

Extracts from
‘Coaching with NLP – How to be a master coach’
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From Chapter 2
Happiness

Coaching is a game for high stakes. Happiness. People come to be coached because they want to be happy or happier. They want a satisfying life, filled with good experiences. They want good relationships, a job they enjoy and are proud of, where they can use their talents and make money. They want a capacity to experience life’s pleasures to the full. They want to see their good dreams come true and feel they are living their highest values. They want to be liked by many, loved by some and respected by all.

Business coaching plays for equally high stakes, maybe the very survival of the business. When the business is viable, then for the business to thrive and be successful, people need to be happy in their work and good at what they do. A thriving business is profitable, good to work in, achieves its goals and operates according to its core values. It is respected in the marketplace.

Everybody wants to be happy, but happiness is not a prescription you can go and have filled by a happiness chemist. Happiness is an abstraction. You can *be* happy, but it’s not something to possess. Everybody has a different idea of what would make them happy. They have different goals, different values, and even if they have the same values, what they think will fulfil those values can differ enormously from person to person. A coach cannot know in advance what will make their client happy. Sometimes their client does not know either.

Most people feel they have the right to be happy. There is some interesting research that suggests that about two thirds of us do not know how to be happy. In 1957 there was a research project in the United States of America asking a large number of people whether they were happy with what they had in life. About one third said yes, they were. In 1992 when the same study was repeated, the same percentage said yes, despite the fact that the standard of living had increased considerably. What does this mean? It means that about one third of the people know the secret of being happy – it comes from the inside. It does not depend on what you have, but what you are and what you experience. It comes from getting what you want, not having what you’ve got.

Many people think of pursuing happiness. When they have that next possession, feeling or person, then they will be happy. This is a mirage. The very language betrays it. If you are pursuing happiness, you have put it ahead of you. As long as you continue to pursue it, it stays tantalisingly out of reach. You cannot pursue something you have. You can only be happy right now. Many people think that to be happy is somehow selfish, that there is only so much to go around and if they are happy, then inevitably someone will have to pay. A coach will make them think - when are they most loving and generous – when are they are happy or unhappy? Perhaps being happy is good for everyone. The only person’s happiness you can deal with is your own.

Being happy is in the small things of life, that series of small decisions each one making you happier. Happiness is in the everyday details of life.

From Chapter six Transition

Transition is the most difficult time in coaching. The client is no longer in their old situation, but has not yet moved completely to the new situation, they are still on the way and have lost the security of the old, and not yet attained the benefits of the new. They are suspended in limbo for a brief period and this can be very uncomfortable. The client has to trust the coach and trust his or her own resources. The support is there if they can change their way of thinking.

Transition is like the split second when you step forward - you are neither where you came from, nor where you are going. You have to make an act of faith without knowing if you are going to have a happy landing. There is a moment in the film, *'Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade'* that perfectly illustrates the transition point. Our intrepid hero, Indiana Jones, played by Harrison Ford, has reached the final ordeal before he can enter the sanctuary of the Holy Grail, the greatest prize of his life. He needs it desperately to heal his father who has been shot by the Nazis. They are also after the Grail for their own evil purposes. Indiana Jones steps to the edge of what looks like a bottomless chasm - yet he must pass over it. The other side is too far to jump, and there is no bridge that he can see. He has to make an act of faith, trusting that it is possible to cross, although he does not know how. He steps out into space without knowing there is anything to support him. He takes the step - and we see that his foot has landed on a thin bridge built of stone. The bridge has been there all the time; only he did not see it because from his viewpoint (and ours, the audience), because the coloured stone of the bridge blends so perfectly into the rocks behind it that it is invisible. We only see it as the camera pans round to a different angle and our hero, heaving a sigh of relief, has the support he needs to cross the chasm.

From Chapter nine Traps for coaches

There are some traps that can snare you.

- *I have to make a difference in every session.*

You do not. This is a pressure to perform and will get in the way of coaching. You *will* make a difference in every session; you *can* make a difference in every session. You do not have to. Nor can you control the difference you make, because only the client can measure that.

- *The client has to like me.*

No they do not. Many clients will like you; many might be your friends in other circumstances. What is needed between coach and client is a professional relationship based on rapport and trust.

- *I am responsible for the client in some way.*

You are not. You do not have to take care of the client. You are not their parent. Nor do they have to take care of you. You are not their child. The client has responsibility for their own life. If they try to give it to you, then you respectfully hand it back.

- *I have to share the problem and feel with the client.*

No you do not. Rapport and a second position will allow you to understand the client better. There are two types of second position. One is cognitive. When you have good rapport and a cognitive second position with the client, you will understand their world and how they think. This is invaluable in coaching. There is also an emotional second position. This will allow you to feel what the client is

feeling. It can be useful to feel a little of what the client is feeling, but do not enter into that feeling. That is the client's feeling, not yours. Also you do not need to associate into the problem, even if it has some resonance for you. It is the client's problem.

- *I have to know something of the client's business to do business coaching.* Not necessarily. The client knows about their business. What you need to know in order to coach the client is the client's view and experience of their business. Of course it is useful for the client to tell you about their part in the business, but you would need to know that however knowledgeable you were about the business. You may want to do some prior research by visiting the website, reading their brochures and buying their products. It can even be an advantage not knowing about their business, because then you can ask some very simple questions without thinking that you already know the answers. Your knowledge of the business may blind you rather than enlighten you. You may assume things that are not true. Prior knowledge may make you less curious about the client's experience.
- *I must not confront the client.*
Sometimes you may confront the client, if they are avoiding an issue. Clients may talk around and around in circles and coach may want to get to the bottom line. You may have to interrupt the client, and say something like, 'Excuse me; I think there is an important issue underneath this that you have not yet surfaced. Can I tell you what I think is behind what you are saying?' If this is done with rapport, the client will agree. This sort of bottom lining should be preframed in the initial session when you manage the client's expectations. You would tell them that sometimes if they seem to be avoiding the issue, you would interrupt them and tell them, with respect, what you think. Ask them if they agree. Then you have permission and it will not be a problem. The coach is an ally to the client's best self, and the client's best self is served by honesty and confronting an issue if necessary. That does not mean that the coach has to rub the clients nose in every issue. The coach may well decide there is an issue behind what the client is saying, but now is not the time to confront it.
- *I have to keep control of the coaching process.*

You cannot keep control of the coaching process, so do not even try. The client has the control if anyone has it. However, control is not a very good way to think about it anyway. Control is a mechanical metaphor and coaching is about human beings trying to understand each other, with the best intentions. There can be no control.