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Welcome to coach, to coach a podcast dedicated to showcasing the power of coaching. I'm your host, dr. Katie Linder, and I offer coaching to academics and higher education professionals to bring more ease to their lives and work. This season, I'm offering a slightly different format than earlier seasons.

I thought that might be useful to go over some coaching fundamentals for anyone listening, who hasn't gone through, coach training. I wanted to share some of the things that you can be listening for and each season that would be good examples of coaching structure, philosophy, and techniques. So for each of the episodes of the season, I'm going to offer solo episodes, talking about some coaching basics.

Feel free to email me with questions about these episodes or ideas of what you'd like to hear more about in future or seasons. If I do this kind of format again now onto the episode.

In this episode, I'm going to talk a little bit about a cornerstone of coaching. Um, and that is the concept of powerful questions. Now, powerful questions show up in every coaching session. And so this is why it is such a. Foundational and kind of fundamental component of coaching. And these questions are really meant to help the coach and the client work together to seek understanding, to find clarity around a particular issue, challenge, topic that the client has brought to the session and they can be categorized in a couple of different ways.

So I'm going to talk about those different categorizations in this. Episode, but before I get into those categorizations, I want to talk about some, some of the elements that make up a powerful person, because they are kind of structured in a very particular kind of way. So the first element is they are usually short.

They are getting to the point as quickly as possible, and they don't need contextualization or explanation. So the idea is to get the client to focus on the question and to use it. The question for deeper reflection. And then after the client response, you would ask them another powerful question to go deeper.

So you might have heard this on some of the coach to coach episodes where it's just kind of question after question after question. And there's not a lot of statements being stated in between, um, from the coach. It's really just the questions, powerful questions. Often start with what stems. Sometimes they start with how or who, um, but it is most frequent.

I think that they start with a STEM of what. And they're always open-ended so closed ended questions and it would just have a yes or no response would not, um, fall into this category. Um, and you want to make sure that you're getting the client to go deeper with their reflection. So if they would just have some kind of one word response to a question, but it's probably not powerful enough to kind of get them to go deeper.

Powerful questions are also nonjudgmental. So they're really meant to bring about that additional clarity to something. So they're phrased as openly as possible. The idea would be to elicit all different kinds of responses that the client might have to that question. And they also come from a place of curiosity, which is another kind of cornerstone of coaching.

We want clients to really remain curious about their situations and contexts. And in order to do that, we need to also remain curious in our questions so that we can look at things from new perspectives. Powerful questions are always going to be focused on the client, um, and asking the right question that they need to hear, like in that moment is kind of an art form.

Um, so if you ever hear a client say like, that's a really good question, like that's a good sign. Um, or if they need to pause to really think about a question before they respond, that's a good sign as well. Usually powerful questions are goal oriented. So this is again, really tied to the concept of knowing what the session agenda is and tying in the powerful questions to the client overall goals or the session goals to really help shape what are the best questions to get to those measurable objectives that we talked about in episode two of the season.

And then also powerful questions are followed by silence. So you ask a question and then you wait and have the client respond. So sometimes the client needs time to really think about it before they can offer their answer to the question. And so using. Silence is really important. So these kinds, so questions can really be mixed and matched.

The other thing that can be really powerful is to use a client's language when you're asking a powerful question. So to use a word or phrase that they just said, and kind of repeat it back to them in a question, and this allows them to show that you're kind of really deeply listening and aware of what they're saying.

Okay. So a couple of the categories that we can think of when we think about powerful questions is one. You might have questions that focus on the past, the present or the future. So the ones that focus on the past are really going to help a client to explore what they've learned and what they're taking from the past to apply to the present moment.

Questions that focus on the present are gonna ask a client to explore their current emotions, processes, approaches, or other actions right now that they're taking. And then questions that focus on the future are going to ask a client to explore things like future plans, goals, their concept of their future self, or other aspects of their future life, which can involve sometimes visioning exercises.

You can also have powerful questions be, um, around certain themes. Like you might have a powerful questions about productivity or powerful questions about tenure and promotion or powerful questions about creativity. So you can also group them that way. And then the third category of powerful questions is what's called the learn, be, do model.

And this is where you have powerful questions that are focused on either learning, being, or doing so questions that focus on learning would help a client to reflect on what they're learning through the coaching experience. And some of these questions might be things like, what did you learn through a certain kind of process or experience?

What does this mean to you? What does this accomplishment mean to you? If you're talking about a specific kind of accomplishment, so really kind of helping them to understand, you know, what are they coming to understand about themselves through a particular situation? Questions that focus on the being concept would help a client explore who they currently are and who they need to be in order to achieve their goals.

So you might have questions, like how have you grown this week or what does your intuition tell you about this? Or what are you pretending not to know about a particular situation? Are you in kind of denial all about something? And then finally, questions that focus on doing, doing are really helping a client to think about actions that they're going to take.

And these often come towards the end of a session. Where you're starting to think toward that accountability and next tasks for a client. And these might include things like, what did you accomplish this week, or what is the first step that you would need to take to reach a particular goal? Or what is stopping you from moving forward?

If you're trying to focus on obstacles. So all of those could be good questions to talk through with a client. Now, powerful questions are one of my favorite things. And when I was designing the coach training manual, I put in like 500 powerful questions because when I was first getting started with coach training, I just couldn't get enough.

Like I really wanted to see you a lot of examples. So one of my favorite kinds of powerful questions is a defining question, right? Yeah. And this is often really helpful when a client is using a word over and over again, and you can ask, what does that word mean to them? So for example, if a client says they're really seeking alignment between their values and their actions, you might say, well, what does alignment mean to you?

And it would allow them to kind of define what that means in season one of coach, coach. You probably also heard a lot of questions around metaphor, cause this was something that Katie really used as a tool. So asking a client, what a metaphor is that they could describe, um, to, to define a particular situation, to help themselves better articulate how they're feeling.

So if a client were to say, you know, I, I feel like I'm in a. Fast moving train and I can't get off, you know, like that might show that they feel constraint or that they feel like things are moving too fast or that they feel overwhelmed. Um, but there will be ways to kind of explore that metaphor through additional powerful questions.

So powerful questions often build on one another. That's one of the most important things about them is that you kind of string them together. Using the client's language and in a coaching session, you could easily ask 35 to 40 powerful questions, you know, based on how a client is responding and the length of their responses, you can actually pack in quite a few of these.

So as you're listening to coach, to coach episodes, yeah. I would highly encourage you to listen to the kinds of questions that are being asked by the coaches, because oftentimes they are going to fall into this category of powerful questions. They're going to have a, they're going to start with what they're going to be short.

They're going to be to the point, they're going to be deepening questions to help a client kind of go deeper within a particular topic. And there's probably going to be a lot of them. You're going to hear a lot of these back to back. And, um, this is something that ICF we know when they think about questions versus tools, if they actually prefer that you use questions, like they wouldn't want you to replace powerful questions with a tool, unless it was really necessary to do that.

So powerful questions are really, again, that cornerstone and fundamental approach to coaching. It's a little bit more about powerful questions, how they're structured and how you use them within a coaching session. I'll see you in the next episode. Thanks for listening to this episode of coach to coach for any resources mentioned in the episode, check out the episode.

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