

Growth Edge Coaching Reflection

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What's your personal philosophy of developmental coaching? What's one story about how these practices helped a client in some way?

As I move to complete the Growth Edge Coaching certification, it serves as a powerful opportunity to make sense of what I've learned and how it influences what I believe and how I engage with and support clients in my coaching. Here's an attempt to explain that.

My personal philosophy around developmental coaching feels in some ways simplistic and in other ways too layered, uncontained, and meaningful to be able to communicate articulately. The simple explanation is that I believe developmental coaching matters. We all walk through the world with unexamined beliefs, assumptions, truths, and attachments that cage us to some degree in our forms of mind. We are subject to them. If we can't examine them, or make them object, we remain contained. That can feel safe, wanted, and perhaps imperative to some at different stages. To many of us, though, it's unnecessary and inhibiting. Developmental coaching, which asks us to consider how we know what we know, how we might be wrong, and what's possible if we ask different questions or see things from an alternative perspective, can beckon us towards a freer version of ourselves. By freer, I mean having more freedom to wonder, challenge, engage, lean back, love, and be. For me, that's both tangible (if I feel more freedom from judgment, I can engage in direct communication more honestly and frequently) and so intangible (What are the bounds of my freedom? Are there bounds? How do I know if I'm fully free? What matters about that? Is freedom even the point?). So while there's research to support the power of this kind of coaching and there's a methodology to help support the development of clients, I think there's so much faith and trust that's required in this deeply human journey that I'm still trying to wrap my head, heart, and arms around.

In terms of how these developmental coaching practices have helped a client in some way, one particular person comes to mind. He's the Founder of a battery focused tech start-up; he's an engineer and seemingly quite brilliant in a number of ways. When I conducted his 360 and talked to participants in phone conversations, a comment from his wife both struck me and made me laugh. On the topic of how he engages with his emotions she said, *"He's calm, he's even-keeled. He doesn't get stressed, he gets diarrhea."* Additional data I collected revealed that this client has a very specific relationship with emotions (they are distracting, unproductive, unhelpful) and assumptions tied to them (If I engage with my emotions or the emotions of others, I'll lose control). This relationship he has with emotions seems to come from a personal value system centered around being responsible, in control, and a source of strength for others which is an indication of the self-authored form of mind.

Our work together has been really focused on wondering about how well his assumption is serving him and how it might be limiting him. And, through safe to fail experiments, we've gathered data that is beginning to challenge what he thought he knew to be true. For example, he and his VP of Sales have gotten into some unproductive habits in their dynamic. My client believes the VP isn't operating with enough urgency and tenacity in closing deals and so my client intervenes and micro-manages. My client described to me that he was 'disappointed' in the VP of Sales. A deeper investigation of that emotion in our sessions, however, illuminated that layers beneath 'disappointment' was a fear of failure. When my client sees potential failure on the horizon, anxiety and stress kick in and he defaults to controlling

behavior. His identity feels at stake if he isn't controlling the work, the outcome, or the process and guaranteeing success. As an experiment, he talked to his VP of Sales and instead of reminding him again about the sales goals and monthly benchmarks, he talked about their inter-personal dynamic. My client named his pattern of behavior as a manager and how those behaviors are rooted in deeply held fears and anxieties. He talked about his emotions and realized that it didn't lead to loss of control, it led to a form of liberation: he doesn't always need to control!

Ultimately, in our work together we're wondering about 'who he is' and what choices he wants to make in terms of 'who he becomes.' We're examining his attachment to a certain identity and beginning to get space around it. We're wondering how he might be wrong and what else might be true because he is sensing that he's outgrowing the confines of his assumptions and needs to be asking different questions, wondering about an issue from different perspectives, and noticing more specifically the dynamics at play in the entire system. He's being called to show up in different ways in order get rid of the literal and metaphorical diarrhea in his life and have the freedom to live and lead in the way he most wants. I feel quite honored to be supporting him on that journey.