TOOLS

co-active

Designing an Alliance

The designed alliance provides the “container” in which coaching takes place. Once the initial container is set, designed alliance is continuous and ongoing. Client and coach design the container so that it is customized to specifically meet the needs of a particular client. It is also a dynamic container, capable of changing over time so that it will continue to meet the client’s needs — not become obsolete. Much of the coaching alliance happens in the initial discovery session between coach and client. The purpose of the designed alliance is to:

- Create a safe and courageous space for clients.
- Establish client trust of coach.
- Help the coach know how to work with the client in a manner that empowers the client.

While each coach will develop their own unique style over time, here are some guidelines to get you started. This conversation can take anywhere from 10 minutes to an hour.

1. Set the stage for the client. Coaching provides a unique opportunity to create a relationship by design, remember this concept is new to many of your clients. Help them out by telling them what to expect.

   “One of the unique aspects of our coaching relationship is that it is a relationship of design. You are creating me as your coach, your ally, your champion. What we are going to do next is spend some time having you design how I can best work with you. You may already have some ideas of how you want me to be with you around certain areas. There may also be some places you are not yet sure how you want us to be. We will use this time to lay some groundwork. As we work together we will continue to create how we want to be with each other. How does that sound?”

2. Begin the design. The coach takes notes and prompts the client with questions as needed. Some clients already have ideas about what they would like. Start there.

   Here are some questions to ask the client:

   - “What are you looking for in a coach?”
   - “If this coaching were to have a huge impact in your life what would it look like?”
   - “What else?”

3. As the client answers generally, begin taking the questions into specifics.
   - “How do you stop procrastinating in your life?”
   - “What is the best way for me to confront you?”
   - “What are some of the things your Saboteur says to you?”
   - “How do you want me to respond when you have not completed something you agreed to complete?”

4. During this portion of the discovery session, it is appropriate for the coach to speak about what is important in the relationship for them. It is the coach’s opportunity to ask for what he or she wants from the client.

   “My style is pretty direct. I like to call things as I see them. For example if I see that you are selling out on a top value of yours I might say…Wait a minute Fred. I’m not buying it. I know that authenticity is one of your top values and what you just said doesn’t fit with how you have been in the past. What’s really going on here? “Do I have your permission to be direct?”

   Remind the client that the process continues throughout the relationship and encourage the client to redesign over the course of the coaching relationship.

   “We have a great start here in how we will work together. I want you to know that this does not stop here. I invite you to keep designing me as we go along. From time to time in the future, you will hear me check in and ask permission to tweak and change things. Will you continue to look at how we work together and give me feedback?”

   You will learn about other aspects of the discovery session in the Fulfillment Course.