

VOICE OF COACHING

eNewsletter of ICF Malaysia Chapter, Kuala Lumpur

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For Members only

1. Keys to World – Class Coaching

by Tessie Lim, Performance Coach; Member, ICF Malaysia Chapter

To be a good coach is a very difficult thing... because a coaching conversation is a conversation like none other. It's what I call a "fierce" conversation – one where the coach is fierce about "getting to the heart of things," so that the client is reacquainted with his or her resourcefulness.

This new energy then, fuels the client's drive and **motivation towards or away** from whatever the issue is. A coaching session is not "time for a nice chat." Oftentimes both coach and client struggle, squirm, and feel uncomfortable, as new ideas, new pathways, new strategies come up and are "tried on" for size and fit.

The client's meanings flow back and forth in conversation; and the coach works not to assume understanding but to use questions to facilitate deeper and deeper clarification for the client. We begin by eliciting meaning. Then we follow, seek to understand, reflect back, and summarize to "be" with the client.

Our objective is to create the desired outcome by asking, **"What does the client want? What do they REALLY want? Is that all? What else? What does the client want by wanting that?"**

Leading out in the field of coaching in this country I'm amazed and alarmed at the number of people who call what they do coaching. In their "magic bag" is a mix and collection of potions: consulting, therapy, mentoring, training, and counselling.

Some think by virtue of their professional experience, they "are" coaches. Others think by reading and learning a bit here, a bit there: psychoanalysis maybe, emotive therapy maybe, or even worse, some superficial new – age theory like "The Secret," they can coach. They think they can coach "intuitively" if they dispense "empathy" in their communication. That would be enough for their clients to experience change and transformation. Good luck to them.

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EDITORIAL

- The views and opinions expressed by contributors / authors in this eNewsletter are strictly their personal views and opinions. They do not reflect the views and opinions of ICF Malaysia Chapter.
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World – class coaches use a systematic approach. I use Self – Actualization psychology, which is a powerful expression of cognitive – behavioural psychology. Its basis and premise is that:

1. **Every experience has a structure.** With persistence and probing, we can understand how things make sense for the client.
2. **Every experience is structured in the mind – body system.** That's why it's so important to pay attention to the words, descriptions and the gestures of the client. That's why listening skills are so important. Calibration is so important. What state does the person need to be in to benefit most from the coaching?
3. **Every experience is a skill.** No matter what, even if the client is obnoxious and over – controlling as a leader, there is a structure to that. A good coach would ask, "How are you creating that experience?"
4. **The person is never the problem; the framing is the problem.** This allows the coach to expose reality without making anyone wrong. It's the behaviour or the frame that is faulty, and must change to create a more positive outcome.
5. **A good coach uses emotions; we induce states, but our goal is not to validate the client's emotions, or to get them to be "true" to their feelings.** Sometimes, we must challenge the client to act against what they naturally feel.
6. **A good coach coaches the inner game.** Realizing that success is always created twice – once in the mind, then in real life, we work to actualize our dreams. We work to turn what's in the mind into our muscle so our clients can turn their meanings into their performance.
7. **Behind every experience are layers of thoughts and beliefs, principles and values as frames.** Just because the client feels something or thinks it or remembers things, doesn't make it useful or productive. A good coach quality controls the client's experiences.
8. **All progress can be measured and that's what makes all the difference between a person who calls himself a coach and a great coach.**

What gets in the way of good coaching? Half – listening and being easily distracted by stuff on our mind, being reactive to things we don't agree with, being all – too – quick to assume or give advice. On top of putting words in other people's mouths, there are coaches who mind – read, misinterpret, or simply pass judgment!

Anytime within my coaching sessions, I always want to know, "**What kind of conversation is this?**"

- Brainstorming for ideas, and possibilities?
- Changing mindset for greater productivity?
- Seeking clarity for decision – making?
- Creating a new identity?
- Understanding his emotions and to turn those into resources?
- Developing an action plan?

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Why is it important for the coach to know this? Then we can set our orientation and drive the conversation to its objectives. A good coach will always ask the question, “**What’s the most transformative thing you could experience in this time we have together?**”

How good a coach are you? How clear are you about human functioning, about what drives and motivates a human being’s success and progress? What is the basis and philosophy that you practice that will keep the results of our coaching relationship track – able and measurable at any one time?”

Tessie Lim for The Courage Confidence Freedom To Live Your Best Life

The Present

The present is so rich because so much is happening in it. Most people can’t see, feel, or experience it, so they can’t benefit from it. If, on the other hand, you actually can see, feel, or experience it that skill is leverage-able.

By this I mean that you can do more with the present than you can with the past or the future. The present is like yeast, or like a pulley or a fulcrum – anyone who is aware of, and sensitized to, all that is occurring in the present will find that they can do a lot with it. --- Thomas J. Leonard, author of “The Portable Coach”

2. Coaching Territory Mapped by Coaches

By Andrew Wong, Coach - Helping People Business; e-moderator, ICFMY Chapter

“**The map is not the territory**” is a remark by Polish-American scientist and philosopher Alfred Korzybski, encapsulating his view that an abstraction derived from something, or a reaction to it, is not the thing itself.

Coaches, trained or certified, may have been taught by the coaching institution, the importance and mechanics of such a concept. Nevertheless, in coaching, this idea is applied, consciously or not.

For example, a coachee comes with a challenge or problem, describing his or her situation as the current reality. A reality, implies something “real” like the territory, which is “concrete”, is the problem or obstacle, as per his or her “mental picture” (map) preventing him or her getting what he or she wants, or feeling lost and does not know what to do.

A coach’s job is to help him or her to see the so called “reality” or “territory” from different perspectives, thus creating different options for action to create the results desired or achieve better situation.

To shift from one perspective to another is the key objective of the coaching.

Sometimes to create such a shift, is more difficult than shifting a physical mountain to another location.

Currently held perspective can be a well anchored labeling, judgment, belief, reinforced with powerful emotion and psychology. For example:

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- “My financial loss is due to the market crash.”
- “My deteriorating health is due to the cancer or diabetes, etc.”
- “My poor performance is due to my unjust boss or demanding and un-reasonable work pressure.”
- “My difficult business operation is due to my lazy and dishonest staff.”

If one is lost in a wilderness and he has a map to help him out, surely he will hold on to the map tightly, defends it fiercely when someone tries to snatch it away. He may even kill you if you try to suggest the map is not real, or the map cannot help him out.

A cancer patient firmly believes in Western medicine and chemo treatment, ignoring other factors like positive lifestyle, calm mind, proper diet etc. may eventually meet the fatality, though other cancer patients, paying attention to those factors, get well from the Western medicine and chemo treatment.

What is Cancer? Or what is your understanding of cancer?

‘Cancer is a class of diseases in which a group of cells display uncontrolled growth, invasion, and sometimes metastasis.’

The above is a definition or explanation. Simply it is a labeling.

Such a labeling or definition by the medical professionals, works within the confine of science – (physics, biology, chemistry) something that can be tangibly measured, analyzed, tests performed with consistent results etc. They do not take into account other factors like state of mind, feelings, beliefs, degree of stress, emotions, attitudes etc. of the cancer patient.

Have you even come across a drug with prescription like “Take 2 tablets when your unhappiness or fear is X units, take 3 when you experience 50% more of X units”?

A labeling is a Map painted (as per the definition of the problem), trying to explain the “territory” (disease) from a set of underlying assumptions or presuppositions.

When a person’s mind is entirely possessed by such a labeling, like the above cancer patient, he will act (within the confine of that labeling) and meet the consequences.

Rigid and restricted labeling, then, becomes not so useful.

On one hand, we create complication to our life by mistakenly taken the “map” as the “territory” or the reality. Furthermore we reinforced it with labeling. Labeling is a serious matter – each of us has a name, which is a label. Once labeled, you stick with it for life, like you do not change your name, as that may destroy your identity. Isn’t that true?

As coaches, we cannot avoid not to have formation of maps on coaching profession. After all, coaches are human beings too.

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We have a lot of labeling in coaching profession. For example, Executive Coaching, Life Coaching, Sports Coaching, Coaching for Performance, Coaching for Success, Parent as Coach. These create a lot of specializations in coaching, like in the medical professions: heart specialists, lung specialist, skin specialist, etc.

“Coaching”, apparently a simple profession, can be very complicated. For example, the definition (labeling) on coaching is a big challenge, or often a tense debate among the coaching professionals in such related fields: such as making distinctions from other similar fields like Mentoring, Counseling and Therapy.

Some of us may have experienced this situation: as a patient, we are being passed from one specialist to another specialist, which can create more complication to us as patient.

Similarly, we could have a situation in which a coachee is passed from an Executive Coach, to Life Coach, to Counselor and Therapist. Good business for the many different types of coaching professionals, just like good business to the many different medical specialists.

Is that really good for the coachee?

Labeling of different coaching professionals is also being further reinforced and anchored. Here comes Certification. Certification is already being well practiced by medical professionals in different specializations.

Because of the above labeling, or mapping of coaching territory, more activities are generated in debates, different seminars, training to advocate a particular labeling of coaching. This can create many different factions and camps, each championing their own correct version of coaching or label.

Hence we observe a “X” coach, after witnessing another coach applying NLP, “Sand Play method” reacts strongly: “That is not coaching, that is therapy, which should not be applied in a coaching session!”

Or, “The coachee jumps from a high rise building, commits suicide, after a coaching session from an uncertified coach” trying to prove a point the importance of certification to be a qualified coach or rather a therapist. Of course this person who makes such remarks ignores many cases of coachee or patient committing suicide after sessions with qualified and certified coaches / therapists.

In our coaching work, we help coachees generate more maps, or options so as not to get stuck in their current situation, perceived as the reality or territory, and facilitate a good focus for action to produce desired worthwhile results.

After all, when the map is not the territory, what is viewed as territory is not a reality, but could be an illusion, or incomplete reality.

Perhaps as coaches, we can help ourselves to steer away from excessive labeling; maps that still cannot fully describe the coaching territory, as that can never happen anyway – a full and perfect labeling or definition, under the question **“What is Coaching?”**

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In the above example, medicinal prescription does not take into account the mental state: e.g. unhappiness level. This is because the medicine is researched, designed and manufactured under the definition or labeling of the diseases and such a labeling is a restrictive map.

As coaches, we also need to be mindful of the restrictive mapping we made in our coaching service to clients. For example: “Dear coachee, please refrain from bringing up emotional issues or spirits affecting your performance, just stick to GROW (Goal, Reality, Options, Will Do) process” – this obviously is the coach’s agenda, mapping on what is coaching and what is not coaching and impose on the client.

Perhaps we should pay FULL attention and focus on the coachee – our client, his or her agenda and desired outcome, using whatever tools and techniques, coaching, mentoring, therapy, counseling etc.

Perhaps we do not need label for coaching, oops!, “coaching” again.

Let’s just call it “Helping People Business”.

For details, please refer QuaSyLaTic Learning System – <http://www.360g.com>.

QUOTATIONS

Men are like trees; each one must put forth the leaf that is created in him.

--- Henry Ward Beecher

The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn. --- Ralph Waldo Emerson

The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes. --- Marcel Proust, French novelist

We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are.

--- Anais Nim (1903 – 1977) French author

3. LIFE REGRETS – IT’S A CHOICE

**By Thomas Chen, Vice President, ICF Malaysia Chapter
Executive Coach, Executive Coaching Transformation**

Would you agree that every action we take is always the best action... at the moment and time we took it?

Have you ever make a mistake or blame yourself for making a bad decision? Worse... do you punish yourself and lose sleep for that decision... and have the same horrible feeling every time you think of it?

I must confess that I have made a lot of mistakes in my life in the past. For example, I made bad investments costing me a lot of money; I often say the wrong things that cost me dearly with my friends, colleagues and my family... so on and so forth. In other words, I regretted what I did. This is certainly a common experience. Do you feel the same way occasionally?

How would you like to be freed from all this blame and take the view that no one ever make a mistake or a bad decision or say the wrong thing from their point of view at that moment?

This is one of the presuppositions in **Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP)**.

Presuppositions relate to unconscious beliefs or assumptions that form the foundation of a

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particular system of knowledge. It cannot be proven but if you accept the presuppositions, then all your actions are dictated by that believe. For example, if I believe that everything happens for a reason, then I no longer question why.

The presupposition for this article: People make the best choices available to them.
To illustrate this point, let's look at a simple example.

Say we are in a supermarket going to the checkout counters. You scan the checkout counters to assess which line seems to be the fastest. You make some quick mental calculation and decide to go to the fastest line (at that moment in time and place and the way you feel). There are several scenarios. One is that the line moves very quickly and confirms your brilliant decision. ... You feel great!

Another scenario is while you are lining up, there is a problem with one of the customers in front and have to wait for the manager to resolve a problem... and the wait seem to be long. You wait patiently whilst watching helplessly other lines moving very quickly. What goes through your mind? Possibly, you think that you made a bad decision to queue at this counter. Another thought is that you always find the slowest lane... that was your track record and history. In either case, regretting the decision you made as you watch the other lines move smoothly and quickly.

Let's really look at the last scenario. Did you make a mistake or a bad decision? If you somehow had foresight and knew that there was going to be a problem with a customer on that line, would you have selected the same counter? In other words, when you made that decision, was it your best decision? If you believed in the presupposition of people always making the best decision, then you did make the best decision to line up at that particular checkout counter at that point in time. Shortly after or even in the next moment, circumstances can change and with that change or new information, you may make a different decision.

So can we extend the above to all the decisions that were made in our lives? Yes, but... because the above example is a simple one.... and real life is more complicated especially in the areas of relationship or where feelings are involved.

OK, let's look at two real life cases, the first one deals with relationship and the second on investment.

Coaching Dialogue # 1: On Relationship

Timothy came to the office looking distraught and very tired. He has not been sleeping well in the last month and has trouble focusing on his work or anything else. He has a coaching session with an executive coach. After the usual greetings and establishing rapport, they went directly to the issues.

Coach: So Timothy, what would you like to talk about today?

Tim: My wife just filed for divorce. She had moved out a month ago.

Coach: Can you give me some background about this?

Tim: Yes, I have been married to Sally for 5 years and dated her for 6 years before that. When we first met, we were very happy and did a lot of things together. However both of us being careful, we dated for 6 years before we got married. We had always wanted to have children and after unsuccessfully trying for 3 years we checked with her gynaecologist. The diagnosis was not good... basically she cannot get pregnant and have children. She wanted to adopt but I was against it. The relationship deteriorated as we often argued about adoption. Now two years later, she told me that she had found someone else and wanted to divorce me so that she can be with this other person. Although we cannot have any children, I still love her.

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Coach: What do you think is the cause for the divorce?
Tim: Children. We both love to have children. Since we can't, she wanted to adopt and I have always been against adoption.
Coach: Why?
Tim: It's not the same and you don't know the character of the children since we won't know the background of the parents.... it's just not the same as your own blood.
Coach: Then what happened?
Tim: We argued quite often, and our quarrels get very heated especially when she learned of children available for adoption. This emotional turmoil drifted us apart and we were no longer intimate.
Coach: Did you try to do anything to turn the situation around?
Tim: Yes! But for her the only thing was children and that means adoption which I am adamantly against.
Coach: Anything else you can do?
Tim: The only way was to give in to adoption which I am not willing to. In addition, she has this other man that she wants to live with.
Coach: How do you feel about that?
Tim: Absolutely pissed off! I had thought of killing this guy.
Coach: What would that accomplish?
Tim: I would feel better and maybe my wife would come back to me.
Coach: Do you really think your wife will come back after you killed this guy?
Tim: Guess not.
Coach: Alright! Let's review the situation. What are your feeling overall?
Tim: I think I made a big mistake in not agreeing to the adoption.
Coach: Why do you say that?
Tim: If I agreed, then Sally would be happy and we would be together now.
Coach: Then what prevented you from doing this?
Tim: Because I am against adoption and still feel this way.
Coach: In that case, why are you calling it a mistake? A mistake is when you think you could have made a better choice or decision at the time you made it... not afterwards as things change which may provide you with have additional information.
Tim: So if it wasn't a mistake, what is it?
Coach: What do you think it is? Are you true to yourself about adoption?
Tim: Yes,
Coach: Then was it a mistake?
Tim: No... maybe it was a mistake marrying Sally.
Coach: When you decided to marry Sally, did you have better choices?
Tim: No... she was the best thing that happened to me.
Coach: Then was it a mistake?
Tim: Guess not, but why am I in this situation now.
Coach: That's a different issue and let's talk about that.....

So looking back, did he make a mistake in not agreeing to adopt? If you accept the presupposition that people make the best choices at that particular time and place... then the decision not to adopt was the best decision for Timothy. **However there were consequences.** So what do most people do? Do they blame themselves for making a mistake and focus on what should or would or even say that they would never make the same decision again.... or do they look at the situation and understand that there were consequences.... unexpected in this case, and focus on the present and the future. And likewise this also applies for marriage. You cannot change the past. In other words, **is it better to live in the past with regret or move on to a better future?**

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Coaching Dialogue # 2: On Investment

During 2001, John invested heavily in stocks even though there was a lot of talk about the BUBBLE. However stocks kept going up... so he happily watched them going up. Then the BUBBLE busted and he watched his portfolio dropped 80%. So at that time his wife blamed him for being greedy and not heeding all the warnings of the bubble. As a result he had to significantly downsize his lifestyle and took his children out of private schools. **John** came to the coach office in desperation as he **blamed himself for being selfish and making the worst mistake of his life.**

So in the coaching session they looked at his action to determine whether it was a horrible mistake or not.

Coach: John, along the way, had you ever thought of selling the stocks in the light of all the articles.

John: I had frequently thought about the idea of selling, but I was making a lot of money and thought that it would last another 3 months. After all, people were talking about the bubble for two years and if I had sold when the bubble idea was first discussed, I would have lost a lot of money on the upside.

Coach: Were you aware of the risks?

John: Yes

Coach: If that's the case, what part of that decision was a mistake?

John: None... not at that time.

Coach: Then what happened?

John: Bubble busted.

Coach: And what did you do?

John: I thought it was only temporary and decided to hold on.

Coach: And then what happened?

John: It kept dropping until it was too late.

Coach: So where was the mistake?

John: None, i.e. if I had known what ultimately happened, then of course I would have sold out much earlier. But I didn't have the foresight or information.

Coach: So decisions you made to sell or hold were the best decisions you made at that time.

John: Yes.

Coach: So why are you blaming yourself?

John: Because I lost everything.

Coach: OK, that is a different issue which deals with loss... but was it your decision making process?

John: No, I did what I thought was the best case.

They then continued to discuss about the feeling of losing everything and what can be done to move forward.

What would John gain by blaming himself and living his life with regrets? This is a question that we seldom ask ourselves. In his case, perhaps he wanted some pity and has people feel sorry for him or to punish himself in some way.

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People make the best choices available to them?

If you accept the above examples and the presupposition that one always make the best decision at that moment in time, then we should not blame ourselves for any decisions made in the past, because we did the best we could at that time. ... and therefore no regret.

Bad decisions? No!

They were the best decisions when we made them. Now as time passed by and with changes (added information) we may make a different decision.

So instead of kicking ourselves, we look at what lessons we could learn that can help us with future decisions. Instead of focusing on the past.... the “what should have” or “would have.....”, you might want to focus on the present and let the future unfold.

Wouldn't life be wonderful if we can live our lives this way?

Now extend that presupposition to others as well.... your friends, colleagues, family members, etc. The presupposition then is that whatever they did.... they were making the best choices at the moment and place and with the worldview they had. If circumstances change they may make a different decision which also will be the best decision with the information they have.

Consequently we shouldn't be blaming others or making judgements on their decisions. The key point is that they were making the decisions not us. We may make a different decision because we are all uniquely different. So who appointed us as judge? More importantly, we should focus on the present and instead of living our lives with regret... we live our lives with curiosity and possibility.... uncertain as it may be!

If you accept this then we would all live happily afterwards... right???

Unfortunately, life is not so simple. Sometimes, even when things make sense, we can still choose not to do the logical thing e.g. smoking or staying in a bad relationship. So if we hold on to blames and regrets... then we might want to reflect on what benefits we are gaining from them.... e.g. feeling sorry for ourselves, want to punish ourselves, etc.

At least now it's a choice for us to make... versus having no choice and feeling stuck.

What's your pleasure.... live in the past or live in the present... it is your choice!!!

Thomas Chen has recently been accredited a NLP Master Practitioner

“People make the best choice available to them given possibilities and the capabilities that they perceive available to them from their model of the world at that moment in time. Any behaviour no matter how evil, crazy or bizarre it seems is the best choice available to the person at that point in time – if given a more appropriate choice (within the context of their model of the world) the person will be more likely to take it.”
--- Robert Dilts, NLP; author of “Visionary Leadership Skills”

A successful coaching relationship is always a story of transformation, not just of higher levels of performance. It's a story that takes people beyond their immediate passion and pride and helps them to grips with the fact that to reach what is really possible and achievable for them, they must be willing to fundamentally question who they are, what they do, and why they do it. --- Robert Hargrove, author of “Masterful Coaching”

----- The End -----