

THE  
COACHING  
SECRET

HOW TO BE AN  
*Exceptional Coach*

ANDREW MACHON

# THE COACHING SECRET

*The analytical eye sees emotions as the unknown and often fears them.*

Coach: I could sense this – when I was in role it felt you were scared of mine too, which didn't allow me to tell you how I was feeling or what was really going on.

Peter: Really? I do want to help by offering my best solutions but in fact I'm actually doing the opposite – aren't I?

Coach: Yes. That may be true. Tell me, what do you think you have been missing?

Peter: Giving my staff a chance to say how it really is and being able to listen and hear them without offering my solution.

*Note how Peter realises that there is another way – through opening the appreciative eye he has a non-judging, more empathic and relational viewpoint.*

Coach: Exactly. Maybe because you don't place a value on feelings as much as answers and solutions, you are unknowingly devaluing them. This is not a judgement, Peter, but a perception.

Peter: Damn. I do want to help and in fact I'm doing the opposite.

Coach: It's a perception that would be valuable for you to work with. Are you willing to do that? To see how you might approach this differently and to explore if this may bring about a very different response from your staff?

Peter: Yes. I need to. Yes I'm willing to do that.

Peter was able to explore his emotions and feelings more fully in the sessions that followed. Each morning before work he would walk his dog and use this time to reflect about his learning and key aspects of life and work. Peter brought a key change into the next session.

Coach: Let's check in, Peter. How are you today?

Peter: I'm OK. Things are moving along. I'm working on a key change initiative.

*Despite the good news about the key piece of work, I see a real sadness in Peter's eyes and sense heaviness in his energy. I decide to explore this further.*

Coach: You look a little sad and down. What's going on Peter? Are you OK to speak about it?

Peter: I feel a little depressed and quite stuck. I think I've been stuck for a while.

*Peter is owning and openly expressing his emotions.*

Coach: Thank you, Peter, for being able to include this. I have been wondering how you truly feel.

Peter: It's not a good place to be. I don't allow myself to be here often.

Coach: I know that (*pause*), but might there be value in being here? Just in being willing to say how it is and how you feel? Your emotions may be friends and helpful in some way if you are simply willing to include them.

Peter: I feel stuck in a groove. I don't feel I've been treated well. People don't seem to care enough. I haven't been supported in the way I deserve. I've been hurt by what's happened.

Coach: I really hear that, Peter, and can see how important this is and how it's affected you.

Peter: I've been running away from this.

Coach: Yes, I see. It seems very real when you tell me how it is for you – how you truly feel. I then feel a strong connection with you, Peter, a very strong connection.

*I am mirroring how his willingness to share his emotions has made Peter more real, and our relationship has deepened as a result.*

Peter: I hadn't realised how much I've been running and hiding from this.

Coach: And yet this, your experience, is important and real. How might I help you, Peter?

Peter: In a way it's just good to let myself speak like this, and then I know how I feel.

Coach: How important are your feelings to you?

Peter: Very.

Coach: How come?

Peter: They help me to understand myself and where I am. Otherwise I don't know where I am. Having spoken about them I feel somehow free to move on – a little, at least.

Coach: What an interesting learning (*pause*).

Peter: What do you mean?

Coach: You are valuing your emotions and experience. Can we go full circle?

Peter: Sure.

Coach: What happened when your staff came to you?

Peter: Oh I see (*pause*). Maybe they need what just happened here.

- Coach: Well, how do you feel right now?
- Peter: I feel seen and understood. I feel accepted and more real and quite still and solid.
- Coach: What if I had offered you a solution instead?
- Peter: I think I might have felt angry and overlooked.
- Coach: There it is Peter (*pause*). What are you taking away from this realisation into your work?
- Peter: I'm going to try to listen for people's feelings more and also allow space for their feelings as well as my own. They may be scary but they make me real and help me to relate.
- Coach: Do you feel able to do that now?
- Peter: Yes, I'll try it. I may get caught in solving again, but I now know how it feels when I simply give my answers to others.

At the next session Peter has found himself working with an external consultant who has evaluated a course on which Peter teaches. This consultant is bullish and dictating to Peter and his colleagues how things need to change.

- Peter: I found myself listening to this man and saying to myself: have you no idea how much you are disengaging this group and making them very angry? Yet he was totally blind to what was going on. All he wanted to do was to tell them his assessment, how he saw things.
- Coach: Isn't that strange that you should meet such a man (*smiling*)?
- Peter: Yes. I see what you are saying (*laughs*), when I think of my personal journey. And it's me that's

dealing with it and trying to mirror back to this man his blindness. If he expects the group to work with him then he has to realise the impact of his own behaviour and how it's made the group feel. How he has imposed his views without accommodating any of ours (*pause*)  
 Andrew, I am becoming a facilitator!

Coach: I realise that and you are being asked to teach what you have learned.

Peter: Would you believe it?

Coach: What's it like to be a facilitator?

*Note how the role of facilitator is from a place of choice: it is a non-judging viewpoint where Peter can appreciate and express both sides. It's the view from the appreciative and creative eyes.*

Peter: I feel free that I can stand outside things, even when I am part of things. I don't get caught like I used to – forcing my own opinions and solutions on others. I'm quite happy now to observe and think about what difference I can make. I don't have to be in control. I can choose to act rather than simply react. Here this man was reacting and I could see the damage he was doing in telling us the solution, and he was completely blind to it.

Coach: In your awareness, you have come a long way Peter.

## THE CREATIVE EYE OF THE COACH IN PRACTICE

Susan is a qualified, experienced and practising coach. These excerpts are taken directly from two consecutive coaching

supervision sessions where Susan was keen to explore some of the edges of her practice in order to continue to learn and grow.

Susan: I love ‘doing’.

*Whenever I hear about ‘doing things’ I recognise the analytical eye and its need to get things done – to find the answer, to process and solve.*

Coach: How does doing serve you?

Susan: When I do things I feel as though I have achieved something. I get more satisfaction from doing. I can see what I’ve done. Often I feel as though I have to do things. I’ll watch television to relax but often feel guilty for not doing things. Moving is vital to me – I have to be on the move and doing things.

Coach: Anything more?

Susan: This keeps me busy, I feel as though I’m getting somewhere. Sometimes, particularly around the guilt thing when I’m watching TV, I think that doing is something I should do. There is voice that tells me that doing is a must.

Coach: Whose voice is that?

*Note how the voices of judgement, fear and cynicism are closely associated with the analytical eye. When we employ this eye the inner voices – which tell us what we should and must do – are never far away.*

Susan: Mmm. I’m not sure. It’s been with me a long time.

Coach: Yes. I wonder whose expectations they are – that you should do things?