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This episode of coach to coach is brought to you by my coach training program for academics and higher education professionals. In each training course, we meet weekly to explore how we can hold space for clients. Listen for the things that they care about most and help them to achieve their goals through focused questioning activities and tools.

If you think that becoming a coach might be a fit for your professional development goals, you can learn more about the coach training program. Or sign up for a 30 minute Q and a session with me to ask all of your questions@higheredcoaches.com cohorts begin in January, April, and June. And I'd love to have you join us.

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 excited to share conversations with some of the participants in my coach training program.

I get questions all the time about how people know it's the right time to become a coach. What the various career pathways are that lead to coaching and what people decide to do with their coaching skills. After earning a credential this season, we're tackling all of these topics and more. A huge, thanks to each coach in training who offered to come on the show and share about their experiences with learning this new skill set.

In this episode, you'll hear from Rebecca Pope Rourke who works with high achieving academic women. Rebecca believes that personal wellbeing and professional vitality are more important than productivity, but also that creating our most meaningful work and connecting with others keeps us vital. Her background as a faculty member, educational developer, project management specialist and writer editor, as well as her experience overcoming professional burnout, allow Rebecca to connect deeply with clients and support them as they articulate their purpose and values and enact plans to meet meaningful goals.

Now onto the episode. Hi, Rebecca. It is so good to see you. And to have you joined me on coach to coach, I am super excited to dive in and share a little bit more about your journey to coaching because everyone's story is just a little bit different. So tell us a little bit about your introduction to coaching as a field.

I think probably for many of us, the first time we heard coaching in this context, we think of like life coaching, which always is, is a kind of a different thing than I think most academics would be kind of up for it's, you know, this is the way it was portrayed in the nineties. And the 2010 seemed like, um, not something that I would be interested in.

Um, but I, so I have a certification in scrum project management, which is an agile project management. Um, methodology and in the training that I took for that, I did take a coaching class. Um, so I did a two day intensive class and then I helped facilitate, um, co-facilitated a two day course as well. Um, and that was really where I, I learned about coaching in a professional context, I think, and the value of it.

Um, it's I think, you know, mentally it's difficult to start to separate, separate out coaching and therapy versus mentoring and those kinds of things. Then, um, this course did that really, really well. Um, so I was really interested in it and I wanted to pursue a certification in that vein, but unfortunately, because it is based in software development and I don't work in software development, it wasn't something that I could naturally pursue because the coaching hours needed to be in.

Stockport organizations where you would be working with teams. So it wasn't something that necessarily I could pursue. Um, so that's kind of where I got my introduction to it. I think coming from there and, you know, from then on, I was always kind of sporadically looking for something that might work. Um, I looked at like organizational coaching and different things like that to see if they might be interested.

So it was always kind of on the back burner. Um, it's something that I was interested in. So I'm really curious, Rebecca, if you can talk to us briefly about agile and scrum for people who are less familiar with it, just so that they understand kind of the connections that you're making between coaching and some of these other things that you've been trained in.

Sure. So I have a certification as a scrum master, which is basically a fancy word for a team facilitator. Um, so agile and scrum specifically is a project management methodology based on short iterations. Of work. It's, it's really about kind of visualizing work transparency of the work, breaking the work down, and then organizing the work of a team over the course of a couple of weeks so that you're hitting short-term goals regularly, rather than, you know, we have a December deadline.

So we have we'll wait until December to go. The part of it done. So it's this kind of continuous progress model, um, that has specific kinds of rituals and specific language. Um, and it works. It works well. I mean, it was designed for teams, but it also works well for organizing research for organizing student teamwork.

I found it to be really effective. So I've been doing that for. Goodness, probably eight or 10 years at this point using it in my own classes. And then, uh, teaching other people how to do it leading workshops on it. Yeah. So I've been working with mentor mentee pairs in our undergraduate research program.

I had been doing just workshops from our center for teaching and learning at my previous institution. And then that. Started I started doing workshops at conferences and it kind of spun out from there for, um, some, some different kind of facilitating and speaking gigs. So it's a project management methodology that can kind of become a framework for how you do a lot of work.

Well, we will definitely link to, um, Rebecca's book, agile faculty in the show notes as well, in case you want to, um, check this out even further, because of course, Rebecca has a book on it. She's been doing this for so long. She's such a good expert in this area. So I'm curious, Rebecca, when you think about this is your background, like this is such a helpful background for us to hear what led you to pursue coach training.

I mean, you knew that this was something that related to kind of the agile, the project management pieces. Are there other things that led you to think about wanting to go in this direction? I have honestly been thinking about going in this direction with not necessarily giving it that label for a long time.

Um, I taught undergraduates for 17 years, including my PhD program. Um, and, and that was wonderful, but I was, I was at a point where I needed a change. So, and when I wrote agile faculty during my sabbatical, that became kind of the impetus for starting to turn more to faculty development. And that was something that I was really interested in educational development.

How do you work with faculty to help them work with students to, um, be the kind of teachers that they want to be, to be the kind of researchers that they want to be, and to have those. Skills because higher ed is so go, go, go all the time and it can be very stressful and very overwhelming. So what can we do to, um, provide faculty members, um, with the skills and some strategies to get ahead of that a little bit so that they can enjoy their work and feel like they're accomplishing things as they go, rather than just, you know, hitting, hitting markers or keeping ahead of the flames and so to speak.

So my PhDs are in writing. So I'm in professional writing. So I have been mentoring and, and facilitating writing workshops, basically my entire career. Um, I worked in marketing communications before I went to do my PhD. So writing was always something that I was very comfortable doing and comfortable kind of coaching other people or mentoring other people in doing.

So that combination of. Writing coaching, um, and working with writers, um, I was a journal editor for a while and loved working with writers in that context. So very developmental editing kind of things. So between the writing and then the project management, it all just kind of made sense to figure out a way to kind of formalize that a little bit.

Um, and there are a lot of people out there calling themselves coaches and, you know, I'm an academic, so I would rather. Work with someone with a certification, you know, which is, which is kind of an academic thing to expect. Right. And we also feel like, I think a lot of people feel like if I don't have that education or I don't have that training, you know, then I'm not qualified to do that.

So, um, I was looking for, for a way that I could. Build those skills in a more formal way. So it was this weird kind of combination of feeling qualified and not quite qualified to do this thing, um, that I was really interested in doing. So the, um, the training made sense to me. And also, um, I remember a long time ago, the first time we met, I signed up for a one-off session because I had all of these ideas for starting a business related to my agile faculty work.

And didn't know what coaching was. Wasn't sure what I was signing up for. And. You said high? What do you, what would you like to focus on today? And I like dumped my life in your lap.

And you were like, okay, Lou, what can we do today? So focus on this. So that experience made that very clear kind of transition from, okay, therapy's over here. Mentoring is over here and coaching is over here. And that just, that made a lot of sense to me. Cause I didn't feel like I had to be the super expert.

Um, I just had to kind of know myself and answer the questions and then figure out the ways to be accountable to myself with you. Hmm. Yeah. I do think a lot of people come into coach training, having experience coaching. Um, but I also appreciated what you were saying about when we serve academics as part of our client base, that credentialing does matter.

Like I, as we record this, I literally just talked to someone this morning who was interested in coming into the coach training program in 2021. And she said, do I really need a credential? And my response to that is always, it depends on who you're serving. If you are planning to have faculty and higher ed folks as clients, our currency is credentialing.

I mean, like, that's just like part of our culture is like, do you have a credential? And because of the PhD and these other things, like it matters for good or for bad, like it matters in our culture and in our industry. So I think it's interesting that you picked up on that too, of like, if I'm going to do this, I feel like I need a credential to do it.

Yeah. And it's, it's interesting too, even now I'm thinking about going into more developmental editing coaching and offering that as a, as a wider service. And my first thought is, do I need, do I need a credential for that? Because there are programs for those kinds of things, but you know, I have a PhD in writing and 17 years teaching experience.

Do I need this extra credential to do this? Would it be fun to do probably. But do I need to. I don't know, but the inclination is, Oh, well, let's do the program, which could be really fun. But it's also just one more thing to kind of add to the academic plate when you made. Yeah. Well, and I mean, you're like preaching to the choir here, Rebecca, because I love credentials and I love it.

But for me, part of it is like structured learning. I like a structured learning experience where I'm not having to compile all the information myself and try to figure it out. Like, yeah. It's easier for me with everything else I have going on in my life to like, have someone hands me a curriculum and be like, this is what you need to do.

Um, so I'm curious too. And I think this is something that a lot of people are curious about is how you knew that it was the right time to pursue coach training, because you, like you said, you'd been thinking about it for a long time. You could have entered into this, you know, at any part along that pathway, what was it in terms of the timing in your own life and career that you thought, okay, this is it like, I'm ready to take the leap into this.

Right. And it really did come at the right moment for me. Um, I had been going through. A significant bout of burnout and had started to make a lot of big changes in my life, um, which meant leaving my tenured role at my institution. Um, moving to Atlanta with my husband, starting a new role in faculty development at a very, very different institution.

So I was at a place of life transition anyway, and it was almost like you're making changes. Let's go all out. Right. You've been interested in this for a long time, so let's just take the first couple of classes. And if you like it, you can stick it out. And if not, you know, you've got, like you said, you've got some structured learning under your belt and you can, you can use it from there.

So it was. It was timing in that sense that I was ready. It was also timing in the sense that you just started the trainings. I was in the first cohort. So I mean, that definitely helps, um, starting out and it, it felt less stressful because we were all kind of starting out together, um, that there was a, there was a group there who we bonded very quickly and you felt very safe with those folks.

Um, so that kind of signaled to me also that this is right. Kind of stay in this. As you go. And also because I am now in faculty development specifically in a center for teaching and learning coaching very much is part of what I can be doing in my role and what we can be offering to our faculty. So it made sense both from a professional.

Development as well as kind of a personal side gig professional development as well. So it hit a lot of boxes. Um, and it allows me to do my job better in lots of different ways. So I wanted to get into that more because I think that this is a question too, that people have is like, how do. Coaching skills come into something like a day job.

And in faculty development, I think is an easier transition for some of this stuff, but it comes into management. It comes into all these other things. And I've talked about this in some other spaces, too, that I use my coaching skills a lot in my administrative position. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Are there certain things about coaching that you see really transferring into that space? And what does that look like for you? Right. And I think in some ways it's, it's code heading that coaching mindset is really helpful because it kind of holds you back a little bit from just feeling like you have to offer advice all the time.

Um, I don't have to be an expert in your discipline or your courses to be able to ask good questions to help you get at. The things that are important in your class. Um, so I can ask questions that help you focus on your learning objectives maybe differently than you had been. I can ask questions that help you think about your students maybe differently, or to kind of excavate something that you maybe were overlooking with your students or in your own practice.

So. Anytime I met a one-on-one consultation with a faculty member. There's always some level of uncertainty. I'm not sure about this. I'm not sure what to do. So rather than just saying, well, here's 12 things that you might try and overwhelming them. We can do some coaching, especially in the first half. It may not be a full coaching session because we may get the answers that we need and then be able to do okay.

More specific planning or syllabus work or whatever it is that faculty member needs in that hour. So it feeds directly into that. It also feeds I work with faculty fellows groups, and we have discussions about different pedagogical topics. Um, I worked with a group of senior faculty last semester and we read Josh Eilers book.

Um, and. We were able to cut. I modeled coaching questioning in that discussion, and then they were able to kind of model it with each other when they each lead chapters. So it's one of those things that, you know, people notice that you're doing, maybe don't have a name for it, but then see what kind of response you get from those kinds of questions.

And I think they, they start to pick it up themselves as well. And that's really interesting. Hmm. Okay. And we'll link to Josh's book in the show notes too, for anyone who wants to check it out. Um, so I'm also curious, Rebecca. I feel like there are some people who think about going into coaching and they're like, I'm not sure if I have what it takes to be a coach.

Like, do I have the natural skillset? Is there a natural skill set? I mean, like, these are all really good questions, right? Are there certain skills that you think you have, or that you've nurtured over time that are really benefiting you as a coach or certain things that you've had to really work on to kind of come into this coaching mindset.

What are some of the skills that you attribute to being a good coach? Well, and I definitely asked you that question. I remember doing kind of a little conversation before signing up for the coaching training and said, you know, you know, you knew me pretty well at that time, we had done slow hustle together.

And it was like, do you think this is something that I can do? Um, just kind of based on what you know of my personality and my levels of compassion and, and those kinds of things to do it seem like something that I think my, my whole concern about coaching is that I never want to do harm. Right. So I don't want to, in some way, you know, mess with someone else's perspective on their work or whatever it is that we're coaching on.

So I did want a little bit of reassurance going in that, that it was something that I could potentially be successful in for clients. So that was definitely a question that I was concerned about. And I think, you know, it's, I think a lot of what I'm bringing in is experience, honestly. So that's 17 years of teaching undergraduates.

Um, at least you two sections a semester, Um, for 17 years. So that's a lot of undergraduates and facilitating that and teaching and especially writing and teaching, writing is very much a coaching kind of process. You're trying to get them to dig deeper into their thoughts and to express them. So that already is very kind of coaching oriented, even if we don't really call it that when we do it, um, the scrum stuff fed directly into it.

So I had been working with people already. I knew how to facilitate larger groups. I knew how to put together a smaller study group kind of. Things as well as one-offs. So I feel comfortable developing, um, curriculum is probably not the right word, but you know, for groups you want to have a structure for coaching groups and things like that.

So if I felt comfortable doing that without being too heavy handed, and then my burnout experience, I think has been, um, attractive to a lot of people who are just kind of becoming. Acclimated to the word and that, that, that, it's a thing that you can talk about. Um, so all of those perspectives, I think come into it, I think over time with my teaching experience and with my experiences leading workshops and things like that, I just, I feel comfortable facilitating.

Um, and I coaching is in that way that you don't need to be an expert in this person's situation or in this person's discipline, you can very much. Come at them from a come come with them from a personal kind of person to person level. So that I think is a, is kind of a powerful placement. Um, and I've gotten, I got really comfortable with silence with my students, right.

Letting them have time to think. And that's, that's a surprisingly a skill that surprisingly transfers over pretty well, helping. Helping your clients to kind of sit in that discomfort or just hold the space for them to think about a question over time. So those are some things that I think carry over.

So you mentioned kind of early in your response, Rebecca, still hustle, which is a separate program. I run on business building and I can link to that in the show notes. And I think it's interesting that you had come through that program. First and you had a separate business. I mean, you have a speaking business and other kinds of things that you're doing, and then you decided to layer in coaching as, as another element of that.

Can you talk about that decision as well? Because I think that this is it's important for people to think about. They may already have something that they're kind of doing on the side and they're augmenting it with this element of coaching. What led to that decision for you? I think in a lot of ways, that just seems like a natural fit because in some ways I think I was more mentoring when I was teaching people how to do agile, because it's here, I'm teaching you a process and then I can support you as you use this process.

Um, so it was already comfortable working with people one-on-one and I had all of these ideas for kind of online courses that I could create and mentoring groups and writing groups and all these kinds of things. But nothing ever kind of caught my attention enough to stick for a long period of time.

And that, you know, part of that was the, the cycles of faculty life in general, you know, figuring out where, where to put the time and where the time makes the most sense. Um, and I. I honestly was at the point where I was getting sporadically, invited to do workshops at institutions and while that's awesome.

And I love doing those kinds of things. It's like, you never know where they're going to come from. So coaching was something that seemed a little more structured to me. That I could control a little bit more. I could do as much, or as little as I wanted, as I, um, became skilled, it already fit into, again, the agile work that I was doing, the burnout work that I was doing.

So coach D just made sense as something that I could really manage, um, in ways that I, I wasn't able to kind of intentionally manage the, this. The speaking and the facilitating, because that was kind of an invitation, um, kind of thing. So that wasn't something that I could necessarily control, but coaching was something that I felt fit into the portfolio of things that I could already do very well.

Um, I think probably initially I was thinking about it too, from the perspective of, of writing groups, right. That, that, how do I run a writing group? As a writing expert without, you know, without putting too much of that on the, um, the participants in that group, how can I support them, but also not take over their projects?

Um, so once I understood that the coaching was really mostly about asking good questions, Of people and deep listening, those were things that I w I was already committed to, um, or that I knew were challenging for me to, you know, it was, it was, it's an exercise in control as a faculty member, not to just jump in and try to solve something.

Yeah. Right. And we talk about this all the time in coaching training. Um, you know, and, and we all get into that kind of expert mode and it. Coaching is a nice reprieve from that in a sense that you really get to work with someone who you genuinely learn to care about if you, you know, when you work with them.

Um, but also you don't have to be the expert. You just have to be kind of the process expert. And that's what I was, that's what I was doing in agile and scrum as a process expertise, I can see that connection a lot. I had forgotten this about kind of the chronology of your story of coming through. So hustle and then doing this and.

There's a lot of people who've talked with me this year about the training program who had, has speaking business. And that was really hit hard by COVID. Um, and they're starting to think about expanding there. Skillset and maybe taking on coaching. So this is really interesting. I'm glad that we, we got into that.

It's kind of ironic right now that, you know, I've I started doing, speaking about burnout and talking to people about burnout. And my speaking business has unfortunately taken off because people recognize that their faculty need to have these conversations. Um, so. It's ironic and it's, it's a little bit sad that we're all, but we're all in burnout right now.

We're recording this in December of the pandemic, right? So, so faculty are just all burned out. Um, so having those conversations becomes even more important, whether that's a facilitation of a workshop or a discussion, or kind of one-on-one working with someone or group coaching with a small group of folks who are going through.

Burnout as well specifically. So I know experimented this year, Rebecca with group coaching and that you've done the individual and the group, and you really seem to enjoy the group coaching. Can you talk a little bit about your experience of launching that program and kind of thinking through what you wanted to do there?

Yeah, it's interesting because the, the, the group coaching program was based on the books that I'm writing. And it's something that I had been developing through my own healing process as a, you know, creating a book and creating a structure. And I can kind of come up with these kind of four resilience pillars that.

That helps me work through my burnout. So just for, for the listeners, it's purpose, compassion, connection, and balance. So those are very coaching words and it's low hustle. We worked for a long time. I'm thinking about, you know, what are our core values for the business? What are, what are the, you know, what are, are our goals or our outcomes for folks who work with us.

Right? And those are four things that I hope that people who work with me will walk away with, if they didn't feel, um, Connected to those, those values or those practices, um, at the time. So I kind of already had this framework. So putting together the coaching program itself, wasn't that difficult because I could use the framework that I had already worked on the book and I published it in inside higher ed in April, I think.

So I had a structure already, um, and I had your seven weeks to radical self-trust and some other programs as a model for that. So group coaching is this really interesting combination of. The powerful questioning part of coaching, but also having a bit of a structured curriculum, right? These are topics for each week.

Um, here's some homework for each week. And then of course in the session, the discussion goes where the discussion goes. Then you, you follow, you, follow your participants where they need to go. And that's the questions develop from there, but having a group that didn't have any kind of goal for each day, What would be kind of difficult really?

Because why would we be together? So I worked with a group of women who were experienced at different phases in their career, different disciplines who were experiencing burnout and needed to explore what that meant for them. Um, so that was, it was a six week program and it was just. It's an experience that I can't really describe.

And it partially because I came out of burnout and I think it was very close to my heart and working with these women. Um, but. The bond that they formed with each other and the support that they gave each other and just the listening and the holding space for each other. Sometimes I just got to sit back and, you know, and insert a question here or there, but they were doing a lot of the hard work for themselves before each other.

Um, and I think that's my first group experience and I hope. That they're all like that. Cause that would be amazing. Um, it just the bonds that they formed in the way they were able to coach each other by the end was just, it was incredible to me. It was really, um, a privilege to witness that. And that's so cool.

Are there areas of the coach training program or just work that you've been doing on your own Rebecca? That her helping you to build your confidence as a coach, as you enter into kind of these new realms of thinking about how you want to incorporate this into your business, into your work that you do during your day job.

Hmm. Um, I think the relationship piece of the training program is probably the most critical, um, You. And I had known each other for a couple of years by now. So I felt comfortable with you as a trainer. Um, and I felt comfortable that you would choose people to be in a program who would work well together.

And, um, working with my colleagues in those classes. And again, we were all from different areas, different disciplines, different, um, Different regions of higher ed in general or outside of higher ed. So we were, there was no competition between any of us to be the better coach or, um, to have the most clients or anything like that.

It was, it was very collegial. It was very supportive. We practice with each other. So, you know, it's. You could say, you can stop in the middle of the practice session and say, I have no idea what I'm doing. What do you guys think? Which is not a good idea in a formal session with a client. So, you know, having, having those practice sessions, um, Was really, really helpful.

And we do the observations where you work with us and, you know, we listened to one of our sessions with you and talk through it. And, um, I get a little test anxiety with those, but it's still helpful to gain perspective, right? You and I did one. Um, the first one we did for the course I'm in now, and it, it was not a good session, but it was good to walk through it and to see where I could have possibly inserted myself a little bit more, but this client needed a bit more structure and I wasn't sure how to give that to her at the time.

So even when things don't go well, and I know that person still got something out of that session, I know that she did it just wasn't necessarily up to par in terms of, of standards, but there's a learning experience in that. Um, Which is it, which is really important. Cause we're not gonna all be perfect coaches and we're not all gonna have every wonderful session, but that doesn't mean that someone still isn't going to get something powerful out of it and that we can't continue to improve because that coaching is a practice and it's a lifelong learning practice.

So I find that comforting as well. Yeah. I love this description of coaching as a practice. I think about that a lot in my own. Practice coaching. Like I call it that, I mean, it is a coaching practice, like in the same way that yoga is a practice and meditation is a practice like you deep, deep in it over time.

And I feel like for the last two or three years, one of my annual goals has been deep in my coaching practice. And I do different things every year in order to do that and kind of better understand what I'm coming from. Are there things that we haven't talked about yet, Rebecca, that you want to share about this journey for yourself and what it's meant for you to.

Go through this training, become a coach, start to use these skills in your life and in your work. I think going to that idea of a practice again, is that, you know, we're all still working on something related to our coaching and that's, you know, remembering to hold space for the client. Um, and to ask the questions when you might be chomping at the bit in your back brain to just, you know, okay, well, this is what I see.

Is this true? Or can you do this rather than letting them come to it? That's something that I think I'll always be learning. Um, but that's important for me because it kind of, if it's against my nature a little bit, and that's the good thing, um, to not always want to jump in and solve a problem. So you just to just be present for someone?

Um, I think it makes me better in my. My own personal relationships and my professional relationships. Cause I have that different perspective. Um, instead of trying to be an expert, um, I'm working on developing some signature programs. So the burnout group coaching program is one I'm thinking about different ways that.

The agile scrum fits in with the coaching and how, what that might look like and some writing groups and things like that. So it's been fun to, to play with those different sides of my professional identity and to kind of put them together. They all kind of meld under professional faculty development, which is really, really interesting.

So I can be pulling from lots of different pots. I feel like in terms of resources, I have so many activities and strategies that I picked up from, from scrum and from design thinking, I was teaching design thinking for four or five years. So I've, I've so many kinds of tools to kind of pull out. So it's not just, I think that's one thing to think about too, is that coaching isn't always just asking questions.

It's providing activities for, you know, just short strategies that people can try. And see if that works for them or helps them, um, dig into some aspect of their, their interests or their fears that they can get some more out of in that coaching context. So that's been fun to kind of go back into that bag of tricks, thinking about different clients and thinking about, okay, I'm going to have these three things ready just in case.

It seems like that might be where the client wants to go. Um, so it's fun in some ways, cause that's spontaneous too. Be like, Oh, okay. Well that reminds me of this activity. Would you be interested in trying this kind of activity? So, um, it's fun to pull all those things together and pull the threads together and see how things are, are uniting under kind of a common banner.

Well, I love Rebecca hearing about your background and how it has. Led you down this pathway to coaching and the connections to agile and scrum are just fascinating to me as someone who also really enjoys project management. I love hearing about those connections. So thank you for coming on the show, sharing your story.

It was really wonderful to have you yeah. Happy to chat. Always.

Thanks for listening to this episode of coach to coach for any resources mentioned in the episode, check out the episode. Show notes at Dr. Katie linder.com/coach. If you found this episode to be helpful, please take a moment to rate or review the show in Apple podcasts or recommends episode to a friend, or thanks for listening.