

NUGGETS OF KNOWLEDGE

The 3-P's of Coaching: Person, Purpose, and Power

By Stacey Jerrold

According to dictionary.com the definition of *coaching* is *to give instruction or advice in the capacity of a coach; to instruct*. For those of us who have been involved in the field of coaching, either as practitioners or students, we realize that this is not the true definition of what the process of coaching entails. Yet, this is the belief of many people in our society. For the purpose of clarifying, or shall we say, demystifying the coaching process, I have written this article.

Many people think that coaching is a long and grueling process. But coaching actually is a co-creative process of communication and problem solving between the client and the coach. If conducted properly with the right components in alignment, the coaching process can be an eye-opening journey for the *person being coached (PBC)*. One of the roles of the coach is to help his/her clients identify and achieve his/her desired Right Action. Right Action is about sound, inner judgments that lead to the best possible outcomes. The focus of Right Action is the client's intentions.

For individuals confused about the coaching process and the benefits that are derived from it, I have put together a simple synopsis to facilitate discussions. In summary, I explain to individuals that the coaching process focuses on the 3-P's of coaching; the **person**, the **purpose** of coaching, and the **power** that is achieved when the PBC has made a commitment to Right Action. Commitment occurs when there is a readiness, willingness, ability, and fitness to take action until any tension is sufficiently solved.

If we start with our first "P," the **person**, there isn't anything more important to say other than the coaching process should be solely focused on the client, her/his needs and experiences, and enhancing her/his effectiveness. The PBC drives the coaching process. She/He is the source for achieving effective coaching, not the effectiveness of the coach.

Our second "P," the **purpose** of coaching, is to surface Right Action and to develop the internal standards of the PBC. Through a technique known as dynamic inquiry, a questioning process utilized to help the PBC to clarify and to take actions on matters of the most importance, motivational, and urgency, a coach is able to surface a client's Right Action and make it visible and actionable. The coaching process helps the clients discover his/her methods of meaning making and problem solving. Through the coach's facilitation of dynamic inquiry, the PBC is able to test his/her beliefs and assumptions, opening the path for self-direction, self-diagnosis, self-correction, and self-leadership. Thus, the purpose of coaching is to assist and guide the PBC to define her/his individual Right Action. It involves the integration of five elements: right people, right things, right way, right time, and right reasons all with the goal of realizing Right Action. There is no universal Right Action. It is situational. Whatever works for that particular PBC are the specific, desired results.

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The final “P” is the **power** that is derived from the commitment a PBC makes to realizing Right Action. In order to reach this point, the PBC has to have established a connection with the coach allowing both of them to make use of their collective wisdom. This connection establishes a level of mutual respect, an environment free of defensiveness, and the opportunity to discover openings and deeper learning. At this stage, the parties are committed to each other, and common goals and conversations exhibit emotional stability. Through the dynamic inquiry process, the coach is able to help the PBC to clarify his/her experiences, meaning making, intention, motivation, and development. With increased clarity come increased energy and the increased ability of the PBC to differentiate among the different levels of emotions. The power of commitment is the resulting by-product: a new or renewed focus and attention to what really matters; an increase in developmental learning; a passion for and appreciation of the developmental process; and an enhanced performance brought about by change and transformation.

Once you have decided to proceed with coaching, there are some criteria to look for when selecting a coach. First and foremost, interview a number of coaches before you select one. Ask each about her/his coaching style and the process she/he uses when working with clients. Some governing values that you may want to look for during the interviewing process are: trust, good listener, elicitation, ability to build relationships, and timeliness. During your initial conversation, was the coach focused on you and your needs? Did she/he come across as authentic? Do you get the impression that this coach would create a safe space for you that would lead to establishing trust and allow the two of you to work synergistically together? If the coach you interviewed spent more time telling you about her/his experiences and wisdom in lieu of asking you questions that could be a sign that the coaching process with this particular coach may not embody the real purpose of coaching. You should be looking for a coach that believes that success resides in each of us and that the role of the coach is to help reveal and release untapped potential so that it can be turned into performance. It is critical that you as the PBC uncover your dreams, your strengths, and any constraints that you may face.

The outcomes of an effective coaching relationship should provide the clients with awareness, purpose, competence, well-being, and results. A masterful coach will accomplish this by getting his/her client to identify openings. Once these openings have been recognized the coach, through the process of dynamic inquiry, will guide and assist the PBC in generating possibilities and developing plans to test those possibilities. By previewing the outcomes of these plans during the coaching interaction, the PBC is able to identify and make a commitment to Right Action. The goal of coaching transforms the clients in their problem-solving abilities and how they live their lives. What else could be more important?