



“Keep this book at your side
at all times! It’s everything
a great coach should be.”

Kim Morgan,
MCC and Director of Barefoot Coaching

The Transformational Coach

Free your thinking and
break through to coaching mastery

CLARE NORMAN

Shift 61

OLD MINDSET: The work happens when we are together

NEW MINDSET: The work happens when we are apart

I observe coaches trying to complete everything in the coaching session, as though the thinker cannot do anything alone without them. Somehow in our coach training, we learn, perhaps implicitly, that the coaching session is where everything happens. Perhaps this is simply because we are learning how to conduct a coaching session, and don't really talk much about what happens outside of it?

It's as though all the work has to happen when coach and thinker are together, otherwise the coach has failed the thinker. This shows up in action-oriented questions too early in the session, driving to get to a solution to what the thinker brought to coaching, running over time to finish what has been started, or pushing for a complete session (whatever 'complete' is, see also Shifts 15 and 23).

We're kidding ourselves if we think that the thinker can only think when we are with them. I would go further than that, and say we're allowing our ego to get too big for its boots. We're no longer working as an equal if we believe they're inadequate outside the session. They're 'creative, resourceful and whole' (Whitworth et al. 1998) in and *out* of the session; we can't allow our ego to disempower them and disable their potential.

So much happens in between sessions. For a start, the thinker usually puts into practice what they decided to experiment with: that's the real work, testing out whether their ideas are successful in practice, and trying something different if it isn't successful. That's why your session close is so important, to ensure the thinker has figured out:

- ➔ what to experiment with
- ➔ what support they can call on – internal and external
- ➔ what obstacles might get in their way, and how they will get around them

- ➔ what they hope to learn as a result (see also Shifts 17 and 79 about CLOSE).

But it's more than them taking action. Their subconscious – or perhaps their conscious – will carry on thinking about the things you mulled over together in the session. Maybe a question that they avoided within the session has stuck with them, and they keep coming back to it. Or maybe they had an acorn of an idea that they continue to grow in between sessions. Or maybe it's simply a case of getting more of what you focus on. This will happen over time, *and* you can encourage the thinker to take time out straight after the session to continue to reflect. If they dash off to their next meeting immediately, they will lose out on a huge amount of continuous processing.

When I'm the thinker, I'm often surprised when I look back at my intentions before a follow-up session and realise how much progress I've made, even without conscious effort. Perhaps I've had more conversations with others in the meantime, which led to a deeper understanding. And sometimes that conscious effort *is* necessary to break old habits and replace them with new ones.

That's the hard work of making change.

I know that not all thinkers follow through on their promises to themselves, but that doesn't mean they're inadequate without you. Perhaps the two of you hadn't got to the root cause for the thinker to figure out a fitting way forward, or hadn't surfaced the belief that was getting in the way of change, or something more important or urgent came up that trumped the thinker's intentions.

That doesn't mean that they can only do the work in the session, with you. You can't be with them all the time, and your job is to enable them to act independently of you, drawing on their own internal resources and others around them. The work happens outside of the session.

Shift 62

OLD MINDSET: Change happens after the session

NEW MINDSET: Get the shift in the room by doing it now

This might seem contradictory to the last Shift, where the work happens when we're apart. It's important to get the shift in the room *and* know that the work continues when we are apart.

We may assume that coach and thinker talk *in* the session, and the thinker does something different to change *after* the session. If you believe your job is to get them to *talk* in the session and *do* after it, you are missing potential opportunities to support them in their shift.

I see a connection here to Kolb's (1984) learning cycle and Honey and Mumford's (1986) learning styles, which found that we each have a preference for learning:

- ➔ by doing – 'the activist'
- ➔ through reflection – 'the reflector'
- ➔ through theory and models – 'the theorist'
- ➔ by experimentation – 'the pragmatist'.

They also found that the best learning draws on all four of these, no matter where we start, going around the whole cycle.

Perhaps you think your job as coach is to get thinkers into a place of reflective observation in the session. Maybe you've learned that active experimentation only happens outside of the session, with concrete experience following hot on its heels. But to me, and to Hawkins and Smith (2011), who said, 'Get the shift in the room', it's important to bring that active experimentation forward so you can support them in that first run-through and enable them to embody the change – really feel it somatically, rather than just talk about it.

If they embody the change, it's like a practice run. Their body and mind know they've done it once before and, according to my own

research for my master's dissertation (Norman 1999), this makes it easier to do a second and third time because we know we can. It's in the muscle memory. You're enabling the thinker to believe in themselves and their capacity to change.

For example, if they're talking about a conversation they intend to have with their manager, you can invite them to practise the first sentence or two of what they wish to say as though they're saying it to their manager – and ideally standing in a different place to where they have been thinking about it, so their body knows this is no longer reflecting, but now experimenting. They might play with it in this safe environment until it feels authentic and fitting for the situation. If they only talk about it, they won't feel the same level of confidence as they go into the conversation, as they won't know exactly how it will sound when it comes out of their mouth that first time; neither would they have experienced it in their body.

Another time when doing it now can be useful is when the thinker says something along the lines of: 'I'll sit down and write a list after the session,' or 'My next step is to work on this spreadsheet'. I invite them to do that now, right there in the session, if that would be a useful way for them to use our time together. I can be with them, silently giving them my attention in service of them capturing their ideas, or they can choose to use the time to work alone. If the latter, we'll agree to come back at the end of our time together to wrap up – or we might wrap up at this point and they get on with it alone.





This may be the best use of your time together, even if you don't feel as though you're doing anything. You are doing something – holding the space for them to work on what matters most to them in this moment, and getting the shift into the room. Their action evokes more awareness and progress. That momentum that they get in the room, breaking the back of the list, spreadsheet, mind map or whatever, is more likely to keep the momentum going after the session.

Do you ever doubt your coaching style is achieving the best results for your clients? Have you ever felt there's room for growth, but you're not sure how to achieve it?

To create a more sustainable transformation in the people you coach, you need to start with your own mindset. As a coach, you know you can't change what you do unless you alter what you believe first.

By shedding the ineffective scripts, trappings and beliefs that a lifetime of personal interactions, professional training and even your parents have taught you, you can reset your thinking to a beginner's mentality and so begin a fulfilling and exciting journey to coaching mastery.

In this fresh and highly effective field guide, Master Mentor Coach, Clare Norman gets into your head to help you pinpoint the attitudes that you need to unlearn and reframe. Through Clare's rich experience, illuminating real-life stories and practical guidance, you can shift towards more useful thinking and powerful skillsets by:

-  Spotting and changing your own restrictive coaching mindsets
-  Understanding how marginal gains can lead to maximal outcomes
-  Embracing replacement paradigms and new thought patterns
-  Rediscovering what you love about coaching and its power to resource people

It's time to ditch the old beliefs that are holding you back, free your thinking and make the move from getting transactional results to being a transformational coach.

“Essential reading for all coaches. Skilfully lays out the important mindset shifts required to become masterful in your work.”

Marie Quigley, MCC, EMCC ESIA, director and co-founder of Empower World

“Thought-provoking! This is a must-read for anyone who wants to get out of their own way and move further toward becoming a great coach.”

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