President’s Corner

Coaching: What’s Love Got to Do with It?

Probably everything. Of course, it depends on how you define “love,” doesn’t it. Someone asked me recently what the difference was between psychotherapy and coaching, and what flew out of my mouth was succinct: I said, “Therapy is about healing, and coaching is about love.” (Interestingly enough, therapy patients often develop the capacity to ‘love’ themselves and others during their treatment, and coaching clients often report ‘healing’ going on as they design and manifest lives and professions they previously viewed as unimaginable.)

As we all know, there are different kinds of love: (1) the love a parent has for his/her child; (2) the love of your favorite sports team; (3) the love you feel as you make your life vision come true; (4) the love you have for the flourishing of humanity; (5) the unconditional love most dogs have for their owners; (6) loving your friends; (7) spiritual love; and (8) the age old romantic love that endures or burns brightly, etc. As we mature, we are able to move away from immature love—“I love you because you love me” (Scott Peck)---into forms of love that are generative, highly productive, deeply soulful, and rich with accomplishment in both the being and doing realms.

Sandy Tomey, “The Love Luminary,” (and Vice President/Media Chair of ICF St. Louis) shares her definition of love with us:

Love is the all-encompassing energy of who and what we are. It is being our true and authentic selves, free from all fear and judgment, and resting fully in acceptance, joy and peace.

Those among us who are wise (hopefully) develop a growing capacity to
love ourselves in a way that shows up in self-care, self-confidence, and is a healthy “given”; it is the ground we walk upon. It is the “all-encompassing energy of who and what we are,” living from our true, authentic selves. And, as we go about living who(m) we truly are, we find that we have plenty of heart energy to extend to others. Enter coaching.

*Let yourself be silently drawn by the strange pull of what you really love. It will not lead you astray.*

-Rumi

I can remember *the look* in the eyes of two coaches who had shifted out of the worlds of teaching and counseling to become coaches. They looked like they were deeply in love as they mentioned they were now coaches. You’ve likely seen this ‘look,’ as well. That look of love is based in two things: (1) a decision or powerful stance; and (2) varied, strong feelings that emerge from the decision and stance.

Here’s my current definition of love:

> “Standing for and holding space for the personal/spiritual/professional development of another or one’s self.

> Out of this space, various feelings may then emerge, seeking unique expression.”

As you trained to be a coach, regardless of your niche, the energy of love propelled you to invest in yourself as you prepared to attract your unique set of clients. You decided to study, practice, and learn as much as you could to become an exceptional coach. And now you ‘hold the space’ for your clients to grow amazingly as executives, moms, athletes, business men and women, entrepreneurs, sensitive individuals, doctors, authors, public speakers, etc. You have assumed the position of the ever-curious, magnificently supportive and/or challenging coach---bringing the very best in you to the co-active experience of coaching your clients. In moments of great struggle, you ‘stand for’ that which can emerge in your clients’ career or personal life; when they cannot be there for themselves completely, you are there for them. Your belief in your clients being able to manifest their full potential never wavers.
Coaching is about love: you may not ever say that out loud, yet you know that you absolutely love walking with people (or organizations) who set out to live their greatness—no matter what it takes. Even if your coaching may be very cerebral, without the energy of the heart, your client won’t get very far. So, coach, don’t shy away from inquiring about what’s lying dormant in that powerhouse organ within you and within your client. (The heart, apparently, has its own brain. More on this later, along with ‘high heart,’ ‘low heart’ energy.)

Find out what your client loves. What s/he loves holds the energy of desire, longing, drive, devotion, decisions and deep motivation. The same goes for you: if you’re a new coach, you’re finding out what you love in coaching; if you’re an experienced coach, you may find yourself shifting as you discover your heart leading you in new coaching directions.

Love is not static. It changes as do we. Be sure to listen to your heart and its great wisdom. You may be surprised and delighted by what you find pulsing away inside you.

Sent with love to coaches worldwide, especially to ICF St. Louis coaches, Nicki (McClusky) President, ICF St. Louis Chapter, 2016