

# Coaching at Work

## “pp42-45 – Locked-in learning by Clare Norman. Special Report: Supervision”

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# Locked-in learning

*Struggling to meet the requirements for coach accreditation or feel you've lost your edge?*

*Clare Norman reports on a 'lock-in' weekend retreat she's developed to boost CPD*

**D**oes the following describe where you're at?

It's been some time since you attended your original coach training. You fear you've lost your razor sharpness, but you can't see your own blind spots<sup>1</sup>. You know being unconsciously competent<sup>2</sup> isn't good enough for your own sense of satisfaction nor is it in your clients' best interests.

You are looking for CPD to sharpen your coaching edge, harness your creativity and bring more innovation to your coaching. You don't want to learn yet another model or tool; you want to enrich your personal coaching presence through practice and feedback. Perhaps you've decided to externally validate your coaching, but finding the time – and motivation – has been tough, given your workload.



You are ready to spend good, quality time on it, and you know you'd be inspired by working with others.

Enter the mentor coaching 'lock-in'.

First, let's explore what mentor coaching is and its benefits.

## MENTOR COACHING

Professional coaching bodies and, increasingly, coaching sponsors, require coaches to demonstrate they are receiving supervision. In the case of the International Coach Federation (ICF), coaches going for accreditation require what is termed 'mentor coaching'. The ICF defines this as "coaching and feedback in a collaborative, appreciative and dialogued process based on an observed or recorded coaching session to increase the coach's capability in coaching, in alignment with the ICF Core Competencies".

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I define mentor coaching as "observed coaching with feedback against the competencies, that sharpens the coach's all-round presence".

Mentor coaching may be classed as a subset of supervision, particularly focusing on the normative and formative aspects<sup>3</sup>. It can highlight blind spots that supervision might miss due to the self-reported nature of supervision, where coaches tell the 'story' of what's happening between them and their client, or talk about their tussle with an ethical issue, or discuss their feelings of overwhelm, for example.

Thus, the self-reported nature of supervision might miss vital information about how the coach is being in their coaching sessions.

Mentor coaching can take place one-to-one, involving listening to a recording of your coaching, stopping

and starting it to reflect with your mentor coach about how you are displaying (or not) the competencies, and how you could improve. Or it can be in a group, where you each take it in turns to coach another member of the group, and receive feedback against the competencies from yourself, your client, the observers and your mentor coach. This has the added benefit of seeing others in practice and learning from their strengths and opportunities for development as well as your own.

Either way, the coach is (re)focusing their attention on the competencies to bring them back into their consciousness – and into their way of being.

## A UNIQUE APPROACH

The concept of the lock-in weekend retreat developed out of the need for coaches to receive mentor coaching ➔

*“Being locked in addresses the procrastination among coaches when it comes to completing coaching and training logs for credentialing submissions. I simplify the requirements for them and lock them in until they are done”*

in order to apply for independent accreditation of their coaching skills for the ICF. But it also meets another very specific need.

The idea is that being locked in addresses the commonplace procrastination among coaches when it comes to completing coaching and training logs for credentialing submissions. I simplify the requirements for them and then lock them in until they are done.

It's not about being 'parental' – participants come with the intention of taking time out until they have broken the back of the administration. They also commit to providing the 'loving boot'<sup>4</sup> to fellow attending coaches, encouraging each other to tackle the paperwork, so they are ready to upload it as soon as they have completed all the other accreditation requirements.

As one participant says, “attending the lock-in made attaining my Professional Certified Coach [PCC] credential come within reach, where previously it had seemed unattainable

because of the hoops you have to jump through”. She was accredited three months later.

### THE BENEFITS

The lock-in feels spacious yet intensive. It enables participants to make significant improvements rapidly. They sharpen their coaching skills through six hours of group mentor coaching, where each person practises one-to-one coaching with feedback and learns from others' practice and feedback.

They get the chance to go deeper during an hour of individual mentor coaching, reflecting together on a recording of their coaching. They also get to clarify the expectations of the ICF, so they can record their coaching and CPD hours. They can take rejuvenating walks in the New Forest, build new relationships with other coaches and ponder on their coaching practice in whatever way works for them.

### WHAT THEY SAY

One previous participant of the lock-in says: “It got me to reconsider my

methods and address the poor habits I'd got into over many years of coaching... and I am now more confident that I am coaching to a higher level [such that] my clients now think more broadly and deeply and own their solutions.”

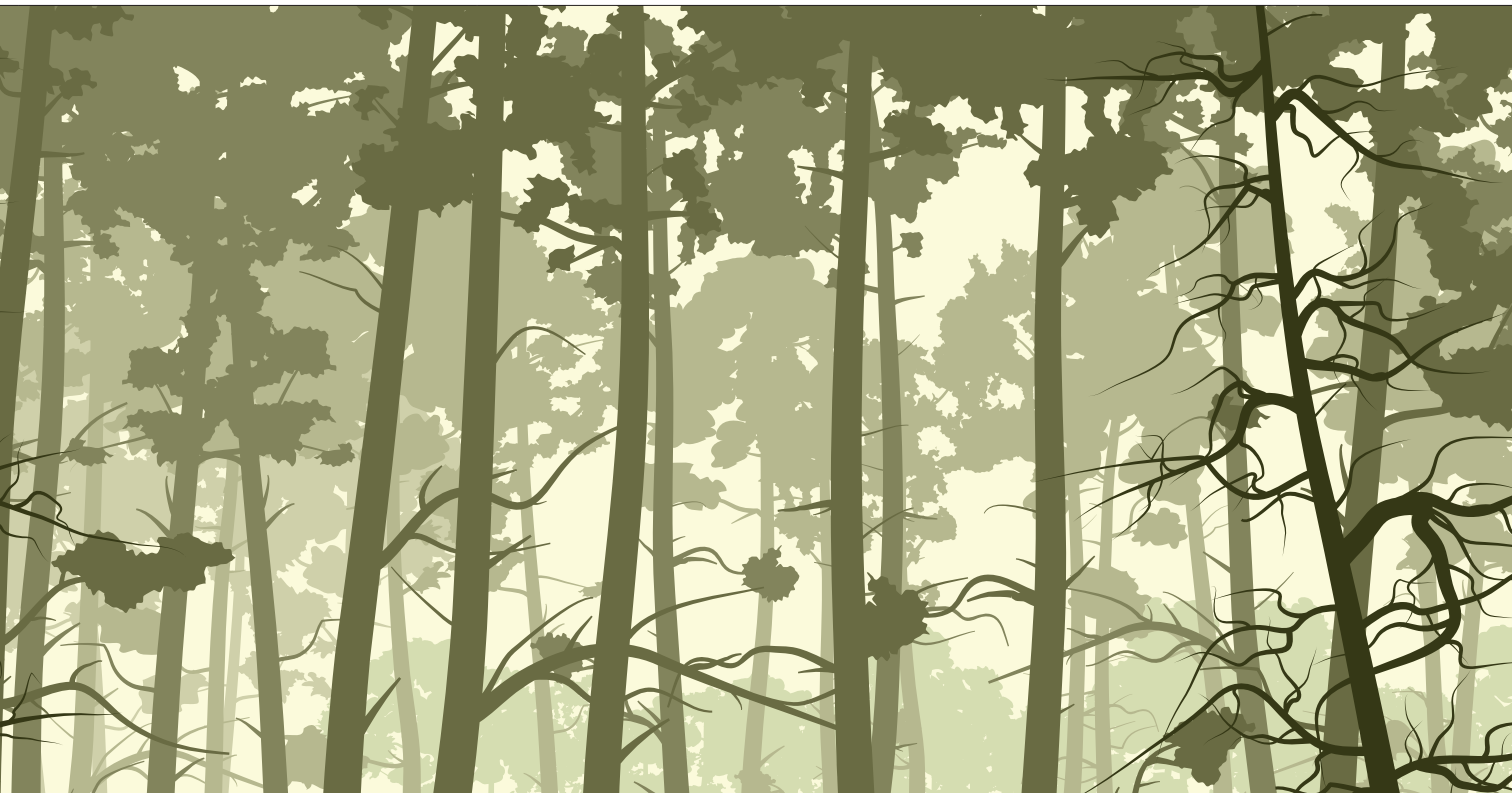
Another says: “I see great value in supervision, but with mentor coaching, there is nowhere to hide, which was even more valuable to me to develop and grow.”

Of the credentialing requirements, many coaches found the weekend really simplifies the accreditation process.

To make the most of the lock-in or any other similar immersive process, they offer the following advice:

● **Join the event early** In the case of the lock-in, go to the dinner on the Friday – to meet people and start to develop trusted relationships, so that you can jump straight into coaching practice once the programme gets going.

● **Immerse yourself and be fully present** Don't be distracted by the outside world, except for any chances to enjoy nature in the beautiful New Forest in the case of the lock-in.



- **Coach as you naturally would**, to get maximum benefit from the feedback.
- **Expect to feel vulnerable**, coaching in front of your peers, but remember you're all in the same boat; treat this as a rare gift to get feedback – it feels very affirming.
- **Be prepared to learn and change**, so you sharpen your application of non-directive coaching; and know that getting the basics of contracting, re-contracting and closing right will make a big difference to your clients.
- **Study the coaching competencies before you arrive** and come with questions. Then get under the skin of the competencies and seek to embody them through the coaching practice.
- **In the case of the lock-in, take all of your records and training materials**,

so that you can make use of all the time available to you to complete your logs at the lock-in. You'll thank yourself for investing the time to get accreditation-ready.

To make the most of individual mentor coaching, suggestions include the following:

- **Record multiple sessions**, so that you get over the performance anxiety of being recorded.
- **Bring your worst and your best coaching** You will learn a huge amount from listening to your worst that you wouldn't pick up from always presenting your best; and your best will be the one(s) that you submit with your application for accreditation.
- **Listen to your recording before talking with your mentor coach.**

- **Write a transcript of the recording** and reflect on how you apply coaching competencies.
- **Reflect on your coaching** in between mentor coaching sessions, to integrate what you are learning.
- **Be willing to reflect on your intentions** for your choices in your coaching sessions.

Participating in the lock-in or any other process designed to support coaches in gaining accreditation isn't just about achieving the kitemark. As one previous participant says: "It's also about being the best coach for your clients." 

● *With thanks to Dave Bates, Helena Clayton, Ali Hughes and Cara Moore for their feedback and insights on the lock-in*

## References

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2. *The Learning Stages Model* was developed by Noel Burch at Gordon Training International over 30 years ago
3. B Proctor, *Group Supervision: A Guide to Creative Practice*, London: Sage, 2000
4. L Daloz, *Effective Teaching and Mentoring*, London: Nicholas Brealey, 1986

### FIND OUT MORE



Clare Norman is founder of: [www.clarenormancoachingassociates.com](http://www.clarenormancoachingassociates.com)

She is a Professional Certified Coach, a coach supervisor and a mentor coach. She works with internal and external coaches to stay sharp and stay safe, and particularly enjoys working with coaches on the lock-in.