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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 Dr. Brenda Lovegrove lip pesto. A healthcare professional coach in training was certification expected in 2021. Brenda currently works as a behavioral health academic program director at McLaren greater Lansing health system in Michigan, where she teaches behavioral science to family medicine, resident physicians, and is co-director of graduate medical education wellness.

Brenda, a clinical psychologist and child and adult psycho analyst does, this is a lifelong commitment to facilitating personal and professional growth in herself and others. Hi, Brenda, I'm so excited that you were joining me on this season of coach to coach. I am excited to hi Katie. So I thought we would start, uh, Brenda, just by learning a little bit more about how you came to.

No about coaching as a thing. Some people come through it because they're a client, other people encounter in different ways. Can you talk a little bit about how you came to be aware that there was a thing such as a field called coaching? Okay, sure. I became aware of the field of coaching years and years and years ago.

Um, when I was in practice there. Were sometimes patients would say things like, I think I need a coach. I need to be coached about this. And so I became aware that there was such a thing as a coach that wasn't necessarily on a sporting team, uh, uh, field. So that's where I first became aware of coaching.

So people will have heard your bio in the beginning of this episode and know a little bit about your background, but as you're talking about patients and working with patients, let's talk a little bit about, um, where you were and what you were doing, pre coach training and kind of what you're doing now.

So people kind of have a bit of a context of your professional background. Okay. I think I'm not quite sure, but I think I was, um, I had just transitioned from a full-time private practice on trained as a clinical psychologist play therapist, a psychoanalyst, um, had a private practice for many years. I think I became aware of the coach training and wanted to do the coach training.

Uh, after I had transitioned to a new job in medical education where I was, um, Precepting, which means, um, kind of teaching on the fly, uh, internal medicine residents, communication skills. Yeah. I remember when we were first emailing you about the program, you were very interested in the concept of questions.

You're like, I feel like I need more questions. I can ask people. And that was part of what was so interesting to me about your background and kind of thinking about how our coaching questions different from the kinds of questions you might be asking in your practice. Can you talk a little bit about some of the.

Differences. You've seen there in this past year as you've been practicing with both hats on. Yes. I love the coaching questions. I use them all the time and the reason I like them. Um, and not that I don't like the question, the normal questions I use. They're just focused at a different aspect of a person than the coaching questions are focused.

And I like the coaching questions and I really wanted them because I was training internal medicine. Resident physicians, usually not from the United States, Optum with preconceived notions about mental health and what constituted, good communication people, psychological wellbeing. And I found that my toolbox was not.

Full of the right kind of questions. And I felt if I could get some of these other questions and be thinking more about how can I ask a question versus make a suggestion or ask a question in a way that someone would be inspired to answer it versus feeling they had to come up with an answer and. I thought that this might be a way to gain that skill, that I could then translate to my, um, precepting and teaching along with others.

So you are someone Brenda, who I would say is pretty advanced in your field. I mean, like this is a set of skills that you've been developing for a long time. And I'm curious if you can talk a little bit about. Why you felt like this past year was the right time for you to develop this skillset and coaching.

You mentioned wanting more of the questions, but sometimes there's kind of this timing question of like, how do I know this is the time to kind of do this work? Can you talk a little bit about that decision and deciding to kind of pivot toward this direction? Yeah, well, the, the quick and dirty answer is that, you know, I only have so much more time in my professional career, so I'm going to be doing it now.

Um, so the other reason, I guess, uh, why I thought it was, um, beneficial is I wanted to do this, um, Training for myself, not for any other reason, I have done all sorts of trainings over the course of a lifetime. We all get to do lots of different things. If we're fortunate and have a curiosity, and I wanted to do something that was just for me.

And I felt like as a sideline, it was going to benefit me in my job for sure. I felt like I wanted to have something that was not the same as the psychotherapy practice. I've run a business for 30 odd years. I didn't want to run another business, but I did want to stay in touch with those folks who want to grow and change and want to find out what's inside of themselves.

I have a, I've just. Incredibly incurious mind when it comes to how people think their behavior. I mean, even creatures, uh, I'm sort of interested in the whole gamut of behavior and communication relationships. And so I felt like this was a perfect opportunity and my institution was willing to fund it because they also saw it as benefiting them.

But I did it for myself, not for the certification, not to start a business, not. For anything other than I felt like it would benefit me. Um, and I think it's benefited me in ways that I wouldn't have predicted. So it was kind of an extra bonus. Okay. Well, we definitely want to hear about that. Can you tell us a little bit about what those benefits have looked like for you?

Yes. So, um, throughout this coaching, first of all, I was able to take your course, which I valued a lot. And I also wanted to have, I could have just taken one course, right. I didn't have to go for anything because that wasn't really working towards an, toward anything. Um, but I wanted to a systematic learning, I believe in that.

And I believe in curricula and that we are guided in. Thoughtful ways to our ends, if we're fortunate. Um, and I also wanted to, um, I think about myself, where I'm going, what I'm doing. Um, this is a type of my life I get to do whatever I want. I want it. I'm always saying all I want to do is have some fun.

Um, I just wanted to have some fun and I felt like this. Added to that because I became, first of all, I had the class, I became connected to folks who, um, while in different spaces and stuff than I was, are just wonderful human beings. And I loved that and I loved listening to their growth, their change. I love to hear their questions.

I got a chance to listen to all of this. So that was a benefit to me, um, in, in terms of having a variety of. Styles of coaching. And then I was able to take away some tricks and tips for myself. So when I get stuck, sometimes I'm writing my morning pages, I think, Oh, I'll ask myself a coaching question or I get into a situation where I feel like I need to figure something out.

I think. Oh, I can ask myself a coaching question. And so I will ask myself the coaching questions. Um, not that I don't take advantage of my cohort, um, who I have some very close, uh, colleagues and we trade coaching and that, and I get benefit from that as well, which I didn't know I was going to get, um, I do have a whole source of coaching questions myself in Friday.

I feel that my relationships, especially with. Tricky relationships, um, meaning relationships where the person, I maybe have some conflict or we have a different approach to life. Uh, different communication styles. I can use my coaching tools and I have, then I can then sit back. I can think about how to ask something in a question versus.

Offering it up as a, maybe a question, but in a statement way. So it kind of confines what they can react to. I can open it up so they can react to lots of things. And I have found that it just improves my relationships all around. So those are the extra benefits I didn't really think about when I was thinking about getting some more questions and acquiring a new skill.

Well, that's been so personalized to different aspects of your life, Brenda. So I want to dig in a little bit more to your background in psychotherapy, because this has been such a benefit to me as the facilitator of this training, that we've been able to have multiple conversations about what we see as kind of the differences between coaching and therapy.

And this is a part of the curriculum to make sure that everyone understands, you know, when to refer a client. Um, if they are exhibiting signs of needing therapy versus needing coaching. But this is an area that I know has been a real curiosity for you just given your background, you know, that you have the skills of psychotherapy, but then you're coming in to this whole other skillset.

Can you talk a little bit about that experience of just kind of, you know, working through this new skillset when you already have a really well established skillset around questioning around kind of digging into people's behavior? Uh, tell us a little bit about that journey. It was complicated. It's still complicated.

I was just talking to somebody, a new client the other day and I'm like, Hmm, let's see. What are we talking about here? And I'm thinking in my mind, how is this going to be. Turned, uh, in ways that either I wanted and feel comfortable with the coaching hat on, or am I thinking about the psychotherapy hat, but the psychotherapy had, has a lot of constraints to it, right?

It's a, it's a regulated profession. I have a license, I have malpractice considerations, which I don't carry malpractice on myself anymore. I have it through my institution, which is different. Um, so there are lots of different. Uh, rules that I have to, uh, follow and not get into. Then the regular, you know, average coach who doesn't have this kind of training.

So it. In that way. It's, it's complicated for me. Um, the other, the other place that it becomes complicated is, um, in terms of, of your question about the curriculum, it becomes complicated to me. And I was talking to another person again about this the other day. I talk about this with every, every person I coach with.

I think that's in our class or whatever. Um, but what is. What I'm struggling with now and kind of working through my mind is so coaches think they know when to, um, to refer someone to therapy. Okay, but they're not therapists, so they don't really know. Cause they're not therapists like they can guess. Um, but there's a reason we all had to go through a million years of school and exams and like whatever else to diagnose and to treat and that kind of thing.

So where does it, where is the line drawn and then how do we know people are really drawing it. Uh, sometimes I'm not so sure. And then where's the overlap because there's a lot of overlap. Um, there are, um, very benign overlaps, but there were also some overlaps that are a little concerning, too more so to me, probably than maybe the average person and maybe more than necessary.

Um, I haven't quite sorted that out for myself yet. I'm overly sensitive to it. Um, because I, I know that a w for instance, I was talking with someone the other day, the PA the, uh, coaching client was, is in therapy. And, um, so now we know we've got a dilemma, right? Cause then we've got somebody who was in therapy, um, who the.

The onerous of the treatment is going to go on that person. It's not going to go on the coach. The coach can do whatever he or she wants to do. Nothing's going to happen. It is going to happen in spades over here with, um, the, the psychologist, like she's responsible. So if advice gets. You know, given or, um, things the coach is doing is actually complicating what the psychotherapist is trying to do.

Then we got a problem. And then sometimes if it comes around where the coach thinks, well, there's no progress being made. So now we should intervene and try to get that person out of therapy because nothing's happening. But really the coach doesn't know because the coach isn't in therapy, all the coach knows is what the client is saying, which.

Because it's very different to be a psychologist than it is a coach. We don't necessarily say because you feel great. You're doing great. Because it's not the case. Sometimes we have to go to some mucky, yucky places, feel kind of lousy for a while to get enough motivation, anxiety, to mobilize our resources, to actually confront a problem.

So that doesn't mean you're making progress in the sense of I'm feeling great. So all of this becomes complicated. Uh, to me, Katie, I'll stop there where this, um, I could probably go on for the rest of this podcast. Um, but that's where it becomes, you know, complicated for me. And I have lots of. Thinking to do about it and not very many answers about the whole thing.

Yeah. Well, this is something, I mean, it's, it's so interesting to me. Yeah, me too. I think that it's, it's really a complicated, um, for me as well in the ways that you've kind of described because. I do work with a lot of clients who have taken kind of a, what we called a team approach, where they are seeing a therapist, seeing a coach and, and maybe have other resources that they're kind of working with.

And one of the things that you and I have talked about in the past is the challenge of that is that the coach is not talking to the therapist and the therapist is not talking to the coach. And, and so there isn't really a. Collaborative approach to what's happening. If you just have the client in the middle, who is telling you whatever they're telling you about kind of how things are going.

And from the coaching perspective, our goal is always to trust the client and, and to kind of go with what the client is saying. Um, and so there's, it does create kind of this interesting, um, concern is you're racing that the coach is not doing something that is, is working in an opposite direction of where the therapist is, is kind of trying to have happen with this client.

Um, So this is the area of coach training. I would say, where I get the most questions is how do I know when the client is saying something that should be referred to a therapist? And we talk about this a lot. There's a white paper that was written by the international coaching Federation about referrals.

So I can link to that in the show notes for people to take a look. But I think you're right. I think it's incredibly complicated and layered. And, um, I don't know that it's something that you're going to figure out, you know, overnight in terms of just like, what does it mean for your own practice? Yes, it's, it's, it's, uh, it's a tricky one and you know, I've given thought to what we've talked about, Katie, um, uh, about a team approach.

And, um, you know, I see benefit in that in some ways. Uh, I also them, uh, then, uh, of course are very protective of my, um, my patients and I'll use that word for the people I see. Not necessarily because they're sick, but because it differentiates them from the coaching clients. Um, but I have a, you know, a very strong feeling, especially given in our society, the stigma around mental health.

Uh, concerns that their privacy and confidentiality be protected. And I also appreciate that when you do give a release. So if I was, if you and I were treating the same, you were coaching someone, I was treating someone. Um, then that person says, um, well, I'd like you to talk to Katie. And, you know, I want you to find out, you know, like what she's doing with me, so you can understand what's going on.

Then I would have. You know, I would be thinking now. Okay. So does that mean an exchange of information? Does that mean information is going one way she's talking to me, but I'm not talking to her. And then if it is going both ways, then what am I allowed to say? And what am I not allowed to say? And do I make that decision or do you make that decision or maybe the three of us meet together and maybe the three of us could talk about.

How things are going and how we're looking at things. Um, and so, and so we could, you know, work to the same ends in some way or one or the other of us could back off from something that might not work well for the other person. You know, like, I guess really now that I'm thinking about it, I think that that might be, uh, An interesting approach.

I'd love to try from, from the psychologist's perspective, actually, um, to have somebody and then to, to say, you know, let's the three of us talk because I have talked with other professionals, uh, with my patients before a dietician, let's say. Uh, for someone who's having, um, an eating disorder, I've talked with dieticians, I've talked to teachers, I've been in teacher meetings with parents and kids sometimes too.

Um, and that is truly, I think, a team approach and that is much more regulated in the sense that, uh, the patient being, or the patient client being worked with has some control. over the flow of information. Maybe that would make me more comfortable now that I'm thinking about it. Um, so that's my latest thought layers here.

I mean, I think about, for example, you know, clients that I've worked with in the past, who are seeing a therapist and it's helpful sometimes for them to disclose that to me so that I don't. Have to ask and say, you know, is this an area where you have support? Because oftentimes I will set a boundary and say, I'm just not professionally trained to assist you in that area.

And I want to make sure you have the support structures that you need. Um, I think specifically for, um, I'll give an example of like an eating disorder, knowing that a client is being treated for that will change how I talk about maybe like. Motivation around or like rewards, you know, like I might say, Oh, you know, like, go, go have a reward.

That's like a treat, you know, or, or a glass of wine or something like, I'm not going to use food-based reward structures. If I know that a client is dealing with something that would be problematic in that way. So there's certain things, but I think the other challenging piece as a coach is. Oftentimes, there are a lot of things that clients are dealing with that they just don't disclose at all.

And, and we have no way of knowing that I would imagine this could also be true in psychotherapy as well. You only know what the client is telling you. Um, and I think that it's, it's kind of a reminder to me of the, um, The limitations to some degree of kind of the work that we're doing, but also a constant reminder to trust the client that, you know, like they're going to tell you what they want to tell you and what they think is relevant.

And it may or may not include, you know, all kinds of information that, that we could, I bet would shape our questions maybe, or that would shape our approaches. You know, I was thinking Katie too, about your question. Um, like when to refer and I thought about that a lot, because a lot of the issues can overlap and I was talking, um, with someone the other day about this and how would we decide, uh, you know, and how would I decide?

Uh, I think, you know, what we kind of thought about was, um, When someone starts asking about the dynamics of a relationship, uh, you know, like asking about why does so-and-so do this? Why does so-and-so do that? Um, You know when so-and-so says this, then it makes me say that why is that? Those are really coaching questions.

Coaching questions would be more like when I get into this situation, what would be a way I could approach that situation? Um, and communicate what I want to communicate yet. I feel okay about it. Oh, okay. Well, we can build some skill around that we can build, you know, some, some strengths around that kind of area.

So that seems more coaching. So when you get to the, what in-house and skills and ways to approach things, That seems more coachy to me and maybe the psychotherapist would be doing so. I mean, I always did some of that anyway, but not in the same focused way as a coach would do it. And I think that when you start getting into these relationships, why isn't my relationship with my wife better?

Well, you know, if you want to say something like, what can I do to make my relationship better with my wife? Then you could say, what has. Worked in the past. What strengths do you have to draw on? Well, good experiences. Can you think of that's coaching stuff? So there, you know, I, I think when I hear things that are not more cognitively based.

And definitely outside of the dynamics, motivations drives defenses, um, that kind of thing. Let me think more coaching. Um, but if I think of them in those other areas, then I have to think about, it's kind of like how the question is framed. It's not necessarily the, the topic or the, you know, underlying questions.

Yeah, no, I think you're absolutely right. I mean, I think that. Um, and this is what we try to kind of differentiate, but as you're pointing out, it's complicated because sometimes it's a very nuanced way of how is the client framing the question? I think this is why having exploration sessions is so valuable because I've been able to find in some of my exploration sessions that a client is coming in with a therapy mindset.

And I'm been able to say, I am not sure coaching is the right fit for you. Like if that's what you're looking for, that's more of a therapy approach and, you know, I can give you resources to help you find someone, you know, who would be a fit in that way, but in an exploration session, you're able to kind of understand what is, what are the goals of the client?

What are they trying to accomplish? And like you're saying based on the way they frame those questions and goals. It does, I think help you to understand, can you help them or not based on kind of your area of expertise and the skills you have as a coach? So, um, so interesting. I mean, I agree with you. I, we can talk about this, like, you know, for hours and hours and we have, I mean, we've gone back and forth and, and had a lot of dialogue about this because I want to pick your brain.

Doesn't mean you've been such a valuable resource to me in this area, but I do want to come back Brenda, to your coaching journey and thinking about. Are there certain things that you have in terms of your skillset that you're kind of pulling from this past experience that you think have been beneficial to you as a coach and maybe are there skills that you're like, I've really had to set some of those things aside, you know, in order to come into this coaching space and kind of.

Understand what that looks like to put on the coaching hat instead of the psychotherapist hat? Yeah, of course. Um, I have, um, I have a great deal of ease talking with new people. Um, I have a great deal of ease for these one-to-one conversations. I don't, I feel. Quite confident whatever's coming my way is, is going to be, you know, something I can handle.

I don't feel anxious, uh, about that. Uh, really at all. Um, I mean, I know people, I know sometimes I, I listened differently, which is sort of a double-edged sword. Um, so I, I do bring that skill with me and I do have to talk to myself about it sometimes. Um, but I think that, you know, rapport building.

Listening deeply. Um, just having a real sense of satisfaction when someone moves along in the direction they want to move along with, I bring that with me. Um, the curiosity about how someone's thinking. I love to talk about that anyway. So, um, that, uh, certainly comes along with this and have there been areas of coaching skill that you feel.

Have been challenging for you at all. I mean, where you've had to like, take one hat off, put another hat on and it's switching your brain a little bit to be like, okay, this is the coaching perspective. Not the psychotherapy perspective. Yeah. And often it listen, I'm getting better at it. And I can tell you that experience, I'm getting much better at that.

Um, it's very hard for me. Uh, it doesn't come naturally for me to, um, not formulate quickly. Put pieces together, uh, follow an algorithm. I mean, all of these things, diagnostic, you know, considerations, all these things are things that are very cemented in my life at this point. Um, so those are hard for me sometimes to ignore.

Um, and I always worry that I'm ignoring something that shouldn't be ignored that I should. Pay attention to it, but then I just tell myself, I'm not, I'm not acting as a clinical psychologist in this setting. I have not advertised my, as myself as such. I am not in that professional role. Like that is not my role at work.

I am not a psychologist. That is, I'm a no I'm now I am sort of a psychologist, but anyway, it wasn't until recently. Um, but, uh, Uh, it's really a different kind. I mean, now we've kind of transitioned to sort of like a health coach sort of, I mean, a little more than that, but sort of like that. Um, so I think that that has been an, um, a struggle for me, um, a little bit, um, Yeah, I probably, I probably think, and I'll put that in big capital letters that I see more than, um, maybe other people are seeing or hearing in an interaction and sometimes my alarm bells go off.

Um, but I'm used to being I'm, I'm a cautious person and I'm used to being, um, you know, Really conscientious about that. And this has been a relaxation of that to some extent, but when you say, you know, plus what the client says, I mean, I, I, I don't necessarily trust what the client says. Um, Not that I don't believe them.

I believe them. And I believe this is how they're thinking. And I believe that this is the place that they're going, but I don't believe that everybody has knowledge of everything that's going on in their minds. I believe there is an unconscious, um, you could call it lots of different things. Um, but that, that does exist, um, for all of us, including myself, so that I get tripped up with a little bit.

Um, sometimes then I just tell myself it's not my business, so don't look at it. Um, and I kind of go on, I'm getting better at it. I'm really getting better at it because I, I think Katie, what has made the difference is I have found more value as time has gone on in the, um, Like, what would you say more? I will say, I want to say superficial level, but that, that would be really not pejorative.

Um, it would be more like the, um, the conscious, uh, decision-making that people make. I have, I have seen and gotten more value of that and paying attention to that as a way to deal with some stuff that might be a little bit more submerged and watching that kind of flower. Um, bloom in a different way, maybe slower, maybe not at, at, you know, the pace that I would need to go in, in my practice or something, but it, it, it grows.

And so I feel like with that competence, um, it has become easier to put aside the psychologist hat and put it on the culture. , I'm wondering if there's anything else that you want to share about this journey that you have been on over this past year and. How this has been for you to open up into this new skill set and use it in a different way.

Um, I think what has been fun for me over this past year is something that seems to be a part of my character that I realized now is that I always sort of like to be in places where I don't belong. And I had a lot of fun being with, you know, like all of you academic. People when I'm in their health care professional person.

And I actually have a practice oriented degree. I have a side ID and not a PhD because I'm like an MD only in psychology. Um, and I, I loved that. That was just a lot of fun. It was, um, kind of enriched my life and. In ways could learn about all sorts of issues that I, that I didn't necessarily know about so much.

Um, despite the fact that married to a professor and I have a couple of professor kids, um, but this was, um, it's fun. It was fun, uh, to be a part of this, uh, community. And so that was something that was, um, Was cut, you know, something I really hadn't thought for, I just thought I'm going to get some questions.

I'm going to do this for myself and I'm going to grow and change. And then it, it kinda came with more than that. So. Well, I, that it's so much to this community, Brenda. And we were so fortunate that in this first group we had, you kind of bring the psychotherapy background. We had an ethicist, like we had like this incredible, like melding of people who are bringing all these different perspectives and it, it did enrichen.

You know, and make this just incredibly rich experience for all of us to kind of be thinking about this from all these angles. So I'm so glad you were part of this community and I'm so glad you shared your experience on this episode of coach to coach me too. Thanks, Katie.

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 colleague.

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