

What to Talk About With Your Coach

by Thomas J. Leonard, Coach

WHAT A COACH AND CLIENT DO IS TALK AND LISTEN. That much is pretty obvious. But talk and listen about what, exactly?

The purpose of this article is to provide the client with a list of recommended topics for discussion during a coaching session.

Most clients eventually get around to all of these topics, but don't think you have to share about a subject you are not ready to or not comfortable discussing. You have the right to set boundaries which let you get the most from your coaching.

The Win. Wins are the purpose of coaching. When you reach a goal, accomplish a task, have something great happen to you - share these with your coach. Your coach wants to know. And sharing these with someone who can really listen makes the win even more rewarding and sets you up strongly for the next one.

A Problem. Life does have its share of - yes - we'll call them problems: the contract was cancelled, the employee left unexpectedly, you caught the flu before the big presentation. Hey, talk about these with your coach - don't keep them inside. Just by communication with someone who cares takes away some of the sting. And, once you've been heard, the solution (and there is ALWAYS a solution) can present itself. It is worth sharing even those events which "really aren't a problem, but..."

The Upset. Did something happen that really knocked you for a loop? Did someone treat you poorly? Did you step over something with a colleague? Did you blow a perfect opportunity (not possible, but you may still be upset by it, so talk about it!)? Your coach is trained - yes, trained to listen to your upsets and help you sort out what happened and design a plan to get through this one and help prevent it from happening again.

An Insight. An insight is like an "a-ha" or a "clunk". Basically, a truth that you just realized. Insights help you realign with yourself and your vision. When you have one, share it. Because after the insight, results follow, especially when you have been able to articulate the "real"

insight with your coach. (Your coach will help you in this process. Often, there is a series of insights which are linked and the coach helps put these in perspective.)

The Breakthrough. A breakthrough is a combination of an insight, a wind and an alignment with truth. After you've had a breakthrough, you feel great: energized, ready for action, relieved and clear. But a breakthrough without follow through is a temporary high and can be addictive. So, share the breakthrough, but be ready to validate it with action or an accomplishment.

A Dilemma. "Should I do X or Y?" Your coach can help you make a better decision. Talk about your options, create a new one and get some perspective on the whole thing. Maybe doing nothing is the best choice.

The Shift. People grow internally all the time, but periodically they really feel it. Kind of like an earthquake that is high enough on the Richter scale. When you've had a shift, the world looks different and what motivated you before is replaced by something better and cleaner. What you once tolerated, you will no longer. The people you spend time with are replaced by those who truly inspire you. A shift almost always feels good, but there can be some fallout, like sadness for letting go, resentment for the costs you had been incurring prior to the shift, etc. People have maybe several dozen shifts during a transformed lifetime. They are turning points worth sharing.

The Complaint. You need to complain? I fully understand. And you have two minutes, max, to get it off your chest and don't expect any Coaching about it until you can articulate it like a request.

The Extra Mile. A little effort is good for you, keeps your body, mind and soul in shape so you can take advantage of life's opportunities. When you've kept your word in a challenging situation, stuck with something when everyone else gave up, honoured your standards when it might have been easier to lower them, tell your coach. It means you've grown and grown stronger.

Focusing your vision, achieving results, continuing your growth

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A Promise. Sometimes it helps to make a promise to your coach. I know I do to mine, particularly when I need to get something done that I don't fully trust myself to do on my own. Just tell your coach exactly what you want to do and when you promise to do it. Your coach will question you if he/she can't "get" (understand) your promise. The coach wants to fully support promises which express your values or further your goals, without a significant personal cost attached.

Your Feelings. Yes, your feelings. Having a bad day? A good day? A "Yuk!" day? Tell your coach, tell your coach, tell your coach. Don't try to keep it a secret (your coach will usually know anyway). Your coach will not try to talk you out of it, pep you up or stuff like that. Your coach will "get it" and fully understand. And, will coach you on what you want to be coached on.

Your Fears. Do you ever hesitate? Get scared? Stop part way? Good, you just passed the humanity test. (Your coach has also passed the test).

A Completion. Bugged down in life? Lacking energy, feeling sleepy? Well, clean out a filing drawer and see what happens! Whenever you finish a project, complete a task, catch up on put off promises, make something right, you open your life to more good stuff. So, get completion on everything and keep your coach posted on your progress.

A New Idea. Have a germ of an idea? Discovered the cure for cancer? Figured out how to make money in racing budgies? Ideas like these should be discussed to break out their - and your - best. So what if the t's aren't crossed or the i's dotted yet, share your thoughts with your coach, who is a safe and nurturing space for even the more delicate and sensitive ideas. Your coach won't debate the

merits with you; he/she will listen and have you develop your thoughts to make the most, personally and financially, of your idea.

The Value Created. From time to time, you will be asked to articulate the value and benefits you have received working with your coach. Sometimes the value is there, but it takes a brief conversation to bring it to full realisation.

Financial Results. You are writing your coach a cheque each month, so there should be some financial value created with your coach. It helps both parties to articulate the immediate and longer-term financial benefits of your work together.

Contribution Made. Did something your coach said last time (or months ago) show up as useful? Tell your coach. We're human too.

Project Progress Report. How is your new business development plan coming? And your career search? And the book you are writing? Include a brief status report of your current projects during your coaching call.

Ask for Advice and Feedback. Your coach has experience in life - and with people. Feel free to get the best of your coach's thinking, particularly useful given how well the coach knows your strengths and style.

A Decision Made. If you make a significant decision between sessions, please keep your coach informed. You'll be right, regardless.

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