time you feel yourself slipping into judgment then go back to your list of how to make yourself feel valued and admired. Focus on doing something that will fill you with high regard for yourself.

Judging others is a sign of your need to build your self-respect. Invalidation is the process of negating any acts of self-respect.

If you have a passport or driver's licenses or ID card and it expires, it becomes invalid. It is basically worthless. You can cut it up and throw it away. This is something we are very familiar with and have no problems doing.

We determine that someone has no use and so they are invalid. Therefore we invalidate them. We understand when it's time to throw away an invalid document but why would we do this to ourselves or someone else? We decide that we have no value and so we invalidate ourselves. The greatest gift you have is you. The purpose of life is to be with people. As humans, we need to engage and be with other human beings. This is a function of us. So why would we invalidate ourselves or someone else?

We invalidate ourselves by the language we use when we talk about ourselves. We invalidate ourselves by the actions we take. We invalidate ourselves by the decisions we make. Others cannot invalidate us. It is our choice as to whether we allow others to invalidate us. If your self-respect is low then you may be more vulnerable to accepting an invalidating comment or action

If we see ourselves as worthy then we see everyone as worthy. If we value who we are, we value others.

Building a reserve of worthiness and self-respect is how we live a healthy positive life. Tiredness, stress, and anxiety deplete our reserve of self-respect. Imagine you woke up every day and made

an intention to respect yourself and others. Every time you made a decision you considered this intent first. Imagine the result of your decision.

The moment that we recognise that respect is our responsibility we stop asking people around us to respect us. Our very actions will show we respect ourselves and each other. The choice is yours.

COACHING APPLICATION

Validation is a similar concept to Acknowledgment and is very much related to the present. Sometimes the most valuable thing we can give our clients is confirmation that they are doing the right thing, or at least, are on the right track.

Uncertainty and change can be scary at times. We are conditioned as human beings to believe there is only one right choice or course of action to take. The truth is there are a number of choices.

When validating a client, we are letting them know we support them. For the client, you may be the only support person they have. We all know the importance of great supports. Work with your client to help them identify the people in their life that can support them.

Listen to the words your clients use to describe their situation. Write down comments they make and then read them back to them. Ask them what was their belief about themselves when they said this? Work with your client to visualize what personal respect would look like for them.

A fantastic exercise is to ask your clients to identify a person they really respect. Then ask them to outline the behaviours of this person so they can see how they model self-respect. What we value in others is what we value for ourselves.

Responding vs Reacting

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the concepts 'response' and 'reacting' in a coaching context
- Learn how to use this distinction to shift or reframe a perspective
- Learn how to partner with the client to transfer new awareness, insight or learning into actionable goals.

SUMMARY

Bam! Reactions are immediate and sometimes astonishing or strange.

Reaction and impulse play a powerful and biologically important role in our lives but - just like an uncapped oil well – if misused, they can leave us feeling depleted, unsafe and full of regret. When we react to a person or event we have taken the focus off them and what they are saying or doing and placed it on our own feelings. Often hurts from the past have been triggered and are driving our response.

Where reacting is automatic and limits possibilities, responding is a choice.

Responding creates opportunity and the ability to act with a sense of responsibility and trustworthiness.

When we respond, we focus solely on the situation or issue at hand. Unlike reacting we are not hurried, or in the moment. Instead, we take our time to consider the options, to look consciously at the situation before we reply. Responding requires us to take a considered approach; it's the magical moment that ushers forth options, alternatives and an ability to align our behaviour with our higher values. Through responding, we become self-reliant and resourceful. We have a chance to think, reflect and decide. We leave a reactive state and become proactive with the benefit of logic.

At any given point in our lives, we are either responding or reacting.

When the world around us changes something that involves us - directly or indirectly - we either RESPOND or REACT and there are consequences to each action. The same goes for when an event occurs in our personal or professional life. We either respond or react to it. The act of responding is an act of freedom and consequently has the power within it. Responding creates opportunity and involves the ability to act with a sense of responsibility and trustworthiness. The act of reacting, however, comes from somewhere in the past and lacks power because the response is based on resistance or opposition without much thought. The reaction can often perpetuate a problem, or exaggerate an event.

Imagine it as a white water rafting experience. If the water splashes you constantly while in the raft, you might find yourself feeling annoyed, frustrated or even angry. You might be getting hooked into something unrelated to the water while your feelings are coming to the surface and you might even express such feelings by yelling or snapping at the guide or your fellow rafters.

When this happens, there is an automatic reaction to the situation. However, if you notice those feelings of annoyance and frustration while thinking to yourself: "What can I do about this?" and choose any number of responsible actions, such as moving with the river, enjoying the water and finding the **humour** in the situation then the action is one of response.

As humans, we are at times a little robotic. For example, we sometimes do something so often that we no longer have to think about how we do it, we just move into doing it. Take driving a car or riding a bike for example. Once we learn how to do it, we just do it every day without even thinking. We might even notice at times that we were not consciously aware of driving the car or riding the bike. We are so automated that it is just happening without conscious thought.

The same happens in other areas of our life. We get up each day; begin the day in the same way, following the same pattern, creating the same routine every day. Routine is an important part of our life as it helps us to move through the day with certainty. However, when our routine is altered it can greatly impact our level of stress.

The routine is a part of us; it is us, so much so that we don't see it anymore. If someone asked you to write down what you do every day, you would have to think hard about it and you would probably miss out on several moments of the day, as you just can't remember. These patterns have been refined for some time and so it is really hard to separate them from you. They are you. When we develop patterns, it is possible that we take on things that don't support us or that need to be altered over time as our life changes. The pattern needs to be altered to reflect this. So we need to check in with our routine to see that it is working best for us.

The routine we have in moving through the day is the same as the routine or pattern we have developed around communicating with people. We use a particular type of language, a particular tone and a particular style of communicating. Some of the patterns in our communication are really effective but again, like with our daily routine, we need to check in to see if all aspects of our communication are working for us. We will have certain triggers that we have set in place that create a certain way of communicating, perhaps a bit like Pavlov's dog, we have learnt to react to things in a certain way.

Reacting is an automated response

Something triggers a reaction. Like dominoes, the first piece is moved and as a result, many other pieces follow, leaving a trail behind it. The end result is that the beautiful pattern that was created is a completely different pattern, scattered everywhere.

Let's take this concept and apply it to how we communicate. Deep within each of us, we have triggers and reactions that we store. We bring them out when the trigger is presented. We react in the way we have programmed ourselves too. One of the concerns with having these types of triggers is that we don't know what our triggers or reactions are as they are part of us and difficult to observe. The other concern is that some of the triggers and reactions we have developed no longer work for us and can actually be destructive.

Imagine the following situation:

Kerry is a hard working person, who has set up her own business as a designer. The business began by Kerry creating design pieces in her spare time and people noticed them and wanted to buy them. She decided to sell her design pieces as a market. Over time more people came to want to purchase her pieces. She began to need to employ someone who could support her with the administration of sending the pieces to her clients. Before she knew it Kerry had 5 people working for her. Kerry found she had to give up some of her weekends to manage her business, especially her staff. She was very frustrated by her staff as she found that she spent a lot of time training them up and then after a while they would come to her with their letter or resignation. All this time training people only to have them leave.

One day she asked one of her staff why everyone always left. They looked at her and didn't respond. She asked them again and eventually, they explained to her that everyone left because they believed she didn't need them. She would train them up in their role and then she would continue to do it herself. She would then complain that they weren't doing the job the way she wanted and it all became too much so they left.

Kerry had developed a belief in her world which was that she was the only person who could get the job done properly. Her trigger to this belief was when someone asked her to explain a task she wanted to be done at work. Her reaction was to dismiss them and say it was easier for her to just do it herself. She would convey this message to her staff in a very negative tone, sighing and breathing heavily in a frustrated manner using language that was very dismissive. All of this style of communication was a reaction to the trigger that she believed she was the only person capable of doing a job correctly. When this was pointed out to Kerry her reaction didn't alter, she simply believed that she had higher standards than other people and that eventually, she would find better staff or staff who had the same high standards.

Kerry's story is common. She had a set belief, she had a set trigger to this belief and she would react in a set way –a pattern mastered time and time again to perfection.

Patterns and our reactions

Everyone has these patterns; everyone reacts to certain triggers that are built on certain beliefs. However, it is a choice to react in this way. If you learnt the behaviour, you can also change it. Imagine if Kerry took a breath and had four seconds of silence before reacting to her staff. Introducing a breath before she reacts would change the pattern of behaviour from one of reaction to one of responding. She would choose how she wished to respond rather than falling back on her automated reaction. She might decide in her four seconds of breathing to ask a question, to bring herself into her conscious memory so that she can respond to the situation rather than falling back on her subconscious memory and reaction. In this one breath, she can bring herself into the present and then respond in a way that supports herself and her employee. Bringing an automated reaction into our conscious memory makes us aware of that pattern and then through awareness, we can begin the process of changing it.

Use your breath to move to response

Who would have thought – one breath! Four seconds! Sounds too easy. It is easy but it is a choice. Kerry must choose to want to change her reaction. Kerry must recognise the role she plays in her staff retention rates. Kerry must recognise the impact her automated reaction has on her staff. The moment she does this then this awareness will bring about a change in her reacting pattern.

Kerry can also decide to keep this reaction towards staff and continue to lose staff. We choose to keep patterns of behaviour that don't appear to support us. But maybe they actually do in some way. Maybe Kerry likes talking to her friends about her staffing problems. Maybe seeing her staff leaving reinforces her belief that she is the only person who cares and is able to do a job well. Maybe these thoughts will keep her belief but these thoughts will also keep her problem, staff leaving. If Kerry is serious about her staffing issue then she has to address the problem, she has to look at herself and become more aware of both her thoughts and beliefs and then her reactions.

Our patterns of beliefs fuel our triggers and our reactions. These patterns can be good. You may train yourself to get straight up when your alarm clock goes off in the morning and to put your

running shoes on and go for a run. Running makes you feel fantastic. This pattern, the triggers and your reaction are working for you. It is helping you stick to a routine that makes you feel good.

Kerry's pattern is not working for her. She needs to reprogram to respond differently to a situation. If we have reactions that are working for us then this is fantastic, but knowing this means we are checking in with ourselves to make sure this is the case. However, life is complex and there are many situations every day where we are confronted by something we have never done before or thought of before. We need to respond at the moment. So we need to know what our triggers are. We need to learn to stay present.

SELF APPLICATION

Uncovering what we are reacting to

The first step to stop reacting is to uncover what we are reacting to. Think about the times when you have felt some sort of negative feeling. What was your reaction to this feeling? Sometimes we suppress how we feel and cover it up with another feeling, a better feeling. For example, maybe we are feeling tired and stressed and so we try to make ourselves feel better by doing something that distracts our mind from this feeling. We might go shopping, eat something, watch television. If the purpose of doing any of these things is to suppress an emotion it may not work as that emotion may be growing stronger inside us leading to an even bigger reaction occurring at any time. Nothing like that poor person who was just standing near you when you suddenly decided to react to the last 3 days of feeling emotionally stressed. Watch out – run for cover. We have all seen this type of situation. Someone reacts in a huge massive way out of the blue and lets it fly straight at us. Whatever was happening at the moment has completely been forgotten and a whole barrage of emotion is storming your way.

Denying ourselves the time to feel our emotions means we store them up and then we are no longer in the moment but in the storage department of our life, stock taking, feeling how angry,

tired or stressed we are and totally convincing ourselves of how the person sitting opposite us is totally to blame.

Enjoying life and having a fulfilling life is about experiencing life and responding to it as it comes along.

Reacting to our triggers is not living in the moment.

COACHING APPLICATION

Coaches support their clients to see the triggers that exist in their life. Coaches must also know the triggers they have as well so that when they are coaching they don't appear in their coaching. Reacting to something a client says in the coaching can get in the way of competent coaching.

Firstly, the coaching may very well shift from being in the moment and client centred, to be in the past and coach centred. Your reaction could make the session all about you. The energy of the moment will totally shift as well. Your coaching will feel uncomfortable and your client appears difficult.

Releasing our judgements while coaching is the best way to avoid getting hooked into our own triggered reactions to the client or their issue. Stepping back before we react with the help of a deep breath can allow room for masterful coaching.

Trust vs Doubt

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the concepts 'trust' and 'doubt' in a coaching context
- Learn how to use this distinction to shift or reframe a perspective
- Learn how to partner with the client to transfer new awareness, insight or learning into actionable goals.

SUMMARY

Doubt is a debilitating and shadowy state.

Born of fear, anxiety, insecurity or worry, excessive doubt places us on high alert for problems, missteps and attack. It's almost like deliberately creating space for things to go wrong. The belief that there is a 'right' and 'wrong' way for something to be or occur is often at the root of doubt. If you believe there is a right way to behave, then you could be concerned about behaving in the wrong way. Similarly, if you believe certain things are good, then you could become concerned about the bad. Regardless of the cause, doubt can be extremely limiting and severely block any action.

Trust - that magical word that evokes calm, peace and security.

With it, relationships are stronger, workplaces are more productive and things can generally move faster, with more ease. The key to building this trust is confidence. We need to feel confident that the people (and processes) we are working with are reliable and safe. But even more importantly we need to trust ourselves, and that means being clear on our beliefs, values and purpose. When we are clear about who we are and what we value we can choose trust to be more confident in our choices. Instead of over analysing or questioning we can implicitly trust what we are doing and where we are heading.

“As soon as you trust yourself, you will know how to live” – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

“Trust is the glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships.” – Stephen R. Covey

People who develop trust are generally empowered to take action and follow up on their goals. Doubt has the opposite effect: it can stop us in our tracks, bringing fear, insecurities and clouded thinking in its wake.

Living in trust gives us a sense of confidence and security that brings freedom to our lives.

It's the anchor that holds us fast amidst the many challenges that can pull us off course.

It's important to recognize doubt as part of being human. Having doubt can sometimes be the first step in creating change. But often it is our judgments about ourselves that hold us back. The source of much doubt comes from our judgment about things. If we believe there is a right way to behave, we will be concerned about behaving in the wrong way. If we believe certain things are good, we will be concerned about the bad and even about losing what is good.

Our way of thinking and how we judge someone or something has an effect on how we perceive the world, people and ourselves. Some forms of judgment can lead us to doubt our decisions. For example, we may doubt we are in the right job or doubt that things will “work out” for us after all. It is only possible to live like this if we entertain certain kinds of judgments or beliefs.

Doubt appears in our life when we are not confident. We shift from being self-confident and self-acknowledging to being uncertain. We step outside of our intuition. We seek approval or praise from others. At this moment our ego steps in and doubt becomes an element of our ego. Trust is a muscle we need to regularly exercise.

SELF APPLICATION

Doubt

If you are not trusting then you are doubting. Remember the last time you had that niggling feeling and couldn't quite work out what was wrong. A relationship perhaps or a project at work just wasn't going as planned. You were never sure about it, though maybe it might not work out. This is a doubt. If we don't resolve why we have doubt and move into a trust then we are committing to failure. This may seem harsh but think back to the last time this occurred in your life. Did you doubt something and it ended up as you thought – not working out?

However, we can move out of doubt by exploring what we are doubting, and then what we need to move into trust.

Trust and Perfection

Consider this: Who are we to judge that something is actually imperfect? Where did we get that idea or perspective from? Too often we criticize ourselves for our “imperfections”. We live and think as if there is a good and bad side to everything. We believe in a reality which has everything defined as “true or false”. We are frequently “conditioned” to think right from wrong and wrong from right.

So naturally, it can be a stretch to think that something hated or feared your entire life could actually be seen in a different, non-dualistic way. If we invert things we get the opposite. For example, the opposite of hatred is love. The opposite of fear is clarity. Within that hatred can we perceive love? How about loving more to break the hatred? If there is fear, can we define the fear so we can clearly reason it out?

The way to perceive perfection in life is to challenge ourselves to reach a new perspective. It is to allow ourselves the opportunity to think better, to see life as something potentially perfect. When we demand from ourselves to see perfection, we allow our vision to open up so we can get the results we aim for in life. Can we then open up to the possibility that there is perfection in all of our perceived imperfections and all of the challenges that face us in our lives?

Ancient Greek tragedy had at its centre the “agon” which was the struggle or conflict that engaged the protagonist, the central figure of the story. But his or her struggle is meaningless

without an antagonist, the one that challenges, throws obstacles up and generally makes life miserable. Another way to see Perfection in our lives is to appreciate the Antagonist. Things would be pretty boring without the Antagonist.

Take a look at this list of circumstances which can potentially antagonize our lives:

- losing our job;
- failing an exam;
- breaking up a relationship;
- experiencing a loss in the family; or
- a negative work environment

It is very easy to see these circumstances as bad things, wrong happenings or imperfections. This is a wonderful breeding ground for Doubt. Now, consider another perspective: all these situations are the Antagonists in our life. They are there to provoke us, move us, challenge us and keep life interesting. Contrary to appearances, the Antagonist is always the catalyst for change and further growth. Without our trusty Antagonists, and if everything was planned and happened as we wished, we would probably wonder what is wrong here since we are used to thinking in contrasts: black and white, wrong and right.

Why is it more empowering to face our challenges than let them remain? Help your clients see the Antagonist as an opportunity for growth. This changes the face of the Antagonist into something “perfect”, part of the whole picture that we are here to complete. When we are able to see everything as perfect we can feel confident, assured, clear. We can relax and trust in our purpose.

Building Self Trust

Before we build a trusting relationship with anyone else though, we need to be able to trust ourselves. Self Trust is the foundation we build our relationships on. In his book, *The Speed of Trust*, Stephen Covey Jr. describes a model called “The Five Waves of Trust”. At the centre of concentric waves moving outward, is Self Trust, which he says “enables us to establish and sustain trust at all levels”. The next wave is Relationship Trust, followed by Organizational Trust,

Market Trust and finally Societal Trust. In order to build trust with others, we need to have a deep trust in who we are and what we are capable of bringing to the world.

If we have established high trust starting with ourselves at the very centre then we create a powerful platform for sustainable personal and professional growth. When you make a promise to people and they don't keep it, you lose their trust. The same thing happens when you promise yourself to complete that report by tomorrow, and you let it go. Or when you promise yourself to quit smoking, but you put it off for another time. Or promise yourself to save more money but instead, keep finding excuses for why you need to spend more. Every time you put off doing what you say you will or make excuses for not doing it, you are chipping away at the foundations of self-trust. It may seem unimportant at first, but like an invisible crack in a supporting wall, over time, it will expand until the structure collapses.

In the smallest everyday actions, by being accountable to ourselves and keeping our word, we build our self-trust.

The Key to Self-Trust: Accountability

Accountability is the key to self-trust. To demonstrate these, let's look at the following situation.

Due to the promotion and new job demands, Sally hadn't been doing any regular exercise in a while, and eating on the run was taking its toll on her waistline. She was eating all the wrong kinds of food and had rationalized the weight gain by telling herself that as soon as she settled into her new job, she would look after herself properly.

As time passed though, she found excuses for not keeping her word to herself. Either there was just no time, the gym was too far from home, or it was just too complicated to make a salad instead of heating up a frozen pizza. The excuses piled up and had the cumulative effect of eroding trust and belief in her ability to get healthy again.

Working with a coach, the first thing they focused on was this crucial question of self-trust and accountability. Before creating any structures, such as a workout schedule or new diet, her coach asked her how she could build her trust. They explored the power of just simply keeping her word to herself, and reconstructed her self-trust. Soon, they created a

structure of regular workouts and a change in eating habits. For two months, no matter what, rain or shine, she made a point of working out at the gym 3 times a week.

This created a virtuous cycle: she never “cheated” herself; she was as good as her word, and she knew she could count on herself to keep going. As she gained confidence, she started seeing the physical manifestation of this trust as she lost weight and ate healthier food. She created trust in herself by getting results as well as by keeping her word.

Self-trust is the belief we have in ourselves. If we move away from trusting ourselves then we rock the very foundations upon which we live. To trust ourselves we need to know what our beliefs are, our values and our purpose. To lose self-trust is to lose sight of these. When we are clear about who we are and know it to be right then we implicitly trust what we are doing and where we are heading. We feel energized and driven. We can begin to breathe. The whole world seems to have opened up and we see everything clearly. Before we can trust others we must trust ourselves.

COACHING APPLICATION

The first meaning of trust, according to Webster's Dictionary, is "Assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something." It's this same trust that helps to establish a coaching partnership. With new clients, much of our initial work involves building trust. We want them to feel that they can trust us to listen without judgment, or that they can share their ideas and feelings with us in total confidence. At the same time, we return the trust by believing in them. Trust is the oxygen of our coaching practice.

When we find clients in doubt mode, it's important to find ways to shift their perspective into one of Trust. One way of doing this is to establish a “Trust Zone” for you and your clients. This is a place where you can suspend doubt, a safe space where right now your life is perfect. Invite your clients to experience that feeling of total trust and the freedom this creates. Help them

understand that whatever it is they face – raising a difficult teenager, paying off debts, finding a new job – it's part of their ongoing development.

Explore with your client's ways in which they can create a perspective of trust.

Some questions to help shift into Trust might be:

- “What can you trust about this situation that is making you stronger/wiser/more open?”
- “What judgment are you making that might be creating doubt about yourself?”
- “What would it feel like to completely trust yourself right now?”
- “If we can suspend our disbelief for a second, what is it, right now, that is absolutely perfect?”

Truth vs Fraud

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understand the concepts 'truth' and 'fraud' in a coaching context
- Learn how to use this distinction to shift or reframe a perspective
- Learn how to partner with the client to transfer new awareness, insight or learning into actionable goals.

SUMMARY

What do others want for you? Each day we receive messages about how we should behave and what we should strive towards.

Often they are well-intentioned messages and sometimes they are shaped by expectations around age, gender, class or race. Like all good earworms, these messages wiggle into the reality of our lives so that we begin to pursue relationships, careers or goals that are not genuinely aligned with our deepest values and beliefs. Living fraudulently - by choice, circumstance or experience - offers us little time to identify what we truly want from life. It robs us of gaining our deepest happiness, and the world of our best endeavours.

Five letters that may cause you to shift uncomfortably in your seat: Are you living your truth?

It's a question that asks you to look deeply into your beliefs and values and encourages you to discover what a truly meaningful life would look like for you. Better still, it is a question that helps you to reflect on how much of your life you are living just to please others. While it is sometimes easier to live according to values ascribed to us, it never leads to a happier life. The more challenging path is to "dance as if no one is watching" as the saying goes. Fully accepting who you are, and disregarding external or internal judgment is not easy, but

it can be a case of short-term pain for long-term gain because ultimately there is nothing more powerful than living a fully expressed life based firmly in your 'truth'.

“The greatest enemy of any one of our truths may be the rest of our truths.” - William James

Your truth is a powerful strength to achieve success in whatever you set out to do. Deciding not to live in your truth is disempowering and fraudulent. When we experience life from a place of fraud, we are lying to ourselves. Our lies change and alter the truth of our stories and physically affect our bodies.

Your truth as an individual is derived from your beliefs and life experience. This is the lens through which you see your world. Your judgments are shaped by your interpretation of your truth. Our perceptions and beliefs affect the lens through which we see the truth.

Take, for example, a car accident. When police officers interview witnesses to a car accident, they often get many different accounts of what happened. Although each person witnessed the same accident, their version, or opinion, of what actually happened varies depending on where they stood, or their point of view.

The question of what is true and what is not has been the subject of philosophical debate throughout human history. Truth is a beautiful challenge that asks us questions about our integrity every day of our lives. In our coaching, we want to become attentive to the moments where integrity slips, when our clients (or we ourselves) are avoiding the truth.

Fraud is an imposter, a person acting like someone he or she is not.

Fraudulent behaviour can be described as ‘deception practised for the sake of what is deemed a good purpose.’ In coaching, this “deception” may show up when clients are not in alignment with their deepest values. Maybe they are justifying something for what they see as a good reason. Somehow along the way they convince themselves that what they are doing is right or what they believe is the truth when it may not be.

Most people are very creative in the justifications that we use to deceive ourselves. Perception is a reality, and reality is our truth. A coach must listen carefully to their clients to discern their

clients' perceptions and how their truth is serving them. What is true for you may not be true for someone else.

From a social behavioural perspective, the truth is a set of guidelines that we live by. We all have different truths based on our perceptions. There is also factual data and the context in which factual data is placed will be guided by our own truths. We often see this when we work with figures and financial records. The context in which we place financial figures will create a particular picture. We could place the exact same figures in another context and derive a whole new 'truth' about those figures.

All truth is conditional on its context.

Have you ever observed two people conversing about a topic that they do not agree on? They may have difficulty grasping the others point of view. This is because they have different truths. Perception of truth determines what we hear. Many things are transpiring at the moment of the conversation. Individual emotions and personal and professional experiences are subconsciously brought into the conversation. These experiences influence viewpoints and perspectives in the conversation.

Two people can have the same experience or observe the same event, as in the car accident above, and yet they come away with very different truths. All conversations and interactions we have with other human beings are based on our cognitive interpretations and our past experiences and beliefs.

Therefore, it is important to know your truth. This first step is empowering. Knowing our truths allows us to grow and develop. Knowing the truth about who you are can be a wonderful experience and it can also be intimidating.

Suspending judgment in the coaching relationship is critical to the success of your clients. In essence, we are saying, "Be fully conscious of what YOU believe to be the truth". Coaching is the ability to hold two or more "truths" at the same time and examine them objectively. With our clients, we support the truth of any given situation by having them check their perceptions and beliefs.

SELF APPLICATION

How to Find the Truth

It may not come to you immediately but if you are committed to knowing your truth, then you will find it. Meditation can move you into a relaxed mode and connect with our subconscious and unconscious thoughts to discover the truth. In Wilson's book, *Calm for Life*, he talks about the brain waves that occur when we operate in conscious, subconscious or unconscious states. Over time we can train ourselves to move between each of these states. This is a real performance enhancing ability that is used by athletes and highly successful people. When we move into a subconscious state or theta brainwave, we move into a meditative state. This allows us to get in touch with our subconscious mind. Our intuition is part of our unconscious state, delta brainwaves. This is done when we are sleeping. Our beliefs and values are part of our unconsciousness. Practising meditation can support you in moving through each of these brainwave states. Over time you will be able to move into your unconscious state through meditation and bring information from there to your subconsciousness, then to your consciousness. This will allow you to know more about who you are. Ask yourself in a meditative state to find the truth about who you are and the strength to manage this truth.

We can also engage friends to support us in our quest for the truth. Remember that they have their own truth to be very clear about what you are wanting from them. Reassurance and acknowledgement from a friend can support you at this moment in time.

Living in the Truth

To always live in the truth requires building structures to support you. Don Miguel Ruiz in his book, *The Four Agreements*, has four agreements that he believes we can live by. These agreements support us in living in the truth. The Four Agreements are:

- Be Impeccable with your word
- Don't take anything personally
- Don't make assumptions
- Always do your best

Each of these agreements reminds us to check in with who we are. The perceptions and beliefs that we hold may limit our ability to see the whole truth. We may be only seeing one side of the truth or part of the truth. If we are living in truth then we don't judge people. If we are living in truth then we accept others for who they are. We do not determine the truth about them. Rather we know that by living our own truth we are more open to receiving others. Living our own truth builds confidence and self-esteem. It strengthens our focus and supports the fulfilment of our dreams and goals.

COACHING APPLICATION

The Truth and our Clients

There is your truth as a coach and your responsibility, to tell the truth to your clients as you see it. That truth, in the form of objective feedback, is one of the most meaningful gifts we can offer our clients. At the same time, it can be extremely challenging to do. There are all kinds of reasons why we might hold back from being truthful with clients: we don't want to hurt their feelings, it might not be the best moment, they might get angry, they might not like us or they might resent us. This "withholding" of the truth though can undermine the coaching relationship. If we think what they are doing is harmful, if we see them heading down the wrong path or one they have been on before, it is up to us to tell them the truth the way we see it. Remember this is not giving our opinion, but rather holding ourselves as coaches accountable.

We as coaches must be willing to challenge our clients about their truths when we see that these truths (held beliefs) are holding them back. Clients appreciate that in our role as coaches we are willing to tell them the truth, no matter how uncomfortable that might be.

It is important for the coach to remember that, when we offer our clients this objective feedback, what we are sharing with our clients is OUR truth, or what WE see to be true. It may or may not be THE truth. It is up to our clients to take that truth and do with it as they choose. They may decide to take it and explore it or they may decide to leave it.

Using Coaching to Learn the Truth

There is an old tradition of biting on gold to check for its authenticity. The “bite test” was a quick way for gold prospectors to know if they had found real gold or “fool’s gold” - a piece of metal that appears to be but is not in fact gold. A bite into real gold would normally leave a mark since gold is a soft metal.

As “prospectors” seeking the truth in a coaching situation, coaches can use their own “bite test” when clients are absolutely convinced they are holding onto pure nuggets of truth

Let's look at an example of this.

As a single mother, Martha was finding it tough to maintain long hours as a manager in a health food store and raise her teenage son, Brian. Since her work made her less available to be with Brian, she believed she had to impose strict rules on him.

He had to be home at a certain time every day, he couldn’t go out at night during the week and he couldn’t have any friends at home when she was at work. Brian had not given her cause to distrust him, but she felt it was absolutely necessary to have this added control.

This created great friction as Brian began to rebel against the rules she imposed. Soon they were at complete odds with one another and unable to communicate about the problem. Martha believed that her son was being unreasonable and insensitive to her situation as a single mother.

What was Martha’s “truth” here?

“You can’t ever trust a teenage boy to be on his own – you have to control him at all times.”

Of course, teenagers can get into trouble, and parents do have a duty to guide them into positive activities. But by holding this “truth” up to examination, Martha’s coach helped her challenge its validity. Martha realized that in fact, her son had proven his trustworthiness on many occasions. What was behind her strict control was a fear that something bad could happen. This was the real “truth” of the situation with her son, and not that he was actually doing anything wrong. This awareness allowed her to relax her control and communicate her concerns to her son.

Demosthenes wrote, “Nothing is easier than self-deceit. For what each man wishes, that he also believes to be true.”

Fraud and Self-deception

In coaching, fraud and self-deception may show up when clients are not in alignment with their deepest values. Maybe they are justifying something for what they see as a good reason. Somehow along the way they convince themselves that what they are doing is right or what they believe is the truth when it may not be.

In the book *Leadership and Self-Deception*, the authors of the Arbinger Institute tell a story about self-betrayal. Self-betrayal leads to perceiving the world in a self-justifying way, which they call “in the box” perception. They outline the process of self-betrayal or self-deception in the following way:

1. An act contrary to what I feel I should do for another is called an act of “self-betrayal.”
2. When I betray myself, I begin to see the world in a way that justifies my self-betrayal.
3. When I see a self-justifying world, my view of reality becomes distorted.
4. So – when I betray myself, I enter the box.
5. Over time, certain boxes become characteristic of me, and I carry them with me.
6. By being in the box, I provoke others to be in the box.
7. In the box, we invite mutual mistreatment and obtain mutual justification. We colluded in giving each other reason to stay in the box.” (p.102)

Case Study

Ben is a busy executive in a conveyancing company, who feels very confident and capable in the workplace, but completely inadequate in social situations. As a result, he spends upwards of 60 hours a week in the office. Ben is scathing of the performance of other staff and is known for his rude, abrupt manner and propensity for cutting people down to size for perceived failures. Ben expects that he will eventually move into the deputy CEO position at the firm. He believes that his

hard work and dedication make him the obvious candidate. Given this, he is shocked, when the CEO of the company, Anna, calls him in to discuss his performance and his career options.

Anna explains that even though Ben's long hours and dedication make him a considerable asset to the company, his appalling interpersonal skills undermine the performance of other staff. Anna says that she has noticed that many of them spend more time trying to avoid getting on the wrong side of Ben than they spend adding value to the company. She also tells Ben that Francesca, one of their highest billing team leaders, is moving on to another company and she has cited Ben's lack of flexibility and support and his constant criticism as a major contributor to her decision to go. Anna tells Ben that she is aware of Ben's ambition to move into the deputy CEO position and believes that it is still a possibility, but only if Ben addresses his interpersonal skills.

Ben is shocked by Anna's analysis of the situation. He believes that Francesca is just a whiner and a pain in the neck. He decides to engage a Career Coach to work out his options for the future and to find a company that will appreciate him. He also thinks that this will show Anna that he is serious about the Deputy CEO job. Ben tells his coach, Linda, that he wants her to be a sounding board for him so that he can talk about his work frustrations, in the hope that this will make him less angry at work. Throughout their sessions, Ben talks endlessly about the various staff who do not perform to his standards. Finally, Ben manages to admit to Linda that the reason he feels so angry with his colleagues is that work is all that he has in life, and he resents others with fuller lives, not taking it as seriously as he does.

How, as coaches, can we get Ben out of his "box" where self-justification is blocking him from seeing what the truth is?

As coaches, the truth is one of the most valuable and powerful things that we can offer our clients. Perception is reality and reality is our truth. By revealing the truth to our clients and having our clients check their perceptions and beliefs, we can work with our clients to find what is true for them, and in essence, change their reality.