

Keeping out of the story - 'Blind' Coaching

One of the most difficult things when we adapt to coaching is to stay out of the content of the story, the issue, the narrative – as a problem solver in life we believe we need to know everything about the issue if we are to help the person solve it.

In coaching, we are enabling the client/coachee to solve it for themselves. We are there, holding the space for them to do their own thinking, access their own experience, knowledge and the links between them. It is based in the knowledge that, beyond all else, the benefit of getting your thoughts out of your head – either verbally or into text – is that you have expressed them, the whirlwind inside can calm down and you can see/hear your thoughts from a new perspective.

As a developing coach we learn as we go to 'trust the process' – our coaching frameworks, questions and tools have all been developed from what works to enable our clients thinking.

On our courses we run you through a 'blind' coaching activity where the whole group is coached at once using some core questions within an OSCAR framework. The coach can't know what a number of different people are thinking through – they can only hold the space and trust the process.

The exercise

Every person identifies a topic or issue they want to think through which they write down. These questions are then offered at a slow pace, giving space for them to write down their thoughts in answer to them.

- Think of an issue or topic that you want to think through and make some progress on – write it down
- What's going on for you now around this topic?
- If 10 is 'Great – that's the best it can be' and 0 is 'I've got nowhere with it' - where would you calibrate you are on this now?
- Where do you want to get to with this?
- What is your ideal outcome?
- Imagine a time in the future – of your choosing – when you have reached this outcome
- Imagine yourself in this future place – you've reached your outcome

- Have a look around you – where are you? what do you see that tells you that you have reached it? What are you doing? Others doing? Differently?
- And what can you hear? What are people saying? What feedback are you getting? What are you saying to yourself?
- How do you feel?
- Calibrate this situation – out of 10 how good is it?
- And if you were to up that score by 1 (if a 7 what would make it an 8...or even 10 what would make it 11?) what do you need to see, hear or feel to enable that?
- Coming back then to now
- What's stopping you from moving to that outcome?
- Particularly, what's in your way in your own head?
- What's the real challenge for you here?
- What's coming to mind that you might need to start to do differently to move toward your outcome?
- What are your options for how to proceed? Which one(s) are you most drawn to?
- What strengths do you know you already have to bring to bear in this situation, that will help you move toward your outcome? Which....qualities, mindsets, skills, experiences will help you most here?
- From everything you have thought about so far – what's really striking you?
- What else does that tell you about how you can progress this issue?
- What might you need from others and how will you ask for that?
- Given all that thinking, what feels like the best first step you can take? When will you do that?
- And how are you going to review your progress – what commitment are you making to yourself?
- Having done all that thinking, how do you feel about this topic now?
- What progress have you already made by doing this thinking? Where are you now from 1-10 and how does that compare to where you started today?

- Celebrate that progress!!!

This takes up to 15 minutes and we then check in as to who has made significant progress on their issue as a result of the time to think. It is usually up to 3/4 and almost everyone makes some progress.

In debriefing this exercise, we learn:

- The surprise that 'just' the time to think and to get our thoughts out helps us progress our thinking
- To write it down allows us to see it clearly and process it better
- It can feel like contacting with yourself
- The questions give a structure and flow
- Not all the questions have the same impact on each person
- That progress is possible in such a short time

Applying this for real

Clearly, it will not be often that we use a flow of questions without hearing our clients answers. This exercise is there to demonstrate the power of time to think, getting our thoughts out and being supported in that with a tried and tested framework.

And the flow of questions might be very similar to those above – they incorporate all parts of OSCAR, outcome thinking, they use visualisation of a future state and calibration of now and progress.

Occasionally we might use questions like this this if a client doesn't want to reveal the content of their issue – it is too sensitive for them to do so and feel safe. It gives them that framework and space to think.