

## 10 things I've learnt in my first 10 years of coaching

Coaching is a humbling experience. It's a rare privilege to be invited into someone else's world to support them in profound and important ways.

As someone who specialises in influence, engagement and interpersonal impact, I've been invited to work with leaders in different countries, in different industries and from different backgrounds. One thing I've noticed is that whether I'm coaching a leader from Canada, Sweden, or Bulgaria or working with my clients here in Australia, our diversity as individuals is nothing compared to our similarities as humans.

Whilst people are different, unique and often surprising, in many ways we are equally predictable. It's these patterns of behaviour that help me help my clients impact those around them in ways that build respect, visibility, trust, and engagement.

I began my coaching career in 2006 and in 2016 I reflected back on what I had learnt from my first 10 years of coaching. May this list fast track your own interpersonal impact and prepare you for the year ahead!

### **1. Your responses are normal**

Clients often feel like they are the only ones thinking or feeling a certain way. They are not. Many people share their responses, their thoughts and feelings, as hard, confronting or unpleasant as they might be. Your responses are human responses and on some level are shared by us all.

### **2. You don't want to be changed**

Clients sometimes fear that coaches will try to 'fix them' or turn them into someone they are not. That's not my job. You are not broken. I'm not here to fix you. Over time clients discover ways that they can adapt more effectively to the situation at hand without changing personalities.

### **3. You're not sure you can change**

"I've been this way for a long time, it's going to be hard to change." Past behaviours are not a sentence for future behaviours. People can and do change... all the time!

### **4. People see your changes when you share your changes**

When working on new interpersonal behaviours, it helps to bring others on the change journey with you. Sometimes others won't notice your new behaviours if you don't signpost your efforts for them. Sharing your new intentions and actions with others can be helpful as the very *idea* that you are working to improve yourself can cause people to think you have already begun to improve... even if you haven't - yet. ;)

### **5. Change your mind to change other people**

When improving relationships with others, clients often wish the 'other people would change first'. Whilst this is understandable it's not practical. It's not possible to coach people who aren't in the room and haven't asked for coaching! It is possible however for clients to choose to see people in a different light. Ironically the sooner clients see others more positively the more often the other people end up changing too.

## **6. Strength is weakness and weakness is strength**

It's an empowering moment when a client realises that real strength can come from vulnerability and the intimidating strength of others can come from a place of fear and doubt. When strengthening relationships and engaging hearts and minds, being strong in soft ways can be a game changer.

## **7. Frustrations call us into our future**

The conflict, resistance, or irritation we experience with others is a guaranteed portal to personal and professional development. Within every conflict is the seed for sustainable resolution. Don't shy away from the frustration; embrace it as your fuel for development.

## **8. Pushing, forcing or controlling the situation prolongs the problem**

As soon as clients let go, give up, give in, bow down or back off, the quicker they get what they want. I know right? Strange but true. Often the thing you don't want to do will be the thing that moves the situation forward. Don't fight it; just go with it.

## **9. The issue is rarely the issue**

People are complicated. Sometimes we react in ways we don't understand and can feel frustrated by patterns we can't seem to break. Through coaching, clients get to explore what's really going on and address the prevailing patterns that are unconsciously running the show. You never know where the conversation will go and that's a good thing!

## **10. Change takes time... and sometimes it doesn't**

Outcomes from coaching rely on many factors including the change required, awareness levels, the environment, support, what's at stake, level of understanding or ability, opportunity, commitment, and much more. Some clients are primed for quick change and others take longer. The speed doesn't reflect the depth or capacity for change; it just is what it is.

## **And finally....THANK YOU!!**

To all my clients past and present, thank you for welcoming me into your world and trusting me to support your potential and progress. It has been my honour to work with you.