

Coaching Mastery – Reflective Learning Journal

“The point of reflection is to enhance capability” Julie Hay

Narrative in the form of a reflective learning journal can be a powerful way for us as coaches to access unconscious patterns of behaviours and belief systems. To coach people successfully it is essential for both the coach and the coachee to understand what is going on underneath the surface and reflective writing can be the key to gaining new awareness and insights on this process.

Reflective and journal writing allows the brain to access the more creative parts of us and also the emotional territories housed in the limbic system and reduces the rule bound executive function which is the part of the brain that wants us to write in complete sentences, preferably with correct spelling and punctuation.

Reflective writing is more than simply describing what happened. It is asking key questions around what you are noticing, how you are feeling about the situation and how this is impacting you now as you write it down. You can also reflect- in- action whilst you are coaching in the moment and then reflecting on-action once you write down your learning notes.

Reflective Writing Techniques for Coaches – some approaches

Technique One

The ORID approach (Mark Bisson)

- O: Objective data – Describe a situation from your coaching or coaching practice. What did you see – include physiology, eye cues, taste, smell, touch? What did you sense?
- R: Reflective Data – Describe your reactions. What did you think and feel? What were your kinesthetic reactions?
- I: Interpretative Data – Describe your interpretations of the data you have gathered?
- D: Decisional Data – Make a plan regarding what you will do differently or will stay the same the next time you are in a similar situation? What do you need to learn to do differently to manage the situation effectively?

Technique Two

After your coaching session why not write a stream of consciousness. You can divide the paper up into three segments. In the first column is what is said by the client and in the second column is what your response is as coach and in the third are any questions or insights that occurred to you at the time. This can be a starting point for fertile material and further analysis.

Technique Three

Another technique after a coaching session is to use a five minute warm up or sprint where you can open the creative floodgates:

- Write whatever is in your head and making sure you are not censoring yourself.

- Write without stopping for 5 minutes.
- Don't stop think or be critical even if you doubt its quality.
- Allow it to flow without worrying about spelling or grammar.
- Give yourself permission to write anything.

After the 5 minute you can use the reflexive writing technique below. Reflexive practice allows you to make sense of what you have written. Pick out words and phrases that stand out for you and circle them. These are your seeds.

Use the questions:

- When I read this, I notice?
- When I read this, I feel?
- When I read this, I am surprised at
- When I reflect on the key messages what is emerging through writing?
- What else wants to be written?
- What am I learning here as a coach?

Technique Four

Another reflective technique is to answer these questions in your reflective journal:

- Exactly what happened and what caused it to happen that way during the coaching session?
- How did you behave, think and feel as it was happening?
- What do you notice now as you review it?
- What do you feel now as you review it?
- What are the main learning points from this experience?
- So how will you apply that learning to your future coaching practice?

Technique Five

Write a letter to your inner coach supervisor. Think of a recent difficult or challenging coaching session.

- Write a letter to your inner supervisor and begin the letter Dear John Jill etc.
- Comment on how you handled the situation, make suggestions of things that could be done differently and be supportive and encouraging by affirming the things that did work.
- Finally highlight any points that may have been missed or overlooked. Tap into the guidance that your inner supervisor has to offer.

Reflective Questions

These are some reflective questions that you can use to prompt learning from your coaching sessions, whichever technique you use:

- How did I feel about what happened? How did it impact me emotionally?
- What are my thoughts about what happened?
- What did I enjoy/not enjoy?
- What do I find easy to do, understand and why?
- What do I find challenging to do or understand and why?
- What do I fear most about what happened?
- What did I learn that was new to me?
- What insights did the new learning give me?
- What new understanding did I gain about myself?
- How do I think this might be useful in my coaching practice?
- What do I need to do differently, do more of, do less in my future practice?
- What actions will I take as a result of my learning and reflections?
- Do I need to acquire any new knowledge?
- Do I need to investigate or do further research?

What do you use your Reflective Learning Journal for on Coaching Mastery?

On Coaching Mastery we advocate for you to use your Reflective learning Journals to reflect on all aspects of the programme:

- The Modules
- Coaching Sessions
- Coaching Supervision
- Your Buddy Sessions
- Reading and Ted talks and in-between module learning

Coaching Mastery requirements

We will ask you to hand in your reflective learning journals in-between modules so we can see how you are going, and we will add our own reflections to your reflections.

As part of your integration requirements we will ask for a Summary of Learning document (around 2 pages of A4) of your key learning and reflections from all elements of Coaching Mastery much of which will come from your reflective journal. Please see the separate document on the portal that describes this in more detail.